

THE FOUNDATION OF SPIRITUALITY



SWAMI KRISHNANANDA

The Divine Life Society

Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh, India

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Publisher's Note

This is a series of lectures that Swamiji gave during the Ashram's annual Sadhana Week in July 1983.

Chapter 1: Preparation for Sadhana

The annual holy Sri Guru Purnima is generally the commencement of a sacred function in the ashram culminating in the most sacred day of worship, the Punyatithi Aradhana Mahotsava of Revered Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. Devotees who come from far and wide to this ashram to participate in these two important occasions of worship have also a rather novel and unexpected opportunity of attending a week's series of sessions usually called the Sadhana Week or the Sadhana Shabira, during which interim period of these few days there is time enough for everyone to prepare one's heart and soul for the reception of the Divine Grace that is supposed to descend upon the deepest recesses of our being on this day of contemplation of Sri Gurudev's entering the Cosmic.

Thus is this initial and inaugural session here today of adjusting and adapting our understandings, thoughts and feelings in a manner necessary for the reception of this divine compassion. Even to collect rainwater, we require an adequately wide vessel. In a similar way, we may say we have to become the apt receptacles for the coming of this grace as a consequence of our dedication and worship which we commence with our obeisance to Bhagavan Sri Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa on Sri Guru Purnima, and we shall have the *purnavarti* of it in that other sacred consecration and worship which is our day of prayer to Worshipful Sri Gurudev.

During these days of the Sadhana Week called the Sadhana Shabira, we are, therefore, to equip ourselves with appurtenances and necessities which will prepare ourselves—our body, mind and soul, our entire makeup—for receiving God Almighty Himself into our hearts, who sends His incessant messages through these great incarnations and prophets and masters, and to us through the visible and veritable Gurudev Sri Swami Sivananda Maharaj.

What is the *sadhana*, what is the spiritual practice, what is the discipline that you are thinking in your minds during these days? It is that education, it is that discipline and preparation by which you can allow and permit the entry of the Almighty into your hearts. Do you make preparations in your own house, in your institution when a dignitary pays a visit to your place? Do you sweep, do you keep everything clean? Are you actively engaged—in body, mind and soul—to see that the environment in your place is

adequately suited and fitted to the grandeur, the position and the perfection of the personality that is going to pay a visit to your house, your organisation, your institution? And are you preparing yourself through this process of *sadhana* for keeping the environment of your life ready for receiving that great perfection into your own life? In this connection, what kind of preparation would you be required to complete before this perfection condescends to enter you, enter your family and your whole social association, call it country, call it nation, call it the world?

When a great genius and a master and a superior personality comes to you, what are the preparations that you make? You set aside all your idiosyncrasies, your internal skirmishes, your ideas of personal likes and dislikes. Your little petty difficulties are brushed aside as if they do not exist at all in order that your prepared environment fits adequately into the great perfection that is going to pay a visit to you. He may be the president of your country, he may be the prime minister, he may be a great dignitary whom you are compelled to respect and adore as something valuable and indeed magnificent.

Who can be more magnificent than God Almighty Himself? And what is the preparation that we have to make? This preparation is *sadhana*. It is that preparation which will fit into the nature of God. That is spiritual practice—call it religion, call it spirituality, call it by any jargon that may be the feature of the religions and the cults and the creeds and the organisations in this world. Remember this little recipe. Spiritual discipline or religious practice is not a social occupation; it is not a business into which you enter, or a give-and-take policy that you may bargain with God for a thing that you may expect from Him. Remember, you will expect nothing from God. Here is the difference between the other dignitaries that you may gladly and happily receive into yourself and the one whom you are calling God the Almighty perfection.

Why do you receive a dignitary into your organisation, into your house? You know very well. Your conscience speaks. Here is a personality who can be an immediate instrument for the removal of all your problems. In a sense, God is also a singular perfection. It is a symbol by which every problem is melted down into the unified perfection of His own Being. It is true in a way that there can be no greater dignitary than God Himself anywhere; therefore, there is nothing which anyone can offer to you more than what God can offer to you. This is one side of the matter.

But there is something very peculiar with God which you may not be able to decipher and recognise in the mortal dignitaries whom you adore so much. God does not give you anything because there is nothing outside Him, while your mortal dignitaries have many things outside them; therefore, they can pour their wealth on you. The dignitary will

never become your servant. However much you may worship him, adore him, he will never be subservient to you. He cannot become your property. That great gentleman you call genius, perfection, dignitary, master, the president, is not going to be under your thumb, and you cannot dictate terms to him, whatever be the expectation from him that you may have. He cannot become a part of you; he maintains his independence still. And he is what he is, whatever be your attitude towards him and your expectations from him. That is one thing in regard to the great men of the world and the great personalities of this Earth.

But there is a peculiar difference with God. This makes all the difference, and every kind of difference. He cannot offer you anything because God has nothing outside Himself. If He has outside Him something which you would covet as a desirable possession, your concept of God is a poor denigration of His greatness. You are giving a poor certificate to God, a very unfortunate one indeed, if you expect an offering from God, inasmuch as He has no offerings that He can bequeath to you for the simple reason that He is soul supreme, infinite, unlimited existence. In this unlimitedness, a limited object cannot be outside Him, so to expect anything from Him, through Him, by means of Him would be a catastrophic demonstration of your utter ignorance of His grandeur, greatness and perfection.

Revered Worshipful Master Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj should be considered as nothing short of an incarnation of a divine perfection in the light of the message that he gave to mankind in the sense that he was never tired of emphasising this peculiar characteristic of the goal of life, which has to be differentiated from every other goal that you consider as necessary and worthwhile. Is not a comfortable physical life in the world covetable? Is not a long life in this world worthwhile? Is not perfect health worthwhile? Is not recognition in the whole world by the society of people worthwhile? Is not, last but not least, the possession of vast riches worthwhile?

Each one of you as a citizen of this world knows very well what you are longing for. Do not deceive yourself. Be honest to your own self. "To thine own self be true," is a great saying of the poet Shakespeare. To thine own self be true. *Atmanam vidhi*, says the Upanishad. "Know thyself," said also the Oracle of Delphi and the oracle of the Upanishad. Be honest to yourself. Do not be running to Gurus, running to ashramas, running to libraries, running to organisations of yoga conferences, seminars, international setups. That will bring you nothing if you are honest only to your own predilections and the axes that you grind, and if your God is kept in your bag and you let Him out only if necessary; otherwise, let Him be tied down and not come out.

To be honest is more difficult than to be even the emperor of the whole world. You can be the king of the whole Earth under given circumstances; but the circumstances under which you can be so honest with God Himself in the sense of the little description I tried to place before you would be the highest laurel that anyone can bestow upon you. Even a thousand Nobel prizes will not equal this—this honesty that is to reveal itself and manifest itself for you. But that honesty is not the usual human characteristic because of the very nature of the human makeup and constitution. The human individual is a self-assertive unit. This is a very important psychological feature of human nature. Every human individual is self-assertive, and when the time for it comes, you will assert yourself as supreme above everything else.

The consideration for others is very rarely capable of being equated with the reason behind our own self-assertiveness. We have consideration for our husbands and wives, and our family members. We have consideration for our brethren who are less fortunate than us. We have consideration for our own citizens in this country. We say we have consideration for humanity also. But this concern is an eyewash. It is not a real concern, because it is very well known to everyone that this concern is not going to affect one's intentions. Your deepest longings of that assertive personality are not going to be uprooted by these concerns of yours. On the other hand, they may enhance them. You may become prominent and comfortable and more happy by these considerations; your assertions may become more potent and the ego can be fattened still more by these considerations, while you will be a pauper, a dry straw unrecognised and wanted by nobody if these considerations are absent in you. You will be dubbed as a good-for-nothing and useless burden, a parasite to society. These are secret psychoanalytical roots of human individuality. Man is not such a simple thing as it appears in a photograph.

But with this peculiar, negative, dark side of human nature, there is also a deeply positive radiance in humanity. This is the reason why man is a child of God and also sometimes the friend of the devil. He can be both things at the same time, and it is up to him to choose which side to take part in under the circumstances. You can shift your emphasis either this side or that side, according to the need of the hour. Often you may feel that it is better to be a devil rather than a God, for reasons you know very well. Sometimes you feel it is better to be an angel. The reason is that both sides are present in you. Do you sometimes feel that it is advisable and worthwhile to retaliate, to be vindictive, and to destroy the welfare and well-being of another for reasons you may have in your mind? At that time, one side of your personality operates, superseding another which may speak to you in a language whose voice is completely hushed by the din and bustle of the roused wrath of your empirical personality.

Most of us are angry people, and no one can afford not to be angry one day or the other. But the anger is not manifest, and it cannot be manifest because you know very well that it will ruin you. But where it will not ruin you and ruin only another, then it will come. So you can very well know what kind of person anyone is.

While this is so, there is something in you which has made you come to an ashram like The Divine Life Society, Sivananda Ashram. Whatever be your problems and difficulties, you have spent some money out of your meagre earnings, with the sweat of your brow, and with some difficulty, with paid leave or without pay, and whatever the difficulty be, with hardships known to each one of you, you have come here, but not for any feast or a very comfortable living in a five-star hotel. There are difficulties and difficulties, hardships and hardships, problems and problems, inconveniences and inconveniences. With all that, you have come.

This reason and background behind your coming here with so much of effort is the impulse that arises from another side of your nature which is the representation of God Almighty in you. You are also an ambassador of God in this world, though at times you have your own personality and predilections, due to which you come in clash with people and cannot accommodate yourself with anybody else except with those who are agreeing with you in thought, in feeling and in adjustability.

There is something in the human being which is divine. You are like an ambassador. An ambassador is a representative of a government. He has a double personality. He is the husband of a wife, or it may be the wife of a husband, and that person may be anyone like you. This representative of the government called the ambassador is just one person like you with all the little personal problems and pinpricks of life, just exactly like every one of you without the least of difference. That is one aspect of the ambassador.

But he has another aspect. He has that feature in him by which he has the capacity to draw the attention of that large power called the government which he represents. He is not just like you in every way, though in some ways he is just like you. So while you may be like any Tom, Dick and Harry in this world as a *sadhaka*, as a seeker, as an honest devout follower in the footsteps of masters like Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, you are also a representative of something which is not capable of accommodation in this world of selfishness, give and take policy, and commercialism of every type.

Thus during these days of the Sadhana Shabira, you will prepare yourself to be a real representative of that where you have come. You may say, "I have come from the womb of a mother," or, "I have come from the Delhi railway station," or, "I have come from my office." Maybe you have come from these places, but you have not originally come from these tentative exits. These are all empirical descriptions of your coming.

You have not come from the womb of your mother. Prior to the entry into the womb, you were somewhere else, and prior to that condition you were somewhere else, somewhere else, and you have come from one root which is the origin of your total being. And in this discipline of these days called the Sadhana Shabira or the Sadhana Saptaha, prepare yourself for recognising yourself as a true representative of that kingdom from where you have come. You have not come from Delhi, Madras, Bombay, nothing of the kind. These notions may be shed for the time being. You have come from a cause which originates every atom of this universe. In this Big Bang, as modern scientists tell us, which is supposed to be the beginning of the solar system and the entire physical astronomical universe, you were also created as a product which is to come to this ashram one day or the other. Your career is recorded in that original constitution, the ordinance which was accepted by the original will that created this Big Bang, the splitting of the cosmos into this diversity of perception.

Thus, you do not represent your family merely, in spite of the fact you may be a representative of them. You are an ambassador of your family and represent all the welfare, well-being and needs of your family members; you are a representative of your country and the whole mankind and international setup. Yes, you are representing all these things—very well, fine, accepted. But finally, you represent another altogether which decides your fate. The original constitution of the centre is the final deciding factor of every official of the world, though he has other, smaller deciding factors in the hierarchy of administration, like the boss and many other things.

Thus, there are many other little grades of hierarchy of superintending principles in your life, such as the cooperation of your family members, the facility you have in your office, and the like. But the final deciding factor is a different thing altogether. You cannot be unfriendly with the Supreme Creator and friendly with people in the world. Your cooperation with anyone in this world and the services that you may expect from anyone in this world will be set at naught in one second if the winds of the cosmos blow in a different direction. The wind of the cosmos is the will of the Almighty.

