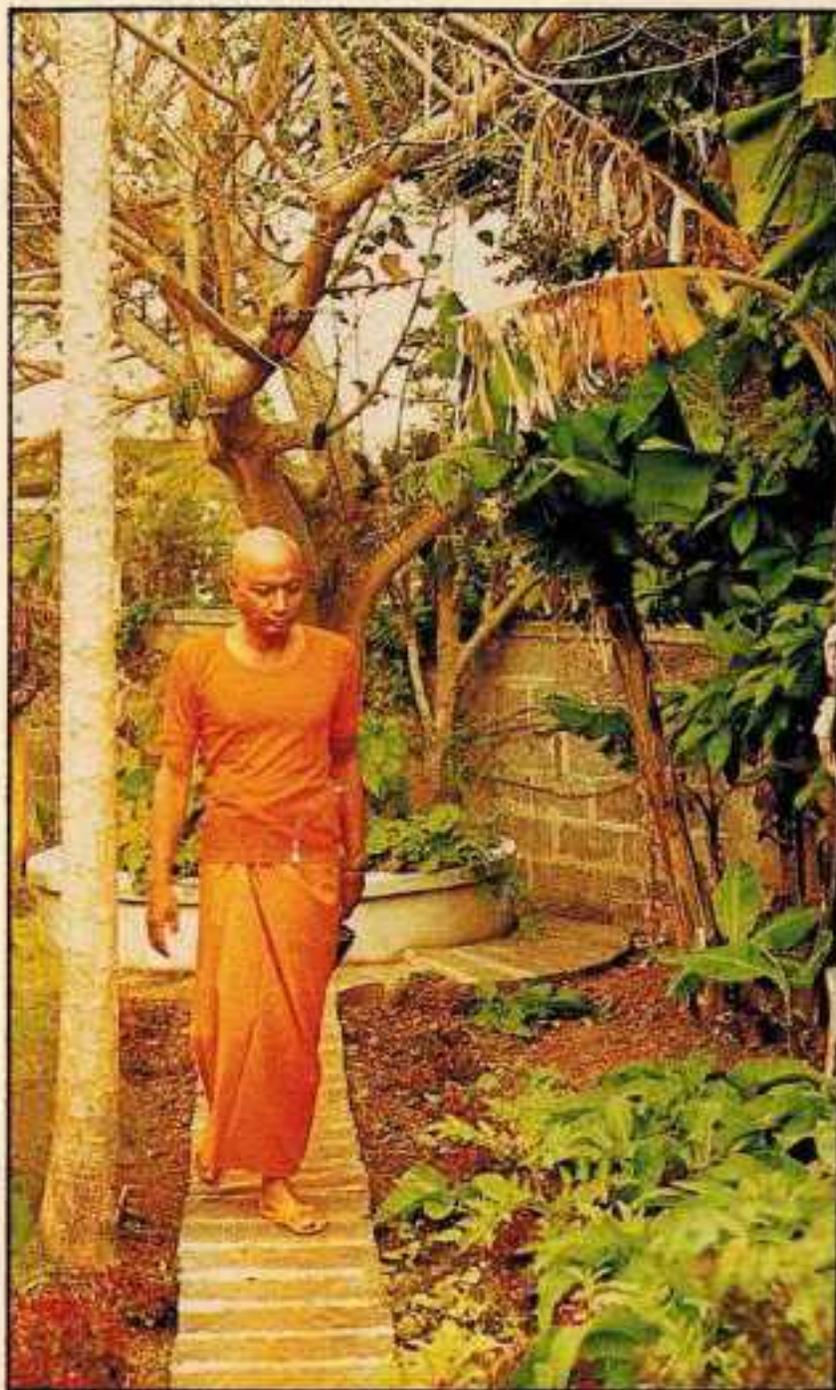


# TOTAL LOVE



VENKATESANANDA



# The Bhagavad Gita Chapter 12 Total Love

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**The Bhagavad Gita  
Chapter 12  
Total Love**

