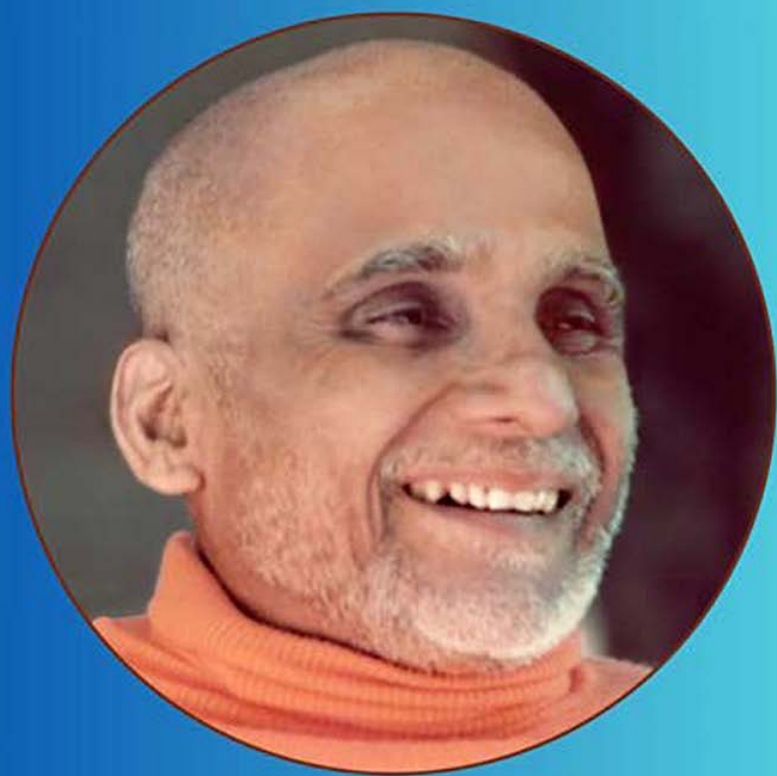


Darshan of Swami Krishnananda in 1995



**Sivananda Ashram
Rishikesh, India**

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

These are transcriptions of recordings of Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj's morning darshans with ashramites, guests and visitors during the year 1995. They are in chronological order.

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God and Human Egoism

Suffering and Disease

Bhakti Yoga, Viveka, Self-Realisation, Guru

CHANTING OM

A visitor: When I sit, the mind wants to concentrate somewhere, but nowhere is it satisfied.

Swamiji: Have you been practising meditation before you came to this place? This is not the first time? Why did you leave Bangalore and come when you are actually studying yoga there? You could have stayed there. Why did you come this side?

Visitor: I wanted to come to Rishikesh to be by the Ganga, and I also wanted to do meditation.

Swamiji: How do you meditate?

Visitor: I try to reach the beyond.

Swamiji: Beyond what?

Visitor: Beyond the body and mind.

Swamiji: It is not so easy. You cannot go beyond the body and mind. What is your idea of God?

Visitor: My idea of God is Brahman.

Swamiji: From where have you learned all these things? How do you think Brahman? You should chant Om. In the beginning, chant softly. Then slowly increase the volume. [Swamiji chants Om.] Chant like this for 20 minutes. Don't think anything in the mind except the chant. Don't think of Brahman, and so on. Only chant, continuously for 20 minutes—nicely, beautifully, in a sonorous voice. You will feel your body becomes calm and quiet gradually. All disturbance, all agitation and pain in the body, etc., will subside gradually. This can be done at least twice in the day—once in the morning, once in the evening for 20 minutes or even half an hour. It is very beneficial to you. It creates a vibration. It will create a perfect vibration, something like a round circle. It is not a disturbing vibration. It is a round, complete, perfect circular motion of vibration. Feel like that. It is a total vibration emanating from your body, from the total personality of yours, expanding into larger and larger dimension as you chant more and more.

I mentioned that it is like a circle. In the beginning, it is as wide as yourself. The circle is as wide as your own self. Then imagine that it expands. When you throw some object on water, a circular ripple is created. It becomes wider and wider, wider and wider, wider and wider, until it touches the edge. So feel that this vibration that you have created within you is expanding gradually, wider and wider, until it touches the very corner of the Earth, touches even the space.

I don't want to tell you anything further. This is sufficient for now, and if you do it for 2-3 months, you will see that some benefit will be there. There is no need of talking further about it. This will also bring you health.

Visitor: Should I continue with asanas, pranayama?

Swamiji: You can do your asanas, no objection. It has no connection with chanting Om. You can sit as you are sitting, and chant Om. This is a spiritual practice. You are free to perform other asanas, as you like.

Swamiji [to another visitor]: When you are in Paramatma, you should know that you are in Paramatma. Who will know?

Visitor: Why should we know?

Swamiji: Then what is the good of your going there when you don't know anything? You can be here itself. When you don't know you are rich, you are not rich, really speaking. Suppose you are rich but don't know that you are rich; can you call yourself a rich man? Everything is conditioned by knowledge. If you have entered God but don't know you have entered God, then you have not entered God. I asked you a simple question, but you are not able to answer it. If you have entered God, you have vanished. If you have vanished, who will know that you have entered God? If you don't know anything, then what's the good of going there? It is like an idiotic man having nothing and imagining that he is a wealthy man. He may be a millionaire, but his brain is idiotic. He doesn't know he is a millionaire. If that is the case, you cannot call him a rich man. In the same way, if you don't know where you are, you are nowhere, really speaking.

This question arises because the mind is not purified completely. You cannot forget that you are a retired colonel. You are a big man. No big man can go to God. This is a very important thing. If you say you are not a big man—you are a very small fry completely annihilated of your personality, and you don't exist at all in the eyes of people—then there is a chance of going to God, because two big people cannot exist in the world. God is a big man, and you are also a big man, so they cannot stick together. Two bigs cannot stick. One man should be a little less.

Great *chitta shuddhi* is necessary. If it was such a simple matter, why did Lord Yama refuse to answer Nachiketas' question? It is because the mind cannot receive it. No philosopher can understand what happens to him when he enters God.

You are an important person, not an ordinary fry. The idea that you are an important person must go, and you must be very humble, like a blade of grass. People may tread over you, and still you don't say anything about it. If you don't exist at all, God will take care of you. But if you exist, there is a contradiction between your existence and His existence. Your personality should go away. You are like an automaton; for practical purposes you are existing, but in your mind you are not existing at all. If this confirmation is acceptable to you, I think one day or the other God will bless you.

Maintain your consciousness of being a universal, all-pervading substance, where in that state of cosmic consciousness or meditation your personality-consciousness gets abolished. That is the highest surrender. You are surrendering your limited consciousness to the Universal Consciousness, and in that state of the surrender of the limited consciousness to the Universal Consciousness, the limited consciousness loses nothing but only gains much, as the river enters the ocean. If this idea can be planted deeply into your heart and you think only this, this is the highest meditation and all the yogas—karma, bhakti, jnana—are included in this one affirmation of your being the all-pervading essence and your not existing separately at all.

Practise this meditation. There is nothing else for you. But you must persist in this thought and sit quietly, do meditation and think nothing else, and if the mind is wandering here and there, read some

books. It will help you in maintaining this consciousness. See good people, saints and sages who will talk to you on this subject, keep good company, meditate again and again, and you will see some miracle will take place. This is sufficient for you. God bless you.

CONTEMPLATING ON THE GURU

Swamiji: [To a visitor] The Guru is only one level of the universal consciousness. The Guru is not a human being. It is a wholeness or a total, which consciousness is, limiting itself to a particular degree of comprehensiveness. Your consciousness is also a whole. It is not a part or a fraction. But there can be a larger circle. There can be many types of circles—small circles, big circles, bigger circles, even bigger circles, and a circle that is as big as the universe itself. So the Guru is a circle higher than your circle. It is not outside you, but it is above you, and so the circle cannot be outside. In this manner you have to consider the Guru; therefore, there is no distinction between concentrating upon a Guru and concentrating upon God because God is the larger circle, the Guru is a smaller circle. There are many Gurus, just as there are many degrees of circles. Do you understand me?

Therefore, nothing is outside you. Everything is above you, in little degrees of expansion. The Guru or God are not outside, just as the higher circle is not outside the lower or smaller circle. It is including even the lower circle, so the whole universe is operating as wholes. This is why it is called a holistic approach. Everything is a whole. Even the tiniest atom is a whole by itself. An atom is a whole, a molecule is a whole, the object is a whole, a person is a whole, the whole universe is a whole, nature is a whole. There are no parts anywhere. So contemplate on the Guru as a whole above you.

Or you need not have to pass through this state. Directly concentrate on the largest whole, and it will include all the lower wholes. Catch the biggest, and the lower things will follow automatically.

Visitor: I hear that you told another man to not surrender to the Guru, to surrender to God only.

Swamiji: This is because if you have understood what I told you, and your consciousness can appreciate the nature of God as inclusive of everything, the Guru comes automatically with it. When you catch the highest, the lower automatically comes. There is no need thinking of the Guru separately.

Visitor: Very good. Thank you.

Swamiji: [To another visitor] You are a whole person, not a fraction of an individual, but the family of which you are a member is also a whole. You cannot say any member in the family is a fraction. The family constitutes an integral totality, and so your individual wholeness is absorbed by the larger circle of wholeness, which is the family. The family is a wholeness which is absorbed or subsumed into the larger wholeness, which is the community. The community, which is a wholeness, is subsumed under a larger wholeness, which is the district administration. The district administration, which is a wholeness by itself, is absorbed into the larger wholeness which is the state administration. The state administration, which is a whole by itself, is absorbed into a larger whole which is the central national administration. That which is itself a whole is subsumed under a still larger circle of wholeness, which is the international setup. That international setup, which is, after all, a setup of human beings, is subsumed under a larger inclusiveness of wholeness, which is nature as a whole. The whole of nature, which is a whole by itself, is absorbed into a larger whole which is the space-time complex. The space-time complex, which is a larger whole, is included in the Absolute Whole.

So everything is a whole. The lower is conditioned by the higher; there are various degrees of the lower, and various degrees of the higher also. When you reach the highest wholeness, all other things run to it like bees running to the hive. Everything, even the littlest particle in the cosmos, gravitates into that central magnet which is the Supreme Whole, and it is wholly working in every lower level of the whole. The whole, which is the Supreme Whole, is wholly present even in the lesser wholes; otherwise, you would feel that you are a little tiny tot, but you don't feel that. You are a perfectly all right, a complete person. That completeness that everyone feels is due to the wholeness that is fully present in you, though one is not able to realise it due to the encasement of consciousness into this body. Otherwise, everything is blessed, all is well, God alone is.

Visitor: Is this a restatement of the proposition that God is indivisible?

Swamiji: God is only a name that you give to this highest whole.

Visitor: It is said that religion is built on presumptions and inferences.

Swamiji: There is no religion. There is only a scientific fact of the holistic conditioning of all the degrees of completeness included in the largest whole, which is the cosmos. There is no religion, no spirituality, nothing. This is the only thing.

Visitor: But that principle, is it...?

Swamiji: That principle is; that is all. You cannot call it spirit, you cannot call it matter, you cannot call it religion, you cannot call it anything.

Visitor: Is it a matter of presumption or inference?

Swamiji: Your consciousness will tell what the fact is. Do you feel limited in yourself? Certainly you will feel limited. Something is conditioning you. What is it that is conditioning you? That is a larger whole. Don't go to religion; don't read books. That which limits you is a larger whole, and if you enter that whole, you will find you are limited further by another whole, and you will never get out of this finitude consciousness, outside which there is nothing to limit you.

Visitor: Do you learn this principle by intuition, or have you arrived at it on the basis of presumption?

Swamiji: Anyone who has a little common sense will think only in this way. You need not be a religious man.

Visitor: It is based on logic.

Swamiji: I don't want to use that word. It is simple common sense of whoever is able to think.

Visitor: It is inference drawn from the known data.

Swamiji: Yes, yes, yes. It is an absolutely incontrovertible logical conclusion, and you are your own judge. You cannot be judged by somebody else, and you need not judge somebody else also. Use your mind as a whole person—whole mind, whole understanding, whole spirit, entire total—and tell yourself what you are and what you are not. That which you are apparently not is that which conditions you, and that which you are apparently not should become you, so

'not' becomes 'is', and then there is no 'not' afterwards. Do you understand me?

What is religion when you are not a man, you are not a woman, nothing? Nobody knows what you are. It is a miracle that each one is. God bless you. Om Namo Narayanaya.

KNOWING THE KNOWER

An ashramite: Swamiji, I want to know who is the knower. If it is the knower, then there is somebody to know it.

Swamiji: This world is the known. You are seeing me, so I become a known to you. Otherwise, you will not see that I am existing here.

Ashramite: But consciousness is ignorance.

Swamiji: That means your consciousness is not everywhere. You are only theoretically saying that, but practically you are making a distinction between one and another. But if you are really drowned into that consciousness that it is everywhere, you will never see anybody outside you.

Ashramite: Swamiji, afterwards there is nothing known.

Swamiji: You will know only yourself at that time. But as the mind is not allowing you to feel that which you are describing now, you are still seeing multiplicity. Otherwise, all these people sitting here will look like branches of your body. You will never see anything outside you. It is like the Viratswarupa, which is that only. All this universe becomes like a part of the body of that Cosmic Being, and you will not feel anybody is existing at that time. But the mind is telling you that it is not so because you are so-and-so, you are a person, you have got all sorts of accumulated ideas; you are personality-conscious. Therefore, duality-consciousness comes. Personality-conscious and duality-consciousness are the same thing, but that which you are saying is a theoretical conclusion, and it isn't true.

Ashramite: Really does it exist or not?

Swamiji: For you it exists because you are seeing it. You may say it is not existing, but you will feel that it is there. It is really not existing, but you must really feel that it is not existing. You are thinking that it is not existing, but your feeling is different. There is a difference between thinking and feeling. The feeling says, "I am quite different from everybody." But the thinking says, "Maybe it is not like that." If the thinking and feeling join together, it becomes intuition. That

requires deep meditation. What you are telling now is to be driven into the feelings so that you will not think anything else afterwards.

Another ashramite: Swamiji, we can state it in this way, how much we think of ourselves, as individuals. We think, and we are aware. This is the consciousness. Thinking ourselves and thinking others go together. The mind is also a faculty of this individuality. The mind expands. The more the mind expands—‘the mind expanding’ means myself expanding. So whatever we are saying, it is in me only.

Swamiji: When you are existing, others also exist. You cannot say, “I am existing, and others should not exist.” It is not possible. Are you existing as a person? If you say you are not existing, then others also do not exist. They go together with you. But when you say you are existing, you cannot assert yourself and deny others because the whole world is just like you only. If one thing goes, everything goes. Something going and something else remaining is not possible.

First ashramite: Does existence have an awareness that it exists?

Swamiji: That has got awareness of itself only. It has no other awareness. It cannot be aware of something else because that ‘something else’ is not there at all. It is a subtle matter.

Ashramite: After salvation of the soul, what happens then?

Swamiji: You become a universal being.

Ashramite: So it knows that it exists.

Swamiji: Does God know that He is existing? If God knows that He exists, then it will be the same thing when liberation takes place. The Universal Being is aware of itself. That is Sat-Chit-Ananda, consciousness of being; that’s all. It is not consciousness of becoming, or consciousness of an object. God has no outside object. He is just aware of Himself only, and in that everything is included.

A visitor: Swamiji, should I do asanas?

Swamiji: You can do it if you like, but it is not an essential thing. You can do it, but if you don’t want to, you can not do it also. You can do a few asanas, but not so many.

Another ashramite: What is *svadharma*?

Swamiji: That work which you can do, and which you must do from the point of your understanding and physical strength, is your duty. That which your understanding cannot permit and your physical constitution also cannot permit, that is somebody else's duty. For instance, you cannot become a soldier in the army. That condition doesn't apply to you. Nor can you be a shopkeeper. You cannot be a trader or drive an engine because you are not fitted for that. That duty, that work for which you are wholly fitted, that is your dharma. It is up to you to find out what it is and what you are fitted for. *Sva* means your own, your own capacity. Your capacity is called *sva*—intellectual, emotional as well as physical, and from that point of view you must think what you are fit for. Your mind, your intellect, your feeling, your body—they tell you what you are fit for.

Ashramite: So *sva* doesn't mean the Self.

Swamiji: No, it has no connection with the Self. It is the individual person because the Universal Self doesn't do any work, so it has no connection at all. It is the individual self. There is no dharma for the Universal Self. It is itself only. All these laws, regulations, duty, everything applies to the individual self only. And so you find out from your point of view: "I am this kind of person; this is what I can do, and more than that I cannot do, and if I try to do anything else, it is not fitting for me."

The position you are occupying in society and your circumstances physically, mentally and emotionally will determine your duty. Are you in England or in America or in India? That also conditions it. What you can do here, you cannot do in Europe because of other external conditions. So all the factors must be considered in order to know what is best for you. Your position in this world determines the duty you have to perform.

Another ashramite: It is written that sannyasins should not take an oil bath.

Swamiji: Every instruction should be taken in its spirit, not in its letter. It is considered as an excessive attention paid to the welfare of the body. As little attention as possible, the minimum attention, may be given, and you need not give luxurious attention to the body. If you are sick, then the application of oil might be necessary, but if you

are sturdy and already perfectly well, then it may not be necessary. You should use your common sense to decide what is necessary and what is not necessary.

Dharma does not permit ill health. You must do whatever is necessary to maintain your good health. A sick person cannot do sadhana. So oil or no oil, whatever it is, these are all... You cannot take things as they are literally. Whatever is necessary to maintain mental, emotional, intellectual, physical, integrated health must be done. The body should be healthy, the mind should be alert, and the emotions should be calm. If you can assure these things, then you can do what you want.

THE LAW OF NATURE

A visitor: My friends and I have come to the Ashram to do sadhana, and we would like to know what sadhana is being done here.

Swamiji: We have only one sadhana—unity with God—and that power works through us. You asked me what instruments I am employing for keeping this Ashram in this status. We have no apparatus, no instruments, and nothing externally appreciable. We have only the power of God with us, and that works very effectively because in our feeling for God, in our devotion to God and our effort to unite our soul with God we are one hundred percent sincere, and so The Divine Life Society is a miracle of God and a miracle of Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj.

You asked what sadhana we do. Our sadhana is only one: trust in God and unity with God. Everything works wonderfully afterwards.

Visitor: What is your message to people?

Swamiji: People should not be selfish. They should not lead a corrupt life, and they should know the aim of life, first of all. Everybody is living, but why are they living? Let this question be answered by any person. When the ultimate aim of life is not known at all, anything that you do in this world becomes a futile effort, so what Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj had in his mind was to educate people in the right line. What we lack is not money or power; we have got everything, but no education is there. Our country is lacking education. There are no really educated people in this country. They are all politicians fighting for their power, for their chair; and the aim of life, which is to condition personal and social life, is lacking very much because the philosophy of education has gone underground. There is only politically manoeuvred education going on now—job-oriented education, we may say—but man-making education is not in the mind of any person, for reasons God only knows. We lack education; we lack nothing else.

My final message to you is nobody will help you in this world. You have no friends, but you have got only One Friend.

An ashramite: What is the law of nature? I want to know that.

Swamiji: You have to obey the law of your body. Will you go against the law of your own body? What is the law of your body? That is exactly the law of nature. The whole nature is in your body only. Your body is a small universe. The body requires something, and will you deny it or will you give it?

Ashramite: I have to give it.

Swamiji: Then it is the same thing—whatever nature requires. You must consider nature as yourself only, and you do to it whatever you do to yourself. Actually, it is not merely a philosophy; it is also the truth. You are foolishly thinking that you are outside nature. Nature has entered into you. You are made up of the same bricks as nature is made of. Your body is made up of the same substance as the world—the same earth, same air, same heat, same water, same space inside. There is absolutely no difference between the world and yourself. There are mountains in the world, and there are also mountains inside the body. There is space, and there is space inside the body. There is light, and there is light here. Whatever you find there is here. So if you say the requirements of the body should not be denied, you cannot deny the requirement of the universe also.

Always be friendly with whatever is happening in the universe. But it is difficult because you always think, “How can I be friendly with somebody else?” He is not a ‘somebody else’. It is you only; your larger body it is. Feel that you are becoming so big that you have gone beyond the sky, and you are the only man existing.

Ashramite: So in what way am I contradicting these things?

Swamiji: You are contradicting when you say the world is outside you. Feel you are becoming bigger and bigger; you have become so big that you have covered the whole sky, so there is no nature at that time. You are asking what is the law of nature. There is no nature; it is you only. Therefore, there is no distinction between yourself and nature, because you have become nature by making yourself bigger and bigger. So whatever you would like to do to yourself, that you do to nature, and you should not say it is outside. You have become that only. The whole mountain is also inside you, and the sun, moon and stars, everything.

Hence, when you ask what is the law of nature, you are asking what is the law of yourself. And you know very well what is your law. The same thing is to be applied to everything. But it is not everything; it is you only. Again and again the old prejudice continues that it is outside. Then the whole world will become friendly with you. You are treating it as an object outside; therefore, it is a problem. There is only nature. You are not existing. Nobody exists here. They are only fingers and cells of the body of the cosmos, and only one soul is there. There is not my soul, your soul, and so on. There is one soul, one body, and if you can think this, then your question is answered. There is only one soul, not many souls as you are imagining. They are all drops of that soul. And one body also, and one person only. There is only one person in the universe and only one soul and one body, and so where is the question? The question has gone immediately.

But you will never believe it. It requires great willpower. Whatever I have told you is the highest meditation. You need not read any book afterwards.

Ashramite: So the whole problem is that we are confining ourselves to this body, this...

Swamiji: “This body, this body”—you should not talk like that. You have become one with nature. Nature is your body. In religious parlance, it is called the Viratswarupa. There is nothing else existing. Other things do not exist at all. It is not a story that I am telling you. It is a scientific fact. The idea that we are existing separately is the problem before us. Otherwise, you will be taken care of by That which you really are. It is a very important matter.

ONE'S FATE AFTER DEATH

Swamiji [to an ashramite]: According to your idea, what will be the fate of a person when he goes to death?

Ashramite: I must be there, Swamiji.

Swamiji: Suppose you go, what will happen to you? It is not that you cannot understand, but only you are afraid to say anything. According to you, what will be your fate?

Ashramite: We cannot say the drop is not inside the ocean. It is inside the ocean.

Swamiji: It is not a question of 'inside'. Why are you using such words? Where is the inside? There is no inside. You are unnecessarily carrying the old troubles of life there also; the same luggage you are carrying there. 'Inside', 'outside' is your problem here in this world, and you are carrying that there also. The way in which we are living in the world, ultimately speaking, is a kind of disease. It is not a healthy state of affairs. You are able to understand it, so you are unnecessarily asking me the same thing. You know the answer very well because it has been told so many times by so many people.

When you become the All, what happens to you? That is the question, actually. There is no question of asking what happens. You have become the All, that's all. If you can appreciate this answer, you will become either a god or a fool in one minute. One of the two will be there. It will take you to the statehood of God in one instant if you can appreciate what this means; otherwise, you will be pulled down. That also can be. You can think of the highest or the lowest.

What happens to you when you become the All? The question itself has no meaning. You have already become the All, and again you are asking the question "What happens?" What is the meaning of that question? Unnecessarily you are asking a question which has no meaning at all. The ocean is the ocean. What happens to the ocean? Nothing happens.

But you have performed terrible karmas, and you have done great good karmas also; otherwise, you would not have come here. You would not have stayed here even for three days if your karma

has not been good. That you have been here for such a long time, and are sitting here and putting a question like this, shows that you have done a very great karma. But there are also very bad things, which create disturbance and doubts and agitation and suspicion, and you cannot even sleep. That is due to some other karma that you have done. That has to be overcome by meditation, which has blessed you with good ideas.

Good company—your friends must be good people. You should not talk to anybody who is disturbing. You should keep quiet. Anybody who talks nonsense, you should not have any friendship with that person. If they talk of worldly things, you should not talk to them. Sometimes some difficulty is there. You feel there are many good things in the Ashram, that there are not all bad things in the Ashram. Very healthy forces are here. You must take advantage of it.

You are not meditating. You are hearing something, but the thoughts are not fully entering the heart. You are not stimulated by them. You must be stirred by the thought, stimulated. A jerk will come inside.

Ashramite: Sometimes it comes, but it does not continue.

Swamiji: That is because you are not persisting in it. You must sit for one hour.

A visitor: What is the difference between *naishkarmya* and *akarma*?

Swamiji: When there is no necessity to do anything on account of the fulfilment of everything, you have attained *naishkarmya*. All actions arise on account of the non-fulfilment of certain obligations of the personality. There is something remaining; therefore, you are impelled to do something. When nothing is remaining, everything has been fulfilled, all is complete, the necessity to do anything does not arise, and that state is *naishkarmya*. It is not actions of activity, but actions of the necessity to do anything. The impulse itself is not there.

Visitor: But yet you continue doing?

Swamiji: Nobody will ask you to do anything because that ‘nobody’ doesn’t exist at that time, because the moment that somebody exists, you have not attained fulfilment.

Visitor: What was the need of Lord Krishna himself to keep acting?

Swamiji: What need has the sun to shine? Why is it shining unnecessarily? Why does he not stop shining? Tell me. You ask the sun, “What business have you got? Why are you shining unnecessarily?” What answer will you get from the sun?

Visitor: He has no choice, Swamiji.

Swamiji: Is he subject to somebody? Is he a servant of somebody that you say he has no choice? ‘No choice’ means ‘helpless’. Do you think the sun is shining helplessly?

Visitor: Yes, Swamiji.

Swamiji: Who is commanding him?

Visitor: The Supreme.

Swamiji: There is no Supreme or anything forcing the sun to shine. It is spontaneous behaviour. Lord Krishna is actually a spontaneity; it is not action at all. It is non-action.

Visitor: So even that can be called *naishkarmya*, Swamiji?

Swamiji: No, it is much more than that.

Visitor: What can it be called?

Swamiji: It can be called nothing. It is not action at all. It is an absence of action.

Visitor: So it is not *naishkarmya*?

Swamiji: It is something more than that. No such words can be applied to it. You cannot apply any kind of definition to God.

Another visitor: Is it possible to become a yogi by doing meditation?

Swamiji: You can become a yogi by meditation; there is no other way. There is no other way at all. Only one way is there: meditation. What you want to become, deeply think on it and you will become that. That is called yoga. Do it.

PHYSICS AND YOGA

A visitor: Is there a law of creativity?

Swamiji: That point is the original *bindu*, the origin of creation.

Visitor: Unless that point is there, nothing is there.

Swamiji: That point is inside you. That is the whole point [laughter].

There is a small book which contains only 72 pages—a very wonderfully written book: *The Universe and Dr. Einstein*. It is written by Lincoln Barnett. Everybody should read it. In only 72 pages he has given the essence of the entire modern physics. Finally he comes to the conclusion that the observer cannot observe the universe unless he observes himself first, and this observer is the universe itself, so the observation of the universe is nothing but the universe observing itself. This is a wonderful conclusion of modern physics. It is just like the Upanishad.

Does God see the world or not? Does God see the world, or does He not see it? This answer will be applied to other answers also. God has said, “I am only Myself.” If you say that God sees the world, He is seeing something other than Himself. But if you say He is seeing Himself, there is no such thing as seeing Himself. The idea itself has no meaning. You can see yourself because you have got eyes and a body, but God has no such eyes and body, so He will not see Himself. The answer has no meaning. So every activity becomes a kind of self-contradiction, and it cannot be explained by anybody. Generally, what people do is they bypass that question and make it appear that everything is clear.

Another visitor: I am thinking how to get business for my company so that I can carry on working in my company.

Swamiji: My dear friend, are you not thinking something by which you can become a better person? Let the company be all right. You do hard work for the company, there is no objection, but do you take care of yourself? The difficulty arises because when I say to take care of yourself, you do not know what I mean by this ‘yourself’.

Visitor: Then what is it, Swamiji? I want to know that, how to take care of myself. What is the Self? What is it that I have to take care of?

Swamiji: When you say “I have to do a lot of work”, this word ‘I’ you have used, is it the physical body that is doing a lot of work?

Visitor: Both mental and physical.

Swamiji: Is it the mind that is doing hard work or is it the body that is doing hard work?

Visitor: Both.

Swamiji: If the mind doesn’t work, the body cannot work, so it is the mind only, finally.

Visitor: If I have to see some client, it is the body which is carrying me.

Swamiji: Therefore, you have to feed the mind as much as you feed the body. What kind of food are you giving to the mind? Doing hard work for some company is not a mental food. It is only an appurtenance for your physical existence. So what diet are you giving to your mind?

Visitor: That is why I have come to you for the diet. I want to know what it is that I should do.

Swamiji: You have come just now, and you are going back after lunch, so what can I do for you? Anyway, I will tell you. You have God’s blessing, without which you would not have come and sat here. The fact that you came even for a few minutes and said something, whatever it be, and breathed the air of this place, shows that you have some divine blessing. I don’t want to tell too many things now because you are very busy and you have to go back.

In order to discipline the mind, the material that is required is the mind itself. There are two types of mind: the lower involved mind, and the higher universal mind. The universal mind is the tool that has to be utilised for the sake of controlling and disciplining the lower mind. Actually, this last sentence that I uttered is called yoga practice. There is a universal, all-comprehending mind, and that is operating through you also, without which you will not be

existing here. And also you have got an individualised mind, which is the troublemaker. That has to be disciplined by the application of the power coming from the higher mind, which is the universal mind. This is called the practice of yoga, and there is nothing else that is necessary for you. How it can be done is a matter to think over. Then all the things that you need will come automatically because you need not have to exert individually; the cosmic mind will take care of you.

Visitor: Does it involve reading...

Swamiji: No, it does not involve anything. It involves only thought. Reading, etc., is only a preparatory stage for that. Finally, all education is the way to disciplining the mind in a particular manner. You can read lots of books, but the purpose is the disciplining of the mind. When that is achieved then no reading is necessary, and no doing of anything is necessary afterwards.

Let it take its own time, but anyway I have sown the seed for some thought in your mind which will make you feel that something is ahead still.

Another visitor: Great men all say that they are the littlest, the smallest.

Swamiji: That is because they have got so much bigness that they are losing nothing by saying they are small. They are only expressing a negative type of humility because they are so big. It is like an elephant saying, "I am a small person; I have no strength or anything." It knows very well its strength, and if you go near it you will see what happens.