Do not say, “I am well off, I have riches, I have strength, I am youthful, and I am an officer with a four-digit salary.” Nothing will cut ice. The winds can blow in any direction at any time. These winds do not blow from the North Pole or the South Pole. These winds are not blowing from the Himalayas or the Arabian Ocean. They originate from that centre which created this universe. And if, in your ignorance, you are not agreeable to accommodate yourself with the intention of the origin of all things, unfortunate will be your life. All your riches will go to the dogs in one second. Political catastrophes are demonstrations before you. The vicissitudes of human history are before your eyes today,

and you can know what can happen to man the next moment. Be it anyone placed in any position, whatever he be, you know what will happen to anyone the next moment if the Earth shakes and the Sun opens his eyes.

Thus, be a little cautious. Shed your petty feelings of prejudice, selfishness, wrath and anger, disagreement and self-assertiveness for the time being at least when you are here under the auspices of this holy precinct of Worshipful Sri Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj in this Samadhi Shrine. He sees you, he knows you, and he is ready to shower his benedictions upon you. Unless you are fortunate enough to have done some good deeds either in this life or in your previous lives, would you have the blessing of sitting here for a few minutes and breathing this air in the presence of this holy master's shrine? Are you not blessed? Should you not be grateful to him? Should you not express your gratitude to God who has directed you here, instead of to a hotel or a club or a ballroom? What makes you come here? Is it not a kind eye and a loving glance from this great compassionate being upon you? Know it, or not, with your ignorant minds.

May I request you during these few days to adjust yourself, adapt yourself, align yourself, tune yourself to this original intention of that One which has sent you here as its representative for completing your duties in this world in regard to yourself as well as to other people here, and also to perform that duty which it expects you to perform in the light of its own intentions.

To repeat once again, while you have all the facilities of an ambassador—you can have a very happy life in a *mahal*, yes—but you have also to bear in mind you have to fulfil the intentions of that power which has sent you as a deputy, an ambassador. If you flout and go against the intentions of that force which has sent you, your comforts will be no more. They will be in the winds. Therefore, have fear of God first. This fear of God is nothing but fear of law, and you know very well the fear of law is not a frightening thing; fear of law is nothing but a necessity that you feel for protection from law. And obedience to law may look like a fear of law, but it is such a necessity that it is not a fear. It is like a fear of falling ill by flouting the laws of health. You cannot call it a fear. It is a need, it is an affection, and, therefore, it is a positive approach.

Thus, *sadhana* is the most positive effort that you put forth in your personal life to be truthful to that Being who sent you here. He alone sent you here. Don't say your father sent you, your mother sent you. Nobody has sent you. The destiny, the fate, the career, the future of you all is in the invisible hands of that Almighty Being which has sent you and whose laws, regulations and ordinances, whose constitution, whose principles of universal affection, love and cooperation and devotion are the determining factors of your life.

For a few days, I may say for the days and nights you are here, focus yourself, become a total being and a compact individuality, not a fragmented individual broken into pieces, not like a house divided against itself. Be a total indivisible being. Focus your entire energy in the direction of this contemplation which will draw the grace, the energy, the power of perhaps the whole creation. What else do you need, what else do you require, and what other blessing can you expect?

Chapter 2: Who is Fit to Lead a Spiritual Life

On the essentially practical side of spiritual living, we have very few guidebooks or texts giving all the necessary details of the entire process, though there are general statements and broad outlines of the nature of the path which we find discussed in the scriptures of the different religions. For instance, everyone knows very well that religious and spiritual life implies truthfulness, honesty, straightforwardness, goodness, kindness, servicefulness, and so on. Virtues of this kind enumerated by teachers as well as texts are known to everybody.

But with all this knowledge of the absolute necessity to be good in oneself and to do good to others, when you actually place your foot on this way that is supposed to lead to what you call the goal of your life, you will find that your knowledge is not sufficient because each individual is unique in himself or herself. Generally and broadly we are all human beings, and therefore, we have human qualities; that is true, of course. All the needs of human beings are felt by everyone equally. Hunger, thirst, heat, cold, anxiety, need for security, food, clothing, shelter are the general needs of everyone. But there is something more in each person than these general requirements which are quite obvious, and these obvious things are not our difficulties. We can get on with them somehow with the wisdom of life.

But we have an inner personality which is actually the true personality. It is not inner in the sense of being something different from the outer realities. It is that which is what we really are and which we cannot always manifest outside in our daily occupations. There is a tremendous conflict between each person and the world outside, and the world being very powerful, each one swallows the bitter pill and suffers silently, weeping secretly in one's own bedroom because no one is going to listen to our weeping. Everyone knows our cry is only in the wilderness.

Most people suffer this life, do not enjoy it, because enjoying life is not possible as the world is confronting us like a roaring lion ready to pounce on us and even swallow us, and we have to protect ourselves. It is the onslaught of these forces of the world with our meagre energies and strengths. This is a psychological tension with which we are born and with which we also die, and due to which we pass a camouflaged life of satisfaction that we are somehow well off in the world.

We can get on in this world with a type of adjustment, whether we are happy about this adjustment or not. Many of the sacrifices that we do are forced upon us—not that we willingly do them—because we know the absence of this sacrifice on our part will endanger our existence or put us in awkward conditions. So we demonstrate an outward charitable nature and sacrificial mood before our superiors, our bosses and the world at

large, though inwardly we grumble and curse this condition that has come upon us due to which we have to unnecessarily spend from our pockets and waste our energies for nothing. But it is not for nothing that it is done because we know if we do not do this, we may be in a worse condition. So goes the world.

With this peculiar inner turmoil we are likely turn to the path of God, the path of religion and the path of spirituality. “I am fed-up with this world.” You do not turn to religion or spirituality because you are fed-up with the world. Here is a caution which has to be exercised by each one who really seeks victory in this spiritual adventure called the practice of *sadhana*. It is not because you are defeated by the world that you go to God. It is not because you are an escapist or a runaway from the world’s realities that you move towards God.

Most people are defeated by the powers of the world. Society and everything that goes with it is a trouble up to the hilt, and we cannot bear it anymore. When we are young, when we have a little money with us and we have some energy to run about even in the hot sun, we bear with all the difficulties of family maintenance and working in the office. But energy fails when we become a little old. And when we become old, we cease to be an object of attraction to people. We are no more a very useful person partly because our pecuniary conditions diminish in their intensity, the beauty of the body fades, and our utility to society also gradually diminishes in percentage. We become a sort of good-for-nothing individual, and the family is not very much interested in us, society knows that we cannot do much, and we also know that we have no energy. Then what do we do? “God help me. I turn to the path of the spirit.” This is the unfortunate understanding of religion and the most miscalculated understanding of spirituality.

The spiritual seeker is the strongest of people in the world. Nobody can be so strong as this person. Nothing can stand before a spiritual seeker honestly pursuing this path. He is a lion and an elephant because he has the strength of being backed up by a power which will never forsake him at any time; therefore, the world cannot kick him out. And our external conditions will not decide our value or intrinsic worth. Mostly our worth or value depends upon what other people think about us, and the way in which other people hold an opinion about us depends upon the varying conditions of human society. It is not possible to expect a uniform opinion or attitude towards us from everybody from the beginning to end, because an opinion is nothing but a calculation based on existing conditions, and conditions cannot be permanent in life. Every day situations change, every minute conditions may change, and so our hanging on our worthwhileness in the light of opinions held by people outside may require moment to moment adjustments on our part, like the caution to be exercised by a motorcar driver along the road to Badrinath

which winds here and there every minute. He cannot close his eyes and be chatting because the road is so dangerous and he has to turn every minute. Such an adjustment we are making no doubt, but these are the techniques we adopt for somehow managing ourselves in this world of difficulties, and that does not prove that we have really understood the world.

We have a peculiar difficulty based on a basic lack of understanding of people or the world as it is. It is not easy to know another person however much we may be moving with that person. Because as we cannot know our own self wholly, and another also cannot know himself or herself entirely, consequently one cannot know the other. This difficulty basic to an ignorance of the inner constituents of human personality decides what sort of adjustments we are to make every day. What an activity, what an effort and what a strain it is that every moment we have to be cautious about who is around us and what is expected of us. We cannot be carefree in this world where we are expected to change our attitudes and adjustments every moment.

But with all these turbulent shapes of the surface of life, there is something which is secretly hidden. There is an essential uniformity in life and a basic goodness in man. If we are able to adjust ourselves with this, we need not have to wrack our heads every minute to adapt our circumstances moment to moment and strain our brain continuously throughout the day.

The structure of the world and the structure of the human being mean practically one and the same thing, inasmuch as man is a part of the world. If we know a human being, we know the world also and, vice versa, if we know the world, we know the human being also. There are basic illnesses which manifest themselves as a multitude of sicknesses and we try to heal the symptoms rather than the causes. The problems of human life are mostly symptoms of basic difficulties in human adjustment and human understanding. They are symptoms, not causes.

We read newspapers, we read novels, and we listen to information coming to us through radios and wireless communications. We know how the world is going on, what is happening anywhere. These are not actually the real stuff of the world. This information that we receive from various sources in this manner are the many-phased symptoms of a deep-seated difficulty which mankind feels essentially. But as an inner diagnosis of a central disease is not easily accessible even to a good physician and he somehow manages to convince himself as well as his patient that the disease is cured by a symptomatic treatment, we get on by a symptomatic adjustment of ourselves with the world of people. Thus, life passes. We become old. But problems are problems, and

whatever were the problems of life during the time of Julius Caesar are the problems today at this moment. They are not different.

Now, the intention of a whole-souled and dedicated spiritual seeker is to be understood very carefully. Why are you hungering for spiritual life, and what actually do you mean by 'this world'? What is religion, what is spirituality, and what for is this running after God? What is the idea behind all these things? Is it because you feel you will be rid of the problems of life once and for all and you will be in some other realm free from these turmoils? That is not possible because there is no such thing as moving away from this world of experience. No one can move away from it because what we call the world is not merely this physical Earth on which we are living, and what we call life is not simply the lodgement of our mind in this physical body. "If the body goes, I am rid of all problems," one may think, and commit suicide. But the problems of life are not located in the physical body and, therefore, a shedding of the body is not a solution of the problems. This is a great error to feel that death is a solution to problems. It is not a solution to problems because they do not arise in the body. They are somewhere else. Therefore, the causes of problems persist even if the body is not to be there, and they will persist even if you are not to be in this world, because your personality is not this body. And in the same way, the world in which you are living is not this Earth. So either way, you make a mistake by imagining that you can be free from the problems of life by getting out of this world, or getting out of the body itself.

These notions either way are total miscalculations based on utter ignorance of the realities of life. Your personality which is the experiencer of the difficulties of life, this personality of yours, is different from the body which you are seeing with your eyes. Therefore, to punish it or to get angry with it or to consider it as the cause of problems would be a mistake. And, likewise, to imagine that this world that you see with your eyes is the cause of your problems and, therefore, you can be free from it, go somewhere else, is also a mistake. You cannot be out of the world at any time, and you cannot be out of the body also at any time because if this body goes, another body comes; and if you are not in this world, you will be in another world. Inasmuch as a single law operates in the whole cosmos, that law which engendered the problems you were facing will continue to follow you even if you have another body, and even if you are not in this world.

So spiritual seekers beware. No amount of trying to be free from the problems of life will be really a freedom from problems. Wherever you go, you will be pursued by these problems in whatever body you may enter into in your rebirth, and in whatever realm you enter after the quitting of this world, because there is no such thing as another world.

It is a single government. The arms of law are so long, so widely spread and stretched that wherever you go, these arms will pursue you.

So nobody can escape from the problems of life; it is not possible. "I will take to *sannyasa*. What have I to do with this world?" These ideas are miscalculations. Your *sannyasa* has no meaning because if you think *sannyasa* is a putting on of a robe or living in a sequestered cloister, it is not the solution to the problems because life is a universally spread-out operation of power, law, regulation and principle, and no man can be exempt from it. Do you think the *sannyasin* is not living in the world? Is he in the skies? Every law will operate upon him. And thus, the psychological complacency that one may wrongly enter into falsely imagining the nature of the problems of life may lead to rebirth, and your idea of freedom from problems will be an utter misunderstanding of the situation.

