

FACETS OF SPIRITUALITY

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This book was printed in 1986, and contains darshans of Revered Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj that took place during 1978-79, compiled by S. Bhagyalakshmi, as well as discourses spoken at different times and taken from various sources, some of which are undated. They are being uploaded in the order that they appear in the book. The discourses at the end of the book have been uploaded to Swami Krishnananda's website individually, and the darshans (conversations) appear in this series. Only the philosophical conversations are being uploaded. Also, the names of people have been changed to Ashramite, Visitor, etc.

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JUNE 22, 1977

On this day, 22 June 1977, revered Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj complied with the request by this humble disciple to give a message for starting a daily recording of the informal conversations in the mornings usually between 9 and 11 a.m. with all those that came for his holy darshan. This was the time when Swamiji also received visitors, sadhaks from outside the Sivananda Ashram, seekers from all over the East and the West, the Netherlands and Australia, the African continent, besides the ashramites themselves, the ashram Brahmacharis.

Simultaneously, he carried on the office work of the Sivananda Ashram. There is thus a constant demand on his attention from different directions and also from different angles, especially when over a dozen departments, all managed by the Ashram or by the Board of Management of the Board of Trustees, seek Swamiji's guidance and decisions for their respective departments. Swamiji has been the Secretary from the very inception of the Ashram and is currently its General Secretary. In fact, he has not only been the one constant factor amid all the phases of change and growth of the establishment, but also the indwelling spirit of the Ashram for Swamiji is one of the first group of disciples of Gurudev Swami Sivananda Maharaj, close to the heart of his great and beloved Master-Guru. Though he is the youngest of the monks, he is the oldest of them all in Sannyashood. To Swamiji, these diverse demands and constant interruptions in the midst of profound expositions of truth are hardly, if ever, capable of interrupting the thread of his thoughts. And he expressed his thoughts in a manner that did not let the listeners feel that they had been interrupted. These interruptions were often minutes long, entirely

unrelated to the question put or the exposition given, but even as one was giving up the hope of the continuity being kept up, Swamiji would pick up from the very last word of the sentence that had been interrupted by the messenger or the problem.

It was for a diary of the picture that presented itself in these morning darshan hours that I had requested for a message of blessings from Swami Krishnananda Maharaj. The message given in his own beautiful hand is this:

"The aim of life is God-realisation, and every other duty is only contributory to this supreme duty."

Thus began the Diary on 22nd June '77.

In the summer we gathered inside the verandah of Guru-kripa Kutir on the ground floor, where a few visitors, disciples and other ashramites sat around at revered Swamiji's feet to have his darshan as also to learn what he taught and chat informally. It was about 9:30 a.m. People walked in and out now and then with varied problems—personal, official or spiritual.

A Visitor: When adopting psychic therapy by the projection of thought-force, what distance can thought-force cover?

Swamiji: The distance depends on the intensity of the thought projected; in addition, the object of thought should have been known to and seen by the one who wishes to send the thought-force.

Another Visitor: What is the relation between a dream and the body of a dreamer?

Swamiji: The simultaneous consciousness of being in this body and being just here as also the consciousness of being up and above in a much subtler form is experienced by the dreamer. And if an outline of the relatedness can be geometrically given, it would take the form of a triangle.

An Ashramite: Swamiji, why is it that we should go alone for walks? This is particularly emphasised to the sadhakas. They do not go out for walks with anyone else usually. Why?

Swamiji: The egos of those you walk with restrict your ego when you go out together for a walk. Each one's ego is cautious and guards itself. The trees and other objects in nature do not exert their ego upon you. They have no ego. And so you are not affected by their presence. No limitations are brought to bear upon your ego. So there is no tension due to caution which has to be maintained when walking with other persons, and you get relaxed and free. The walk is meant for relaxation of the mind from tensions, as also exercise for the muscles.

NOVEMBER 26, 1978

Swamiji: Socrates questions the existing value of things of his time. The value of all things was taken for granted by the philosophers of his time, who ruled the people's thoughts. Das Gupta, in his *Studies in the Philosophy of Madhusudana Saraswati*, takes the view that Nagarjuna negates the world and God. It is all only in the imagination. It is just a 'void'. Of course, that is the view Buddha also takes. He calls the Absolute state 'void'. The Hindu philosophy says it is '*purnam*'—plenum—completeness. In a way, they are both saying the same thing. When there is nothing but completeness, there is nothing other than One; it is void. The two views ultimately meet at the same point. Socrates also states that there is neither this (world) nor that (God). And he is right. We are fools imagining that the world exists and is related to God. What is the relationship? Something else must also exist to be related to. Then what can be the relationship of the non-existing thing to that which is? We are all patting ourselves on the back,

thinking we are very wise. That is not so. That is what Socrates' *Dialectics* say. How can A be related to B? It cannot be, because A is A. The very fact that you are saying A is related to B shows A is not B, is it not?

A Visitor: It is like Nyaya Vaiseshika.

Swamiji: If A is not B, how can there be any relationship? You have already said there is no connection. And what do you mean by relationship of A to B? You are floored in one sentence. What is the meaning? And yet we are getting on. He argues like this, and you get fed up. But look at the point raised. It is a very interesting subject. It is not a joke. And it is one on which everything hangs. Your entire life is hanging on this little concept of relationship. Neither you are one with That, nor different from That. What else are you? Neither this nor that.

Visitor: He does not give the answer.

Swamiji: No. He simply has stunned you. By that he has proved the unreality of the relationship, that it does not exist at all. By which also he proves that the world also does not exist because the world is nothing but relationship. So the whole world vanishes into thin air in one second by this argument, and you are in a delirium of thinking that there are relationship and things. Are you sleeping?

Visitor: I got taste of that kind of logic from Sankara Muni's *Atma Puranam*. He goes into this Nyaya Vaiseshika argument, Paksha and then...

Swamiji: No, no. This is Vedantic argument. Not Nyaya Vaiseshika. Of course all these are based on Nyaya, the effect and the cause. The effect has come from the cause. It means it is different from the cause, and so it should have characteristics not inherent in the cause. But if they are not in the cause, from where do they come?

Visitor: There is no cause, rather it is modification of the cause.

Swamiji: Again we are in the same trouble. You cannot say something comes from nothing. So there must have been something existing there. So the effect is already in the cause. Then why do you say it is different from the cause? I am giving you a taste of all these arguments of Vedanta. Either you never go near it or you understand it! [*Laughs heartily.*]

Visitor: I think it is best to stay away from it.

Swamiji: [*Still laughing.*] Socrates used to put questions to the Greeks like that and debunk all their so-called wisdom. They were sophists. They thought they were very clever people. And this man's work was only to show that it was not so. They could not define even one idea—Truth. What is truth? You tell me what is truth. You all say, truth, truth, truth. Unless you know what is truth, how can you speak of truth? Let me first of all learn from you what is truth. Then I will speak the 'truth'. Now, you cannot answer this question, you cannot tell me what is truth. Then, why do you tell me to tell the truth? Your instructions are useless. Why do you tom-tom around, speak the truth, when you do not know what truth is?

And finally he said, "There is only one thing I know: I know nothing." A very profound statement, that! Truth is what corresponds to facts. But how do you know what is fact? Then only the question of correspondence comes.

Visitor: If Socrates wanted to tell people that what they were saying was not anything correct....

Swamiji: But his point is you cannot define things like that. Your logic cannot help you in defining things. Nothing can be defined in this world; everything is undefinable—*anirvacaniya*. This is what Sankaracharya

said finally. It is undefinable because every characteristic is definable only in terms of another characteristic. If you say something is red, there is something non-red. Otherwise it cannot be said to be red. But how do you know it is non-red? Because something else is red! Wonderful definition you are giving [*laughing.*] You are hanging on non-red for red, and on red for non-red. Do you call this a positive definition? [*pause*] And, this goes up to the limit, to the definition of God, Reality, the Absolute, the ultimate value of life, everything. And everything falls to the ground, everything is undefinable. The whole structure of philosophical thinking cracks and falls in a second, if you pursue this logic to the ultimate limits. And it cracks your existence also, finally, as you are a part of this world, and nothing exists. Then what remains?

There was a man called Sriharsa, who wrote a big book called *Khandana Kavyam*. Everything falls and cracks because of this invincible logic which does not allow anything to exist and stand on its own legs. But he says—he has got a saving factor: everything fails, everything has gone, nothing is, but at least you have awareness that nothing is. That is sufficient for you, he says. You cannot say the awareness also is gone because if awareness is gone, there must be an awareness that awareness is gone! So anyhow you cannot get out of the fact that you have awareness that awareness is. That awareness itself cannot be denied. So again there is a basic minimum of positivity, if at all you can call it so. That is Truth.

An Ashramite: Nihilists, they say there is nothing. They destroy. Is it not so?

Swamiji: No, no. They destroy the idea that your definitions are correct. The ideas are all destroyed. You are right. They are called Vaiseshikas, destructive critics

who do not accept the validity of anything. Everything is invalid—even what he says! That is another thing. Nagarjuna in India, Sriharsha in Vedanta and Bradley in England, they are of this type.

Another Visitor: What is soul?

Swamiji: The soul is the ultimate irreducible minimum of existence of anything. The soul is the ultimate essence of existence of anything. Everything can be reduced to something else. You can reduce matter to molecules, molecules to atoms, atoms to electrons, and so on. Finally there is a state beyond which you cannot go down. That is the last barest minimum of reality. That is the soul of things.

Visitor: Do we make distinctions between the spirit and the soul?

Swamiji: You need not make a distinction. There is no necessity. They mean the same thing.

Visitor: Yes, spirit is the essence—the soul is the essence—so they are the same. It is the Ultimate Reality. That is the soul. You use another word, Atman. Is it different?

Swamiji: Soul is English. Atman is Sanskrit. So in what language would you like me to speak? There is a Latin word, *anima mundi*. That is maternal soul. When you say my soul, you don't mean the absolute self. You mean your physical personality, psychological individuality. That is what they call *anima mundi*, the corporal self. But, ultimately, even that is not the reality because that also can be reduced to the further, ultimate state. There is an Absolute Reality, which is the true Spirit.

Visitor: What is the spiritual path?

Swamiji: The spiritual path is the way to the Infinite. It simply means the way to the realisation of the Spirit—the path.

Visitor: What is spiritual life?

Swamiji: The dialect for this realisation is spiritual life. It is in stages, from one step to another step. The law of the spirit is quite different from the law that we apply in our empirical life. To that extent you can apply the laws of the spirit in your daily life, to that extent your life is spiritual. It is integration, unity and harmony, whereas empirical life is the opposite of it.

Visitor: If you follow the spiritual path, you must now be very kind and very good to others. Just leave people going their way or....

Swamiji: Listen, listen: These words, 'kindness', etc., are traditional, and they have to be understood in their scientific spirit. You cannot be kind by merely uttering the word 'kind' and taking its dictionary meaning. If a particular attitude which you call kindness is in consonance with the law of the Spirit, it is necessary to be kind. It is a false idea of kindness if it is contrary to the fact, and then it may not work. A mother has great care and kindness for her own child, but that kindness may be unkindness to others. If kindness to one becomes unkindness to others, you cannot call it kindness. So I am giving you an example where a traditional meaning has to work. If the mother gives a bitter medicine to her child to cure an illness, it is kindness. But if she takes away the sweet from another child's hand and gives it to her child, it is unkindness.

Visitor: So you must take the whole?

Swamiji: You must take the whole, and spirituality is nothing but that. You cannot rob Peter to pay Paul. That is not charity.

Visitor: No.

Swamiji: Though charity is good, ethical instructions have a limitation of their own because they have only a

local value, and are not of an absolute nature. Therefore, they have to be understood from the point of view of the civics in which they operate, and not in a general manner.

Visitor: There are people dressed in rags, and they don't look after their body. Why do they do like that? Are they aiming at something? Or, when they are so badly dressed, are they aiming at realisation and negating the body?

Swamiji: They do it as a kind of austerity to control the mind and develop willpower. The practice of this kind of discipline is itself not spirituality. But it has a negative value in the sense that it helps in the development of willpower for the purpose of higher religious practices. I will give you an example. You fast on the *ekadasi* day. Now, that fasting itself has no spiritual value. But by that you develop a control over the mind and mastery of the physical instincts to some extent. This willpower that you develop is helpful to you for the purpose of applying that very same will for meditation. Your making money by itself has no value, but it is done for another purpose which has value. So is this austerity; it has a secondary value, though not an absolute value.

Another Visitor: She thinks it is not a very good choice....

Swamiji: Which one?

Visitor: Wearing rags.

Swamiji: They are having a type of psychological mind. But it does not mean it is necessary for everybody. It is not necessary for all, but necessary for a particular type of psychological condition. If you understand this, that it is human psychology, and that human psychology is the same everywhere—East or West, South or North. It makes no difference.

Visitor: It is lacking in human dignity. It is madness.

Swamiji: Human dignity also is a part of human psychology. Unless you become identical in feeling, you lack understanding. And East or West makes no difference. You cannot think like a monkey unless you yourself become a monkey. You think of them differently because you have not entered their mind. And the others similarly think about you that you are mad to wear the dress you do. To judge anything from one's own point of view is not wisdom. There is always a necessity for giving due consideration to the others' point of view also.

Visitor: What is the standard?

Swamiji: Every standard is correct from that level. No standard is wrong. You must take it at that level.

Visitor: But then what is wisdom?

Swamiji: Wisdom is not negation of anything. Everything is okay from God's point of view. That is why God does not interfere with anything. Everything is okay for God, because every point of view is His point of view.

Ashramite: You are the greatest advocate for God, Swamiji. For all that He does, you excuse Him and let Him out!

Swamiji: God's point of view is all points of views.

Another **Ashramite:** But God does not spare the wrongdoer; yet, according to God, there is nothing wrong!

Swamiji: He is not saying someone is a wrongdoer. He says, well, that is another way of doing it.

Ashramite: But we are vicious people still, and we are punished.

Swamiji: God will never call it punishment. It is a thing

which God Himself does within Himself.

Ashramite: Even death, Swamiji explains, is evolution.

Visitor: But by that (punishment) man suffers.

Swamiji: Suffering is only an ethical word you are using. It is your way of looking at things. When you are dipped in the Ganges, it is suffering for you, but the fish does not call it a suffering.

Ashramite: But is it suffering or not?

Swamiji: You ask the fish if it is suffering. It will say, "I don't know what you are saying." Again, when you are thinking of suffering, you are cutting off some aspects of it in your mind and calling it suffering. If it does not agree with you, it is suffering. It is a question of whether it is agreeable to your constitution. Again it is a subjective point of view. When your viewpoint does not tally with certain situations then you call it suffering. That is all.

Visitor: Is it a path?

Swamiji: Which path? Don't interfere with other people's path. Each path is correct from its own point of view. You follow your own path. We should not interfere with other's path and say it is wrong.

Visitor: There must be a standard.

Swamiji: Standard? Your standard is good for you, that is all. My standard may not suit you.

Visitor: Mind your business, in short?

Swamiji: Ah, yes. My standard may suit you when you come to my standard, and your standard will suit me when I come to your standard (*laughs*).

Visitor: That means standards are not static?

Swamiji: That is for your convenience. They have no absolute validity. When you have acidity in the stomach, you take sodium bicarbonate. This is a standard. But

you cannot give that to everybody, unless there is acidity. What do you say? It is a standard prescription, and you give it to everybody because it is a standard prescription.

Ashramite: But a prescription is given for a specific ailment.

Swamiji: But not for every ailment. You won't give it for every purpose. So all standards are conditional and relative. Absolute standards do not exist. Otherwise, everybody can have the same prescription for all conditions. Time, place and circumstances—these are conditional factors. For example, in Kerala you may take a bath five times daily, but in the North India, in Kedarnath, will you also take a bath five times a day? How is that possible? In Kerala it is necessary because the climate is such. You will fall sick if you don't take bath because it is warm and you are perspiring. You can't wear a coat in Guruvayur temple, they will tell that you are a stupid. But a man wearing a coat does puja in Kedarnath. So it is the place and the time also. It is just common sense. Time, place and circumstance, and the prevailing condition—these should give the verdict. If there is a war taking place, what do you do at that time?

Ashramite: There is a hot spring in Kedarnath? He can perhaps...

Swamiji: No, no, they will not allow him to bathe in the hot spring. God does not want comforts [*laughs and so also the gathering*]. How do you do puja at that time? You do *archana*, with Sahasranama and so on. But sometimes it may not be possible. There is a hubbub all around—floods, cyclone, wind, somebody is dying, and whatnot. Do you sit and do *archana* while all this is going on? Conditions and circumstances must be taken into consideration in deciding on what action is to be taken in the context of *desa, kala, vastu, sambandha*. You

must live and let others live. You might have to lower your standard sometimes to let others live. If you raise your standard of living beyond a certain limit, it may not enable others to live. That is a great point in social sciences. But if you do not want others to live, you only want to live, then you keep your standard.

Ashramite: Then there is no system as pulling up to the standard?

Swamiji: Yes. If you can pull up the standard, good, unless by pulling up your standard you pull down others. Qualitatively, comparatively, you must raise up others.

Visitor: There is no absolute standard?

Swamiji: What do you mean by absolute standard? I cannot understand what you are saying. I am telling you, the world is empirical and relative. Everything is hanging on something else. How can you have an absolute standard in the circumstances of such interdependence?

Visitor: Was there never an absolute standard?

Swamiji: They say there was absolute standard, in mythology at least, in Krita Yuga, when everyone was like everyone else. Government did not exist. There was no government, as there was no need for it. What is the government for?

Visitor: To do justice to everyone.

Swamiji: Yes, that time was called Krita Yuga. They say that a millenium of that type prevailed. Bhishma mentioned this in the Mahabharata. There was no caste, and no distinction of any kind. And the Vedas also did not exist! Only Pranava, *Omkara eva pura veda praneva sarvang mayaha*. This is what Krisna tells Udhava. There was only one Veda, and it was called Om. The Rig Veda, Sama Veda started afterwards. There was only one

caste, called Brahma. There was no Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya, etc. There was no government, because everybody knew his duty. That was an ideal, known as the Krita Yuga, and they say it will come again.

Visitor: The Krita Yuga will come?

Swamiji: Well, they say it will come after 4 lakhs of years. We have got now Kali Yuga. The wheel will move and the spokes that are down will come up again.

Visitor: The cycle will go on rotating?

Swamiji: Well, it has happened so many times. The 28th Kali Yuga is now going on. The wheel has rotated 28 times, they say.

Ashramite: Is it possible to reach the Absolute in Kali Yuga?

Swamiji: I don't know if there is Kali Yuga for the Absolute! It doesn't exist for it. The Absolute doesn't know what you are saying. It is like talking to the...

Ashramite: I know what I am saying...

Swamiji: It is like talking to the sun about night. The sun says, "What is night?" [*laughter*]. He doesn't know what you are talking about. "I have never seen it," the sun will say.

Ashramite: Can the *jivas* attain the Absolute in Kali Yuga?

Swamiji: Kali Yuga is nothing but the condition when you feel that you cannot reach the Absolute [*ashramite laughs*]. That is called Kali Yuga. When you feel it is possible, Krita Yuga has come to you in a second. This is another revealing and solacing factor for you.

Visitor: It is a condition of the mind.

Swamiji: You need not worry about the cycle, it will come automatically, in one second, though the Puranas

say it is four lakhs of years.

Visitor: It amounts to that. It is an attitude of the mind, Swamiji.

Swamiji: Yes, ultimately the Yoga Vasistha will tell you all this. All these terrifying doctrines will vanish in a second before another greater truth. They are terrifying but, when understood, they are nothing. Otherwise, who can bear these four lakhs of Kali Yuga? But there is also another teaching that it is not so terrifying if you can understand it: you can simply melt it like the snow melts before the light of the sun. The whole Kali Yuga will melt in one second before the light of enlightenment, so don't cry unnecessarily if you believe God exists. But a clause has to be added to it: God exists, and nothing else exists. Then it would be a complete statement. But you can imagine what consequences will follow from that doctrine of nothing existing. You will vanish in a second and be finished.

Visitor: Then what is the meaning of 'All-pervasive'?

Swamiji: Nothing, nothing! When everything has vanished, then where is the question of pervasiveness? Again you are implying that something else exists when you are diminishing. By saying He is all-pervasive, you have implied that God is different from the world. Then only you would use 'pervading', and that would make God a second-grade God. First you deny God, then you say He is staying far above, then you say He is related. In the Bhagavad Gita, all the 18 chapters tell you these various stages. First, know God. The Gita never talks of God in the beginning; afterwards, it slowly begins to say that God is above, then it says that God is also below, then it speaks of relationship, and then it says that God is everywhere. It takes you gradually. Religion has various stages of approach, but you should not say "That only" in the beginning itself. So gradually take the

mind up [*laughs.*]

Visitor: To the Ultimate Truth?

Swamiji: Ah, yes. When you are prepared, when the vessel is prepared to contain the substance, then only you can fill it with the substance. Otherwise a pot of mercury poured into a mud the pot will crack. So the chapters of the Gita prepare the mind gradually for the reception of higher knowledge. In the beginning it was such a catastrophe that there was simply crying. It started with crying. A strategic method is adopted, step by step, until there is a cataclysm, the flood of God coming. There's nothing like the Gita. It is everything, if it is properly appreciated. God comes and attacks you like a cyclone. In the beginning it is frightening. "Enough," Arjuna says, "A cyclone I don't want." Even a God-cyclone is terrifying. Is it not?

Ashramite: Yes, Arjuna cried like that.

Ashramite: Is idealism not a mania?

Swamiji: A normal thing you don't call mania. If you have desire to eat food, you don't call it a mania. But a desire to commit suicide can be called mania.

Ashramite: I mean martyrdom?

Swamiji: Martyrdom is...

Visitor: Martyrdom is done for a good cause.

Swamiji: That is a different matter, now you are interpreting something. She is talking as it is. All martyrs are so for a good cause only, not otherwise. Nobody calls it martyrdom for a bad cause.

Ashramite: But that is a mania.

Swamiji: Why do you call it mania if it is for a good cause? Martyrdom is not a mania because a martyr is aware of every sequel of consequences and is prepared for it. So there is no shock for him, and he is the master

of emotions. If you push a man into the Ganges, he gets a shock. But if he himself dives into the Ganges, he is prepared for the cold and the force of water. But a person who commits suicide, you call him a maniac. Because he is not prepared for the consequences, his being gets a shock.

Ashramite: But the man committing suicide is prepared for the consequences. He knows he will end and will go into the unknown...

Swamiji: That is only at his conscious level, but not at that subconscious level which gets a shock because it is not prepared for it.

Thank you, God bless you all!

DECEMBER 18, 1978

(Today's diary is not from any recorded tape, but has been actually written in the customary style of a diary).

To begin with, there were just three or four visitors only. As the morning proceeded more visitors came, but it was a floating crowd of hardly 10 in all.

This morning's darshan had come after an interval of nearly 10 days, excluding Sundays when in any case Revered Swamiji does not give morning darshan.

A sadhak disciple began the conversation by asking about the division of the chapters of *Durga Saptasati*. The question was if all the *slokas* (stanzas) and mantras (hymns) of Devi, should as a rule be treated as three separate portions. Revered Swamiji replied that it was because they were addressed to Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati. Were the chapters then spoken from different aspects? No. The three deities were the three stages of consciousness—*tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*—reached in an ascending order.

Sadhak: Are the chapters then suitably written to

tamas, rajas and *sattva*?

Swamiji: No, because they are all one. It is our incapacity to see all three as one that brings in the distinction. It is the same one *guna* that appears as *tamas, rajas* and *sattva*.

Sadhak: Then the number of *slokas* in each portion has no meaning as so many mantras? The numbers vary, unlike in the *ashtottara* and *sahasranamavalis*.

Swamiji: There is no significance in the number as such of the *slokas*. It is all one continuous mantra of prayer to one deity only.

Swamiji: There is a figurative description of the karmas of the individual, his *prarabdha* waiting for the *jiva*, like a king who is awaited by his vassals. But there is also this logic. For instance, under the circumstances of suicide when the subconscious is shocked it results in the restlessness of that particular *jiva*: its astral body.

An ashramite. Why should the latter eventuality occur when the former condition is already a fact?

Swamiji: That happens because the soul is ignorant of its destiny. Under the circumstances of deaths due to accident or suicide, and the like, the soul is restless.

Ashramite: But why does not the *prarabdha* come into action?

Swamiji: The *prarabdha* will act at the proper time and place. Till then it will await its turn. The *prarabdha* of every individual is written at his birth, even while in the womb. And it awaits the right time and place for it to come into play. The whole tree is in the seed. But you cannot expect it to come forth as soon as you put the seed in the earth. All conditions for its growth must be present. There must be rain for the seed to sprout. It is our ignorance that makes us incapable of seeing the whole picture—from birth to death. Even the moment

of death is written up in the womb. If we have the capacity to see into time, we can see the working of the whole cosmos. There is no present and past, we are used to think in such terms. If it were not for your ignorance you will see the whole history of the individual personality even in the new-born child.

Ashramite: Why do we suffer Swamiji? What is the cause of suffering?

Swamiji: It is the incapacity to adjust oneself to things that is the cause of suffering. It is the lack of union between the intellect and the act. Suffering is the reaction to an action. When feeling merges into intellect it is philosophy. It is the practical philosophy of adaptation. Otherwise, it is armchair philosophy. The art of seeing things as God sees is the real spiritual life, nothing else is spiritual life. To God everything is perfect. Everything, at every time and everywhere is perfect. It is very difficult to think like this. If every day for five hours, you can think like this, you can grind this thought into the mind. Otherwise it vanishes into thin air like mist before the sun. You see the difference between this and that, you and the others, only due to space and time and the projection of your mind. Our trouble is that we are unable to see things as they are. You see everything as outside yourself. It is this separation in space-time that is the root of all our sufferings. If you abolish the feeling of separatedness, suffering also goes. You abolish the cause and the effect also goes.

DECEMBER 21, 1978

In winter we gathered in the open terrace in front of Swamiji's kutir under the open sky and shining sun for warmth and fresh air. During these months foreign visitors also came in groups and in numbers and the open terrace had space for all to sit around informally. To begin with, there were about half a dozen people.

A Visitor: Swamiji, I wish to ask you a question. In the cosmic consciousness there is no compassion; there seems to be injustice.

Swamiji: These don't exist in the cosmos. These are all human feelings.

Visitor: It is difficult to live with this idea.

Swamiji: Which idea?

Visitor: Well, see the suffering and...

Swamiji: No, no. When you see the suffering naturally you cannot escape reacting to it. And when you see it, you are not seeing the cosmic consciousness. It is out of your sight. You can't see the two things at the same time. When you are sleeping, the waking does not exist. You can't say what you shall do with the waking consciousness; in the dreaming also, you cannot put this question because you have not woken up. If you wake up, you do not put questions about dreams. The matter is closed. And you know very well why you should not put such questions. You will never ask me questions about your friends in dream. Perhaps one fell and broke his limb in that dream but on waking up you do not ask, "What happened to that man. I have to take him to the hospital." You do not put such question for obvious reasons which are known to you very well.

For the same reason, you will not put these questions when you are in cosmic consciousness. But these questions will certainly be there so long as you

have not woken up into cosmic consciousness. When you fall from a tree in the dream you certainly feel the pain at that time. But this is only in a dream. When you wake up, you will not say anything about the pain.

Another Visitor: So when I am in a cyclone-hit area, I cannot think that it is a cosmic action.

Swamiji: You cannot think like that; the mind will not go there to the cosmic consciousness.

Visitor: It does go. God's will, etc. we say.

Swamiji: No, no! Only theoretically the mind goes there, and that is useless. It has no utility for the mind.

Visitor: [laughing]: What does it want, and how does the mind in a practical sense go to the cosmic consciousness?

Swamiji: Practically it means you will become that. Just as you become practically waking—you are not theoretically thinking it is the waking state. Are you simply arguing that it is the waking state, or is it really so? Now you are only arguing that God exists. You are not seeing it. It has not become part of your life. But waking is part of your existence, and you would not have any question about it. It is very clear that in the waking state the sun is rising and is bright. You will not ask any question about that. But you ask questions about God, cosmos, and all that. This is because it is not a part of your life. When it does become a part of your life, you will not ask questions. You came from England, you didn't ask from people, "Am I coming from England?" That is very clear to you and you'll never ask such questions. Your name is very clear to you, do you ask others, "Am I called by this name?" These are part of your existence, and questions can't arise. That which is outside you, and not part of your life, raises doubts. Cosmic Being and God are outside your personality and so you have so many questions. So 'practically' means

practical experience and the cosmic consciousness absorption into your personality. Anything that has become one with your personality does not bring doubts. You've no doubt about your being a citizen of England, but you have doubts about your being a citizen of Paradise. If you are connected with another British national, you are connected with the citizens of England. This is very clear to you, it is a part of your existence, you will not ask any question. If you see the world at the cosmic level, you will see it in a different light altogether. Answers to questions will be as clear as daylight.

First Visitor: Many traditions talk about the Compassionate God.

Swamiji: That is only man's creation of God. What man himself has created traditionally, it is that God. There are two kinds of God: God created by man, and God as He is. [*laughing*] And the God created by man is like this—He thinks as man thinks. But there is another God who does not think like man but has got His own ways of thinking. And you've to participate in that. He is not prepared to participate with you. [*laughing*] There are people who do not believe in God. When, for instance, a child dies—if my child dies I can't believe that God is good. He is a very cruel, hard-hearted person if at all He exists: He has killed my little child. But if you win elections to be the Prime Minister of England, God is very compassionate. He has given me success in the elections. This is your God whom you have created and who is of this type. Whatever you say, He does. So He is like a servant. You can't call Him a God who does whatever you like. In that case He is only your slave. If you want wealth, He must give it; if you want that your enemy should die, He should kill him. A very strange God that would be! Whatever you say He must do,

otherwise you have no faith in Him.

This is exactly what I have been rebelling against for years and years. [Swami K. laughs.] As a poet beautifully said: "God is the greatest creation of man. Man has created many things like robots and engines and aeroplanes, and also God for his utility. And this God is not going to help you. This is your creation. But there is a God who has created you and that is the real God. If you are able to understand Him, well then, you'll be a superhuman being, and you will not think in the human way.

Even mathematics is of three kinds. There is empirical maths and a cosmic maths, $2 \times 2 = 4$, 3 angles of a triangle make two right angles. These are arithmetic and geometry of the empirical type. But there is an arithmetic of subatomic physics and cosmography, of the theories of relativity, for instance. There $2+2$ do not make 4, and the 3 angles of a triangle do not make two right angles. How do you say that it is absurd! No, it is a geometrical truth.