A person who is not really big, who is a small fry, is unhappy, but a person who has really risen to the top loses nothing by saying he is small. He can crouch before a child, but he knows very well he is a big man. It is a humility born of greatness, not humility born of helplessness. They are two different things. A helpless man also looks very humble, and a great man can be humble, but they are two different things.

Visitor: I want to become a great man.

Swamiji: Do you know the meaning of greatness?

Visitor: Being humble.

Swamiji: No, being humble doesn't mean being great. Humble people are not always great people. You yourself know what you mean by a great person.

Visitor: To overcome anger, fear, etc.

Swamiji: If a person never gets angry at any time, it doesn't mean he is a great man. Something else is there. Some status arises from his own self. An elephant is very great in strength though it is not humble and sitting quiet, not getting angry. These qualities don't apply to it. You are stunned by seeing an elephant. You look at it again and again. It has no other quality except greatness as such. The ocean is very great. People are simply stunned by looking at the ocean. Greatness is a quality by itself, and it does not come due to other qualities.

It is difficult to describe it, just as you cannot describe what light is. Tell me, what is the meaning of light? You cannot say what light is. Light is light only, that's all. What is sweetness? Sweetness is like sweetness only. You cannot compare it with anything else.

Another visitor: What is law? Is it made by man?

Swamiji: How can law control human beings when they themselves made it? So there is something else behind this apparent phenomenon that law is made by man. It is not made by man. It exists by itself as, to remember Plato of Greece, ideas exist prior to the individual who entertains that idea. This is a very important matter to remember, and it is not easy to catch the point. How can ideas exist prior to the person who entertains the ideas? Likewise, law exists prior to the making of it.

THE UNIVERSAL AND THE PARTICULAR

Swamiji: [To a visitor] Bondage is caused by your inability to know that you belong to the Universal Reality, imagining that you are outside the Reality as Mister so-and-so. But you are not that. You are a part of the entire structure of the cosmos, and not merely part in the sense of a mechanical nut and bolt; you are inseparably related to the whole total, so that when you think, you have to think through the thought of the universe only. This you are unable to do. The whole cause of bondage is only this much, that you are unable to think through the cosmic mind. You are thinking only through the individual mind. That is all, briefly speaking. You have to learn the art of thinking through the Universal Mind. That is called yoga, that is called spirituality, that is called religion, that is called anything blessed. The mind should think in terms of the universal inclusive mind, and not think as Mister so-and-so. Do you understand my point? This is called yoga, and if you have understood that, you will not have to understand anything else afterwards.

Swamiji: [To an ashramite] It is foolishness to ignore duty and expect only fruits. It is like asking for the harvest without sowing the seeds in the field. The farmer has to work hard sowing the seeds, taking care of everything. Then the harvest comes. How can you have rights unless you have duties? "I want only the fruits, not the trees." What kind of argument is that?

This is due to a lack of adequate education. It is not the fault of any person; it is the fault of the educational process itself. We have some education, but not total education. It is partial and one-sided, and it ignores all other aspects of life. It is like a doctor who knows very well how the eyes are to be treated, but he doesn't know what to do if you have got pain in the chest, which is a more serious matter. He is a one-sided doctor. If you go to an eye surgeon and say you have got pain in the chest, what will he say?

A visitor: Pluralists quote a mantra from the Rigveda which says Brahman and *jiva* are separate.

Swamiji: The universal and the particular are the two words mentioned there or, to put it more practically, what are represented as Krishna and Arjuna in the chariot in the Mahabharata are, philosophically, the particular and the universal. The particular can be considered as isolated from the universal in the sense that you call yourself different from another person, but there is a universal in which all the particulars are included. Inasmuch as all the particulars are included in the universal, there are no two things. You have used the word ‘particular’—the drop and the ocean, for instance—and if you consider the drop as different from the ocean, then they are two different things. But if you say the drop cannot be different from the ocean—because you say it is the ocean only—then they are not two things. So it is only a question of viewpoint. If you consider one bird as the universal and the other bird as the particular, you can view it from two points of view. Is the drop in the ocean identical with the ocean, or different? You can say anything, either way. Likewise, the universal is present in the particular and the whole is present in the part. The whole is present in the part, but the part is not in the whole. The part is different from the whole; yet, it is not different from the whole because without the whole, the part cannot be there. So it is a kind of viewpoint, and you may say it is from the individual point of view. You never say you are the same man as that person. You are two different persons because you are asserting your individuality. But if you visualise yourself in the universal that is immanent in you as much as it is immanent in other persons also, then you are not different from that person.

Visitor: That means this difference is only in the empirical states.

Swamiji: Certainly so. It is empirical difference, but transcendental unity. It is not only in the Rigveda; it comes in the Mundaka Upanishad also. The whole may be said to be different from the part, or you may say it is not different from the part, either way, according to the viewpoint, because the whole includes the part, so there is only one. There cannot be two different things, and yet because you have used the viewpoint of the part you can say they are different, just as everyone feels he is independent. Otherwise, basically you are a universal being, and in that context you are inseparable from everything else.

Visitor: It is only up to empirical states.

Swamiji: Correct.

Another visitor: If the disciple is separated from the Guru by a long distance...

Swamiji: There is no distance. Distance does not exist in space. If you know this fact, you will never put a question like this. If you think a thing in your mind, even if that thing be in the high heavens, it has touched you immediately. Even if it be many light years away from you physically speaking, the moment you think it you have contacted it, and you will have a response from it. It may be a Guru or even God Himself. What is the distance between you and God? How many kilometres? How will you contact God? If God is endless light years away, how will you contact Him? There is no means of contacting Him. But His presence is not so many light years away. It is an instantaneous presence. If you think God, He is here in one second. So is the Guru, and so is anything in the world. Even if it is a banana—if you are intensely thinking of the banana, it has to come here. Somebody will bring it. You should not think it is a joke. It is a serious matter. If your heart says “I want a banana”, somebody will bring it here. You will not know how it works. It is a satellite action which immediately acts and connects your thought with what you need. There is a cosmic satellite though which you are thinking, so immediately it connects your thought to that destination, wherever that thing is. So there is no problem in contacting anything.

WHAT IS A HOUSEWIFE?

A visitor: I want my daughter to stop studying.

Swamiji: Then what will she do afterwards? What is her fate?

Visitor: I want her to be a housewife.

Swamiji: For that she need not study. Anybody can become a housewife. Then she need not go to school at all.

Visitor: But she is insisting that she graduate.

Swamiji: But she is not utilising that knowledge when she becomes a housewife. A housewife is the lowest thing that you can think of in life, and you are just identifying her as a housewife, which is a very unfortunate definition. But she is something else. There cannot be a worse word than 'housewife'. It simply means a kind of attendant to keep the house in order. That is the definition of a wife: "You have to keep the house in order, and for that you need not study further."

Visitor: But Swamiji, it is a very difficult thing to keep the house in order.

Swamiji: You want a good painter and carpenter and an architect, and he keeps everything in order. It is like a judge keeping two parties in a court in order. Two contending parties are there; you keep them in order by your operations. You don't come into clash with them.

The 'house' is also a word that has to be explained. What do you mean by 'the house'? A building of brick and mortar is called a house, isn't it? You have to keep it in order. She is not the wife of a building, so why do you say 'housewife'? Is it the building that you mean?

Visitor: That is the language, Swamiji.

Swamiji: But anyway, the idea is there in your mind. Every word has to be explained etymologically. Does it mean a building that has to be kept neat and clean? It is a concept. A house is a concept; it doesn't exist physically, really speaking. The concept has to be kept in order. It is an organisation of ideas, and she is an idea. She is not a person. She is neither a man nor a woman. She is an idea that

is sitting here, and that has to be set in tune with other ideas which jointly operate and call themselves a family. So a family is nothing but an organisation of ideas, thoughts, feelings, aspirations. It is the mind actually that is operating. The physical body is not the person.

It is very difficult to understand this concept. A philosophical root is there even in the notion of a family. We are neither men nor women. We are ideas only. This is what Plato has cried with force in so many volumes, saying that ideas are the ultimate reality. You exist for ideas only, and thoughts and feelings. There is nothing else existing in the world. If ideas do not cooperate, human beings do not exit. They cease to exist at that moment.

A little bit of philosophy is not bad, so that we may know what is behind our ordinary thoughts. Do you understand what I am saying?

Visitor: [Does not reply.]

Swamiji: He doesn't understand what I said. What to do? Anyway, God bless you. If God blesses you, everything will be all right.

You have got very intelligent daughters, and you want to convert them into instruments like a fountain pen, to be used by somebody. Now they are totally independent intellectuals, and suddenly they should be converted into fountain pens or some nut and bolt, or a screwdriver or something. That is the whole concept of the wrongly understood family life. One must understand, first of all, what is the meaning of the family. Nobody knows what it is, and nobody can know it easily because that type of education is not imparted in our universities. Useless knowledge is given, and a useless outcome also follows from that useless education, and the person is as ignorant after coming out of the university as he or she was before going in. As far as ignorance is concerned, they are identical before and after. In the middle there was a drama; it played, and it brought out nothing. They cannot answer this question because they have not been educated in that line of thinking. It is abstract. They know concrete things, but abstract things they don't know.

There are subtle abstract forces working within us, and they are the realities which control us. What you see with the eyes are not the realities. They are neither your daughters, nor anybody's. They are totally independent entities, actually speaking. But you are thinking

they are yours. That idea is not correct. They have come from somewhere due to their own karmas, and they will pass through that.

Visitor: In that area I would like to decipher.

Swamiji: They do not belong to you. Actually, nobody can belong to somebody else. A human being is not a property. That is a very strange concept. A human being cannot become a property of another human being.

Visitor: Maybe my ego is working. I can't say.

Swamiji: No, no ego can work there. A human being cannot be called a property of some other human being. Because all are human beings equally, how is one subservient to the other? How is it possible?

Visitor: In very concrete terms, what should I do?

Swamiji: This is a highly subtle matter. You convert a human being into a tool of another human being? Is it possible? Each human being is as important as another. They have got a soul of their own, and cannot merge with another person's soul, nor can it serve another soul. It has its own destination. She will reach God independently, not with the help of an instrument or a house. A house will not go with her. She independently will go to God, irrespective of all the so-called social associations which seem to be ruling her life.

This is a very high concept of educational philosophy which is completely obliterated from the minds of even the professors, let alone the students. They are told to mug up something and so they have mugged up, and they say they have got knowledge. But the secret behind it, they do not know. Why they have gone to college, God knows; and now what is happening to them, that also nobody knows. What happens the next day? What is the future? After ten years, fifteen years, what happens? You must know even now what your future will be after ten years, to some extent at least. Though it is not entirely in your hands, you must at least know what you would like it to be. If even that knowledge is not there, then you are living a humdrum, routine life. One day passes; let it pass. Tomorrow another day passes; let it pass. But you have no aspiration and no concept of the interlude.

Though you don't know what will happen tomorrow, at least you must have some idea as to what it would be like, or what you would like it to be. That itself could be a guideline for you: "I would like tomorrow to be like this." And perhaps it will be like that because of your intense determination. Otherwise, you think only today, just now, and the next moment you don't know anything.

This is the art of thinking in terms of causes and effects. All these lives that we are living is a bundle of effects. The causes thereof are completely thrown out of our minds. So we live like puppets on strings pulled by somebody, and nobody knows who that somebody is.

Visitor: Then Swamiji, what is the answer?

Swamiji: Only a judge knows. When two parties come, how will you find out who the right man is? You only know that.

Visitor: Swamiji, that decision is for reasons.

Swamiji: It requires years and years of education in thinking rightly.

Visitor: But what is the answer that can answer all the questions?

Swamiji: That is the answer. You must know what are the ultimate causes that govern life. If you know the ultimate causes, you will know everything.

Visitor: That is Self-realisation.

Swamiji: I don't want to use any word because these words do not help us finally. There is something which must be understood. You may call it Self or non-Self or anything; what does it matter? It is necessary to know what that thing is that controls you. Don't think that you are independently acting. Next moment, another thing will come.

But your thoughts have great power. That is important, and they will rule your destiny to some extent; but if you cannot even think properly, then it is a great tragedy. "Somebody is controlling me. I am a servant of somebody." If always you think like that, that is very unfortunate. I belong to somebody. That person belongs to somebody else, and that somebody belongs to somebody else, so that nobody is by herself or himself. Everybody belongs to somebody else only,

so there is no owner of anything. Only the property is there, which is hanging somewhere. It looks like that.

DUTY TOWARDS THE WORLD

An ashramite: What happens to a person who has realised the Absolute? What is his duty towards the world?

Swamiji: What is his duty towards the world? His duty towards himself is his duty towards the world, because he and the world are not two different things. What is the duty of God towards the world?

A person who has realised the Absolute will not be separate from God, and therefore his duty will be the same as the duty of God Himself. If you say God has a duty towards the world, then he also has a duty. But if you say God has no duty, then nobody has a duty. Duty is a concept of separateness, and if the separateness persists, you will never be able to bridge that gulf between the two things. Always they will be two only.

There must be some kind of underlying unity between the performer and the aim to which it is directed; otherwise, no achievement is possible. Totally dissimilar things cannot come in contact with each other. That is why mere social work does not succeed. Only spiritual activity will work; and what is spiritual activity? It is that activity which anyone performs with the vision that is described in the eleventh chapter of the Bhagavadgita. At that time, what will you do? If you think in the same way as that being which is revealed in the eleventh chapter of the Bhagavadgita, what will you do at that time? “What is your duty?” you asked me. Then your question itself ceases. When the question ceases, the answer also ceases.

The mortal mind cannot think like this. The mortal mind thinks only mortal ideas. It can only think in terms of give and take, in terms of subject-object, in terms of society, in terms of politics. It cannot think in terms of Pure Being, prior to the manifestation of the universe. The mind is incapable of thinking like that. And meditation or spirituality, whatever you call it, is nothing but the attempt to think in terms of that existence which must have been there even prior to the manifestation of the universe. God must have been existing prior to the creation of the universe, isn't it? But where was He existing?

Ashramite: Everywhere.

Swamiji: There is no question of everywhere because there was no space, so the idea that God is everywhere is also not correct. See the difficulty in thinking. The mind is unfit to think such things. Time cannot think of eternity. Qualitatively, they are two different things. We are bound in time; we are made up of time. Every cell of our body is made up of the time process. Therefore, it is very difficult to think of that which is purely eternal, and is not everywhere. The question does not arise. It is an indivisibility of Pure Consciousness, Existence as such—not existence of something, but Existence as such.

You asked me what is the duty. Here every duty is subsumed. *Sarvadharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja* (B.G. 18.66) means the Absolute is telling you to renounce all relative categorical imperatives and absorb yourself in that one duty: that which is Pure Being as such. That is the real meaning of that verse of the Bhagavadgita. It is the Absolute speaking to the individual, the eternal speaking to the relative.

Ashramite: When a person gives talks on the Gita or the Upanishad...

Swamiji: Talking is different from actual feeling in your mind. Your talking will depend on your audience. You can talk to children also. You go to the primary school, high school and college, and you speak whatever is necessary for them according to their status, but I am talking of the fact as such for your own personal benefit. Do you want salvation, or do you only want to give talks?

Ashramite: Salvation is more important.

Swamiji: And how will you get salvation?

Ashramite: Transcending above this body, mind, intellect, consciousness, and merging in that All.

Swamiji: You have to think as the Absolute would think, that's all. This is the whole philosophy in one sentence: You have to think as the Absolute thinks. Can you adjust your mind to that level of being? It is a total thought.

Ashramite: That means we have to kick the mind and intellect to that level of consciousness.

Swamiji: You place yourself in the position of the Absolute, and then you will know what to do. You needn't ask anybody what to do. You will burst with joy to think like this, isn't it?

Ashramite: Yes, Swamiji.

Swamiji: You would not like to speak to anybody afterwards. You will feel that you are filled up, that everything has filled you, and you will not open your mouth afterwards. All speaking will cease in the joy of completeness that you feel within yourself.

All activity is a manifestation of the finitude of individuality, and the more is the finitude felt by you, the greater is the desire to do work, and so that is not a great virtue, finally speaking. That is why Sankaracharya is against action. He was not a foolish person. You must understand that existence is not action. The whole point is that. Existence does not act. Action emanates from existence. You exist, and you work, but you don't exist for the sake of work. Existence is a value by itself. Are you identical with your work, or are you different from the work?

Ashramite: Different from the work.

Swamiji: Then what is more important? Is your existence more important, or the work that you do?

Ashramite: Existence.

Swamiji: Then that's the whole thing.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

A visitor: I want to learn meditation.

Swamiji: What made you think meditation is necessary?

Visitor: It is a way to relax.

Swamiji: You have got tension? What kind of tension have you got?

Visitor: I don't know.

Swamiji: You are not feeling happy? Is it so? You are not feeling happy inside? You have got a disturbance? Unless you find out the cause of your inner difficulties and do something about them, you cannot do meditation. There are practical approaches to practical problems. You cannot suddenly go to transcendental concepts of meditation when your feelings and emotions are not well trained.

Tension arises due to some desires which are not fulfilled. If you have any desires which you are unable to fulfil, then tension arises. You think over this matter, whether you have any wishes or desires which you are not able to fulfil. If any desire is there, it can cause tension.

Visitor: I have many.

Swamiji: If you cannot fulfil them, why do you entertain them? Only those desires which can be fulfilled are valid. If they cannot be fulfilled for any reason whatsoever, they should be considered as invalid. So it is a contradiction. Actually, you suffer from a contradiction in thinking. I don't want to go into all these questions because you have just come and you are going back.

Anyway, you can meditate. Generally, by 'meditation' we mean meditation on the Supreme Absolute Creator of the universe. That is called meditation. In short, it is meditation on God Almighty. Do you understand what I am saying? How do you conceive this great Creator of the universe, this master Plan-maker of the cosmos? What is your concept in your mind?

Visitor: [Does not reply]

Swamiji: Do you believe that there is a God who created this world?

Visitor: I am not sure.

Swamiji: Do you know that the world was created by somebody? Somebody must have created it. That is called God. So you have to believe that God exists. If you believe the world has a creator, then you have already accepted that there is God. Can you conceive this great majestic Being who is supposed to be the creator of this universe? Can you conceive it in your mind? It is an all-pervading presence. The universe that is created is so large that the creator must be as large as the universe itself. So can you imagine that vastness of creation and the tremendous immensity of God's existence? If you think this, go on thinking it, and feel that you are going to be blessed by that. It is an initial step in meditation. But if you have got any problems, you have to pay attention to them.

Another visitor: When I go back to my country and take up my duties, I do not feel as rewarded inside as I do here. I am thinking of leaving my job.

Swamiji: Then what will you do?

Visitor: Swamiji, as I have heard from you many times, the goal of life is Self-realisation.

Swamiji: How can you leave the job and get Self-realisation?

Visitor: I have some savings.

Swamiji: Are the savings enough for your lifetime?

Visitor: No, Swamiji, they are not.

Swamiji: Then what?

Visitor: Then one finds what one can and gets on as best one can. But the concern is that life is so short.

Swamiji: You work for another one year and amass some more money so that it may stand you in good stead. Too little money will keep you a little disturbed in the mind because you will not know what will happen to you in the future. Insecurity of life is also a disturbance in your spiritual practice. Unless you are well founded and secure in society, meditation is not possible. It will disturb your mind that the future is uncertain. The thought of an uncertain future

will disturb you even in your attempt at Self-realisation. Unless you are perfectly secure in life, this cannot be taken up. For that, you have to see you have done what is proper. A person who is insecure in any way cannot do meditation. You have to choose this path very carefully after considering all the pros and cons. An undecided future itself will disturb your mind, which will not allow you to meditate. If you are perfectly all right and have no trouble, and are sufficiently strong in every way so that you have no difficulty about security and so on, if you are so sure, then go ahead. But if it is not so, then think thrice before doing anything.

Visitor: Swamiji, you may have answered my next question, which is a question for the far future: How does one begin to move from a householder life to a life of renunciation?

Swamiji: Are you a householder?

Visitor: I don't have a family but I live the life of a householder. I have a job, I have worldly duties, so I am not a sadhu.

Swamiji: What do you mean by 'householder'?

Visitor: I am a householder to the extent that I am not a renunciate. I work in the world, I earn a salary, I spend the money that I earn, so I am not a renunciate.

Swamiji: 'Householder' does not mean that, because if you call work as a household, it can be renounced in one day. You can stop the work completely. A householder is one who is caught up in some commitments. The work that you voluntarily do is not a commitment, but if it is something imposed on you, you may call it a commitment. You are voluntarily doing the work for your own benefit; that cannot be called a household because you can give it up any day. The household is a permanent commitment; for a lifetime you will be thinking of the household only. But you are not like that, so you cannot call yourself a householder.

Visitor: Swamiji, I have a question for the future. You have resolved the first part of the question. Thank you. The second part is, I don't know if I can get back here or if I will have communication with you.

Swamiji: Why should you get back here? What is the purpose?

Visitor: Swamiji, I've benefitted here a thousand times more than I could benefit in my own country. I don't have satsang of mahatmas in my country. It makes all the difference in the world. To have darshan, to have satsang here is a tremendous difference. My question has to do with the manner in which one carries out a life of renunciation in a Western country in which that tradition is not established.

Swamiji: If you don't talk to anybody and you mind your business, you are a renunciate even in a Western country. Why do you talk to people unless you have got to do something with them? If you don't talk to any person and you keep quiet in your house, then you are a renunciate only. That which you are doing here, you do there also. In what way are you not a renunciate in Western countries, provided you do not interfere with people and don't have any dealings with them? Then how do you say you are not a renunciate? It doesn't mean that only Eastern people are renunciates. It has no such connotation. It is the way in which you conduct yourself. Do you think that only Eastern people go to God and Westerners will not go? It is a wrong notion. It is only an adjustment of mind and a way of living. If you entangle yourself with people, that is a different matter, but why should you? If you are well enough and everything is okay for you...

Visitor: Swamiji, do you not recommend repeated trips to this place even for a short stay if that's possible, because my perception is I benefit so much? But I will yield to your higher wisdom on that. I perceive myself as benefitting when I come here, even if it's for a short stay.

Swamiji: You have to chalk out your entire plan of life properly. Carefully chalk out a plan of life.

REPUTATION

A visitor: This ashram has the highest reputation in the world.

Swamiji: The greater is the principle of God immanent in a person or an institution, the greater is the reputation of that person or institution. Actually, the reputation goes to God only. The whole world is a manifestation of His presence, including our own selves. So if there is anything worthwhile anywhere, it is the presence of that Supreme Being that immanently pervades every nook and corner of creation, even a sand particle. If we have any value, if anybody has any worth, it is the quantum of the presence of this Divinity in that person. Minus that, nothing has any value, so it amounts to saying that only God has value and there is nothing else that can have value. If anything else seems to have any value, it is because God is present there.

It is difficult to conceive this rather unusual way of thinking. Human beings cannot think like that because everyone is independent of the other. Each one is important independently, by himself or herself. The 'I' and 'you' and 'he' and 'she' and 'it' are words we are using too many times. Actually, there is no such thing as 'he', 'she', 'it', and so on. They are all nomenclatures created for the convenience of language and deciphering the individuality. With this mess of thinking we can get on nicely in this world, but it will not cut ice with God. And one day or the other the person has to leave this world.

It is necessary to be cautious. What happens to a person when he leaves this world? All the glory, all name, fame, everything goes in one second. Then what happens to all the good work that a person has done? Is it null and void? If it is not null and void, how does it follow that person? The body cannot carry it. Who goes, and what is the value that one can carry to the other realm? Not money, not name and fame, not power, not authority, not the importance of leadership—nothing will follow. What follows? The extent to which we have made God our own, that consciousness will follow us. In other words, the element of God will follow us. To the extent we have made Him our own, to that extent He will guard us in all the

levels of creation. But if we have asserted ourselves too much and ignored the presence of That which has given value to us, then what will happen?

These are quintessential words regarding the teaching of Swami Sivananda himself. He had a motto: When you think and speak and act, God must be placed first. You cannot disregard Him in your activities. After that you look at the world; the world comes next to God. Lastly you come. This is also true from the point of the evolutionary process. God existed first, the world came next, and we came afterwards. The effect cannot take prerogative over the cause. The cause is more important than the effect. So all things we see here, whatever it is, is an effect, and prior to that was the creation of God: the five elements. Prior to that was God Himself. The cause is immanent in the effect, and the effect has no value minus the cause.

If we think along these lines, a thrill will automatically arise from our person that we are not helpless people, we are not forlorn, we are not without any guide or help. At every moment help comes to us. It has to come because God is present everywhere. But we cannot think like that because of the affirmative ego, we may say. How much importance do we give to our own selves? Let each one think about it: Am I an important person? Why am I important? What makes a person important? It is a kind of confused thought. It is also a hobgoblin in the head. No person can be called important. The importance is due to the entry of something which is important, of which one has no knowledge. It is a very tragic condition of humanity. Everywhere there is suffering. In the whole history of creation and the history of humanity you will find that there is turmoil, ups and downs, wars, conflicts, and newer and newer ideas, only to be supplanted by further ideas. Where does anything lead, finally? Where is the culmination of human history? Where does it lead? Nobody knows this.

Spirituality is a difficult concept. It cannot enter the brain of an ordinary mortal. You can have an external ritualistic demonstration of what you consider religion and spirituality, but spirituality is not what one does. It is what one is. The importance of God is in existence, not in activities. His existence itself is activity, like the sun shining in the sky. We cannot say the sun is not doing any work,

and yet he does no work. The very existence itself is tremendous activity, which makes everyone run about. What is the importance of the sun in the sky? Nobody has time to think of that. We think we are getting on scot-free, that the sun may be there or may not be there, what does it matter? Let it not come for three days, and you will see what will happen to the important people in the world. Likewise is God. He is like the supreme sun whose very being itself is action, and if we can accept this principle that our being itself is action, then our very thought is the greatest of activities, and our very feeling is service. If we identify ourselves with this cosmic structure, we have done the greatest service to humanity because the mind is stronger than the hands and feet of a person.

This is a very lofty ideal that everybody has to keep in front of himself or herself, and there is no use imagining that all things are well, because any at moment the last breath will be taken. It can be tomorrow. The last moment isn't necessarily after sixty years. It can be after sixty minutes. And how should one conduct oneself at that moment? Suppose the end comes after sixty minutes; now, at this moment, what is the person to do? Will he read books at that time? Will he speak? Will he give lectures? He has nothing to do afterwards. The world is of no concern to him because he is living only for sixty minutes more. So what is his duty at that time? Can anybody conceive this? At that moment, what is the duty? No organisation, no books, no literature, no friends, no disciple, no Guru—nobody will come there. The whole thing goes like an object in dream. Then something comes. What that something is, is the duty of a person to know. It requires initiation, the company of a great Master who knows the art of living based on the science of Being. This is what we have learned from Swami Sivananda.

[Next day]

Swamiji: I was told that The Divine Life Society has a great reputation. I collected my thoughts and wanted to say something about this importance of the reputation or worthwhileness of anything: where does it lie, and how anyone becomes important at all.

The point that I dilated upon was that reputation, worthwhileness, glory, power, eminence, etc., cannot be considered as characteristics of mortal human individuality because human nature, as it is

empirically viewed, is just a skeleton, flesh and bone, like a scaffolding, which is necessary and important of course, but by itself it has no intrinsic value. People who generally feel that they are important, that they have got eminence of some sort, perhaps are missing the essential issue behind this phenomenon of reputation, importance, glory or greatness.

Nothing in the world can be called great or important because there cannot be several important things in the world. If that had been the case, there would be a conflict between and among several important centres. All the value that we associate with anyone or anything in this world, if at all that value is to be our permanent nature, has to be credited to that which is really permanent. Impermanent, passing phenomenon of the physical frame of the human individual cannot be credited with permanent value. Do we really want a worthwhileness or value which is of a permanent nature, or would we be satisfied with an effervescent importance, a passing show of greatness?

There is a contradiction between the brittleness of human individuality, the fickleness of life and the mortality of all things seeping into the vitals of everyone in creation, and the search for that which is of permanent value. These two ideas do not seem to go together. But the contradiction is solved if we go deeper into this quest for a permanent value and the frail nature of human individuality. How can frailty seek eternity? And it is seen that we do seek such a thing, which means to say, we are in heaven as well as on Earth at the same time. Our originals, which are usually called archetypes, the real souls of our own selves, are not in this world.

We are restless and dissatisfied with everything in the world. The cause of this restlessness is generally attributed to political upheaval and social evil, but that is not the real cause. The restlessness and dissatisfaction that is inherent in human nature is to be attributed to the call from the higher realms of being, to which we really belong. Our higher self is summoning us: "Come on. You are here." We ourselves are calling ourselves, as it were, from an abode where we are actually residing and existing even at this moment, which we are unable to realise because of a frail, affirmative sense called ego, clinging to this framework of physicality, and imagining that

our sorrows are man-made. They are not made by anyone. They are circumstantial consequences following from a conflict between our higher nature and our lower nature, our clinging to the Earth on the one hand and our aspiring for eternity on the other. Philosophers are likely to designate this phenomenon as a clash between the noumenon and the phenomenon.

It is difficult to comprehend what this world is made of, how we are located here, and what the station and our duty in this phenomenon of the world is. If we know where we are actually located, the circumstances under which we are living, what our station is, actually speaking, we would also know what our duty is. But what is the station, actually? We may say the station is Rishikesh, or it is India, or America, or England, but this is not the station. Our real station is where we are firmly rooted, truly speaking, because we have come from somewhere as pilgrims in the sojourn of this evolutionary process, and to that original source from where we came, we have to return.

The call to return is the cause of the restlessness of life. In some way, it is the call of the higher self. It is the summons issued to the lower self, as the Bhagavadgita would put it. *Uddhared ātmanātmānaṁ nātmanānam avasādayet, ātmaiva hyātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ* (B.G. 6.5): We are our own friends and we are our own enemies. Whenever our lower, physical selfhood wages a war with our higher self, our higher self, which we actually are in the purest sense of the term, will give a kick to the lower self, and the nemesis of that kick will be the sorrow of life.

We require enlightenment. We do not require money, power, authority, respect. Nothing of the kind. These so-called requirements of human life are like a wisp of wind, like a piece of straw. They have no meaning, because whatever meaning we see anywhere in the world is due to the immanence of that which is of permanent value. If there is anything worthwhile in this world, even if there is something which can be called really existing, it is due to its borrowing true existence from somewhere else. Otherwise, nothing exists, really speaking. Everything is passing. How could that which is passing really have the feeling that it is existing?