Who is then fit to lead a spiritual life? Who is a *sadhaka*? The world is not several kilometres away from God. There is no distance between God and the world. So when you reach God or move in the direction of God, you are not moving a few kilometres away from the world. But we have such ideas. As there is a distance between the world and God, as we are likely to imagine, we also imagine that there is a distance between family life and *sannyasa* life. There is no such distance. A *sannyasin* is not five kilometres away from family.

The family idea also is to be clarified first in the mind. What is a family? What is your knowledge about it? Your idea of family life is as poor as your knowledge of the world itself because what you call a family is nothing but an involvement of yourself in something, and anyone who is involved in anything is a family man. This is an internal principle which has to be revealed to one's own consciousness. A person who has a compulsive obligation to perform is not a *sannyasin*. He is a householder only. But if he performs functions out of the spontaneous emanation of his own free will, then it can be called karma yoga, especially in the light of the Bhagavadgita.

But let each one judge for oneself whether activities are engaged in out of compulsive obligations in the light of circumstances in which one is placed, or they are utter freedom manifesting itself from the spontaneity of the great understanding of life. The associations which go with any kind of compulsive obligation are called family. It has nothing to do with husband, wife, etc. These are gross descriptions of family life. A family is a psychological involvement. It is not just physically living in the midst of people.

We are even now here in this hall living in the midst of many people, but do you call it a family? It is not a family. So living in the midst of a thousand people is not to live in a

family. Family is a mental involvement, and whoever is so involved, even in a thick forest, is a householder. He is not a recluse. This is one point to remember.

The other side is the concept of the world itself. What do you understand by the world from which you wish freedom? Is this world the Earth on which you are seated? What is this Earth from which you want freedom? Do you want to be free from the mountains, from the trees, from the oceans, from the rivers, from the buildings, from the roads? What is the world? The world consists of only these things. Wherever you go, whichever place you visit in this world, this world which you want to renounce is only mountains, rivers, oceans, sun, moon, stars. Are you going to renounce the sun, the moon, the stars, the hills, the forests, the rivers, the seas? What are you going to renounce when you say, "I am renouncing the world"? These ideas also are very hazy in our minds. It is just jumping to conclusions with a nebulous notion of the circumstances in which we are placed.

Renouncing the world is certainly not renouncing the sun, moon and stars. Nobody can renounce them, and nobody has ever succeeded in doing that. Nor have you an idea of renouncing mountains. "I have renounced the Himalayas, Andes and Alps, and the Atlantic and the Pacific." Nobody says that. Nothing is there which is evidently to be renounced. But there is something pricking you from inside. "I have renounced." The conflict of this difficulty of not being able to analyse what it is to be renounced, and yet a pressure felt within that renunciation is necessary, is to be obviated at the very beginning before we become clear as to what spiritual life actually means. We may safely say very few can be said to have succeeded in living that life. They go with a morose dissatisfaction, somehow or other. We have done many things indeed, many good things in the eyes of people, but the eyes of God may not necessarily be the same as the eyes of people. And it is generally held that goodness that characterises spiritual life is the goodness that will attract the attention of the eyes of God only, not necessarily the eyes of man with whom we can be very good and recognised easily by the adjustments of political and social manoeuvre.

What is the intention finally? What is it that you are asking for? Very few will be able to answer these questions. There are stock answers: "I have only a desire to have peace of mind. What else do I want? To be free from the difficulty of family life and the boredom of working in an office and live a little peaceful life in an atmosphere of an ashram—that is all I want." Thus, spiritual life is wound up and is closed as a simple act of living without responsibilities of any kind. You need not have to do anything when you are in the ashram. What responsibility does any visitor or guest or a longstanding resident of the ashram have? They get free food in the ashram, and nobody asks them to do any work. Is it not freedom from responsibility? This is a very happy life. "I have not to do

anything, and my needs are met automatically without having to do anything.” This is what generally becomes the conclusion of a retired life, and even the life of a person who thinks he or she is living a spiritual or religious life. Go to an ashram, and stay and do nothing. So to do nothing is the freedom. But if everybody is a do-nothing, you will know that your ideas of living a life of this kind of retirement in a sequestered ashram will not succeed. Because someone is working hard, the other can be free. If everybody is entertaining a similar idea of doing nothing—let everybody keep quiet and do nothing—let us see what happens. Nobody will do anything. We all have come to the ashram to do nothing because we are retired people; we have fulfilled our responsibilities and there is nothing to be done. Let each one, A to Z, keep quiet. You wish for that to happen: “Let somebody else sweat, and I will live a retired life in an ashram.”

This idea may go up to even God Himself, and in a naïve notion of religion and scriptural understanding, we may not be far away from entertaining the idea that we may lead such a life in the kingdom of God also. “I will sit quiet without doing anything. God will do all things. God’s responsibility it is to take care of me. He will rule the world; I will sit there attending his *satsangas* and listening to his discourses. God may be saying some good words.” The kingdom of heaven flows with milk and honey, a cool breeze blows, the sun is not very hot and there is no perspiration, no fan, and everything is fine. This is what we read in scriptures as the description of heaven, the kingdom of God, where you have not got to do anything, and God does everything for you. Is this not your idea of salvation and freedom from turmoil?

It is difficult to lead a life of yoga. This is why they say mere study and reading of books will not be sufficient. With all the readings and studies of religious and yoga texts, these misconceptions still persist. And whatever be your logical, intellectual, university acumen as far as your learning of the scriptures and the philosophies of the world is concerned, you will be individually in your house the same little boy that you were as far as the basic notions of life are concerned. Whatever be your learning, basically you are a little child. This is what you will realise finally when you are rid of and free from all the associations of life in society which made you feel that you are different from them.

Why is it then said you should live under a Guru and live a life of discipline? Otherwise, go to the National Library of Calcutta and become a yogi in a few days because there are thousands of books, or the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. Go and read all the books. There is no book that you cannot find there. You can become a yogi. “I have understood everything, all the scriptures, all the Upanishads; everything in the Bhagavadgita is known to me. I know all the verses by heart.” Well, everything may be okay; you are the same man still.

Why is it so? Because the internal discipline required under the principles of living a life of yoga has not been undergone, and you do not want that discipline. *Tad viddhi pranipātena paripraśnena sevayā, upadekṣyanti te jñānam jñāninas tattvadarśinaḥ* (Gita 4.34) says the Lord in the Bhagavadgita. Approach a Master. And who wants to approach a Master? Everybody is a yoga teacher in this world; there is no yoga student anywhere. Everybody says, “I am a yoga instructor; I am a yoga teacher.” At least, I have never heard a person saying, “I am a yoga student.” They are yoga teachers only. This kind of attitude is the bane of real aspiration. Why do you want to be a teacher? Whom are you going to teach? And what is your capacity? What is your knowledge of life? What is your strength? And why are you doing this teaching? For whose good? Let these questions be put to your own self. These are again confusions in the head.

Which person has the humility to place himself at the feet of a Master and receive the spiritual vibrations emanating from that great soul? Humility is the most painful of sacrifices that we would like to perform. Who would like to be humble before another? Humble, humility, effacement—it is worse than death for us because there is always a need for recognition and importance wherever one is. Even before a Guru we would not like to present ourselves as nobodies and nothings, but as somethings.

The humility that is necessary is not a make-believe, or putting on an appearance. It is the automatic enlightenment and satisfaction one feels in the light of the magnificence and power of the whole universe. Your understanding of this vast creation, if it is sufficiently profound, will place you in such a predicament that you will feel that you do not exist at all. When you are not existing at all, where comes the need for affirmation? The world’s grandeur, power and all-comprehensiveness is of such a majestic intensity and profundity you do not seem to be anywhere there. Even if you have only a meagre knowledge of the working of the astronomical universe, the way in which the stellar system and the solar system operates, you will find you are nobody, and if the whole earth is only a speck of dust floating in the atmosphere of the solar system, your importance is well known to each person.

Well, why go to this? The might of God is something to be appreciated. Before this radiance and glory, what is your importance? And before this great representative called the Incarnation, the Master or the Guru, what is your importance? And the self-affirmative importance that one feels is simply the pressure of your own ego which insists on maintaining an independence of God’s creation itself, and independence even before the great Master. And any isolated individual or segregated independence is obnoxious to the great independence of God’s creation. Only one thing can be independent—the creation as a whole. The universe is independent, and it will not tolerate any other person

asserting independence. That would be a secessionist attitude, and this will not be tolerated. In the Bible we read of the fall of Lucifer who asserted his independence.

Why not be independent? Because nobody wishes to be humble, even before God Himself. “Why should I be subservient even before God? Have I no importance of my own?” That importance made Lucifer fall. The Bible says he became Satan, and the Upanishad also says the same thing. The Aitareya Upanishad, the Chhandogya and the other Upanishads tell the same story of a peculiar metaphysical evil, as they call it, that crept into the centres of consciousness during the process of creation which made us what we are, and each one is totally independent: “I am independent, you are independent; who are you to speak to me? What are you?” Each one has this attitude psychologically.

Fall prostrate, do *sashtanga namaskara* before this sole independence that alone is permissible in this creation, and before which your independence has to go. This is *atma samarpana*; this is what is called surrender. Self-surrender is not an abject slavery that you are manifesting before a power due to your weakness. It is an understanding of the greatness of that supreme independence, communion with which is a gaining of true independence by yourself also.

So if you are really, honestly, sincerely interested in living a life of yoga, spirituality, religion, the path of God, then your sacrifice of your ego is called for before this might that manifests itself as the Teachers and the Prophets and the Incarnations of the world. Only a disciple can learn from a Guru, and one who is not a disciple has no relation to a Guru. Therefore, he has no relation to God also because what is called a Guru is only a symbolic manifestation of that supreme power and independence of God the Almighty.

Thus spirituality, yoga, religion is a life of tremendous discipline, in regard to which I placed before you a few ideas yesterday as a sort of preface which I dilated upon a little more today, which we shall try to touch upon in some more further details in days to come. May God bless you!

Chapter 3: The Sadhana Panchaka by Acharya Sankara

There is a famous five-versed poem called Sadhana Panchaka by Acharya Sankara, or at least attributed to his authorship, which concerns itself in a very concise manner with the stages of the practice of true spirituality, the procedure of engaging oneself in *sadhana*.

For the last two days we have been bestowing some thought on the preliminaries of even a correct understanding of what religion can be, what spirituality is, and what yoga is to mean to us. Yesterday, particularly, we had to conclude with a note on the necessity for renunciation, the development of a spirit of non-attachment, which is often identified with what traditionally goes by the name of *sannasya*. We could find time to ponder over some of the difficult issues arising out of the very concept of *sannyasa* and the errors of jumping into sudden conclusions in such important matters as these.

In these verses known as the Sadhana Panchaka, many a thing is told. Almost every verse has eight instructions. Different things are told, all very important. Though the spirit of the teaching of these verses has some relevance to the historical conditions of the time when it is supposed to have been written and is very ascetic in its note, it is at the same time of a perennial value if the ascetic injunctions which we seem to read in them are to be studied with a knowledge of the background of the injunctions themselves.

Every religion, every mandate or guideline in the direction of God, a life religious or spiritual, invariably seems to be involved in the emphasis on what is called renunciation. We understand a religious person to be a renunciate, and this was the subject we were trying to understand yesterday. What is it that we are really going to renounce in trying to implement this essential injunction that renunciation is an imperative precedent to any genuinely spiritual or religious life?

We had a humorous consequence drawn out of our workaday definitions of *sannyasa* or renunciation. "I have renounced the world and I own nothing." We were trying to know what kind of world a person is expected to renounce, because the world of geography, the world of astronomy, does not belong to anyone; and a thing that does not belong to you needs no renunciation. It is important, therefore, to remember what exactly it is that you think is your belonging which you are supposed to renounce by means of the axe of detachment.

There is nothing in this world which seems to really belong to us. We are not owners of any property in the real sense of the term. We have no say in any matter concerning the working of the world. As I mentioned to you yesterday, you cannot renounce the hills and the mountains, the rivers and the oceans, the roads, and the stars and the sun and the moon, which is the world. Who is going to renounce all these things? If these are not the objects of renunciation, what else is it that you are going to renounce? And why is it that

religion emphasises and lays intense stress on this need for what is well known as renunciation, *tyaga*, taking to a life of sequestration, a life of complete isolation, *kaivalata*?