**Contents**

**lectures on the 12th Chapter of the Bhagavad Gita  
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What Is God?  
Love Is God  
How To Love God?  
The Least of My Creatures  
Surrender  
The Search for Truth  
Knock and It Shall Be Opened

## 1. What is God?

The twelfth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita deals with bhakti: divine-love or God-love. Unfortunately we have misused the word 'love', so we have to use the adjective 'divine' or 'God'. It may be a good idea to look at this word 'love' before going on to its description. If you look at the word 'live', you discover that, in order to live, you have to do something very drastic, not merely breathe or eat - that is easy. The word live is the complete reversal of the word evil. L-I-V-E - E-V-I-L. You have to turn completely away from evil; and unless you do, you have not started to live. We don't begin to live at all until we recognise what evil means, and we turn away from it.

What is evil? Evil is not what the scriptures say it is. If you look at the word again, probably the meaning will become absolutely clear. With the four letters E-V-I-L, there is one more word possible: V-E-I-L. What is evil but a veil? Supposing you ask yourself very simple questions: what am I? what is all this? what is this world? what is life? If the answers to these questions are veiled, then there is some evil in the heart and in the mind. That veil may even appear to be a religious veil or a non-religious veil, an irreligious veil, a theistic veil or an atheistic veil. In all so-called ancient cultures, you have this dreadful phenomenon of the religious tradition itself becoming a veil, a menace. I know this first hand. "This is religion - you are superior, the other person is inferior. This is our tradition, you are born a brahmin, you are born a holy man, and the others are unholy." However unholy your behaviour may be, you are still a holy man; and however good the other fellow may be, he is still a bad man, a god-forsaken person in the eyes of the traditionalists. So, both a religious veil and a non-religious veil hides the truth.

Who am I? What am I? What is this life? Why am I here? The mind itself might provide an answer. You will see that it comes from the veil. For instance, who am I? "I am a Hindu." That is what someone told me. That is a veil, not the truth. What am I? "I am a swami." That is not truth, that is what someone told me; forty years ago I was not a swami.

All self-images are veils, and all self-image generates evil. If I can completely turn away from that, it is then that I begin to live. But, 'I' begins to live, and 'I' may even pretend that I am completely free of all veils. One way of expressing this freedom is to throw off all the clothes. That is easy, especially if it is hot, and you feel like it - and if you have a nice figure, there is no problem. But that is not throwing off the veil which is the self-image. Can that be discarded? When the scriptures suggested that we shouldn't adore an image, it was this self-image that was meant, not images and idols. It is the self-image that is the danger.

When you think that you have turned away from evil, and therefore you think you live, it may even be true that, according to your standards, you are free from evil. You have a standard, and in India also they have a standard, a description of what a swami should be - and, as long as the swami conforms to those standards,

he is worshipped. A swami should have a shaven head, wear orange robes, and not even look at women, and not eat this and not touch that. As long as he does all these, at least in public, he is venerated, and, especially if he can talk, he is adored. Therefore, it is even possible for one to convince oneself that one is completely free from all evil. For instance: "I am 80 years old, and so I am free from lust; I have a bunch of cronies around me who obey me implicitly, and therefore I never get angry; I've got a few treasurers, and therefore I don't touch money, I let others handle all that business on my behalf. So, I am pure, I am free from all evil." 'I am free from all evil' - in that expression is the source of all evil. That ego, that vanity, is enough to create a whole host of evil. Even when a man pretends to be holy, it is because he is so terribly anxious to preserve that self-image. When you see someone like Baba Muktananda, you see something different. He is natural, he is naturally beautiful. My Guru, Swami Sivananda, was also like that.

Self-image can even achieve the semblance of absence of evil; but, it is all hidden in that one self-image - 'I'. Therefore, let us go back to this word 'live'. You have turned away from evil, but you are hanging on to that self-image; and while you live the self-image is extremely important in that living. L-I-V-E - the most important part of that word is the 'I', and as long as the 'I' is there, it can turn upside-down into evil again. As long as there is this self-image 'I am a holy man', you can become the most unholy man on earth - you are an unholy man already. So, you look at that word again, and you realise that, unless this 'I' - the ego - is dropped, there is no hope.