But this empirical mathematics is not applicable at that level, and has nothing to do with it. Only a person whose mind has risen to that level will understand what it is. Now, length, breadth and height—this is called three-dimensional perception. But it is not true. It is only an erroneous perception. According to the Theory of Relativity, these are made in four dimensional structure. What four dimensional is, God alone knows, the mind cannot grasp. You have reduced everything to three dimensions—length, breadth and height. Everything is in space and time. They say there is no such thing as space and time, there is only a complex of space-time continuation. This is one mathematics. And what this gentleman, this scientist, said, God can't understand. Only he can understand.

According to the Theory of Relativity, there is no

past, present and future. The past can be future and the future can be present. There is no distinction of the past, present and future; time does not exist. And if the past and the future do not exist, the world also does not exist. It comes to that. The world is based on this conception of the past, present and future. The human basis doesn't exist. The whole thing collapses. If the theories of modern physics are to be accepted, you can't even believe that the world exists—except in your head. And this is what men like Einstein have demonstrated, to the horror of ordinary thinkers. If physics can revolutionize your brain like this, well, God is something different, and you will never think in such terms as this. Your daily life will get completely transformed in God-consciousness. It will not be as it is lived ordinarily, because God will direct your course of actions in the light of the cosmic set-up of things, not in the light of empirical perception of values.

Where is the difference between these? You have no connection with the person sitting next to you. That is your ordinary way of thinking. You may think you are connected with that person who is your sister, etc. But in the cosmic setup of things it is not true that this other person is not connected with you. There is nothing which is not connected with you. Everything is connected with you, just as your nose and hands are connected with you. And if that is the case, what will be your attitude to things? I ask you, if everything is connected with your personality organically, what will your attitude be? You can yourself judge. You can yourself answer this question. If everything is organically connected with your personality, and is inseparable from your being, what will be your attitude to things? You will have the same attitude to things as you will have to your own self. You can neither like nor dislike anything. You cannot pass judgment on anything.

No opinion about anything, just as you have no judgment or opinion about yourself. And then you will see some miracle taking place, and what that miracle will be you will see at that time only.

People will start appearing in a different light altogether, and everything will come to you on its own. They are away from you now, and you have to go here and there to get them. At that time you need not go to things, they will come to you. And you do not have to run after them because they are away from you. At that stage they run after you; the tables are turned. Now you are dependent on the world. At that stage, the world will depend on you because you are not an individual, you are something else. Not only the world, but also that which is beyond it will look unlike what it was before. You are now a representative of the cosmic substance. Even the world looks like a dot before the might of the cosmos. Naturally, nothing exists before it, and everything has simply to bow its head before it. Now everything in the world, which looks so big, frightens you. But at that stage, nothing can frighten you because you have transcended it in your awareness, and you become a superhuman being. Your logic fails, your mathematics fails and even your ethical consciousness fails. It is super-moral; not immoral, but super-moral.

Second Visitor: Swamiji, you have said that during meditation, a change takes place in every cell of your being. If there is no concentration will this still happen?

Swamiji: No, there is no change taking place when there is no concentration; nothing will happen. If you throw a grain of sugar into the ocean, there is no change in the ocean. A spoon of sugar is not sufficient to sweeten it. It is true that you are concentrating, but it is not strong enough to bring about that change. When a strong wind blows, even a tree can be uprooted. (Acting

the words) But if you puff and blow before the tree nothing happens. [Swamiji leads the laughter from all]. You will say, I am blowing but nothing is happening! See! Your blowing can have no effect on a tree just near you. How can poor concentration affect the cosmos which alone brings about the change in your individual self?

Visitor: So any unusual experience, when there is no concentration, is not valid? It is only one more phenomenon the senses are creating under these conditions.

Swamiji: Y-e-s.

Visitor: Even if it repeats itself, it is only the senses that are projecting the experience, and so it has no validity. Is it only the senses affirming their say and trying to convince us that they are not protecting it?

Swamiji: Yes, if the experience is not projected by the senses by themselves, you will never have a doubt whether they are true or not. You do not doubt that it is daytime now; you don't ask people around whether it is day or not. The minute you ask questions, it means it is not true. If you are free from doubts, the experience is true. The minute you ask questions, it means it is not O.K. It is not the real thing: of the real thing you, will have no doubt.

Visitor: Swamiji, you have said that the eight ways in which the Vedas are recited drives them into the mind. Are all the four Vedas recited in all these eight ways?

Swamiji: Yes, but especially the Rig Veda is sung like that.

Another Visitor: What should be the aim of one's life?

Swamiji: Let me first explain who you are. You are an individual. An individual is a social being, a member of a certain society. We think of each person in the society

as separate individuals. You do not think that one soul is connected with another soul. Suppose you sit here without having any connection with one another. In that case, you cannot call it a society. It is only like a heap of pebbles on the road which looks connected with it with each other, but is not really so. In fact, society does not mean merely a group of people. Society is the relationship between individuals, and not merely a group of people. There is a difference between a group of people and society, though on the surface it appears that society is nothing but a group of people.

There is, therefore, a difference between group psychology and individual psychology. You may think something individually, i.e. as an individual, but when you are in the midst of a hundred people, you think differently. Why is this so? What happens to you? You become a part of the group. This is the difference between society and the individual. This relationship between one person and another is the primary concern at present. Whatever you do is in the light of society, the social relationship. You are not doing it absolutely from your own individual point of view, though ultimately that is your intention. You cannot impose upon it your own personality inasmuch as you cannot extricate yourself from social relationship.

But social relationship is ultimately to be transcended in one's understanding of the great fact that society is not independent of individuals, notwithstanding the fact that it is the relation between the individuals which is society. If individuals were not there, society will not be there. So individuals are tremendously important. You have an importance in your individuality because you are an individual. And the importance of one individual is the same as that of any other individual. If you know yourself fully, you know everybody else because everybody is made of the

same substance. So from social psychology, you come to individual psychology. Though the primary intention is to face society ultimately, that will not decide all your questions unless you read the psychology of human nature. And the way in which human mind works decides the manner in which society works. Because society is a relationship of individuals, it is essential that you know what is the structure of the human mind and human nature. It is made up of certain factors. It is constructed of certain forces and works in a certain manner, and you have to take into consideration the structure of the human personality, the human mind, the intellect, the emotions and whatever there is of the psyche.

But this is also not sufficient. Why should the mind work in that way? This is another question. The human mind works in a given way because of its pattern of thinking, understanding and desiring. And one has to conform oneself to the way in which the mind works. There is the question why the mind works in that manner and not in any other manner. This question cannot be answered by psychology because psychologists study only the pattern in which the human mind works, as also the way of the working of the mind. The why of it cannot say. This is the question which leads us to philosophy, to philosophical enquiry, which is in the higher realms of spirituality, religion, yoga, etc.

Your relationship with the universe is the reason behind the way the mind works in that particular way. As human society is determined by individuals, the individuals themselves are determined by cosmic relationship. You are constituted of a particular relationship with the universe of the world outside. You are connected with air, water, fire, ether, sky, the moon, the sun, the solar system and what not! So the way in

which you are related to the cosmos outside is the determining factor of the manner in which your personality would work—the way in which your mind works and, incidentally, the society works. And your relationship with the universe outside is the subject of philosophy. From sociology, we go to psychology, and from psychology to what they call epistemology, that is, the way of thinking and understanding of things outside and the manner of our perception. Then we go to cosmology, the creation of the universe.

When we go to the creation of the universe, the question of the creator arises. Who created this universe? So we go to metaphysics and the Absolute. Just imagine! You are related to so many wonderful things which are unthinkable, and it is enough to make one giddy. Your head will start reeling if you have the time to think of the various relationships in which you are involved. Though it seems you are connected with only little things like shopping and standing at a counter to encash a cheque—silly matters for you—but these things are connected with the Absolute. And this will become clear to you only if you have time to think deeply about small situations. Even the littlest thing of the world is connected with the Absolute. Now I come to your point. You asked me how can I decide the aim of life. Do you think you get some inkling as to the answer to this question? Some idea as to the implications of your question?

Visitor: Yes.

Swamiji: What should be the aim of your life? Tell me.

Visitor: You should see to your own qualities, your own intelligence and...

Swamiji: You should not look to your own quality. You have to look to the various stages of life. I mentioned to you the various stages of the development of thought;

from lower to the higher, you go gradually. You are not looking to any particular thing—neither to yourself, nor to society, nor the world, nor even to God Himself, but you have to look to all things at the same time in different gradations or ascents, and you must know where you stand. You should not jump too high, thinking that you are on a higher level when you are actually on the lower. Generally, we suffer and come in conflict on account of our theoretical imagining that we are on a higher level while practically we are on a lower one. That is called worry, mental tension, etc. Tension is the problem that is created by a theoretical future and a practical present. [laughs] So you should be very wise. You should not try to soar to the sky very quickly. When your feet are planted on earth, you must know that they are on the earth; you should not think you are in heaven.

People say, “Oh! I am concerned only with God, spirituality and yoga.” That is not true. This kind of statement will not work, and it is not a fact. The fact is that you are in the world. When the wind blows you feel cold, you have hunger, you have thirst, sleep...See? And many other considerations. So you must eschew the idea that you are thinking only of God. One must be realistic. Though the aim should be to transcend these lower limitations, you cannot ignore their presence when they are there.

First Visitor: Swami Sivananda says that while he was doing ordinary things, he had his consciousness on the higher level. He does not talk of any level of perfection but says you should be conscious only of the higher values

Swamiji: Yes, yes, that is so.

Visitor: There is no link between the ordinary level without real perfection and the higher consciousness

within oneself.

Swamiji: Why do you say there is no link? A link between them is actually present. In fact, the very art of perfect living or aim of living life is the maintenance of a higher purpose. It need not necessarily be the highest purpose, it is the purpose immediately higher, just above your present level. That is what you are concerned with, not with the supreme level. That is not your concern. When you say this is right, that is not right; this is good, that is not good; it should be like this, it should not be like that—when you say this, you have already set a higher standard than the standard you are following. Otherwise, you will not say this is good and that is not good. You have something in your mind as the proper standard, to which you make a reference to find out what is right and what is wrong. So your idea of it is already there. If it is not there, you will not know what is right and what is wrong. The very fact that you are thinking this is right, that is wrong shows you have a link with a higher idea which you are maintaining in your mind and from the point of which you want to judge the lower level. Similarly, when you have reached that you will find a still higher level. You go on like that until you reach the highest step. So, as I said, you must concern yourself with the immediate higher level.

The immediate higher level for an ordinary individual is the social norm. You cannot break the social norm, you know that very well. Otherwise, you cannot live in human society. Whether the people in society are correct or not is a different matter. For you, it is correct. The Western society has one norm, the Indian society another, and the Japanese still another, different from both. It is very strange that every society has its own norms and neither this is nice nor that is nice. But that is a different subject. You belong to a particular society, and you have to follow its norms. So

at the earliest stages of existence, social norms become the higher level. When you transcend that, then you are independent and you do not have to hang on society for your existence, and you have strength and value of your own. Then you start judging things from the point of view of your own conscience. Sometimes your conscience will rebel against social norms. You will think society is stupid. But you cannot live, get on staying in society with this feeling; you have to get out of it, and that is a different matter. When you are in it, you have to follow it. So when your society relationship is transcended, you begin to follow the higher reason with which you are endowed. What we call conscience is the next step.

There is no need of thinking too far into the higher levels because the mind is not used to it and will not, therefore, go to that level which it has not reached, though it will go to the cosmic level itself in time. Your reason may not be of the final norm because that is also an empirical thing. It is conditioned by your body and your needs. Your idea of the necessary and unnecessary is dependent on the needs of the body and mind. Whatever is necessary for the body and the mind, you regard that as really necessary. And this something is necessary for the body and mental well-being, and you have got to give in. That is the temporary and tentative judgment of the values of things. But you will transcend this value afterwards. What is good at this level is not necessarily good for the body and your individual psyche from the point of the law that operates in the cosmos. And that is the next step. Then finally the highest good is that which is in consonance with the existence of God Himself, and anything else is not good. But you cannot reach that level immediately. As I told you, slowly and gradually you must go from the lower to the higher purpose; otherwise, you cannot make

judgments. Every judgment logically is the standard that is set as the next higher level. In any opinion that you express, whenever you pass an opinion on anything, hold an idea or a concept or a judgment about anything, you have connection with a higher purpose which becomes your standard. Otherwise you cannot know what is right and what is wrong, what is perfect and what is not perfect, what is true and what is false. So there is a real link. But the link will develop into higher and higher dimensions. You cannot see the higher dimensions, but only the immediately higher.

Third Visitor: What is Shakti? How does it work?

Swamiji: What is Shakti? Which Shakti? First of all, you tell me what you mean by Shakti?

Visitor: Well, Shakti like creature power, Shakti like the Divine Mother.

Swamiji: It works everywhere and in everything, and everything is its manifestation. It is cosmic energy. And everything is constituted of that. Do you know what the latest modern scientific discoveries say? They say that every material object, apparently looking material, is nothing but a formation of cosmic energy. Everything, including your own body, is made up of that one energy, Shakti, which means energy, power, force, etc. It is the stuff of everything, right from earth to heaven—nothing else except that. And the more you are able to participate in its working, the more strength you derive. Shakti is not merely physical, but also psychological, and even spiritual. But you must know how to participate in its working. That means you have to transcend your ego, and to some extent also your personality and your individuality. Because cosmic substance is all-pervading, it is not affiliated to some particular individual. So to participate in the universal substance means to get over the limitations of

personality, that is, to transcend it. What else do you want to know. What is your question?

Visitor: Is the Shakti connected with feminine quality?

Swamiji: No, no! It is not connected with any quality because it has no such distinction as masculine or feminine. It is a universal, impersonal force. It may split itself into various shapes, into not only feminine and masculine but also into matter in the animate and the inanimate, etc., etc. This is a discussion of animate and inanimate. Even that is the creation of the ways of human perception. It has no such distinctions in itself, but it looks as if there is distinction when you look at it from your point of view. It is not male or female, it is impersonal. It is endogenous.

Visitor: It works also in the individuality.

Swamiji: It works also in the individuality; it works everywhere—in every atom of the world it is working. It alone exists through all that appear as substances. But it looks, to your empirical perception, as if it is divided, whereas it is cosmically integrated.

Visitor: There are such things as positive and negative forces. Can the male and female be regarded as such?

Swamiji: This would be a very gross and crude form of expressing the two forces, positive and negative. These two forces of electricity, for instance, you don't call them feminine and masculine. That is a very peculiar human way of looking at things. They are two electric couplings—neutral forces: one becoming complete by combination with another, and they appear to be different on account of the manifestation of the space-time causal relationship. There is further distinction of male-female, positive-negative, etc. But in what people nowadays call the fourth dimension, there is no such distinction of positivity and negativity. The split of positive and negative, male and female, arises after

space and time have been divided. So what you say in this context it is correct. But everything is contained in the fourth dimension and, in its essentiality, has no division within itself. There's a difference between the head and the legs, for instance. You have a head and you've legs. They are not different; you can't say either that one is the same as the other. But you don't feel the difference; you feel it is one whole. You feel one living mass or personality extending from head to foot. You don't see the distinction from one part to another part of the body. Likewise, the energy will not see any difference such as that which the mind sees. It is one mass in which everything is comprehended: pure awareness.

Visitor: What is the meaning of yoga, please?

Swamiji: The meaning is the realisation of the mistaken notion—that of the isolation of the individual from the cosmic, your feeling that you are cut off from the world. You feel that you are outside things, isn't it? There are so many things like the sun, the moon, the stars, etc. You think they aren't connected with you, but it is not true: you are connected with them. The solar rays and the cosmic rays constitute the substance of your body itself. But you feel that you aren't connected, and this is your mistake. Our mind is not so made as to appreciate the connection of our existence with other things. This is the inability of the mind to think correctly. That is our problem. And the practice of yoga is nothing but a gradual process of self-identification with the different levels of reality, until gradually you identify yourself with that to which you originally belonged. A great art, a tremendous, life-long process—life-long, not a question of a few days and months. And you exist only for this purpose, and have no other duty in life. Every other duty is only for this purpose. What can you do in this

world is a step in the achievement of this purpose.

Visitor: So yoga is connecting the individual reality with the Cosmic Reality?

Swamiji: Yes, yes; right, right!

Visitor: Have you to use the mind to...

Swamiji: In the beginning, you've to use nothing else. You've got no other faculty. The only faculty you've got is the mind and the intellect in the beginning. But later on, there is no need for you to use the mind and intellect. The soul itself will act. Your soul is your total personality. It is not working always. Generally only a partial part of your total personality works.

Visitor: It is the individuality that works.

Swamiji: Yes. Personality is the outward expression of your individuality. Your individuality is superior. Either the intellect works or the emotions etc. but the soul does not work. The whole intellect works, emotion works, will works. And the soul does not, only very rarely it acts.

Visitor: Is it because the intellect and the mind are conditioned very much?

Swamiji: They are very much conditioned, and they are not going to be of help at all times. But when you have nothing else, you have naturally to take their help for the time being. When you have no apparatus to rely upon, you have only the mind and intellect, hence you have to take their help.

Visitor: What about the feelings? Is it conditionless?

Swamiji: It is equally conditioned, as much as the intellect and mind. It is no less conditioned. Your whole vision of things is conditioned in a particular manner by space and time. As I mentioned to you, you cannot get over this conditioning. But the intellect will help you finally in knowing its own limitations. That is, when you

know your own limitations, you have automatically outgrown your limitations. When you know, you can go up higher and further to this level, you have to some extent known what is above you. When you know the limit of a thing, you also have an idea of what is outside that limit. So when your intellect has reached its farther limits of logic and understanding, you would get a flash from the higher level. And then the soul acts and the intellect stops.

Visitor: What happens to your own personality afterwards?

Swamiji: It all just goes, afterwards. It will not exist then. You will become something different. You will become a larger personality, and not an individual personality. You become inclusive of all other factors in you. That is what is called a superman. You must have heard of super-beings. Superman is nothing but a higher being in whose personality the existence of other personality is subsumed. He is a larger individuality with greater dimensions tending towards still higher realisation, stage by stage.

Visitor: What is the difference between Jnana Shakti and Kundalini Shakti?

Swamiji: Kundalini Shakti is everything. Jnana Shakti is knowledge. Jnana is a Sanskrit word; the power of knowledge is Jnana Shakti. Kundalini Shakti includes the power of understanding, of feeling, the power of action. It is every kind of Shakti, action, volition, feeling—all these are comprehended within it.

Visitor: Is it included in the practice of yoga. Can we use this term?

Swamiji: Yes! Kundalini Shakti is included in yoga. All types of energy are included therein, and it is inclusive of everything.

Visitor: What is the difference between knowledge and wisdom?

Swamiji: Knowledge is the lesser of the two—wisdom is deeper—almost bordering on intuition. Many times in practical life, we have knowledge but not wisdom. You know that very well. When you know how to live properly, that is wisdom.

DECEMBER 23, 1978

About ten people, mostly foreigners, were present at the start of the morning *darshan*. Revered Swamiji welcomed them.

A Visitor: What is the cause of our perception of change? Is it purely physical, and, therefore, pertaining to the body, or is it due to the structure of the mind?

Swamiji: Changes are both perceivable and not perceivable due to the mind and the body.

Visitor: Are they interdependent?

Swamiji: Yes.

Visitor: How to overcome this interdependence?

Swamiji: Interdependence of the body and the mind can be overcome by transcending both, and this is what is meant by the word 'meditation'. What kind of meditation is suited for the individual can be found only with the guidance of a competent person. Find someone in the world—may be in your own place or elsewhere—and ask him which type of meditation is good for you.

Visitor: Cannot Swamiji tell me what is suited for me?

Swamiji: I will study you first, only then I can answer that question. Psychoanalysis, which is essential to understand the structure of the mind, is part of yoga itself. Yoga is the highest kind of self-analysis.

Visitor: Do you believe in dream-analysis as relevant to

yoga practice?

Swamiji: Psychoanalysis includes dreams, etc. The function of the mind is studied in this analysis and all the various mental functions have to be studied, and it requires time. It is a long process of analysis undertaken leisurely. You need a guide for this, because you are studying yourself and, therefore, will be prone to justifications of your own way of thinking. You hold an opinion, because you are sure that it is right. But it may not be so in the final analysis which we have undertaken. Therefore, a personal guide is needed, because it is better to have two heads than one. Specially in the advanced stages of meditation, you need the guidance of a competent person.

To find out the type of yoga suitable for you, you must first fix up the aim in your taking to yoga. It is useless to proceed if you cannot fix up your aim. When you undertake a travel, unless you determine the aim and purpose you wish to achieve by travelling, how can you reach anywhere or fix up your travel programme?

Another Visitor: I wish to study yoga.

Swamiji: Why do you want to study yoga?

Alex: I want to know what I am. I sit with my eyes closed trying to find out what I am.

Swamiji: How did this question arise in your mind? There must be something in your mind which is prompting you into this question. Why do you want to know yourself?

Visitor: Because I am not satisfied that I know myself.

Swamiji: Not satisfied? Why? Are you not happy?

Visitor: Sometimes I feel unhappy, but generally, quite happy.

Swamiji: Note down what makes you unhappy.

Visitor: I am not able to follow my own way of thinking, I am not in my own path.

Swamiji: Why do you feel so? Are you sure your way is right? If you are not sure, then why do you wish to change? There are different ways of thinking—how to judge which one is correct. If each one is correct in his own world and cannot harmonise his way of thinking with another, find out what the reason is.

That the world of one's own is different from that of the other is what results in war. Is your unhappiness caused by the necessity of following the law? Actually appreciation of the law is happiness. That is the first thing. Secondly, because you don't want to agree to other's opinions, you feel unhappy: this is wrong, this is selfishness. Thirdly, happiness is the result of agreeing to the law and thus avoiding trouble. Philosophical thinking brings about understanding. We must direct the mind to understand the law. Education is the capacity to understand. Philosophy is not for writing for the examinations. It is an education in the art of life itself, and not any compartmental knowledge. Philosophy means comprehensive thinking. You need not follow Plato or Kant. You can take their help to the extent you find them helpful. A wider vision and sympathy should be the result of the philosophy of thinking. All these need to be studied under a competent guide for a protracted period of time, just like in a university where they have the course chalked out systematically.

Because the subject here is more difficult, there is a great necessity for such a systematic course and a guide. Yoga is not one singled-out subject. It is fundamental, your existence itself. Understanding of the subject depends on the level one is at. The different qualities of different people is due to the fact that they are at different levels of understanding. It is not enough to

meet one of your own level, but one who is at a higher level, so that you can progress. As human beings, we act alike in general. But we think differently in particularised details. Since yoga deals with the fundamentals of one's existence, there is need to harmonise by adjusting oneself to all the levels one meets with. That amount of adjustment is necessary which is needed for harmony, specially in such things as in differences of outlook, mind, aim, etc. of the individual.

When a person thinks rationally, there are, side by side, feelings of personality also. A man of understanding is also a man of feeling. It is in consideration of this that the great tradition of the Guru-disciple system of education had been planned with great wisdom by our ancients. But in modern times, we are trying to overstep this wise and necessary Guru-disciple tradition. The modern ideals of independence is the cause behind the impetuosity of severance from guidance. Self-dependence plays the key role in the misplaced idea that a Guru is dispensable. I repeat, you require a guide.

Another Visitor: If I ponder over spiritual problems, I become depressed.

Swamiji: Thinking becomes depressing, because you don't understand the subject you are thinking of, and if your reading has not been understood, you feel more so. A medicine it meant to alleviate, and not to aggravate, the illness. If this happens, it means it is a wrong medicine. The disease has not been properly diagnosed, and a competent prescription has not been given. Three things are necessary for yoga: 1. Continuous study under a guide. 2. Contemplation of what has been studied. 3. Meditation on what has been understood. Contemplation is lighter in depth than meditation.

In meditation you become the object of your meditation and, therefore, have gone much deeper into your own personality and the relationship to the object of meditation.

Another Visitor: Which is the best religion which gives the right direction?

Swamiji: What is good, bad, above, below, right, wrong—all this depends upon the position of the observer and, therefore, they are relative, and not absolute in themselves. There is no new philosophy. All philosophies are so many different aspects of theology. The old and the new concept of God is what you learn in the Old Testament and the New Testament. So, there is no right or wrong type of philosophy. All depends upon your level of understanding and your type of thinking. I will not say this is higher or that is lower. Do you know Judaism? You know nothing about it. What religion have you studied?

Visitor: I am only a student, and my subject is Theology. I have studied only in the university, and I like Hinduism.

Swamiji: What books have you studied?

Visitor: Mostly about hatha yoga and other yogas.

Swamiji: Why do you like Hinduism?

Visitor: Because I feel it is more open than the other religions that I studied.

Swamiji: What is the outlook of Hinduism? In what way is it different from the ways of other religions? How? Or, is there no difference?

Visitor: It has more practical value.

DECEMBER 26, 1978

A Visitor: What happens to us after death?

Swamiji: If you exist after death, there is no need to worry. If you do not exist, there is no point in worrying. What does it matter even if it is a continuous existence after death. Tomorrow is no botheration because it is yet to come. Therefore, death is not a problem. Look at it either way. So why bother? Because you have a hazy notion both of existence after death and also of non-existence, because you have 50/50 percent of both these notions, the problem has risen before you. There is always a problem when partial views are taken. A partial view gives a double attitude. There is a big philosophy behind this problem. As the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad puts it, the subject and object are 50/50 percent mixed with up each in the other because neither is 100 percent. Therefore the problem of likes and dislikes arises. If this double attitude goes, the problem goes too. When you project God as an outside object, then you say God has no sense. He sends cyclones, earthquakes, etc. He is very unkind; He is very cruel. The problem before you is because of conflict between the subject and the object; your understanding is in conflict with the understanding of God. Your understanding is in the light of the report of your senses, and the mind is ever ready to rely upon the report the senses bring. God's understanding is independent of the senses. And yoga is withdrawal of the senses from the objects, because senses act like the prism that splits light into seven colours. Hence, to get the pure light of understanding, yoga, which is the withdrawal of senses from the objects, is the solution. Then the double attitude of subject versus the object goes.

Another Visitor: What is the difference between feeling

and emotion.

Swamiji: The two are like the wind and the cyclone. Feeling is mild emotion; emotion is strong feeling. A singled-out emotion versus all other views, and emotions of even collective nature, is passion. A preference for a particular emotion is passion. Passion is a thought that overpowers personality.

Visitor: What is the difference between devotion and passion?

Swamiji: Devotion without understanding is only emotion, and later becomes a passion—fanaticism.

Another Visitor: If all devotion ultimately reaches the Absolute in whatever form it is offered, why is there such an elaborate arrangement for devotion to lesser deities?

Swamiji: Shankaracharya, in his commentary on the Brihadaranayaka Upanishad, says: "Why quarrel with the lesser gods by objecting to the worship offered to them? Please them. There is no harm in it."

Visitor: Why can we not think of God as such.

Swamiji: You can't think of God as such because the minute you think God, He becomes the object. You think of God as a particular potentiality, power, force, conduct or beauty. The history of mankind is the manifestation of God's potentiality in any or all these forms. It is said that before manifestation, it was all dark, unknowable, ununderstandable, etc., and this potentiality has no beginning nor end, even as there is neither beginning nor end of the cosmos. Only for man who thinks in terms of the present, past and future, there is a beginning, a process and an end, and there is history.

Visitor: Why is this Yuga called Kali Yuga?

Swamiji: The yugas come in a cycle. There are four yugas, which come in rotation: Satya Yuga, Treta Yuga,

Dwapara Yuga and Kali Yuga. Satya Yuga is the golden age. The golden age is a condition of things where consciousness of externality is minimum, and consciousness of universality is maximum. In the golden age, there is the highest consciousness of universality. The question whether creation is a reality or not cannot be answered. Both ways of answering it, yes and no, land us in one or the other kind of problem. So, why creation was of the highest consciousness of universality in the golden age cannot be easily answered. The reason why we feel that now in Kali Yuga we are in a non-golden age is because the sense of externality is overpowering the other view, viz., that there co-exists the consciousness of universality. Hence, the consciousness of universality is reduced to the minimum. There are books written by a Chinese author: *Infinite Way*, etc. In these books, he gives the same thoughts as those contained in the Indian system of thought explained by Patanjali. Matter is another name for externality, in other words, sensory perception, and if there is 100 percent perception of externality, it is inferno. At one stage, there is a balance between sensory perception of externality and the consciousness of universality. At another stage, there is complete abolition of this balance. Then the catastrophe occurs, as in the case of the Yadavas being exterminated by Lord Krishna, an Avatar. Thus starts another *yuga*. The golden age is the harmonious self-existence. It is the harmonious relationship of all forces in the world. Kali Yuga will be followed by Satya Yuga. The world is not going to the dogs. The Supreme is ever Bliss and happiness.

Another Visitor: Why do we have to search for our own souls?

Swamiji: There is logical contradiction in that things

are outside us. By logic it can easily be seen that the universe is one whole, of which we are parts. For example, the hand in our body. It appears to be outside our body, but it is really not so. And if there is no conflict between the hand which is outside the body, why should a conflict arise when we perceive the world as outside us? Yet conflict is raised: the world versus man. The greatest conflict, however, is the relation between man and God. There are four types of conflicts that assail man: 1. Conflict of man in society; 2. Conflict of man in his own (individual) personality; 3. Conflict of man, between the individual and the Universal, i.e., the cosmos; 4. Conflict of the relation between man and God or the conflict between the spirit and the Supreme.

God created the world and, therefore, it is outside God. That is the idea we have. This is a wrong notion, and it is with this wrong notion that we complain against Him. The world is not created in the sense of space-time relationship as far as God is concerned. This space-time relationship being foisted upon God is also a wrong notion. Now, the dream proves to you that you can exist independent of the physical body. The parallels can be seen in the existence of God in the world and beyond it, what is it that exists continuously in both states of dream and waking consciousness. We had no awareness in sleep, and yet we know that we slept. This is the contradiction. It is a recollection which is also a fact. How does contradiction in this recollection come—of the sleep of yesterday and the waking consciousness today? We say it is memory of the dream which is recollected today. What is memory? Memory is a remembrance of previous experience, which is not possible unless there is consciousness of the previous experience. For example, the stone does not have any recollection or memory of the time-space complex,

though a degree of consciousness does exist in it. Therefore, consciousness is independent of mind and body. Consciousness alone is present in deep sleep. Therefore, it is a proof that you can go beyond body and mind, but not beyond consciousness. If there is no consciousness, who will know that you slept, you had dreamt, etc. It can only be if consciousness has been continuously present. You cannot believe that there is anything beyond and outside consciousness; therefore, consciousness is everywhere. Thus, your essential nature is somehow that existence everywhere. Do you search for your own soul, was your question. How can you search your own soul outside this existence which is everywhere, the Absolute? This all-Soul is God, within whom rests the whole world. God did not create the world for you as an object and you as the subject opposed and outside you. Yoga aims at reconciling all the conflicts we have now mentioned: 1. Social, 2. Individual, 3. The individual in the Cosmos, 4. Spiritual and the Absolute.