This point is pithily mentioned in this verse belonging to the Sadhana Panchaka. Bhavasukhe dosho'nusandhiyatam (SP 1): The perception of defect in the satisfactions and joys of life automatically necessitates a distaste for what people usually call the values of life. The values of life are the joys of life. We do not call pains of life as the values of life. And are there joys in life? This is an investigation which a carefully conducted analysis will carry on philosophically, logically, scientifically, dispassionately. There is no doubt, at least from the point of view of man in general, that there is joy in life. If there is no joy in life, who would like to live here for three days? The point is not that we do not discover a veneer of joy or satisfaction in life. The point is, are we justified in our assumption that we are really enjoying satisfactions here, or are we under a misapprehension?

There are a hundred ways of conducting this analysis into the structure of the world as a whole, and this is precisely the function of philosophy. What the world is made of, implying thereby what man also is made of, will reveal what the world can give us—what we can expect from the world. The occupation of philosophy is this much: an investigation into the reality of the world as a whole. This investigation seems to present a different picture altogether of the essential characteristic of this world we consider as the source of our joys and satisfactions, even of our sorrows.

There is an almost unanimous conclusion arrived at by deep thinkers of great stature, both in the West and in the East, that there is a basic mistake in our perception of things; and an assumed validity of our process of perception also brings about, as a natural consequence, an assumption that the conclusions that follow from them are also valid. If something is taken for granted as a hypothesis, everything that logically follows from it also has to be accepted as valid. If the premise is valid, the conclusion should also be valid; but if the premise is not tenable, we should be careful to come to conclusions about the results that may follow from drawing deductions from such premises.

We have certain hypotheses, and we are born with these assumptions we may call our prejudices embedded in the very structure of our psychic personality. Our understanding of the world is nothing but the reaction set up by our psychic individuality in respect of what may be there outside us. Thus, our understanding of the world seems to be a psychic reaction. This is something very important to remember, and you can very well know to what extent you can rely on this understanding if it is only a tentative rebuff emanating from the present prevalent condition of your psychic personality in respect of the conditions prevailing outside.

There is a great difficulty before us here. The world passes through several processes of vicissitude historically, geographically, astronomically, physically, chemically, and biologically. So is the way in which we also undergo an incessant transformation, and our experience of the world, which we call pleasure and pain, is just this much: the peculiar adjustments and the reaction which follows from the given condition of the psychic personality of the individual in respect of a given condition in the world outside.

Neither the human individual as a percipient of the world, nor the world as an object of the percipient, are static indivisible masses. The world is a flux, as many a thinker has said. So are we, so is everything, even up to an atom and a grain of sand. This movement, this flux, this incessant transiency of every constituent composite, whether outside in the form of the world of perception or inside in the form of the percipient individuality, brings us to a crucial issue which needs consideration: How are we to come to any final conclusion about any experience of ours at all?

Is there a finality at all in this world which, transitory as it is, carries with its transitoriness of motion everything that is also with it—myself, yourself, everybody? This peculiar enigmatic character of the fluxation of the inner constituent of all things is evidently one of the reasons why people such as Buddha said there is no permanency anywhere. There is only transiency, and that much is this world.

From one point of view, this may be a very correct deduction from existing verifiable premises. A transient reaction by a transient constituent of the percipient to a transient condition of the object outside cannot but be transient. Hence, the joys and the pains of life are also transient. Here comes the forte of a teacher like Buddha. There is nothing substantial, nothing solid, nothing that you can call durable even for a split of a second. You cannot step into the waters of the river even for a second without actually stepping into a different water altogether. The flame of a lamp is not a mass; it is a moving fluxation of atomic energy.

What are our experiences, then? Our experiences are like the fast-moving presentation of cinematic pictures. For half an hour a person may be standing and gazing at you in the film projected on the screen, but he is not standing there. That impression on the mind of the percipient of this picture on the screen as a standing posture is a composite illusion created by thousands of movements which constitute this apparently standing posture of the person. So the apparent fixity of a thing may be only an illusory presentation of a tremendous rapid movement inside, though we may think there is solidity. And apparent fixity of things, the tentative feeling in our minds that we are living a continuous life for days and months and years, is supposed to be attributable to a peculiar harmony and a

temporary generality that is at the back of this incessant fluxation, both in the constitution of the percipient and the world outside.

Now, we are human beings in a general sense, so there is a general uniformity in the way of our thinking, but in details we are different from everybody else. In minute details of our personal lives, one cannot agree entirely with the other though we speak of a single humanity as if it is one single indivisible entity. I am bringing this illustration before you to explain how there can be a tentative reliable presentation of fixity of perception and a feeling that there is a uniformity and, therefore, a permanency in our experiences in life, notwithstanding the fact not a single individual can be totally identified with another individual in any way. In every sense you are different from another person, but you somehow or other get on with these inward fluxations of your composite personality, differing altogether from others by planting yourself on a generality at the back, as in the illustration of the cinematographic presentation, the screen is the picture which gives the idea of permanency. If the screen were not there, there would be no pictures visible.

It is very important to remember that this world is a transiency, and how could you call anything meaningful if it is just a bundle of transiencies? It is only movement without anything that is moving. Something flying—only flying is there, but nothing is flying. “Such is the wideness of the world,” said one conclusive character of Buddhist psychology.

There is something very important in all these conclusions. They are not totally wrong. The world is totally void. It contains nothing if it is true that it is only transiency. ‘Transiency’ is only a word meaning nothing finally, because there cannot be transiency unless there is something which carries this characteristic of transiency; and that something cannot itself be transient, a point into which a teacher like Buddha did not want to revert, for obvious reasons.

Bhavasukhe dosho'nusandhiyatam. These joys of life are a phantasmagoria. This is like the city that is seen in the clouds, a circle presented by the movement of a firebrand, water in a mirage. These are illustrations given of the structure of life. And don't say, “I am permanent; I am living for many years.” I have already told you this assumption that you are living continuously as an indivisible unit is a false picture that you are presenting of yourself, because you are mixing up by means of a peculiar error—what is known as *adhyasa* in the language of Acharya Sankara and Vedanta philosophy—a mutual transposition of characters. The character of the screen in the picture hall is transferred to the moving transiency of the projections on the film, and vice versa. Thus is the beauty of the cinema.

There is, therefore, the necessary for *adhyasa* in order that you may enjoy anything or even suffer anything. This *adhyasa* is a Sanskrit word meaning 'a mix-up of values'. The utter transiency which is the essence of individuality, or the essence of anything in this world, is made to appear as a permanent, valuable and reliable something on account of a screen that is behind. This distinguishing analysis between what is really there as a screen giving the impression of permanency, and the transiency of what is really there, is called *viveka*, discrimination. So, *vairagya* cannot be there unless *viveka* is there. There is a necessity on your part to develop this intellectual, analytical acumen by which you can distinguish between appearance and reality, the transiency of things and the permanency which has to be there in order that you may be even under the illusion that there is such a thing called transiency. As Acharya Sankara would say, even the appearance of a snake cannot be there unless there is a rope at the back. The appearance of water in the desert cannot be there unless there is desert, and so on. Illusions, mistaken notions and utterly miscalculated conclusions also have at their back something which prompts these conclusions. This distinguishing ability is the *viveka shakti*.

And what are you renouncing? I am coming to the point we left yesterday. All teachers of religion and spiritual life tell you to renounce. You have to renounce that peculiar accretion that has grown on the screen of permanency in the form of the joys and sorrows of life. What you call the world that is to be renounced is a very difficult thing to understand. You cannot easily know what sort of world it is that you are going to renounce. In fact, you are going to renounce a world which is not there at all. This is very strange indeed. Am I going to renounce a thing which is not there? It is really not there. The world is not there; it is a void. But why should I renounce a void which is not there?

The renunciation here consists in actually abandoning the mistaken notion—underline these words 'mistaken notion'—that what is really a passing shadow looks like a real substance and reality. It is a withdrawal of consciousness from projecting itself into the phenomenon of space and time. That factor—space and time—which is invariably involved in every process of perception causes the externality of the world, and this notion that the world is outside you compels you to move in its direction. You have naturally to develop a relationship with that which is outside you. Whether the world is really outside you or not is a different matter. That compulsive factor of space-time and causation, as they say, forces you into the belief that the world is outside you, and anything that is outside you requires on your part an adjustment of yourself, and you engage in this adjustment and adaptation either by liking a thing or not liking a thing. Likes and dislikes follow. *Raga-dvesha* automatically result from ignorance of the fact that transiency cannot be reality, appearance cannot be the Absolute, and what is not there

cannot be what is there, really speaking. What is, is certainly different from what is not, but a mixing up of what is with what is not is empirical life.

Renunciation is difficult. You cannot easily practice renunciation. I concluded yesterday by saying that all this difficulty arises because you have not found it either necessary or possible to sit at the feet of a master, a great Guru, a teacher who represents this wisdom. Who wants a teacher? Everybody is a teacher himself; everybody is a guide, everybody is a leader, and nobody is a servant of anyone. This attitude has to be shed because the world is made of such stuff that it cannot bend before your little understanding. This is just an empirical projection of your own whims and fancies, and nobody has succeeded in bending the world before himself. It has managed to kick him out. All Caesars and Napoleons have gone to the winds; such is the power of the world. The power arises in the enemy due to your not understanding what the enemy is made of. Your ignorance of what is in front of you is your weakness, and that is the strength of the other party.

So *viveka* is the first thing that is enjoined upon a true spiritual seeker. *Vairagya* need not be practised subsequently as a different item altogether. A person who has woken up is not sleeping. It is not that you wake up first and sleep goes afterwards. They are simultaneous occurrences. *Vairagya* is not something that follows afterwards as a child being born to a father. It is an automatic occurrence. The gaining of health is also the removal of the disease. The rise of the sun is the exit of the night. And this illumination called *viveka* is at once *vairagya*. Who will eat poisoned food even when he is really hungry? Even if you have starved for days and days and you are writhing with gripping hunger, would you eat poisoned diet? So is this illustration of great masters. These joys of the world are delicious dishes presented before you mixed with utter poison; and what this poison is, one cannot easily discover because the poison is mixed without your knowledge. If you know it, who will go for it? If you know that you are entering a death trap, will you walk over that place which is meant for catching you? If you eat poison, one life is cut off; but if you eat the poison of desire for objects of sense, several lives may be ruined. This is a verse from one of the minor Upanishads, evidently quoted from the Yoga Vasishtha.

Why so much emphasis on non-desire for objects of sense? I have already explained to you the metaphysical background of the need to have no desire for anything. It is not an instruction given to you by somebody, like the judgement of a court upon a client: Do this or don't do this. It is a wisdom that is made to awaken in yourself. The objects of sense are not sources of satisfaction, and your experiences in regard to the objects of sense—the world as a whole, in general—these experiences are passing phenomena; therefore, your

joys are unreliable phenomena. Today's joy is tomorrow's sorrow, and so on. No one can have real joy here, and no one can be permanently unhappy also, because the joys and the sorrows are temporary reactions of the subjective transient constitution of individuality to a similar constitution of the world outside. Thus, the whole world is perishable.

These are some of the philosophical foundations behind Acharya Sankara's little instruction on the practice of *sadhana*, which he tries to explain in a few verses in what goes by the name of Sadhana Panchakam. I was told, "Say something on Sadhana Panchakam," but I think I have told you something more than what is actually readable there on the surface. The very foundation of this instruction is given to you. Renunciation, *sannyasa* as it is called in Sanskrit—the life of an ascetic, a recluse, an ashram life, a life of a spiritual seeker, a religious mendicant, a devotee, a servant of God—what does all this mean, finally? Well, you may say it is rootedness in God. But again we come to another difficulty. What is this rootedness in God? *Atmeccha vyavasiyatam* follows: Having discovered the defective character of every experience in life, joyous or otherwise, root yourself in the true Self of the cosmos, Paramatman, the Supreme Self.

What is this Supreme Self, the God that you are speaking of, and what actually do you mean by fixing yourself on that reality? Here again we are on the border of the same difficulty which you are trying to forget: "How am I to relate God to the world? How am I to relate this world to God, this so-called transiency you are speaking of catching hold of my throat every day, and that which you call the permanency of life?" I will have something else to tell you in the days to come.