There are dozens of stories - especially in Indian scriptures like the Bhagavatam - where we are told that divinities in the kingdom of God fell because of this vanity. These stories may be allegories, or they may be true, but they hold for us this marvellous lesson: however holy you are, if the ego, the self-image is still there, there is danger of a fall. You are still not out of the woods.

If we rub that 'I' out, we are left with L-V-E - we can't pronounce it. We go shopping for a vowel which is the direct antithesis of 'I' - which stands erect and says, "Do you know who I am?" The antithesis of 'I' is 'O', which bends double, which is humble - not because it pretends to be so, but because it is naturally so. Pick up that vowel and put it in its place, then 'live' is 'love'. If we learn to love, there is absolutely no problem.

This love is not what you and I have made it out to be - 'I love you.' In 'I love you', the 'I' is still there. And therefore, I can stop loving you, I can hate you! Only when this 'I' is completely abolished, and love alone prevails, is it possible for that love to be natural, effortless, choiceless. You have no choice but to love, because you 'are' love.

This is the essence of yoga. If love is there, then whatever you do is yoga. If it is not there, then whatever you do, it is not yoga. You can stand on your head for six hours a day, and you will probably not have grey hairs, but that is not yoga; you are not a yogi. You can be a very religious person, but very diabolical. One of the

officers of a south Indian temple said, "When God wants to send someone to hell, he appoints him a priest, because that man has no faith at all." The man who worships the deity in the temple has no faith at all in it, he only does a job for a living. You may do all these, but none of these things is yoga - until you have discovered the key to life. The key to life is the substitution of the 'I' with the 'O', to discover love. This is the essence.

We are told right from the beginning that you should love your guru, a saint, a holy man. There is a beautiful expression in the Bhagavatam which says that it is bondage to be attached to anybody, but if you have to be attached, better get attached to a holy man. He is unattachable. You hang onto him, and he refuses to be clung to; and, in that you will learn what it is to be unattached. So, love has to be sublimated. You love your husband, very good; you love your wife, very good - gently change it, transmute it, sublimate it. See that in any 'I love you' relationship, there is the 'I' again. If you love a saint, a holy man, he will teach you how to love without the 'I' loving 'you'. In his behaviour you will see this. One day he will say, "Oh what a nice, wonderful girl you are." The second day you will be completely ignored; and the third day he will publicly ridicule you, so you think that he doesn't love you anymore. The next day he will beckon you "Come, come, come," from a great distance. Suddenly the image of love that you had is smashed. You suddenly realise that this 'I love you' business is a business, not love. Love is something quite different. Here is not a binding love but a liberating love; here is not an attachment which is called love, but a freedom that is love, love that is freedom. Suddenly you realise that this love is divine. It is not human, though it includes human affection.

I have never experienced such love and affection as I have in my contact with my guru Swami Sivananda and Baba Muktananda, J. Krishnamurti and some others. Please let me confess to you that I have been surrounded by love - everyone who comes anywhere near me loves me, there is no doubt about that. But that love which I experienced with Swami Sivananda, Baba Muktananda, Krishnamurti and others is something in a class by itself. You suddenly realise, 'This is love!' All the rest is something else - attachment, affection, attraction. That love is divine. That love is God. When that love is not there, we remain restless.

Bhakti is usually translated into divine love; but the word also means division. That is where we start. We start with an idea of division - 'I love you.' In 'I love you', there is frustration, disappointment. For instance, she loves you for some time, and then she doesn't love you. You are shocked, disappointed, frustrated. Then, if, by God's Grace, you come into contact with a holy man, you transfer all this love onto him - "I love you, my guru." Then he plays ducks and drakes. You don't know where you are from one day to the other, but still he doesn't let you go - and this love gets a shake-up. You still feel that you are different and separate from him. Then, gradually, he hammers at the self-image that you may have. This thing which was two - 'I love you,' is slowly being smashed, because the guru enables you to realise that that love is not love - it's a business transaction. Then

it is possible that gently the guru might divert your attention to God. The guru says, "You must love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might, with all your strength," in order that you may not cling to him.