These are the stages mentioned by sage Patanjali, and are based on intense scientific investigation. Yoga is meant for everyone because everyone has these four conflicts, which have to be resolved by reconciling the contradictions. Therefore, yoga is for everyone. Yoga is the art of the science applicable to anyone anywhere, every time, for Hindu monks or for other types of monks in other religions.

Om is a symbol of the vibration from which is supposed to emanate the manifestations of the world. Science says electricity is vibration. Not only that, science further says that all materials, the so-called objects of the world, are nothing but vibrations ultimately. A substance is hard, soft, not palpable, etc. according to the vibrations our fingers register. Even so, universal vibration is the energy of the whole Cosmos,

which is Om.

Hence, we may say that the world and ourselves and God are not separate from one another, but constitute a continuum of consciousness. To realise this, the four conflicts mentioned above must be resolved at the very start before we try to go to the next stage. The first conflict must be resolved before trying to resolve the next stage of conflict. We must go stage by stage, and not overstep any stage. If you know well the level at which you stand now, the next stage is not difficult to reach. The difficulty will come only if you try to jump levels.

It is but natural that you must have time of your own to ponder over the level you are on. Only then you can resolve the conflict one by one and progress towards your goal, and it is possible to find time for yourself because you are not occupied all the twenty-four hours of the day. Nor do you have to be in the midst of people every hour of the day. This is never the case. So tell people, for one hour—any hour that you decide upon—you will not see anyone. Every problem must have a solution. Problems cannot exist as an eternal fact. You may feel that while devoting time for your own self in this manner, you are not doing your duty to other people. This is not so. If your problem is service of people, you can do more service by being alone this one hour and resolving the problem of conflict. That way you have drawn more strength, and thereby have fortified yourself for the object you say you have, viz., service to people. The scientist when working in the laboratory is alone with his experiment, and not in the midst of people. The doctor in the operation theatre is alone with the patient, and does not operate in the midst of people in the ward. So the conditions necessary to tackle a problem is clear from these two examples. It is necessary to be alone to resolve your own problems

because from the generalities observed, it is not possible to find the solution to the individual's problems. But like the ocean which remains calm even when the waves are dashing on the shore, you must remain calm and rest in your own individuality when the waves of problems of society dash upon you. From this analogy, the relationship which exists between society and you is clear, and the art of yoga is this art of keeping calm like the ocean. The art of yoga is to become a superman, and yoga will make you that. The only trouble is, you are in a hurry and wish to get on quickly with it and be through with it. There is no point in hurrying to the goal, as we have seen; every step must be given its due time to resolve itself into the next higher step.

The reason why the psyche, or the individual, takes on many incarnations is because the psyche is taking a new body for every new experience it desires to undergo. The psyche's desires are many. Why these desires arise is a different subject of philosophy. In a nutshell, you may say that the infiniteness of desires results from the fact that the psyche is seeking the Infinite every time, in every experience. This is why the body is cast off when the psyche withdraws from it, because the psyche knows that in this body the experience of that particular desire is not possible. When this body is cast off, the gravitation of the psyche pulls the materials needed for the body that can enjoy the desired experience, and builds the new body. It is like the magnet that pulls the iron fillings in different patterns under different conditions. The psyche pulls the atoms of the universe in the same manner, giving rise to a suitable incarnation.

No-desire is God. Hence, once you have reached God, there is no reincarnation or, in other words, once your desires are nullified, you reach God, which means God-

realisation, which means no more reincarnation. Once you have understood the nature of Truth or realised the Truth, which means God-realisation, then there is no desire. Only because this Truth has not been realised, the search for the Infinite continues in the form of desires, and therefore there are repeated reincarnations of man. The notion that the world is outside you is what makes you go to the world for the satisfaction of your desires and for obtaining happiness. And for this you engage yourself in a number of activities in the world. The actions you perform in the world, and their reactions, are the cause of your being caught up in a net of action, which the Hindu philosophy calls karma. Karma means the impressions on the psyche produced by your actions and the reactions to them. These impressions in turn prompt you for more actions on the same lines. Movement of the psyche towards an object is for the fulfilment of its desire. Ignorance of Truth produces desire, and in turn produces action. All these three go together, hand in hand. If all these three factors are absent, then your action is God-action, and this God-action is what is explained in the Bhagavadgita as karma yoga.

What man likes is ordinary freedom, but freedom in its real sense means ultimately to be in tune with the Absolute. That is real freedom. Psychoanalysts have told us that we are not free in the sense we understand it, and our freedom is not what we imagine it to be. Take any action in which you feel you have freedom. For instance, you have freedom to eat. But do you have the freedom to eat whenever you want? Unless there is the compulsion of hunger in your system, you don't eat food. How, then, have you acted with your own freedom when what has made you act is the hunger factor? It may now be possible to understand that the urge for the recognition of the soul, that is realisation of the Atman,

or God-realisation, is possible under special circumstances.

When you are driven to the corner by the external, inevitable and irresistible urge, and the purpose of reincarnation is tightened, you can reorganise the phenomena of the empirical world of the time-space complex. But unless this urge is there, it is not possible to get into those special circumstances which drive you to the Truth, and so due to this, evolution goes on from the atom to the soul, until the soul gets identified with the Absolute. Evolution is there because it is a movement towards the Absolute. The Absolute is the only thing that does not evolve because it is the whole of the evolution and, therefore, with the attainment of the Absolute, evolution ends.

MARCH 19, 1979

The weather has warmed up and so the open-air terrace becomes unsuitable for the morning darshan. We sit before Swami Krishnanandaji in the closed verandah of his kutir. This is the first day after a week of severe illness that we get a blessed hour with Swamiji.

A group of Japanese have come to see Rev. Swamiji, along with an interpreter.

A question is put as to why the mind is unable to concentrate on the Buddha. (The questioner is a Buddhist.)

Swamiji: The reason is simple. There is fear in the mind that the Buddha cannot give everything. So the mind is not going to the Buddha. There is something that the world also can give and which the Buddha may not be able to give. When you are hungry and you pray, your mind will say: 'You are hungry and you are praying to the Buddha. Go to a restaurant.' This is the dual attitude of the mind. This is a very general statement I am

making. Mainly the reason is that there are many tensions in the mind, nervous complexes, emotional frustrations, etc. These are the reasons why the mind will not concentrate on what you wish to concentrate upon. Remove all tensions and frustrations. This is the method. Remove what you do not like, and have only what you like. There is something the mind longs for and cannot get; or you may hate something wholeheartedly, and that is what troubles you. Though these factors may be small or subtle, they are important factors in the psychology of the individual. Buddha is not a personality, a human being. The idea that he is a human being must go. *Buddham saranam gacchami* is only a concept for the Universal Reality. *Dhammam saranam gacchami, sangham saranam gacchami* – these are the three great proclamations of Buddhism. These mean 'I take refuge in Buddha which is Reality. I take refuge in Dharma, namely, Love for all creation. I take refuge in *sangham*, which means the organisation.' These three are the three stages of ascent, of which first is Reality. Then it manifests as Law of the Universe. Then it further manifests in concrete organisations in the human society. So from the organisation you go to the Universal Law, and from the Universal Law to the Absolute. When such a grand concept is before you, how can you think of anything else and be distracted? Buddha was not some gentleman born at one time and now dead and gone. Dharma Kaya is what He is called. [*The Japanese visitor here makes a statement.*] Yes, there are three stages, no fourth. Tatatha Gata is the third. Dharma Kaya is the second and Bhuto Tatatha is the first. It is something like Sat-Chit-Ananda. Bhuto Tatatha is Sat: it is the whatness, the thatness, the suchness or the whichness of things.

At this stage, by vivisectioning the type of questions, Swamiji elicited from the questioner that God exists everywhere

and, therefore, he had answered his question, where is God.

Swamiji: In the heart of the man? Not in the head of man. Not in the animals.

Visitor: Yes, also in the animals.

Swamiji: If God is sitting in the same place as yourself, how can another, you, also be sitting there? But these are very high and abstract thoughts. Do not go too high in your concepts. Be humble and simple in whatever way you can think of God without bothering about such high flights into philosophy.

Visitor: Where has man come from? What is his connection with God? Am I and He different from one another?

Swamiji: Why does such a doubt come to you? God is all-pervasive, and you have to surrender your will to Him. You contemplate on God as the Creator of the whole cosmos. Whether He is one with you or different from you, this question should not have come into your mind just now. Why do you let unnecessary questions come into your mind? Pray to Him and seek His grace. That will make everything automatically okay. God will tell you what the Truth is.

Visitor: The Christians believe that God and man are different.

Swamiji: But you are following Buddhism. Why worry about Christianity? There are things which the mind cannot grasp, and these should not be thought of; the understanding will evolve by itself. Now we talk of three dimensions of a thing: length, breadth and height. But modern physics says no, there is a fourth dimension. Everything is a four-dimensional reality, not three. What is the use of saying this to the ordinary mind? Such a thing cannot even be thought of by the mind. But

the scientist says that it is the only thing that exists. So you can imagine where we are. If that is the only thing that exists, and that is what we cannot even think of in the mind, what is the kind of paradise you are living in? Tell me.

Another Visitor: Why did Swami Sivananda found the ashram here in India?

Swamiji: There are branches all over the world.

Visitor: My point is, why at this place?

Swamiji: Why is Ganga here and not in America. Similarly, the Ashram is here. The geographical and historical circumstances, and certain factors, produce certain influences on the social life of the people, that is to say, the humanity living there. These influences form the very thought and outlook on life of the people living under such influences. "Why was Christ born in Israel, Jerusalem?" asked a boy. The missionary's answer was, "Because it is in the centre of the Earth. To the East and the West there are other lands." When I was a small boy, I myself put this question to an Evangelist, who gave me this answer: "The centre is Palestine, and so God is born there, for He is born only in the centre of the Earth." Even so, there are theories and theories of the theologians, doctrines and doctrines of the theologians, and babblings and babblings of the sectarians. But nobody understands the mystery of these things. There are mysteries and mysteries, and they are not what you see with the eyes. It is not visible to the eyes like the sun, nor like the bullockcart on the road, the shop in the market or the bus stop, etc. These are not the Reality. These are the outer phenomena which are projected by certain secrets that are working behind nature. Unless you know this mystery, neither can you have peace nor can you give peace to others. So you must go deep into your personal self, and when you go deep into it, you

will find that you are entering an ocean which includes everything else. This is my message to you this morning.
[laughs heartily]

MARCH 22, 1979

A Visitor: In meditation, I was taught to concentrate on the centre of my eyebrows, which is difficult, and it landed me in physical disturbance. Is it right, and is it the only place to concentrate upon? I am unable to control the mind in meditation.

Swamiji: Has anyone controlled the mind? None except the Realised Souls. As for the centre of the brows, it is not necessary to fix on that point for more effective concentration. The control of the mind is a very difficult matter. The mind is not a thing; it is not a person, and it is not an object. It is like air. Therefore, how will you catch it? But there is a way, a technique. The air is everywhere, and you cannot catch it, but it is concentrated in some place. Find out where it is thus concentrated, the source from where it is flowing everywhere. Even so, the mind is concentrated at some spot or object that it is aware of, and the location is there. What the object is, of little importance. But it should be made to stick there, and never move away from it. It may be only a tree the mind is located in—that is, thinking about—pin it there and do not let it move even an inch from that place (location-object). Do not move it to another place, and then the mind will become very strong. The mind is always thinking about something. But if it is thinking of one thing, let it think of that only, and not of any other thing. That is called meditation. You go from shop to shop when you want to purchase something. You do not find it in this shop and so you go to another shop, and so on until you find what you are looking for. It is the same thing that you are

looking for when you go searching one shop after another. It is not that you go from shop to shop for nothing, in order to get fatigued. Is it not? Similarly, the mind is searching for something in the various things it is thinking of. What is it searching for? Here rises another question. The first question is that it is moving. Where is it moving? I have answered that question: it is searching for something. Now the question is, what it is searching for?

Visitor: It is going here and there, thinking of the Divine.

Swamiji: It is not thinking of the Divine. It has no idea of the Divine. It wants to unite itself with some object, and when there is a union with that object, it gets pleasure. And it looks for pleasure. It is pleasure that the mind is looking for. It does not want objects, which are only instruments in creating the psychological circumstance called pleasure. If an object cannot bring pleasure, who wants it! You love a child because you get pleasure by hugging it, but do you want to hug a tiger or a cobra? Hugging a child gives satisfaction. What you seek is pleasure, and not an object. So do not make the mistake of thinking that your mind wants this or that object. You do not want anything, only pleasure. And if you think that a particular object can give pleasure you go near it, but if it does not give satisfaction you will leave it alone and go to another place for another object. In this way, your life is spent looking for pleasure, and not for a particular object, which it really cannot find. And nowhere you will find this pleasure you are seeking—nowhere, because it is not a commodity of this world. It belongs to some other realm altogether.

I have given you a simple picture of the state of affairs. You cannot get what you want in this life that you live. Now comes the next question: Where else you can get

it? One question leads to another, endlessly. You can find it only where it is. You cannot get water from the Sahara desert, you can get it only from the Ganga. So you must first know where the Ganga is, then only you can go for water. What the mind is looking for is not in an object. If there had been pleasure in the object itself, there would have been no necessity for it to move from one object to another. That it moves from object to object shows that these do not give satisfaction. So it is not available anywhere in the world, it is available somewhere else. Where is that place? It is not in books, universities. Even Mahatmas and Gurus cannot give you that. If you know where it is, you will never open your mouth thereafter to ask for it. Do you understand what I say? These are the answers to your various questions on meditation. Do not concentrate on the *trikuti* (middle of the eye-brows) unnecessarily. It is not going to give you anything at all.

Another Visitor: Why is it compulsory for us to read the Glory of the Gita, which runs into several verses, reducing the time available for the verses of the Gita itself? Why? I never read them. Sounds like blackmail to me, this compulsion.

Swamiji: It is only to give you an incentive to read the text, and has no importance by itself. We have a peculiar system of glorifying everything; the greater the glorification, the more compelling the incentive to read it, though it is not worthwhile by itself. When a product is advertised, you have a peculiar weakness to go for it. It is a tradition, and you may give it that value. After the death of a person they read a sacred text, such as the Garuda Purana in which there is a vivid description of hell. When people hear that such and such torture is meted out to a miser, or for lack of due respect when called for it, they get frightened and do a lot of charity

and so on because they think, “Oh! Let me be saved from such torture.” The Garuda Purana picturesquely and vividly describes what happens to the soul of man who has not done charity or fulfilled his duty or lived a bad life etc., etc. It is an incentive for the living to mend their ways! (*laughs*)

An Ashramite: Does not charity, etc., done by those left behind benefit the departed soul?

Swamiji: No, nothing of the kind. It has no connection with the departed soul. It is meant only for those left behind.

Visitor: The glorification is much longer than the verses, which you can complete in a given time!

Swamiji: (*laughs*) Yes, yes. Reading even one sloka of the Gita is enough if you can understand the meaning properly. One single verse is sufficient for contemplating upon its glory.

Visitor: What is karma yoga?

Swamiji: Activity in terms of multiplicity and consciousness in terms of unity is karma yoga. Can you, do you understand that sentence? Ponder over it.

Visitor: I shall, thank you Swamiji.

Another Visitor: What is your name?

Swamiji: (Without showing any emotion) I am he whom you have come to see.

The luncheon bell—Namaskar—Go and eat hot food!

UNDATED-1

A Visitor: Kant, Descartes, Hegel, Hobbes, Edward Kail, W.T. Sates, Bergson, Bradley, Debnunke—all these are great philosophers, but not alike in their views, quite often diametrically opposite, the one even decrying the other logically and philosophically. Sankara's works, on

the other hand, constitute an omnibus, as it were. Whom should we read, Swamiji?

Swamiji: They are all great masters of thought who will chisel your thoughts and make them very sharp. You may agree with them wholly or partially or not at all, that is a different matter, but they can help make your intellect sharp. That is a great help. I am very glad to hear all this from you. Very good. After that, you read Acharya Sankara. Acharya Sankara should be read to give flesh and blood to their thoughts.

Visitor. Yes, Swamiji; and Yoga Vashishta contains Berkley's thoughts.

Swamiji: Berkley?

Visitor: And I read his work, and Yoga Vashistha also.

Swamiji: They have great similarities.

Visitor: Not merely that, it looks as if Berkley plagiarised it!

Swamiji: [*Laughs heartily*] He might not have plagiarised, but it looks as if it is done! All this is good. Have you read Paul Deussen? You must read his exposition of Sankara, because Sankara's original commentaries are very long; Paul Dawson has given an exposition of Sankara. It is a beautiful volume, the system of Vedanta. Yes, very exciting to talk of all this. You practise meditation on these thoughts, on the maker of all things, and you will get all the answers— isn't it? Answers will come from everywhere, from every nook and corner and even from the very bricks, not merely from masters and teachers, kings and sannyasis. The very bricks will give answers to your questions when you are able to commune yourself with all Reality, because when you become friendly with anyone, that friend will tell all his secrets to you. He will not tell all his secrets to you unless he is a real friend. So

the brick will not tell you what it is unless you become friendly with it and become one with it. Likewise, the secret of the whole universe is known when you become tuned up to its essentiality.

Visitor: Why are dogs far more faithful than men? Is it a silly question?

Swamiji: Animals act on instincts, and instinct is supposed to be nearer to reality than intellect. At least, according to Bergson, this is so. There is some point in it. Man is very untrustworthy, unreliable, and he suddenly changes his attitudes, but dogs are not like that. Even if you give it a kick, it will follow behind you.

Visitor: But why can't it be argued that they act so because they have not got reason?

Swamiji: That reason is a 'bondage' which has made you fall into the hell of this social life, whereas they are happy without that. What is the use of reason which tells you wrong things—that you must punish somebody, wreak vengeance on somebody? Is this reason for your good?

Visitor: But I will at least know that I should not sit near the person who will kick me. But the dog doesn't.

Swamiji: Reason is like a double-edged sword. It can tell you that it is doing a wrong thing and yet also remember some evil done to you. You will remember it for ever! "The evil that they do lives after them, the good that they do is interred with them." You can never remember the good done to you. But always you will remember one wrong done to you out of the hundred good things I have done for you. This one wrong will wash off all the hundred good things. But dogs are not like that. Everyday you give it a little bread and it will always go wagging its tail behind you.

Visitor: Why? Why is that so? [*The question came from*

someone in the gathering.]

Swamiji: Because the intellect takes you away from reality to some extent, though it has a virtue also, because it can tell you what is truth.

Visitor: Is the intellect all the time taking you away from the reality?

Swamiji: Not always, sometimes. When it gets mixed up with emotions, it takes you in the wrong direction. When it stands independently it will say to itself that it is also committing a mistake. Reason has this other aspect also; it can find its own limitations. Sometimes it asserts its absoluteness when it goes with sentiment and feeling, etc. By reason you know you must love all children in the same way you love your own. But emotion dictates that your own children are better! Emotion speaks and says mine are dearer to me than others' children. But reason tells you no, it is not the proper attitude, all children are equally good. So in certain attitudes there is a mix-up of emotion and reason.

Visitor: Are reason and intellect the same thing?

Swamiji: Yes! Reason is a higher power of the intellect, like the electricity that is working through the bulb. Electricity is the intelligence—that is the reason. The bulb is the intellect; it is the vehicle.

Visitor: What is the meaning of satsang, Swamiji?

Swamiji: Satsang means holy company. Spiritual company is satsang.

An Ashramite: Why is the same piece in the Veda recited in three different and very difficult styles? Were all the Vedas learnt to be recited in this manner only?

Swamiji: Yes, the Vedas were memorised so that you should not forget them. And they have created such a complicated method that you can never afford to forget

it. If, for example, you go on troubling me every day, I cannot forget your existence. That is one way of making me keep remembering you. Every day you harass me, and I remember you without effort. Like that it is a harassment to the brain to such an extent that you cannot forget it.

Ashramite: Ingrained in the brain!

Swamiji: Yes, like the repeated visits of your creditor! Now, will you forget a creditor? Every day he comes and gives darshan. His visit gets imprinted in your mind, does it not?

Another Visitor: Why did Krishna play that lila with Rukmani who, he said, had made a terrible mistake in choosing Lord Krishna as her husband when there were so many other suitors who were much worthier than himself. Lord Krishna goes on telling her that he is a poor man, that he has been called a thief, that he has got many enemies, like Sisupala, who hate him, and so on. Poor Rukmini swoons, and Lord Krishna revives her. With eyes filled tears, Rukmini explains how she is unworthy of his greatness. Why did Lord Krishna frighten Rukmini like this?

Swamiji: Lord Krishna wanted to present an unpleasant picture of himself to test whether it was the essence, the real qualities in him that she liked. He tried to put off Rukmini. Lord Shiva is represented as a *tapasvin* full of ashes, as a meditator in the burning ghat, as a beggar with not even a good begging bowl except a skull. Further, he does not even have clothes to wear and goes about wearing tiger skin or elephant skin. And he lives on Mount Kailas. Even Parvati complained that he had no house, no roof over his head and he had no respect for the guests who, when they came to see him, sat on the snow. She wanted him to build a nice place for her. Lord Shiva tried to dissuade her, reasoning that it was

useless wanting a house and such other things. Parvati would not listen, and she insisted on building a nice place worthy of Lord Siva and his consort. Brihaspati, the divine purohit, was called and told of the plan to build a palace at once. He said that the period was such that if Shani (Saturn) had one glance at the house, it would burn up. Shani was bound to come to know of the building of the house, and he was bound to see it, and the house would burn away. If Shani could be stopped from coming at the *grihapravesa* (House warming) time, then everything would be all right. Parvati agreed to keep Shani away, and she requested Lord Shiva to go to Shani's house and keep him in his house until the *grihapravesa* was over. If Shani insisted on coming to see the house, Lord Shiva should play the damaru, at which she herself would burn the house. Lord Shiva agreed happily and went to Shani's house, and innocently explained everything so that Shani understood that Lord Shiva had come to keep Shani bound to his house and if the damaru was played Parvati herself would burn the house! Cunning as he was, Shani started praising the Lord, "O Lord, this is *sandhyakal* (the meeting of day and night) and it is wonderful to do kirtan with you. At *pradoshkal* (the sacred hour of twilight), you dance wonderfully. Let me see that glorious sight. Let us sing and dance." The Lord was happy, and he started dancing to the beat of the damaru. Parvati, who heard the damaru, thought that Shani was insisting on coming to see the house, so she herself burned the house! The point of the story is that Lord Krishna and Lord Shiva are quickly pleased because they are simple in their nature. That is why Lord Shiva is called a simpleton, Bhola Nath. This aspect, namely, the simpleton's attitude, can easily please the Lord. And like a mother who plays with the child, covering herself with a cloth to frighten it, the

Lord plays such lilas.

Another Visitor: When you are in doubt, another doubt and yet another doubt comes. How to clear the doubt?

Swamiji: When in the first doubt, best remove it first before the other doubt crops up. How will you remove it?

Visitor: By study?

Swamiji: Yes, And by frankly placing yourself under your Guru. A Guru need not be a spiritual Guru only. Anyone who helps you to understand things better is your Guru.

Visitor: What is grace? Is there any particular type of yoga which can bring this?

Swamiji: Effort from outside, you may say, is grace. Effort from within the individual is effort, but the one cannot exist without the other. That is, they follow one another. Do not speak of the yogas as either effort or grace. It is their transcendental finality. One is supposed to often enter into the other. This is something which the mind, with its capacity to think only in three-dimensional pattern, cannot transcend this stage. To enter into the fourth dimensional consciousness, if the mind is forced it is not fully prepared for it and will even go berserk—mad. This fourth dimension, this transcendental state, is like the fourth state, known as *turiya*, which is difficult to comprehend, though a sense of understanding of it may exist. It is said that a shadow is a second dimensional concept of the third dimensional physical body. In the same sense, in a continued sense, the body is the third dimensional concept of the fourth dimensional Brahman. It is the reaching to it that is the point, and this is the finally transcended consciousness, or the fourth dimension, mentioned at the start.

Another Visitor: While Adi Sankara's philosophy expresses most clearly the concept of the illusion of *maya*, both Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan are critical of this attitude and comment that we should give the world its due and not overemphasise this *maya* aspect.

Swamiji: Before we go to this state of critical thinking, we must first obtain enlightenment of the Absolute by a clear concept of the steps in yoga, and progressively fix upon the higher steps by which you get enlightenment one by one. How can you know how you will act and be, unless you reach the fourth stage of consciousness; in other words, in that state in which we have changed the content of our consciousness. And when the mind sees separation in space and time, and the mind gets gross, then the mind can see only the gross things, you cannot get into the higher state of consciousness. *Vritti-bheda* is the cause of the mind feeling that I, the drop (of the ocean), is different from the ocean. The Cosmic Being is the split-personality so to say: it is all the three: the *drashta* (the seer), the *drishya* (or the act of seeing), the *dhric* (or the object seen).

Another Visitor: Swamiji said the other day that when God comes, He swallows you like the ocean. The world or God comes to swallow you, that is, swallow my ego, my dearest personality?

Swamiji: God will swallow you. The world and God are the same thing. You have seen people committing suicide when they are defamed. What is suicide? It is throwing off the physical body; one throws off the physical body merely because one does not want to throw off the ego. Getting a bad name means having the ego defamed, the ego which is shaken. He does not want that. Even if the body goes, the ego should not go. It shows the intensity of the ego of the person and his attachment to his personality: the psychical, not the

physical. It is not possible to exist without personality, because it is the dearest of possessions. Similarly, what is the use of going to God and losing my existence itself by merging in Him, is the question the ego asks.

Visitor: Is meditation a means to conquer the body, the soul and the ego?

Swamiji: The meditational stages are explained in the Bhagavad Gita in the arrangement of the chapters. First, second and so on—in which chapter are you? You find that out. You can find out where you are. Each successive chapter is a description of a higher ascent, and when the last stage is reached, you become like Lord Krishna. And what is it to become Lord Krishna? Nobody can understand that, except Lord Krishna himself. You become a Cosmic Person. You get adjusted to everything, tuned up in one second to every cell of the cosmic body. When you wake up from dream, you get tuned up to your waking consciousness. Every cell of the body is your cell only. There is no cell outside you. Likewise, when you wake up into this universal consciousness, you get tuned up in every cell, in every atom of this cosmos, and just even as you say every cell is 'I', the whole universe, you will say, is "I". That is the God-experience that the Bhagavad Gita tells you.

Visitor: Swamiji, why is the last chapter not the Eleventh Chapter? You have the Viswarupa in the Eleventh, and thereafter seven more chapters?

Swamiji: The Eleventh Chapter is not the end of the story, the end of the experience. The Cosmic vision is not the end; it is only a terrifying vision which Arjuna sees. He has not entered into it. The entering takes place afterwards. Merely seeing is no good.

Visitor: Yes, in Chapter Eighteen Arjuna says, "Now all my doubts are gone." So there are seven more chapters after the Eleventh.

Swamiji: Yes, I suddenly bring you face to face with all the wealth of Rockefeller. You only see it, you cannot get it. If you get it, then it is a different thing [*laughing*] and is the end of the matter. I just show it to you, but you cannot get it. In Chapter Eleven, He has shown all the tremendous magnificence, but as yet that vision is not yours. You don't even touch it. But if it becomes yours, then you can have it, then you really get it. This great achievement cannot be by just seeing the Vision. It must go on till then, so the Eleventh is followed by more chapters.

Visitor: Is there any significance in the Twelfth Chapter describing bhakti following the (Cosmic vision) in the Eleventh Chapter, that is, if you are a dedicated *bhakta* even this terrifying vision becomes a beautiful form to you.

Swamiji: There is an old saying in Zen. Before you reach Zen (and by the word Zen they mean the ultimate experience) the mountain is a mountain, the tree is a tree, and a river is a river. But in the process of reaching Zen, when you try to gain Zen you do not see a tree as a tree, a mountain as a mountain. This is the answer to your question. The Cosmic experience is not a stunning resolution of the existing law. This is the middle stage only where a tree is not a tree, a mountain is not a mountain, a friend is not a friend, an enemy is not an enemy. Everything changes when you are in the middle stage. In the third stage, the tree is a tree, and so on. You don't have to abolish the existence of things in God-realisation, or Zen. And, this is the experience when you transcend the middle stage to the final—the ultimate realisation of God, when a tree is a tree and a mountain is a mountain, because it is no more a renunciation. First you get attached. Then you withdraw. Then you go back to it with a new vision. These are the three stages.

First stage is attachment. But afterwards there is no attachment, but efforts towards detachment.

In the first experience, you want the world only. You don't want God. That is usual, and that is the first experience. A normal man's experience is I am concerned with the world and not concerned with God. The second experience is, I am concerned with God, not with the world. I don't want the world. That is renunciation, *vairagya—tyaga*—giving up. Then the third stage is when everything is okay. There is no withdrawal because there is no attachment. There is no attachment, and therefore no renunciation is called for, for everything is perfectly okay.

Suppose a person has schizophrenic experience. There was a very learned philosopher. He was master of all philosophy, Western and Eastern. But he was in the mental hospital where Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru visited him in the course of his visit to the hospital. The man very learnedly discussed all schools of philosophy with Pandit Nehru. He spoke beautifully. At the end of their interesting hour, Panditji met the doctor-in-charge (the Superintendent of the hospital) and asked him why such a learned man, discussing philosophy in such an excellently cogent manner, was kept an inmate of the mental hospital. There must be some mistake. The doctor listened to Panditji and said, "You want to know why that man is in the mental hospital. Come with me, I will show you." Together they went back to the philosopher. The doctor put out his finger to touch the patient. Immediately the philosopher screamed, cringing away from the doctor's finger, "Don't touch me! I am made of glass. I will break! Don't touch me." (Swamiji acted all this bit of narration). The doctor turned to Pandit Nehru and said, "You see why he is here." He may be master of all philosophy and many such things, but he thinks he is made of glass. This is the

mental problem that he has.

Now, I have given you an example. When a person thinks he is made of glass, the purpose is to treat him with a medicine so that he may realise he is not glass, that is, the consciousness is withdrawn from the so-called imaginary object which is glass. That is called renunciation. You are saying this is a tree, this is a mountain, this is my father, this is my mother, this is my property, this is my land, this is my building. This is exactly the kind of identification that man did. In imagination he was a thing which he was not. There is no tree, father, etc. They are all imaginations in the mind, just as there is nobody made of glass.