Chapter 4: The Stages of Karma, Upasana and Jnana in Our Spiritual Growth

In the light of our attempt at a study of the prerequisites to spiritual practice as we have considered up to this time, it would appear that the whole adventure is a graduated process. It is a living, growing and fulfilling advance which the true being of the person makes in the achievement of its purpose, its aim, its goal. Nothing is done in a hurry. It is always considered safe to take firm steps, though they are slow steps and not slippery ones, though they may look like fast ones.

The accepted tradition of the practice of *sadhana* chalks out a program which, in the language of an accepted ancient system, goes by the name of karma, *upasana* and *jnana*. To translate it literally, it is action, contemplation and knowledge. The one is not to be compared with the other, as if one is better than, or worse than, the other. As it was stated, these are to be regarded more as stages of ascent, rather than watertight systems of practice to be chosen according to one's predilection of this or that, exclusively.

These stages, reputedly known as karma, *upasana* and *jnana*, are not three paths of practice. They are three stages of the ascent in the spiritual fulfilment of the total personality of the human being. It is a veritable procedure and technology of education of the human individuality. The lower and the higher, as stages of educational advancement, are not to be compared with each other as lower and higher. They are necessary stages. "I like only meditation. Why should I do any work?" There are some who think in this manner. "All this is Brahman. Why should I contemplate on anyone? There is no personal God. I like only Nirguna." These are only some of the whims and fancies of certain illiterate spiritual seekers.

There are others who think humanity, humanity, humanity; service, service, service; work, work, work. And nothing is equal to that, nothing superior to that, nothing comparable with it. These are all extremist views of protagonists who take sides under the impression that the sides they have ignored or rejected either are unimportant, or perhaps do not exist at all. Neither are the ignored sides non-existent, nor are they unimportant.

The human personality is a very complicated structure. It is not something easy to understand. Our body is not just a bag into which we fill some food and pour some drink. Many young ones, children, and those who are not tutored adequately may be under the impression that the human body is only a barrel, that it is a vacuum inside, and we can go on filling anything into it as if it is a drum. No one knows what is operating inside the body. Only one who is acquainted with the anatomy and the physiological system within will know that the human body is not a barrel, is not a drum, is not a bag. It is not a sack into which we can throw anything we like.

But this knowledge that the body is not a sack or a bag, that it is something quite different and astounding in the way of its operation and reaction, will be known only to a deep investigative faculty arisen by profound education along these lines. Well, this is only to speak a little about the human physical body.

But man is more than the body, as can be easily ascertained. Our destiny, our joys, our sorrows, our aspirations are not really connected with the anatomy or the physiology of the body. Our feelings rule our destiny to a larger extent than even the health of the physical system. Our longings and our griefs, our disappointments and our breakdowns in emotions tell upon us more vehemently than even what can happen to us by starvation of the physical body. The body can stand starvation for some time, but not the feelings, not the emotions, not the curious reason which wants to know all things, not the inner longing of the root of man to fulfil himself in every way. These inner upsurges of the human personality cannot be stifled, and they cannot observe a fast. They have to seek their fulfilment.

Spiritual practice, to revert to our original point once again, is not an occupation, a job that you choose as you would like. You are free to choose any particular vocation according to your requirement, knowledge or capacity from among the many other jobs or occupations that are also accessible and possible, but spirituality is not such a job which you can choose. It is not one among the many pursuits of life. Here is a vital point that has to be driven into the minds of every sincere seeker.

Religion, call it spirituality, is not a way that you choose. It is not a path that you tread among the many others possible. It is the background, the very sustenance, the very basis, the meaning, and the foundation, the total essence, the very substance of anything that you can consider as meaningful or worthwhile in life. There is no such thing as taking to religion or resorting to spirituality. Such a thing is a misnomer.

The path of yoga, the path of religion or spirituality, is not a resorting to some way of living. It is an entering into the field of the totality of life. Thus, what you wrongly and in a miscalculated way call spirituality, religion, is not a Godward otherworldly movement from the existing world of physical realities. It is such an involvement in the total reality of life, visible or invisible, that the true spiritual seeker, *sadhaka* or religious aspiring soul becomes a perfectly healthy, developed whole being belonging to the world in its entirety. A spiritual seeker belongs to the world. Such a seeker does not belong to a little community or a family. He or she ceases even to have the consciousness of male or female when the intensity of spiritual aspiration takes possession. The spiritual seeker is radiance rather than a human being. It is a light rather than a personality. It is a response from within to the call from the eternal, rather than a man or a woman treading the path of

religion. It is the answer of the soul within to the call of the Almighty. This is spiritual sadhana. Here the question of cult, creed, religion, colour, distance, direction and sex do not arise.

Thus it is that when you tread the path of the spirit, when you enter into the way of what is called spiritual practice, you overcome the limitations of an ordinary individual and become rather a super individual. Let us not use that magnificent word 'superhuman'.

Karma, *upasana* and *jnana*—action, contemplation and wisdom or awakening—the stages mentioned according to accepted tradition, correspond to the stages of ascent of the inner constitution of the human individual. We live in a social world, and we live in the midst of people around us. There is nature, there is the atmosphere of the physical world, and there is the environment of humanity around us. Whatever be the truth of things finally in the end, there is also an empirical truth, visible truth, perceptible truth, experienced truth, which is the truth of involvement in the world of nature and the world of human society.

Action, karma so-called, the initial stage as it is usually considered to be, may be regarded as a necessary art of fulfilling the obligations which one owes to human society in which one is situated and in which one is involved, and according to the old, accepted tradition, these obligations, while they can be manifold, have been classified into at least five different essentials.

The duty towards your ancestors who brought you up is not to be considered as a non-essential. You know very well your parents have taken care of you; in your upward enthusiasm, may not this little essentiality be ignored. I was talking to an old man a few minutes before I came into the hall who was telling me to give him refuge in the ashram. Though his grandson is like a king, the grandfather wants refuge in the ashram. I told him, "Your grandson is a king, I know very well. How is it that you have no refuge except a tree and a little ashram?" This is modern education where grandparents have no value at all. Fathers and mothers lose significance when the son becomes a youth and has found it possible for him to live a newly wedded life of opulence with an imagined strength and a vainglorious satisfaction in life. This is very unfortunate.

We have a duty to everyone whose salt we have eaten, whose protection we have secured, who has sweated for our upbringing, and we owe perhaps some duty even to that soul in whose womb we have been writhing for several months. We owe perhaps a duty to the father who sent us to the school, to the parent who saw that we don't fall off a precipice and break our legs, or touch a fire and burn our fingers, or go and fall upon a

snake or a scorpion. We have been guarded against these obnoxious possibilities in our untutored ignorance of childhood. How can we say that we have no duties?

Well, there are many other duties apart from our duties to ancestors. We have a duty to our teacher, the master. He may be the teacher in a primary school. Can you say you have no respect and regard for him? The teacher who taught you in the schools, the professor who enlightened your brain in the university—you have no duty towards him? You have no regard for him? You do not owe anything to him? Are you superior to him? Are you imagining that you have just dropped from the skies like a sweet fruit and nobody has taken care of you?

There is a duty towards parents, there is a duty towards the superiors who have taken care of us, guided us, advised us and protected us and helped us in some way or the other. We have a duty to our teachers, to our schoolmasters, to our professors, to our guardians, to our guides in the universities. And we have a duty to many other things whose breath we are breathing. Even the tax that we pay to the government is not to be avoided. We have to pay the tax because the government protects us. It is not asking us to pay a charity to it. Everyone knows how a government is necessary. We have created it as an unavoidable necessity for protection, and the origin of the governmental system is well known to everybody who is acquainted with the philosophy of political science. If it is not a necessity, why should it be there? Let it not be there; you will see what happens to you. And people don't want to pay tax. They avoid it somehow or other as if it is a grudging consideration on your part, a kind of dole that you are giving to the government. It is a little requirement that is demanded from you for the salt of the government that you eat. By salt, I mean the protection that you gain.

So is the human society—the neighbour, the community, the person next door. He is a friend, and he has some regard for you. The person next door is not a nobody. Some consideration on your part is expected in regard to that person also.

The five *mahayajnas* mentioned in ancient traditional circles have relevance to this point. When you have received knowledge from someone who had that knowledge, it follows that the person who had that knowledge shared that knowledge with you. You are today illumined because one who had that knowledge had the goodness and the charitableness of sharing that knowledge with you, so you too have to share that knowledge with others. *Adhyāpanam brahmayajñah*, says the Manu Smriti. *Brahma yajna*, or the sacrifice of knowledge, as you may call it, the sacrament, the worshipful adoration of knowledge is the respect that you pay to it by sharing it with others, and keeping the line of tradition of the continuity of this learning, and not breaking this thread. If no one had taught you, what would you have known? You would have been in

ignorance. So if you have received something from others, why should not others also receive something from you? Be charitable. Share your knowledge by teaching: *adhyāpanam*.

Pitryajñas tu tarpaṇam. I mentioned that you have an obligation to your ancestors. Ancestors, of course, may mean our own parents, grandparents, relatives who are alive here. They may also be those who are not alive in this world, because there is no such thing as really not being in this world. To this essential point I made a reference sometime back that there is no such thing as running away from the world because the world is everywhere, wherever you go. Even if you shed this body, you will be in the world only—in another realm of the world, but not away from the world. Likewise, there is no such thing as a dead and non-existent ancestor. Nobody is really dead; somewhere they are, and it would be a propitious gesture from your side to regard those ancient ones whose vibrations may perhaps be still active in the veins of your own body.

According to Hindu tradition at least, we believe in sixteen generations of ancestors. There is a ritual called *shraddha*, what is called *pinda dhana*, etc. This is an external ceremony which is indicative of a remembrance on our part of sixteen generations behind us. The seventeenth generation is dropped, according to tradition. The idea behind this seems to be that the power of the ancestors through sixteen generations may have some impact upon us. Their thoughts and the components of their blood may perhaps be capable of being traced in the little genes and chromosomes in our own body. Maybe after the sixteenth generation they may be completely transformed. These are mysteries into which we have no proper access. So we have a duty towards ancestors who are both alive and not alive by our daily prayers for their welfare in whatever realm they may be, and for their salvation, if that could be in our hands to some extent.

Homo daivo balir bhauto nryajño 'tithipūjanam, is a verse from the Manusmriti. There are powers which guard us. It is not merely the army and the police that protect us, though that is also true to some extent, as I mentioned to you already.

The gods in the heavens are not non-existent chimeras. They are realities. If you exist and I exist, why should they not exist? The gods, so-called, the deities, are referred to in a famous verse of the third chapter of the Bhagavadgita. Sahayajñāḥ prajāḥ sṛṣṭvā purovāca prajāpatiḥ, anena prasaviṣyadhvam eṣa vostv iṣṭakāmadhuk. Devān bhāvayatānena te devā bhāvayantu vaḥ, parasparam bhāvayantaḥ śreyāḥ param avāpsyatha (Gita 3.10-11). Propitiate the gods because due to their superintendence over you, you are alive here, whether you know it or not. Who knows what authority the sun in the heavens has over your eyes, the organs of perception? He is supposed to be the deity over the eye, and it is believed that every limb of the body has a deity.

“What is this deity?” you may ask me. It is not the time to go into details of this intricate subject. When I spoke on several occasions previously, reference was made as to what these deities are. They are the necessary connecting divine elements between the subject and the object, the seer and the seen, yourself and the world, consciousness and its content, without whose intermediary operation knowledge itself would be unaccountable. Your knowledge of the world outside, your consciousness of anything being there outside, is due to the presence of something which is either a transcendent being, as you may call it, or something in which both you and your object is involved.

The god that we speak of is a relative term. This is the reason why we have many gods in religions. The many gods are not like many persons. They are like various grades of the authority exercised by the supreme divinity. In a way, we may say all the officials in the government are one person only. They are not many persons, though they look like many persons. And similarly, these gods look like many divinities but are not many divinities, as there are no many governments though there are many officials. These officials are gradational descents of a single authority at the top, called the governmental ordinance. So these gods are the officials, and they are multifarious. They have to be such, yet they are one only in the end.