Still there is this ego-sense which is very strong. The ego-sense does not go away by merely wishing, because we are encouraged to maintain this division. God is there, and you are here, and you sit and worship that God. Or, you sit down and meditate upon God - sitting upon God! I don't know what meditating upon God means. Or, you sit and visualise God within your heart; God suddenly becomes so small that you can fit him into your heart! Please don't think I'm ridiculing these practices, they are very good. But the techniques of visualising God in one's heart etc. have been given to us merely as an exercise. The heart in this context is merely a focal point. Incidentally, it is not the physical heart that is meant, but the spiritual heart - consciousness. To visualise the presence of God in your heart means that you visualize God as the as the limitless Being - but it is not usually explained that way. We are asked to visualise a little God in the heart, of the size of the thumb of a newborn babe, a very nice and neat little image. That is as a focal point. Your attention is scattered over a million things in this world; and, in order to help gather the rays of the mind, they suggest this little exercise. But it does not mean that that is the be-all and end-all of it, that that is what is going to lead you to God-realisation. In the Bhagavad Gita, Krsna uses an extraordinarily beautiful expression:

*mayy avesya mano ye mam nityayukta upasate (XII:2)*  
'Enter yourself into me.'

Krsna tells us here, "Don't try to push me into your heart. You are a small little creature, and I am infinite." Instead of entering God into your heart, enter yourself into God.

I suggest the following technique: start with this little image in the heart, because that helps you focus your attention and concentrate your mind; then quickly draw closer and closer and closer to that divine presence, until it occupies your whole being, until you begin to feel, "God, you alone exist, not I. There is no room for a 'me'." With your heart, with your soul, with your entire being, you enter into that presence. And then you begin to feel that we are all in this God, who pervades everything - not he in us. We are all in him.

Only if that becomes a direct realisation, are we out of the woods. Only then are we free from the possibility of the arising of evil. When there is this direct realisation of this cosmic oneness, the cosmic Being whose cells we are - souls - only then we live, and only then we love. It is then that we would know what to do with each other - whether to love each other, or even to destroy each other; to serve each other, or to ignore each other.

Love is the natural expression of Oneness that alone exists. All the rest is attraction, attachment, or infatuation, which is bound to have its own reaction. 'I love you' must lead to 'I hate you', one of these days, if we live long enough.

In this 'I love you' relationship, there is always a motivation. "I love you because - because you are beautiful." What happens if your beauty is lost? Or "I love you because you are wealthy or very intelligent, so that I can be proud of having you as my friend." What happens if you lose these qualifications? You have the famous example of Peter in the Bible. It may have other meanings. I am drawing one single meaning from that episode. If someone is famous and powerful, you say "Oh, I know him; he is my friend." When he is in trouble, you might probably say "I am just a casual acquaintance; I don't know him very intimately." And if some FBI man comes and asks you "Do you know this chap? He has been accused of murder", you say "Well, I just met him at a party; I don't know him." That is what happens. This 'I love you' relationship is a menace, is hypocrisy.

When there is this direct realisation of the infinite, when you realise that only God exists - or, what exists is God - and in that cosmic Being we are all but cells, then there is a purity in relationship, there is no self-image anymore. The self-image is gone, we being an inextricable part in that cosmic Being. That is God-love. In order to reach that, Krsna tells us:

mayy avesya mano ye mam nityayukta upasate  
'Enter yourself into Me. Don't enter Me into your heart.'

Remain constantly united with the cosmic Being in this manner. Then you are the greatest of yogis.