So you are treated by an antidote that is called *vairagya*. The withdrawal is what you call renunciation and you go to a chapel or a monastery or a desert, renouncing everything. That is an antidote you are giving to this wrong feeling that something is yours. When you come to the consciousness that you are not the body made of glass or that you are not the building, tree, etc., you are in the second stage. You realise that you are a human being made of flesh and blood. But afterwards, that medicine of renunciation is not necessary. You need not repeat the injection. So once you come back to the realisation that things are what they are, the attitude of renunciation becomes irrelevant and is not applicable any more. What are you renouncing? You have already renounced the wrong idea, and the right idea has come, and so further renunciation of things is not called for. Thereafter you live under normal conditions. The first stage is wrong thinking, the second stage that of medication—not meditation but medication. The third stage is the normal realisation.

Now, in which condition are we? That each one should understand for himself. We are mostly in the

first stage, with a little of the second stage mixed in. Some 75 per cent in the first stage, and 25 per cent in the second stage. The third stage has not come. It may not come in this birth. God knows in which birth it comes. We are wrongly thinking and are in need of an antidote. That antidote is this medication: spiritual study, and going to satsang, and good company, and renunciation, etc.—all that you usually call the religious life. We always make a distinction between religious life and secular life, just as we say there is a difference between medication and illness. But that difference exists only as long as there is illness, and when the illness goes, the medicine does not come into the question at all. So we have a tremendous hope of transcending the first stage, where we believe that this is a building only. We cannot say it is but a building. You may read any scripture, you cannot get out of the idea that this is a building of bricks and that it is my house, my garden, my plantation. Who can renounce this idea? However religious you may be, however spiritual you may be, however God-fearing you may be, you will still say this is my garden, etc. This idea will not go.

So for most people in the world, real religion has not started yet. It is still in the preliminary stage of spirituality. But when you come to the decision that this is not correct and you require a rectification of this idea, you decide to undergo the tremendous discipline of the practice of yoga. Now you are in the second stage. Even the practice of yoga is not a healthy condition, just as the necessity to take medicine is not a healthy state. Medicine must be continued, for you are still sick. But you cannot say it is a natural condition and go on eating medicine indiscriminately. Likewise, this meditation and yoga are not natural conditions. They are necessary as an antidote, as a counteracting element for your earlier mistake. These clash at each other and cancel

each other. Then neither illness is there, nor the medicine. So is the case with the practice of yoga and meditation, for instance. You don't go on meditating. "I am the daughter of so-and-so." You know that, so there is no need to meditate on it. Why were you meditating? To make this clear. If a thing is clear, then you don't need to meditate on it. Why you meditate on is it daytime? It is very clear that it is daytime. Are you going on meditating: Oh, it is daytime, it is daytime, it is daytime! Why will you do that? It is foolishness. Only if a thing is not clear, then you need to think it out. If a new vision comes in, no renunciation is needed, for there is no attachment. When the third stage comes and everything becomes so clear, no practice of yoga is necessary. No meditation. No God-realisation. No bhakti. No devotion. Nothing. They are all only methods, like medicines and drugs.

So this is what the Zen master said. In the beginning it is a tree—a mistaken notion. In the second stage it is not a tree; you withdraw yourself from the idea. You are now in the third stage, and so a tree is a tree due to the new vision that has come. You are seeing the same person with the idea "I am not a glass, but a human body". The mistaken idea has been rectified.

So the answer to your question has come. The Viswarupa is only the second stage, where it is a counteracting force for Arjuna's wrong notion. Things are not different from one another. They are all integrated in a Cosmic whole. That is what is shown in the Viswarupa. But afterwards, what happens? You have to continue to live in the world only. That Cosmic consciousness tells you that nothing is different from another and that there is no need to have to abolish that duality, because that duality does not exist, then that idea of duality has gone completely from you, and you are free—after this realisation. Suppose you have a

microscope for your eyes instead of what God has now given you physically normal eyes. Then you won't see bricks and trucks, you will see only atoms! If nature had made your eyes microscopes, then you would not struggle to get out of the ideas of bricks and wall and this and that, but see the atoms alone. So at that time you have eyes with which you see things as they are. And no question of the practice of yoga arises to get that vision at that time, because you are perfectly in a normal condition.

This is what has been said in the last six chapters of the Bhagavad Gita, which state that we are on a dangerous path, for we are asked to see the spirit, the soul, through everything, and be spiritual. Spirituality is a dangerous path, in view of what I have told you, the desperations you have to pass through in traversing it. And if you think of it, you will not go near it. It is such a terrible thing. "Namaskar, I go my way," you will say. Suppose you have to suffer like Christ. Will you like to pass through that stage? You will say, "I don't want to go. Next time, not now. Now I cannot undergo all this amount of suffering." But that is absolutely necessary. You cannot escape it if you want God. He comes like fire, like the Ocean, like the wind, and you cannot stand the wind or the ocean or the fire. It is not possible with your ordinary strength as a man. God does not come like that. In the beginning, that is, in the first stage, everything is satisfactory to the body. The body and the ego are our enemy. We have no other enemy in the world. These two will not want to give themselves up in favour of spirituality and God.

Visitor: But the body only exists because of the ego.

Swamiji: Yes, the body is the outer expression of the ego. The one is a gross form, and the other its subtle form. Two troubles you have. Hunger, thirst and sleep,

they are all problems of the gross form, or the physical body. Who can bear them? If these three attack you, you cannot resist them nor exist without them. That is the body-ego problem. You know what the ego is. Everybody calls you an idiot. You don't like to be called such names. You think it is better to go away somewhere instead of continuing to live here. But at the time of going, the going is with such force that it looks as if the disease is made worse, such as in Homoeopathic treatment. This is the same case when the need comes to surrender to God in every instance, like Jesus did.

This ordeal you cannot understand by reading any book on philosophy, because philosophers are not saints. They are only expounders of the logical implications of your problems. If you read the life of saints, you will come to know how to meet such problems. You read of Buddha or Christ, and of the Desert Fathers—you must have heard of Desert Fathers who lived in the deserts of Egypt? The worst that can confront us is not to be wanted by anybody; it is the worst experience you can imagine. Even hunger and thirst will not be so bad as the feeling that nobody wants you. This is so very strange a thing that you cannot live with it a day longer. You cannot understand what such a wretched feeling means, unless you go through that stage. If you are hungry, you know what is hunger. By reading a book you won't know what hunger means, what poverty means. Only a poor man knows what poverty means. A rich man cannot read a book on poverty and understand it. You will like to go to hell rather than live a life where no one wants you. You will pray to God to throw you into hell, which you would say would be better. Do you now understand why?

Why doesn't God come, though you pray so much? Because you are not wanting that kind of God who gives

such wretched problems. You want a nice God who speaks nicely, smiles, and is motherly. Your illness is so intense that the medicine must be equally intense. It has become chronic, and it is such an illness that no medicine on earth can cure. It requires surgical operation of a divine type as makes you pray to God to give hell rather than this, and that would be a help! And God is prepared to help you if you consent to be treated thus and surrender yourself to Him and if you accept His ways. Otherwise, even through the ordinary routine of meditation, nothing will be achieved because you have got a subtle lurking feeling that you belong to this world still, and you don't belong entirely to God even when you meditate. You say, "God, I will meditate on you, but still don't take me away from the world. That is the ego speaking. That is the desire of the ego to exist without an end—never to die!

An Ashramite: Are the world and God not different?

Swamiji: (Emphatically) Yes, they are! You always make a distinction. We cannot say they are identical. If they were identical, it would be still worse for you. You cannot believe that people are God to you. You think it would be good to divide them as separate from God, and keep the meditation for the temple and the world for shops and shopping, etc. If you believe they are identical, you have to behave with the shopkeeper as God Himself will! It is a very difficult thing to imagine what that would be. So you are not prepared to undergo that ordeal, which is a great experience.

What you say is worse than what the other alternative is. To behave like judge in the Court and a father in the house is better than to be like a judge everywhere. You cannot exist like that. It will be a very difficult thing to do. Even to your wife, you are a judge, and to your son also. To the shopkeeper, you are also a judge. They will

say, he is a horrible man [*laughs*]. To a shopkeeper you are an ordinary customer, though in the Supreme Court you are a judge. Of course, if you can become like that and you can bear the consequences of behaving like the Divine Being everywhere and with everything, it is wonderful. In that case, you are immediately in the soup—in one second! Your identity is in God! You don't want to slip into the soup all that quickly. But slowly, slowly, perhaps?

There is another thing. Sometimes you would like to do something, you want to get out of all this confusing problems and in trying to do that something, you don't know whether you are doing it out of your volition or God is impelling you to do it. This is another problem for you. You cannot immediately make a distinction between God's impulsion and your ego. You will say, "Well, I am going to the mountain top for meditation. I am not going to live in this terrible city of noise and foolish, stupid things." Now, who is telling this? If God is ordering you to do it, very good; He will help you at the top of the mountain. But you may be doing it for some other reason. It may be that you are unable to bear the pain of living in the midst of anti-social persons. It is a pain, isn't it? And you are trying to avoid the pain. That will be a subtle psychological reason behind your getting out of a city and wishing to reach the mountain top. But worse things are possible at the top of the mountain. So now are you going to the mountain top because you want God or because you don't want pain? Which is that reason? These are all very subtle matters, not easily to be left out on the basis of simple assumptions.

Visitor: But Swamiji, God is supposed to be wanting to receive us with open arms. He is pulling us to Him all the time.

Swamiji: He wants to receive you, the Y capital. He does not want the lower y. He wants you with the capital Y alone. He wants you, the Real you. Not the legal you or a social you or the gender you—masculine or feminine you, He does not want these. That is not the real 'you', and so it is the unreal. You will ask for the unreal God only. It comes to that when your prayer is conditioned by the footnote: provided that... The proviso of the law usually takes the edge off the law. Now it is clear why God does not come when you pray, 'I am Thine' etc.

Visitor: Yes, Now it is clear why God does not come.

Swamiji: You want God. Who are you? Tell me. If the individual you is wanting God, then a corresponding thing will come. He will send an assistant, not come Himself (laughs heartily). When you do *japa* by rolling the beads, God will say "Mind your business. Do not trouble Me unnecessarily."

Visitor: And has He also told you what your business is?

Swamiji: [*laughs*]: When you tell a man "mind your business", you do not intend anything in particular. Your intention is to get rid of the man. Whatever it is, mind your business is an idiomatic way of talking. God does not tell you what the business is. I don't want you to talk to me. Don't interfere with me unnecessarily. There is no mystic greater than God. God is the highest mystic. That is why Lord Krishna is depicted as a tremendously naughty boy. Otherwise, why do you depict the incarnation of God as mischievous and naughty. That is how Vyasa depicts Lord Krishna. He could have depicted him as a wonderful, beautiful, sympathetic person instead of as a very mischievous and troublesome element. It is a spiritual interpretation of God's attitude towards you that the author has given you. Sri Krishna marries a thousand wives, he is a householder, yet he is described as a Brahmachari.

Every social law is broken in his life. He has his own law, and his law is a super law with which social laws have to be consonant.

UNDATED-2

Visitor: How can yoga practice get us strength?

Swamiji: Your affiliation to God is your strength. It will save you in this life and in your future life also. What I am telling you is yoga without giving it a label, yet it includes all the yogas. You want a living yoga which is helpful in your practical existence—not yoga only for demonstration or an institution. This is a thing with which you can exist and keep yourself balanced and happy, without complaint against anything. The yogi sees everything in its proper place. When you see a thing misplaced, then it is not yoga, and then you complain.

Yoga is nothing but a comprehensive outlook on things. Yoga is not just the Bhagavad Gita, it is not just the Upanishad. You may call it by any name you like. But you cannot be a comprehensive person because of the weakness of the mind and the incapacity of the understanding to grasp all aspects. You always miss some points, and then you say something is wrong. If you see that point, you will say everything is okay. You have perfect peace, and your peace will spread the aura of peace around you. You become a magnet of completeness—radiating strength, energy and peace. But if you are a partial being, you become wretched yourself and make others around you also wretched.

An Ashramite: All right, accepted. But how do I take my pains? Saying that cosmic balance is being set up, that does not help.

Swamiji: Your suffering is due to lack of understanding. It is the philosophy of Madhusudan Saraswati. Have you

heard of this him? Madhusudan Saraswati was a great scholar and saint who lived about a hundred or two hundred years ago. He was a master in philosophy. He was also a great devotee of Lord Krishna. He was a jnana yogi and a bhakti yogi. He believed in Krishna only, and in nothing else. Nobody was equal to Madhusudan Saraswati in the philosophy of the Absolute. He is the topmost philosopher of Advaita philosophy—and how he combines it with Krishna's devotion is a wonder. That is the knack of the man; the greatest man is capable of reconciliation of anything with anything.

Visitor: The intellect and heart joined together.

Swamiji: Everything; that is the sign of greatness. He can be reconciled with anything. He is not an irreconcilable personality. That is the sign of greatness. He never refuses anything. He never rejects anything. He does not disbelieve anything. He does not say anything is wrong; that is the sign of greatness. Everything is okay in its proper place, at the proper time, in the given circumstances. So this is, again, yoga.

Ashramite: But, Swamiji, it is said that Lord Krishna's ways, his lilas in his Avatar were all a breaking of social norms, so to speak. And that was said to be a spiritual interpretation, an explanation of God's attitude to man. How can it be a spiritual interpretation?

Swamiji: Because, to say that the Ganga water is very cold is just a human attitude. But God does not say it is very cold, because it is not cold. It is cold only to your skin. To the fish in the Ganga it is not cold. So is Ganga water really cold? Tell me. Now you can very well see that your statement is not correct, for any statement society makes is partial. How can God take it as perfect? You may be right from your skin's point of view in saying that the Ganga water is cold. But the fish in the

Ganga does not say it is cold because they have adjusted themselves to the atmosphere. You cannot adjust yourself to it in the same manner. And if the temperature of your body is the same as the temperature outside, you will not say it is winter. So all social laws, personal predilections are judgements made on the basis of the experiences from the point of view of your present state of personality. And it need not be correct. [*Emphatically*] It cannot be correct. It is partial.

You will not see things as before. If you have got a microscopic eye, you will not see the wall in front of you. You will not see the building, you will see only vibrations, you will see electrons or protons, and if I tell you it is a building, you will not be able to see it. But God has given you a very gross eye and you see a large structure. So, who is correct? Is the microscope correct or are you correct? The circumstances are different, and you speak from different levels of being, whereas God speaks from all comprehensiveness.

Ashramite: What is the ear or the eye with which we should see or hear His lilas so that we understand His purpose?

Swamiji: You first understand your level of existence. Speak from your level only. Do not overestimate yourself and try to see as God sees at the comprehensive level.

Ashramite: You mean to say, what I cannot understand I should leave alone?

Swamiji: You should not try to disturb your present feelings. The disturbance arises on account of the fact that you try to overcome the limits of your feelings. Whether they are right or not is a different matter. They may be right. They are right only as long as they are incapable of transcendence. When they are capable of

transcendence, they become wrong. When you are dreaming, the objects that you see in the dream are real but now they are not real—you have transcended them. So when I say it is real or unreal, it depends upon the point of view, the level of being from which I speak. You cannot get over the idea that you are a human being. But it is not true that you are a human being ultimately. You are something else. You are a unit in the Cosmic Force—but you cannot understand it. It is no use talking about it. So what is your present state? You are a human being. You cannot forget that you are an Indian. You cannot forget that you are a woman. All these are false notions, ultimately. But when you realise that you are not a woman, then your law changes and you speak in a different language and you experience different things.

So long as your feelings and your conditions are inseparable from your present level of understanding, you have to follow only that law. That is what Bhagavan Krishna says in the Gita: do not disturb the present state of affairs, nor speak to others from your point of view of God. Their point of view may be quite different; do not disturb that. You have to go stage by stage, from one level to another. All yoga is transcendence, and not negation. You do not negate anything, you transcend it. You should understand the difference between negation and transcendence. You do not negate the nature of a child, but you transcend it when you become an adult. When a child behaves in a particular manner, you do not call it a stupid behaviour. It is a valid behaviour on that level. But if you now behave like a baby, it is invalid because you have transcended it. Work on that level till you transcend it. And when you fulfil the law of that level, you will automatically be liberated from that bondage, which would mean that you have taken to another level. And then you work on that level. Like that, you go higher and higher until you reach the

Absolute. You should be a happy person at every level. You must always be friendly, happy, balanced and coordinated with every type of atmosphere—that is your wisdom, the wisdom of life. Never reject, never disagree, never become irreconcilable, and never be intolerant.

Ashramite: It is very difficult to decide at what point one should act. I increase my sufferings which could have been forestalled if I could have had...

Swamiji: That is due to ignorance, and ignorance of law is no excuse. Every law is a kind of system which has a reaction.

Ashramite: Swamiji spoke of intolerance. Now, that is exactly the point I want to know. Up to what point should you tolerate?

Swamiji: No limit to tolerance. Christ also suffered due to his goodness. But you cannot say he did a wrong thing. And you will be taken care of by other forces, which will not let you feel at ease. You think that because you follow a system of perfection you suffer; well, really you will not suffer. It is a mistaken notion. If you follow the law from the level on which you are, then you will not suffer.

MAY 1979: PART 1

A Visitor: Revered Swamiji has said that a true disciple never asks God for anything. What if you ask for liberation?

Swamiji: In that case you are asking for God Himself and God only; you are not asking for another entity. You must not use God as a means to achieve some end. God is an end in Himself.

Visitor: How are disciples classified?

Swamiji: (Laughingly) There are three kinds of

disciples, according to their ability to get ignited with the fire of wisdom. One type is like a banana stem or wet wood. No matter what you do, it won't burn. Yet if it stays in the fire long enough, some effect will eventually be seen. The second type is like firewood. One must blow on it, tend it carefully, and it will catch fire. The third category is like gunpowder. It catches fire immediately.

Referring to the warm weather (it was the middle of a very hot summer), Swami Krishnanandaji compared our attitude to the weather to the attitude of ordinary people who think they are *bhaktas* of God. When these *bhaktas* get a lot of material things which they wish for, they praise God as if giving Him a Certificate. When the Oxford University wanted to confer an honorary degree of Doctorate of Literature on George Bernard Shaw, the latter said: "It is an insult for you to offer that to me." God does not care for your praise. It is all purely subjective. It gives you pleasure when you praise Him. This is like the way you admire the sun in winter. But when these *bhaktas* suffer materially or physically, they condemn God, in the same way you curse the sun in summer!

Visitor: What is the meaning of darshan?

Swamiji: It is seeing a holy thing. The influence it has on you can be great, depending on the strength of the source. For example, you sit for an hour out in the sun today at noon and you may get sunstroke (or at least a good tan), but a candle light will not affect you in such a way.

Visitor: What is *prasad*?

Swamiji: It is a consecrated thing. Taking it may affect you immediately or much later.

Visitor: Is pilgrimage of any use? So many pilgrims are daily passing through the Ashram on their way to or

back from Badrinath, Kedarnath etc.

Swamiji: It depends on your motive. What is your motive? Is it for going to heaven? Any action may produce good reaction, bad reaction or a mixed type of reaction, according to the attitude of the doer. Pilgrimage is an action, a karma. To get moksha, you have to go beyond all karma, good karma as well as bad karma—that is, in other words, all types of motivated action. A *jivanmukta* also engages in action, but he has no selfish motive, and the action does not affect him in any way. A *jivanmukta* without karma would vanish, so he must have some *prarabdha* karma yet to be worked out, which makes him engage in good actions; otherwise, he would not act at all.

Visitor: Is there really such a thing as Grace? Karma seems so relentlessly binding.

Swamiji: (light-humouredly): You want God to be partial? Why should He be partial to you? God is just. He has established the law and fixed it permanently. God's nature is His law. But this law, the law of karma, is not like the laws of physics, for example. It is not mechanical. The cause-effect relation of karmas has always been there, but not a fixed mechanical law for everyone. When Ramana Maharshi attained Realisation at such a young age, it is not that he got there quickly, as it may appear. He must have passed through all the preceding stages in his previous life or lives. In a few minutes at the convocation ceremony you may get the Ph.D. degree, but you have laboured for it for many long years.

Visitor: What is the difference between mantra *japa* and meditation?

Swamiji: *Japa* is the verbal or mental repetition of words, whereas in meditation we are dealing with concepts. Usually you cannot separate the two, that is,

words and concepts. When you think of a tree, for example, you also think of the word 'tree'. Practically the two are inseparable, but theoretically they can be distinguished. A mantra is that which protects you and elevates you. All mantras are equally good. Different mantras are selected because of different temperaments, but they are all equally good.

Visitor: What is the definition of Brahmacharya?

Swamiji: Brahmacharya is living as a Brahman lives. It is not merely a vow externally imposed. If it is only that, then the mind will rebel against it. It should be spontaneous. It must come from within. If there are lapses now and then in the beginning, don't worry about them, but carry on. After a while it will become a habit.

Visitor: What is your definition of morality, Swamiji?

Swamiji: Morality is the attunement of oneself to the atmosphere one finds oneself in at any time. It is always changing with the evolutionary process to which the individual is subject. Morality is relative from place to place, time to time, but the necessity for morality is absolute. You cannot sever yourself from the environment, because you are virtually related to it. To find out if an action is moral or not, apply it to everybody and imagine what the result would be. Suppose everyone tells lies, for example, then lying will not work! Suppose everyone is a thief, then stealing will not work! If it works when universalised; then it is good, it is moral. Morality is realising that everyone is an end in oneself, not a means to some end. Others are also subjects, not objects to be exploited. Anything that conduces to the higher integration of personality is moral. Anything that leads to disintegration of personality is immoral. The intention behind the action is what is most important. A man may be making a hole

in this wall; it is quite all right if he is a construction worker fixing a door there. But the same action is not all right if it is done by a thief intending to steal.

Visitor: They say that the path to hell is paved with good intentions?

Swamiji: Only if the intention is bereft of understanding, then it is merely emotional, and you may get a bad result. All factors must be taken into consideration. A king had the good intention of giving away one thousand cows to poor people, but by chance a cow belonging to another, a Brahmin, got into the herd, and the king unknowingly gifted away the entire lot. Later, when the mistake was found out, the king offered to compensate the Brahmin with ten, twenty, fifty or even a hundred other cows, but the Brahmin would not agree to accept any other cow but his own and he cursed the generous king, who had to be reborn as a lizard. Suppose a man takes Sannyas, you would say it is a very good thing. But suppose his wife dies the next day because of her sorrow at separation from her husband, she suffers a heart-attack, does he incur sin?

Visitor: But is the really spiritual man beyond the laws of morality?

Swamiji: Firstly, at that time you cannot call him a man. Rather, he is a Universal Being. Though he is beyond the law, he cannot break the law. The law works only for individuals, not for space, for example, which is universal. According to circumstances one may modify one's rules of behaviour. When you travel on the train, you modify your programme somewhat; you cannot take a proper bath, and the like. You have to change even more if you are a soldier at war. There you cannot act as in peacetime. One might even have to steal, rather than die of starvation! The spiritual man knows the exigency of the prevailing circumstances, and hence it is

imperative for his disciple to obey him.

A disciple and his Guru journeyed to a land where they found any quantity of food cost only half an anna. The Guru said: "We must leave here immediately, this is a place of fools." The disciple, however, stays and becomes very fat. After two years, a wall collapses and a man is injured. The king of that place wants to hang the man responsible. They find the mason who built the wall, then the cement mixer, then the water carrier, and each claims that he is not responsible for the bad construction. They bring a woman who is very thin and are ready to hang her, but they discover the loop of the rope is too big for her neck. The king says, "Bring a stout man and hang him." That disciple, who stayed back unheeding his Guru's warning, has now become quite stout, and so he is brought. He prays, "O, Gurudev, please save me." The Guru was an omniscient *jivanmukta*, and he immediately appears in that place and says, "Don't hang that man. I want to die. This is a very auspicious time. Whoever dies now will be a king in the next birth." They report this to the king, and the king goes to the gallows saying, "Oh! In that case, let me die." Thus the disciple is saved, and the Guru tells him, "You should have listened to me. I told you this is a place of fools."

Visitor: Which is good to wish for: a short life or a long life?

Swamiji: If you want to live a hundred years, it could be an error. If you want to die, it is also a mistake. You should not condemn life outright. Make the best of your life here. A hundred years is only symbolic. A negative, pessimistic attitude of utter condemnation of the world is wrong. But excessive love, being captivated by the beauty of the world, is equally wrong. The truth is somewhere in the middle.

Visitor: Is it a sin if a mantra is mispronounced due to ignorance or physical defect?

Swamiji: Some people become fanatics and think only their mantra works and only if pronounced correctly. A devotee in Tamil Nadu used to recite 'Namah Chivaya' (instead of 'Namah Sivaya') with such faith that he was able to walk on water reciting 'Nama Chivaya'. One day a grammarian taught the devotee to pronounce the mantra correctly as 'Namah Sivaya'. But with the correct pronunciation the devotee could no longer walk on water. He fell into the water because he was concentrating on the pronunciation of the mantra and had also lost faith in his Guru who gave the mantra.

An Ashramite: Swamiji this story is like the "Tapla Curry" story.

Visitor: Please tell me that story also.

Swamiji: There was a sweeper woman who approached her employer, a proud Namboodiri Brahmin of Kerala, for a mantra she could recite. He was angry that she should ask for a mantra, as she was of a low caste. But she persisted. The Namboodiri got angry and yelled at her contemptuously "Go and recite 'Tapala Curry', meaning frog curry. The woman took it in good faith and went on repeating the phrase with such devotion that she became enlightened. People asked her who her Guru was, and when she told them they went and praised his disciple's saintliness and how good a Guru he must be. But the Namboodiri had forgotten all about the low caste woman. Now he remembered the incident and felt sorry for himself, for he was still in samsara while she had become enlightened with the 'frog curry' mantra! All these parables emphasise the importance of the attitude or Bhava in mantra japa. The attitude is much more important than the mere sound of the word.

Visitor: Some sages had families. Is not celibacy

compulsory?

Swamiji: I may live in a garden, but I don't think of it as my garden. So I am not affected. The Rishis had no psychological attachment to house, wife, children, etc. The mere physical presence among wife and children, did not, in their case, mean anything. So they have to be regarded as celibates.

MAY 1979: PART 2

A Visitor: Ishvara is associated with sleep, Hiranyagarbha with the dream state and Virat with the waking state. Does this mean that all our individual experiences come out of sleep, as the world comes out of Ishvara?

Swamiji: The consciousness in the waking state, the dream state and the deep sleep state is more and more dull in the *jiva*, in that order—but the reverse is the case of the Cosmic, where Ishvara is greater and antecedent to Hiranyagarbha, and Hiranyagarbha is greater than and comes before the Virat. It is like seeing a reflection of yourself in the water while standing on the bank of a river; the reflection is upside down. Everything is upside down here in the individual, [*laughing*] as in *sirsasana* when everything is upside down for us.

You must see the object as the subject. When you think of someone or something as an object, it is an insult to that person or thing. When the object becomes the subject, it is yoga. You are not able to see that the object depends on the subject and that the subject is in the object. When you do see it so, you are a yogi.

Visitor: How do Vedas provide knowledge of Nirguna Brahman, if they were revealed by Saguna Brahman?

Swamiji: If the Vedas are eternal, they cannot be said to come from anyone else. If they come from someone else,

they cannot be eternal. So to say Ishvara created (or revealed) the Vedas is only a way of speaking. The Vedas are a thorn to remove the thorn of ignorance. They negate the Vyavaharika plane, but do not give any knowledge of Brahman. A tiger in the dream experience can remove the dream experience by waking you up with fear!

Visitor: In the Bhasyam on the Brahmasutras, Sankara says the gods have knowledge of the Vedas. Are the gods omniscient and on the level of Ishvara?

Swamiji: Only Ishvara can really be omniscient. The 'knowledge of the Gods' is only a concession. It cannot be equated to Ishvara. No one can be equal to Him.

Visitor: In Mundaka Upanishad 3.1.1, Sankara says, God is pure, wise, free and Omniscient. Then how can He be limited by Cosmic Ignorance—Maya? Maya is often called the *upadhi* of Ishvara. Is it not a mistake to call it an imperfection?

Swamiji: You can see the sun. But suppose you have a cataract in your eye, then you cannot see the sun properly. But that is your fault, not the sun's. It is an imperfection of your vision to say that Brahman has limitations or adjuncts.

Visitor: Some Advaitins say *sarva-mukti* means we attain Ishvara when all (everyone) finally attain Brahman; but Ishvara is not different from Brahman, so how can we attain this entity?

Swamiji: This is only a theory that may appeal to your sentiments. It is not real. When you say 'all attain', you have an idea of a finite number of souls. But really the souls are infinite in number. There can be no end and no question of all attaining anything. So this is a democratic theory that can be misunderstood. There is no ontological entity called Ishvara to be attained. Ishvara is like the 'x' in a mathematical equation. It has no

ultimate value, but it helps you to solve the problem (of Reality) just like 'x' created by you for the purpose of solving the problem. You think that Ishvara is Infinite and the world is finite. You think that the finite has come from the Infinite. But it really is not so.

All these theories of cause and effect (i.e., creation) appeal to you. But if the Sruti tells the Ultimate Truth that the Infinite has come from the Infinite (which means nothing is really produced), you won't be able to accept it. But the Sruti teach us metaphysically, not literally. They mean to teach non-difference, not really creation as different from the Creator.

The Infinite is also in the finite, the whole is in the part. The soul pervades the body, that is how the Infinite can be in the finite, as it is said in the Gita. The ocean is in the drop; but really the ocean, which is so vast cannot be in the tiny drop. So the Lord says in the Gita: "I am in all creatures, yet I am not in them..." [*laughing*] No one can be as difficult as God. He is a master of confusion. For, really the drops are in the ocean and the ocean is in the drops in a way which we don't understand. The essence of the ocean and the essence of the drops are the same. It is water. They are not two, they are one.

An Ashramite: Swamiji, someone with a definite purpose of his own, in order to provoke me into an argument, remarked in the presence of a religious Muslim who had married a Hindu, "Hinduism is nothing but one god fighting with another!" I knew his mind, and so refused to say anything and get excited. But what is the meaning of these so-called wars between Vishnu and Brahma, for instance, when Lord Siva vanquishes them both and quells their pride? Lord Siva establishes at the same time that He is the Most Supreme! Is it because in such contexts the Manifested God gets accretions of their level, which is lower than that of the

Supreme Being? The Puranas and the Epics are full of such incidents of war among the Gods.

Swamiji: The subject-object opposition in time and space, the affirmation of the ego as superior to and supreme over everything, causes the clash, no matter at what level. This clash of the positive and the negative, both of which are inherent in everything finite, produces a spark as a Higher Synthesis and is absorbed in the Higher Synthesis. But this level of the present Higher Synthesis is, again, not the highest; it is still only in the process of evolution into the next Higher Synthesis. So this clash and this spark are repeated, so is the absorption of the spark into the next Higher Synthesis, from level to level. This clash or 'war' between the gods—deities of the different levels—goes on until the last Higher Synthesis is absorbed into the Absolute. This process of the sparks getting absorbed thus is explained in the Puranas and the Epics as one god warring with another and a third god conquering (absorbing) both within Itself.