The passing phenomenon is also hiddenly pervaded by a thing that does not pass away, so we feel that we are existing even in the midst of a flow, a succession of evolutionary process. Even in the process of dying, we feel that we would like to live. Even a dying man would like to live, though he knows that death is immanent. That desire to live in spite of the knowledge that no one can live forever is due to the call of God, the eternal existence, life perpetual, our own higher self, which we have disregarded because of our being wedded to sense perceptions and seeking pleasures which are not existing at all. We are not merely effervescent; we are non-existent. We are a will-o'-the-wisp, a phantasmagoria. Awakening to this fact may be regarded as true spiritual education, or true education as such. We require institutions of this kind to train persons in the art of thinking in this manner for their own benefit as well as for the benefit of the world as a whole. We require true education, true enlightenment.

Towards this end, great Masters of teaching spiritual life are the real values of life—Avataras, saints and sages, and institutions of this kind. They are the inheritors of eternal values, the propagators of these values to mankind, working vigorously to awaken mankind from the slumber of ignorance of the Eternal Truth.

SERVICE TO PEOPLE

Visitor: Is it important to worry about acting sane? Is that a valid consideration or... Many saints go crazy in their sadhana.

Swamiji: It does not follow that because of your experience of the unity of things you will be a misfit in society. There is no contradiction between your being a good citizen in society and also a spiritually evolved person. As a matter of fact, the more you are established in this unity experience, the more you look normal to people. Nobody will know that you have got that experience, unless you have some reason to believe that the experience contradicts human nature. It need not do that.

Maybe in an initial stage of that experience if the emotion is heavily charged, some kind of behaviour may be there in the person which may not look normal to human society. But when you are mature, that contradiction or disparity will vanish automatically. A spiritual hero is not an unnatural person; they are very natural.

Another visitor: I believe that by doing good deeds we can reach God.

Swamiji: 'Good deeds' means the service of people?

Visitor: Yes.

Swamiji: Do you mean to say that God can be reached by the service of people?

Visitor: Yes.

Swamiji: Suppose you are not in a position to serve people due to some physical disabilities. Then you cannot reach God because you are not able to do service?

Visitor: No, there are other ways also. By knowledge, etc.

Swamiji: So the idea that service of people is the way to moksha is ruled out by the fact that this idea will prevent people from attaining moksha when they are physically unable to do service. Therefore, that definition may not be correct. It doesn't mean that everybody can do service. If you have some facility you can do service, but

there are some people who are lovers of God but they cannot do service because of their lack of facilities. So that will debar socially incapacitated people from reaching God.

Visitor: Then what do you suggest for such people?

Swamiji: What is your desire for God? Why do you want Him?

Visitor: Everybody in a way wants this.

Swamiji: What is the reason for wanting it? You are feeling you will get some great benefit?

Visitor: Peace, tranquillity.

Swamiji: You feel you will get some tranquillity after reaching God?

Visitor: That's what I think.

Swamiji: According to you, where is God at this moment?

Visitor: In everybody.

Swamiji: In everybody. That means to say, everywhere.

Visitor: Everywhere.

Swamiji: Can you conceive something in your mind which is everywhere? Is it possible to contain in your mind the idea of being everywhere? Everything must all be in your mind at once, because it is all things. Is it possible to think like that? Simultaneously you have to think everything, because it is everywhere. This is called meditation, and this is the way to God. God does not want anything from you except your thinking Him and not forgetting Him. Service or no service, it is immaterial because when you serve Him you have also served others automatically. When you serve the root of a tree, you have served the branches also at the same time. So you need not worry. God is not so cheap. Your heart has to get concentrated in that thing which you described as all-pervading.

Now, you say it is difficult to conceive it. That requires a little bit of practice, and nothing else is necessary for that. No ritual, no books, no reading, nothing is necessary. This requires only your feeling for Him and your ability to conceive the presence of God everywhere. As you say, it is a hard thing. The mind is not

accustomed to think like that. But if you can succeed in maintaining this consciousness that God is all things, then your heart will be purified at once. Instantaneous purification will take place.

Visitor: In meditation, what should be our thinking, our aim of...

Swamiji: You don't think anything except what you said just now. It is something which is everywhere.

Visitor: But it is all an objective thing.

Swamiji: It is not objective. If it is objective, then it is not everywhere.

Visitor: Sorry, I meant subjective.

Swamiji: It is not subjective. If it is subjective, it is not everywhere; it is only in one place. If it is objective, it is also not everywhere. When you say everywhere, the subject and object have vanished completely. By eliminating subjectivity, eliminating objectivity, you are trying to raise your mind to a transcendent universality. That exercise must be continued. That is meditation, that is yoga, and there is no need for anything else. That is enough for everybody. Do you understand the point? There is no other way.

Another visitor: I am a humble soul beginning the journey. I don't know how long or short it will be. Right now all I've been doing is meditating.

Swamiji: Is your meditation all right?

Visitor: My meditation is going wonderfully, though I find that sometimes I create it as a chore for myself because I have so many things in my life—school, family and friends. I'll say, "Okay, I will meditate," and then if I don't have time for that meditation...

Swamiji: You don't have time for meditation?

Visitor: Well, I say I want time for meditation, and then when I don't meditate I get angry with myself.

Swamiji: You have no time for meditation; that's what you are saying? You have no time?

Visitor: Well, I have time. Time is what I make it but I find myself putting off meditation although it seems to me the most important thing.

Swamiji: It is a little inconvenient for you?

Visitor: Yes. And there are so many other things going on in my material life.

Swamiji: The question is the same as the one that concerns you. Do you know the value of meditation?

Visitor: I'm learning about it.

Swamiji: Are you convinced of its supreme value?

Visitor: Yes.

Swamiji: Then how is it that you cannot find time for that?

Visitor: I find that somehow I'm distracted.

Swamiji: Distracted by that which is more important than meditation?

Visitor: Distracted by other people and things around me.

Swamiji: The other people are somehow or other inadvertently accepted as more important than meditation; otherwise, the attraction is not possible. For some reason, the other people are more important than meditation. The mind cannot accommodate itself with the idea that what you are thinking in your mind in meditation is of any utility finally, because the utility is somewhere else, in the people outside in the world. The mind is not able to accommodate itself to that point because sometimes there is a serious doubt in the mind that you are meditating in an abstract manner, whereas the world is more concretely real. You cannot say the thought in your mind in meditation is as concrete as a brick or a human being.

Actually, it is a foolish doubt. The mind is as solid as the world itself. It is as hard as a rock, and it is more real than the world. You can analyse philosophically or by your conviction the actual fact that the mind is not a phenomenon, an exudation from the body, and the body is more real. Don't you feel that the body is more real than the mind? You think the mind is only a theory, that it is only a way of thinking, but the world is not a thought. The whole point

is that. You cannot agree that the world is a thought. You think the world is more real than thought, and if you identify meditation with thought, it becomes less important than the world. This is the whole psychological contradiction.

A very difficult situation this is, and you have to have great satsanga for that. Satsanga is company of great people. Your studies will not help you in this matter. You are told right from the beginning that the world is more real than thinking, that thought is less important than the actual concrete reality of the world. This is what you are studying in the schools and colleges. This is what you are seeing with your eyes. So how will you suddenly turn the cart around and think that the mind is more important than the world? Easily you cannot accept it, though it is a fact. Unless the mind is more important than the whole world, meditation is not possible; otherwise, it will be a mere imagination and it will not work at all.

Meditation is not imagination. It is a concrete thing, more solid than the whole rocky world. You cannot understand this unless you have the company of great people. That is called satsanga.

Visitor: So to resolve this struggle between what I have always been taught is real, and what now I am learning is real—is satsanga the key to that? Is the key to resolving this struggle satsanga?

Swamiji: There is nothing equal to satsanga. Independently one cannot go because the world will be too much for you. You cannot face it, and to develop an inner strength by which you can face the whole world is not an easy job. That requires the grace of God, I may say, or the company of great Masters whose presence will be an encouragement for you.

Visitor: So I should seek those people?

Swamiji: That is very important. Otherwise, you will drift somewhere and you will not know where you are moving.

PRANA AND HEALING

A visitor: I am a healer. When somebody comes to me with a stiff neck or a back that's hurting, instead of adjusting them partially like a chiropractor would do, I simply follow their breath and then the body self-corrects.

Swamiji: What do you feel at that time?

Visitor: I feel an expansion, a widening and a narrowing, and at the same time a moving up and down.

Swamiji: When a patient comes to you, what do you feel at that time?

Visitor: I feel whatever is happening. Everyone has this primary rhythm; it's whether it is fully amplified, or whether it is moving through. It's called subtle osteopathic work.

Swamiji: So what is your question?

Visitor: I think what is happening is that I'm working with the prana, even though they don't call it that. They call it the primary breath, but I think it's the same as the prana. So there is the body, and the prana is the next subtle thing, and then the mind. Is that correct? Therefore, the mind would be influencing the prana. So my technique, what I do, is I simply follow what's happening there without trying to do anything, and just be in pure awareness, just try to be with whatever is happening, and then hopefully the plan is that things will just self-correct. What happens is it lends energy to the body. The prana goes back and just rests, instead of being drawn outward by the mind. The question is: Is the prana affected by the mind?

Swamiji: Prana moves according to the dictates of the mind. Whatever the mind thinks, that the prana will do. The breath moves in the direction that is indicated by the thought process. If you are in Rishikesh and you deeply think of a person in America, your prana will travel to that place because of your concentration on that person who is far away. Prana is all-pervading. It is not in one place. You are only communicating your prana with that cosmic prana, so it catches like a radio wave. It is exactly like a radio wave. It acts. You

are only communicating your individual prana to the cosmic prana, which transmits your thoughts. It can spot where the other person is, and it gets retransformed into the individual prana of that person. You are actually coming in contact with the cosmic mind at the time of your contemplation on somebody else through distant space.

Visitor: What would be the best thing to hold in mind to let the prana sense the mind is affecting it that much?

Swamiji: The mind adjusts itself to the structure of the circumstance which you want to prevail at that particular moment.

Visitor: Which would be perfect health.

Swamiji: Okay, then it will work that also.

Visitor: But to get more specific than that, is that a good idea, or just to hold in general everything operating perfectly?

Swamiji: Ill health is an unsystematic operation of the system, and your mind, if it adjusts itself to a systematic, symmetrical pattern of thought, the prana also will work symmetrically; either it will be working in you, or you can transfer it to somebody else if you are thinking of the other person.

Visitor: Specifically, Swamiji?

Swamiji: Specifically in the sense of if you are not doing it for somebody's sake but only for your own health. You yourself adjust your mind in a systematic manner, in a very perfected, harmonious arrangement of your ideas; then it will bring strength to your person. But if you are thinking of another person, then you will superimpose that personality on your personality. You become that person at that time, and then it works. You cease to be whatever you are; you become that person, and so you think through the personality of that person. Then your mind works through that person, and your prana operates through that prana, and it is as good as if you are thinking that person. So it works because you have identified yourself with that person.

Visitor: Identify myself with the highest quality of that person?

Swamiji: Whatever quality you are wanting to think. You can think any quality.

Visitor: Perfection?

Swamiji: Okay, then it will be perfection. You can even make a person run away from you if you think in that manner. Intensely you think this person should leave this place. Like that if you go on thinking, that person will leave this place. And if you say that person should be always with you, they will be with you. And if you say that person is you only, then they will become you only. You will start thinking like that person, for whatever purpose.

What is your aim behind this?

Visitor: The aim is to help people get better.

Swamiji: So you are doing some practice for social welfare?

Visitor: No. I have a private practice in healing, and people come with their aches and pains and I get rid of them. But a lot of it is that I don't know what I'm doing, though it works.

Swamiji: If you have been successful in this practice, and it has not done you any harm, and everything is going on well, you can continue.

Visitor: And I've been teaching it also. I travel all around teaching this.

Swamiji: You teach the same technique as you are practising?

Visitor: Yes. I just teach what I do, but what I know is so limited.

Swamiji: Do you sometimes feel any harmful effect coming upon you by this practice?

Visitor: In general, no. I usually feel much better. I usually feel energised.

Swamiji: Do you feel depressed because of the introduction of the depression of the other person?

Visitor: Generally, no. Only occasionally I have been affected by other people, yes, and that's a barometer for me. That's when I know I'm not God-centred enough.

Swamiji: Because you are concentrating on the sickness of a person, do you also feel a little disturbed by that?

Visitor: I try to never ever focus on the condition. I try to focus only on God and the health and wellness of the person. I am trying to never look at anything of the illness of the person. Occasionally someone affects me, very occasionally. Then if that person comes to me again, I start playing music or listen to Swamiji's lectures early in the morning and get myself stronger, and then it doesn't affect me.

Swamiji: All right. You can go on with it. This is a very ticklish practice. There are two ways of thinking an object. You think the object as you see it with your eyes or feel it with your emotions. That is one way of thinking. You see it in the same way as it appears to your eyes, and feel it as you would like to feel its presence. But there is another way of thinking an object, from a transcendental point of view. You raise your position to the cosmic state, the cosmic level, and you are not sitting in America or Rishikesh, or any place. You are in the centre of the cosmos and from there, the centre of the universe, you are looking at the object, so it will assume a different connotation to you from that point of view than when you see that object through your sense organs, like an ordinary person sees somebody. Do you understand the difference? And if you think of anything from the centre of the cosmos, transporting yourself to that place, then no harm can accrue to you. You can think anything you like. But if you are coming down to the ordinary human physical level and psychological level and work like a psychoanalyst, that may sometimes react upon you and may do some harm. But it will not do any harm if you think from the centre of the cosmos where you are actually not thinking one person, you are thinking all persons and this is only one among them. One is the philosophical, metaphysical way, transcendental way, and the other is the ordinary psychological way. These are the two ways of encountering anything in the world. You can look at a thing transcendently or you can look at a thing psychologically, either way, and they will produce two different effects. So you can go on.

Visitor: May I ask you one more question? When does the prana enter the body?

Swamiji: Which prana?

Visitor: The individual jiva, when it is born, the prana is there at what point?

Swamiji: You bring the prana with you when you are born. You have brought it from the previous birth. The very necessity for the individual to be reborn in a particular form immediately brings with it the required apparatus of the sense organs, mind and prana also. They all come together. The kind of life that you are expected to live in this world is determined in the womb itself because of the potencies that you are carrying with you right from the previous birth. That is what they call karma. The prana, the mind and the formation of your life pattern all come together and take effect right in the womb itself. So you come with the prana, you come with your mind and you also come with your pattern of life right from the beginning itself, which is finally determined by what you have thought and done in the previous birth.

Visitor: So at that same moment, mind and prana exist.

Swamiji: At the same moment, simultaneously they come.

EXISTING FOR MOKSHA

A visitor (a sannyasin): I want to serve humanity.

Swamiji: Why do you want to serve humanity?

Visitor: Service is my habit.

Swamiji: A person cannot exist for any purpose except for moksha, and to think he is existing for service is a travesty of the whole situation in life. Why should you exist in the world? You need not exist, also. What is the purpose of existing? We can abolish our existence. Each man is born alone, and you will die alone, and nobody will come with you. All great people will desert you in one second. You are the great people, as far as you are concerned, but God will care only for you, and not for what you have done here. What you are before God, that only is virtuous, and what you are to other people has no meaning. You are thinking erroneously, like a politician. Politicians have a way of thinking: We shall uplift the world, build a dam and have hospitals, and so on. Finally they perish after doing all these things.

Unless you reach the Supreme Being, you are not a human being. You are simply useless. Your whole life is a misery and a travesty. So we should not distract our minds here and there in unnecessary activities, especially as we are sannyasins. We are examples of spiritual supremacy before all people. Your face will shine with a divinity, and your very face itself is a teaching, like the sun. If God is pleased with you, the whole world will be pleased with you.

You are here only to spread the greatness of God, and if that is not done, all other things will be like straw. You will get burnt into ashes. I am speaking for the good of every person. Otherwise, you will become politicians, canvassing agents for the next election, and become ministers, and build dams. This is not our duty. It has no purpose finally. We can also build dams. Why should the government do that? I will build dams, and everywhere bridges I will build. It is a great service to people, but we are not meant for that. We are intended for illuminating people, and not to do merchandise work and marketing work, and all that. It is not our duty.

Visitor: I surrender, Swamiji. Suggest to me something.

Swamiji: If your heart is yearning, God will bless you, but your heart should really yearn. You should not doubt: “I made a mistake. God may not come.” If that is there, then He will not come. You must be a saint and sage. Your very existence is a light. Wherever you go, you will spread light by your personality.

I am not saying that you should not do some good. You can do some service also, but not at the cost of your spiritual welfare. Actually, you will realise you have no friends in this world. Don't be under the impression that you have got friends. They will desert you at any moment. Even the nearest relatives will desert you when the time for it comes. When you have something to give to people, they will come to you as friends. When there is nothing to give, they will desert you. People are wanting to exploit you finally.

Side by side with your little capacity to be of help to people—it is all right, there is nothing wrong—your rootedness must be somewhere else. And if everything goes, still you are great. Your greatness does not depend upon what you possess. It depends upon what you are in your own self. If everything goes, if even the cloth goes, still you are a great man. That you must realise. This requires deep meditation, conviction, and your heart must rise to God.

If you think doing service is more important than moksha, you have not thought properly as to what moksha is. It is only a word for us. When you say you don't want moksha, it means the mind has not understood the very meaning of life. It is not easy to understand it because it requires a new education altogether. A whole reorientation of thought is necessary. An ordinary way of thinking is purely mechanical. It is not transcendental, so it will work for a few days and afterwards it will collapse. You require guidance from great Masters, satsanga with great souls. What you want is satsanga with great souls, not building hospitals and so on. They are not going to bring anything. Everywhere you have got hospitals. The whole world is filled with hospitals, and what are you going to do by adding one more hospital? That will satisfy your personality, but your spirit cannot be satisfied.

I am saying this because you are a spiritual man, a sannyasin, and you are a guide to people for enlightenment. Wherever you go, you spread light. That is your duty.

Swamiji: [To another visitor] What are you wanting? What is in your mind, tell me.

Visitor: I wanted to ask you one question. Five years before I was here with you in your darshan. You asked me, "What are you doing in India?" I replied, "I want to look for God more inside." You said, "No, you look for God outside." That was very difficult to hear for me, and I wrote it down, and I took it in my heart, and I was working on this, but I think I didn't succeed too well.

Swamiji: Tell me what you are trying to succeed in?

Visitor: You told me to look for God outside. I wrote it down. And it was right because I was supposed to look for God in every person and everything I meet.

Swamiji: That concept of God being everywhere and everything may look as if it is outside because people are sitting outside. Do you feel these people are inside you or they are outside you? What do you say?

Visitor: I see them outside but I feel them inside also.

Swamiji: That is very good. So if you consider the world as if it is outside, then it will appear that God is outside. But if you feel that the world is not outside you, then God cannot be outside, and also not inside because the idea of outside and inside goes away by the acceptance of God's presence everywhere. Do you catch this point? You practise it.

Another visitor: I want to find the Lord in my husband because my husband doesn't accept my way of praying and belief in God.

Swamiji: Why didn't you bring them here?

Visitor: He doesn't want to come with me to India.

Swamiji: He doesn't like India?

Visitor: No.

Swamiji: What does he like?

Visitor: To stay in Europe.

Swamiji: What does he believe in? He must be believing in something.

Visitor: I think he has a strong belief inside, but he has a very strict Catholic education.

Swamiji: If it is a Catholic education, what is wrong with it?

Visitor: Nothing is wrong with it, but he felt very comfortable with it.

Swamiji: No, you are perhaps saying he is an Orthodox Catholic Christian. Let it be. Why are you worrying about it?

Visitor: He had this education in his childhood, and he did not like it, so now he rejects God and everything.

Swamiji: Has he rejected Christianity also?

Visitor: Yes.

Swamiji: Then what is he now? If he has rejected something, then he must have embraced something else.

Visitor: He likes people very much, and he thinks that with my belief in God I go far away from him. He is afraid that when I go to India and find my own spirituality, that I will stay here. I will go away from him.

Swamiji: How does he know that you are always thinking of God?

Visitor: When I do my meditation.

Swamiji: When you do your meditation, do you make a gesture and pose, and make a very unsocial posture? Or are you looking normal?

You see, I am now talking to you in a normal manner. I am sitting with people, but I am still meditating on God, and I am not making any faces or anything like that, and nobody can know that I am meditating on God because I am talking to people. So if you are an expert in meditating on God, nobody will know that you are meditating on Him.

REMOVING THE EGO

A visitor: I want to remove my ego.

Swamiji: What method are you adopting?

Visitor: I am watching the mind and the thoughts, and then it goes deeper, deeper, deeper.

Swamiji: Have you any problem with the ego?

Visitor: Yes. I don't feel free. I feel like I'm in prison.

Swamiji: Why are you feeling like that? Ego means the consciousness of your personality. That is called ego. Now what is the trouble?

Visitor: I feel two parts in myself. Sometimes I feel free, and another part I feel like I'm being manipulated by something.

Swamiji: You require a guide. In matters of this kind, you require a guide, a superior who understands things clearly and who also knows your mind. Such a person should be your guide. You should not handle your mind independently in an unsystematic manner. It is a great science, very precise and systematic. You cannot simply think whatever you like and imagine the ego is going. Who is your guide, who is your Guru, who is your teacher?

Visitor: Ramana Maharshi.

Swamiji: Have you seen him?

Visitor: No. I don't need to have seen him.

Swamiji: You said something about your method: watching the thoughts, going deeper, but Ramana Maharshi's method is not exactly like that.

Visitor: I know. I feel what he said, but I cannot do exactly what he said.

Swamiji: Why you cannot do it? Follow that method. His method is very good, and if you think it is suitable, follow that method.

Every person in the world has an aim in one's life, a final aim. You are sitting for some purpose. That must be clear first.

Visitor: My purpose is to be free.

Swamiji: You're saying 'free' means 'free from ego'. That is what you mean?

Visitor: I want to be myself.

Swamiji: Very good. But you cannot do anything like that unless you have got a guide. You are treading a dangerous path if you go independently, so don't meddle with yourself like that. You can meddle with others, but in meddling with one's own self one has to be very cautious. It may take you anywhere. Like a wind blowing, it may go this way or that way. One should not handle oneself in a haphazard manner. It requires a Guru. You said Ramana Maharshi is your Guru. If you think so, you follow his method.

Visitor: That's what I'm doing.

Swamiji: You are not doing that. Your method is something else.

You are going inside yourself, and not into the mind, if you have understood Ramana Maharshi properly.

Another visitor: What is *satsanga*?

Swamiji: It is a Sanskrit word. It contains two words: *sat* and *sanga*. *Sat* means Existence, Pure Being, Eternal Existence. *Sat* means God. *Sanga* means company, friendship, close contact. So close contact with God, that is *satsanga*. Also, *sat* means a saint or a good person. A saintly, good person also is *sat*, so friendship, company with a saint, also is *satsanga*. So it has two meanings. One is company with God; another is company with a saint or company with good people. It is a very big word, full of meaning, and very sacred, very holy, and wonderful. That is *satsanga*.

Visitor: What is yoga?

Swamiji: When yourself and God join together, unite, you become one with God. Yoga means coming together, union, joining, becoming one. That is yoga. So when your soul becomes one with God, that is high yoga.

Visitor: Swamiji, can you explain what the word *hatha* means in *hatha yoga*.

Swamiji: It has got several meanings. One meaning is that it is a forceful exercise to make the body yield to certain positions which actually are not the position of the body. Normally, we do not adjust our body as a yogic exercise. We behave as we like. But in hatha yoga we apply a special force on the body to yield to a particular position only. So actually, *hatha* means a kind of forceful effort. In ordinary language, *hatha* means obstinacy: You are very obstinate that you must do this. In ordinary language, when a person is going on insisting on one thing only, we say he is doing *hatha*, persisting in one thing only.

Another meaning is esoteric, secret. *Ha* and *tha* mean the secret names of two nerve centres operating through the two nostrils, and by these exercises we try to bring these two processes of breathing into a union of a single act of breathing.

And a third meaning is, *ha* means inspiration, *tha* means expiration, and so the union of these two processes is *hatha*. So this is actually what hatha yoga means. It is a preparation for raja yoga. The final aim is raja yoga only. That is the answer to the question.

Visitor: In yoga when you say God, are you referring to one thing or a variety of gods?

Swamiji: It can be one thing or a variety, both.

Visitor: So is God one or is God many?

Swamiji: Humanity is one but people are many, so do you consider humanity as one or many? A person is one, but there are many parts of the person such as eyes, nose, hands and feet, and so on, so can you say the person is one or many? The many gods are only parts and limbs of the one God, so you can meditate either through one god to the whole God, or you can directly meditate on the whole God. Since it is difficult to conceive the total God, the mind is given a little slower prescription of contemplating on lesser gods. But if you have got the strength of mind to contemplate the total God, you can directly do meditation on that.

It is like the government. The government is one, but officers are many, so there is no difference. Both mean the same thing. When a person puts on one uniform he is called a judge, and when he puts

another uniform he is a policeman. Now, which is the correct one? One person can do many functions.

Visitor: Is it possible to cure illnesses by hatha yoga?

Swamiji: What kind of illness?

Visitor: It is not a particular disease. It is a chronic weakness in the knees.

Swamiji: If it is due to a disease such as polio, it cannot be cured so easily like that. You can mitigate the pain caused by chronic diseases, but they cannot be removed by physical exercise, though doing the exercises will do much good. Chronic diseases may not go completely, but you may not feel the presence of these troubles by regular exercises, especially breathing. Many of the troubles are due to shallow and irregular breathing. Shallow breathing is due to not paying sufficient attention to one's health, and irregular breathing is due to disturbed emotions and desires, and so on. The breathing exercise should not be practised if the mind is disturbed or the emotions are in turmoil. Some sort of calmness of mind is necessary before engaging oneself in breathing exercises. Shallow breathing can be rectified by sitting in a particular posture and breathing slowly. Take a deep breath and hold it for a few seconds. First you expel the breath. When you breathe in, push the chest forward. When you breathe out, press the stomach inside. The stomach goes inside when you breathe out by a little pressure. As much as possible breathe deeply, with all strength. If you do that for a long time, the carbon dioxide that is accumulated in the lungs will come out. If the carbon dioxide is not expelled properly, you yawn because it has not gone out completely, and so the lungs are pushing out all the unwanted breath.

There is a little more technical exercise called alternate-nostril breathing. [Swamiji demonstrates.] You have to do it several times, some fifteen minutes at least. But if your health is good, you need not do all these things. Merely a simple intake and expulsion is sufficient—inhalation and exhalation for at least fifteen minutes a day. And when you take the breath inside, stop the breath for a few seconds, and then exhale.

Carelessness in the way of living, in diet and in other behavioural patterns contributes to the coming of disease, which should be avoided by normal thinking, normal behaviour, normal diet, and as far as possible, a happy mind.

Visitor: Concentration is very difficult. The moment I try to concentrate, my mind goes from one thing to another. Is there any guidance?

Swamiji: What is the trouble that you are facing in life?

Visitor: I am not facing any particular difficulty, but I am not able to concentrate.

Swamiji: There are two reasons. One reason is, you do not believe in the value of meditation fully. Secondly, you believe in the validity of thinking other things which you consider as more important than the value you attach to meditation. That means to say, you finally do not know what meditation is at all. The meaning itself is not clear.

Meditation means total thinking. It is not one kind of thinking; it is total thinking in which every other thought is merged together into an integrated whole of thinking, so that the mind cannot go here and there. The other thoughts, which are actually distractions, should be brought together into this total which includes the distracting minds also, so that you have one big universal integration of one huge thought, and that thought includes every other thought which you are considering as distracting. Do you understand the point? It is difficult to think like that. It is not easy because finally there is only one mind in the whole universe, a vast sea of mind, and our minds are little drops of that universal mind. So you must put forth some effort in the direction of uniting this mind with the universal mind, which includes everybody's mind also. That is what I mean by 'total mind'. It is finally the universal mind, or you may say God's mind. On that you think deeply because since that includes every other mind, naturally there is no scope for the mind to go here and there.

All this is very difficult to entertain in the mind unless you devote at least three quarters of the day thinking like this again and again, again and again, again and again, and mutually discuss all these points. Don't talk nonsense and go here and there, and have distracting ideas. Go again and again to this only, read books on this

subject, and when you talk to people also bring this point so that you will have a collective cooperation of exercise in maintaining this total thought.

Your heart should have deep love for this exercise of meditation. It is not a routine and a mechanical action. Your heart is fully filled with it. Unless you love it, the concentration cannot come.

All this requires a teacher and a constant guide.

KARMA AND CHOICE

A visitor: What is moving the world? Is it God that is moving the world, or is it the karma of each person?

Swamiji: It is God that is moving the world finally. It looks like karma is moving the world, but ultimately it is God that moves it. Everything is moved by Him.

Everything should be done with love. Love is the supreme thing in the world. Nothing is of any value without love because love is God, finally. How much love do you have for what you are doing? Here is the secret of well-being.

In modern life everything must be done in a hurry. This is not the way nature progresses. When you have grown into an adult from childhood, did you jump into adulthood in one day? Nature does not do that. "Slow and steady wins the race" is an old proverb.

Do meditation every day. We are coming to the point. Do meditation for at least five minutes. I am not saying to meditate for two hours. Meditate for five minutes. To strike a match, it takes less than a minute for the flame to come. Meditation is striking a match. It is not a question of many days and many hours. It is putting on a switch, and the light comes instantaneously. But you must know how to put on the switch; that is the whole thing. If there is a loose contact, even by one millimetre, there is no light.

Another visitor: From where does the inner compulsion come to do something?

Swamiji: The inner compulsion comes due to a desire which is associated with the personality. Nobody can be said to be divinely motivated. Such a human being is rare to find in the world. All motivation is personal, psychological, social, political, economic, and so on. Associate your motivation with the Absolute Reality. Divinely motivated people in the world may perhaps be counted on the fingers. Are you really motivated toward some particular act due to the call of God, or is it something else that you are entangled in? That distinction is difficult to make due to the pressure of the

psychophysical organism which has its own say in spite of your rational investigation into the higher values of life.