Thus is the way we may try to understand what these gods are. They have some say over us, and we offer our prayers, our worships, our pujas, and all those rituals called adoration, prayer, worship, mass or whatever be the name you give to it according to your own religious tradition. These are the obligations, duties, karmas you owe to these divinities. When you cannot directly contemplate them and mentally adore them, you perform this worship through an external ritual in the form of offering of a flower, waving of a light or pouring sacred ghee into the holy fire. If your mind is strong, external forms may not be necessary; internal communion is adequate. But you know very well an internal communion is not practicable for those who live in an external world of outward relations. So outward performance of rituals in the form of worship is important as long as you consider there are people outside you and the world is real, external to you.

And you have a duty even to animals. Don't think that you are a human being and, therefore, you have concern only with human beings. Humanity, mankind—you go on crying hoarse as if the world is made up of only human beings and there is nobody else. Perhaps the world contains greater truths than what man can imagine in his mind, and the powers that govern the world are superhuman, not human.

Well, apart from human beings, there are powers which are sometimes considered by us as subhuman, but they are not. The power of an atom may be called subhuman, but you know what power it is. The power of electricity, the high voltage current, is

subhuman, but you know its strength. And all the powers that you can recognise in the five elements—earth, water, fire, air, ether—may be said to be subhuman, but you know their strength. They can wipe you out in one minute, though you think you are human and they are subhuman.

You have, therefore, a duty of consideration even for those little humble creatures who cannot speak in a language—the cows, the dogs, the birds, and even the ants, says the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. Disturb not even an ant in your house. Don't crush it and throw it out with a broom. It is not a poor nothing. Unfortunate is the knowledge of man if he thinks that the ant is a poor nobody, and that it has no say in this world. It has as much a say as the Creator Brahma himself may have. So the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, especially towards the conclusion of the fourth section of the first chapter, is eloquent when it stresses to harm not even ants in your house, and feed them. And what does the Upanishad tell you? These little things whom you have taken care of and fed with love and affection will take care of you one day or the other. A mouse can save a lion. Let not the lion say, "You poor mouse, what can you do to me?" Do not proud men say, "You poor ant, what can you do to me?" And you know the story of how a mouse could save a lion. If that is true, pride not your ego, and do not pat yourself on the back unnecessarily that you are the crown of creation. Nothing of the kind may be true.

As the Upanishad puts it here in this context, extend the love of self to even these little creatures. If you harm them not, if on the other hand you take care of them and disturb them not, they will love you as their own self. As you have extended your selfhood to them, they will one day or the other find an opportunity to extend their selfhood to you. As you do to others, so you will be done. Be careful. This is called *bali yajna*. In ancient tradition people keep a little rice or foodstuff outside for crows, dogs, cattle, whoever they be.

And you should not gulp your food without having any consideration as to what is outside. The Smriti says that just at the time when you are taking your meal, says the Smriti, have a look around and see if anybody is standing at your door. You may ask him, "Have you taken your meal?" It is your duty to ask. And if he has not, may you share what you have. This is *atithi yajna*.

These *yajnas*, the five mentioned as *mahayajnas*—*pancha mahayajnas*—are not merely expiations for commissions and omissions, as they are sometimes interpreted to be. They may also be regarded as essential duties. You owe a duty to everyone and everything whose support you receive knowingly or unknowingly.

You have a duty even to the very five elements: the earth on which you are seated, the water that you drink, the air that you breathe, the heat that warms you, and the very space

that accommodates you. Says the Manusmriti, the very five elements will stand witness one day or other for what you have thought, felt and done.

Karma, action, duty, obligation is not a non-essential as over-enthusiasts in religion and spiritual life may imagine. Shirking duty is not equivalent to running to God. There is no connection between the two. "Make friendship with your brother first before you enter the Kingdom of God," said Christ.

Thus, karma is the stage which is essential in the ascent of the spirit to the ultimate goal of life as enunciated in our tradition. I have tried to explain this in some detail as would be comprehended by you *sadhakas* seated here, and I am sure you have noted down these essentialities for the time being.

Chapter 5: Upasana or Devotional Worship

Performance of duty is not only a discharge of the obligation that we owe to the environment in which we live, but it is at the same time the manifestation of the necessary cooperation that is expected of us in regard to the environment of which we are an integral part, and without which cooperation our very existence itself would be at stake. Thus, the performance of duty is not a grudging condescension on the part of a person as a charity, as it were, that he doles out to others in a highly lofty superior attitude. We do not render service to others because they are poor and we are rich. This is not the reason. The service that is expected of everyone is not a superior attitude expressed by an authority, as it were, in regard to one lesser or lowly placed. These ideas, though very wrong indeed, cannot be easily avoided. There is a spontaneous feeling of superiority whenever one recognises another as someone placed on a lesser pedestal than one's own self. This feeling should not be there for obvious reasons, but nevertheless it is there. The idea of superiority and inferiority does not leave us. It will not easily leave us as long as we are alive in this ego-ridden bodily complex.

The service, the performance of duty, a philanthropic attitude, a cooperation that you extend is to be defined only as duty, and there is no other suitable word to describe what exactly it is. A duty is not a charity. It is not a help that you render as a more powerful person to a weaker one. It is a duty in the sense that it is unavoidable, inviolable, a must and an imperative—compulsive, not in the sense of a compulsion coming from somebody outside, but a compulsion arising from a higher dimension of your own being. The compulsion of duty comes from you only; it does not come from others.

But here is another difficulty for us to understand. The obligation, the injunction in regard to duty appears to be a command received from others. Therefore, we resent it oftentimes. But the command of duty, the imperative so-called, does not come from others. These so-called 'others' are only a phenomenal expression of your own higher self and, therefore, it becomes impossible for you to violate this command that may look like a thing coming from outside. The outsideness, again, is a misnomer. There is no outsideness, really speaking, because you know a thing that is really outside you is not connected with you and, therefore, you need not be afraid of it. You are not obliged in any way whatsoever to a thing that is totally outside you. The fact that you seem to be terribly obliged and feel the need to kneel down before that compulsion coming from outside, which you so much resent, shows that this so-called outer mandate does not come from an area that is totally outside you. If that were the case, who would listen to any instruction, and why should there be any kind of law, regulation or any kind of authority at all? What authority can there be upon someone who is totally independent?

The inviolable need felt to be subservient to an authority is at the same time an acceptance of the fact that the instruction, the direction, does not come from outside. This is a very interesting logical and psychological background of the environment of so-called duty and obligation in which we are placed. This is a philosophical analysis which goes into the very root of the nature of human duty and performance, and therefore, no one can grudge the performance of duty. "Why should I do this? I do not like it." These statements have no sense because a thing you would not like to do, you will not do. A grudging performance of a duty is the outcome of a malaise, a malady in the mind, a kind of illness that has crept into the brain of the person which, on the one hand, feels the need to perform that action which seems to be a compulsive force upon it; and, on the other hand, it resents it.

There is a dual conflict of psychic individuality in a person who does a thing grudgingly; therefore, there is no such thing as doing a duty with resentment. Either it is done, or it is not done. Such is the very intricate structure of human duty in this world of internal relations, which are not obvious before the perceptive empirical eye.

There is a simple moral which is expressed in half a verse in the Mahabharata: Do not do to others what you would not expect to be done to you. There is no need of reading many a book. You know very well how you would expect other people to behave with you, it is clear to every conscience: "I wish that all people in the world should have this kind of attitude towards me." Do you think that others do not have this feeling? And if that is the case, can you afford to have a different attitude towards others, and grudgingly condescend to be of some service to others? Would you like others to grudgingly do some service to you?

Here is something which takes us beyond ethics and morality. The need to be ethical and moral, the need to perform duty, to discharge one's obligations, and the necessity for being righteous and cooperating in every way in life arises on account of a deeper-than-ethical structure of the universe, and that is the foundation of something which is breathtaking, into which we gradually enter when we ascend the pedestals of spiritual practice, sadhana, a Godward movement of the human soul.

The need to be cooperative with everyone whom you consider as apparently outside you arises on account of the non-separateness of these so-called persons and things from you. Otherwise, there would be no duty in this world, and you would not have to do anything at all. You can close your eyes and wither away in this world. Unknown, unwept, unhonoured, unsung you can quit this world. This is not possible because there is a need to extend cooperation. From where comes this need? It arises from the very simple fact that the so-called others, in respect of whom you are expected to extend

cooperation, are not outside. If they are outside, cooperation is not necessary. There is no need to do anything. The world would vanish in one second if this were the fact.

So the spirit behind the performance of duty, the essential at the back of the discharge of obligation or the paying of one's debt, comes out onto the surface of our understanding when we go deep into the diagnostic rock-bottom of the need to do anything at all in this world.

Yesterday I mentioned a sentence, or even a half sentence perhaps, that there is a deity, there is an angel, there is a god, there is a divinity, there is a superintending principle beyond both the percipient and the perceived world, a reference to which is casually made in the verse of the Bhagavadgita I quoted yesterday: *devān bhāvayatānena te devā bhāvayantu vaḥ, parasparam bhāvayantaḥ śreyaḥ param avāpsyatha* (Gita 3.11). "Discharge your duty to the gods," says this verse.

The gods are not persons like us, though they can assume personalities in a different sense altogether. And I also made reference to the organisation called the government, which is not a human being but it can manifest itself through a human being. A god, therefore, is not a person, but this divinity can manifest itself as a personality if the necessity arises. Money is not something visible to the eyes. It is a power of purchase, but it can manifest itself as a visible something which we keep in our purse, and so on.

The higher reaches of spiritual practice or *sadhana* take us to a level or realm called *upasana*, devotion, adoration of a divinity or a god, the need for which arises because there is something at the back of even the necessity to do anything in this world. That which is at the back of your obligations to persons and things in this world is the divinity so-called, the god that superintends over the relationship between you and the world or people at large, invisible yet immanently present—invisible because it is not an object. If it were an object, it would not be the connecting link between you and the object. Therefore, the god that you are referring to here, the angel, the divinity, has to be invisible. You cannot see God with your eyes. The moment you see Him, He ceases to be God. He becomes something like any other object in the world. A divinity, a god, an angel, a superintending spiritual power is what is referred to in this little verse of the Bhagavadgita—that which comprehends you as well as that which you see with your eyes; that which you contact with your senses as an object; that which is between you, and yet includes you both. Here is something very important for you to remember. It is that which is neither you nor the object which you see, but that which includes you and that also.

This is a little hard for the brain to comprehend, but once it enters your head you will be thrilled and be in a state of such joy that you are always guarded by a power which will

not allow a hair of your body to shake. There is a protection behind you always, and you are never in peril if this divinity is to guard you.

But the god loves only itself. It cannot love somebody else. There is nothing outside the god, whatever be the level of your conception of this god. What you call a god or angel or divinity is a principle outside which nothing can be because, as I mentioned, it includes you as well as the so-called object of yours, and hence, you cannot say there is something outside. Therefore, your relationship to this divinity cannot be as if it is a relationship to somebody external to you. Do not bring this logic of externality even in your devotion to God, whatever be your notion of God.

Now, this is a very difficult thing because our understanding is not usually accustomed to think in this manner. We can never think impersonally. We are always persons and persons and persons. We cannot believe that law is a universal principle which is not intended to harass us. It is an acceptance on our own part of a need to be subservient to that which is superior to us—superior not as something or someone sitting on a chair physically above us in space, but superior logically. Your so-called boss is not a physical superior, but a logical superior. Many will not be able to understand this because you see another person like you even when you consider that person as a superior. That superiority is not a person.

Here again is a difficulty before us. The superior in any sense, whether in an office or in a religious field, is not a person. If that is a person, then that person cannot be your superior because you are equal to that person. The superiority, or superiority of that so-called position you call the authority, is an impersonal pervasiveness which is not standing outside you, though apparently to your empirical eye it may look like that person is sitting on the chair. Otherwise, you cannot be subservient to that person. It is a pervasive force which includes you also, and that principle which you call the superior is the symbol of the exercise of that law which is necessary for your own maintenance also and, therefore, a law which you accept of your own accord. It is a self-ordinance that you are manifesting from yourself. So there is no such thing as resenting law, just as there is no such thing as resenting duty. A law is not made by somebody outside you, but many of us may be thinking it is made by some people who are very selfish. It is nothing of the kind. A law is a pervasive inclusiveness in which you are also comprehended; therefore, it is intended for your good also, for your protection. When I say it is for your protection, it means for the protection of everybody like you also. So sometimes it may appear that it is not intended only for you. But man being what he is, he wants everything to be for him only, not for anybody else.