Visitor: What is the benefit of *sirsasana*? Swami Sivanandaji says it is good for memory and brain power; Rajneesh says it makes you stupid. Who is right?

Swamiji: *Sirsasana* is the best asana. But it should be done only for a maximum of five minutes. You will get good memory immediately. Something can be good and bad also. Someone says, "Eat this, it is good for you, you will be strong." Another says, "Don't eat it, it is bad for you, you will get diarrhoea." Actually, your memory improves as your body consciousness decreases. The more the body consciousness, the less the memory and the ability to concentrate.

Visitor: Swamiji, what is the locus of *avidya*? It is in the *jiva* as the Bhamati school asserts; or is it in Brahman as the Vaishvanara school asserts?

Swamiji: *Avidya* can have no locus, no place to be in, for it is not real. Each thinks it belongs to the other. A guest showed up at a wedding party. The father of the bride thought that the man had been invited by the groom's family, and the family of the groom thought he was a guest invited by the bride's family. He stayed there many days enjoying their hospitality. Finally, one day the bride's father and the groom's father were talking about him. When they were about to ask him where he really belonged, he vanished. [Revered Swamiji laughed heartily when he gave this illustration.] *Avidya* is like that. It is not real, so it vanishes the moment you enquire about it.

Ishvara is like the government. It is not perceptible, but it is everywhere. You cannot say where it is, but if you do something wrong you will feel its effects. You say the government is in Delhi, but if you break the law (or if you want an extension of your visa, etc.), you will feel the government's presence here! Ishvara is a logical thing, not an ontological or metaphysical entity, not the Reality. The government is like our body. When you are aware of your body, it means something is wrong with it; my head aches, you say. When a king rules righteously, no one is aware of his rule. Even so, when you realise Brahman even the Mahavakyas will not matter much to you. 'Aham Brahmasmi' will then be only words, and you will be beyond words. You will attain that silence which is beyond all theories. Would you want your books even then? If one could attain God by books, you could spend a few days in the National Library in Calcutta and have realisation. But getting God is not so easy. Even if you memorised the entire Encyclopaedia Britannica, you would not have knowledge of God.

There are different names of God: Ishvara, Hiranyagarbha, Virat, but they are the names of one

Single Being. Just as you are one person but you can be analysed medically, physically, psychologically, etc. If you exist as an individual, He (Ishvara) also exists. But once you lose your individuality, even Ishvara goes on realisation of the Absolute. Actually, Ishvara is not different from Brahman. The same Ultimate Reality is there in both. The name Ishvara is given only for relational purposes (Brahman is Ishvara in relation to us)—just as the same man may be a father, brother, son, etc. You call It Ishvara because of your isolation from It. You pray to your own higher nature, which is so vast that it looks to you like another person altogether. Because Ishvara is a Cosmic Individual, you pray to Him—like you bow to an individual who is a leader of the nation, whom you yourself have elected, whom you yourself have put in that supreme position!

To think universally, as God thinks, is our goal. The only problem is we think as man thinks. When the milk becomes curd, it ceases to exist; it is totally in the other form—the curd. But when God 'becomes' the world, He continues to exist in Himself. Really nothing ceases to exist, for there is no difference between cause and effect.

Visitor: Is logic the same as metaphysics? Is the law of the mind the same as the law of the Universe?

Logic is the manifestation in the mental realm of the Ultimate Metaphysical Principle. Vedanta metaphysics asserts that Reality is non-dual. So the psychology, and the epistemology or logic of Vedanta must be based on this non-difference of the knower and the known?

Swamiji: This is based on the problem of whether there is a metaphysical thing in itself (noumenon), on which the logic of phenomenon is based. This is a great mystery, but it is unsolvable. Even Kant died before he got the answer. Ishvara is thought to be logically the

highest, whereas Brahman is metaphysically or intuitionally the highest. But these are not two. The law of Ultimate Existence manifests itself in various ways: law of cohesion, integration, love, sanity—so the universal cosmic law regulates our individual and social and mental life.

Visitor: Is self-luminosity the same as self-consciousness?

Swamiji: 'Self-luminous' (*svayam-prakasa*) means consciousness itself. You are not aware that you are aware. It is awareness, pure and simple. The question of self-consciousness, as you think of it, is that of an individual subject as opposed to an object. The Absolute does not have self-consciousness, rather, it is Consciousness itself. Ishvara is the highest self-conscious being. It is the Universal Being aware of itself as existing. You cannot imagine what this kind of self-consciousness is. Ishvara is aware of the object as identical with Himself. He regards the objects of the world as you would regard your hands and feet. Your hands and feet are objects in one sense, for they can be seen by you. But they are vitally related to you, just so is the whole world related to God. Brahman is consciousness itself. Ishvara is self-consciousness. *Jivanmukta*, you may say, is a little lower. He has not merged completely into Brahman (until the final death of body, and so still needs some external objects to maintain life.)

Visitor: If life is a movement from *ananda* to *ananda*, why is it that we should be detached from it?

Swamiji: If you know life is *ananda*, then everything is fine! What do you want detachment from? You want detachment from wife, children and property, because you think these are the causes of sorrow; you want to renounce liabilities. Really you should think about being

attached (to life). God is not such a fool that He cannot understand these tricks of the human mind [*emphatically.*] “Stone walls do not a prison make’, nor do the stone walls make an ashram or church. So you leave the stone walls of your home for other stone walls. What is the difference? Religion is a continued idea of the world, and in this sense it is the opium of the people. Religiosity—conservatism—will enable you to get on in ordinary life, but it won't cut ice with God! Religious groupism (sectarianism) has the same purpose as political groupism (parties or nationalities). Whether the left leg is broken or the right leg is broken, it is a broken leg. You cannot be a religious person until and unless you renounce religiosity. Don't call yourself a Hindu, Christian, Advaitin, etc. There was a man at Stanford University who wrote “The Religion of No Religion”; again there was William Cantwell Smith who wrote “The End of Religions”. When you know that you know nothing, still you have knowledge. Cut it all away, and something remains [*With great emphasis.*] At Dakshineswar when Ramakrishna was alive, a poor, dirty man came and recited something in a temple. No one could understand the language, but all present felt a spiritual presence in the temple when he was there. They went to Ramakrishna and told him. He said, “You fools, that was a God-realised man, you should have prostrated before him. Go find him out!” The people went looking for him and found him in a gutter in Varanasi. The filthy sewage water was flowing down (to the Ganga). The people asked him, “What is truth?” He replied, “When you see this filthy water and the holy Ganga are one (not different), you know the Truth!”

One Mouni Swami of South India used to keep a pot of spit, urine, rots etc. People thought he was a great saint, so they went for initiation. He insisted that they drink the contents of the pot, and the people ran away.

One half-crazy man went there and, when ordered, he drank the scum in the pot. His senses had been conquered and he tasted no 'scum'. He went into samadhi. They asked him later what it tasted like. He said, "It was sweet nectar!" These are real men of religion—but you want someone who tells you to read Gita, do *japa*; you want comfortable answers.

Visitor: So ultimately we have to give up everything?

Swamiji: What do you mean by everything? Wife, children, etc.?

Visitor: No, I mean theories, beliefs, sects, etc. Are these to be given up to attain God-Realisation?

Swamiji: No, it is something quite different from that. You must discriminate as to which thoughts to retain and which to dismiss at any moment. When a man comes to a doctor with 105 degrees temperature and eczema, certainly the doctor treats the fever first. Common sense is the most uncommon thing in the world (laughs.) When you have been starving, eating is more important than meditation, but when you are drowning, being saved from the water is more important than eating. When is the best time for eating? It is when you are hungry. The same with meditation. Samsara is timeless. Time began with creation, so in that sense, it is said to be beginningless, or eternal. But remember it is not real. *Jivas* in bondage exist to a realised being just as the people you saw in a dream last night exist for you in the dream. Where are they today? They have been absorbed into your waking consciousness. Your recurring question is based on the assumption that there has been creation. Why do you assume this? No one has seen God creating.

Visitor: But the Srutis teach us there has been creation. Why should they mislead us?

Swamiji: When you think the Srutis mislead you, they

cease to be scriptures. A friend ceases to be a friend when he robs you. The tiger in the dream can wake you, though it is unreal.

Visitor: Is not social work an altruistic ideal?

Swamiji: If you investigate all social organisations from the UNO down to the family, you will find that they are all based on selfishness [*laughing.*] Love everyone but trust a few, they say.

MAY 1979: PART 3

A Visitor: Why does my throat go dry during meditation? It makes me cough.

Swamiji: It is due to the stopping of saliva; emotion dries up the saliva, which is connected with emotions, and in meditation your emotion on the object of concentration may cause this. Hunger, thirst, grief, sorrow, joy are all emotions which affect salivary secretion. When you are very angry, the mouth dries up; you cannot speak at that time. The mouth closes, the liver is disturbed and immediately your mouth dries up, the lips tremble.

Visitor: There is also palpitation during meditation.

Swamiji: It is all due to concentration at the time of meditation. Sometimes you feel the locking up of the teeth also. It is nothing unusual. It is natural—all due to concentration only.

Visitor: When in the course of doing *japa*, there is a time when you are unable to go on with it, as if you were in the grip of something other than the distraction of the mind. The mind does not seem to be coming into play here; there is joy for the time you are in this grip of something, which you are convinced is not a false experience but are convinced of the reality of the experience. It is not slipping into sleep or dream.

Simultaneously you are aware that your concentration on your *japa* is not all that deep. Can this be taken to mean a flash in meditation, if such an interpretation is permissible here?

Swamiji: It is due to deep concentration only, although you may not be aware of it. Concentration can be even unconscious. Concentration need not be consciously set up. There can be effortless concentration, and that is more natural than the concentration with effort. When doing *japa*, it is tremendous concentration; but concentration is done unconsciously, and is more effective than the concentration with which you are speaking to me now. You are naturally feeling that you are so-and-so, and that is a tremendous concentration that has been pre-decided for years and so intensely practised that it has become a part of your being. And therefore, there is no effort in thinking you are this so-and-so, while it requires a little effort to listen to what I am saying, and so on. In *japa*, you have concentration at its subconscious level. Your name has become a part of you, you are that. Even so is the experience and the *japa*.

The conviction that there is a world outside us does not require great concentration of mind. We are born with the feeling that the world exists, though it really is a false notion. And yet that false notion has got into our blood so powerfully that we do not require to go on looking at things to feel that there is a world outside. So even wrong things can become a result of concentration.

Visitor: If no one is helping, how can one achieve anything for the commonweal?

Swamiji: You can do anything alone. Mahatma Gandhi led alone the whole of the Indian nation. Churchill singly defeated Hitler. Swami Sivananda was alone when he started the Ashram. If he had waited for help or

cooperation from another person or persons, this Ashram would never have come into existence. Lord Krishna all by Himself delivered the Gita and won the battle of the Mahabharata. You also can do it all on your own.

An Ashramite: So Swamiji, you mean to say that it requires concentration when you wish to concentrate on, i.e., think of God? How to concentrate when you want to think of God?

Swamiji: Be conscious that God exists, that God is the only thing that exists. This requires concentration. But we do not require any concentration to believe that the world exists, which really does not exist. You can imagine the trick of the mind. A thing which really is requires tremendous concentration to get it into our mind. But for a thing that is not there, it requires no concentration at all. It simply sits in your mind like a devil and takes possession of the entire area [*laughs.*] You can imagine the catastrophe that has taken place, and it is not going to be so easy a matter to rack one's head hard and struggle even to be aware that something exists while in fact that is the only thing that exists. And to get free from the clutches of a thing which is not there, see what an effort or attempt it is! You are struggling throughout your life to free yourself from the clutches of a thing that is not there, and you cannot think even for a single minute a thing which is really there. It is a case of complete hypnotisation and brainwashing to the very core by the mind. Brainwashing is really a poor word for it; much worse has happened. Brainwashing is only a psychological function.

Ashramite: The brainwashed mind does not wish to believe that it is as serious as it really is.

Swamiji: Yes, yes, yes.

Ashramite: In fact, that is the real brainwashing we do! We do not realise that it is as complete as it is.

Swamiji: Yes. A tremendous catastrophe has taken place, and yet you are brainwashed in another way, to make you feel that nothing has happened to you. Though are you a prisoner in fetters, you are made to believe that you are free. And that is a very interesting way of brainwashing! When you are in prison and you are aware that you are in prison, that is a blessing. But you are brainwashed again to believe that you are a free man.

Ashramite: If there is confirmation that you are in prison, there is no more struggle necessary to believe it is so. But you are brainwashed into thinking that you are practically free.

Swamiji: Yes, yes. Many great men think that they have realised God and are self-realised—Buddhas-Bodhisattvas. They think there is nothing else to attain, it only remains to give salvation to the world. Even many thinkers think like that. This is a topsy-turvy sincerity.

Another Visitor: When did this change from reality to brainwashing begin? How?

Swamiji: It has no beginning. When you say 'begin', you are thinking of a particular point of time. You are imagining a beginning of time [*laughs*].

Visitor: Okay. How did it change then? Why did it come about? What caused it?

Swamiji: If you know that you are no more so-and-so, you will cease to be that. That secret means God speaking in the end. He does not want to tell you because if He lets the cat out of the bag, then everybody will be happy. He has a small cat in the bag. He will not let it out; this secret He keeps to Himself. He has done

something without letting you know what He has actually done.

Ashramite: Is it because man's own efforts will get rusted?

Swamiji: He wants you to put forth effort and know it. And He will not answer the question like that. He has worked the miracle. It is a miracle, well, merely because it is beyond the intellectual capacity to reach the cause. You are putting the question 'why', and why is a question connected with logic. Logic means intellectual activity connecting cause and effect. These are all aftereffects of this phenomena, and the effect cannot know the cause. So the question 'why' is connected with effect, and effect cannot know the cause, because logic cannot know the cause. Therefore, the question why has no answer. The question itself is a misplaced question.

Ashramite: Swamiji, the other day you said that the contradiction that arises between the waking consciousness and dream consciousness creates all the restlessness and problems of the waking consciousness, and that there are many more layers of the personality before the Atman is reached.

Swamiji: Yes, many, many more layers.

Ashramite: [*Continuing*] And Swamiji, you further said that God in His mercy has hidden these layers from us. How is it mercy?

Swamiji: Have you read my small book "[The Struggle for Perfection](#)"?

Ashramite: No. Swamiji. It is only now, after hearing you for a period of seven years, that I have the courage to read your books. Earlier I always kept them for special attention to the subject and for concentrated understanding. This opportunity did not come before I came to live in the Ashram, and only now the ground is

familiar and I can read and follow what you write. Because of this background of only the earlier days that I had all those problems when I translated your book "Meditation—Its Theory and Practice".

Swamiji: Read my book "The Struggle for Perfection". I have mentioned all these layers there.

Ashramite: You have mentioned the layers in other contexts also.

Swamiji: I have also explained the layers there, and not merely mentioned them. The explanations cannot be exhaustive for a small book like that, but that is enough in that context.

Ashramite: I see. So I will get my answers by reading that book?

Swamiji: Yes, specially in the first part of it. That book is condensed and provides the essence of the whole matter.

MAY 1979: PART 4

A Visitor: The gods in my country are represented like the ancient Rishis, in the ordinary clothes of men. But Hindu gods have very complicated dresses—snakes and all kinds of weapons—so difficult to worship.

Swamiji: Hindu gods are not Brahmins. They are Kshatriyas, they have got weapons, and Brahmins are asked to worship them! And the gods are all householders. Hindu gods are not Brahmacharis or Sannyasis. This is also an interesting thing. Every god has a wife, even two. All this is something more than sociology.

Visitor: Which is the correct way of worshipping God? Which is the right method? Should food be offered to God?

Swamiji: Anything that is offered is called food. What is

it that sustains the soul? Tell me.

Visitor: The body is sustained by food.

Swamiji: The body is sustained by food, and what is it that sustains the soul?

Visitor: The soul is sustained by the body. The body is a disease of the soul.

Swamiji: Swami Sivananda used to joke [*pointing to clothes—the dhoti and the upper wrap*] this is a bondage put upon the soul, a carbuncle that has grown on the soul. Every day you clean this carbuncle, put medicine and bandage it [*laughter.*] The soul is sustained by God, by the Supreme Being, by God Himself. The body can be sustained by a cup of tea and food, but the food of the soul is God Himself; it cannot be satisfied with anything less. It wants only that. And so it goes on crying, and until that is got it won't become quiet. And though body can be satisfied with little things, the soul cannot be satisfied with anything but God. Only when it comes in contact with God, it loses itself. And when it has contacted Him and has realised it, it feels happy then and only then.

Another Visitor: We offer food—*pindam*, etc., during those ten days of mourning to the departed soul. How does that affect the departed soul?

Swamiji: Yes, it will affect the soul, just as you send a money order to someone and the money reaches him. Although it is not actually the cash that is sent from your place to the other place, it is the intention that is conveyed to the other end. And even the kind of currency sent need not be the same; you may send it in rupees and it can be paid to the receiver in any other currency.

Visitor: But the soul does not require any food, etc.?

Swamiji: No, no! The soul has not reached God yet. It is

in a helpless condition as it cannot act. So it requires some external help. If that soul has reached God, then your *pindam* has no meaning. It does not want anything. But you cannot take it like that. It is implied that he is hanging in some realms and so, maybe, his meritorious karmas are perhaps not sufficient to sustain him. So you add on your prayers, charities, your *danam*, etc. If I get some good from somebody, it might be because of the prayer someone has offered on my behalf. Goodwill and sympathy, or rather a telepathic communication that you establish in whatever place, in whichever realm the soul exists, will reach it by a vibration which is set up in the Cosmos by your mantras, by your feelings, etc. It does not mean that your *pindam*, i.e., the same food, will go there. Like the money order, the intimation is given there and whatever amount is necessary is paid in its own currency to the addressee there.

Visitor: So then, the *pindam* and the like help the soul to go to God?

Swamiji: That is a more difficult thing. It cannot reach God like that. Your *pindam* and all that cannot reach God. But it is a lesser help that you are rendering. The soul has got sufferings of various kinds because of demerits that it has accrued. So, it may take a rebirth or it may have other kinds of agencies, and all these are natural things. Who is perfect? So you render help so that you may also be helped by others. Whatever help you give to others will be given back to you as a kind of mutual return help, as sympathy and love.

An Ashramite: We can pray for their rebirth also?

Swamiji: You need not say any prayers for that. They will take rebirth anyhow without your praying for that.

Ashramite: "Please grant that a good rebirth"—cannot you pray like that?

Swamiji: That is again a kind of help you are giving to

the soul by offering your prayers to God. You are appealing to the Supreme Master, don't put him in prison, and so on. You are appealing. You are advocating. You are a counsel on the part of the soul and you are pleading before the Judge, the Supreme Being—don't punish him unnecessarily and commit him to prison.

Ashramite: Is that a foolish act or is it a part of the prayer we may offer?

Swamiji: Why do you say it is a foolish act? It is a great charitable feeling.

Visitor: You are pleading for that soul?

Swamiji: Yes, yes. Perhaps you will also be pleaded for by somebody because you have done some good deeds. Somebody will help you. Law works like that. It is natural. When offering *pindam*, generally the only the head of the family is counted [*laughs*] in the prayer for the departed ones, and after a few years some new persons will be added to the prayer and then the earliest ones are omitted.

Vis.: If that soul has already left the world as time passes, is it still in Pitriloka or in other *lokas*?

Swamiji: You cannot say that. How can you know? It depends upon his karmas. He may be in Pitriloka or Swargaloka—anywhere. But it does not matter where he is. As far as your charitable deeds are concerned, it will reach him wherever he is.

Ashramite: Swamiji, if the soul has already taken birth—is it not the wrong address?

Swamiji: No, no! It will reach him. Your mind will tell you where he is. The vibrations you set up—you have got a picture of that person in your mind and before the inner eyes, so wherever the soul is, that force will go and touch it in any world, even if he is reborn. He may

be sitting near you here, and it will have some benefit. You may not know it works. But it will work.

Ashramite: And I wouldn't know that it has worked on this person next to me.

Swamiji: Nor will he know that you have helped.

Visitor: Some Rishi curses—like the one which cursed Ahalya to become a stone—have had great potency. How does a curse work? Ahalya is also released from the curse conditionally. How?

Swamiji: It is a force that is working. It is his mind that is working there. His mind goes and impinges upon the person with such a force that whatever the thought, it immediately materialises in that personality. It is a force of his mind's thought.

Visitor: I thought that perhaps it is prediction that is going to come true.

Swamiji: Prediction by whom?

Visitor: By the person who curses.

Swamiji: That way, everything is predicted by God. It is said that when the universe is created, everything is determined by Him. That is a cosmic a view of things that you are taking. But normally, relatively thinking, it is this man's thought that is working. But why is he made to think like that? That is a different thing. Why has he the impulse to curse others? Who is prompting him? Then you are going behind the causes which lie behind causes. That is too much. But we are thinking of the immediate cause. The immediate cause is his intention to do something and effect that particular experience in that person, and that is a blessing or a curse. It is the materialisation of the thought of the person who expresses it.

Ashramite: Blessings do not seem to have their effects as quickly as curses have.

Swamiji: It only shows that your power to hate is greater than your power to love. That is all (*laughs*). That is why that quick effect. Otherwise, if your love is as intense, it will work—why not? After all, it is your thought that works. But our love is niggardly and our hate very powerful. The love of Savitri for Satyavan, her husband, was such that she defeated the Lord of Death himself! And it is not any inferior to the curse. It is much more powerful. Such a terrific force of thought she had that she would not budge until she attained her goal. The story is not an ordinary one. It is love that wins the blessing at once.

Visitor: Dasaratha was very happy when he was cursed with *putrasoka* (grief caused by separation from his son) because the curse implied that he would get a son, and that was his greatest desire. The curse did not impress itself as forcibly on his mind.

Swamiji: Yes. Dasaratha was happy because without a *putra* (son), he could not have experienced *putrasoka*. So he knew he would get a *putra*. That is why he was very happy. "After all, I will have children," he said to himself. Otherwise, how could this curse work? [*Laughs*] Very interesting!

Ashramite: A blessing in disguise!

Swamiji: A blessed curse! My grandmother used to tell a story.

A householder was eating his luncheon served by his wife. The vegetable she had prepared was very tasty and it was his favourite. So he said to his wife: "Keep some for the night. I like it."

Just then laughter was heard from the outer verandah where visitors, until invited in, waited. The husband said, "Go and see. Some visitors are waiting."

So the wife went and greeted the guests by doing them obeisance. This is the Indian tradition. Greeting

her in return, as is traditional, they blessed the lady: "*Dirgha sumangali bhava*" (May your husband live eternally!)

The husband had his meal, and came outside to greet the guests. Greetings over, he asked them, "I heard you laughing. What was the matter?"

They replied, "We are Yama Dutas, messengers of the Lord of Death."

In those days, long, long ago, my grandmother used to say the Yama Dutas came visibly, in person, to take people to the world of Death and stand before Lord Yama. So these two guests who had been sitting in the outer verandah while the husband was eating were Yama Dutas, who said, "We have come to take you with us to Lord Yama just now, and you were telling your wife to keep some food for the night. You won't be here in the evening. We are taking you just now to Yamaloka. So we laughed, amused as we were at your saying that."

The husband was taken aback. And he called out to his wife and reported the matter to her.

The wife was an intelligent and quick-witted woman, and she said to the Yama Dutas, "How can you take my husband away now? Just now when I greeted you, you blessed me, saying, '*Dirgha sumangali bhava*'. How can you go back on your word now?"

This was a sort of bombshell to the messengers. They woke up to the situation. They had made a mistake. They had pronounced that blessing in a traditional way, mechanically, so to say.

When they reported the story to Lord Yama, he said, "You foolish fellows, you should not have spoken to them. All this blunder has been caused only because you were visible to the mortals. From now on, do not be visible to the moral world. Go in an invisible form and do your work."

Thus it is, my grandmother would conclude the

story, that nowadays the Yama Dutas are invisible to the mortal world. [*Laughs.*]

These are all interesting stories. But some creatures, such as dogs, sense it. When death comes, they say that dogs howl and whine because they become aware of the approach of death. And vultures, days before the corpse is actually to come, sit waiting, perched upon a tree. That is why they say, "Oh, it is a bad omen, the vultures are seen sitting!" They seem to sense the vibrations set up in the vicinity.

Visitor: A dog accompanied Dharmaputra, and he would not enter heaven without the dog if it was not allowed in.

Swamiji: It was Lord Yama Dharmaraja himself that was following Dharmaputra, to test him if his generosity would prevail unto the very last. There were three tests for Dharmaputra (Yudhishtira). Once at the lake of poison where the Yaksha, pleased with Yudhishtira's answers to his queries, asked the latter to ask for the life of any one of the brothers who had died as a result of their failure to answer his queries. Yudhishtira asked for Nakula to be restored to life. The Yaksha said, "Why do you ask for that brother's life? Bhima and Arjuna are better people. You should ask one of their lives back." To this, Yudhishtira replied, "We three are the sons of Kunti, while Nakula is the son of our other mother, Madri. Now that I am alive my mother will be happy. And if Nakula too were to return alive to his mother, she would also be happy." When Yudhishtira passed the test, the Yaksha revived all the brothers. The third test was in hell. Nothing but suffering everywhere. His brothers were there too. And Yudhishtira, after he had seen his brothers there, was asked to go to heaven. But he refused to go. "If my brothers are suffering in hell, how can I go to heaven alone? I too will stay here

until they also go with me to heaven.” And any amount of pleading that while his own karma would allow him only a glimpse of hell, those of his brothers were such that they had to stay there long, would not change Yudhishtira’s mind. Thus he passed the third test also. And all the five of the Pandavas went to heaven.

OCTOBER 1979: PART 1

A Visitor: What is the *lila* of God? What does it mean that the creation is His *lila*?

Swamiji: This is the same as creation. If the electrons of the stone have really become a stone, then you cannot see the electrons but you can certainly see the stone. If it does not become the stone, how do you see it? The electrons become the stone, but why? No answer can be given. So, creation does not exist; it means it is only a misconception in the mind—it does not really exist. The more you think of it, the less you like to speak about it! *Lila* is an indescribable sport. You don’t know why it happens.

Visitor: Is Ishvara a personal God?

Swamiji: There is a person as long as you exist. When you expand your personality, the personality of God gets diminished correspondingly, because two persons—you as well as He—cannot be there at the same time; and when you become cosmic, He ceases to be completely. He gives place to you. So there cannot be two Gods; only one God can be there.

Visitor: You seem to emphasise the creative side?

Swamiji: If He is the Creator, then He has to be the Sustainer and the Destroyer. But is there any Creator? You must decide that first—then other things would also follow. Has He created the world? If He has not created, He cannot sustain and destroy. I think He has

not created the world.

Visitor: Some people say God created the world mechanically due to karmas; if so, can there be any grace of God to us?

Swamiji: There can be karma, there can be grace, there can be birth and death, there can be every blessed thing—even if there is no creation! These are no contradictions. God's creation is not necessary for all these purposes. It is a process of consciousness. Whatever you call it—karma, birth and death—they are not objective events, they are processes of consciousness. They are not outside us, what you see with your eyes.

Visitor: You mean belief in the world is a misconception, like the belief in the body?

Swamiji: Even the body is a state of consciousness only; it is not an object which exists ultimately. It appears to be there, but it is really not there. This 'you' and all that are, again, phantoms.

You have made a gulf of difference between you and I, which is not really there. It is a mistake that the mind makes. Just as in dreams persons appear to be there, but are really not there; they are only split parts of the same mind, one appearing as the I, the other appearing as you, and both are integrated in the single mind in a certain condition.

Visitor: Likewise here...

Swamiji: There is nothing like you and I. What are you seeing? You are seeing a part of the mind only. You are not seeing a person. Just as you see a wall in dream, you see another wall here. It stands in the same relation to the cosmic mind as the dream wall in relation to the waking mind.

Visitor: You mean the world is like a dream?

Swamiji: This world is a cosmic dream. When you wake up, you will not see the world, just as you do not see the dream-world now.

Visitor: Any difference between the *jivanmukta* and Ishvara, or are both beyond space and time?

Swamiji: Even *mukti* is a part of the dream only. When you wake up, there is no *mukti*. You are on the borderland—one leg here and another there—but really when you go there, there is no *jivanmukti* or anything.

Visitor: Then *jivanmukti* is the death of the empirical self?

Swamiji: It is not really death in the ordinary sense. It is a realisation by consciousness of its presence in everything. That is what you call death.

Visitor: It is not aware that it is present in everything. It always thinks it is present only in the body?

Swamiji: This is not the Truth. It is present in everything, and the moment you realise this Cosmic Presence, there is no question of birth and death, the question itself does not arise.

Visitor: Shankara and Ramanuja disagree on *saguna* being ultimate?

Swamiji: There is no disagreement between Shankara and Ramanuja, but *saguna* is empirical reality for Shankara while Ramanuja takes it as an absolute Reality. It is something to be transcended.

We may be sitting here—you may not see the person really. You are seeing a part of the Cosmic Mind, of which you are also a part. One part of the Cosmic Mind is in another part of it. It is not one man seeing another man. That is a very crude way of thinking and expressing the fact. There is no man or woman or anything in this world; it is one part of the Cosmic

Existence envisaging another part of it.

Each part is containing the whole in a hidden form. That is why you are able to catch the whole. The whole is implanted in every part entirely. Every cell of the body contains the totality of the personality biologically. If you take one cell of the body, you can study the whole of the person because it contains the reflection of the total personality. Likewise the whole Cosmic is reflected in every man—nay, in every atom.

There is a distinction between the *vyavaharika* and *paramarthika* levels of Reality. The distinction appears only to the empirical, it does not exist for the Absolute. You cannot have two things as reals. Two reals cannot exist. The real is only one, either this or that. One of them must be less, they cannot be in the same intensity of delight. Take, again, the electrons in a stone or as stone. Can you say the stone is nowhere after it becomes the electrons? It is even now the electrons only! So why should it 'become' a stone? So there is no question of *jivas* 'going' to Brahman. They are already there. They have only become aware of that fact by non-objective awareness.