We have got two levels of being working in us. One is called the psychophysical, philosophically called the lower nature. Another is aspiration for the Almighty, the Supreme Being. Now, which one is stronger? You find out. Is your longing to merge in the Absolute stronger than your asking for the facilities of life in terms of name, fame, authority, finance, position? You must see which is stronger.

The body is very vehement. It is not a poor nothing. It may be an ass, but it is a very powerful ass. It can kick you in some direction. So is the mind. The psychophysical pressures are not to be taken for granted. They have a voice which is as vehement as a tornado. They will come like a tempest, and to subdue them you may require a power which is more powerful than that tornado or the tempest. Such power, how will you generate in yourself? These are very serious matters which should occupy one's mind, and for which one should give sufficient leisure.

You are pulled down and pulled up at the same time, but which side is stronger is a matter to see. An airplane goes up, against the gravitational pull of the Earth. Now, which is stronger: the power of the engine to rise up, or the power of the Earth to pull it down? Which is stronger? This also is important. If the engine is not as strong as the pull of the Earth, you know the consequence. You have to be very careful to manufacture such an engine that is capable of counteracting the terrible pull of the Earth. Only then the plane will fly.

Visitor: Where is the choice?

Swamiji: The consciousness that you are capable of doing something is the reason for the feeling that you can choose. Do you understand me? The consciousness that you can do something, the feeling in you that you are in a position to do something is also the reason why you feel you can choose between two things. If you feel that you are a helpless person and are not in a position to do anything, the choice also will not arise. You have a feeling of competency, rightly or wrongly, and therefore you go ahead with the project that you have in your mind. Otherwise, nobody can do anything in the world.

The question is whether you are really competent to do anything or not, or whether you are under an illusion. Find out whether something is doing it through you in some way and you attribute that process to individual competency, like a hypnotised person thinking that he or she is doing something voluntarily though it is done under the pressure of the hypnotist's willpower. That is up to you to find out. Are you doing anything because of the pressure exerted upon you by something of which you have no knowledge? Or have you really got some competency individually, and you are doing it by your choice and you have got the power to do it? What do you say for that?

Visitor: Swamiji, it still seems that certain factors are there. If choice alone were the thing that the competency...

Swamiji: Choice is only an effect produced by your feeling that you are competent to do something individually, of your own accord. If you feel you are helpless and you have no competency, you cannot choose anything. Already you have decided that you have the capacity to do things, and you don't believe that you are pressurised by somebody to choose particularly in this manner.

Visitor: The choices are there, but certain factors...

Swamiji: The point is something else. Is anyone doing anything independently, or is it not true that anyone is acting independently—that they are compelled to do things by forces of which they have no knowledge? Now, which is the truth? Is it true that people have individual choice, or it is not true that they have individual choice? They are forced to do it in a particular manner, and the credit of it they are assuming to their own selves wrongly, like an electric bulb attributing the character of shining to its own person, while the shining is caused by another thing, without which it will not shine. So what do you say?

Visitor: The choices that are imposed are only an imposition.

Swamiji: That is why most of the choices end in undesirable results. You may make a wrong choice. It is not true that choices are always correct. Under your present condition your choice may look correct, but your present condition is a limited circumstance constrained by

certain pressures of society and your present desires, etc. If you are a little more mature later on and your understanding improves, you may find that your earlier choice was mistaken, and you grieve for it afterwards. Then you will change your mind and go for something else, though you will have to bear the result of the earlier choice, whether it is pleasant or unpleasant. Every action will produce a result, and even if you have done a bad thing or a wrong thing unwittingly, the result of it you have to bear, though afterwards you realise that you have made a mistake.

A hunter shot an arrow at some animal moving in the forest, under the impression that it was a tiger. He let off the arrow. Afterwards he realised it was a cow, and he was repentant that he ought not to have shot it. But once the arrow has been shot, it will do the work.

Visitor: But it is not a choice.

Swamiji: It is a choice, wrongly or rightly. The whole question is a philosophical one: Who is the doer of things? You are boiling the whole question into some fundamental issue: Who does anything finally in this world? If it is true that people are doing something by themselves, they may never do something which is disadvantageous to them, so how do disadvantages sometimes follow from a correct choice? That means to say, there is some mistake in the assumption that a person can act independently by one's own self.

Visitor: That's the wrong choice.

Swamiji: Always it is the wrong choice because your concept of the rightness of choice depends upon your present mental condition and social circumstances, which will not continue always. You will be something else after some twenty-five years, and you will rule out all that you have done earlier as a blunder. But you have to bear the consequence of what you have done earlier. It is like an arrow that has been shot. Though you realise that it ought not to have been shot, you have done it, and so it will kill the cow though that was not your intention. This is why it is said you should not do anything expecting the result thereof because the fruit, the result, is not in your hands. It is controlled by factors of which you have no knowledge at the present moment.

Visitor: So that is the only choice: to keep doing.

Swamiji: Do your duty according to the conditions prevailing at present, but you should not expect anything from that. Duty is different from expectation. Under some conditions you are supposed to act in a particular manner. It is done with the best of intentions, but you are not expecting anything and whatever result follows, you have to bear it.

Soldiers march in the battlefield not with the intention of being defeated in the war. They always go with the hope and conviction that they will win the war; otherwise, who will go there? But then some circumstances may prevail in such a way that they do not win, which is a realisation that comes a little later. Otherwise, soldiers will not die in the field if everything has been chosen properly. There is some mistake which makes them die.

STOPPING THE MIND

Visitor: I want to stop the mind.

Swamiji: You are thinking that you will not think. That is also thinking only. Think over it: If you do not think, what do you gain out of that? What is the benefit?

Visitor: Some freedom in the mind.

Swamiji: Suppose there is a problem, and you think in the mind there is no problem because you stop the mind. But still the problem will not go by thinking that it is not there. So while you are trying not to think, you are trying not to be aware of the difficulties of life. Understand? But the difficulties of life will continue when you start thinking. So how will you be benefited by temporarily thinking they are not there? This is the negative side of your attempt, but you require something positive. It is like thinking that you are not hungry. Though you are hungry, you think that you are not hungry.

You do not want the absence of a thing. You want its presence, isn't it? Do you want the absence of a thing or the presence of something? Think over this matter. There is a subtle distinction between the two, and it will depend upon why you are doing anything. You are doing something, but why are you doing it? What is your aim?

Visitor: The aim is for the sake of Truth.

Swamiji: Truth is a qualitative existence, whereas not thinking something is not a consciousness of it. It is a consciousness of the absence of everything, but not necessarily the presence of truth. Absence of a thing is not equal to the presence of something. Truth is a state of consciousness, and in your technique there is no consciousness because you have stopped the mind from thinking.

There is some subtle psychological distinction. When you do not want a thing, it follows at the same time that you want something else. That must be emphasised. You do not want that thing, but you want something else. That wanting something is more important than not wanting something. So you must think deeply what exactly is the position that the mind is occupying.

What do you want except Truth? But what is Truth? Can you find out what Truth is? The word 'truth' has a dictionary meaning, but the dictionary meaning is not Truth. It is something solid, and what is your concept of that solidity which you regard as Truth?

Who is your guide in this world? Who is helping you in this matter?

Visitor: I don't have a Guru.

Swamiji: But you have caught something from somewhere.

Visitor: I have been studying a little bit here and there.

Swamiji: What have you been studying?

Visitor: I have been studying some philosophy and scriptures.

Swamiji: What kind of philosophy have you read?

Visitor: Some Buddhist philosophy, some Bhagavadgita, Yoga Vasishtha.

Swamiji: You have read everything, but what is the conclusion you have arrived at after reading all this?

Visitor: I'm not sure.

Swamiji: Then what is the good of reading? Reading is a way of coming to a final conclusion about things. If you don't come to any conclusion, you will be drifting. You think over this matter.

Another visitor: What are the conflicts of life?

Swamiji: The intellect and the heart clash. The intellect argues in a very philosophical manner, and the heart revolts: "I want something." Whatever advice I give to you is an intellectually acceptable process, but the heart will say something else. The emotion is something else. That is inner conflict.

Then you have got social conflict. You cannot get on with people outside. You have some clash with people outside: "This person is not okay. That person is troubling me." So there is a clash between you and society.

Then the third conflict is the whole world is against you. It looks like that. The world is not a friend of yours. It rains heavily, the sun

is hot, you catch cold, water can drown you and fire can burn you. No element is very friendly with you. So you are not harmonised with it.

Finally, you have got conflict with God Himself: whether you are getting God or not getting God, how far He is, and whether it is a hopeless case or it is possible, and if any meaning is there. There is turmoil inside.

There are four conflicts. Sometimes all the four come, and then it is a great difficulty. Sometimes one comes. The most troublesome is the inner conflict. After that comes social conflict. Then comes conflict with the elements of nature. Finally there is conflict with God.

If you really trust in the power that operates in the universe, and you know your relationship to it, you will get whatever you want. You have got an incapacity to even think about it, and even if you try you are getting repelled by it. That is why *satsanga* is necessary. Though it is scratching a rock with a needle and it will take ages to make a dent in it, yet you have done something. Even if you scratch the rock with a needle, something you have done. It cannot be called useless. Even one inch of good that you have done in the right direction will protect you from great fear. You need not do so much good. If even one inch of good you have done for your benefit and God's benefit, the great fear of life will be taken away from you. One inch, every day you do one inch, not much.

Whatever the difficulty is, it has to be solved in two ways. One is, all the means available to a human being should be taken advantage of. It may be medical treatment, it may be rest, it may be diet, etc.; whatever is necessary from this point of view must be done to the best of your ability, and it must be done forever, as long as the difficulty continues. As long as the problem continues in life, this method of treating it should continue. There are some people who are sick and they have to take medicine always. That is one thing.

The other way is to tune yourself with God. That is a greater method than the human method I suggested, though the human method is equally important. It is very important to take your meal every day, but you must have the stomach first before you start

eating. The stomach has to be given to you by God only. If the stomach is not there, then what is the good of food? Likewise, one side is the effort that you put forth as it is available to you to the best of your knowledge and capacity, which I have already mentioned. The other is attunement with God. Do you understand what I am saying? According to you, to the extent that you know, what is the meaning of 'attunement with God'? Have you any idea about it?

Visitor: To overcome one's individual will and to surrender to His will.

Swamiji: Very good. You know very well what I'm saying. But you have said it in some words. How will you feel it in your heart?

Visitor: Through prayer.

Swamiji: How will you pray? What is the way?

Visitor: For me it's mainly a feeling of prayer, but it can be also uttered in words.

Swamiji: A feeling of the presence of God is the greatest prayer, which can be expressed in words or can be felt only in the mind. The practice of the presence of God is the greatest prayer, which means to say that you must accept with your deepest feelings that God does exist and His presence is here and now. It is a presence that pervades all things. Therefore, it is in and out. It is the greatest of energy that you can think of, incomparable power, which has the greatest healing capacity. You ask anything from God, and He will give it to you. It is the reservoir of every kind of abundance, and whatever you ask, that shall be given to you. Deeply feel this: I am in the presence of this indomitable, all-pervading power, which is just here in front of me. It is not merely in front of me; it is, because of its all-pervading nature, inseparable from my existence. Therefore, the great power is entering me. As you sit in the open sunlight, the energy of the sun permeates and enters into your body. It has become you. It is not outside you. You are inundated and flooded with that.

HUMAN EFFORT AND DIVINE MEDITATION

A visitor: I am HIV positive. How should I deal with it?

Swamiji: Think that your body has become strong like diamond because of the entry of God's indestructible power. "I am very happy. I am breathing the air of this supreme abode of the Almighty Himself. The aroma of God is entering into me. The power is energising me. I am in attunement with Him. I have no fear because He is with me, He is in me, He protects me and He is all-in-all for me. He gives me all things. My dear God, bless me with Yourself." Do not ask for any material things from God. "Bless me with Your Own Self. Come on to me, be with me, be in me, fill me with Yourself so that You are myself. Such energy I have got now. I am very healthy, very powerful. I have no illness. Illness has gone. I am very happy. I am more happy than anybody else because the Great Power is with me. It is blessing me with Itself."

God need not give you any object. He must give you Himself only, because no object can equal Him. All the wealth of the world, which He can give, is nothing before Him. The giver is greater than that which is given. Do you catch the point? This is a kind of meditation I am suggesting to you. This has to be done every day. When you get up in the morning, whatever be the time when you wake up, don't jump up from the bed and go here and there. If you want to do your ablutions, have your ablutions. Then sit quiet, and face the east where the sun rises. The power of the sun is the most potent in the east because that is where he rises. Sit facing the east in the manner you are sitting now, and go on charging your personality with this intense feeling that I have described to you in these few words. Every day you do it. I would like you to do it for at least half an hour every day continuously, and before you have your tea or breakfast. Breakfast may be taken afterwards. When you get up in the morning, have a wash, take a bath, whatever it is, and sit quiet and do this. Every day, every day, every day. If you can do it once again before you go to bed in the evening, even better. But if you are busy for other reasons, then do it at least once in the morning, and you will find a miracle will take place gradually.

All that God does is a miracle. He does not work like human beings with instruments. He himself is the instrument; He has no other apparatus with Him, like a doctor having surgical instruments. His presence itself is all the instruments. This is a meditation.

There are two ways of handling a thing. One is the human way; the other is the divine way. The human way is, eat a proper diet, take rest, take medicine, take deep breaths, go for a walk, have fresh air, and live with good friends who will talk to you pleasantly, happily, without disturbing your mind. This is the human way. The other way is the divine way I described to you, and you perhaps understand it. This practice should go on. The double practice—the human side and the divine side—should go together. Then it will click like a clock, and really some unimaginable miracle can take place. This is my suggestion. Do you understand me?

Visitor: Yes, Swamiji.

Swamiji: You should not take this as a joke. It is a serious matter. Both things I have told you. One thing is human effort, the other is the divine meditation. These should go together. Effort and grace are two sides of one aspiration, so effort on one side and meditation on another side, both must go together. Every day you do it.

And every morning take some honey with a little lemon juice combined—the juice of one lemon with two spoons of honey. That should be the first thing you drink, not tea or coffee. Take only this.

Do you have any habits other than the normal ones? That you must give up. It is very important because when God works through you, you should cooperate with Him. You should not put any obstacle. If the doctor says to do something, you should not do something else. And whatever the habits be which are not good for the health of a person, you stop. People have got unnecessary habits like smoking, drinking and non-vegetarian food. They do not contribute to the health of a person. I would suggest that these things are to be completely avoided: no smoking, no drinking, no non-vegetarian food. This is also part of the treatment, because you must cooperate with nature. You are opposing nature. Nature does not want you to drink or smoke or eat the meat of animals. It is not nature's wish. You must live a natural life in the manner I mentioned, and on the other side there is human effort and divine meditation,

which I also mentioned. Three things I have told you. If this is done, if you understand what I say, then I think you will have the blessing of God.

If you have any difficulty in this matter, that also must be tackled. Sometimes there are insurmountable difficulties, and they must be tackled slowly, little by little, little by little, little by little. I will give you an example. There are people who smoke cigarettes. Ten times, twenty times, fifty times a day they smoke. The method of avoiding is, instead of fifty cigarettes, you make it forty-nine only, so they are not angry because, after all, you are reducing only one. For one month, let it go on. Afterwards, still one less, one less, one less, one less, one less. In about six months it may be about fifty percent less. Then you will have developed a habit of getting on without it in the measure with which you were taking earlier. And also, the mind should say that it is a horrible thing. Nobody will do harm to one's own self deliberately. Will anybody do harm to oneself deliberately? Is it not good to maintain good health? Tell yourself, "This is not going to contribute to my good health. This habit is no good for me." Tell your mind again and again. "Do I want to be happy? Do I want to live long?" Tell the mind, "Do you want to obstruct this process? I want to live long and I want to be healthy, but these things which I am habituated to are contradictory to it. I will never deliberately go to the pit and fall into it." So habits must be controlled in the interest of natural health.

And there is the grace of God. You must cooperate with your own psychic personality, you have to cooperate with nature, and you have to cooperate with God. If you are not cooperating, then how will you expect help from nature? If you cooperate with people, they will cooperate with you. If you are against them, how will you get their help?

Today whatever I have told you is sufficient for you. I don't want to burden you with so many things, and what I have told you just now is complete in itself. In my opinion, so many problems can be solved by this method. They look like many, but actually it is one only, and that has to be handled with wisdom, with determination of will, and with a real interest in one's own welfare. No one should try to ruin oneself due to unhealthy habits of any kind. Think over this

matter, and if there is anything else, you can tell me later on after bestowing deep thought on it. I wish you happiness. God bless you.

A NECESSARY DESIRE

A visitor: How do I meditate?

Swamiji: Chant Om for fifteen minutes every day. Then close your eyes and breathe deeply. When the breath goes inside, the chest expands. When you breathe out, it goes back. When you breathe inside, feel the whole air enters into you—not the little air of the house. So much air is there in the whole space, and the whole thing is going inside. When that happens, you feel great strength comes because the air of the whole world is being sucked inside. Feel the whole thing comes in. Far, far, far sky—from there the air is coming, and so powerful, fresh oxygen is entering the lungs. After some time you can hold the breath for two seconds. When you breathe in, the chest comes forward; when you breathe out, the stomach goes inside. Do you catch the point?

Today you do only this, and nothing more is necessary. Do this for half an hour. Then I will see you tomorrow.

An ashramite: I have a necessary desire.

Swamiji: You think that desire is a necessity?

Ashramite: If necessary, then desire comes.

Swamiji: Suppose you want to go and kill somebody. That is also a desire only. Now, is it a necessity or not? Then you will also be getting the same thing afterwards, so are you prepared for that? Only a fool will think like that, because you will get back whatever you have done to others. Suppose you have a necessity to destroy some man; then what will happen? Then it will react and you will be destroyed afterwards. So would you like to be destroyed?

Ashramite: It must be for some higher value.

Swamiji: Nobody can have a higher value by destruction. Destruction cannot bring a higher value. Destruction is a negative activity. Your answer is not correct. Desire does not arise due to necessity. It is due to the weakness of the finitude of personality. The more you are weak, the more is the necessity, as you call it. If you are very thin, you want to become stout, and the greater is your thinness,

the greater is the need for becoming stout. It is the counterpart of your present personality. So the more is the deficiency in you, the more is the desire to be compensated by something outside. But will anybody succeed in fulfilling all the desires?

Ashramite: Swamiji, I think the desire is to get a thing that is outside.

Swamiji: So who asked you to think that they are outside you? Why do you create a problem and want to solve it afterwards? This is a politician's work. The politician's work is to create a problem and then try to solve it. Why do you create a problem, and then afterwards try to solve it by a wrong method? You are trying to solve it, but by a wrong method. You cannot get a thing by desiring it because it is as much a subject as you are. The subject cannot attract a subject, and from its point of view you are an object. It can also pull you that side. What makes you so egoistically think that you are the subject, and that others are objects? Why don't you give the credit of being a subject there also?

An ant is as self-conscious and has as much self-love and self-respect as you have got, and you are considering it as an object that you can sweep away. Can you do that? Somebody will sweep you away also, somebody stronger than you. It is a great blunder and uncharitable attitude of anybody to think another thing is an object. It is an insult to call people objects. You should not use such words at all. They are not objects. Even an atom is not an object; it is self-dependent. It has a value by itself. It has a soul. It asserts itself, as you are asserting yourself. It wants to survive in the same way as you want to survive. It does not want to become a servant of yours. Nobody likes to become a servant because to become a servant is to become an object, and that is an error which will not work for a long time. A servant will assert his independence one day or the other. For some time because of weakness we feel he looks like a servant, and one day he will feel that he is an important person and not a servant of anybody. Why should I consider myself as subservient to somebody else? In what way? Is the other person having four eyes and two noses? I am also having the same two eyes and one nose, same stomach, same desire, same importance, same survival instinct. Whatever the boss wants, the servant also wants, so in what way is he insufficient? Why do you call him a servant? You are thinking

wrongly that others are inferior to you. To consider anything as an object is to regard yourself as superior, and others as inferior.

That is why nobody can fulfil their desires in the world. There is always travesty, suffering, bereavement and loss. A person who desires cries and weeps and goes on suffering, and gets nothing out of it. The whole thing goes away because it is outside you when you consider it as an object, so how can the outside thing become the inside? It is a contradiction. The thought also is a contradiction.

But if you have got that strength of meditative force with which you identify your consciousness with the existence of the object, you become the object itself. This is what is called samadhi. The object is not wanted by you, because the object is you. Then you will see what happens. It will be you, and when it has become you, you will not want it anymore.

If you are in a position to do this kind of exercise with all the things in the world, then all the things become you. Even space and time become you because they also look like outside things. Even the sun and the moon and the stars become you. At that time, what do you think in your mind, tell me? What do you think? You have got everything, whatever you want, in one stroke. You wanted something; you have got it. And you got it in such a way that you will never ask for it afterwards. If whatever you want is already yourself because your consciousness has identified itself with that, it immediately runs to you because it is the self and you are the self, and two selves cannot exist so they merge into one self only, a larger self. The self becomes larger and larger, larger and larger because of the identification with all things, so that it becomes the universal Self, and then you are not a meditating individual. You are the Universal, conscious of itself only. Then what will happen, nobody can explain.

Now, that which listens to what I am saying is the higher reason in you. It appreciates. But when you go out, the lower personality will pull you down and it will say: "No, this will not work." The higher mind listens and appreciates: "Yes, it is true." After sometime the lower mind says, "You are a fool. You do what I say." The power of the gravitational pull of the Earth and the whole world of externality is so intense that nobody can resist it, and so intellectual appreciation

is wiped out in one second by it. The externality is so powerful that it will not allow you to think like this for more than one second. But if you insist on it and submerge your understanding into the feeling and the appreciation and the experience, then you can counteract this lower pull, and then the entire thing that is pulling you down will become you. That also will become your friend. The lower will change its course.

You are living separately, independently. You don't talk to anybody, you have no friends, you have no Guru, and you have no occasion even to think. You don't read anything. If you live like that, you will be carried by the wind of the world. Wherever the wind blows, you will be thrown out. You cannot live by yourself like that. You require a larger support. Your strength is not sufficient because the world is stronger than you. It will pull you in any direction, and afterwards you will feel the whole thing has gone.

Why don't you sit one hour alone to yourself? Why do you talk to anybody? What is the purpose? You have left your home and come here, not to go on talking to somebody. You could have talked there also. What is the use of it? Here you have come for thinking differently altogether. Why do you talk to any person? Nobody can give you anything. You must remember that. You cannot expect anything from anybody. They will simply put you out when the time for it comes. You have to stand for yourself, and that strength you have to develop from inside. It cannot come unless your mind changes thoroughly in the thinking process.

Tremendous faith is necessary that this will work: "My heart is pure. I am sincere." And it will certainly work. If you think like that, in three days you will find a difference. In three days, because truth is stronger than untruth, so even a few minutes of thinking truth will completely overturn all the untruth of nature.

What is the harm in sitting alone for one hour? "I will not talk to anyone for one hour. I will be by myself only. I have come alone, and will go alone, and will also live alone. I didn't bring anybody when I came, and when I go I won't take anybody, so why should I have so many things in the middle? Now also I am alone only. I want nothing. I am self-sufficient, and I can get what I want by thought itself." Have this confidence. That is the characteristic of a

superman. You should aim to become a superman. Why do you want to remain a little boy? What is the good of it? You should not go on thinking “I am a little boy”, and so on. Why does this thought come to you?

The whole world can come to you in one minute if your heart is sincere. Call it, and it will come. When it comes, God also comes. You have no time to think. For a few minutes you come here, then you think of the Annekshetra, and that you have to go here and there. It is not that you should not do that, but this is more important than that. Who prevents you from thinking correctly? You do whatever you like, but why do you change the thought also? Is it necessary? Nobody can compel you to think in any particular manner. They may ask you to do this work or that work, but they cannot say “Think like this”. You are the master of your own mind. You can think whatever you like. Even in the railway station, who troubles you? Social conditions may not make you feel that you are totally independent, but in mind you are totally independent. Nobody can compel you to think only in this way.

Ashramite: But there are things outside that I have to think about, Swamiji.

Swamiji: The mind has to first understand what is necessary for it to think; then outside business will not arise. Again you are talking about ‘outside’. ‘Outside’ means the object only, so I told you how to bring it in tune with yourself. The outside has to become the inside. Every day you should sit alone. You should not talk to anybody for one hour. Keep quiet, and don’t even read books. Don’t do any work for one hour, and deeply think this matter, this little thing. Every day you strike on this more and more, more and more. Otherwise, you lose this world, and lose the other world also afterwards. This world has gone because you have left everything and come here. Now the other thing also will go away if you don’t pursue it. That is very unfortunate. You cannot lose both worlds, this and that both. At least something must come. You could have got a job and large salary, and the world would have come to you, but you rejected that. Now what else is there? If that has been rejected, something else must be there. That also goes because you have no time to think it. Then you are in a very miserable condition. That state of affairs

should not come to you because a day will come when you are alone to yourself. Nobody will help you. At that time you should not feel miserable, and it is not necessary to feel miserable. You have got friends everywhere if you are really conscious of them.

JAPA OF GAYATRI MANTRA

A visitor: Wherever I go, wrong things enter the mind and create disturbance.

Swamiji: What are the wrong things? Tell me one wrong thing. Let me hear. What is the wrong thing that is coming to your mind? Give one instance.

Visitor: Accident or fire, that may happen. I may die. All these things.

Swamiji: If you think that some fire may come, it may really come also, because whatever you think will take place.

Visitor: I can't stay alone and do sadhana.

Swamiji: Since how long have you had this trouble?

Visitor: Since two months.

Swamiji: I will tell you one method so that all these thoughts will run away. Do Gayatri mantra *japa*. This is a mantra which glorifies the sun. The sun is the highest purity and greatest power, immeasurable energy. When you recite the mantra, feel that the great energy of the sun is coming into you. It is the representation of God Himself, *surya pratyaksha devata*. If you want to see God, you must see the sun. He is God Himself. If you recite this mantra, you draw the energy of the sun into yourself, and every day you must feel that now the trouble is going, the trouble is going, the trouble is going because fire-like energy is entering into you when you recite this mantra. You must take some time to do this mantra *japa*, not only two or three minutes. Three hundred times you do it in the morning—three *malas*. With every chant of the mantra, feel that energy from the sun is coming to you. The mind should not think anything else at that time, only *surya*. The blazing power is entering into you and destroying all evil of every kind. If you have time, you can do it even ten times, ten *malas*. If you have no time for that, do at least three *malas*. This you should do after taking a bath in the morning, facing the east, and if possible, again before dinner, or if it's not possible, then after dinner. Wash your mouth and sit. Do three *malas* in the morning, three

malas in the evening. If you have time enough, you can increase the number. And the same number of *malas* should be done every day.

There is no power greater than this mantra, which can destroy all the foolish ideas in the mind. It is a kind of illusion in your mind. What you said has no meaning, really. There is no fire, no earthquake; nothing is there. Unnecessarily you are worrying. The defect is in your thinking itself. So the mind has to be illumined first, and this is the most powerful mantra to brighten the intellect. *Yona prachodayat* means 'brighten my intellect'. Your intellect becomes sharp and powerful and radiating. That is the prayer that you offer in this mantra. Do this *japa* every day, and feel that everything is all right. All the negative forces are gone completely because when the sunlight comes, all darkness goes. All these negative thoughts in your mind are like darkness, like cobwebs. The whole thing will vanish when sunlight falls on it. If you do this mantra every day, you will find everything will be all right. All these ideas will vanish. No other thing is necessary. Gayatri mantra *japa* is sufficient; no negative thought can arise afterwards. It will purify your mind. Do it with faith.

Another visitor: I feel my friend is selfish.

Swamiji: There are two things. One is social life, another is meditation. They are two different things. When you are meditating, you must also bring that selfish person into the field of consciousness. It is one centre of consciousness operating in a wrong way, but it is within the consciousness only. Sometimes the waves go this side, sometimes the waves go that side, but yet it is within the ocean only. This is how you have to think of selfish people, or anybody, in meditation.

But in social life your mind may not work like that, so you keep away from those people. You don't become friends with them. Otherwise, if you are a very strong person, you remove that selfishness by telling them some good thing. Then the selfishness of these people will go away. Do some good to people.

Visitor: In social life, I don't need to feel that another person's selfishness is mine?

Swamiji: No. In meditation you can feel like that, but if you have got a practical difficulty in your daily life you tell this person, "I

have gone to Rishikesh and I have heard these things, very beautiful. Do you want to hear? I will tell you this.” Then if you tell that to the person again and again, the selfishness will go away. You are not selfish now; you have become very clear in your mind because I have told you something. Tell the same thing to other persons. Spread this knowledge everywhere nearby little by little, little by little, and you will make your whole country beautiful. Do some good to your friends also. They may be on the wrong path because they don’t understand. Then you tell them, “I went to Rishikesh and learned all these things. It is a very good thing. You also do that.” Then they will feel happy, and they will also start meditating. Then you will have a good group for meditation. Everybody will be happy.

Visitor: Is there any way to do concentration?

Swamiji: Now you are concentrating on consciousness, isn’t it?

Visitor: Does that have any image?

Swamiji: No, consciousness does not have any image because it is everywhere, but if you want an image, you can have one. What image do you want?

Visitor: When I try meditation, I cannot concentrate.

Swamiji: If you want an image, what kind of image do you want?

Visitor: Something.

Swamiji: Take Buddha’s image. Think that he is a very powerful man, that he realises consciousness everywhere and so he is a figure of universal consciousness. Think of Buddha. Take a photo or an image, and keep it in front of you. Feel, “I am in the presence of a mighty, great power who has realised this universal consciousness.” Think of him again and again, again and again, again and again: Buddha, the great one, Buddha, the great one, Buddha, the great one. Centralise consciousness. Consciousness is centralised there. “Very powerful. I become like that. I want to become Buddha.” Go on thinking like that again and again, and you will become like Buddha afterwards.

Another visitor: I am a manager in a company. I want to know what is spirituality.