Therefore, a sufficient intensity of education is necessary here even to understand the principles behind the political administration, the principles behind social cooperation, the principles behind family maintenance, and the principles behind even being a good person. These are not simple things, as they may appear.

The *upasana* that spiritual circles enjoin upon a seeker of truth is, therefore, an adoration of a divinity that is not outside you. It is that which includes you also. That is why you are thrilled before it. You are thrilled when you think of God or even a representation of God, even a lower degree of your notion of God, because even that lower concept of God is a concept that overcomes the limitations of your present individuality. Otherwise, who will worship any divinity? Why should you worship an image? Why should you bow down before a photograph or a painted picture of someone whom you adore? What kind of adoration is this?

You are not adoring an outside painted picture, idol, photograph—nothing of the kind. You are adoring a principle, a pervasiveness, a universality, a superior position which cannot be outside you, which is inclusive of you; therefore, you are obedient to your own higher dimension. You are obedient to yourself only, not in the sense of a person, but obedient to your larger self. If this is not acceptable to you and you cannot understand it, you also cannot understand that famous verse of the Bhagavadgita which says, *ātmaiva hy ātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ* (Gita 6.5): Your self is your friend, your self is your enemy. You are your friend and you are your enemy. This statement of the Bhagavadgita also means you become your own enemy when you resent the performance of duty under the impression that it is doing something for somebody else, while it is not so. The performance of duty is the discharge of an obligation—not in respect of another person, but in respect of your higher dimension, which includes others as well as yourself.

So is *upasana*—God-realisation or God concept or the worship of a divinity. It is a still further rising up of the level of your consciousness. What does it mean? In the performance of *upasana*, worship of a god or divinity, what do you do? You place yourself in the presence logically, not physically, not by way of a measurement of distance by a foot ruler. God is not sitting five feet in front of you. This god is a pervasiveness, a superior, a comprehensiveness, an integrality, and therefore, it is something superior to you in a very, very significant manner. You cannot but obey it. You cannot say, “No, I do not worship God. I do not care for anybody.” These statements lose sense in the light of the impossibility of a person to exist without the cooperation of that integral environment in which one is involved, whether you call it a society, or you call it a divinity

superintending over both you and the object, or humanity, the world that is outside. So what is *upasana*? It is worship of a god.

I mentioned that sometimes it appears that they are many gods, and I also told you how there are no many gods, though the concept of a multitude of gods is unavoidable under the circumstances of the present way of human thinking. But the manifoldness is not in any way a contradiction of unity. The manifoldness of the limbs of a human body does not contradict the unitary character of your personality. You are a single Mr. so-and-so, undivided in every way, indivisible to the core, in spite of millions of cells being the constituents of your personality and several limbs such as hands and feet forming part of you. So multiplicity need not always contradict unity. There are conditions where they can be coextensive and in harmony with each other. There are stages of this realisation. There may be a stage where the very notion of multiplicity may be redundant. We need not go so far. But at a particular level they can be harmonious.

The *upasana*, the devotional worship which is considered as a next step, as it were, is a larger absorption of our consciousness in the light of its involvement in a spiritual inclusiveness, a god who sees us with an eye that is intuitive and not perceptive. You have heard that intuitional perception is different from sensory perception. God knows things intuitively and not sensorily. We see things sensorily, look at objects with our eyes. Therefore, everything appears as if it is outside us, and we have a difficulty in maintaining a relationship with other people in a harmonious manner. But intuition is an eye which does not require spectacles. It is not an eye in the ordinary sense of the term. It is the vision of the soul. It is not the physical eye or the orb, the iris that sees things here, but a radiance, a light that emanates from what you really are. I have made a reference that you are an indivisibility in respect of an apparent multiplicity of your personality; therefore, when the vision of this real indivisibility of yours becomes the instrument of knowledge, it becomes intuition, and the indivisible intuitional cognition would be an intuitive, inclusive perception. It will not see things as if it is outside.

In intuition you do not see an object outside, though you see it. The eyes see a thing as if they are outside in space and time; but the intuitive vision, which is the integrality of the manifestation of the light of the soul, visualises also its object, if at all you can call it an object, as an integral something. This is exactly what the Yoga Sutras sometimes refers to as samadhi. In samadhi you are in communion with the object, people say. You are in communion with the object in samadhi in a very special sense, not in an ordinary sense of your understanding of the coming of one in contact with another. Samadhi is not a contact. It is *asparsa yoga*, as great masters sometimes say. It is non-contactual contact. It

is a coming in union with something, no doubt, but it is a coming in union as if you are awakening from dream or sleep.

The object of intuitive cognition is a part of yourself, referring to what I told you a few minutes before. An intuition is the vision of your own larger self which includes everything that you originally considered as outside you, so intuition is not an inferior perception. It is not something irrational, as some of the rationalists of the West may retort. Intuition, mystical vision, is not irrational, it is super-rational. It includes everything that rationality may comprehend. It is inclusive of everything that the eyes can see or the ears can hear, and yet is beyond.

In *upasana* you are endeavouring to commune yourself with the deity by way of adoration and worship, but this worship has to arise from your heart. It begins with a ritual. Rituals are not unnecessary things because the concept of externality, though it is not finally tenable, is a level of understanding and experience which has to be paid its due. Therefore, when you pay the due in respect of that which you consider as outside you, it becomes cooperation, it becomes duty, and so on, and in the religious realm it becomes a ritualistic worship.

The service that you render becomes a social cooperation in the lower level; it becomes a religious ritual in the higher level. It is necessary at a particular stage. Why is it necessary? It is because of the very impulsion which the empirical self of the human being feels under a given condition. We cannot but express ourselves in an empirical fashion as long as we are placed in an empirical circle. We have a hazy vision of a superintending universal principle around us and above us, and this surge of the innerness of ours in respect of that universality above us compels us to bow our head down even physically. It is, therefore, a physical external visible manifestation of an inward notion of our obedience of a larger self to our own self. Thus, ritual is a religious performance, and it has no contradiction with our higher meditations. Therefore, those who think that idol worship, ritual, etc., is nonsense do not understand human psychology. They perhaps do not understand even religion itself.

Everything is necessary, though nothing is ultimately necessary. There is nothing so irrelevant and meaningless in the world as to deserve total neglect or disregard on your part, yet there is nothing so meaningful as to deserve your clinging to it as a final reality, as an end in itself. So is the background of the need for worship, *upasana*, which begins with adoration, religious worship, some form of which you are seeing here in the ashram itself, and perhaps you will see it in all religious centres, temples, ashramas, churches, everywhere.

The need to be religious, therefore, arises on account of there being a reality above us. But for that, religion is not necessary. There is no meaning in it, and no sensible understanding would feel that such a superior inclusiveness is not there. There is always a feeling within us that there is something beyond, but for which we will not raise our finger for a moment, but for which we will not hope for a next better day, but for which we will do nothing in this world, but for which we would not have any kind of optimism in our life. All positive thinking is an indication that there is something higher, superior, more inclusive. Else, we would not be here alive for three seconds. That we are alive with a hope for a better future is an indication that there is something superior, higher, more inclusive and, therefore, deserving of our respect and adoration. And what this adoration is, in what way this adoration is to be manifest from our side, I have tried to dilate upon in a few words. These will be themes for a little further consideration in the coming days.

Chapter 6: The Secular and the Religious are One

This Law that the universe itself is spiritual practice, *sadhana*, is essentially an effort at the awakening of a consciousness in respect of the relation that obtains between God and man. In what way are you related to God? The implementation of the necessary consequences that may follow from this awareness of your relation to God is spiritual living.

I have specifically used the words “the implications and the consequences that may follow in practical life from this awakening into the consciousness of the relation between you and God”. First of all, it is necessary to awaken yourself to this consciousness, because most of us are not acquainted with the subtle relation that is between God and ourselves. You may glibly say God is everywhere, but you do not know the consequences of this statement because if He is everywhere, you cannot be anywhere, and you know very well you are certainly there. Therefore, your statement that God is everywhere is a way of talking, without properly going into the results that may follow from these utterances.

But something miraculous is supposed to result, not this peculiar difficulty that I suggested at present due to your inadequate understanding of the consequences thereof. A wonder will be your life. That is the only word with which can describe the result that may follow in your practical life in this world if you are able to clearly visualise before your mind’s eye the meaning behind the establishment of yourself in that consciousness of your relation between man and God. This has perhaps been explained to you majestically and very comprehensively.

This is the root of the whole matter. This is the foundation of spirituality, which goes by various other names also—as religion, yoga, mysticism, samadhi, meditation, and so on. Yesterday I tried to explain certain features of a devout adoration of God the Almighty, which is a principle stage in the advance in the direction of the achievement of the goal of life.

I have also taken time to explain the need to perform duty in this world, to discharge our obligations and pay whatever debts we may owe to any person or to any kind of circumstance or environment. I have also mentioned that there is no such thing as running away from responsibilities. Nobody can ever succeed in doing that, because your obligation is the need on your part to fulfil the law that operates in the universe, and inasmuch as nobody can run out of the universe, nobody can escape the performance of duty that one owes towards the fulfilment of this law that the universe itself is.

In fact, the universe is not a substance or a thing. It is a law. What you call the world, what you call the universe, is a state of being, rather than a thing that you can touch with your hand. It is a condition rather than a substance; therefore, you will realise and

appreciate that it is not only necessary to correctly apprehend the nature of the duty that is expected of us in the station in which we are placed in human society, but at the same time we must appreciate the need to be true to that obligation. This purifies the mind, and if the mind is not purified—it is filled with some impurity in the form of a muddle of thinking—any amount of advice or instruction given even a thousand times will not enter into the brain of a person. So it is an exercise for the teacher only, and not for the student. He can go on repeating it; it will be a meditation for him. But whether the students are benefitted or not, the Almighty only knows.

The reason is, impurity of the mind—*mala*, as they call it, which causes *vikshepa* or tossing of the mind. *Mala*, *vikshepa*, *avarana* are the three terms usually used to designate the difficulties before us. There is a big list of *mala* given in the Vedantic texts such as the Vasudeva Manana, a very famous introduction to Indian philosophy. *Raga*, *dvesha*, *kama*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *moha*, *mada*, *matsarya*, *irsya*, *asuya*, *dambha*, *darpa*, *ahamkara*—thirteen are mentioned there. It is enough for you. These thirteen constitute a linkage of bondage, and this is what is called the dirt of the mind. As a clean mirror covered with thick dust will not be able to reflect light or absorb the luminosity of the blazing sun in the sky, a mind that is ridden over with this dust, this dirt, will not be able to absorb any sound advice. It will not understand and appreciate, much less be able to put it into practice.

The tossing of the mind is called *vikshepa*. The mind cannot concentrate on anything for a long time. Its difficulty is the necessity it feels to experiment upon various avenues of success in this world. “I may not succeed in this line; I may succeed in that line.” It has not succeeded in its efforts along one direction, and it has now found it possible perhaps to move along another channel; there also, it has not succeeded, so our life ends in a series of experiments without any palpable achievement of victory or attaining anything worthwhile.

The discipline which the ancient students underwent before a competent Guru or master is today considered as an old-fashioned educational system. We think we are so modern and excessively advanced in our cultural progress that the system of personal discipline under a teacher is not necessary. We have only books and libraries, papers and pens, and there the education and the discipline is over. With this background we come to spiritual institutions with an ego, to put it very plainly, with a sense of self-importance and a feeling that one already knows enough and is not bankrupt in understanding. With this complacent, self-fulfilling egoistic adurance of the psychic individuality, students approach a master more to test his knowledge rather than to learn anything from him. This is the fate of mankind today. And where comes God, where is religion, where is

spirituality, where is peace of mind? Where is social amity and even the minimum social affection, consideration for another and a capacity to understand?

So the prerequisite which is the purification of the mind by self-discipline, by sharing with others what you have, by service of the master—*viddhi pranīpātena pariprāśnena sevayā* (Gita 4.34) as the Bhagavadgita puts it—these are not only necessary presuppositions of a further advance in religious practice, but unavoidable conditions. And a double promotion here cannot be expected. It is a hard discipline indeed, and whatever the difficulties of discipline ancient masters and students of yoga underwent, we too have to pass through without any kind of expectation of a concession. Natural laws do not give concessions. They are equally distributed with a uniform vehemence of their requirements from our side.