Your consciousness of objects is your obstacle—i.e. consciousness identifying itself with all things, immediately after you wake up from dream. As long as the object is seen, you are inside the dream. When the object becomes the subject, the dream vanishes, the bubble bursts. That is called meditation. Ishvara is an object as a tree is an object. Your point of view in respect of the Absolute is called Ishvara. It is a point of view only, it does not really exist. If you cease to exist, it also goes. You will not see Ishvara when you reach the Absolute. It is like an 'x' in mathematics. It is a great help in finding a solution, but it is not in itself existing there. Without it you cannot have the solution, and it in itself has no meaning. Ishvara cannot be avoided as long

as the world is seen with your eyes. The Ishvara concept is an automatic outcome of your belief in the reality of the world; and when the world exists, Ishvara has to exist as the cause thereof, but if the world does not exist, Ishvara need not exist because if the effect is not there, what is the use of the cause?

Visitor: I think Ishvara is useful as an object of worship. Does it then matter what object we concentrate on?

Swamiji: There is no hard and fast rule in worshipping anything, provided you regard that as the Absolute. You should not regard that as one among many. That is the mistake which prevents you from going to the Absolute. You can take any particular object as the symbol of the Supreme. There is no question of this object of concentration as mine. The other things do not exist at all for you. The moment other things' concepts exist for you, your own concept of God ceases to be the Absolute for you. A person who regards a deity as the Absolute cannot argue like this. But if I think my deity is Absolute i.e. Visnu, I will argue with Saivites. The moment you are aware of another person, you have become relative immediately and you cannot regard that object as the Absolute. You must become the Absolute, pervading the whole Cosmos. That sort of concentration you must develop—so, in that way any meditation is correct meditation.

You can take that fountain pen as the Absolute and go to the Supreme by meditating on that because even here the Absolute is present in some form. Through any river in the world you can reach the ocean! These objects are only vehicles to conduct consciousness to the Supreme Absolute. So one object is as good as any other object, if you regard it as the Supreme. There is no inferior or superior deity, all deities are of equal status.

Another Visitor: "There is Atman in me, and there is

Atman in you, and there is (Atman) God outside.” What is the relationship of Atman and God?

Swamiji: What is in between?

Visitor: Atman only!

Swamiji: You have answered your own question. The words ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ are but two terms used because of our physical body, like the inside and outside of a room. There is no relationship as such because they are the same thing. The Atman and God are but two different words standing for the same thing. You have asked the highest question. Nothing else remains.

Another Visitor: Truth is one, although the paths are very many. Often I come across people who dogmatise and say, “This is the truth.” I wish to argue it out with them. Am I wasting my time?

Swamiji: Why do you think so?

Visitor: Because they do not seem to change.

Swamiji: There are two aspects; one is the time factor. Everyone’s grasp is not of the same quickness. Everyone cannot grasp what is said in the same period of time. Some grasp it immediately, while others take a much longer time to comprehend it.

Secondly, there is your own capacity to teach. How quickly the other person grasps what you say will depend upon how you teach that particular person or a group of people.

Visitor: Truth is one, and all spiritual friends believe this.

Swamiji: Teaching is a science in itself, and the psychological understanding of its method and the technique of teaching, only a real teacher knows. Thirdly, you cannot teach when you yourself are not hundred per cent sure that your faith is correct. Missionaries are convinced that all religions are means

of approach to God but Christianity is the approach to God for man. How would you impart your view to them?

Visitor: I shall ask what is the object of Christianity?

Swamiji: Love of God.

Visitor: Other religions also believe in the same view.

Swamiji: There are certain tenets of Christianity which cannot reconcile with other tenets. That is the difficulty. And the Bhagavad Gita says never disturb the faith of anyone.

Visitor: I only want to open their eyes.

Swamiji: Opening their eyes does not mean disturbing their faith. If your heart is sincere, this itself is its own reward, and will speak. Christianity, however, asserts that there is none other than Jesus, who is the only incarnation of God the Father. The only teacher of the Gospel of God is Jesus. Judaism is the religion which he taught. As a matter of fact Jesus, who is the "WAY", is only one of the several Avatars. To see wrong is itself wrong. And this is the great quarrel. It is the negative way to argue.

Visitor: I want to unify the religions of the different sects of Christianity. They quarrel among themselves as though they were speaking of different truths.

Swamiji: Religion is a unifying factor. Religions today have, besides love of God, other accretions. Many other activities are included in religion. So you have a difficulty in saying 'God is love' to the customer to whom you speak. You speak in a way different from the one in which you talk to God in the Church. You must see God in the customer. But it is difficult, and not quite practical. That is why religions fail, because of this difficulty in achieving the balance between the love of God and the love for man. Religious practice is a hard job.

Visitor: Am I taking too big a job in this task I have set for myself? Do I need training, etc.?

Swamiji: Why do you have that fear?

Visitor: Because I do not want to aim at the moon with a pea-shooter.

Swamiji: By understanding the technique of teaching better, namely, the technique of teaching, you can improve your efforts to teach. And by yourself getting closer to God you can succeed in the job. For, at the point where you get close to God, you do not have to speak; your existence itself will speak. If you are truly a religious man, your life will belong to the great God! For, living a life as great as God's is to live a Godly life. There is no other or greater service to mankind. To all the friends you wish to talk to, this is the magnificent service you can render. And God will speak through you. You will be told what to do and what to say. You become the instrument of God, and it must succeed. This is the greatest duty and the greatest service you can render. His Being will spread an aura around you. Christ was greater than His words. For, "words are partial emanations of His", is a saying; and 'being' is the first thing and doing comes afterwards.

To do a magnificent work you must 'be' yourself magnificent first.

OCTOBER 1979: PART 2

The usual audience of various nationalities were gathered under the open sky. Visitors kept trickling in and out. Conversation follows.

Visitor: What is the worth of a man?

Swamiji: You may define it in an aphorism. The worth of a man is his nearness to reality. Now, what is nearness to reality? Not physical contact. An agent of

the Reserve Bank is sitting over all the moneys in the Reserve Bank, but he cannot take for himself even a single rupee. So nearness does not mean physical distance. It is the nearness to your own reality to yourself. The Bhagavad Gita says, "Your own self is your friend and your own self is also your enemy." Now this raises the question again, "What is reality, the self?" You can see and put your hand out and touch the wall. The wall is a reality. What appears as wall is not the reality of the wall. You will see atoms through the microscope! Even so, there are many layers of the 'self'. In dream you are far away from your 'self'. In waking condition you are nearer to your 'self'. Besides the waking and dream consciousness, there are many other layers of consciousness; and it is God's kindness that of the other layers we are blessed in their ignorance. Restlessness, unhappiness, insecurity, etc. are due to the various layers being at variance with the waking consciousness. The waking consciousness summons you in dream. And so also dream consciousness summons the waking consciousness and causes the world of dreams. When your personality, that is, the 'self', is described as having seven or fourteen layers, it only means that you are still on the path to the destination, the Self. And if all these layers were our experiences, like the dream and waking consciousness, then we would be in a far worse position than the merely waking consciousness being at variance with the dream-consciousness. God, in His kindness, keeps us in ignorance of the other layers. Once the destination—the Self—is reached, there is rest and peace. Nearness to Reality is, therefore, nearness to your own Self. What greater thing can be given to you than that of the use of your own Self? Jesus said, "What if you gain the whole world and have lost your soul?" So we have to say that the worth of a man is not his wealth but his nearness to his Self, or the nearness to Reality.

Visitor: I experience pain during pranayama. Why?

Swamiji: You are holding the breath for too long, and hence the pain. Hold it for 1/4 of a minute only. If you hold it for a longer time you will get headache. Also, this holding the breath is not necessary. Deep breathing in and out is quite enough.

Visitor: What was *karma-phal-tyagam*. I cannot understand it.

Swamiji: Imagine you are a farmer. You plough the field, manure it, sow the seeds, and fence it around. This is the maximum you can do. You cannot push up the sprouts. Your thinking on it is of no use, and your wanting and concern that it must come out is of no use. From now on it is not your concern—not in your hands. There are many factors which have to come into action for the seed to sprout. Lack of rain, onset of pests, hail, etc. are out of your control, but the sprout is dependent on these factors also. The Bhagavad Gita says that the fruit of your action is not determined by your action and intention alone. The Third Chapter of the Bhagavad Gita answers this question. There are various factors that are co-related to your action and motive which also are responsible for the fruit of your action. First, you as the agent; second, your intention in doing that action (and this intention may be different from your action); third, the capacity of your sense organ through which you have acted; fourth, the various motives connected with your present motive (when, for instance, you send your boy to school because everybody does so, but sending him to school is not your ultimate motive; you send him to school to enable him to earn his livelihood later on, and from his learning you want him to be able to earn that much as is necessary for maintaining your standard of living, which is dependent on this and that and a hundred related factors.)

Finally, the fruit of your action is dependent on the ultimate factor of the action being in harmony with the will of the Absolute. If your action is in harmony with that will, you get the fruit of your action. If it is in disharmony, you can't get the fruit. Hence, it is not wise to think that the fruit should follow from your action as a matter of course. It is wisdom to be content to do what you can do and leave the rest to God. Action is the result of an impulsion to achieve something. You never act just for the sake of doing something. In the ultimate analysis, you are made to take action as per the purpose of the universe itself. It is for this reason that if you don't harmonise your actions with the will of this Absolute, you cannot succeed. And you cannot understand the Supreme Will.

Your conscience is a great judge in this matter of whether your action is in harmony or disharmony with the universal will. Even a thief knows that he is not doing a good action in thieving; it is other factors that are brought to justify it. Harming others in the process of your action cannot be in harmony with the Supreme Will. Secondly, what you do in harmony with the will of God cannot harm anyone—for God does not harm A to bless B. So answer to yourself whether in an act, you have harmed anyone else. This is buddhi yoga, or yoga of correct understanding. This lack of understanding is what Chapter Two of the Bhagavad Gita deals with. It is because Arjuna does not understand what is right and what is wrong, what the will of the Supreme is, that he is depressed and confused and bereft of correct understanding. Chapter Three of the Bhagavad Gita answers this question of what is harmful action, what is correct action, etc. The point is that you as an individual are not a separate entity. You are the universe—one with it. The five elements, *viz.*, earth, air, water, fire, and space are in your body, in you as well as in the world. It

is the same five elements present in all these, and hence your harmony with these is a law with which you cannot take privileges. Your own individual personality acts. But your action loses its meaning as an isolated fact in the understanding that you and the universe are one.

And yet you must act because you are a part of and within the universe itself. Your hand is like the world. It is outside your body, but is yourself when the hand does something. It is you who are acting, not the hand as such. That the world is external to your personality is the wrong understanding, as in this example: when the hand holds on to something to prevent your falling, it is a spontaneous action of the hand without harming anyone else in the process of its action. And this spontaneous action, arising out of the whole universe, acting simultaneously, is as much a part of you as you are part of the whole universe. This becomes karma yoga. It is like the whole body of yours cooperating in the lifting of your hand. Hence, there is no question of there being a fruit of an action. Because the 'agent' of the action does not exist, it is not an action outside you. It is like the waves out of the ocean; the waves are the action of the ocean, you may say. But they rise on the ocean itself, not outside it. The wave has no individuality; it is the ocean in action, and when it subsides, it becomes indistinguishably one with the ocean. Until you reach this universal consciousness, by your acts, you share your pleasure with others. This sharing is a cosmic tendency, a universal urge, to share pleasure or joy. This is Jesus's meaning when he says, "What you do secretly is rewarded publicly."

Namaskar. Thank you for a nice satsang.

An Ashramite: Swamiji is to be thanked, not us!

Swamiji: No, it is you all also that go to make the

satsang.

Ashramite: Thank you for your faith in us, Swamiji, in that we have been Arjuna.

Swamiji: (*Laughs and repeats*) Namaskar.

OCTOBER 1979: PART 3

A Visitor: Is there a place for the police and the military in the scheme of life?

Swamiji: Man needs the police and the military, because he is afraid of the man next to him. There is no confidence in the intentions of a neighbour who appears friendly but may have a knife under his arm. So we have the United Nations. We say we want peace but pile up arms. Even a brother does not trust a brother. How, then, can man reach God? It is all an empty cover without contents!

Visitor: What is the 'Direct Path'?

Swamiji: It is Tantra based on Buddhism in Nepal. It is also known as the 'Sword's Path'. They leave the lower stages and go direct to meditation. This is dangerous. But even now it exists all over India—this Tantric practice.

(A youngster, a medical student from Gwalior, greets Swamiji. He wishes to give up his studies and take to spiritual life).

Swamiji: You should first stand on your feet as far as your studies and the world are concerned. You should also seek your father's advice. What you do should be superior to what you reject.

Visitor: I have been sincerely practising the spiritual path all along; hence, I can now fully devote myself to spiritual life.

Swamiji: You can be a spiritual seeker through your

medical profession.

Another Visitor: Why does the mind wander so much when we try to meditate or repeat the hymns and mantras?

Swamiji: Because, there is no will to think or take in more than what it is choosing to at a given moment. So the words remain mere words. You must keep insisting on, and hammering in, the thought you wish to understand. The understanding of a thought comes by repeated, continued and exclusive practice of the mind in one single thought, which is a very different type of thought from the worldly one of social relationship. But in your efforts you wish to turn it to an otherworldly pattern of thinking. This is not easy. There should be consistency in thinking. Thinking that the world is real will not stop you from getting to the Ultimate Reality. The shadow must have, and it does have, some substance behind it to form the shadow. What is misleading is to separate the substance from the shadow. What is misleading, and can be erroneous, is thinking simultaneously that there is Reality and unreality of the world. Hammering on a thought will ultimately reveal the Truth. Staying in the Gurukul Ashrama of the ancient days had a great significance. Staying for years with and in the service of the Guru helped in training the mind to eliminate irrelevant thoughts. And then entering into the world, into Grihasthasrama, did not become an obstacle in the thinking process in the right and helpful manner for the understanding of great truths. Unfortunately, modern education fails to develop this in the students. The atmosphere in which one thinks, and its suitability, influence one's thinking. The Upanishads present the greatest truths. Other scriptures only repeat their statements, but do not impart any higher truths.

Visitor: How should we contemplate God?

Swamiji: Those who are harassed by bondage contemplate God as Infinity. People who are grief-stricken contemplate God as bliss; they think that He is bliss, He is happiness. Swami Vivekananda said, "In the garden of Eden of Allah there are rivers flowing everywhere, and trees and brooks surround you everywhere. This is the Arabian Paradise, full of water flowing around and cooked hen running around! But my country (Bengal) is so full of water, with Ganga and all her tributaries, that it is all full of marshes. And, my paradise will be without water! Not the Arabian paradise!" [*Laughs and all join in with their laughter.*] If Bengal was described as paradise to the Eskimos, it will be hell to them! [*Laughter all around and Swamiji still in the grip of laughter.*] Arabia has no water and its paradise is full of water, and Vivekananda, whose home was in the wetlands, of Calcutta, says: My paradise will be dry land without water! [*More seriously*] Whatever we lack is found in God. God is the bank. God is a treasure-house where you can find whatever you lack. God is like a statue you can find in a block of stone. Whatever form you want, you can get out of the block of stone; you can carve the stone as you want to. But God is not a statue or any such thing. He is just Pure Being. Every statue is inside the stone, implicit in it. Even so, you can get anything from this Pure Being: grief, joy, power, infinitude, spacelessness, timelessness—whatever you want. God is an Omnibus, a 'hold-all'.

Visitor: Is instinct greater than reason?

Swamiji: Yes, there is a point in it. The dog follows you even if you kick it, because its instinct tells it that it will get food by following you. (*Laughs*).

An Ashramite: Why can't it be argued that it is the lack of the capacity for reasoning that the dog does not

understand the meaning of a kick?

Swamiji: Reason is a very dangerous weapon. Reason is a bondage which has made you fall into the hell of social life. The dogs are happy without this trouble. What is the use of that reason which tells you wrong things? That you must punish somebody, wreak vengeance on somebody, you call this really good? Whereas the dog does not think like that.

Ashramite: At least I will know by reason that I should keep away from the person who will kick me. but the dog does not.

Swamiji: Reason is like double edge sword. It will tell you it is doing a wrong thing, and yet also remember some evil done to you once long before. Forever you will remember this evil only. The evil is interred with your bones. You can never remember the good that is done to you. If I do a hundred good things, and one wrong thing which you do not like, you will remember only the wrong or the bad thing, and the hundred good things are washed down the drain. Whereas, the dogs do not behave like that. One day you give it a little bread and it will come behind you wagging its tail (imitates the wagging of the tail and the tongue out) and follow you even if you kick it.

Someone: Why does reason react as you say?

Swamiji: Because, to some extent, the intellect takes you away from reality. It is a virtue also because it can tell you what the truth is.

Visitor: Does the intellect act like that all the time?

Swamiji: No, not all the time. Sometimes. When reason gets mixed up with emotion, it takes you in the wrong direction. But it stands independently when it will tell you that it is doing a mistake. The reason has other aspects also, that it can find out its own limitations. But

sometimes it asserts its absoluteness, when it goes with sentiment, feelings etc. By reason, you know that you must love all children in the same way you love your own children. But emotion says, "My children are better." The emotions speak and say "My children are dearer to me than the other children", while reason tells you, "No, it is not a proper attitude. All children are equally good." So there is a mixture of reason and emotion in certain attitudes.

Visitor: Are reason and intellect the same thing?

Swamiji: Well, yes. Yet reason is the higher, it is the power of the intellect, like the electricity that is working through the bulb. The electricity is the power force, and that is what reason is. The bulb is the intellect, which is the vehicle.

Visitor: Is self-affirmation wrong?

Swamiji: When you make a statement by way of judgment, it is not that you speak a merely grammatical sentence with just a subject, a predicate, and an object, without any connotation behind it. So we should never make an affirmation beyond our capacity of comprehension at the present level of our experience. While affirmations are, therefore, good as far as they go, the only thing you must see is whether they are fit for us to make them in the given context.

DECEMBER 19, 1979

A Visitor: Please initiate me in meditation.

Swamiji: Have you been meditating?

Visitor: No.

Swamiji: Then why do you want to do so now? Curiosity?

Visitor: No. I am coming here for the third time, and at first I was not interested in these matters. Now I want

to learn to meditate. Please initiate me with some mantras.

Swamiji: Mantras can't be given just like that. Tell me first of all what benefit you wish to get out of such meditation. What is your desire? Which God form are you fond of?

Visitor: I have no desire, Swamiji. I do not believe in *saguna* forms of God. I believe only in the Absolute.

Swamiji: What objection do you have to *saguna* forms of God? Why don't you want them? What harm have they done to you?

Visitor: The *saguna* forms are all manmade. So I believe only in the Absolute.

Swamiji: Describe the Absolute to me, let's have your own idea.

Visitor: The Absolute has no qualities.

Swamiji: You have already given an attribute to the Absolute. Unless you have some qualities in mind, how can you say the Absolute has no qualities? Where is the Absolute then?

Visitor: In my heart and all over.

Swamiji: So again you are giving a definition of the Absolute. The Absolute is not a negation of all qualities. The Absolute is inclusive of all qualities, and that is why It is without any special qualities. Tell me, of all things in the world what is it that you like most?

Visitor: I have no particular predilections. I have no desire.

Swamiji: Then why do you want to do something? To learn how to meditate? There is something that is making you want to do this. What is that?

Visitor: There is no desire, Swamiji. I want to...

Swamiji: Unless there is desire, there cannot be any

urge to take action. You don't know what your desire is. And *saguna* forms of God are as effective as the Absolute in leading you to your goal of life. Now you are a musician, a professor, and you find joy in these and the like. What is that thing of which you are extremely fond?

Visitor: *Ragas*—more than other types of music.

Swamiji: Many saints have reached moksha by singing *ragas* to their *saguna* God forms. It is a very effective way of being in communion with God in the *saguna* form. I hope you understand me.

Visitor: Yes, Swamiji.

Swamiji: Tell me, whom among the members of your family do you love most? Your wife? Your children?

Visitor: My mother.

Swamiji: [*turning to his very worthy wife*]: See! He is creating a quarrel between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law! In the presence of your wife you have said you love your mother most! Well, you say the Absolute is in your heart. Meditate on whatever seems to you to be the Absolute, even as you perceive it in your heart, and when you come again, we shall have more chat about this.

Another Visitor: I feel confused because I see lots of suffering in the world. At the same time, I feel that one should turn inwards and contemplate on the spiritual aspect of human existence. What should one do? Turn inward or turn outward and relieve suffering?

Swamiji: You are seeing neither side fully—50% that side and 50% this side, and both together are making the confusion in your mind worse. The conflict is between what you see and what you have not seen. Why see only one side? What is meditation? In meditation you are thinking something not seen with your eyes.

When you are doing work, you see the world. There is, therefore, a double devotion to both the world and the abstract object of meditation. Hence, confusion and doubt arises as to which one should follow. What you see with your eyes is what is real to your mind, and what you have heard from others also seems real to you, and you keep thinking of what you have heard. Your sentiment makes you see the world, and your faith in the person who tells you that there is something unseen which is real, is the other factor which makes you think of it, because it is different from your sentiment. It requires profound study and learning, and a protracted period of training in the correct way of thinking, if the confusion is to be got over. What you see with your eyes is not real, and cannot therefore affect you. But you erroneously think that it is real. In other words, you behave according to what the eyes tell you. But the eye that has a cataract gives wrong visions. One needs special glasses to see things correctly. You have to find a proper guide who will help you to see things and think about them correctly in due course. Even this idea that you have confusion has come to you only now, after you started to think on these lines. So, everything will come in its own time. All these years, these doubts did not come to your mind. But now, because you are in the proper atmosphere, the idea has surfaced in your thinking. Similarly, the proper guide will appear in time and guide you as to how you should think and act.

An Ashramite: I have a doubt about the right way of meditation. First, a small light appears and stays for some time. Then a second light appears on the other side. Why is this? I do not know which light I should concentrate upon.

Swamiji: Who asked you to meditate on light? Your problem is that there is no proper philosophical

background for your practice. Your mind should be satisfied with the technique you perform. Otherwise, you cannot answer the questions that come up in your mind. Doubts will come from the very start of your practice. It will even put the question, why do you want God? Every question of the mind must be answered satisfactorily. The horse must know where you are driving it.

Ashramite: I want God. So I am asking my mind to meditate.

Swamiji: You are not wanting God for the sake of happiness, and the mind craves for something which it likes and which will make it happy. So it must be explained to the mind that wanting God means wanting happiness. This is the philosophical point. Your whole idea of meditation is a hotch-potch. Therefore, you are having troubles of all sorts. Wanting God, happiness, knowing what is meditation, and how to achieve success in it—all these require a scientific approach. You cannot simply sit and cry aloud, I want a house. Mere sentiment or emotional spurts will not take you anywhere. You think you are a very important man, and God is a poor man, unimportant! (*laughs*). God is Ashutosh which means a simpleton, that is, He is quickly pleased by those who approach Him in utter simplicity of heart.

Another Visitor: I want to learn yoga.

Swamiji: Yoga begins where philosophy ends. From the social, geographical, geological and astronomical level, you go to the biological level, and from there to the psychological level and again thence to the rational level. You cannot go further because your capacity is only rational. It is only intellectual, and hence you cannot go further. So all philosophies generally stop at the intellectual analysis and rational conclusions. But

we are not merely reasoning individuals. We have a status of our own—we have an individuality and an existence of our own. You are not merely a function, but an existence as well. Intellectuality is a function; rationality is an activity of a status or faculty. What is in you? Can you say that you are merely a function or a process or a faculty? You are so-and-so. Can you say so-and-so is only a name for a function? It will be a very poor definition of yourself and something below your dignity. You are not a function, you are a status of your own. People always assert their status. When you assert this status, it is a unique indivisible existence of the barest minimum of the totality of your personality. And this barest minimum is part of the universe. The universe is not merely a function—physical, astronomical, psychological, intellectual, etc. It is a pure existence by itself. These are levels of understanding of the universe. So, on the basis of this understanding of the structure of the universe, you may have to prepare the syllabus of your study of yoga. And you are to study the lower level first, and the higher level afterwards. When you go to school, they teach you only what is visible to your eyes; they don't tell you what is invisible. In the KG class or in the First Standard they tell you a little bit of the nature of your neighbourhood and the people around you to arouse your civic consciousness, and then a little bit of the administration of the country, then a little bit of the geography of the land, and so on. It takes a lot of time to take you further up beyond the earth to the solar system, etc. which will not be taught in the elementary schools. The mathematical or the astronomical geography is never taught in the earliest stages; they are taught much later because if you suddenly start pouring into the young students' ears facts about the solar system, physics and such things as the atomic structure, these will be horrible things for

their shallow minds. And these matters won't enter their minds at all.

But the mind can and does grasp things by stages. Gradually, in due course, everything is taken up, and finally you envelop the entire physical cosmos with your mind. This is the conclusion of physical study. Then, as I said, you go to the biological, psychological, rational study, and finally you go to pure existence, which you must consider as the spiritual study. That is reached in a very advanced condition, but they are all layers of personality in the cosmic structure. So in the beginning you have to be acquainted with your political relationship, your social relationship, and then with your personal relationship to the family, the community and the nation. Then comes your physical structure, then the nature of the relationship of this structure to the physical universe, then the higher studies of life, of the mind and reason; and finally of the spirit.

I am giving an idea as to how the study has to be conducted, stage by stage, without hurrying or jumping suddenly to the highest reaches such as samadhi and all such which some people speak of as if it was the second or third lesson of life. Nonsense—nothing will enter the head. You talk of samadhi, but you don't know what it is. It is only a word—a mere word, and in reality it has no sense for you. How can sense come when you are still at the lower level, when you have not reached that stage, when the mind cannot understand the implications of all this? So, finally, a fear catches hold of you in the end, with all your studies. "If I enter Samadhi, or God's body, what will happen to me afterwards? What is my future afterwards?" You don't know anything, only there is a terrible fear. This doubt will persist till the end, even if you see God face to face. Let us say you are seeing Him, a terrible thing in front of you. Afterwards what will happen to you? How long can you keep looking at Him?

You don't know anything, you will be tired of seeing him (*laughs*). Many people have told me, suppose I see God, how long can I go on seeing Him? I will be tired, I will get up and go away [*laughs*], I will be fed up, I want some work ! [*Laughs loud and long.*] After seeing God, you want some work (*chuckles*).

They don't understand that God means a stage of awareness. "After reaching that stage, what will happen to me?" That is the fear. And this "what will happen to me" will not leave you till the end. Such doubts will never leave you. Sometimes these fears are childish. A disciple was once told by a great rishi that when you go to heaven you will not have hunger. The disciple said, "Then, I don't want to go there! It is very bad not to have hunger and thirst! No appetite! No sleep! These are all tedious conditions." [*Chuckles heard from the gathering.*] Would you like to be in that condition? It is a state of sickness [*chuckles and laughs*]. These doubts arise because you are still very immature. We are but children in our thinking. Physically grown up, yes, but mentally very immature. We cannot understand the cosmic reality. Even doubts which you may not have imagined in your mind come in at the end. "What stage have I reached? I do not understand. Where am I? I have practised sadhana, studies and meditation, and still I cannot make out where I am." Let us say, you find this. This is still a stage of a state of doubt only, and in the end you cannot see any relationship between the world and God. Even learned people have this doubt. What happens to the world when I see God? Your family and all these things are here. "When I suddenly soar up into the empire of God, all my children are seen crying!" You wonder what will happen to them. This is another unfortunate thing. You seem to be in a state of anesthesia.

Visitor: They seem to be quite happy!

Swamiji: You are happy because you know nothing about happiness. But if you are aware of it, you are frightened of it!

Visitor: But why has God made it all so difficult?

Swamiji: Since you have woken up from sleep, you are frightened. They, the world-ridden, are still sleeping. A sleeping man has no doubts; when a man is awakened, he is frightened about everything. So the best thing is to sleep, is it not? No loss, no worry, no fright!

Visitor: That also He does not allow—to sleep and sleep.

Swamiji: Because eternal sleep is not allowed. It has to be intermittent. Even the atom does not sleep eternally—it wakes up because of the urge to evolve.

The more the knowledge the more the suffering. So it is better to have no knowledge. Is it not?

Visitor: A devil in the knowing...

Swamiji: A bird in hand is worth two in the bush, eh? They say knowledge is bliss. But here, knowledge is sorrow *[laughs.]* Suppose you have no knowledge that you have lost something; you are happy. When you know of your loss, the knowledge leads to sorrow. Thus knowledge can also be sorrow. Is it not? *[laughs.]*

Visitor: Why has God gems on Him? Decorations?

Swamiji: No, He has not put on anything; you are unnecessarily blaming someone who does not exist.

Visitor: Why have I put on something?

Swamiji: You have put it on because you want it. One does not do anything that one does not want.

Visitor: It was silly of anyone to want it.

Swamiji: Now you mean it is silly? At that time you wanted it and you were very wise! Afterwards you felt that you were foolish! Many people, even great people,

have this doubt: What is better, to have God or the world?

Visitor: Both.

Swamiji: No, you cannot say both—you see a man sitting there and you see only the man, not God; man works for man only. He is not aware of the ant or the frog.

Visitor: Yes, I am aware, Swamiji. I see everything, I see the frog and the ant, the world and the monkeys before me.

Swamiji: Yes, as a nuisance. The monkey is looking at you as a nuisance. It is looking only for the monkeys; frogs work for frogs only, ants for ants. You are thinking of human beings as much more worthy. When a man says, I work for the world, he does not obviously think of the frog or the ant. He is working for man only.

Ashramite: Working for the world also includes working for ants?

Swamiji: No, you aren't concerned about ants. You destroy them and you would not bother; what's the use? Your sentiment will tell you that there is a great use for man's values only. "My brother is greater than my father." This is the only way man can think. Man can think only as man, he cannot think like a tree, so what can he do?

Visitor: How then to work for God, Swamiji?

Swamiji: *[laughs]*. You cannot work for God. You have a fear that He will leave you in the lurch in the end. He is unseen, and we do not know what kind of a person He is, so it would be better to leave Him alone. Don't go near Him; He is an unrealistic person! Humanity is near; you know what it is. It is better to work for human beings. God is an unknown thing, and to work for an unknown thing is dangerous! A reliable man (humanity)

is better than the unreliable man, i.e., God (*laughs*).

UNDATED-3

An Ashramite: Yajnyavalkya says that all love is self-love. Which self? The Atman?

Swamiji: That is also a part of that. There are so many selves—political, sociological, social, psychological, rational, physical, vital and mental.

Ashramite: It is all myself only—the *jiva's* self?

Swamiji: They are not the *jiva's*. They are higher than the *jivas*; you cannot call the inner self a *jiva*—but it is self, nevertheless. They are all real selves. There are many layers of the self. And he refers to every layer of the self. A universal statement is what he is making. Even the utmost selfishness you have is the urge of that universal self. It passes through, pressed through the body, and so becomes selfish—selfish, because it is limited to the body. But the force comes from the universal only, ultimately. Other than the Self nothing exists in the universe. But there are degrees of the self.

Ashramite: But are you speaking of that highest self only?

Swamiji: All self. Any self. Anything

Ashramite: It is not love *of* the self, it is love *for* the self?