Swamiji: Management is nothing but a concept of wholeness in the mind of a person who manages. Only a person who has knowledge of what wholeness is can manage everything. Part by part, fraction by fraction, bit by bit it cannot work. At one stroke, the whole thing must be in your mind, whether it is industry or agriculture, or whatever it is. Spirituality is the concept of wholeness. Now I have told you what spirituality is. And the wholeness has many degrees. The family is a kind of whole organisation because though there are many members in a family, they work like a total organisation, so it is one unit. It is not made up of different individuals, but is one entire concrete organism. The family is also a part of many other families in the community. Hence, in the same way as an individual in the family is a part of the wholeness that is the family, the family also is an individual which constitutes part of the wholeness which is the entire community. So you will become a part of the community, rather than merely the family. This goes on in the same way. I am mentioning to you the concept of higher and higher. The entire state is one whole organisation, to which all the communities belong. Then comes the nation. The nation is a total whole which transcends all the particulars. And then you have got international wholeness. Then you have got universal wholeness, cosmic wholeness. This is the way you have to think, gradually. This process of thinking is spirituality.

Visitor: Does method flow out of meaning, or does meaning flow out of the method?

Swamiji: If a thing has no meaning, there is also no method. You don't practise a method in regard to meaningless things. There is some significance in it; meaning is there, and importance. Therefore, it is necessary to pursue it. The way of pursuing it is called method. The thing has to exist first. That is called the meaning, and then the way of reaching it is the method. If it does not exist at all, the method also cannot exist. The city of Delhi must exist first before you travel to that place. If it does not exist at all, there is no question of travelling there. So the meaning or the significance of a thing is first, and the modus operandi or the method of reaching it is afterwards. The thing is first, the effort is afterwards.

Visitor: Swamiji, what makes a place holier than other places?

Swamiji: It is the percentage of divinity that pervades that place. What makes a person very great? You say that person is a great man. How he has become a great man? Can you tell me? Ordinarily, every person is like every other person—same eyes, same nose, same hunger, same thirst. Everybody looks alike, but why is one person called a great man? There is the presence of a supernatural power in that person that makes him great, and so also is the reason for the greatness or importance of a place. There is a supernatural vibration acting and operating in that particular place—something beyond nature; divine, you may call it. That is the reason behind it.

A UNIVERSAL VISION

A Western visitor: Could you tell me something about the Sivananda Ashram?

Swamiji: The Divine Life Society, of which the Sivananda Ashram is headquarters, is a universal cosmopolitan society created by Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj for the welfare of humanity spiritually, culturally, socially, and in every form of benefit that is required for people in general. As I mentioned to you, it is a society that integrates faiths, religions, philosophies and general outlooks of life so that it has no partisan attitude. It is not devoted to any particular cult, creed or faith. It has a universal approach. It treats all people as far as their requirements are concerned. You may call it a universal institution meant for the welfare of everybody, irrespective of any kind of categorisation or departmentalisation of people in any manner whatsoever. It is basically spiritual. People come here for the purpose of learning the way to reach God Almighty, the Creator of this universe. But together with that, there is also a concern of the Society for the social and secular needs of people. That is why I say it is all-inclusive in every respect in the centrality of a spiritual approach to all things in general.

An Indian visitor: I would like a message for the citizens of India, for Indians.

Swamiji: We are concerned with the whole world, not merely with Indians, and if a message comes to the whole world, it includes Indians also. You know very well that the country cannot be happy and safe unless the international setup is also safe. So you have to look to the welfare of the entire setup of humanity so that the country is automatically included in that setup. Do you understand me? So the welfare of people, whether they are of India or of any other country, consists merely in a proper vision of the structure of the universe and the placement of each individual in the location of this universe.

Where are you stationed? Are you in Delhi or are you on this Earth, in the world or in the whole cosmos, or are you in the solar

system or in the universe? You can say all these answers are correct. Actually speaking, a universal vision is the solution to the difficulties of every kind of human approach in this life. I told you this Ashram is spiritual. By 'spiritual' I mean a total vision of things, an integrated vision of things excluding no aspect of life, considering and taking into consideration every aspect of life, whatever it is—inward, outward or transcendental.

It is difficult to conceive this kind of vision, which was held up as the lofty ideal of the life of people by Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. It requires a lot of training because we are generally accustomed to think in terms of personality, individuality and community, and creed, denomination, etc. These ideas should go. You must belong to the whole world. You must be a citizen not only of India, but a citizen of the world; or, I may say, you are a citizen of the whole creation of God. Then you will have protective forces emanating from all sides and taking care of you, and you will have no problem afterwards. Finally, the solace of mankind is God and its friendship with the whole creation of God. It is necessary to develop a sense of friendship with everybody, in every way, at all times, keeping in view the central vision of the transcendent and immanent presence of God Almighty. God is not a human being but a pervasive presence which is just here under your nose; and to realise that, to keep it as the hallmark of the approach to anything in this world, we may say, is the solution to difficulties and problems of life. You must consider God as the first value of life, the world should be considered the second value of life, and individuals are the third value of life. The third and the second will be taken care of by the first, which is all-inclusive. God first, world next, and individuals last. This principle should be kept before everybody. I think if this principle is kept in the hearts of people sincerely, all shall be well. There shall be no problem.

Another visitor: What is your concept of God? Are Rama and Krishna the only gods?

Swamiji: There is no Rama and Krishna. They are only some formations and nomenclature that we establish for their manifestations of the universal God. Rama and Krishna are like the hands, feet, nose, eyes, ears, etc., of a person. The person is one being only.

There are no multitudes of persons in a human individual, though there are multitudes of limits. So all these Rama, Krishna, Govinda, Mohammed, or sky, star, whatever it is, they are part and parcel of the integrated totality which is God Almighty. It is omnipresent, which has no form, really speaking, because form is something which is associated with this otherwise formless, impersonal Absolute by interpreting things in terms of space, time and objectivity in the philosophical approach, which has to be understood properly. There are no many gods. There is only one God.

Visitor: Swamiji, what is your daily routine?

Swamiji: I get up in the morning and remember the great Almighty from where I came. And afterwards, I see this world before me, which is inclusive of many things like me, and I then look at myself as a spark of the Divine omnipresence, so that when I see things, when I talk to anybody, when I work, when I have to deal with anything, I maintain the attitude that I am dealing with the whole creation of God, and not with one person. When I talk to you, I don't feel that I'm talking to one person but to one leaf, one twig, one fruit, one flower of that large tree of universal manifestation. I maintain one consciousness always, that I am connected to everything. There is nothing outside me; and when I think, the whole universal thought enters me, and that keeps me always happy, so whatever work I do is a universal work, whatever word I utter is a universal word, and whatever activity I am engaged in may be considered as a universal activity, the meaning of which you can know only if you study the Bhagavadgita, which is the gospel not only of Hinduism but of the whole of humanity. This is the principle we follow.

Another visitor: Swamiji, these days are we going nearer to God?

Swamiji: We are going away from God, not nearer, due to the desires which are physically oriented, comfort oriented, gadget oriented, and pleasure oriented. People are thinking only what is outside, and they never think what is inside. All the religions of the world, all the so-called philosophies, all the activities are externally motivated, so in that sense I can say people are not going near God, though their duty it is to go near God. Otherwise, there would be no suffering in the world. There is too much desire, too much longing, too much

passion, too much greed, too much conflict, too much anger, too much warfare. How can you think that people are going near God? They have to turn their gaze inside in a universal fashion. By 'inside', I do not mean inside the physical body, but the inside structure of the whole creation, which is inundated by God's presence. If you can think as God thinks and try to behave as God would expect you to behave, and act as an ambassador of God Almighty and not as a person wedded to any particular occupation of life, you will be blessed. If this view is absent in people, you cannot say they are moving towards God.

Visitor: Swamiji Maharaj, as a great philosopher your replies are really wonderful and we are highly thankful to you. But as an administrator, as the General Secretary of the institution, some must be near, some must be dear, something right, something wrong.

Swamiji: I don't have any such feelings. Nothing is right, nothing is wrong. Everything is a variegated, multifaceted manifestation of a single problem, which is the creation itself, and to put it together in a harmonious state and make it a complete whole is the duty of every person who is attempting to attain the vision of life.

Visitor: At that moment is the Gita's *samatvam* possible?

Swamiji: It must be possible.

Visitor: How, Swamiji?

Swamiji: By the vision of the Almighty, who is present in all things and in the integrated structure of the cosmos.

Visitor: In daily life?

Swamiji: There is no daily life. It is only cosmic life that exists.

Visitor: But in the day-to-day routine, how can one practise?

Swamiji: There is no such thing as day-to-day routine; there is no such thing as individual life. There is only cosmic life. If you cannot grasp this point, then you cannot have peace of mind. There is no such thing as day-to-day, and all that. There is no day, there is no night. There is only one thing, which looks like day and night, which looks like activity, which looks like people. It is difficult to maintain

this vision. That vision is described in the eleventh chapter of the Bhagavadgita, which is called Viratsvarupa. If you can think as the Viratsvarupa expects you to think, then you will not see any day-to-day, and no day and night, no people, no problem, no whiteness and blackness, nothing of the kind. But we are wedded to think in socialistic terms, political terms, business activity. With these attitudes we are looking at things, and we are not able to solve any problem of the question of life. The whole thing has to take a round-about turn, and this requires proper education, not the education that you are getting in the college and university, which is nothing. It has no meaning. It creates only more problems for you, so you must have a new education altogether. For that purpose you have to come to institutions of this kind and under the feet of the great Master, Swami Sivananda. With his blessings you must feel that you are a blessed child of God. You are not a child of a father and mother. You are a child of the Almighty God. Can you believe it? If you can believe it, I assure you that you shall have no problem.

Another visitor: You said that if we are a child of God we shall have no more problems. How can we reclaim this attitude, this long-lost attitude in a world where...

Swamiji: By a serious attempt to inwardise your consciousness in deep meditation, the art of which you have to learn from a competent person. From particularity consciousness you have to lift your attention to universality consciousness. From personality you become universality. From one particular thing you become all things at one stroke, just as you will not think of a particular limb of your body every day. You think of your total personality. Why are you not thinking of your finger, your nails, your nose, etc.? There is no need of thinking of them because you are one total whole. If this is possible when you are a personality, it should be possible in a similar way in regard to the cosmos, of which you are an integral part. Consider all things as parts of one universal whole, which includes yourself also, so that there is only one person who is thinking, one person who is acting, and one person who is doing anything. If this can enter into your heart, you can...

Visitor: There is also the danger of you thinking that you are having the experience while you are not.

Swamiji: Why? The experience will come if you meditate like this. You should not think it for a minute only. This should be maintained throughout the day. It should be the background of thought.

Visitor: In principle it should be, because that is what we are in reality.

Swamiji: You must believe it.

Visitor: Then the process of believing it, is it up to us?

Swamiji: Whatever I have told you just now, you should take it as something to you only. Why should I repeat the whole thing once again? Okay?

THE OBSERVER IN QUANTUM PHYSICS

Swamiji: [To a professor of physics] According to the top-level findings of modern physics, is the universe external to the observer, or is it not external to the observer?

Visitor: It is within the consciousness of the observer. Quantum physics says that the observer's consciousness is co-related with a measurement.

Swamiji: You are bypassing the question. According to quantum physics, is the universe external to the observer or not external to the observer? You answer to the point. Why are you talking about consciousness?

Visitor: The observer is a conscious being.

Swamiji: The observer is a consciousness?

Visitor: The observer is a conscious being.

Swamiji: You are saying 'conscious being', not 'consciousness'.

Visitor: They mean the same thing.

Swamiji: No. It is not the same thing. 'Conscious being' is not the same as 'consciousness' because consciousness is not any being at all. It is not anybody's being because the whole problem is if the observer can exist outside the universe and then observe it, he does not belong to the universe. It comes to that. Do you understand me? Is it true that a person does not belong to the universe?

Visitor: It is impossible.

Swamiji: Then how can a person who is involved in the observed universe observe it? How is it possible to observe it?

Visitor: It is not possible.

Swamiji: Then how to answer this question? If the observer cannot stand outside the object that is observed, how is there a possibility of observing anything? Then the whole of science falls down in one second because science is nothing but the process of observation and experiment, and that collapses if this conclusion is drawn.

Visitor: Swamiji, I have another question. I have been thinking over this point for several days. What is the relationship between a person's material fulfilment and his spiritual fulfilment?

Swamiji: Is there such a thing called matter?

Visitor: No, I want to talk in a very commonsense way.

Swamiji: Can you be wise in your laboratory and a fool in public? That cannot be.

Visitor: No, as an ordinary man.

Swamiji: An ordinary man cannot be a good physicist. Will a professor be very wise in the classroom and foolish in the house?

If material fulfilment—to put it in your own language—is understood from the point of view of its nature as such, and not as it appears to your sense organs, then it can be regarded as a step toward spiritual realisation. Material fulfilment need not necessarily be sensual fulfilment, but it is not easy to understand the difference between metaphysical fulfilment and sensual fulfilment. You can enjoy an object as a necessary ingredient of your personality, or you can enjoy it as something perceived by the sense organs. No man in the world can ever think that the object of enjoyment is a necessary ingredient of his organism. It is not a necessary part of his organism; it stands outside, unconnected with the person, and such a thing cannot fulfil the requirement of a person. It will end in bereavement and sorrow, as happens in the case of any sensory enjoyment. But if you are able to understand the location of the object of enjoyment as a part and parcel of the whole cosmos of which you are also a part, it becomes what you call a philosophical, metaphysical enjoyment, and not a sensory enjoyment. I want you to make a distinction between metaphysical enjoyment and sensory enjoyment. Sensory enjoyment is obnoxious, and it will bring you sorrow. Metaphysical enjoyment will enrich your personality, widen your dimension of being, and you will take further steps towards what you call spiritual realisation. I have told something very intriguing, which is not easy to grasp. You will have to stay here many days to understand the meaning of what I said.

Any enjoyment under the impression you are external to the object that you are enjoying will bring sorrow. That is why everybody has sorrow, whoever tries to enjoy the objects of sense. Nobody is free from that grief. You will repent one day. But there is another way of non-sensual enjoyment. You can love a thing in the sense of what is called platonic love—not sensual love, but platonic love. It is a love of that which is, towards that which is. This is why I called it metaphysical, and not sensual. A thing as it is in itself comes in contact with a thing as it is in itself, and not as it appears. You are something unique from the appearance of your personality, as the object also is something unique from what it appears to be to your sense organs. Your reality, which is hidden, should come in contact with the reality of the object. That is platonic love, and you can enjoy it in that sense. You may call it spiritual love, if you like. But no brain will catch this point because people are wedded to wrong thinking and a sensory way of looking at things. Are you making any sense of what I am saying?

Visitor: I am understanding a little bit, but I will take longer. That is why I am taking a cup of tea and enjoying it.

Swamiji: You can enjoy a cup of tea, no objection, but you should not think it is coming from a marketplace, and so on. It is something organically involved in your being. It is a necessity. If it is not a necessity, you should not take it. Anything that is necessary is inseparable from your existence; otherwise, it cannot become necessary. Then it becomes your own person, in one sense. It enriches your person; that is why you are taking it. It widens your being, and is no more a sensual object. Then you cannot get attached to it. This is a little bit of philosophical thinking. Brood over it.

Another visitor: When I meditate, what should I concentrate on?

Swamiji: You should concentrate on your main chosen object.

Visitor: I am confused, actually.

Swamiji: What confusion have you got? You have chosen the main ideal for meditation. Carry on with it.

Visitor: Some pictures appear in my mind, and they go on changing.

Swamiji: These pictures are potentials of your own mind, and they will go away gradually by intense meditation on the object that you have chosen for meditation. Do not bother about them at all. They will exhaust themselves by coming out, as dust rises when you sweep the floor and afterwards it settles. In the beginning it is like the rising of dust because you are sweeping your mind in meditation. Then afterwards it settles, it goes away, and you do not have any problem. So don't consider it as a confusion. It is a normal experience of anybody. Carry on with it.

Another visitor: Is the object of meditation to remove all thoughts from the mind?

Swamiji: Removing something cannot be called yoga. Attaining something is yoga. You have to attain something. What will you attain? Removing is a negative process.

Visitor: We make a clean slate of our mind so that...

Swamiji: Still, it is a negative state only. When you make a clean slate, you have removed something from the mind, but what have you achieved? You see, not having darkness is different from actually having daylight. There is a difference. You cannot say absence of darkness is the same as daylight. One is a positive thing, the other is a negative thing. What do you want to get finally from meditation? What are you expecting?

Visitor: Self-realisation and the highest states that the mind...

Swamiji: If you have no worldly desires of any kind, then you will get Self-realisation, but if there is even one desire connected with external objects, society, people or any kind of arrangement in life, then it will be hard to do. So it is up to each person to decide whether there are lurking desires of any kind which pertain to this world. If there is nothing of the kind, then your path is clear.

Visitor: It is *vairagya*.

Swamiji: It is much more than *vairagya*, much more. You have nothing to gain from this world. That is the state which will pave the way directly to what you call Self-realisation. But if you think there is something in this world which you would like to have, then

it will act as an obstacle on your path, and it has to be very clear in the mind of every person whether there is anything that you would like to have in this world or you want nothing from this world. Everything in the world is of no use to you.

CHANTING OM ACCORDING TO SWAMI SIVANANDA

A visitor: In various books Swami Sivananda says that Om is a cure-all, a panacea for all disease. What does he really mean by this? Does he mean the chanting of Om?

Swamiji: You may say that, if it is chanted correctly.

Visitor: Long chanting?

Swamiji: You may call it long or short. It produces a vibration which sets right irregularities in the physical system, as well as in the mind. It produces a harmonious vibration in the entire system, so you may say it has a curative value. If you chant it properly, from the naval onwards, it produces a perfect circle, you can say, a circle of vibration around you. Vibration moves out of your personality in a circular manner, like a round circle. It can go on expanding into larger dimensions also, according to the intensity of your feeling in the chant. It is not the word or the sound that is important; it is the vibration that is emanated by the recitation, which is a medium for producing that rhythm. It produces a rhythm, a kind of electrifying resonance, you may say. If you touch a mild live wire, you will feel a kind of overwhelming vibration taking place in the entire system. Here you may say this chant is a kind of live wire, the proper utterance of which will produce a holistic circular vibration, and irregularities cannot be there in a circle. A circle is perfectly round. It is not a rectangle, a triangle, a square, and so on. It does not take that shape. The irregularities which are in our mental way of thinking and in our physical body also get straightened up; they get rounded up, you may say, as when you feel a sensation which is somewhat of the nature of perfection. It is an inclusive force.

But you must know how to chant it. Saying 'Om, Om, Om, Om' will have no effect. It is not a *japa*, like 'Om, Om, Om, Om'. That will not do anything. It must be chanted in the manner that is required, with deep feeling. It must start from the naval itself. When you deeply, resonantly chant it, you will feel a rising from the naval, and then it slowly rises up. You will feel a kind of tremor.

Visitor: If the chanting of Om becomes a sort of meditation, is there any difference between the meditation that is generated by the repetition of one's *ishta* mantra and this?

Swamiji: The *ishta* mantra can also generate the same thing because if the mantra is nothing but the name of a deity whom you are conceiving as your great beloved, the idea of that beloved will stimulate your body. It is not the mantra that is causing that, but the idea of that which you are wanting so much in your mind. It is the mind that is causing it, not merely the word. When you think of a thing which you call the best thing in the whole world, can you imagine such a thing? Nothing greater than that exists anywhere. That will produce a thrill. You will not be able to think like that, because you do not know what is the best and what is the greatest in the world. You will be flabbergasted and confused, isn't it? But yet you want the best in the world, the best of everything. You want the best of health, for instance. Everywhere you want the best of things, yet still you cannot conceive what the best is because the mind is so weak that it aspires for things which it cannot understand. Our trouble is that only.

The mind can grasp it if you are trained properly. For instance, the thought of God can simply devastate your feeling in one second.

Visitor: Can the thought of God go deep in the mind?

Swamiji: At that time the mind evaporates, and something comes and takes possession of you. I can only call it devastating, something that will tear your personality if you actually know what God is. Ramakrishna Paramahansa used to say the experience of this thought of God is something like a mad elephant entering a thatched hut. If a mad elephant enters a thatched hut, what will happen? It will simply tear the entire thatched hut to pieces. That will happen to you, if you really think of God. The whole body will break. That is why he had so many types of experiences, and he fell sick also. He had physical illness because of this torture that somehow he had to undergo because of the experiences which he had again and again.

The whole difficulty is, you cannot conceive what is the grandest thing in the world. The grandest thing, the most magnificent thing—

what is that? If you say there is no such thing, then it is a very poor concept of the world.

Another visitor: What is the role in pranayama in attaining *brahma jnana*?

Swamiji: It has no direct connection. Suppose you want to go to Delhi to achieve some purpose, and for that you have to walk on the road from here. Walking is not equal to the achievement of that purpose, but walking helps you in some way, in a preparatory, incidental manner, to achieve the goal. But one thing cannot be identified with the other because there may be a way of achieving that purpose even without walking on the road. Likewise, pranayama may help you in purifying your body and purifying your mind for the purpose of another thing which is called meditation, which is directly connected with *brahma jnana*. Pranayama, purification, etc., are not directly connected, but they are incidentally connected because they purify your personality; and yet, that is not sufficient to attain *brahma jnana*. What is required is direct meditation, and inasmuch as there are disturbances caused by factors in the human personality, to remove them you take recourse to pranayama, *tapasya*, etc. So there is an introductory effect with pranayama, etc., but that in itself cannot take you to *brahma jnana*. That is the difference.

If your aim is to reach God, pranayama is good, but it is not sufficient. For that purpose, meditation is necessary. More importance must be given to meditation. It is pre-eminently important. And correct meditation must be done. You should not conduct a wrong meditation, because meditation is the way by which you introduce into your own consciousness the characteristics of what you are wanting, namely, the Absolute.

You must know, first of all, what are the characteristics of the Absolute. Those characteristics have to be implanted in your consciousness by ruminating on those characteristics as long as possible; then those qualities of the Absolute will enter your consciousness, and you will feel a great transformation taking place in your personality. You will feel a nearness to the Ultimate Reality. So you must know the correct procedure of meditation, and the mind should not have any other desires because when you want the total whole you should not run after little titbits. When you run after the

parts, the total whole will be missed. Many times the mind finds it very difficult because it has many other occupations which it is unable to reconcile with the aspiration for the total. It is a little defect in the way of thinking. You have to understand how you can harmonise the mental cognition of the varieties of things in the world with the total whole, which is the Absolute. If that harmony can be established, you are well with this world, and you are well with God also. So that technique you must learn, and then you can carry on.

Visitor: In the process, should you definitely turn away from the world to establish...

Swamiji: You see, you have not heard me properly. I did not say that the varieties of the world should be shunned.

Visitor: In the transition period?

Swamiji: Even then. Even in the transition period you must learn the art of harmonising the perception of variety with the total whole. Meditation is nothing but that. It is not shunning anything or renouncing anything. You cannot renounce a thing which is already there. How is it possible to renounce a reality? It is not possible. And if you foolishly try to renounce that which is really there, it will pursue you wherever you go. That is no good. It is like burying a desire which is troubling you from inside. The desire should not be kept inside. It is a reality. A desire that is persisting is a reality, though it is a phantasmagoria, finally speaking. So yoga is not the rejection of anything. It is a process of gradual harmonisation of the lower with the higher, systematically, by degrees. The whole process is positive, and nothing of negativity is there in it. You don't shun anything; you make yourself friendly with everything. You are the friend of even the little atom, and not merely the Absolute, and you have to reconcile the notion of there being varieties of things with your concept of the total whole, which you are aspiring for. This is a very tremendous, herculean task, but you must follow that, and once you have succeeded in thinking like that, you will feel a wonderful, energising experience within yourself. So there is no shunning, no rejecting. You cannot reject any part of the world because it is a part of the Absolute itself. How will you reject it? Do you understand me?

Visitor: Yes.

Another visitor: What is the exact process of meditation?

Swamiji: Have you been practising meditation?

Visitor: Yes.

Swamiji: How are you practising? Tell me the method.

Visitor: They said to think of some light inside the heart.

Swamiji: If you think that concentrating on some light as located in your heart has been benefiting you, and you have no problem with it, then you can carry on with it. Only if you have any trouble with it, then you can ask me the question. If you think it is okay, if you are feeling happy, you go with it.

Another visitor: This meditation we do, is it the final goal of the achievement of success?

Swamiji: It is the final goal.

Visitor: Is it different from *Aatma vichara*?

Swamiji: It is also meditation only. *Aatma vichara* is also a meditation process only. Any kind of intense thinking, call it *Aatma vichara*, call it analysis, scientific examination, metaphysics, or by any name, when you deeply concentrate on something you are doing meditation. So finally, it is meditation only.

Visitor: Can we start with idol worship?

Swamiji: You can start with that.

THE SUBJECT AND THE OBJECT

A visitor: In one of your writings you made a comment that the difference between the subject and object should be eliminated.

Swamiji: When you yourself become the object, the difference vanishes. As long as you are observing the object, the difference continues. When you merge into the object and you yourself become that object, the distance between the two vanishes immediately and there is no further difference between the two.

Visitor: But first you become the object?

Swamiji: You become the object or the object becomes you, either way. Either the object is you or you are the object; it makes no difference. They are only two ways of describing the same thing. Either it enters you or you enter it. The result is the same: The distance between the two is abolished. Either the object is thinking or you are thinking, whatever you call it, but not you are thinking somebody else. The idea of somebody else should go away. That is what is known as union with reality. The reality is that which you regard as existing, whatever that reality be; and that thing which you consider as existing—and which, therefore, stands in the position of an object—creates a difference between itself and yourself. In order to abolish this distance you have to become the very reality of that object, and your aspirations get fulfilled because you are asking for the object. If that object has become your own consciousness, you have fulfilled the purpose of your life and there is nothing more to speak about it afterwards. You enter into silence.

Visitor: It seems as though sometimes we can get absorbed into the mantra.

Swamiji: Then in that case the object, or deity of the mantra, is the object. That which you long for, that which you want, that which is your objective, finally—it may be the deity of a mantra or anything else—the distance between that and yourself should be removed by your identification of consciousness with that particular thing, whether it is the deity of the mantra or any other thing whatsoever.

Visitor: Sometimes it seems as though I can go back into the subject.

Swamiji: What is the meaning of 'going back into the subject'? You are the subject.

Visitor: Where the mantra is being said from. Is that the same?

Swamiji: That point is not very relevant here. The point is whether the object is outside you or not. Even if you go inside you, you will see the object outside you. The question is not whether you are going inside or not. The question is whether it is standing outside you. That outsideness must be removed. That is the aim of meditation.

Another visitor: I am speaking about the social structure of religion.

Swamiji: That kind of religion cannot take a person to God. It can satisfy your human sentiments, but God is far away from that kind of social religion. God will laugh at that religion. Why don't you speak something about real religion, together with this? Let the souls of those people whom you are addressing be a little satisfied. You may be satisfying their intellect and social instinct, but satisfy their soul also to some extent. When the soul is suffering, no other thing will satisfy a human being. So inject some real religious aspect also into whatever is your profession.

Why should religion be there at all? That question may also have to be answered. Suppose there is no religion of any kind in the world; who is going to be the loser? There are people who think like this. A large section of people in the world are likely to think: "In what way is religion going to benefit me? Rather, it may make a person go down." That also is the thought of certain people because of the total misrepresentation of what religion is. It is like calling a dog a bad name and hanging it afterwards.

Swamiji: [To a visitor] You are seeing this building. Just think that you yourself are the building. You have got walls, windows and so on. You are not a person; you are this building itself. Then think that you are also this very earth on which the building is sitting. You are also the whole space outside in which the building is. You are also the mountain in front of you. You are also the sun on top. You are also the moon. You are also the stars. You are the sky. You are everything that is in front. You are everything that is behind. You

are everything that is to the right. You are everything to the left. You are everything that is above. You are everything that is below. Everything, everything, everything. Can you think like that?

This is a simple, kindergarten method of thinking of the Universal—a very simple, easy, primary school instruction on universal consciousness. I am not telling you some difficult thing. It is a simple thing. If you can think like this, you have attained great concentration.

Suppose you are moving in a bus. At the same time you must think several things: The bus has a top, the bus has a bottom, the bus has a right side, the bus has a left side, and the bus is in motion. Can you think all these at the same time? Right side, left side, top, bottom, movement—everything you think at the same time. It is integral thinking, total thinking of the action and the existence of the bus.

I am not suggesting a very philosophical method. It is a simple, commonsense method that I told you. Whatever you see with your eyes, feel that you yourself are that only, and like that it goes up to the sun, moon, stars, space, everything. Then finally, you will find that only you are existing. There cannot be anything else because that ‘anything else’ has become you. So who is existing, finally? Who is existing? Only you, but ‘you’ does not mean this person; this person has gone away. It is something else existing: the total Being that is aware that it is all things, including yourself. You also have gone into it, so the meditation is done not by you, it is done by something which includes you also. When it has included the sun, moon and stars, it has included all people—yourself, everybody. So who is meditating, tell me? Some great being is meditating, and you are nowhere there. You have abolished your individuality.

This is the way to salvation. If you go on thinking like this, you will attain salvation, and you will not take another birth afterwards. You have understood the point, but you will not like to think like that because you are busy with something, forgetting that all these busy things are included inside that. The whole total being includes every blessed thing. But your mind cannot work like that, as you are not used to it. You are a busy person thinking of all sorts of things.

Every day think like that, and see what happens. Everything will change, the entire atmosphere.

Another visitor: I have been feeling pain in my body for the past several years, and doctors don't know what it is.

Swamiji: How do you meditate?

Visitor: I meditate on the heart.

Swamiji: Do you believe that God is everywhere, or do you have a doubt about it? Do you really believe He is everywhere, even here in everything?

Visitor: Yes.

Swamiji: Then can you love all these things as you love God? Is it possible? Can you love this table as you love God? Can you love this pen as God?

Visitor: Yes. The essence of the pen is God.

Swamiji: It is very difficult to understand all these things. If God is everywhere, He is not merely the essence. He is everything. If you say that only the essence is God, then the pen itself is not God. So God is in the essence, but not in the pen. Hence, God is not everywhere. It comes to that. So here is a mistake in thinking. Do you catch the point? God is not merely the essence of the pen. If God is the essence, then the pen will be outside God. So how can you say God is everywhere when there is something outside?