## 2. Love is God

It is possible for someone who has heard a discourse on the importance of the glory of love to say, "I love my father - or my mother, or my husband, or wife, or child. Is that not enough?" Or we have some sort of glorified concept, "I love my country - or my religion. I am even prepared to sacrifice my life for my country - or for my religion." All these are defective, for the very simple reason that they spring from the ego - they are promoted by the ego, practised by the ego - and, they promote the ego. Hence, in the case of all these so-called 'loves', you find a reaction.

Love is quite different. It arises only when the 'I' has become a zero. You can see this in the case of a really enlightened man, like Swami Sivananda, or like Baba Muktananda. They don't have to say "I love you." In their look, you see something extraordinarily beautiful. This love does not spring from the personality, and is not directed to the personality either. Only that is love.

yetv aksaram anirdesyam avyaktam paryupasate sarvatragam acintyam ca kutastham acalarh  
dhruvam (XII:3)  
samniyamye 'ndriyagramam sarvatra samabuddhayah te prapnuvanti mam eva sarvabhutahite  
ratah (XII:4)

This is a description of God-love.

What is this God that we are supposed to love? What is this God that is love - the love that is in me - as it were - which is God, the love that completely possesses me, transforms me, transmutes my life, and makes it impossible for me not to love, leaves no room in my heart for anything other than love - that is God.

What is this God who, in the meantime, while I am still endeavouring to cultivate this love, I am supposed to love? God is not a concept. It is very easy for us to create a concept called God, and then love it. That is what we have unfortunately come to regard as love in our daily life. The man or woman who you love today, you did not love a few years ago. You met and you 'fell' in love. That is a fall! Love, which arose in your heart, really wanted to embrace the entire universe, but you fell for this single person. Suddenly, one of these days, something happens between the two of you, and you say, "I don't love you anymore." What does that mean? It came from somewhere, it seemed to exist somewhere, and then it disappeared. That is not love.

We are used to creating a concept in our own mind, the concept being "This is my wife - so, I love her." And of course, there are all sorts of other rules tagged on to it: "She is my wife and she must do this and she must do that. If she does all that, you love her. That is loaded love, which is a load, rather than love. So, we are used to the idea of creating a thing which is lovable, and then loving it - as long as it is lovable according to our definition! We do exactly the same thing with God. We create a thing called God - "God is the provider, God looks after me." The big 'me' is back again. Are you so important in this world that this almighty God must

look after you, of all things on earth? And if he doesn't, that God is dismissed by you.

Most of us treat this self-created God as a sort of a secretary: "God! Please wake me up at a certain time tomorrow morning." We are used to treating this God as a thing, a concept; and then we love that God because we created it. You have created God in exactly the same way as you create a thing called 'husband' or 'wife' - a certain person is suddenly transformed into a husband, or wife, in your mind. That is not the truth. The truth is something completely different.

Sometimes we change from one idea of God to another. If you are Hindu and have a God called Siva, Krsna or Rama, you go on with that for some time - it doesn't seem to pay dividends, nothing is happening. What is supposed to happen? Must God come and dance in front of you? Then someone says, "Become a sufi, you will get instant enlightenment or experience" - so you clap your hands and dance. Or you become a Christian or a Buddhist. The hindu God is dismissed, you don't love him anymore, and another one has taken its place. I am not discouraging these things, because they all have their own meaning, but not as creatures of your mind. It is natural for the mind to love its own creature, but that does not solve the fundamental problem posed by the ego. When the mind loves its own creature, the ego is strengthened, and it continues to create problems.

That which is created by the mind is smaller than the mind, not the infinite. The infinite cannot be created by the mind. Mind, when it is spiritually awakened, and when wisdom dawns in it, offers itself to God; and that God is what 'is'. In Sanskrit, two words are used frequently to represent God - 'isa' and 'isvarah'. Isa means 'is' - not what I think 'is', not a concept created by my mind, but what 'is'. The Indian mystic is not interested in proving that God exists. He turns the whole thing the other way round, and says, "What exists is God." Time being a mode of thought, what exists beyond time is God - that which is indestructible, which is unchangeable, which doesn't decay.