Swamiji: They mean the same thing. When the self is the only reality for you, then what can you love? You can say 'of' or 'for' or 'by' or anything. You love anything because it is in consonance with the structure of yourself. So ultimately it means you are loving yourself only. It follows that if something is not in consonance with you, you don't love it.

Ashramite: But suddenly it falls into the pit of selfishness?

Swamiji: That is it. It is selfish. Your love is only selfish because ultimately you are loving yourself only. Even the highest love is selfish, until it is merged into the Absolute. Then the 'self' goes. There is no question of selfishness—because love for an object outside it is selfishness. And since the Absolute is not an object, there the self ceases to exist. Every objective level is selfish, unless and until that thing is in consonance with the nature of yourself. If an objective is disharmonious, you cannot love it. So you are loving yourself only; it is yourself only that you are loving. It follows by logic that you cannot love anything except yourself. Otherwise you will love even an enemy, and there would be no such thing as enemy at all. Only that which threatens your very existence cannot be loved, because it is disharmonious with yourself.

Ashramite: And it is not easy to distinguish it and understand it, as different from selfish love.

Swamiji: It is difficult to understand it, because it is a deep psychological subject. We are like hypnotised persons. A person who is hypnotised cannot know that he is working under the pressure of some other will. The moment he knows that, he ceases to be hypnotised. But as long as he is under the spell of that influence, he thinks he is acting of his own will. When you hypnotise a patient and ask him, "Why are you walking this way?" he will give some reason. But the reason is only a concocted reason; he is pressurised from within by some urge of which he has no knowledge. Do you know that you are walking on earth because of the pull of gravitation? But you say, "Who is pulling me? I walk of my own will." It is not due to your will. If the gravitational force were not there, you would fly in the air like this [*imitates flying.*] So it is not true that you have even the freedom to walk. Where is your freedom?

You don't know even this little pressure somebody puts on you. They say that if the sun didn't exert its upward pull, you would be stuck to the ground so much that you could not even move! And if the earth did not pull you down, you would be flying in the air! So the two forces are pulling in such a proportionate way that you are walking smoothly on the earth. Nobody is aware that such is the fact. You think you are free and go walking, swinging your arms as though you were the master of it all. But it is these two other masters who are controlling you!

“There are more things in heaven and earth than your philosophy dreams of,” says Shakespeare. All our philosophy is a husk compared to these mysteries. And if we think of it, it will crack our heads. They say that there are rays called cosmic rays which will melt even the earth if it penetrates deep enough—and that the whole universe is made up of the condensed form of this ray. It is light rays themselves that have condensed into matter we call the universe, and it is also your body. You are part of the nuclear dust. All these are tremendous and frightening truths which will simply take us out of our wits. You cannot exist at all without the operation of these forces because they hold your personality like the threads constituting the cloth. You pull out the threads, the cloth also goes. So is this. All these forces constitute the universe, and if they are withdrawn, the whole universe will vanish into thin air and disappear.

Ashramite: Is this the final dissolution?

Swamiji: Yes. But they won't withdraw because of the assertion of your personal ego, your individuality. One day they will withdraw, and that is when liberation takes place. At that time, all the forces are withdrawn into their sources. They say that the power of seeing

goes to the Sun, the power of hearing to the Dikh Devatas, the power of the ego to Rudra, the power of the *chitta* to Vishnu, the power of the body to the earth, and the power of water principle to water. Everything goes to its original source. And you cease to be anymore, and become the cosmos. That is called freedom, liberation. But that cannot take place as long as you are in the physical body. Since there is great pleasure in this body, we don't want to get out of it. And that dismantling of this body, dismantling the warp and woof of the body, will not take place in hundreds of births unless you will it and wish it here and now. It is like a house you have built, and the entire structure has to be thrown down, and the effect has to go to the cause. It is not so simple (*laughs.*) You cannot do a few asanas and reach God. Asanas are good, but they are not sufficient for the purpose on hand (*laughs.*) God is not satisfied easily like that (*laughs.*) I cannot satisfy you unless I understand what you are made of. Even so, unless you understand Him, you cannot please Him. If I know your psychology, only then you are in my pocket. So is the case with God. Unless you know what He is made of, you cannot approach Him and satisfy Him. You may offer Him a banana, a little sugar candy in the form of asanas, austerities, etc. You cannot please Him so easily like that. He does not want bananas, because He is not made of bananas (*all laugh, and so does Swamiji*). It is like a baby trying to satisfy you. It puts a toy on your head for your headache. You laugh and say let it go! (*Laughs loudly.*) After all, it is a child, and even if it has no meaning, it shows love.

Sometimes the sun is worshipped by waving the camphor light to it, as if the sun is going to be illuminated. But your feeling in the act is appreciated.

Ashramite: It is not to illuminate it, Swamiji. It is to pray that he burns up...

Swamiji: No, no. you are not thinking of all that. You are showing some affection or fear through that act—not that you think of illuminating the sun. Sometimes when a guest comes you offer him a cup of tea, though it does not mean that he wants it. You show your concern for him, and your gesture is appreciated. God also knows that it is out of your simplicity that you do so. That is why Lord Krishna says, even a leaf is enough. He does not mean ‘leaf’, but your sentiment is understood. His meaning is “You have got love for Me, I understand it, and you are expressing it with a leaf. Not that I want a leaf. But in your mind there is love for me.”

Ashramite: Just as we offer laddus for Gurudev at Samadhi Mandir.

Swamiji: Yes! Yes!

A Visitor: When we start loving spiritual life, the world distracts us. Why should it do so?

Swamiji: [*joking*] Are you saying that God has made a blunder in creating the world? That is what it amounts to. You are telling God, “I want you only, and why have you created the world?”

Vis.: Yes! Yes!

Swamiji: God will tell you, “My dear man, I have created nothing. I am a simple man, and unnecessarily you are blaming Me for the things I have not done.” (*peals of laughter from the gathering and from Swamiji.*) God has not created the world. You see, this chair I am sitting on is made of fine electromagnetic waves. But there is no such thing as a chair from the point of view of physics. Can you say that the electrons have manufactured this chair?

A Visitor: Their perfect order is distributed into this form of chair.

Swamiji: They are in perfect order even as this chair. If

you see the chair with a powerful microscope, you will not see a chair there. So it does not mean that the chair has been created. It doesn't exist. If it is really there, you must be able to see it even with the microscope. Your imputation that God has created the world is like that. He has not created the world even as the atoms have not created the chair. As I said, God is sitting always as He was. God has done nothing, but you unnecessarily say He has done this and that. So there is some defect in the perception of the man who says God has created the world. Do you understand?

Visitor: That is what He has done, given a defective perception?

Swamiji: There is no He. You are part of Him, and you are blaming somebody of whom you are yourself a part. Your doubts arise because you are not seeing things properly. Can you say, "When I think of God, my mind rises to God?" If it does, then you will be able to do your official work in the world, and not feel you are debarred from it. Your spiritual life will not be contradictory to your official life. Once you see that point better, you can work better. Now, because you are not seeing clearly, you are fumbling. You come in to conflict because you do not see things in their right context. When you see things clearly, no conflict arises and your efficiency increases. When you do meditation, you will do more work, instead of allowing meditation to prevent you from doing work. Will you say that Lord Krishna did not meditate or that He did less work than you?

Another Ashramite: Why is the spiritual path so difficult? What makes it so?

Swamiji: The emotions and sentiments don't go hand in hand with logic and intellect of mankind. Your logic may impel you and force you in the direction of an aspirant. But the sentiments, which are human and sometimes

subhuman, are against this logic of the intellect, and there is conflict in one's conception. All this is very well known to people such as Lamas and Jesus. Though very rare, there are a few souls that can understand this mystery. It is not easy to understand it. It is a mystery, and it is a mystery because it is not accessible to human understanding. It is not like two and two make four. We are in a realm where two and two do not make four. If something is said which is not acceptable to the human mathematical mind and the social way of thinking, nobody accepts it. We are immersed in the social decorum and social norm of thought, and we want to press even God into that norm, and if He is not amenable to that norm of our social way of thinking, we are not prepared to accept that God.

So we must be clear what it is that we are asking for. Be prepared to get to such extremes as sacrificing your ego and your social relationships and accepted social norms, as this may be demanded of you at some stage of your progress. You are unable to go there because the logic and arithmetic there are quite different; so we arrive at a conflict. We cannot displease the world. We cannot displease God either. We are trying to please God by pleasing the world also, at one and the same time. But it so happens that they are not in harmony with each other. Jesus said that God and Mammon cannot be pleased at the same time. Mammon is the extrovert mind which moves towards objects of the senses. It does not mean gold merely; it is only a symbol of the peculiar extrovert way of thinking, which directs itself towards sense objects and senses, including everything and anything that you see with your eyes or think of in the mind. Man is accustomed to think only in terms of objects which include society, which include everything that you regard as worthwhile and valuable in this life.

But the value that you are unconsciously or subconsciously seeing as the special ideal is something transcendent, which is a very significant word. It simply oversteps the limits of mathematics and human logic where your calculations do not hold good. Parallel lines may meet, the three angles of a triangle may not be equal to two right angles. All this is absurd from the human point of view. But that is the truth in some other realm. You may call it the multi-dimension or whatever it is, and that is what you are exactly asking for. You have got yet another prejudice which compels you to think in terms of the world of objects. You cannot forget it, because you are born into it. I am giving you an idea of how hard it is to find a person who can teach you, and even if you find such a person, how difficult it is to assimilate into your personality what is taught. It is impossible—almost impossible. After considering these difficulties in the way, if you are prepared and ready to go through the ordeal, I think there is no problem. But one cannot easily enter in and get into it. You have to crush your ego and demolish all your ordinary norms of thinking. It is almost like death itself. It is like dying to empirical life.

There are two kinds of prejudices; social and personal. We think in terms of society, and also in terms of personality. We cannot get out of this twin situation. What will happen to this body? And what will people say about me? You are frightened about these. These two difficulties have to be overcome with great caution. And the caution you have to exercise in this path is all the problem there is. That is the subtlety of the path. You should not go to any extreme. You have to seize the golden mean in such a manner, with such concentration and caution, that you don't get kicks from either side. Go slowly, causing displeasure neither to your body nor to the outside society, nor to God. You are to please

everything by harmonising everything. The most difficult experience one has is that of being in harmony with everything. When you are in harmony with one thing, see that you are not in disharmony with another thing. So go very slowly and cautiously, and if even you take only one step, see that it is a firm step so that you do not regret it afterwards. It takes time, patience and force of will, coupled with understanding.

Aurobindo was a great man—you must have heard of him. Someone at his deathbed asked “Master, what is your message to the world”? He said, “It seems that the world is not ready for it.” Maybe it is true in some sense because the world is ready for what is pleasant, while it isn’t ready for any unpleasant truth. It doesn’t want it and says let us wait [*laughs.*] How can we forget that we are so-and-so, that we belong to this country or that country? How can we forget all these things? It is not easy to give up these ideas. But how wrong these ideas are! It is not ultimately true that you are a man, a woman, Western, Eastern, tall or short. These are all gross, empirical ways of thinking, and they are not ultimately true in the evaluation of things. Yet these are such hardboiled thoughts that we cannot easily get rid of them, especially when we try to get out of the personal and step into the realm of the impersonal. Then it is that you realise your status as a speck in the universal setup. You are not a man or a woman, not even a human being; you are a speck of dust, a drop in the ocean of Spirit, or in the ocean of the Universal, which cannot have gender and nationality. It cannot be designated in any way whatsoever. When such connection enters your very being, I think you will enter the path of the Spirit. Then alone the actual progress starts. Till that time you are only struggling against the current, trying to swim against it.

UNDATED-4: THE LORD'S LILA—WHAT IS IT?

An Ashramite: What is *lila* (as we see in the war of Kurukshetra)?

Swamiji: What we cannot understand we simply call *lila*.

Ashramite: Can we say that it is the cause and effect of the Cosmic in the *lilas* because in Lord Krishna's life we discern *lilas*. He never directly does anything; He always causes things to be done.

Swamiji: He directly does also.

Ashramite: Which one?

Swamiji: Perhaps His directions produce the feeling that He is causing them. When I push you and you fall on somebody, it does not mean that you have done something. I make you fall on that person. But if you are not conscious that I pushed you, you think you have done it yourself. Ultimately, He only does.

Ashramite: He does not want an instrument to do it.

Swamiji: And when you are not aware that you have done it, you say He has caused it or caused it to be done by somebody else.

Ashramite: It was even so in the case of the man who was led by Lord Krishna into the cave so that the sleeping man, when waking up from slumber, would see him and the former would, by the power of the latter, be burnt up.

Swamiji: That man was not led by him into the cave; he was forced to go there on his own accord by the will of Krishna, and that man thought he went on his own accord like the hypnotised man not knowing that he was hypnotised.

Ashramite: No. Swamiji seems to think that I am bringing down God's capacity to cause...

Swamiji: God does not cause anything to be done through an instrument because He has no instrument outside Him.

Ashramite: Then, why does Krishna tell Arjuna, “Be my instrument”?

Swamiji: He is not Arjuna for God. Arjuna is God’s own limbs working. But from your point of view it is Arjuna. Sri Krishna simply showed the Cosmic Form, and Arjuna vanished in it in one second. Krishna said, “I have done everything Myself. Now, from your point of view, let it be that you do it, as it were, though already what has to be done has been done.” The future has taken place in the present itself because He has no time. For you, the war has not taken place. For Him, it has already taken place and the matter is over. But still, from your point of view, it is a future. In Eternity, there is no future. What you are going to have or what process you are going to undergo in the future has already taken place in the Eternal Mind. So it is not a future for it. What has not taken place for you has already taken place there.

Ashramite: But except in the case of Sisupala, He does not war with anyone. And he always...causes wars.

Swamiji: This is all your way of looking at it.

Ashramite: [*Bursting into laughter*] Yes, that is true.

Swamiji: But it may not be correct. He might have willed it.

Ashramite: I am not objecting to it. I am only asking if it is the correct interpretation.

Swamiji: He has no instrument and He does everything Himself from His point of view. But from your point of view, He has done it through somebody.

Ashramite: Lord Krishna was in the human form only, when he performed all His *lilas*.

Swamiji: No no.... If you think of Krishna as a human

being, you are thinking wrongly. He said, "Foolish to think that I am a human being." It is mentioned there in the Bhagavad Gita: *anjananti ma moodha manusham...* "Not knowing Me really, if you think that I am a human being..." He has made that point there.

Ashramite: Even when He shows Himself, He conceals His *prabhava*.

Swamiji: He says, "You have not understood Me."

Visitor: He is known as *kapata nataka sutradhara*.

Swamiji: You have not understood Him. Because He has concealed Himself, perhaps you are not able to understand Him still.

Visitor: Yes, He will never allow you to understand Him. Not that you cannot understand. In that also He is *kapata nataka sutradhara*.

Ashramite: But what is the idea in appearing like that? He could have retained His *prabhava*?

Swamiji: Why are you commanding Him like that? [*Laughter all round.*] The moment you command Him, He ceases to be free. But He is free [*laughs*].

Ashramite: It is not that we are commanding Him. We are only trying to understand Him.

Swamiji: When you understand Him, you become Him, eh?

Ashramite: Where is the harm in trying...?

Swamiji: There are the Gopis. They became Krishna when they behaved like Him.

Ashramite: They never bothered to understand...

Swamiji: They played flute like this [*imitates*]. They took broomstick and played like this [*laughter all around*], and somebody killed Putana. The Gopis are doing that. Another Gopi killed Bakasura. They were playing all His drama because they became one with

Him.

Another Ashramite: Mira also behaved like that.

First Ashramite: Mira became one with Him. What I am saying is: Why does He conceal His cosmic personality and reveal it only occasionally?

Second Ashramite: Even to Arjuna, He did not reveal it always. Arjuna could not have contained it.

Swamiji: "Everything is in Me and nothing is in Me," He said. "And yet everything is in Me, look at my wonder. Look at this great yoga of mine!" Now what is His yoga? Hatha Yoga? Or what is it? He said, "*Pasya-me yoga maiswaryam.*" Look at my yoga. What is the yoga He is telling about? Raja Yoga? Hatha Yoga?

Second Ashramite: That is what I was saying. Though it may not be intellectually understandable for us, it is quite possible for God to be the world also simultaneously.

Swamiji: But He is not calling it the world at that time. He Himself is that. It is something He is doing within Himself. Even the process of His doing is Himself.

First Ashramite: Why does He conceal it from us?

Swamiji: He never concealed it. Even that you can call His *lila*, His way of concealing it. Why did He vanish from the Gopis for a few minutes?

Ashramite: They say that *viraha* is the highest state...

Swamiji: Well, that is why He is doing it for you so that you may create *viraha* in you. He is troubling you very much. Otherwise, why will He do it, unless He wants you?

Ashramite: No. I am saying why does He...?

Swamiji: Only to create *viraha* in you. Otherwise, if you understand Him, what *viraha* is there? Then you will keep quiet and sleep very well because you understand

Him very well. You won't aspire for Him.

Ashramite: No, no. There must be some difficulties in revealing your inherent nature.

Swamiji: He has no difficulty. What difficulty has He?

Ashramite: The world. Why does not He reveal Himself? The world is not ready for Him? Or they will injure Him?

Swamiji: What is the difficulty for a child to keep quiet without being naughty? It is building a mud house and playing with it. God is looking at us like a child. He builds a house and plays with it. What is the harm in keeping quiet? Why does He not keep quiet?

Ashramite: For 114 years He did this; for everything...

Swamiji: I am not talking of time limit, but of facts. Why does He create the world? This is what you have been asking in a sense, again and again, and putting various questions. This is your question, isn't it? The very same thing you are putting in difficult words whenever you ask, "Why is God doing something? Why has He created the world?" Why did He create the world? You tell me that first. Then I will answer other questions.

Ashramite: I am not bothered about it.

Swamiji: *[laughing]*. The questions are all interrelated. When you cannot ask one why, you cannot ask another why also. Otherwise, you should not ask why at all. You are trying to subject Him to some logical analysis.

Ashramite: You must understand why I am asking.

Swamiji: That is called logical analysis. Again you are coming to the same point. You are trying to understand through the intellect, through logic. First of all, by cutting Him off from you, you have done it already. You have already separated yourself from Him and then put this question, which is why it is not permissible. You have taken Him as an outsider, and then put questions

about Him. Otherwise, why this question? How does it arise if He is not outside you? You are judging Him as a person judging another person. The moment you become an organic entity involved in Him, you will never speak. You will say, "Well, I understand everything." Because you know yourself, you do not put questions to your own self.

Ashramite: I can speak of Him as Him only because...

Swamiji: What Him? You have separated yourself from Him. He will never answer questions about Himself. You don't put questions about yourself, such as "Why am I asking you?" You don't ask me this question. Or why do I put questions? You have got a justification for your own point of view. You have no doubt about the validity or the justifiability of your own questions because you are one with your question. But you can't give so much concession in respect of a thing outside you. The whole problem is of a dichotomy between the subject and the object, as philosophers tell us, which is the trouble with everything, down to the atom. No scientist can understand the world even today, because he sees the world outside him. No philosopher can understand, because he thinks God is outside him. Creation is outside him, etc., etc. And no sadhaka can understand God's ways, because he thinks God is outside him, that God is a future being, or transcendent, or whatever it is.

Ashramite: As a child He is never concealing..

Swamiji: Again you are putting the same question. Who told you He is concealing Himself? It is your own interpretation, and you are justifying your interpretation. I am saying He is not concealing Himself.

Ashramite: I want to know the secret. And you are not telling me that, Swamiji?

Swamiji: *[laughs]* Why should you say that He is concealing? Because it is not clear to your mind, you are

saying He is concealing.

Ashramite: He takes efforts to see that it is not clear to my mind.

Swamiji: He says, "I never do anything." [*Quotes the verse "Na"*] "I neither give anything nor take anything, nor am I concerned with your merits and demerits."

Ashramite: But He has given all authority to Maya. It is the same as He is doing it.

Swamiji: Again you have brought in another thing for the same question [*laughs.*]

Ashramite: He tells Arjuna, "This is your duty. Go and do it."

Ashramite: And yet He says, "I take birth for punishing the wicked..." And then He says, "I do nothing..."

Ashramite: He is very shy!

Swamiji: This is another, a greater glory you are giving to Him (*laughs*). The highest credit that you can give Him is that He is the greatest liar. To say, "I create the world without creating it," is the greatest lie He is telling. Isn't it? Eh?

Ashramite: But does He say that?

Swamiji: Well, you see, it looks like that.

Ashramite: He tells lies which are truths, and speaks truths that are lies! [*Hearty laugh all around.*]

Swamiji: This is the devotee who speaks.

Second **Ashramite:** Devotees and non-devotees, both speak like this.

Swamiji: What you are doing is *ninda stuti*. "You fellow, you think you know everything. You don't know your own father!" This is what a devotee cries out. "When you don't know your own father, how do you say you are omniscient. I deny this," he said.

Ashramite: Yes, *ninda stuti*.

Swamiji: “You fellow,” one man cried, “when Buddhists denied your existence, I established you, and you have no pity on me. You are not giving me a morsel of food.” He wrote a book in Sanskrit, called Kusumanjali. He wrote a book in which he established the existence of God on various grounds, against Buddhists’ denial. But he was a poverty-stricken Brahmin. He had no food to eat. He just cried, “I established your existence when the Buddhists completely denied your existence. And see what I get for it!” This is all devotion. Devotion takes various forms, which are inscrutable. Devotion is as inscrutable as God Himself. And the devotee also becomes as inscrutable. Afterwards he is not in any way less than God. And they say that the devotee becomes so great that he simply pockets God afterwards! God starts dancing to his tune behind him. What do you say for this? If he speaks, then God speaks—only then.

Ashramite: God becomes afraid of him!

Swamiji: Yes, yes. “I am *Bhakta-paradhina*.” “I am helpless,” Narayana told Durvasa. “I cannot do anything.” Narayana said that He cannot do anything. When Durvasa says, “Withdraw your Chakra”, He says, “I never did anything. Don’t insult Me like this. I am helpless in this matter. I am *Bhakta-paradhina*.” Metaphysical philosophy can’t explain all this. There is a transcendent truth in it. There is something transcendent which overcomes the limits of intellect, and surpasses in every way, and takes you to the realm where you are flooded with what you may call devotion, or bliss or *ananda*, or whatever you call it. You get flooded with it, and your philosophy goes into thin air. It demonstrates the limitations of philosophy, ultimately. When philosophy has known its own limits, then it has transcended itself. But if it thinks itself to be powerful and proud, then it won’t understand anything. Reason is

helpful only to the extent that it can tell you where its limits are. When it loses its own limits, it has become humble at once, and then you are taken by some other force. Limitations of reason must be realized, and reason helps you understand its own limitations. When scientists like Einstein have realised the limitations of science itself, they are the greatest scientists. They have understood the limitations of science and know why it is limited, and because they know the limitations of science, they are more than mere scientists. They are almost mystics. When you know the reason why you cannot understand a thing, you have understood it to some extent (*laughs.*)

Ashramite: You have got your answer! Is that what Swamiji means?

Swamiji: Because you must be knowing why you have not understood it. That is the reason. That is wisdom. There is some flaw in the way of your thinking itself, and you understood the flaw. Then you have overcome that flaw immediately, you have transcended it and gone to another realm beyond the human level. There you become a real devotee.

Ashramite: Beyond reason...

Swamiji: No, transcend it. Then you are possessed by a force and caretaking element which is superhuman. Then it is that you become a real instrument of God. You are crying about instrumentality. The real instrument you become at that time when you have completely overstepped the limits of your own capacity, and you know that you have no capacity except that you have become a humble instrument of a Power which is completely in charge of you. This is what the devotees realised. And they are the most carefree people, the most helpless, the most happy, and there is no botheration at all for them.

Ashramite: Is it not called intuitive perception?

Swamiji: Well, call it whatever you like. They go beyond your intuitive and logical and scientific understanding, and your social law. They behave like fools and idiots, and you cannot understand them. They have no ethical or moral principle, nothing of the kind. Their law is quite different.

Ashramite: Swamiji, in the Gita they say that knowledge is higher than...

Swamiji: Well, that knowledge is of no use. That knowledge is not your book-knowledge—no Plato, Kant or Hegel. It is not that knowledge.

Ashramite: It is not...

Swamiji: Knowledge is greater than devotion. That knowledge is interpreted in one way. Devotion is greater than knowledge. You have to interpret it in another way. And yoga is the greatest. He is saying karma is the greatest, yoga is the greatest, knowledge is the greatest, bhakti is the greatest—in different places. But He puts it in different contexts, and they appear greatest at that time.

Visitor: Gita has 700 slokas, and Vyasa has written all the 700, or was it composed by three different authors, as some say?

Swamiji: A 'somebody' cannot say that. If Vyasa has written the Mahabharata, he has written the 700 slokas also. If you think he has not written the whole Mahabharata, then you can omit some. If he has not written it, who else has? Nobody else. Isn't it? Who is that somebody, otherwise? "Sanjaya said..." Sanjaya himself could not have written that sentence.

Visitor: And it takes hours to recite the slokas.

Swamiji: No, no. He has not recited them. He was not singing the slokas. He only spoke as He spoke. The poet

wrote it in slokas. He spoke ordinary language, like 'get up'. But when you sing music [*Here Swamiji puts the words 'get up' into a musical and literally sang: 'G.....e.....t.....u.....p' to the hilarious delight of all present, and he himself rejoiced when his singing was over.*] But Vyasa did not say like that. They say he took a few minutes, not hours. We do not know exactly. Some say it was a conversation for 4 hours and some say it was 48 minutes, etc. There are various versions. Anyhow, there was sufficient time. They were not in a hurry to attack because after the Gita was over, war did not take place suddenly. Yudhisthira had something to say, and he went and prostrated before all people, and something took place.

Question: What is dharma and what is *rita*?

Swamiji: The effect of *rita* is said to be the dharma of the cosmos. '*Rita*' is cosmic law, order of things... Says the Rig Veda [*Swamiji recited it in the exact orthodox cadence in which it is meant to be recited.*] It manifests itself as the first order of things. That is the dharma of the universe. The law which is operating in the universe is called the *rita*. And the basis for it is the Absolute. That is the *satya*.

Sadhak Disciple: Swamiji, '*Namaha*' is said to be self-surrender. How does it mean so? Does the word mean that?

Swamiji: No, the word does not mean that, but that's its significance! When you say *Namaha*, at that time you are in union with and united to the deity you say *Namaha* to.

UNDATED-5

A Visitor: What is Truth, Swamiji?

Swamiji: Jesus was asked, what is Truth? There was no time for him to answer it. Before he could answer, he was condemned to be crucified. Truth—the Ultimate Reality—is that which cannot be contradicted. That is what they call the Absolute. When you say the Absolute, you mean it is not related to something else. And it can't be defined by characteristics other than itself. You can't say, it is like this... When you say it is like this, you are referring to something else in comparison. And you can't. When you say you are so-and-so's son, you are defining yourself in terms of somebody else. But you have no definition of your own. But THAT is not like that. You cannot define It in terms of somebody else, because that somebody else also is within It—not outside It.

Visitor: It may mean limiting it.

Swamiji: Yes, yes, denying it almost. Defining it is denying it, they say. All determination is a negation. Definition is determination; determination is negation, almost so in the ultimate sense.

Visitor: In defining the soul, we say I am not the body, I am not the mind, I am the knowledge and the Brahman of this knowledge—why can't it be said like this? I am this also and that also instead of not this, not this!

Swamiji: It means the same thing. They are not different statements. When you say "I am not this", what is it that you are denying? You are denying something. Isn't it? What are you denying?

Visitor: I am not this body, I am not this mind...

Swamiji: Why do you deny the body when you say it is a part of Brahman?

Visitor: That's what I am asking.

Swamiji: There's a point in it. It is not so simple as you say. There's a point in that denial also. Your idea that something is outside is denied. Even the idea of the body is the idea of externality, the popular man's idea of something external, and you deny everything external. And together with this, it is not denying the body as such but as the externalised existence of it. When it is non-externalised, it ceases to be the body. This is as good as denying it, so that you are actually including it. To say that you are everything is the same as saying you're nothing. They are not two different things, for to say it is everything, you must be able to comprehend that state. You can't conceive everything that statement asks you to, and therefore such statements have no meaning. The moment you say "everything", you have some preconceived idea about it, that it is the totality of many things, or something like that. Even the idea of totality can't be there unless you have some idea of space, etc., and even the idea of space is not permitted because it is an idea of externality. So ultimately you are reducing yourself to the same predicament.

There are two methods, the Yoga Vasistha mentions: either you affirm that you are nothing or affirm that you are everything, but don't affirm that you are something. That, it says, is the only cause of bondage. But nobody can affirm like that. You cannot say you are nothing because you have got an element of existence which affirms itself, and it can't deny itself. It is very hard to deny anything when it does exist. Nor can you include everything in yourself. There are many problems in it. You think over it, and you will see that the idea of your individuality, and of everything, is different from yourself. It is so inveterate that you can't say you are a cobra, you are a frog, and the like. You may say that in a linguistic manner, but actually the feelings will not

permit such an affirmation of universality unless you are a supernormal person. You can't affirm a thing which belongs to a state of reality in which you are not at present. Do you understand? "I am the President of India." What is the use of affirming this? You are not in that set of circumstances that can give meaning to this affirmation, and so on. Similarly, you are not in that level of consciousness where universal affirmations, or such an affirmation, can be made. It is a particular level. You may become the President of India, there's no objection to that, but at present that affirmation is irrelevant. And so if you make a statement, it is but a grammatical sentence, there is no correlation of reality behind it. Likewise, if you say "I am Brahman", you must be fit to conceive such an idea, then it will have meaning, for it will actually be from that level of your life that you speak. Otherwise, it will merely be a grammatical statement that you make. It has a subject and an object and a predicate, but no practical connotation. So you should never make affirmations beyond your capacity. Your capacity is comprehensive in the present level of experience, which are good as far as they go. But you must be sure whether any statement you make is fit for that state you are in—whether the prescription is fit for your ailment or not, then only the next question arises.

Visitor: When the sun is rising over one half of the world, that half is illumined but the other half is in darkness. So when you say 'illumined intellect' that is...

Swamiji: It is not illumined intellect if it is only partially illumined. You don't mean that half the intellect is in darkness?

Visitor: Yes, that's what I am coming to. Are we to take it as a sort of a transparent layer which gets illumined or...?

Swamiji: It depends upon your concept of the intellect. If you think that intellect is a material substance, naturally you will give it a shape. Square, round, tall, short, thick or thin, transparent or opaque or whatever it is—you've to add all these adjectives to your definition of it. What is your definition of intellect? Is it made of matter? If so, what is its size? All these questions arise.