This is a very important point in meditation, and it will bring a great change in your whole system if you can think God not as the essence of things but as things themselves. Think that everything—all people, including yourself—has gone inside that all-pervading Being. Will you be able to think like that? Is it possible? You will become a different person in three days. If you have understood what I said, and it has entered your mind and the meaning of this is clear to you, this meditation will remove your pain. If you really concentrate your mind in this way, you will immediately feel a great joy that you are also inside that which is everywhere. You are also inside it. So who is meditating? Because you have become one with that, because it is everywhere, it is not you who is meditating. Do you understand what I am saying? Then who is meditating? That

which is everywhere is meditating. It is thinking of you; you are not thinking of it. You are not thinking of that; it is thinking of you. So it is the other way around. If you have really understood this, you will have no problem. Be happy.

HARMONY AMONG PEOPLE

A Christian visitor: I give talks on harmony among people.

Swamiji: You will not get this harmony so easily because of basic offensive traits in a human being which will prevent any good being done, or even contemplated. There are certain very strange traits in a human being which will refuse to yield to the demand of another person. "I am, that's all. I cannot be you." This is the attitude of every person. Can you become me? Is it possible? If not, harmony fails in one second. If you cannot become me, and I am me and you are you, where is the harmony between two persons? Some concession must be there. I have to concede something, and you have to concede something, but if you are not prepared to concede anything, and I stick to my guns and you stick to your guns, where is the harmony? What is the use of seminars? What is the purpose?

Can a Christian think like a Muslim? Is it possible? No. The whole problem is this only: A Christian cannot think like a Muslim because there is such a difference between one religion and another, which you do not want to consider at all. Even your concept of God is different from the concept of God of another religion. The concept of God in Islam or Hinduism is not the same as the concept of God in Christianity. There is a fundamental difference in the root itself, so how will you bring harmony among these concepts? You have got a Trinity, for instance, and there is no Trinity in Islam. Tell the protagonists of Islam that there are three. Will they accept it? How will you have a discussion with a Muslim, for instance?

Visitor: I understand in this way, there is no question of imposing my faith on another or making another person believe in what I believe. I take it as a sharing of my faith with others, and when I share...

Swamiji: The idea is very good. What you are saying is wonderful. There should be harmony, but there should be harmony in the heart of a person, not in the words that he speaks.

Another visitor: I am studying concentration on the chakras, and how feelings and emotions can come up. What is the right way to get rid of them? Will they go by themselves?

Swamiji: No, they won't go. They cannot go like that. They will persist as long as you are alive because they are part of your being itself. How will they go?

Visitor: Then we will never be free.

Swamiji: You will be free if you adopt proper yoga techniques. Otherwise, they will not go; they will carry you to the next birth. Desires never die; they go on increasing.

Visitor: What is the right way to get rid of them?

Swamiji: Your soul has to be united with God perpetually. That is the panacea and the remedy for all problems in life. Even the worst of desires will all vanish like darkness before the rising sun. If you cannot do this for any reason, you have to pay the price for the inability to do it by taking another birth to move further, onwards and onwards. Can you adopt that technique?

Visitor: Yes, Swamiji, I will try. People say they are good Christians, good Hindus, but they are still fighting and killing continuously.

Swamiji: All that will stop if you adopt my method. And if everybody adopts that method, the earth will be heaven. But nobody wants that, because of other reasons which are pressing inside very hard. If you tell a monkey to meditate on God, will it meditate? So it also depends upon the receiver, not merely the person who tells it. You tell a cow or a bull or some animal: "Unite your soul with God." You have done your duty, of course, but it has not understood what you say. So the receiver must have some capacity according to the nature of the teaching given. Do this technique of meditation, honestly and sincerely, and you will see that miracles will take place in your life. No problem.

Another visitor: Isn't understanding of the small self, the ego, a prerequisite for the path of...

Swamiji: It is a very great prerequisite. You have to understand your small self first, in order that you may understand the big self.

Visitor: And is then the understanding of that small self also an understanding of the desire that animates it?

Swamiji: Certainly so. You are perfectly right.

Visitor: So how can one remove the limitation by the understanding of one's desire?

Swamiji: The understanding of one's desire is, at the same time, an understanding of one's limitations because every desire is a limitation, and the moment you know that there is a limitation, you also will know that there is something beyond the limitation. That which is beyond the limitation is the higher self.

Visitor: Okay, but what if you see the limitation...

Swamiji: You cannot see the limitation unless you are also aware that there is something above the limitation.

Visitor: Yes, I agree. Otherwise, there wouldn't be someone seeing the limitation. But let's say you see the limitation and you cannot do anything about the limitation.

Swamiji: No, it is not possible. When you see the horizon, you will know also what is beyond the horizon. You have a consciousness of your limitations, which means there is something above you, and you concentrate your mind on that which is above you; then the lower self will get controlled automatically.

Visitor: But if you get out of your state of concentration, then you return to the lower self with the problems that you have.

Swamiji: You will have to return again and again, many times, and also try to go above it again and again, many times. This process has to be carried on—going up and coming down, going up and coming down—until you gain so much strength that you need not have to come down at all.

Visitor: But isn't there a way of dealing with the limitations progressively...

Swamiji: It will progressively touch that, correct. But a day will come when the limitations will vanish and you will be concentrating on the higher self more and more until the limitations vanish completely. When you catch the higher self, the lower self will completely go.

Visitor: You mean, when you have achieved perfect concentration.

Swamiji: Right, right.

Visitor: Yes, but until that day?

Swamiji: Until that day you have to go on practising it. It may be for ten years, a hundred years, as the case may be according to the nature of your concentration and the power of your concentration.

Visitor: But if those limitations are the nature of your little self, and it is a prerequisite that you contend with the problems—because they are basically problems of your little self—in order to advance on the spiritual path there must be something to...

Swamiji: At every stage of your consciousness of limitation, you will be aware of that which is above the limit, and on that you have to concentrate. When you get into that higher nature, you will find that this also is limited in respect of something still higher than that. Like that, there are degrees and degrees until you reach the highest unlimited being, and by concentration on this you will find the lower limitations automatically vanish. You have to struggle hard in the beginning.

Visitor: Yes, the beginning is long.

Swamiji: Let it be. You should not be impatient. You must be very patient, and go quietly and calmly. However much time it may take, you should not get disappointed. You must have a little strength and courage, and hope. You should always hope that something will come positively.

Visitor: Yes, but that hope can be an imagination.

Swamiji: You will feel more and more composed in your mind, more and more confident, more and more strength in your mind and your feelings, and more and more self-sufficient, and less dependent, as you progress further and further.

Visitor: I find that the nature of the problems of my little self—and not just me, everyone—are substantially unaffected. In their nature they are not affected.

Swamiji: They will be affected, provided your concentration on the higher self is strong enough. They cannot but be affected. They

must; otherwise, the concentration will have no purpose. That is, now you are concentrating more on the lower self than on the higher by saying this.

Visitor: The lower self is my problem, not the higher self.

Swamiji: This is because your mind is working in two ways: It is conscious of the higher self, and conscious of the lower self also. Why do you concentrate too much on the lower when you are also aware, at the same time, that there is a higher? Why not concentrate on that?

Visitor: Because I consider it an act of hypocrisy to jump over the lower as if...

Swamiji: No, you are not jumping. When you have become an elderly person from your childhood have you become a hypocrite, or have you actually grown?

Visitor: I don't know. It depends how sincere you are.

Swamiji: You have to be confident and have faith in the practice. You cannot doubt your practice and then try to achieve anything out of it.

Visitor: I can't believe in my practice except to the degree I believe in myself.

Swamiji: Okay, even if you have achieved one degree, it is quite sufficient. That is a hope for you. One step if you take, and you are satisfied with that one step, it means you are moving in the right direction.

Visitor: But what if it is not simply that the little self that is so problematic...

Swamiji: Why are you worrying about that little self?

Visitor: Because it is it that has the demand.

Swamiji: Let the demand be there. Whatever is permissible you give it, and whatever is not permissible you don't give it.

Visitor: But that's me playing two people with myself.

Swamiji: No. There are things which will harm you and things which will help you, desires which can harm you and desires which will protect you. For example, the desire to eat a lunch when you are hungry is not a harmful desire. When you are tired, you want to sleep. That is also a desire. But there may be dangerous desires which must be sublimated, and you cannot fulfil them. You must make a distinction between harmful ones and normal ones.

Visitor: But if I sublimate them, I am merely altering the level at which they operate, and not eliminating them.

Swamiji: Sublimation does not mean destroying. It is not destruction, it is transformation. There is a difference between destruction and transformation.

Visitor: But if I sublimate them, I am merely making them operate on a different level. I am not eliminating them.

Swamiji: But they cease to be what they are. The iron becomes gold at that time.

Visitor: But it is gold that is mixed with...

Swamiji: No, it is not mixed with anything. It is completely transformed into gold. It is not mixed. The lower nature will not persist in the higher. It gets completely transmuted, just as all the dream perceptions get transmuted in waking and they do not persist in waking. It is a completely different consciousness now, so you cannot say dream objects are still persisting. They are not persisting. Likewise, transmutation will take place. You should not have so much doubt unnecessarily. Do it, and see. Without doing any practice you are putting questions. You do it, and it will do the miracle.

Visitor: But I am unscrupulous because if I have gotten myself into this mess I have no reason to trust myself, have I?

Swamiji: A person who does not trust oneself is not a human being. Every person knows what oneself is.

Visitor: Everyone knows what oneself is? Then why are we all here?

Swamiji: You are here because you are trying to know more about yourself, not that you don't know.

Visitor: So I don't know enough about myself, obviously.

Swamiji: Right, right. You know about yourself, but not enough. That's why you have come, and all are sitting here. Okay? You are a very intelligent *sadhaka*. I appreciate you. You are very honest and sincere in your feelings. You are a very good *sadhaka*, and I think you will be blessed by that. Your honesty will pay you. Be happy, and continue.

CHOOSING THE MANTRA

A visitor: Should I use a Siva mantra or a Krishna mantra for meditation?

Swamiji: Do you like Siva or Krishna?

Visitor: I like both.

Swamiji: Then both you chant—one mala of Om Nama Sivaya, one mala of Om Namō Bhagavate Vasudevaya. When the mind is oscillating between the two, it is better to do both.

Visitor: Is it possible to concentrate on both?

Swamiji: Are you not knowing that so many people are sitting here? How is the mind knowing everything unless it is concentrating? Are you seeing only one person? So if you can know so many people are sitting here, you can also know two gods are there. What is the objection?

Visitor: But is it not better if we concentrate on one?

Swamiji: But your mind is unable to do that because it is oscillating. That's why I'm suggesting both.

Visitor: Is it possible to come to a state where the mind can concentrate on one?

Swamiji: If you believe that any particular thing is able to give you whatever you want, you need not think of the other. But if you have a doubt that this is perhaps not satisfactory, and you want assistance of somebody else, then the mind will go to the other also. Are you sure that Lord Siva will give you whatever you want, or you have got a doubt? What do you say?

Visitor: I don't think anything, Swamiji. I just want the Lord's grace.

Swamiji: Which Lord's grace?

Visitor: My mind goes to Lord Krishna but my heart speaks Om Nama Sivaya.

Swamiji: Your heart is more important than your mind. You go on with Lord Siva.

Another visitor: This morning I was in the ashram, and there was a puja. I'm a Christian, but I was very touched in my heart by this puja; I loved it, and it was a very good feeling for me to be there. Do you think that for a Westerner, for a Christian, being in a Hindu puja as seen from the point of view of a Hindu, is it good?

Swamiji: Has God created Hindus and Christians, or has He created only human beings? What has He created? Tell me. Has He created Muslims, Christians, Hindus, or He has created only humanity? Which is the correct answer?

Visitor: He created man out of love.

Swamiji: Love or no love, He created human beings. So they need not be called Christians and Hindus. You are unnecessarily creating complications by putting a label on your head. God does not want Hindus and Christians and so on. He wants the soul of a human being, and the soul is not a Christian, the soul is not a Hindu. It is an impersonal radiance emanating from God Himself. The light will go to the light. So why do you create complications unnecessarily, saying you are Christian or Hindu, etc.? Be a good person, and then you will become a godly person also. Be impersonal as much as possible because God is all-pervading, and therefore He is also impersonal. We should not carry our labels before God. Every worship is wonderful—Christian worship, Hindu worship, Muslim worship, whatever it is. Every worship is wonderful if you go to the spirit of it. But you should not go with labels; otherwise, you won't appreciate it. Do you understand me? Be happy.

Another visitor: Swamiji, tell us about the relationship between the teacher and the disciple.

Swamiji: The disciple is supposed to obey the order of the mentor, the Guru. Whatever the Guru says, whatever the guide says, that the disciple has to obey. If that obedience is not there, then that person ceases to be a guide. It is a simple answer to a simple question.

Visitor: Things are going well in my life, but I still find I have a lot of anger in me and my instinctive reaction is to react in anger sometimes. Can you help me with this?

Swamiji: You are meditating and you have anger. This is what you are saying?

Visitor: Yes.

Swamiji: With whom are you angry?

Visitor: It could be anyone. If anyone attacks me verbally, my instinctive response is to attack back sometimes.

Swamiji: Who is attacking you?

Visitor: It can be any person.

Swamiji: I don't think anybody attacks like that unnecessarily. There must be some good reason. Nobody will attack like that unnecessarily. Why should they attack you? What harm have you done? Who is that person attacking you? You tell me one person, one instance.

Visitor: Yes, perhaps it is the way I am seeing it.

Swamiji: Then why are you asking me? You are only imagining they are attacking you, and imaginary questions have no answer except imaginary answers. Why are you worrying over non-existent things? Perhaps your meditation is not being conducted properly, and that is why these difficulties arise. How are you meditating?

Visitor: I concentrate on my breath and try to focus, but I get very distracted.

Swamiji: This kind of meditation is not going to free you from anger because it is a mechanical device that you are following, whereas human relations are vital. There is no connection between your breathing and your relations with human society, so you have made a mistake in choosing an inadequate path of meditation. What connection has breathing got with social connections? You have not been properly instructed by your Guru.

Another visitor: Swamiji, how did you know that you had chosen the right Guru, that you were really listening to the voice of God when you chose your Guru?

Swamiji: If you feel fully satisfied with the instructions of the Guru, and at the same time you feel you are improving in your life by following the instructions of the Guru, you can conclude that you have chosen the right Guru. It depends upon your feelings.

Another visitor: In the beginning, in following a Guru there is a lot of resistance.

Swamiji: What kind of resistance? Give me an instance, an example.

Visitor: Not obeying the instructions exactly.

Swamiji: Why do you not want to obey the instructions? What is your problem?

Visitor: It's in me, a kind of not wanting to surrender, not giving myself totally.

Swamiji: Nobody has asked you to give up yourself, only you are being enlightened by certain guidance in life. Don't you like guidance in enlightenment?

Visitor: I want it, but I'm not used to it. It's hard for me to accept it.

Swamiji: What do you want then, finally? What are you searching for?

Visitor: Freedom, inner freedom.

Swamiji: You cannot get it when you are unable to surrender yourself. If the personality is so strong and the ego is very adamant, then the question of surrender doesn't arise. Understand? So if you maintain your own egoistic personality and would not give concession to the advice given by the teacher, then you don't require a teacher.

Visitor: I want to give it up, but I want some help on how to give it up. I do want to give it up.

Swamiji: That is the duty of the teacher to tell you how to do it. If the teacher cannot answer this question, then I'm sorry for that Guru [laughter]. What is the use of the Guru if the Guru cannot remove

your problems and give you ideas and suggestions how to get over them?

Now you are telling me all these things. What do you expect from me? Why are you telling me all these things?

Visitor: Maybe it will help me overcome some of the resistance in me, that's why. I'm struggling a lot these days with this resistance, and I feel it very strongly.

Swamiji: What are you resisting? What kind of thing?

Visitor: I don't know.

Swamiji: How can you resist unless you know that you are resisting something? What do you do in your country?

Visitor: I am a psychologist.

Swamiji: You are a psychologist and you cannot understand your own mind.

Visitor: True.

Swamiji: What are you aiming at finally?

Visitor: Living more happily, living freer.

Swamiji: Are you not happy?

Visitor: Not enough. No, I don't know how to be happy the way I want to.

Swamiji: Are you unhappy?

Visitor: Sometimes, yes.

Swamiji: Who creates the unhappiness for you?

Visitor: The ego.

Swamiji: You are saying you are creating your own unhappiness. How can you say that you are a good psychologist?

Visitor: Maybe I'm not a good psychologist. I feel that spiritual work is above and beyond psychology.

Swamiji: Wonderful. So what is the harm in it? Spirituality is not against psychology. It is one of the stages of understanding which leads to spiritual living also. Do you have any trouble in your life?

Visitor: I don't have external troubles. I have the trouble in me that is making life difficult for myself.

Swamiji: You require a deep psychoanalytical study of yourself, and I don't have time to do all these things now. I am not going to do any psychoanalytical probe into your personality, though it is worth doing. If you are a psychologist yourself, you can be a psychoanalyst of yourself only. Another person is not necessary. The only thing is, you have not thought properly over this issue, and you are in a state of mental muddle, I can say, and you have no guidance from anybody. You yourself are the master of all things, and that is a little difficult thing. Tell your Guru that I said you require a psychoanalytical probe, and see what he says.

What is your spiritual practice?

Visitor: Contemplating.

Swamiji: On what are you contemplating?

Visitor: On something that I haven't experienced—on Pure Consciousness, on Truth.

Swamiji: Where is Pure Consciousness? Where is it sitting?

Visitor: Everywhere.

Swamiji: You are concentrating on that which is everywhere? Are you sure about it, or have you got any doubts about it?

Visitor: I am sure I have doubts.

Swamiji: I understand that you are a very good person, but you are a little confused on certain things. I can only repeat I have no time to talk on the subject because so many are sitting here and I cannot give all the time to yourself. So you excuse me with this remark I have made: You require deep consideration.

Who else wants to talk to me?

Another visitor: In my heart I love God, but when it comes time to meditate sometimes I have a fight inside myself, between my heart and being distracted by all the things that I need to do.

Swamiji: Find one hour a day to sit alone and meditate.

Visitor: And how does one reconcile being married and having very different needs from one's partner in spiritual practice?

Swamiji: Is there a contradiction, or are you imagining there is a contradiction?

Visitor: I am probably imagining it.

Swamiji: You please verify whether it is an unnecessary imagination or it is a fact.

Visitor: What happens is, there are various times when someone else's needs are clear to me so that my needs take last place, and I disregard what I feel I am being asked to do by my spirit, so I don't know how to resolve that contradiction.

Swamiji: Either you develop a strength within yourself to rectify the other person who is not thinking correctly or, if it is not possible, you just ignore the trouble that is arising, at least for an hour or so in a day. Afterwards, if your prayer to God is sincere, something will take place which will solve your problems. In an unknown manner your problems get solved.

VALUES IN HUMAN LIFE

A visitor: Can we inculcate values in the younger generation and, if so, what is the methodology?

Swamiji: Why are you asking “Can we”? You have to inculcate values, because would you like anybody to live a valueless life? But only, one must know what the value is, what kind of value you are trying to introduce. What kind of value is required? Is it moral law, political law, ethical law? What kind of law? A value is that which determines the very existence of things, and we have a principle laid down in ancient times that there are four values in life which include every other conceivable value in the world, namely, economic law, which is the necessity to look to the material needs of people and to provide all means that are required for furnishing material necessities to people. Then there is vital law, emotional law, aesthetic law. We do not want only material comfort. We also seek a heart, beauty, aesthetic perception. Don't you like beautiful things? There is an urge for anything that can be regarded as attractive. The principle of the attraction of a person to anything in the world is included in the whole area of knowledge called emotional value. It is a deep subject, which perhaps comes under aesthetics.

Then you have got eternal value. According to our Indian tradition, it is called the liberation of the spirit from every kind of bondage. In Sanskrit they call it moksha. Only that person can be regarded as a truly wise person who can harmonise these three kinds of values without bringing about any conflict among themselves under a determining law, which is called dharma. ‘Dharma’ is a Sanskrit word which means, finally, the law which binds things together, and binds in every way.

When dharma operates as a binding factor in the physical body, it is called health. When dharma operates through the reason, it is called rationality, logic. When it operates through the feeling, it is called joy, happiness. When it operates through society, it becomes friendship, goodwill and harmonious behaviour. Even gravitation is a part of dharma only, which decides the very existence of life in the world. The gravitational force that decides the course of the

earth around the sun, and of the planets everywhere, is the dharma of the physical universe. That is to say, that is called dharma which is the law that keeps everything intact harmoniously without dismembering anything that is originally organic. Life is an organic inclusiveness of every kind of value, and if you dismember the part, that is adharma. Adharma is the tendency in any area of life which dismembers the wholeness that is operating in things and violates the law of integrality in all the areas of life.

Four values have been mentioned. The law that regulates everything, even the very existence of a human being, even the very existence of the Earth itself, is called Universal Law, on which is based every other kind of law you can think in your mind. You can make any law, but it cannot stand if it violates Universal Law. And I mentioned other things: the economic law, the vital law, and the eternal law. These are the four aspects of supreme value, which is life itself.

Life itself is a value. You cannot disregard life, neither your life nor anybody else's life. Life is sacred. Your life is sacred, and everybody else's life is also equally sacred. You cannot insult the life of any other person or any other living being even, let alone human beings. This is India's concept of values. And you mentioned to me, "Is it necessary to inculcate values in people?" That is the only thing that you have to inculcate. What else is there? It includes everything else.

Visitor: I realise the importance or the significance of values. But the problem is, we have our limitations. How to inculcate values in a young person?

Swamiji: If you are yourself living this kind of life, your very personality will speak more loudly than the words that you utter before students. You will shed a ray around you, and everybody will recognise "Here is a stalwart, here is a great man", and they will be forced to salute you because of the might and the magnanimity and the magnificence of your personality, which you will automatically imbibe by the entry of these cosmic powers to which I made reference just now. What you are is much more than what you say or what you do, and your personality will attract even mountains, what to speak of students. So you must be a great man in the sense of what you call

greatness, and then you will see things bend before you. And you should believe what I say. It is a hundred percent truth. The teacher is greater than the students. He is not one among other people. The greatness does not lie in his physical tallness or anything like that. It is a majesty that manifests itself in his own personality due to his living this integral life in his own personal life. What you teach must also be lived; otherwise, what is the good of teaching law and so on when you yourself break the law? So this is what I can tell you briefly. Think over it.

Visitor: It is very inspiring and enlightening. It is crystallised wisdom.

Swamiji: This is what I try to place before you: the crystallised part of India's culture, to which I made reference in the beginning.

I belong to all the religions. That is a new thing I am saying about myself. I do not belong to any particular religion, but I belong to every religion and I accept the truths of all the religions, all the prophets.

It is difficult to belong to all religions. It is not easy to do that because each one differs from the other apparently, isn't it? Christianity and Buddhism and Jainism and Islam—you cannot connect them together because of their operative differences. But if you go deep into them, you will find there is something common among them. You can become friends, if you want.

A visitor: What is your concept of God?

Swamiji: I first of all want to know what is your concept; then I will comment on it.

Visitor: My concept of God is the all-pervading power that keeps the creation going, and all of us have a little piece of Him in us. Our consciousness is...

Swamiji: This is a very, very correct definition. We all have a piece of Him, a little bit. That is what you are saying. A little piece of Him is present in each one of us.

Visitor: Yes.

Swamiji: What is the purpose of loving God, according to religion? Why do you want to love God? What for?

Visitor: Well, because you want to know your own origin.

Swamiji: After having known it, what happens to you?

Visitor: Well, the body will vanish, and my consciousness will somehow live on.

Swamiji: Where will it live?

Visitor: I am an old man, so I will know pretty soon.

Swamiji: If you're an old man, what does it matter? I am talking about the location of consciousness after having known the origin from where you have come.

Visitor: Well, I think our consciousness will dwell in a place where time and space, in a sense, is irrelevant and so it is useless for us to...

Swamiji: This is another way of saying you will dwell in God. This is the essence of religion, and it is beautifully put by you, and it is wonderful. This is my concept also. We agree with each other.

Visitor: You have taught me something, after all.

Swamiji: After all, we have agreed with each other. It is a great achievement. People never agree with each other. This is the first time two persons are agreeing.

Now you have understood the whole thing correctly. The real thing is what you have told just now. If that is clear to the mind, and one can live the life of oneself in this world in the light of that knowledge, one is really a religious person, call him by any name you like.

It is wonderful to remember all these things. The concept of God is the same as the concept of life and the concept of the aim of existence. They all mean the same thing.

We do not always wish to be a little piece of God. Let us be full unity. Why should you be a little piece? Better than a little piece, you can become a larger and larger part, until you are inseparable from Him. The ray of the sun is a piece of the sun, you may say. A little bit

of the sun is coming through its rays. Through the rays you can go to the real because, primarily, the rays cannot be distinguished from the sun. They are the sun only. So this little piece is exactly like the original, and it is the passage to reach that original itself, for which purpose only we are existing through these religious activities, prayers, meditations, etc.

UNIVERSAL LAW

An ashramite: What is universal law?

Swamiji: Universal law is that which keeps every little bit of the universe intact as a whole, and never allows it to disperse into parts. The whole thing is brought together in a powerful cementing force so that the whole universe becomes one person only. Similarly, you are made up of little cells, millions and millions of them, but you don't feel that you are made up of so many cells. You feel you are one. There is a law which brings all these millions of cells into one forceful collation of a centrality of existence so that you don't think that you are made up of little things. You are one whole thing. There seems to be millions of things in the universe, but they are not millions of things. They are all put together into a single Mahapurusha, Purushottama, as you call it. Just as you are one person, there is also one person in the cosmos. As you feel "I am one whole", the Universal Being also feels "I am one whole", which includes you and everything else. So it is the Cosmic Person, in whom every little particle of the universe is brought together into a completeness, and every little thing becomes a soul. You don't feel that your soul is in one place and the cells of your body are somewhere else. The cells themselves have become your soul, so that you are one integral, indivisible being. You are not made up of little parts. That is the state of the universe also. The whole universe, which includes you also, is one indivisible central existence which is conscious of itself. You are conscious of yourself, and that also is conscious of itself, in which consciousness everybody is included. Just as all the cells are included in your consciousness, the whole universe is included in that. That central consciousness which brings everything together into one whole, that is the universal law. Otherwise, everybody will run here and there, and your ears and nose will also be here and there. [*Laughter*]

Ashramite: In which way we are contacting the law, Swamiji?

Swamiji: You are always feeling that you are far away from the universe. "The universe is so big, so many millions of miles away,

and there are the sun, moon and stars. I am somewhere on the Earth.” This idea is a mistake. You are not down below; you are everywhere. Why are you thinking that the stars are millions and millions of miles away? Then the stars will feel that you are millions and millions of miles away. Whatever you think about them, they will think about you also. Are you not millions of miles away from something? They are in the high sky, but you are also in the high sky. Where are you sitting? The entire Earth is moving in space, so you are in the middle of space. You are thinking that you are on the Earth, but why think like that? You are in the middle of space, and this shuttle is moving with great force, a spinning planet, and with that you are moving in space. You imagine you are in India, and so on. This idea must completely go away. You are in midspace. Can you think like this?

Ashramite: It is total thinking, Swamiji.

Swamiji: Yes, yes. It requires a little bit of calmly sitting quiet. For a few minutes you must be alone, not talking to anyone. Think over this. You are always busy, running, running, and so you cannot think like this. Keep quiet at least for half an hour, don't talk to anybody, and see what thoughts come. One day the time will come when you are alone. Nobody will come to you. Why do you wait for that day? Today itself be prepared for it. It is no difficulty at all. It is a simple thing, only you are mixing up ideas and creating a chaotic thought. That is the only mistake.

Ashramite: Swamiji, sometimes it is not so difficult for me, and sometimes it is difficult for me.

Swamiji: Because you are not able to catch the spirit of what I told you. It slips from the mind. Again and again the idea comes that God is somewhere far away, and moksha is after millions of years. It is not true. Moksha is not after millions of years, and God is not far away somewhere.

Ashramite: Sometimes it comes and...

Swamiji: Everybody feels like that. Everybody who is sitting here feels that God is millions and millions of miles away and we are on this Earth, this little planet, so He is not going to come so easily. This stupid idea will not leave anybody's mind because the force of

gravity of the Earth compels you to think that you are on the Earth only. The force of gravity pulls the mind also, not merely the body, so you are Earthbound even in your thoughts. Get rid of this idea by this analytical process of meditation. You are jumping here and there, talking to people. It won't work. You must be alone to yourself for some time. Don't talk to any person. Be alone to yourself, and see what this mystery is. Once you catch it, you will be so happy and free, and you will not bother about anything afterwards. You will simply be a master of everything. Really you are a master, because the whole thing is with you. Why are you degrading yourself by thinking you are a little person, a little boy coming from somewhere, having a father somewhere? This idea must go away—no father, no mother, nothing is there. It is all an illusion in the mind, complete with the drama, and when the drama vanishes, you will find yourself alone. You are yourself sufficient for you. You won't want anybody's help if this thought is centralised and merged in your heart. The whole world is with you, so why do you want another man's friendship?

A visitor: Sometimes I think of some object of meditation, instead of just general. Is this okay, also practising mantras?

Swamiji: What object are you meditating on?

Visitor: Sometimes I see Swamiji, sometimes Christ, sometimes Krishna, and hold on to that thought.

Swamiji: What do you gain by this kind of thought? What is the benefit?

Visitor: If successful, there is only that one thought, and there's not this and that, and going around.

Swamiji: You feel this kind of thought is beneficial to you?

Visitor: Yes, Swamiji.

Swamiji: All right, go ahead.

Another visitor: My method to come to Self-realisation is through hatha yoga, and I would like to know how people in this institution are trying to realise it through raja yoga, or through meditation.

Swamiji: The Self is realised only through meditation. There is no other way.

Visitor: Hatha yoga is a way to raja yoga.

Swamiji: Let hatha yoga be the way to raja yoga; it is all right, but until you practise raja yoga, Self-realisation cannot come. If you spend all your life in hatha yoga, then where is the time for raja yoga? Hatha yoga is not as important as raja yoga, and when you are perfect in meditation according to raja yoga, you can give only minimum time for hatha yoga but maximum time for meditation through raja yoga. Do you understand me? Everybody can do hatha yoga. It is perfectly all right, but it is not sufficient. It is only a preparation. The real yoga is meditation, and that is possible only through raja yoga.

QUESTIONS ABOUT SELF-REALISATION AND MEDITATION

[Questions and answers from a group of Japanese visitors are being translated by a translator.]

A visitor: What is the difference between Self-realisation and Self-creation?