What is this God? Oriental mystics have given us an example - not to be taken literally: God is akasavat sargavata nitya. Akasa - like space - it is not space, because again space is a mode of your mind; sargavata - omnipresent; nitya - eternal.

One can use this idea for a meditation exercise. First visualise a divine presence within, and then imagine this presence expanding, filling your whole body, filling this room, filling the entire universe, like space - and we are entering into it. We are not non-entities, but we have no existence apart from this God. This is the beauty of this teaching: you are not a non-entity, you are not an illusion, but you are not an independent entity; you are not even independent of others, and yet you are not dependent upon others as opposed to something else. It's a cosmic totality.

Akasa - like space. You are surrounded by space, space interpenetrates us - the

thickness of your body is also space, the length and breadth of your body is also space. And as that, it is indestructible. If 'I' does exist, it is one small particle, one small cell in the cosmic Being.

If this truth is immediately grasped or realised, a new vision arises in which there is a new hip. You and I are related, but not you as my mother, my wife, my sister or my brother - the 'my' being important there, but we as cells in the one cosmic body of God. It is a beautiful vision. Love continues to be, and perhaps only then we learn what it is to love. Or we love - we don't even learn what it is to love. We love without asking questions, without motive, without a 'because'; but we love - if there is a because - because we can't help it. In that heart, there is room for absolutely nothing else. That is God, that is divine love, and that is loving God.

A holy man, Swami Ramdas, said, "To love God is to love all; to love all is not to love one particular person to the exclusion of others." Please be very careful here. It does not mean that therefore you are not going to love your husband or your wife. You love them, but not to the exclusion of others. There was a woman sufi mystic who, when she was a little girl, was given an islamic scripture in which she found an injunction 'Love God and hate the devil'. She picked up a pen and scratched off the 'hate the devil'. When the master took her to task for mutilating a scripture, the girl's answer was, "I understand the first part of it - and I love God so much that in my heart there is no hate at all, even for something which you may call a devil." It is a beautiful thing. You love your husband, your wife, your father, your mother - you love all - but not to the exclusion of somebody or something else. It is not love as we know it now: "He is my friend, I love him and therefore I hate the other person," or, "I love him more than him". You don't love anyone more than anyone else, though the expression of that love may be different. For instance, you may have a couple of pets - maybe a cat and an elephant - and you love both equally. You are not going to place a small cup of milk in front of the elephant; although the elephant loves a whole coconut, you are not going to give that to a cat! You love all equally, even if the expression differs. That is possible only if the love is directed, not towards a personality, but towards the impersonal Absolute.

God is something which cannot be described. All that is described is limited, is a concept. A concept is created by the mind, sustained by the mind, and is smaller than the mind; it enters into the mind, and it exists in the mind. But here we are told that your mind and your heart must enter into this cosmic Being, into God. Normally we possess this God, but here we are told, "Surrender yourself to God." Only then would you know love, otherwise you don't know what it means. That God is anirdesyam - indescribable. You can't point to something and say, "This is God", to the exclusion of others; avyaktam - it is not manifest, and therefore it is intangible.

What the devotee does in relation to God is called upasana - worship, or divine service. The word upasana literally means 'sitting near', 'sitting close to'; but in

practice it has come to mean some sort of ritualistic worship. But while you ring the bell, wave the lamp and do all sorts of wonderful things - which are colorful and very beautiful - you may not be there at all! You are supposed to be sitting near God. But if you are ringing the bell, waving the lamp, and looking over your shoulder at somebody else, you are not sitting near God. On the other hand, wherever you are, if you enter into the spirit of this teaching, you are sitting near God. God being omnipresent, you are never away from him. There are lovely stories in the Bhagavatam where someone is cursed, "You'll go to hell!", and he replies, "God, being omnipresent, has got to be in hell too. I don't mind going there." One who realises the omnipresence of this cosmic Being, of God, is never away from Him, and therefore this love affair is unbreakable. There is no escape!