Thus having considered something in regard to the need for the purification of the mind by service, cooperation, discharge of obligation and performance of duty with a proper understanding of the same, we feel the need to raise ourselves and to lift our personal status to the level of a deep contemplation of a higher divinity, which is called *upasana*, worship of God, adoration of a divinity, a placement of ourselves in the vicinity and atmosphere of a transcendent being, to which reference was made yesterday.

A nearness to God is established in what is called *upasana*. You are always near God—of course, it is true—but here in *upasana* you are becoming conscious of this nearness to God, and this consciousness of your proximity to this transcendent principle becomes the motive force behind your forms of adoration and worship, even if it be in the capacity of a ritual that you daily conduct as a routine. The ritual is not a physical performance. It is a gesture of the psyche from inside. It is an expression of your feeling and consciousness, and it is a manifestation of what you really are, or at least what you feel you are, in that context of your longing to be in the presence of that supreme superintending principle, the divinity, the god whom you worship.

As I mentioned yesterday, the Bhakti Yoga Shastra is the area which covers this vast area of discipline of devout adoration of God by various means of diverting our attention to a being which is neither a subjective percipient nor an object of perception, but something transcendent to both the visible object and the visualising subject. Thus, in this diverting of your attention to the transcendent principle of *upasana*, which is worship, which is puja, which is your daily religious performance, you are actually attempting a superhuman feat. You may call it a circus feat of climbing on your own shoulders, if you would like to call it so.

When you are seated in a holy shrine or in your puja room for the purpose of adoration of the Almighty in your own way, you are performing a tremendous feat in the

internal operation of your consciousness. What is that feat? It is an uncanny exercise by which you feel attuned to that which is neither you, nor that which you see with your eyes. You don't remain there as so-and-so when you see an idol before you or contemplate an object so-called in your religious adoration. The worship in this process of *sadhana* is not an adoration of something that is outside you in the form of an idol or so on. Again I revert to the example of the governmental system I mentioned to you. Do you not salute the flag of the government on Independence Day? Is it not outside you? It is outside you, but when you salute, adore, pay respect to that flag which is outside you, you are not respecting that which is outside you. Your respect is to that which is universally operative as the national spirit, which cannot be called an object of your senses. The respect that you evince to the spirit of the nation in your obeisance to the flag is not an obeisance to some object outside, though it appears as something visible. You can see a piece of cloth hanging there, and you salute it and chant a holy hymn. Here is an example. Notwithstanding the fact that you apparently seem to be adoring an external something in the form of a flag, an image, a worship, painted picture or a photograph, an idol, yantra, mantra, tantra, whatever it is, you are actually contemplating in your mind that which is not limited to that object but which is the fire, the force, the energy, the universality that is behind this particularity.

Again I repeat the analogy of the national spirit. It includes not merely the flag; it includes you also. The spirit of the nation whom you are adoring, whom you are respecting through this adoration and saluting of the flag, is not only in the flag; it is in you also. So what are you actually adoring? It is something which you are not able to think in your mind. The saluting of the flag is a mechanical ritual which you perform without actually knowing what exactly it implies. It is a tremendous significance which you are evoking from within your heart when you adore this flag, or salute it. What does it mean? You are not looking at something outside you. You are inwardly contemplating something which is represented by this flag, and which is represented by you also, who are saluting it. The subject that you are, the object that the flag is, both are comprehended in that which you are adoring and saluting.

So is the *upasana*. Whom are you worshipping? You can imagine how this is a feat of exercise. I told you this is a feat. It is a feat because it requires a little effort of thinking. Otherwise, you can say, "Namaskar, Om Namo Narayanaya," and mean nothing in your mind. This will not produce anything worth any significance or meaning if religion means mechanical adoration of something whose significance is not clear to the mind. Even if your understanding of spirituality is only this much, you are what you are, and

you cannot expect to be more than what you are. The *upasana* is not a mechanical adoration of any object.

So, bring to your memories once again the significance of these few words that I placed before you: It is a wonder. *Āścaryo vaktā kuśalo'sya labdhā* (Katha 1.2.7), *āścaryavat paśyati, āścaryavac cai 'nam anyah śṛṇoti* (Gita 2.29) says the Upanishad, says the Bhagavadgita. To hear these things is a wonder, to listen to these expositions is a miracle, and to be able to understand what is said is a great miracle. If you are able to understand and appreciate the spirit of what is told to you, it is a wonder indeed, because what is told to you is itself a wonder. It is not some little thing which you can see in the world, though the whole world is contained within it. Such is the grandeur of spiritual practice, *upasana*, religious adoration. What is the intention? What is the purpose? Why do all these things?

These questions must have been already answered by what has already been said. Why all these efforts? Why should we engage ourselves in all these difficulties? The reason is, to say once again, you are in search of your own larger eternal being. You are in search of infinity and eternity in the quest of even the little joys and satisfactions of life. These purposes that you wish to fulfil by means of your activities in this world are actually symptomatic of your search for eternity and infinity. This is the reason why you would not like that your life should be cut off even after five hundred years or a thousand years. Whatever be the little joy, whatever be the little comfort, whatever be the success even in its minutiae that you may have achieved in life, you would like to live in this world for as long a time as possible. Even a wretched existence would be worthwhile if it is to be continued for a long time. Even an ant does not wish to die. It wriggles out of the clutches of anyone who wishes to catch it.

The desire to live endlessly is the desire for the eternity of existence, which your basic self is. And the desire to possess infinite things in the world, infinitely great, endlessly possessive and to have suzerainty over an infinite area or locality of jurisdiction is a desire for infinity. Your longings are for the infinite and the eternal; therefore, these longings of yours cannot be for any object of the world. Though it may appear that you want money, you want social status, you want friends and relatives, you want a nice family and all physical comforts in life, accepting all these things, you will need to realise an underlying significance and hidden meaning behind these longings.

The hidden meaning of these longings for the tinsels of the Earth is that you ask for that which is timeless and spaceless. You are asking for that which is eternity and infinity blended together, blended together in such a way that you cannot know what it actually means. Where space and time come together and become one being, you do not know what that one being can be. How could you imagine anything which is neither space nor

time, but which is more and which is above both? Such is the thing that you are asking for; that is the thing that you long for; that is the thing that you need, and you don't want anything else. Your asking for a family life and asking for children, welfare, security, joy—all these are symptoms, outward forms, shapes taken by your inward asking for that which is not of this world, that which is not transient.

You may ask, "So why should I undertake any kind of exercise along the line that you are prescribing? Why do anything in the name of religion and spirituality?" Because it is the arduous effort of every living being to realise That which is utterly perfect. If you call it religion, please yourself by calling it so. If you do not want to call it by that name and want to call it by another name, call it by another name. That which goes usually by the name of yoga, religion or spirituality is the system of that perfected form of integrated living which can be accommodated into the law of eternity and infinity, which can be accommodated with the system that prevails in the universe and which can make you a citizen of the creation of God.

This is the reason why no one can be wholly irreligious or unspiritual. Even the so-called irreligious, unspiritual movements that appear to be prowling like wild beasts in this world today in man's history are blind gropings of the very same search for eternity and infinity, wrongly manoeuvred and erroneously conducted. A right thing is wrongly attempted by the errors of mankind. Thus, the blunders that man commits, the errors of human history are the mistaken movements of a blind consciousness which is searching for the very same thing which everyone has to seek, and there cannot be any other aim in life.

So there is no such thing as irreligion or unspirituality. It is a science of existence that you call spirituality or religion, and it is not, therefore, a kind of occupation to which you can give a little of your time. Inasmuch as it is not a job or an occupation and a vocation of your life, it is not enough if you give a little time to it, because the whole of your time is intended only for that.

Then you will ask, "What about the other duties in life? If I give the entire time for religion, for spirituality, for worship, for study, for meditation, what happens to my other secular duties?" You bring an argument of your own. Again, I request you to remember what was told to you earlier. There are no such things as secular duties. Such a thing does not exist. The so-called secularity of obligation, performance and discharge of duty in the world of human society is the outer expression of this inner determination which is called the regulative principle of the science of existence called spirituality or religion. The more you are truly religious, and the more you are spiritual, the more competent you will become even in your so-called secular duties.

The distinction that is usually drawn between secularity and religion is the fallacious distinction that people draw between the world and God. When you say the secular thing is here and the religious is there, you inadvertently mean that the world is here and God is sitting there. Therefore, let God mind His business for some time until I fulfil my duties in this world. If this is your idea of the relationship between world and God, then all that will be a waste.

There is no gap, even to the width of a single millimetre, between God and the world. There is no distance between God and the world; therefore, there cannot be distance between the religious and the secular. Therefore, they are not two things. It is a double or dual significance you attribute, a dual nomenclature that you are trying to associate with that which is basically integral, like a rupee coin which has two sides. You cannot have only one side without the other side. One side is religion, the other side is secularism. If you say you want only secularism, it means you want half the rupee only, and split it. It is not possible because they are the obverse and reverse of the same coin. They are two features, inseparable features, facets of the single crystal of a total life. That life is called spirituality, that is religion, and therefore is the need for you to be religious, to be spiritual; therefore, it does not mean that it is different from being engaged in the work of the world. The work of the world, the duties you are to perform in life, are not outside the purview of religion and spirituality; they are part and parcel of your great adventure in the direction of the experience of the ultimate goal.

Thus is this little introduction before you. Suffice this to be a little preface to a great task that is ahead of you. You yourself will realise in your own practical life that you would be a better person in every way if this knowledge has taken possession of you, if this knowledge has become your being. “If knowledge has become your being”—remember this very well. If this understanding has become an emanation of what you are, if it is not merely an accumulation of information that you have gathered from somebody else, if consciousness is being and being is consciousness, if your awareness of this fact is the same as your existence and vice versa, if your existence or being is the same as this consciousness, you are living spirituality, you are living religion and not merely hearing about it or reading about it in a scripture. Religion is living; spirituality is life. It is yourself. What you are is the spirituality that you live, and what you are in your own self is the religion that you practice.

Thus, you will be a light before everybody else. A true spiritual seeker, a sadhaka, is a light, a flame before others, a torch which can shed some lustre on the path which is trodden by other people also. You will not only be a source of immense relief and satisfaction, you will also be a medicine to the illness of tensions of every kind to other

people also. You will be happy, no doubt, but your very personality will be a radiation and an exudation of this joy to others also. Your personality will speak; your mouth need not open. A spiritual seeker is an example of the presence of this proximity of being to God.

This is, therefore, enough for you if you can masticate and digest these ideas and absorb them into your being so that this knowledge is your being. Sattaiva bodho, bodha eva cha satta: Existence is consciousness, consciousness is existence, *chit* is *sat*, *sat* is *chit*, knowledge is you, you are knowledge.

Knowledge is not in the books. It is not a technology that is capable of implementation only through an instrument which is outside you. You yourself are the instrument, and therefore, yoga is self-discovery. It is not a discovery of something outside you. And this art of self-discovery is also the discovery of the whole universe. Know thyself and you know that also. The knowledge of that is also the knowledge of this. The knowledge of this is the knowledge of that. One who knows one's own deepest being knows the whole universe, and one who knows the universe knows the Self. Thus the universal Almighty is also the Self of all beings, and that which is the Self of all beings is also the infinite existence.

How can you say that this is not for you? And if it is not for you, for whom is it intended? This is unavoidable. This is the science of life, the art of existence, the logic of your practical getting on in this world, the very meaning of any existence that you can conceive of in your mind. Such is the glorious idealism which is the most practical realism of life that Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj and stalwarts of his nature have been untiringly proclaiming to the world of humanity through history.

Here you are seated in this holy atmosphere of the sacred shrine of Sri Gurudev, and I am certain you return from this place charged with a power that is not of this world, with a grace that you may not even be aware of as having descended into you. You become better, and you are one step ahead in the direction of being a super-personality, implying thereby that you have taken at least a single step in that directionless direction which is the soul's movement to that which is everywhere. You can know very well what sort of movement it can be if it is a movement towards that which is everywhere. Here is some homework for you to think deeply: How will you move to that which is everywhere?