Swamiji: There is no such thing as Self-creation because the Self is already there. It need not be created; it has only to be realised. Of course, you can call it Self-creation in another sense. We have a lower self and a higher self, and if your lower self is trying to expand into the higher self, you may call it a kind of Self-creation. So when the lower self expands into the higher self, it is Self-creation, and also Self-realisation at the same time.

Visitor: When time passes, the love among the families or their friends or lovers fades out. When time changes, things change. Our body changes, and people age. Do you think that the love among families, friends or lovers will also change and fade away? Is this life?

Swamiji: Yes, it will change and slowly it will fade away. Right.

Visitor: When our body perishes, will the love and compassion stay or remain, or does the love also die out when our body perishes?

Swamiji: The love will not die, but it will be carried over to the next birth. There are two kinds of love. One is the love for particular persons and particular things. Another love is the love for the whole universe and God. When you have developed love for the whole universe, the individual love will get absorbed into it and it will not remain separate, as if outside, because that which is universal includes all individuals also. Actually, there is no necessity to pay special attention to individuals, because they are included in the total universe.

You have been speaking about the universe. This kind of meditation will one day make you one with the universe, in which case, you will not be existing as isolated individual bodies. Do you

catch this point? If this is clear, you have also understood what is God. The consciousness in the universe is called God. Just as there is consciousness in you, there is consciousness in the whole universe, and your individual consciousness is included in the universal consciousness of God. So Self-realisation is the same as God-realisation.

Visitor: You mentioned two kinds of love. When the love and compassion are so highly elevated, then we will be guided to Self-realisation?

Swamiji: Only if the love and what you call compassion are expanded or extended to the whole universe, then you can call it a means to Self-realisation. But it should not be confined only to particular individuals or things.

Visitor: I am asking from the lower level because I have not achieved a very high level yet. However, every day I meditate and practise yoga asanas and pranyamas, and also I conduct my daily life and my work. So what is the principle of spending everyday life in order to achieve the higher level?

Swamiji: Together with all these things that you are doing, you must also meditate in the way that you have described already. Do all the work that you are doing, there is no objection, but also do this meditation for one hour, as we have already been considering.

Visitor: I would like to talk about my experience, and I would like to ask for your comment. One time I was meditating at the Zen temple in Japan, and then after forty minutes I felt a hand on one of my shoulders, and the hand was very warm. I felt like the sunshine was accumulated in my right shoulder, and the palm of a person was on my shoulder. Then I looked back, and there was nobody. This was repeated two times. Then at that time somehow I was so satisfied internally in my heart and I felt the full bliss. My question is, how should I understand this experience? This is only one experience. How should I deal with these experiences? Am I going to have more experiences like this, and how should I act when I have such experiences?

Swamiji: You can continue the Zen meditation, and this is an example of a good experience. You are moving in the right direction, so continue the meditation. There is no trouble, no problem. Whenever the mind is concentrated, such experiences will follow naturally. There is nothing to worry about.

Visitor: This is only a process of the meditation?

Swamiji: It is a process.

Visitor: And I will get all different kinds of experiences?

Swamiji: Different kinds of experiences will follow, much more than this.

Visitor: So the person who put the hand on my shoulder is not the only god that I have to be worshipping, or not the god who is always guarding me and protecting me?

Swamiji: In Zen meditation, as far as I understand, there is no God. It is a total concentration on a principle, which you may call God if you like. It is a meditation on a principle, and it is an act of intense concentration on one thing continuously which brings about these experiences. You can call it God, provided you think that this object of Zen is universal in its nature. Then you may call it God.

Another visitor: Why are there sick people? Although all of us are wishing for peace and also health, why do people get sick?

Swamiji: It has many reasons, not only one reason. One of the reasons is wrong living. The other reason is some power or force generated by actions done in the past. There are two reasons: Something the person has brought to this life from actions done in the previous life is a reason for the experiences in this life. And the other one is an erroneous way of living, contrary to nature, contrary to a rational and reasonable way of living and proper psychological alignment of one's own being. So there is an immediate cause, and also a transcendental cause.

Visitor: When a patient has found that he is not going to be cured, then what should he do?

Swamiji: Then two things should be done. Firstly, one should rectify one's way of living—eating, drinking, sleeping, and thinking. They must be harmonised as far as possible. The second thing is, one should meditate on the Supreme Creative Principle as the highest curative power. These are the only two things that are practicable under the present circumstances.

Visitor: How should the families around the patient react?

Swamiji: The family should serve the person who is sick. They must serve, do service to the one who is sick in the family—father, mother, whoever it is. The duty of the members is to serve this person who is sick in the family.

Visitor: In which manner?

Swamiji: By every way—by loving, compassionate and affectionate treatment, by proper diet, proper medicine and, finally, by prayer to God. Doctors can prescribe medicine, but they don't have an affectionate heart. There is a difference between a family member speaking to a patient, and a doctor speaking. There is a great difference.

Another visitor: I have two questions regarding the method of meditation. Should we meditate in the morning, or in the evening, or any time is okay?

Swamiji: Any time is okay, provided your mind is free at that time. If the mind is occupied with some immediate work, that may not be a suitable time for meditation.

Visitor: Another question is, I usually meditate for one hour, and when I feel relaxed and good, and my body condition is very healthy, then one hour goes very quickly and I feel it is a very short time. And when my condition is not so good, I feel it's very long. So the time of the meditation is ideal for one hour, whether I feel it short or long, or when I feel it very happy then it could be shorter?

Swamiji: No, it should not be made shorter. You can make it longer if you have time enough, but if you have no time, practise at least one hour. Why do you make it shorter? It is not necessary. Let it be one hour; that's good. The question of shortening the time arises only

when you are very busy with something. Otherwise, why should you shorten it?

Visitor: I have a friend who says she can receive cosmic power in her palm, and so she concentrates this cosmic power in her palm and then heals people. Do you believe that the person can concentrate cosmic power in the palm and heal the patient?

Swamiji: Yes, it is possible.

Visitor: Sometimes it works wonderfully. Sometimes it does not work on each individual patient. Is it because of the quality of the patient who receives this cosmic power?

Swamiji: It is the quality of the patient's receptivity, also the quality of the concentration through meditation of the person who is palming.

Visitor: Is this person who is palming talented by birth?

Swamiji: It can be called a talent by birth because this person must have practised meditation in the previous birth, and so it is coming automatically in the early days of life itself, but it cannot come without practise. She might have practised earlier.

Visitor: Sometimes you have a relationship with your friend or somebody, and you think that what you are saying or what you are doing to that person is good for her or good for him, but this person does not recognise that I am doing good for her or advising good for her. Then sometimes this person suffers from my advice or my actions. Should I continue my good action to that person in spite of the suffering from this person, or should I stop?

Swamiji: The person cannot suffer if your advice is given in a proper manner. The way of giving advice also is important, not merely the advice that is given. The advice should be very loving, affectionate and intelligent. It should not be abruptly saying something.

Visitor: When I have a very firm conviction that this is good for her, for instance, and one method was not received by that person, then I have to consider other ways so that this person can receive and welcome it.

Swamiji: You adopt that way by which it can be received by the person. If your mind is in harmony with the way of thinking of the other person, then your advice will take effect. But if you are disharmonious in your way of thinking, it cannot be received so easily.

Another visitor: As you know, when we see the world news this year, there are a lot of natural disasters. In Japan we had a very big earthquake in Kobe, so it looks like the universal God is manifesting in various ways as the form of natural calamities. Is this a certain sign of the universal God, and if it is a sign, what should we be doing?

Swamiji: If you can do something to prevent these catastrophes, do it. If you cannot do anything because the catastrophe is too big for you, then only you feel very incapacitated. As long as it is possible, do the best possible.

Visitor: Is it the intention of God or a message to human beings?

Swamiji: You cannot separate God and the human being. They work jointly, together, and the action of God and the thought in your mind are not two distinct actions taking place. They act simultaneously. So the action of God, whatever be the nature of that action, also includes the compulsion from you to do something. They are two sides of a single action. It is not that you are doing something opposed to God. It is not like that. Your way of thinking and your feeling in such conditions is a part of the thought of God Himself, who seems to be doing something else from your point of view.

God does not do bad things. He always does what is necessary, and you should not complain that God is doing something bad just because something that we cannot accommodate ourselves with from our personal point of view looks unnecessary. How can you judge any particular thing as necessary or unnecessary unless you look at that particular thing from a universal point of view? You cannot judge a thing from your personal point of view. You will always have a partiality for this side or that side. You said you are meditating on the universal Whole. If that is the case, you are included in this action that is taking place, which is the action of the universe. You should not stand outside and make a judgment.

Visitor: My question is about the earthquake in Kobe. Many people died; five thousand people died. Some people died, and some people were saved and survived. What is the difference of these people who died and those who did not die? Does this depend on the karma of the previous life?

Swamiji: When some surgery is conducted on the body of a person, something is destroyed and something is saved. Do you understand what I say? When medical surgery is performed on a person, some part of the body is destroyed and some part of the body is protected. So this is exactly what is happening. Something goes and something is remaining for the sake of something which is higher than what actually has taken place. The health of a person requires that some parts should go and some other parts should remain because the other part that remains is the real whole body. If half the body is cut off by surgery, still the whole person is remaining. He doesn't feel that he is only half a person.

You must always look at things from a total, cosmic point of view. You should not look from the point of view of Japan or any particular place of the world. It is not Japan or any country that is facing the trouble. It is the whole universe, and Japan is only one piece of it. If there is any pain in the leg or in any other part of the body, it is a pain felt by the whole body. It is not only the leg that is feeling the pain, it is the whole body. So it is with Japan or India or anything; it is a total action taking place in the whole universe, and you cannot understand it until you think like the universe. You must think not like an individual Japanese or Indian, but you must think like a total cosmic person. Then you will get the answer to it.

Another visitor: This is my personal experience. When I first started yoga practice, I did fasting. Then after fasting for several days, I found my mind was so clear and I felt my mind was unified with nature, and I felt full of bliss, and I was thankful for everything. However, after fasting, when I started eating regular meals again, then I have to go to the toilet and everything, then it starts to go back to the life before. So how can I maintain this blissful feeling without doing fasting and while making the usual normal life?

Swamiji: Normal life does not necessarily mean not eating. It also does not mean too much eating. You must eat only as much as is necessary for the health of the body. We need not go to extremes of fifteen days not eating, and afterwards starting eating. That is not a healthy way. The best thing is, eat a little every day, but not more than what is necessary for health. That is a harmonious way of taking food instead of taking extremes. For fifteen days you don't eat, and afterward you eat more; that is not a healthy way. It must be harmonious every day, and the minimum, as much as is necessary for the health of the body.

Visitor: Then I can maintain my spiritual bliss?

Swamiji: Spiritual bliss comes by meditation, not only by food. Food cannot bring peace of mind. It is only a means of maintaining health, and peace of mind can come only by meditation.

Another visitor: Since I have started yoga, meditation, I have peace of mind, and I am very kind and gentle to people, and I have compassion to people, except my family. That's my fault. I get very angry at my family. I think this is my special ego love.

Swamiji: If you are very compassionate to people, is the family not people?

Visitor: Yes, they are people, but because I have a very egoistic love for the family—I want my children to be like this or I want my husband to be like this, then that makes me angry at the family. But if I continue my meditation, do you think I will also have peace in my mind for my family?

Swamiji: Yes, right. If you continue meditation properly, this difficulty will vanish. Otherwise, it will mean that you love distant people and do not love nearer people. Family people are very near, and you are saying you are loving people who are far away. What is the purpose of that? You are distinguishing between nearer people and faraway people. People are everywhere, inside and outside. Why are you making distinctions?

Visitor: What is the method or way of meditation? Do you think meditation only takes place when you sit down in lotus posture and close your eyes and keep quiet, because through my experience as

a calligrapher, when I am drawing calligraphy and concentrating my mind, I feel the same bliss. Also I am an ice dancer, and when I'm dancing and concentrating on dancing, I also get the same type of very happy, blissful feelings. Or when I am devoting time to somebody and work for somebody with selfless works, I also feel the same feeling. So my question is, could the form of meditation be different, or still do we have to sit down?

Swamiji: Meditation, finally, is a universal feeling in the heart. If this feeling continues even while you are doing any other work—dancing or calligraphy or whatever it is—it will bring the same happiness because happiness does not come from dancing or calligraphy. It comes from the universal feeling that you are maintaining even at that time. So the question is answered. It is only the feeling of the Universal that brings happiness, not the action as such, though the action will not prevent this happiness if the feeling continues.

Another visitor: All our bodies, including yourself, will get older and have sickness, and then deteriorate and perish. What kind of feeling do you have toward your body?

Swamiji: I have a feeling towards my body as I have a feeling towards the whole universe. That is the same feeling I have got because I am not outside the universe.

Visitor: The last question is about the destiny of human beings. I have heard that each individual has their own destiny when we are born, and usually it is very difficult to change. Swamiji said that when we do sadhana and meditation, we might be able to change part of our destiny. But since we are ordinary people, is there any chance we can change our destiny?

Swamiji: You cannot change anything, but you will not be able to feel the pain of any unpleasant experience because of the power of your meditation. The unpleasantness associated with the change will not be there because of the power of your meditation, but the change will continue nevertheless.

Visitor: I want to thank you, Swamiji, because my mother is very aged and critically ill but in spite of that I came to Rishikesh and

I am very thankful to Swamiji because the last word spoken by Swamiji is exactly my feeling to my mother.

Swamiji: Right. Thank you.

Another visitor: There is so much misunderstanding in Japan for yoga itself because people think yoga is totally wrong.

Swamiji: It is because they have not understood what yoga is. That is a mistake in the thought itself, so you must rectify it by your group meditation. You join together and counteract that wrong thinking by your proper approach to things as they are. That is the highest social work. When you go to Japan, you start spreading the wave of good thoughts. It will influence everybody. That will rectify all the errors of thinking in other people.

GOD PULLS THE WORLD

A visitor: Can human awareness, consciousness, go to a much higher level? That's what is predicted, in fact. To survive, we need a higher consciousness.

Swamiji: Yes, it is believed that the cycle of time, which moves somewhat like a wheel, has its ups and downs. There are occasions in the process of history when there are cultural downward movements, but the wheel always moves; therefore, there is no permanent down and permanent up for the wheel. It is always a movement from one condition to another condition, and we may hope that a better condition of human values will emerge in the course of time. Mankind gets disillusioned after having lived in this state of affairs for a long time; humanity has taken a set of values as most desirable, under which conditions people are living now, but a day will come when you will be fed up with it. It is not of any utility to you. And then, what you said is correct. There will be a higher upward movement of consciousness into states of more and more integration and comprehensiveness. In other words, perhaps we will be moving Godward in due course, which must take place because God cannot keep quiet. He will certainly pull the whole world towards Himself in the process of what we call evolution. So good days are coming. Let us be happy.

The universe has to move towards its ultimate centre. It cannot perish. So always hope for the best. God pulls the world. As Aristotle put it, God pulls the world as the beloved pulls the lover, not by a physical chain but as an indescribable affinity between one and the other. Because the world has come from God, the characteristics of God must be immanently present in the world; therefore, it is natural that the world has to be pulled back to its source. The effect always moves to the cause, so one day or the other there will be universal God-realisation. This is the belief of many philosophers—universal God-realisation. This is a message for you, a good message.

Visitor: My question is, could you advise us how to participate in raising awareness and consciousness to a higher level, that we can open up to the inner wisdom, and not just trust the rational mind?

Swamiji: Are you already doing something in this direction?

Visitor: Yes.

Swamiji: Tell me how you are proceeding. What is your method?

Visitor: I am meditating. I am trying to bring people in touch with each other by going to people from different religions—to Buddhists, to Sikh people, to Hindu people.

Swamiji: You meet people belonging to different religions. And what do you tell them?

Visitor: That we should open up our cultures and that we can be aware of the state of our universe.

Swamiji: What is their reaction to what you say?

Visitor: Positive.

Swamiji: For this reason you are travelling from place to place to meet people of different categories?

Visitor: I feel like I am sent. I feel like a donkey who takes messages from one place to another.

Swamiji: You should not talk to the masses, because that cannot be received properly. Each person you must meet personally—it may be one Muslim, one Christian, one Buddhist, one Hindu, one this, one that. When you are satisfied with your interview with that particular person, and there is a positive response, your work with that person is over. Be happy that you have done some good work.

Visitor: And then I can put it on paper and transmit it to other people?

Swamiji: You can write for your benefit; there is no objection. Actually, messages of God and prophets do not necessarily have a need for writing. Your words that are written will not convince people so much as the words that you speak, because when you speak there is a compelling conviction arising from your words, and not so much when you read a printed book. A printed book also is good, but speaking is much better. Likewise, you can meet different people. It doesn't mean that you can meet all the people in the world—just as much as you can within the ambit of your capacity. And, finally, God

Himself will tell you what to do. Inspiration will come from inside, and do as the order comes from above. This is my message to you.

Another visitor: What advice can you give to a married woman who wants to live a spiritual life, to have a spiritual Guru?

Swamiji: You get up in the morning at some time. For half an hour, be alone to yourself. Don't talk to any person. You may be sitting on your own bed or sitting anywhere else. Close your eyes. Deeply think from where you have come: "So many incarnations I have passed through. I have been born many times. I have seen many fathers and mothers, many brothers and sisters. So who are my parents, really speaking?" Thousands of births you have taken, with thousands of fathers and mothers, thousands of brothers, sisters, relatives. So if that is the case, who is your father? Can you say anything? Do you understand what I mean? Everybody in the world will be your relative, if you can remember your thousands of births before. If this awareness is maintained by you, you will not get attached to anybody. Now you are saying "this is my sister, this is my brother", so you are attached. This analysis will raise you to a level of perception where you will find everybody is your brother, everybody is your sister, everybody is your father, mother. But from where are these people coming, these fathers and mothers who are so many in number? They come from one central seed of all these manifestations: God Almighty.

Hence, where are you from? Not from Mauritius or anywhere. "I am coming from the supreme God Almighty, so His grace is always inside me." Go on meditating like this for half an hour in the morning, half an hour in the evening because you are a busy person. Study the Bhagavadgita every day, or the Srimad Bhagavatam, and do whatever service you can for people, in your own capacity. This sadhana is sufficient for you. There is nothing more to say. Okay? Hari Om.

ABSORBING THE LOWER INTO THE HIGHER

Swamiji [to a visitor]: Spirituality is a process of gradual ascent from matter to spirit. You cannot reject matter and go to spirit, because spirit is only a flowering of the material existence you are thinking of. Matter melts down into the liquefied condition of spiritual existence. It doesn't mean that it is opposed to the spirit. You are thinking that matter is opposed to spirit, and materiality is against spirituality. It is not like that. Lower knowledge is not rejected by higher knowledge. It is subsumed and absorbed into the higher knowledge. You are saying that lower knowledge opposes higher knowledge. Lower knowledge does not oppose the higher, but is transcended by the higher. Do you know the difference between the two? When you grow into an adult from childhood, you don't reject the childhood; you have only absorbed it into your adulthood. Can you say there is a contradiction between the genius that you are and a little baby that you were? If that is the case, then there is no contradiction in anything in the world. It is only a gradual development from lower to higher, from lesser to more noble, and from the finite to the infinite. So you cannot say something is useless.

Visitor: But things such as jealousy come automatically.

Swamiji: You have to materially exist and also spiritually exist. You have to intellectually exist and morally exist, and also exist socially. You cannot deny existence of one aspect and catch another aspect. You are materially existing as the body, socially existing as a citizen of a country, morally existing as a good man, intellectually existing as a qualified engineer, and these are not irrelevant things for the purpose of the spirit because the spirit is only a transcendence of these lower things, not a negation of them.

Therefore, you should give up the idea of rejecting, but you must always have the idea of absorbing the lower into the higher because if a thing is totally useless, nobody will pursue it. Just think over it. You take lunch, a meal in the daytime. What connection has that got with spiritual realisation? You will know it only if you don't take it. So you cannot say it is a useless thing. "Why should people cook food when they have got God?" is an immature way of thinking.

Every little thing is a cooperative element in the development of personality in higher and higher degrees. You should not make hasty conclusions: “I want God and I reject the world and everything in it.” It doesn’t mean that. The world is integrally connected to God’s existence, which means it is integrally connected with yourself also. Everything that you are is integrally connected to God, whatever you are—a body, a social unit, a moral principle, an intellectual genius, and also a spirit. So which part are you rejecting when you are going higher up? It is a total rising from the lower inclusiveness to the higher inclusiveness, and so you reject nothing. Everything comes up in a modified, transformed and transmuted form when you rise to the highest inclusiveness, which you call God.

Do you catch the point? You require a proper teacher, a Guru, as we call it. Otherwise, you will make a mistake in judgment. The spiritual path is very difficult because the mind cannot conceive this totality which is involved in every movement of yours, every day. A total action includes everything. You cannot forget any of your aspects when you take any step in any direction. You have to become a total person because God is a total being, and only a total can go to a total. A fraction, a finite, a little speck cannot go to God. Do you understand me? It requires great training in the way of thinking itself. You require a very good mentor. Keep it in mind.

Another visitor: Swamiji, in the past you would say to give things up for the life spiritual.

Swamiji: No, I never said that. Sankaracharya never said that. It is a misunderstanding of the whole subject. He never said give up anything. You give up the lower for the purpose of the higher, which is another way of saying absorb the lower into the higher. You cannot reject anything because if anything exists, it is real, and a real thing cannot be abandoned. Only unreal things can be abandoned. And so there is a contradiction in the statement that existing things should be abandoned. Anything that exists is real, and real things cannot be abandoned because you have already called them real, so they will be persisting as a reality in spite of your imagination that you have rejected them. There is a misunderstanding of Sankaracharya. You don’t understand him properly. There is no rejecting anything. The idea that you are rejecting must be abolished from the dictionary.

The dictionary must remove that word. There is no rejecting, there is inclusiveness only. Inclusiveness, absorption, totality—these are the things that you have to keep in mind, not throwing out, rejecting, abandoning, and so on. These are wrong notions of religion, and perhaps of spirituality.

Visitor: If someone pursues a PhD, how do you know that the world won't suck you in too much? How do you know it is enough? You can get one PhD, two PhDs, three PhDs. How does one know what is enough? How do you know you've done enough?

Swamiji: My dear friend, what you call worldly life is an erroneous way of thinking, in which condition you imagine that things are totally outside you, and you have either to grab them or reject them. Things are organically connected with your larger being, and so worldly life and spiritual life are not opposed to each other. They are only two different ways of looking at things: one horizontally, another vertically. The worldly life, as you call it, should get transformed into spiritual life not by rejecting it, but by understanding its true meaning in the context of spiritual consciousness. Do you understand me? Actually, I am repeating in another way what I told the other visitor. There is no worldly life. It is a wrong way of thinking. You cannot reject the world. It existed even before you were born, so how will you reject it? You have only to understand it and appropriate it into your life in a larger dimension of your consciousness, not as an individual but as a comprehensive consciousness that you are in your essence.

Visitor: After a while we like it so much that we tend to grow more horizontally than vertically.

Swamiji: The horizontal gets absorbed into the vertical so that you become wider and wider, and also higher and higher at the same time. God is the widest, and also the highest, and towards that end you are moving. Do you understand? It is very difficult to catch. Your mind will not receive this. You will forget it because you are not accustomed to think like that in your daily life. Wrong education is given to us from the very beginning. Society tells us wrong things. Education tells us wrong things. Nobody tells you the correct thing, and so it is very difficult to accommodate these truths unless you

have put forth great effort in completely changing the way of your thinking.

Visitor: I would like to discuss *japa* yoga.

Swamiji: Actually, *japa* means chanting a formula which indicates perfection, or God-consciousness. Go on repeating the same word: “God-consciousness, God-consciousness, God-consciousness. I want God-consciousness.” I am saying it in English but you can also say it in Sanskrit, and it becomes a mantra so that you may go on thinking the same thought again and again until your way of thinking gets transformed. It is a very beneficial way of controlling the mind, and turning it from a wrong way of thinking to a correct way. It is actually reciting the name of God, or you can recite any kind of formula which amounts to that meaning, finally. You can even say, “I want God Almighty, I want God Almighty, I want God Almighty.” If you go on saying it a thousand times every day, your mind will get purified. That is *japa*.

Visitor: Can I chant Om?

Swamiji: You can chant Om consistently, with deep feeling about it. Om is actually a universal name. It is the name for the total existence of all things. It is a cosmic vibration reverberating through your vocal cords.

GOD IS EVERYWHERE

A visitor: Recently I've been having some palpitations. This trouble came during meditation.

Swamiji: No. Meditation cannot bring that trouble unless you do wrong meditation. If it is right meditation, it will not bring trouble. Perhaps you are doing some wrong meditation.

Visitor: What is wrong?

Swamiji: I don't know what you are doing. Tell me.

Visitor: I do mental *japa*, repeating of the mantra every time, and sometimes it gets stuck in the mind.

Swamiji: Perhaps this is not suitable for you. That's why you are having some tension. There is no problem in the heart?

Visitor: I went to see a doctor. He did an ECG. It showed some palpitations. He told me not to do meditation, that it's not good for me.

Swamiji: You see, now I'm not going to teach you meditation. That is a different matter. You take rest. There are meditations which will heal your trouble, and there are meditations which will increase the trouble—two varieties.

Visitor: Sometimes I do *chintanam* only.

Swamiji: No. You are having trouble caused by this *chintanam*. Your mind is in a state of concentration and some particular thing causes tension.

Visitor: It is not from anxiety in the mind. When the mind stops, the heart stops beating.

Swamiji: This trouble cannot arise by thinking. It has no connection with *japa*, and so on. Are you unhappy for any reason, or are you a very happy person?

Visitor: Yes, I am happy. No problem. But before going to sleep, between waking and sleep, it comes sometimes like this.

Swamiji: You can stop this *japa* for some time. Don't do *japa*. Take rest. Go to bed and sleep properly, but don't do *japa*. For fifteen days don't do *japa*.

Visitor: So what should I do instead?

Swamiji: Are you really sick, or are you imagining it?

Visitor: I am sick. The doctor gave me medicine. I took it for five days, and now I am much better.

Swamiji: Anyway, there is no problem. You are all right. You have to stop *japa*, and also stop meditation because your meditation is not correct. About that I will talk later on. Stop the *japa* for fifteen days. Only eat and sleep, and the body will adjust itself afterwards.

Another visitor: I want God-realisation.

Swamiji: This is why you are meditating? You are sincerely wanting God-realisation?

Visitor: Yes.

Swamiji: Do you know where God is? Where is He?

Visitor: He is everywhere.

Swamiji: He is everywhere, even here just now? Is He sitting here? Do you believe God is sitting between us, in the middle, because He is everywhere? You have got some doubts that it may not be like that, that He is somewhere far off but not here. Far off in the sky He may be, but not here. Will He sit here between us? What do you say? It is a very serious question. I am trying to clarify your thoughts. I'm not putting any nonsensical question. It is a very serious matter. Do you really believe God is sitting between us?

It is a dangerous thing to accept that. It is a serious matter, sir. God is everywhere. Therefore, He is also everything. That which is everywhere is also everything because things cannot exist outside that which is everywhere. Do you catch the point, or have you got doubts?

Visitor: No.

Swamiji: That which is everywhere should also be everything. Otherwise, if it is not everything, it cannot be said to be everywhere. Now you adjust your thought. You want God. It is something that is everywhere, but it is also everything. 'Everything' means including yourself. You cannot say that you are outside it because you have already declared that it is everywhere and everything. Slowly adjust your mind to what I am saying. You cannot exist as Mister so-and-so if the truth is that it is everywhere and everything. Do you believe that you are existing as Mister so-and-so, or you doubt that because of the fact that there is something else which includes you also in its existence? If that includes your existence in its existence, then you have no separate existence. Do you understand? Then where are you at that time?

Visitor: I am within.

Swamiji: Why do you say 'within'? The thing that is everywhere has no within and without. You should not use such words. Within and without creates a gulf between two things, and the gulf is abolished because of the everywhere-ness of that. You are not inside it. So where are you then?

Use your mind now. This is a mathematical equation. You cannot think it. You simply get deluged into that because of its being everything. What do you think in your mind just now when I am saying this? What are you thinking? If it is everywhere and everything, and you are also not outside it, then where are you existing, really speaking?

Visitor: In God.

Swamiji: You should not use the word 'in' because I told you, 'in' means 'out'; two things are there. Something is not in me, because it is all things. So you should not use the words 'in' and 'out'. What do you say?

Visitor: I am God.

Swamiji: 'I' means this Mister so-and-so is God? What do you say? You have melted down into that everywhere-ness. So finally, what exists?

Visitor: The Atman.

Swamiji: Don't use such words. I haven't used any Sanskrit word. Atman is a Sanskrit word. I am scientifically approaching this problem to clarify your mind. That which is everywhere is everything also; therefore, you cannot be outside it. Then, at that time, what happens to you? Don't say 'inside', because it has no in and out. You said, "I am God." Does it mean this body is God, this person? This body cannot be there. When it is everywhere, it has inundated the whole personality. Then what is this, finally? What exists finally? You should not say 'I am existing' because you have gone away together with other things because of its pervasiveness. So what do you mean, finally? Tell me.

You are getting a shock to think like this. You feel a shock inside the mind. Now you are purified. This shot that I have injected into your mind has purified you already. All your sins are gone. They are destroyed. This is a vitamin injection, high potency, which will strengthen your total being. Can you meditate like this, the same thing I have told you? This shock is a highly purifying shock. It will transform you completely into something which is inexplicable. Can you understand what I am saying? Has it entered your brain? Can you find out the conclusion of this argument? If you have understood what I said, you are a blessed man, and you are already in a state of meditation now. You are just now in a state of meditation of a tremendous type, not an ordinary thing. Are you catching what I say?

Visitor: Yes.

Swamiji: You are a blessed man. God has already blessed you if you have understood this. Continue this thought. This is meditation.

CONTRADICTORY PULLS

A visitor: You have said that we are a muddle of two contradictory pulls. One says that we should take a stand for a position, and that it should be right to demand it. But the other pull says that anything that happens is right, and we should take no position. How do we know?

Swamiji: You cannot take that position. You cannot say that everything that happens is right, as long as you are sitting in a wrong position. You yourself are not sitting in a right position, and therefore that statement is irrelevant to your personal life.

Visitor: How can we be sitting in a right position?