God pervades the entire universe. From whom will I run? And into whose arms, when He and He alone is everywhere?

### 3. How to Love God?

Though we are discussing bhakti and God-love, the sublimest of topics, I hope you don't miss out on the effect of this on your day-to-day lives. If you realise that God is omnipresent, whom will you hate or run from? Whom will you be jealous of?

The moment even this feeling arises in us, there is a tremendous and instant change in our attitude to life. God-realisation and all of that comes later. We are incapable of hate, we are incapable of jealousy. If you hate someone, you look at her and you think, 'She is also God, the Omnipresence! Must I hate you, God? Never mind!' It is finished. The problem is diffused before it has a chance to arise. We learn from day to day how to live close to God.

sarvatragam acintyam ca kustatham acalam dhruvam (XII:3)

Sarvatragam - he is like space, everywhere; not an object of thought. This is a very important definition - if one may call it so. God is definitely not an object of thought. He is the subject, in the sense of the cosmic subject. This is why they say that God is the witness of all hearts and minds. Kutastham acalam dhruvam - and He is firm, unshakeable, unmoving, because He is everywhere. That which is everywhere cannot move.

samniyamye 'ndriyagramam sarvatra samabuddhayah te prapnuvanti mam eva sarvabhutahite ratah (XII:4)

They who are devoted to God, who have learnt the art of sitting near God, find self control natural and effortless. Does it mean that that yogi doesn't eat, work, express emotions, get married, raise children, or earn money? Everything is done. Samniyamye 'ndriyagramam - all the senses are under control. The entire body and mind are under control. What is not said here is under 'whose' control.

One impossible situation in meditation is when you try to meditate. You can never do that. As long as you are struggling, trying, so long you are pushing meditation away. Let yourself go into him. Why must you meditate upon God? Why shouldn't God meditate on you. Feeling 'God, You are infinite, I cannot meditate upon You, I cannot comprehend You,' let yourself go. Then meditation happens.

In exactly the same way, if you want to get rid of a bad habit, try not to struggle. If you are smoking, and you say "Oh! I want to give up smoking," in all probability you will not. You will probably start smoking at night, even in dreams, because the mind clings to it, the mind is saturated with it. I am sure you have experienced this: if you love me, and hate him, it is more than likely that you will think of him more often than you think of me. The thing that you hate will completely and totally possess you. As a matter of fact, we are told that the demons who hated Krsna attained moksha faster! Kamsa, his own uncle, hated him; during the last few days, when he knew that Krsna was coming to kill him, he thought of nothing but Krsna - and so was liberated.

So, if you want to get rid of an evil habit, hand it over. "God! I can't do this! If You think it's alright, You try, not me." It is a fantastic thing. Immediately the value is gone. Smoking or not smoking are seen to be equally valueless, stupid things. The moment your heart - not your mind, not your lips - says, "Thy will be done", both the alternatives have lost their value. Heavens are not going to fall if you smoke one more cigarette, and heavens are not going to fall if you stop smoking - you are going to stop smoking one of these days, if not alive, then dead! So, what on earth are we bothered about? Why is it so important you should or should not do this? Neither of these is important. When you can say, "Lord, thy will be done," a tremendous burden is lifted off your shoulders! There is peace within - therefore there is no agitation, and the play of the mind and the ego are seen as clearly as - to use a sanscrit expression - 'a fruit lying on the palm of your hand'. That which arises then is control of mind and senses.

This control may not be in regard to smoking, but, for instance, it may be that a young man and a young woman who are both spiritually inclined are looking at each other. He says, "My god, I am tempted! O Lord, Lord, I shouldn't look at her again." Then he will dream of her, which is useless. But if he can say, "Lord, neither of these is important. It is possible I fall in love with her, and it is possible I may never think of her again. Lord, Thy will be done," the ego has realised that it is not 'my' job.