Visitor: This is only putting it academically. What is intellect, what is intelligence?

Swamiji: Intelligence is that which illumines the intellect. It is the energy that makes the intellect shine in respect of itself as well as in respect of others. The electric energy is the source of the illumination of the bulb. The bulb you can say is intellect. It is *jada*—lifeless. It has no consciousness. It can't shine on its own, just as that the bulb can't shine unless the power is charged into it. Here the illuminating power is the intelligence.

Visitor: When, for example, you say intellectual curiosity, what is that?

Swamiji: That is a psychological state.

Visitor: It has nothing to do with this question of an illumined intellect?

Swamiji: The intellect has its own functions, and one of its functions is 'curiosity'. It understands, it doubts, it is curious. Curiosity is eagerness to know something. And that is a condition.

An Ashramite: It has to be shunned.

Swamiji: Why do you shun it? I have a curiosity to know the Absolute. I will not shun that idea! Why should I?

Visitor: When you put the question in order to know the transcendent, we do not call it curiosity. Otherwise,

don't put questions out of mere curiosity, we say.

Swamiji: That is so. Every question is not transcendent. When you put a question which can't be answered at the present level of your understanding, it is called transcendental, and you should not put such a question. But curiosity is permissible in certain circumstances. It becomes a curiosity when the answer cannot help you in any practical way and is irrelevant or meaningless. When it is out of a practical desire which can be implemented, you need not call it curiosity, you can call it a natural aspiration for understanding. But when it is impractical, you call it curiosity, for then it becomes unnecessarily asking about something you can't understand.

Ashramite: But it is the urge to evolve—curiosity?

Swamiji: No. no. Curiosity is a desire which can't be implemented—that is what his meaning is. Otherwise, you don't shun it.

Visitor: Is it *chitta*, the subconscious? The subconscious or the unconscious? You can call it both put together. All of them have the same function. But...

Swamiji: No. They do not carry out the same functions. The *chitta* remembers—memory is the function of the *chitta*. Understanding is the function of the intellect. Thinking and doubting are the functions of the mind.

Visitor: Desiring also?

Swamiji: Yes, desiring is also a function of the mind.

Visitor: Is mind consciousness?

Swamiji: Consciousness is the background of the function of all psychic apparatus. It is the light behind the total consciousness of the psyche.

Visitor: Can it also be called...

Swamiji: It is called the Atman. What you call the

Atman is the Supreme.

Visitor: Mind is Atman?

Swamiji: No, mind is only the instrument of the Atman.

Visitor: Is consciousness the Atman?

Swamiji: Yes, yes. That's how we define it for all practical purposes.

Visitor: Then what are the functions of the mind?

Swamiji: Thinking and doubting.

Visitor: Mind is *jada*, 'unconscious' matter?

Swamiji: It is like a mirror. Does the mirror shine or not? It can't shine itself. But it shines when the light falls on it.

So the mind can't think if it does not have the consciousness of the Atman behind it. It reflects the consciousness of the Atman; it shines as if it were its own light.

Visitor: Like the Atman?

Swamiji: Yes, yes. It behaves like a glass when the light passes through the glass. You can't see the glass, it is so transparent. But it is still there as a material substance.

Visitor: Then *chitta* is the unconscious?

Swamiji: The subconscious and unconscious have to be combined. It has the character of unconsciousness, and it has the character of the subconscious also. They work in different ways at different times. It is a total mass which works in different ways under different types of pressure. It is a big conglomeration. They are only names for the different functions of your individual way of thinking. And it includes understanding, discrimination, doubting, etc., etc.—hundreds of things.

Visitor: Judgement is the function of—?

Swamiji: The intellect. '*Buddhi*' is the Sanskrit word and 'intellect' is its English equivalent.

UNDATED-6

A Visitor: There is a question on *brahmacharya*. We are asked to observe *brahmacharya*, for it reserves energy for higher purpose.

Swamiji: Yes.

Visitor: If everyone were to observe *brahmacharya*, how could you get a Sankara, a Ramanuja, a Krishnananda?

Swamiji: Why do you want a Sankara or a Ramanuja when everyone has gone to Brahman? [*laughter in the gathering.*] When everybody has gone to Brahman, why do you want a Sankara, a Ramanuja?

Visitor: For example...

Swamiji: Why do you want them? Why?

Visitor: For the ordinary men.

Swamiji: Where are the ordinary men when you have gone to Brahman?

An Ashramite: Such people as are in ignorance of Brahman and such matters.

Swamiji: Where are they? I cannot see them!

Visitor: They are the average men—*jivas*...

Swamiji: They do not exist before Brahman. So you are talking from a lower-level point of view and contradicting it by bringing in a question of the higher level, which is only curiosity. This is called curiosity—you bring about an impractical ideal in conjunction with the practical reality. No one should just use some words whose meaning is not clear to the mind. What is *brahmacharya*? You first define it to me. If you tell me what you mean by it, then I will tell you if I have got some commentary on it.

Visitor: Preservation of that fluid...

Swamiji: Why do you want to preserve it? What for? What is your purpose, the higher purpose? Tell me.

Visitor: For God-realisation.

Swamiji: How do you get realisation by the preservation of it? What connection does it have with realisation?

Visitor: That is what I want to know.

Swamiji: So everything is doubtful. You are not clear. So you are putting doubts without knowing their meaning yourself. Unless the thoughts are clear from bottom to top, you can't proceed along any line. It may be *brahmacharya*, it may be cooking food. Even in cooking, the entire process of cooking you must first know, from beginning to end. But if doubt comes to the mind: Is this the method or is it some kind of a crochet in the minds of people? The method should be very clear to you, the entire scientific basis—in such and such a manner, in such and such a way. Then you will not put questions or doubts, and will be very clear on everything about it. Your question is like asking if everybody in the world should take medicine or not. You tell me, should everybody in the world take medicine? Everybody should take medicine only if everybody is sick. Again, should everybody take the same medicine? The answer is 'Yes' only if everybody has the same disease, but not otherwise.

Brahma means the Absolute, *carya* is the attitude. The attitude that the Absolute has is called *brahmacharya* ultimately. What is its attitude, tell me? What does it think? To have the same attitude as the Absolute is *brahmacharya*. Well, this is an ultimate definition. But there are lower grades of it also. To the extent this attitude can be implemented in your lower level of experience, to that extent you are a *brahmachari*. Even the first step is a necessary step.

Inasmuch as even the first step is the lowest and the most insignificant perhaps, it has also a connection with the highest step, and so it is a necessary step. And inasmuch as it is necessary for you, it is necessary for everybody else also. So why are you dragging in Sankara and others onto this level of these poor people on the very first step? If anything is good for you, why should it not be good for others? Under the same circumstances, of course. If the circumstances are similar for you and the other person, what is good for you is equally good for the other person also. If everybody realises Brahman, what will happen to the world? The world will go to the dogs? What an unfortunate thing! You are suggesting that everybody will die in one stroke. This is what you are thinking!

Visitor: It is good if all people go to God. It is better if everybody doesn't go! Somebody should be there to take care of the world! The Bhagavad Gita says that perhaps out of the millions, a few try to and out of the few, perhaps one achieves God-realisation.

Swamiji: Dear friend, scriptures will not help us; our intellect also will not help us. You have to serve a Guru, they say. These difficulties arise in our mind because we don't serve a Guru. Now we don't live under a Guru. And we don't follow the advice of a Guru.

You have no question arising in your mind. At that time, you simply do what the Guru says. You don't ask him why you should do all that. What he says you do, but if he says don't do this, you don't do this. Because you can't use your intellect for everything just like that. Now you started using your intellect and you are in a turmoil. Nothing, no question can be answered like that. That is to be understood. Otherwise everybody can read a book or purchase all the Upanishads, read them and reach Brahman. How is that possible? The difficulties

become more and more insurmountable as you go further and further on the path of spirituality. In the beginning, the difficulties are simple and they don't look complicated. It looks as if it is a simple path. But afterwards, when the difficulties become so very great and nebulous and incapable of comprehension, you require personal guidance. And therefore on this path, a Guru is absolutely essential, and you are not to worry your head with any question. If you have any difficulty, you simply say, "This is my difficulty at this time. What shall I do?" The Guru will say, "Do this" in one sentence. You do it. There ends the matter. If he tells you to go away or asks you to stay on, you do that. If he tells you to sleep, you sleep. If he says to have your food, you eat. If he tells you not to eat today, you should not ask him why. He has a better understanding of your difficulty than your own self. So you have no problem under a guide.

Sometimes even *japa* cannot be done. It is not that every day you do no *japa*. If your mind is upset and there is tremendous worry and tension, at that time you should not do *japa*. You will be thinking in your mind, "Because the scriptures enjoin do *japa*, I do *japa*. Guru may say at this time, "Please sleep. Take rest, go and sleep." So there is an exception to every rule.

Meditation or *japa* should bring satisfaction and clarity. That is the test of the correctness of your approach. You should not be depressed, moody, mentally troubled and in a state of assailing doubts; that would mean you have not followed the technique correctly.

It is not that we have only read from books that we are what we are today. Perhaps there are people who have read more books than I. That is different. If we, the disciples of Gurudev Swami Sivananda are alive today, it is because of him. Otherwise, we would have died of worry. For my part, I can never forget him. Master

Sivananda is my father and mother even today—not merely many years back, even today. It is not the Upanishads that help me, it is Gurudev. [*Swamiji's voice is choked perhaps with feeling and recollection.*] And I can clearly feel that he is helping us, even today. He is very kind. I have never seen a Guru like him, and I can never hope to see another like him. The greatest person I have ever seen in this world is he. And because we had the opportunity of living with him, we feel like crying sometimes now that he is no more with us. We weep (*actually sniffs*). Such a great person we have never seen—great in every respect. He was like a baby, child-like, and also like Brahma, Visnu, Siva, so high and God-like—whatever you can think of as the best and the greatest. What I am today is because I could stay with such a Guru, and am thus blessed by serving him as I would serve God. Thank you for your satsanga. Namaskar!

UNDATED-7

A Visitor: Should I search for a Guru?

Swamiji: Who told you about Gurus? How did this idea come into your mind?

Visitor: A certain friend told me that I must search for a Guru.

Swamiji: Take him as your Guru, for you believe that you should do what he has told you. Otherwise, you would not have listened to his words. If there was no need for a Guru in your mind, you would never have put this question. Unless you felt a need to receive guidance at such supernormal levels you would never have put this question: Should I or should I not search for a Guru? That this question has come into your mind means that you want a Guru. Your friend, who told you that you must search for a Guru, has cut the ground from under

his feet by saying you must look for a Guru. Guru is one who gives advice and guidance. Your friend has given you both, and has therefore become your Guru.

An Ashramite: What does ‘Trayi Marga Pradarshakaya’ mean? Is it what Gurudev used to call the ‘Trisul’?

Swamiji: You are mixing up the meanings. ‘Trayi Marga Pradarshakaya’ means the one who directs you on the path of the three Vedas—the Rig, Yajur and Sama. The ‘Trisul’ means, the three disciplines by which you control the mind: (1) the daily fixed routine, (2) the resolve you take to improve virtues and eradicate your weaknesses, (3) and spiritual diary. These three are like the three points of the Trisul.

Another **Ashramite:** The statement “Truth is that which has no contradiction” is unsound logic. The world then has to be negated, and that cannot be because God is the world.

Swamiji: So long as the two words, ‘world’ and ‘God’, are not used, this point is correct. Well, if you must have it, what you call the world is what I call God. There should be no duality. Hence, the statement that Truth is that which has no contradiction has to be accepted; it comes to that. Of course, Gaudapada also takes this view. And the Nasadiya Suktam also says “Does God know that He has created the world?” The idea is that the world is a part of God. He Himself is the world; it is like the sunlight, which is just a natural feature of the sun. The world, too, is a natural part of God, so to say.

Ashramite: Even in the state of the Final Deluge (*mahalaya*) the world exists in its involute form, and so cannot be neglected—no, not at all.

Swamiji: Despite this fact, Mula Prakriti is not independent of God. It is just one aspect of His, so we come back to the point that there is only One, not two. And Truth is that which has no contradiction to it. You

can have the world, provided you first state that God alone is.

Ashramite: If I see only God in idli and dosai, I cannot enjoy them! What is the point of my eating them?

Swamiji: When you see God, you would not want to eat idli and dosai as such. You will find the joy in God which you see in them. He is every kind of joy and all joy.

Ashramite: It sounds like that man who said that if there is no sense of hunger or sleep, he did not want to go there to God.

Swamiji: It is said that after taking Varaha Avatara, the Lord became so one with its own Avatara that he forgot His Real Self. And when Mahalakshmi said, "My Lord, we have been here so long and it is overdue for thyself to return to thy true divinity," the Lord is supposed to have asked, "Do we get this food we now live on there also?" And when the reply was negative, it is said, the Lord observed, "In that case, let us remain here only." If you want to enjoy idli and dosai, you do not need to see God in them.

Ashramite: The point I wish to get to is that the rishis have lived on dry leaves for their sustenance. Did they taste the dry leaves?

Swamiji: Their mind was not on what they ate; the biological need was satisfied by the act of eating the dry leaves. Their state of evolution was such that they could digest them. You cannot eat them and live. You will fall sick. There was no question of taste or of the mind contacting what it ate. You also become unconscious of the taste of the food or of what you eat when your mind is preoccupied with something else. You eat merely as an act that must be finished to be able to get on the next thing on hand.

Ashramite: Swami Chitbhananda has written a

commentary on Saint Thayumanavar's Guru in Tamil. In this, he says that *siddha purusas* who have attained such a *siddhi* as to be able to preserve their physical body for any number of years as they wish to, have an object in so preserving it. And to illustrate this, he cites the example of a saint, whose name was Tipilinga Swamigal. It is authentic information, he says, that this Swamigal lived as recently as only 500 years ago and had achieved this *kaya-kalpa-siddhi*. And this saint had preserved the physical body he was born with for over one hundred years. The object in view was that with this single body, without further merging with the Absolute, he could experience the terrors of *grabha vasha* and reduce them thereby to this single physical birth. It is not *prarabdha* that gives a physical body to the *jiva*. How can all the *prarabdhas* of the different births be experienced and exhausted in this single birth itself?

Swamiji: That also has been predetermined by his previous *prarabdha*. That he should strive for or that he should achieve success in thus exhausting all his *prarabdha* in the *kaya-kalpa-siddhi* of this same body—all this is due to his *prarabdha* only; it is this *prarabdha* that has determined that all this shall be so. You can keep this body for 500 years or so, for as long as you have willed it, and after that time only it will disintegrate. This is possible, but it needs a very highly developed evolution of the soul and hard work for years, after which you can attain *kaya-kalpa-siddhi*.

Now, as for the questions. Who gives this urge to acquire this *siddhi*? Who gives this urge to know God? Who told you to tread the spiritual path? Who gives the knowledge of God the Absolute? No one knows how all these come or from where. The great Sankaracharyat simply gives up further probe at this point and urges that it is God's Grace alone that can induce the urge, this knowledge that there is a higher knowledge [*quotes a*

Sanskrit line from Sankara]. If this were not so, everybody, even the buffalo, could have knowledge of the Absolute.

Ashramite: This grace which God gives, which He alone can give—how does He give it? Like the rain? As a boon? Or...

Swamiji: It is just His nature to shower grace on whom He wills, without any motive; not giving it so that you might return it. God is not mindful of your gratitude about it. It is His own being. God has no motive or discrimination. A blind man was going to the temple to see God. Someone told him, "Since you are blind and you cannot see, what is the use of your going to the temple for the Lord's *darshan*?" And that blind man replied, "I may not be able to see God, but He will see me!" That is how God behaves. He has no motive or discrimination. He showers His grace upon all, at all times, on all occasions.

Ashramite: Are we not now qualifying God with some characteristics—a mode? The Absolute has neither.

Swamiji: It is His nature.

Ashramite: If every bit is predetermined, as explained in the case of the *kaya-kalpa-siddhi prarabdha*, it gives one more leg for fatalism.

Swamiji: There is no such thing as fatalism. Fatalism is not a blind mechanical action or reaction. You are unable to understand the whole truth of it and are unable to analyse the cause and its effect—that's all. Every single aspiration or desire, every single impulse or urge leaves its impression upon your *prarabdha* which works accordingly. Nothing happens outside these impressions.

Ashramite: Swamiji often says that in God there is no dirt, no ugliness, no ugly sights. Is it because they

undergo a chemical change in God and so dirt and unsightly matter becomes pure and non-ugly?

Swamiji: Is it chemical change when the sun shines upon you? Is it undergoing a chemical change in its rays when it lights you? It is just its nature to shine, and give warmth and light. Everything is perfect in God. It is when you isolate a thing from God, isolate yourself from things, and see them in a variety of ways that all imperfections come in. There is nothing but perfection in God. And when you are with Him, your consciousness is that of God only, and you see also everything in its perfection. Everything becomes yours when you enter God. There is nothing outside you. At that stage of God-consciousness, nothing exists but yourself. And what is samadhi? You push people and objects outside your being, and then become filled with criticisms of them. People whom you consider your own are always good in your eyes. It is people whom you consider outside you that you find so much to blame for. Nothing is outside God, and nothing is dirty or ugly in Him. Gurudev never found in anyone anything bad. A certain man abused Gurudev, and it made the General Secretary very angry. So he reported the matter to Gurudev, who merely remarked, "The poor man is angry. Take some *badam* and milk to him." The General Secretary again got annoyed and grumbled that Swamiji always spoilt people like this. But the *badam* and milk were given to the man who abused Gurudev. The man was thunderstruck. That act of Gurudev truly made him repent, and he turned a new leaf in his life. That is what is called seeing everyone in yourself and not as external to you. Sivananda Maharaj thus answered a question, saying his disciples should see everyone with equal vision.

What do you understand by 'equal vision'?

Ashramite: The Bhagavad Gita says you must look upon a dog and a Brahmin with the same eye.

Swamiji: What does it mean? The elephant eats grass, cows eat straw. Will you feed the Brahmin with grass and straw because you must see him as you do the animals? Seeing all this with equal vision means seeing everyone in and as your own self, not externally as 'the other', as an 'outsider'. And I told you how Gurudev gave *badam* and milk to the man who abused him merely because that man was angry and so abused Gurudev. That is what is called seeing everyone with the same eyes. A disciple should just be guided by the Guru. If he understands and obeys, well and good. If there is no understanding, at least he should obey, in the knowledge that the Guru has told him why he should or should not do a thing, because the Guru understands why he is instructing him in that way even if the Guru has not told the disciple of it, the why of it. Gurudev, Swami Sivananda, has written a poem; in the form of that poem he has said all that which he would call being his disciple would mean. The book is in the library. And Gurudev's poems are much better than his other writings, though some may seem to have been written in a light vein. The disciple should be concerned with only what he is told. This is what Jesus said, "Tomorrow's will be told tomorrow." Now we are concerned with the today, the present. Now I work or chat with you all as my way to God.

Ashramite: When a person fights for justice and gets angry at injustice, it is called righteous anger and, as such, is justifiable. Still, it is not permitted for a seeker. Why?

Swamiji: To follow a principle is not getting attached to the principle. A principle is not an attachment. It is only when you get attached to an idea that you want to fight.

Anger is emotion. Righteous anger is therefore meaningless.

UNDATED-8

A Visitor: How to see God as everything?

Swamiji: If you can be independent of the world, then you can see God in everything. The difference of opposites is the obstacle that prevents you from seeing God in everything, because the opposites do not exist in God; they cease to be opposites in God. God is positive in its entirety.

Visitor: What is the distinction between male and female?

Swamiji: It cannot be of the psyche. The psyche is not involved in the physiology of the body...

Visitor: What is meditation as part of yoga?

Swamiji: The yogic meditation is the summing up of all our activities. The purpose of all our activities is to be one with everything. But even in meditation space and time come in, and this is the tragedy which our activities try to overcome; our activities split up the purpose of unifying the activities in view as 'desires'. Hence, no desire is contradictory to any other.

Another Visitor: What is free will and what is God's grace?

Swamiji: When God's will passes through your personality it is your 'free will', and when the cosmic urge manifests itself through you, your personality takes 'effort', and that is the meaning of free will to act and effort one makes to act. Effort from the layman's point of view ordinarily appears to mean that activities are isolated. When you are writing, is it the nib of the pen writing? The eyes are unable to see what is behind the visible form; hence, the sense of isolation of

activities. When the little finger moves, the child thinks that only the little finger is moving. But mature minds with knowledge of the working of human body know that the whole physiology of the human system is behind the movement of the little finger.

Visitor: Is prana the Ultimate Truth?

Swamiji: It is not, because a vibration, a motion, is transient, and this is not the characteristic of the unchanging Truth. But tentatively you can call it Truth inasmuch as it is the subtle essence of the cosmos. It is, relatively, Truth, but not actually Truth.

Visitor: What is its origin? And is it from *prakriti*?

Swamiji: The origin is the Atman, the Supreme Being itself. It is the breath of the Supreme Being. *Prakriti* is also prana itself. *Prakriti* is a potential condition of prana. *Prakriti* is a philosophical term in Sankhya, and ultimately means the same thing as what the Upanisadic language terms as prana. The two terms are two different ways of expressing the same thing.

Visitor: Are the *gunas* dependent on the power of prana?

Swamiji: The answer is the same as for the previous question. The three *gunas* are the three ways in which the universal prana operates. When it works by way of division, destruction and isolation of one thing from another, it is *rajasic*; when it works by way of stability of static forms of energy of things, it is *tamasic*, when it becomes subtle enough to become transparent and therefore capable of revealing the harmony of things, it is *sattva*, which is superior to the other two *gunas* and, hence, called *sattva*.

Visitor: Is prana identical with Existence?

Swamiji: Since prana is an expression of existence, how then can you say they are identical? Prana is an

expression, a vibration, a motion, a manifestation relatively of the Reality and, therefore, we should not call it existence as such because it is manifestation of the Eternal Being, and it is not the Eternal Being itself.

Visitor: If its existence is Existence itself, is it co-related with the will of God as the originator of the universe?

Swamiji: Yes. The will of God manifests itself as the cosmic prana in its grosser form. But the cosmic prana itself is on a higher level, called the will of God.

Visitor: Is prana “Mrityu”, or the Death Principle, in this universe itself to some extent?

Swamiji: It is the Principle of Death only in the individual, and not in the cosmos, because the cosmos does not die when the individual dies. There is death in the individual, but not in the universal. It can withdraw itself from the physical embodiment called the body. At the time of death the prana in the individual withdraws itself from the physical body, and gets absorbed in the mind, and it is this psychophysiological complex called the blend of prana, senses, the mind, the intellect etc., which is called the subtle body that reincarnates itself in a new existence. So prana is not ‘Mrityu’ or death by itself, but it is what causes death by an extrication of itself from the physical body when the purpose of the physical body is completed.

Visitor: Is prana playing with prana which is present in all manifestations though prana, and is Shakti itself? What else can it be, other than the substance of everything? Can it be thought and matter also?

Swamiji: The answer is not different from what has already been said. Prana, thought, matter—they are interconnected and convertible. The subtler thought and the grosser form of thought are prana. The movement of thought is prana, and the thinking aspect of prana is thought; and matter, of course, is something

grosser than prana. It is the visible individualisation of things that we call prana, but the energy that is behind matter is called prana. Higher than prana is thought which is the cosmic thinking principle of thought.

Visitor: What is prana in relation to the Consciousness of the Absolute?

Swamiji: Consciousness co-vibrating with and through space and time is called prana, whether it is vibrating universally or individually.

Visitor: Has prana a place to merge in the Absolute?

Swamiji: The prana, being the manifestation of the Absolute, naturally gets absorbed in the Absolute at the time of the dissolution of the universe and also at the time of the liberation of the individual.

Visitor: Would even the attempt at meditation to realise the identity with prana be bound to the Cosmic Consciousness, or is there a passage to the Absolute transcending the universe and its Shakti?

Swamiji: Everything is cosmic ultimately because everything is correlated interconnected. Whenever you breathe, naturally you get connected with cosmic prana. The intention of meditation is to connect one's prana with cosmic prana. Only then it becomes a passage to the Eternal. It is not only the prana that is trying to connect with the cosmic prana, but everything also that is also in us. For example, the mind, intellect, etc., are also being connected. The individual prana in us by means of pranayama, or harmonised breathing, should get connected with the cosmic prana, which neither inhales nor exhales. Similarly, you must connect your individual thought with the cosmic will, or the universal thought. So also we have to connect our individual understanding with the cosmic intellect, which is called Hiranyagarbha.

Visitor: Why did the substratum, or cosmic prana, vanish as the Lord of the mind, Indra, appeared? Are the cosmic mind and the cosmic prana inseparable?

Swamiji: They are not inseparable because the cosmic mind is the internal condition of the cosmic prana, and the cosmic prana is a grosser manifestation of the cosmic mind. The substratum, or the cosmic prana, vanished because Indra is the principle of the ego. While speech can express by means of fire, which is a principle of nature and of health and which is symbolised in Agni as its deity, and while we can act in consonance with the Universal Being by means of the expression of the prana, which is symbolised by the deity Vayu approaching Supreme Being, Indra cannot approach the Universal Being, for Indra is the ego. When the ego approached God, God vanished because God and ego are polar opposites. So it is that Indra could not see the Absolute. Even though thought, speech and prana could visualise the Absolute Being, they could not understand the nature of the Absolute. Similarly, even in our practice of harmonised activity like philanthropic works and social service, we are unable to understand the nature of Reality, though by such harmonised activity we are trying to diminish our ego. But Indra is the principle of the ego itself, in direct opposition to God, which is why when the ego approaches, the Absolute vanishes.

This is a lesson to us as well. We should not meditate with our ego. It is worse than merely studying the scriptures and giving discourses on the nature of God, etc., or doing social service which, to some extent, is good. But when the ego contemplates, God vanishes because He is inclusive of the ego principle also. The meditating principle is not the ego. It is the Universal Being itself. It is God meditating on God, ultimately. So if you consider yourself Mr. So-and-so and then start

meditating on God, God does not come to you because He is inclusive of your being also.

The concept of the universal means the affirmation of the idea that other than the object of meditation, nothing exists. That is called universalisation. When you think of something, you should not think of something else at the same time; that is the essence of concentration. If you believe God is all, you should not think of non-God at the same time. That is another way of defining universalisation. If a thing exists—and only that exists and nothing else—and your objective in meditation is so complete in itself that other than it cannot be, that is called a universal concept. What you think is not important. But are you thinking something else at the same time? That is the whole point. Are we able to concentrate upon it exclusively? You should not think anything except that. That is called concentration. How can something be outside of that object of your concentration? First of all, you have to convince yourself that the object of your meditation is all-pervading and it is all-existence. It should be the only thing that exists. It should not be one of the things in the world. Then there would be no valid reason for the mind or the ego to think of other objects outside it.

Spiritual life is not easy. It requires a little of effort of thought. We have to think in a new way altogether. Now the time has come to think of only one thing, and not of anything else. The other things we consider to be outside are a part of what you have been thinking of. So the essence of concentration is exclusive absorption in the object of an Omnipresent Reality. That is the essence of meditation. Everything which up to now you have been regarding as a little finite being becomes an integral part of the Cosmic Being. It is an awakening into the true relationship of things to Reality. When you realise your integral connection with the Absolute, you

will realise that in every sand particle, in every dust particle, everywhere is God Himself. That is meditation. You need not close your eyes and sit in the meditation hall. The moment you are aware of this, you are in a state of meditation. That is the way to be happy. Otherwise, you are happy inside the meditation hall and unhappy outside. You must be happy in the street, in the marketplace, in the bathroom, and not only in the temple, etc. That is what is described as your 'travelling in space' by yogic practice. You must travel in consciousness first. The whole point is, we require some guidance from a Guru until such time as we are able to live in this kind of living awareness.

An Ashramite: What is time? There is a confusion in giving different meanings to it.

Swamiji: Time is consciousness of the succession of events. It is not the time factor of this world of ours. Time was the first creation. *Jiva*, with reference to creation, is both the animate and inanimate mass of creation as a whole. In the evolution of *prakriti*, the rocks and other inanimate objects, by rearrangement of their internal atomic, neutronic structure, evolved into trees, and the like, of the plant kingdom in the evolution of time.

Ashramite: It is again said that the *jiva*, *maya* and time (to which reference is made in the Bhagavad Purana) were lying meaninglessly around until the Supreme Being entered them simultaneously when creation began. How does time make *maha-sattva*, the ego and the five gross elements cohere? Is it by sequence? Can it be said that up to now the evolution was something like a chemical action and time a manufacturing factor giving meaning to the chemical actions?

Swamiji: It is a poor analogy but it is something like that, and of a much more complex and deeper nature.

Ashramite: Is time equal to, I mean, the same as consciousness?

Swamiji: Time is consciousness of the succession of events. This is different from the Time Spirit, which is Narayana himself. The hub and the spokes of a wheel is a constant figure of speech to explain this differentiation between time and the Time Spirit. It is a cliché of the sacred texts, even as is the analogy of a black rat and a white rat eating the thread which means time, that is, day and night, which are the hierarchy of time. If you see the stone in the statue of a dog, you don't see the dog. But if you see the dog, the stone does not exist. The snake and the rope is another such cliché.

Another Visitor: What is Madhu Vidya that the Brihadaranyaka Upanishada expounds?

Swamiji: Three things are in three different places: the Absolute, the universe, and the *jiva*. The interconnectedness of these are explained in this chapter. The Lord's energy is divided when the equilibrium of the three *gunas* gets disturbed under the force of His energy, known by the name of Time. Externalised energy is matter and objective energy of the Lord, and time is subjective. Mimamsa speaks of Him as karma, the Charuvakas speak of Him as nature. Some speak of Him as *kama*.

Visitor: Why is the *anandamaya kosa* a sense of darkness? There is no awareness of anything in deep sleep which is because it is resting in the *anandamaya kosa*.

Swamiji: There is no such thing as *kosa* for the *anandamaya*. It is only a way of putting it, for there are no *vruttis* in the *anandamaya kosa*. *Vruttis* arise only with reference to objects that are externalised as objects outside. This is what happens even in dream; and since there are no objects in deep sleep, which rests in the

anandamaya kosa, there are no *vrittis*. The absence of *vrittis* is not a state of a nescience that is darkness. The *anandamaya kosa* is so brilliant, like the light of a million-watt bulb, that it seems dark, like the sun's disc appears dark when you see it with naked eye. The mind cannot take this amount of brilliance that is in the *anandamaya kosa*. Hence, the *jiva* gets the sense of nothingness. Also, there is no such thing as 'entering' bliss. It is not pulled up or down as happens in the case of a satellite entering the orbit of the moon. The pull in the state of bliss, if you so wish to put it, is from all sides. You just become merged into it, one with this Existence-Knowledge-Bliss.