Swamiji: You cannot, unless you abolish your personality and become one with the Supreme Being. Until that time, this statement is irrelevant. It is not true that everything is all right. Something is wrong also. Your separation from the Ultimate Reality makes everything positive and negative at the same time. Who told you that everything is all right? Such a thing cannot be a correct statement in the world of contradictions. In the world always something is wrong, something is right.

Visitor: But we are in no position to take any stand because we do not know what is wrong, what is right.

Swamiji: Anything that does not harm you or harm anybody else, and anything that is for the welfare of yourself and everybody else, that can be regarded as right. Neither you should be harmed, nor somebody else should be harmed. It requires proper common sense. You must apply common sense. Neither you should be harmed, nor anybody else.

Visitor: But it could be apparent, and in the long run the result may be different.

Swamiji: You must use your common sense for that purpose. You can know the consequence of your actions by the discretion that you are adopting. Nobody is so foolish as not to know the consequence of an action. Everyone who is having a little common sense will

know what happens when something is done. That you can judge by your discretionary powers. The consequence of an action is to some extent clear to any person who can exercise one's mind.

Visitor: But we are also surrounded by other minds.

Swamiji: Let them be. Do you want to be alone in the world without anybody else outside?

Visitor: Can't be.

Swamiji: Then what is the use of complaining?

Visitor: Then how could we, living as we are, be in the right position in the world?

Swamiji: I told you already. Whatever steps you take should not produce any adverse consequence, and whatever consequence follows from any steps that you take will be known by the application of your reason. I don't think anybody is totally bereft of reason. They can understand what is the consequence of anything. Anyone who is a little educated will know what happens when something is done. Even animals know that.

Your question is general and vague. It is not practical and to the point. All questions should be practical and to the point. Why are you asking philosophical questions which are general in their nature? You should say what your problem is. Why should you generalise?

Another visitor: My close relation has passed away.

Swamiji: You should not go on crying about a person who has passed away. By that, you are not doing any good to that person. A negative reaction you are creating. You have got an attachment to that person. See, you are pulling its soul down to your own level. It has removed the body and gone somewhere else in order to take another birth, and why are you preventing it by pulling it down with your thought power? It is because people still feel that it is their property—my son, my daughter, my husband, my wife. When it has departed, it has proven that it is not yours. You have a wrong notion that it was yours, whereas the departure is proof that it is not yours, and instead of enlightening yourself to the fact, you are brooding over the same thing again and again, which is not proper. You should not think

about them. Pray to God and become strong. Read the Bhagavata, and you will become strong. It will be good for your family, and it will be good for you also.

Another visitor: I am an actor in the theatre. In myself I witness my thoughts and emotions, and then afterwards I again fall into involvement with my feelings and with my thoughts, and so on. I change. Sometimes I witness, and at other times I am again involved in emotions.

Swamiji: You should never get emotionally involved with anything. You must be intellectual, philosophical, a scientific witness. A philosophical, scientific witness does not get emotionally involved in anything because if you are emotionally involved, you yourself become an actor. You are not a witness. And if you would like to become an actor by participating in the performance, if you think it is a good thing, then do it. But if it is not a good thing for you, don't see the performance at all. Why are you seeing it?

Actually, I will tell you one thing. When you see an actor performing, you necessarily get involved in it. Everyone who sees that will get emotionally involved unless one is highly intellectual and only scientific. But if you have feelings, you will naturally feel, which is another way of involvement. Then don't see anything. Keep quiet. Why are you witnessing it?

You yourself are an actor. Now, who will witness you when you are acting? Somebody witnesses you, and they may like it or they may not like it, so it is a natural occurrence. It is something natural. There is nothing abnormal about it, and you cannot consider it as a problem. Drama is an art, and every art has some emotional aspect in it. The only question is, whether you are benefited by it or you are harmed by it.

There are tragedies and comedies, for instance. When you witness a tragedy, you pass through some peculiar process in your mind while you are witnessing it. It looks as if you yourself are passing through that tragedy. When you see a play by Shakespeare—*Hamlet* or *Othello* or *King Lear*, or whatever it is—they are all tragedies. When you see actors performing these plays, you will feel that you yourself are Hamlet or the king involved there, etc.

Aristotle was a great philosopher of art and of theatrical science also. He said that when you feel disturbed in your mind by seeing a tragic performance, you are passing through some particular phase of your own life which is hidden inside you, but this art of the performance brings it outside, and so you are completely cured of that disease, of that tragic feeling which is already in you, but you are not manifesting it outside in daily life because in daily life you cannot manifest tragic feelings. So you go to a theatre and see it, and internally you pass through that stage. He says in one way it is a good thing because that tragedy, which is also potentially present in your mind, brought it out, and so afterwards you will not once again have the trouble. It is like a vaccination. A vaccination means a little disease is introduced into your body so that the real disease may not come. You don't want to pass through a tragedy in your life, but you can see somebody else passing through it, and then you psychologically actually experience that tragedy so that you will not have a real tragedy in your life. The emotions wipe out all these possibilities. So this is a little bit of psychology behind theatrical performance. I cannot talk more now. Whatever I said is sufficient for you.

MAINTAINING A CONTINUOUS AWARENESS OF UNIVERSALITY

A visitor: I read a book you gave me last year, *Problems of Spiritual Life*, where you mention that God is consciousness. My question really is, does it mean that once you have no thoughts in your mind, you are God?

Swamiji: No, it is not so. When there is no thought in the mind, you are in a worse condition than your present state. Consciousness does not mean absence of awareness. It is greater awareness. Are you aware that you are existing now?

Visitor: Yes.

Swamiji: In the same way that you are aware that the whole universe is filled with consciousness, and your whole personality is filled with consciousness, can you imagine that this consciousness that is in you, due to which you feel that your existence is pervading the whole universe, is only a little drop of that universal consciousness, which is aware of the whole universe, which includes you also? Do you understand that you are part of the universe? Or you are outside it? What do you say?

Visitor: A part of it.

Swamiji: Therefore, the whole universe is animated by consciousness, total consciousness. Do you understand? And so your consciousness cannot stand separately. That universal consciousness, can you imagine what it is, what kind of thing it is?

Visitor: It is vast.

Swamiji: That is called God-consciousness, and it does not mean the absence of mind. You should not use the word 'mind'. The word itself is inapplicable. The mind is only an individualised function, whereas consciousness is a universal function. So stopping the mind is like sleeping. A person who is sleeping has not realised the Cosmic Being. You must be awake, but awake in a universal sense, not in an individual sense. Do you understand the implication of what I am saying?

Visitor: So you must have the consciousness, the awareness, all the time.

Swamiji: All the time, of the universal whole, not only of yours. Your personal consciousness is not God-consciousness. You have to be conscious always of the universality of consciousness. That is, you must be feeling the existence of the Universal Being, and it is conscious of itself. It is the consciousness of the Universal being conscious of itself only, not your consciousness of that, because you don't exist separately there. Do you understand the meaning? What is your question now?

Visitor: How do I achieve that state? I mean, what do I do to have the whole universal consciousness in me?

Swamiji: Now I will ask you one thing. Why are you asking this question to me? What is your intention?

Visitor: Actually, I am very interested in this method called *atma vichara*.

Swamiji: Anyway, the essence of it I have mentioned to you briefly in a few sentences. Are you able to think in the way I suggested to you just now?

Visitor: I can only imagine.

Swamiji: Okay. Your imagination is also a consciousness only, because without consciousness you cannot imagine. So your consciousness is imagining. What does it imagine?

Visitor: I can bring myself to imagine that I am part of the whole.

Swamiji: You are not part of the whole.

Visitor: I am the whole.

Swamiji: Ah, yes. You yourself are the whole. Can you go on thinking this again and again?

Visitor: It would be difficult when I'm working.

Swamiji: Okay, you do your work. I am not saying that you should think like this for twenty-four hours. It is practically not possible. But can you think like this even for a few minutes?

Visitor: Yes.

Swamiji: Can you think like this for ten minutes?

Visitor: When I'm meditating, yes.

Swamiji: Can you think like this for fifteen minutes?

Visitor: Yes.

Swamiji: Can you think like this continuously for one hour?

Visitor: That I haven't tried.

Swamiji: In the middle you will have some difficulty.

Visitor: Yes.

Swamiji: What difficulty?

Visitor: I will have thoughts coming in, and I will lose the consciousness of the whole.

Swamiji: Sit and meditate like this, in the manner I have described to you, for fifteen minutes. If the mind is not allowing you to think like this, stop the meditation. Just breathe. Then start again. Bring the thought once again to the mind, and think the same thing. Another ten minutes, then another ten minutes—the same, same, same way. Don't miss the point. Ten minutes intensely think like this. Then when the mind again goes here and there, stop the meditation and practise deep breathing. Then again start. Sit for five minutes, ten minutes. When the mind again goes here and there, stop the meditation and read something which will tell you this point again and again, again and again, again and again. You are reading my book *Problems of Spiritual Life*. This idea came to you from that book.

Visitor: Yes.

Swamiji: Read that again and again. Chant it, chant it, chant it repeatedly, loudly, and go on telling this again and again, again and again, again and again. If the mind cannot think like that, at least recite it. Go on telling this, telling this, telling this—this, this, this particular thing. A hundred times you should go on telling this. Then the mind will get charged with this great awareness of universal existence. You have to apply many methods. One thing is actual

direct meditation, as I mentioned. If that is not possible, go on chanting, repeating, do *japa* of the same formula: this kind of thing, this kind of thing, this kind of thing, this Universal Being.

Visitor: *Aham brahmasmi*.

Swamiji: Don't use any Sanskrit words. Don't use Sanskrit words because they will misguide you into thinking that *aham* is somewhere, Brahman is somewhere else. These ideas are no good. Don't use any Sanskrit words. Use your own language, whatever it is.

Visitor: I am the whole.

Swamiji: Ah, even in the English language you can say, "I am the whole." Don't use *aham brahma* and so on. Then there are two words; two words create the problem. Don't use two words, *aham brahmasmi*. Simply whatever I have told you in plain language, go on asserting it again and again. Do it daily for 15-20 minutes continuously. After you get up in the morning, do it for 15-20 minutes, and again before you go to bed. And read this book *Problems of Spiritual Life*. That also is like a scripture.

Visitor: Yes.

Swamiji: If you go on reading it, you will be charged with some force. Continuously do it, and feel from your heart, "I want this only. Everything that I do is a preparation for this achievement." Your hands, of course, are given to your daily work, but the heart says, "No, I want this, I want this. I am preparing ground for this great experience." Don't forget this point at any time. And read that book again and again.

Visitor: Is this what you mean by universal meditation? Is this the same?

Swamiji: This is universal meditation. Right.

Visitor: And you mentioned about this universal continuum where the consciousness is between the subject and the object. Is this the...?

Swamiji: Universal continuum is almost the same as universal consciousness. Subject, object get abolished. There is a transcendent

rising above subject-object relation. I am glad that you have understood it. You have caught the point. So go on persisting in this meditation, and some miracle may take place in your life. You will get that blessing. Okay?

Visitor: Just one question, Swamiji. Is there any point in visiting holy places like Patal Bhuvneshwar?

Swamiji: You can visit anything, no objection. You can visit any holy place to purify your mind so that the mind becomes holy and purified as much as possible. You can see holy places, you can see holy people, you can read holy books and scriptures. All are preparations for this greatest of the holiest of thoughts that you are going to entertain. They are only preparations for this. You may do it, you may not do it; it makes no difference. But if it is helping you in maintaining this consciousness, do it. There is no harm. You can go on pilgrimage and study books and meet mahatmas, have discussions—all is good. It is a preparation for this great achievement of the continuous maintenance of this awareness. Okay? Hari Om!

GOD AND HUMAN EGOISM

A visitor: If you think logically, there can be only one God who has created everybody.

Swamiji: Maybe there is only one God, but there are different people who think in...

Visitor: But we are fighting in the name of God. That is nonsense.

Swamiji: We are not fighting in the name of God. We are fighting in the name of our own egoism.

Visitor: Right, Swamiji.

Swamiji: So God doesn't come into the picture. We foist our egoism on God and then think we fight for God. It is human egoism that is actually at war. God does not wage war with anybody, but human egoism is so hard and indomitable that it can associate itself even with God and make it look that God is fighting. That is the ferocious and indomitable cussedness, I should say, of the human ego. The trouble doesn't arise from God. It arises from human egoism, which also goes by the name of human religion. Religion can be a part of the human ego, and it can take any shape. Ravana, the great demon, was looking like a great saint and sage when he came to Sita. Any kind of extreme *ahamkara* is what is called a demonical nature, and it can take the shape of any kind of religion or goodness. Everywhere the same thing is taking place. In one place it is one form, in another place it is another form. Whether two nations fight or only two people fight, it doesn't make a difference. The activity is the same. If two people fight, it is an international war, if you actually go deep into it. The quantity does not make the difference in quality.

Visitor: They should mutate our genes.

Swamiji: It is only the gene of God that is entering into them.

Visitor: We could do it in a nice way, but it is a dangerous thing to do, to mutate the genes. It is against God's will.

Swamiji: Who has seen God? And why should we talk about Him at all, and whether He has a will or not? That also is doubtful. So

again we are foisting some ideas of ours on what is called God, and interpreting Him in terms of our own use. It is better we don't take His name too much because we are misusing the name.

The whole world activity, in any form whatsoever, is the human ego dancing in one way or the other. It can take any shape. In a pleasant form or in an unpleasant form it can perform its dancing, and it may look like something quite different, but it is the same thing, just as Ravana looked different, and yet he was the same person. It is not easy to get rid of it because even the one who tries to get rid of it is also ego only. So that is another difficulty you have got.

Visitor: Why has God given us an ego?

Swamiji: He has not given anything. We have manufactured it ourselves only. God cannot give an ego because He Himself has no ego, so how will He give it? It has erupted like a disease, and the cause of it is one's own irregular way of living, and it cannot be attributed to somebody else.

Visitor: Is there a secret meaning for existence?

Swamiji: Existence itself is the meaning. You cannot have quality for existence. The final meaning is existence only. Everything is striving for being, and it wants nothing else.

Visitor: Sometimes I think that God, if He exists, is a sadomasochist.

Swamiji: God doesn't exist in that sense that the human being thinks. Unless the human being also is there, he cannot attribute such qualities to somebody else. That quality which is absent in you cannot be seen in another person. So it is the transference of one's own qualities that is actually seen in another. Our mind acts like a mirror in which one sees one's own self. No object can be seen as it is in itself. It is always coloured by the process of thinking.

Visitor: We go on committing the same mistakes again and again.

Swamiji: That is because people have short memories. The whole reason is, you forget everything that has happened in the past, and so you commit new mistakes. Man is having no memory. Therefore, reading history does not bring anything, though it is supposed to

bring knowledge. Yesterday's tragedy he forgets today, and he commits the same mistakes because of the thought of the future enterprise which is in his mind. He has to be educated properly. An uneducated man can learn nothing from history, or from any experience. We require a guide.

Another visitor: The human being has not so much freedom.

Swamiji: The human has some freedom, but not absolute freedom.

Visitor: I agree. We are under karma. So what is the purpose of prayer? We don't eliminate karma with prayer.

Swamiji: You cannot eliminate the karma which has already started working through your body, but prayer, meditation, and such other spiritual exercises will prevent the formation of fresh karmas which may bring another birth. They cannot negate the experiences that you are passing through in this birth because these experiences are the product of the karma that has already manifested itself through this body, but spiritual exercises, meditation, etc., are intended to see that you do not commit the same mistake once again; you shall have no coming back to this world of sorrow, and you will go higher up rather than revert to the old condition. The absence of any future binding karma automatically springs you up to the higher level where karmas do not operate. That is the benefit of prayer and meditation.

The present life's experiences cannot be destroyed. You have to pass through them.

Visitor: They cannot be destroyed, but can they be reduced a little?

Swamiji: You cannot reduce them also. The only thing is, you can develop a strength which will make you not feel the sorrow so much. The sorrow cannot go, but you will not feel it much because of the spiritual strength that you have developed.

Another visitor: What is the best way for us to have constant remembrance of God and Guru?

Swamiji: There are no two things. You should not bring two things like that. There is no 'God and', and so on. God does not permit 'and'. It is either He or somebody else, there cannot be two. God is adamant that He will not tolerate anybody else except Himself, so

don't bring Guru; otherwise, don't bring God. Either one of the two you bring. There is no two. You should never use the word like that.

Visitor: They are the same.

Swamiji: They don't exist as two. They exist as one only. It is like saying the sun and his rays. Which is better? What is your question?

Visitor: What is the best way to constantly remember God?

Swamiji: The best way is to remember and keep Him in the mind. What else can I tell you?

Visitor: But it goes out because all other thoughts compete with it.

Swamiji: It goes out because you do not want Him entirely.

Visitor: I want Him entirely.

Swamiji: No, it is not true. If that were the case, you would never think of other things. You are theoretically saying "I want God entirely", but practically it is not so. Otherwise, even when you are doing work, that memory will not leave you. It cannot leave you. That means you are not fully wanting God. You are thinking that even without Him you can get on for some days. That is what the heart is saying.

If a man is to be executed tomorrow and today he is taking lunch, will he forget that tomorrow he is going to be executed just because he is busy with taking lunch? What do you say? So it depends upon the importance that you are giving to a thing.

Visitor: I want to give supreme importance to God.

Swamiji: But you are not giving it; otherwise, this question will not arise. You are separating your activity from the thought of God. They are not two things. The thought of God includes your activity. You cannot separate them. If the activity that you are engaging yourself in is really going to be beneficial to you spiritually, then it cannot be outside the purview of your remembrance of God. It is a part of your sadhana itself, unless it is irrelevant. If you think you are doing an irrelevant thing, then it must be given up. But if you say it is relevant to you, it is necessary, it becomes part of your sadhana and it cannot cut off your memory of God. This is a passage to it. Whatever you

are doing is a passage to that memory, unless what you are doing is meaningless. If it is meaningless, you will not do it. Both are the same.

SUFFERING AND DISEASE

A visitor: Let's say a person is suffering from cancer, is terminally ill, so he has an intense desire to live.

Swamiji: You should not expect everything as you want. Perhaps your wanting it itself may be a disease in certain cases. You want to become the richest man in the world. Do you want to fulfil that wish? What do you say?

Visitor: No, not for me.

Swamiji: No disease can be cured completely; it is not possible, but you can have the strength to bear the suffering caused by it. You cannot cure any disease completely. For some reason or other it has come upon you, but because of the willpower you have developed on account of some meditation that you are practising, you will bear it without grudging. You cannot remove it; it is not possible, because it has come to you due to some background, some cause behind it. Unless the cause is removed, the effect cannot go, and sometimes the cause goes only when you die. Before then the cause will not go. The sufferings of life cannot be removed. Only you can develop the strength to bear them.

An ashramite: I get a headache when I try to do cosmic meditation.

Swamiji: This cosmic meditation that you are trying to tell me will give a shock to anybody's mind because the mind is not supposed to think such things. It is a prohibited area, like entering the Chakravayuha of the Mahabharata. You must know how to enter into it.

There is a tremendous contrast between the way you are thinking every day—various things, a hundred things in the world. 'Tremendous' is not the word; it is much worse than that. There is such a difference, a gulf, as between the North Pole and the South Pole, between the usual human way of thinking and this thing that you are trying to probe into, because the human way of thinking gets abolished automatically when the other way of thinking which you are trying to introduce into yourself takes possession of you. What can be a greater shock to anyone than the proposal to get annihilated

completely? Theoretically you may feel that you are not going to get annihilated really, that you are going to be expanded, enhanced and made more stable. This is what you are thinking theoretically, but in practice the mind will not accept it.

For instance, would anybody like to die? This is a simple question. Ask anybody in the world: "Would you like to die?" They won't like to die because that is a complete negation of what they consider themselves to be. While physical death is abhorrent because of its association with the negation of your very existence itself, the same is the case with the negation of thought. You cannot separate physical existence and mental existence. They are identical at present. When you think, you are thinking through the body only, so they cannot be separated. Hence, physical dying and mental dying look identical. As much shock as you would feel at the time of physical death, you will feel at the time of mental death also because they are not separate things. Your existence is the mind only. Your existence is mental existence. Physical existence is only a secondary matter, but it looks important because the mind has pervaded the whole body. You can't distinguish between your physical existence and mental existence.

Now this thing that you are talking about, cosmic meditation, is a negation of mental existence, together with which, physical existence also goes in some way. Though actually, tangibly, the body will not die in meditation, it looks as if something like that is taking place. That gives a shock to it, and the mind also gets a shock, so you will feel something unimaginable at that time.

You have no other desire in the mind. Very, very carefully you must hear this point. If you have any other ulterior motive in your mind, you must very carefully make a list of them all. Some of them are very clear to you, and some of them you have brushed aside because of your other engagements. Those which are clear to you, as well as those which you have suppressed, will both prevent you from thinking like this. This difficulty can be overcome. I am only repeating the same thing which I have told. This difficulty can be overcome by one method: You are not going to lose anything by entering into the cosmos. You are not going to die; you are going to live, rather.

Now you are living a miserable life. When you are a butterfly in dream and you wake up into the human being, the butterfly has died. Now, is it a good thing for the butterfly that it is to die for the sake of the human being that you want to be? You will say, "What kind of stupid thing is this? Why would I want to be a butterfly? I want to be a human being only." The same is the contrast between your mental-physical existence and the cosmic existence. Your real nature is cosmic existence only, and it does not destroy the personal existence. It is absorbed into itself. Just as the dream person has been absorbed into the waking, and he is not destroyed, the same is the case with this. The problem is your own creation. It doesn't exist, really speaking.

But the mind is not willing. You are so-and-so, you are born to some father, you have come from such and such a place, and you have got some relation with these people. This is some kind of cobweb that has been created, which may be there. It is not that it is not there. I am not saying that anything is to be denied. You are a father's son, and you are this and you are that; everything is correct. It is not necessary to destroy, negate or renounce anything, but only to absorb all these things into a higher thing where all these things are included. Your father, mother, everybody is inside that. So actually, renunciation does not mean abandoning some physical relationship. It is the absorption of all physical relationships into a cosmic relationship. Otherwise, the fear of abandoning will come and catch hold of you. You must tell the mind: "You are not going to abandon anything. You are only going to absorb the whole thing into a more expanded, permanent existence."

Don't think like this too much. Do some *japa* and meditation. You have got a fear that by going there you will be losing something here, but it is not so. Going there does not mean losing something. It is gaining everything. That idea should be accommodated into your mind. You should be able to grasp it. The fear is that you lose something, but it is not true. You are not losing anything. You are becoming a raja, a maharaja. Now you are a poor man. Suppose a poor man becomes a king; has he lost something by renouncing the poverty? The poverty has been abandoned when you become a king. Do you call it a real abandonment?

Suppose you are sick, and you become healthy. Can you say you have renounced ill health? These ideas have no meaning. The whole life that we are living is a kind of illness. It is a philosophical, metaphysical, transcendental illness that has caught hold of us. Everybody in the world is sick, and mentally also we are not normal. The actual fact is that. Because everybody is thinking the same thing, it looks that everybody is normal. There is some very unfortunate and unhappy mystery behind our existence in this world. That's why we are never happy. You are never happy because you are not in yourself. You are not in yourself; you are in something else. *Swasth*—you are not *swasth*. In Sanskrit we have a beautiful word: *Aap swasth hai*. *Swasth* means: Are you yourself? Are you in yourself, sir? If anybody asks you this, what will you feel? You will say, "What kind of person is putting a question like that?" But actually, it means that only.

Go slowly, stage by stage, not in a hurry. In the beginning you have to meditate on an incarnation of God, not on the Absolute suddenly, because though you have understood it, the mind is feeling fear. So don't give sudden fear to the mind. Go slowly. Take the name of God first. Don't think of God, but only take the name of God. "God Almighty, I want you; God Almighty, I want you; God Almighty, I want you." When you go on chanting this, your mind gets purified. Let God Almighty be anything, it doesn't matter what He is, but these words themselves are so powerful. You see what you are feeling at that time. Close your eyes. "God Almighty, Great Magnificence, All-Powerful, I want you. Come to me. Great Almighty, I want you. God Almighty, I want you."

Instead of chanting Rama, Krishna, Govinda and so on, whose meaning is not clear to you, at least utter these words whose meanings are clear to you. You say "Rama, Krishna, come!" but you don't know where they are, so you will not be so happy. But if you say "God Almighty", the meaning is very clear to you. So don't chant anything whose meaning is not clear. Simple, like a child you are asking for God. This itself is a mantra. "God Almighty, I want you." Immediately you will feel a purification process taking place in your mind by uttering these words. You can say it in English or Oriya or Hindi or any language. That is how you start. This is the

best way of purification of oneself. There are all kinds of rituals of purification, but this is the best way of a simple man speaking.

There is the story of a shoemaker crying to God: “God, I want to give You a pair of shoes. How large is Your foot? God, how large are Your feet? Please tell me. I want to make a pair of shoes for You.” His heart was simply bursting with devotion. He thought God is so big, and huge feet He has got. He was a cobbler, so simple a man. “O God, how big are Your feet? Oh, I like You, I love You! I want to give You something. I have nothing with me. I have only shoes. Please, please, please tell me how large are Your feet. I will make some big pair shoes for You.” He was so pure in his heart when he said that.

At that time, the prophet Moses was passing that way. He heard this shoemaker talking. He thought, “This man is talking some meaningless thing to God Almighty.” He said, “Hey, what are you babbling? You want to give shoes to God? You think God wants your shoes? This is the way you are praying? Have better sense than that.”

This old man, his heart broke because the great master, the prophet, said that he is a stupid man. So he thought, “I am really stupid to have offered shoes to God.” He broke down with grief. “After all, my devotion is a foolish devotion.”

That night, they say, God appeared to Moses: “Hey, why did you disturb the heart, the feeling of a good man, my devotee? Why did you disturb him? He is a real devotee. Go and beg pardon from him for this. Console him. He is my real devotee, and why did you disturb his mind?”

Moses was shocked. “How God speaks to me like this?” He went and said, “Okay, I said something, but forget it. Whatever you have said is correct. God is highly pleased with you. You can make shoes.”

When devotion becomes really genuine, even stupid things look all right. What looks stupid and foolish in the eyes of people becomes perfectly genuine when the devotion is perfect. God will tolerate even a stupid thing, provided your heart really feels it. It doesn't require great intellectuality and study of scripture and learning and professorial wisdom. God doesn't want all that. God wants your

feeling only. You may feel some idiotic thing, just as the shoemaker felt, but it is perfectly okay. It is all right.

So I am telling you, go slowly, little by little, and don't have unnecessary company with people. You can have company with such people who think alike; otherwise, don't talk to any person. Why do you talk? Mind your business and do your work. If you have got a few people who are thinking alike, you can have a friendly talk. But you should not unnecessarily talk with other people. And do a little *seva*.

BHAKTI YOGA, VIVEKA, SELF-REALISATION, GURU

A visitor: Some of these people never came to an ashram. This is the first time. Could you please explain to them the importance of bhakti yoga in the life of swamis?

Swamiji: You are thinking that swamis are practising bhakti yoga? The swamis deeply love God, and in that sense you may say they are doing bhakti yoga. Whoever deeply loves God is a bhakta, that is, a devotee. And your question is whether swamis are practising bhakti yoga, and I answered your question: they have no other duty than that.

Visitor: How can I develop the capacity to discriminate, to have *viveka*?

Swamiji: ‘Discriminate’ means seeing a difference between one thing and another thing. That is called discrimination. Do you mean this, or is there something else in your mind?

Visitor: I want to know how I can make the right choices in life.

Swamiji: What work do you do?

Visitor: I am retired.

Swamiji: If you are a retired person and have no particular work to do, you can live a life of prayer and meditation.

Visitor: I would like to start meditation, but I am afraid of meditation because in the past when I was meditating, there was a deep silence and I was frightened.

Swamiji: Meditation cannot be done offhand, by everybody, unless they understand what it means. This requires proper initiation and explanation by a teacher. You do not know what meditation is; that is why you are frightened. Do not meditate. Pray to God. Is there any difficulty in only praying to God?

Visitor: No.

Swamiji: Actually, praying to God is also deeply thinking of God because you cannot pray to God without thinking, so that thinking itself is meditation. So you can confine yourself to prayer to God, which is quite okay.

Another visitor: I feel that I was once on the way to Self-realisation, but then I had a car accident and after that I lost my way. How is it possible to find it again?

Swamiji: When you felt you were on the way to Self-realisation, what did you feel in your mind at that time?

Visitor: I felt light inside, full of light.

Swamiji: Were you doing any meditation?

Visitor: I felt that after breathing exercises I was in a meditative state. I felt and realised that God is everywhere. But after the accident I lost this state, and it is difficult to reach it again.

Swamiji: Your mind is very clear. What you said is correct. God is everywhere, and to think thus continuously is the way to Self-realisation. Why are you unnecessarily raising a problem when your mind is very clear about it? Don't be worried about the accident. The accident is over, and now you should not be thinking about it.

Visitor: How is it possible to find a Master in spiritual life?

Swamiji: You must have seen many people in the world, and at least one person must have interested you. That person whom you consider as the best among many others whom you have seen, that person can be considered as the instructor. Among the many you have seen, at least one must have impressed you. That person may be taken as the instructor for the time being, at least temporarily.

Visitor: I would like very much to meet my true Guru.

Swamiji: How can you know who is the Guru unless that person is beneficial to you? Have you not seen any good person in the world?

Visitor: Yes, I have seen somebody.

Swamiji: Then that person is your teacher.

Another visitor: I have seen it written: “Know the truth and be free.”
Can you explain this?

Swamiji: If you tell me what is the truth, then you will know the answer to it.

Visitor: My opinion is, the truth is God.

Swamiji: That is it. So when you know God, you are automatically free. You can have no problems afterwards if you know God.

Visitor: Because knowing God is to be into and with God.

Swamiji: ‘Knowing’ does not mean knowing theoretically. It is actual union, communion of yourself with God. That is called knowing God. Then you will have some grace coming from God.

Visitor: There is a subtle difference: Why is God truth, and truth is God?

Swamiji: There is no such thing as truth, and all these things. You are using some words from your own point of view. That which is permanently there, always, is called truth. That which is not permanently there is not truth. So there is only one thing which is permanently there; it is God. Therefore, you call God as truth. That which passes away cannot be called truth. Truth is the only thing which cannot pass away. Therefore, God is called truth. Even our personality is not truth, because it will pass away.