Neither of these is of any value - to fall in love, or not to fall in love - both are stupid. When that is seen, there is absolutely no inner agitation. The heart is at peace, and there is a clear understanding of upasana - sitting near God. That is the control that is meant here. You do not control the mind and the senses. That which is - God - controls the mind and senses in accordance with His will. It might still happen that you may have to fall in love and marry. OK, go ahead. It is quite possible that it is not to happen. OK, no hard feelings. You might be able to look at that girl and say "Bye bye my dear. It is probably not going to work." Or, a couple of days later you might find her walking away, hand in hand with somebody else, and there is absolutely no hard feelings. That is control. That control is not brought about by the ego - but the control happens.

In the case of one who understands this teaching, and who lives in the love of God, control of mind and senses happens - and there is absolutely no struggle, no effort and no preconceived idea of what it should be or should not be. There is total surrender, because he has entered into this cosmic Being.

Sarvatra samabuddhayah te prapnuvanti mam eva - he who knows that God is omnipresent, that God alone is, that he is always near this cosmic Being, will naturally be keenly devoted to the welfare of all beings; sarvabhutahite ratah - he is someone who has no room in his heart for ill-will.

It is said that he would even treat the elements - earth, water, fire, and air - with respect, with love. I have seen this in the case of my Guru, Swami Sivananda, and hardly in the case of anyone else. The way He handled anything - like a spectacle case, for instance - was so beautiful. To see Him open or close the spectacle case,

to see Him put it down with such love, with such reverence, was a joy. It was as if it was a tiny little baby. When He put on His shoes, there was that love and reverence. When He closed his fountain pen, there was love and reverence. Some times I lend my fountain pen to someone, and they put the cap on and give it back to me. Later I discover that I have to go to this person to open the cap again! They close it so tightly that it is impossible for me to open it. Then there are people who don't know how to shut a door. They know only one way - slam! I have never seen Swami Sivananda do that. He was big, tall, heavy - but He walked with such lovely gait that, if a small insect came under His shoes, it would not be crushed. Such love in those footsteps. The description given in sanskrit literature is that of an elephant. An elephant walks with a softness in its gait.

Sarvabhutahite ratah - one who would spontaneously become interested in the welfare of all beings. It is not as though such a person wouldn't admonish a disciple, or be harsh in certain situations and so on. We have our own images of what violence and non-violence mean. It is not as though, if you are a surgeon, and I have some serious problem, you would say, "Oh I won't use my knife on your body." That is absurd! Even violence and non-violence, love, and so on, have to be learned from these great beings.

They are devoted to the welfare of all beings, not just you and me. What it means, only they know; but in their actions, their attitude towards life, the way they move, the way they live, and the way they speak, you realise that this is love, this is non-violence.

kleso 'dhikataras tesam avyaktasaktacetasam avyakta hi gatir duhkham dehavadbhir  
avapyate (XII:5)

Is it easy for everyone to be so devoted to this omnipresent God, who is beyond thought, who is even subtler than space? Krsna admits that for embodied beings it may not always be easy to be devoted to a totally impersonal God, a totally unmanifest Being. The orthodox interpretation of this text sanctions idol worship. Let us look at that right in the beginning. This verse is interpreted to mean: 'Since you are embodied beings, and since, as embodied beings, it is difficult for you to be devoted to that which is unmanifest - the infinite absolute consciousness, and so on - you are allowed to be devoted to manifest divinities like Rama, Krsna, Buddha, Jesus, and so on.' That may be true.

In the practice of devotion, one is allowed to make use of everything in order to grow in God-consciousness. This whole sentence 'We are allowed to use anything and everything in order to grow in God-consciousness' is important; not one little bit must be ignored. I repeated this because it would be foolish to say, "and therefore we can go on worshipping some kind of idol for the rest of our life." No! The idea is to grow in God-consciousness.

Are you growing in God-consciousness, or have you got stuck in this idol worship? You don't know what it is to love God, and therefore you can use this picture or image of Krsna, Buddha, or Jesus, in order to cultivate this love, to

experience this love within yourself, to enjoy the proximity of God - upasana. If your consciousness remains circumscribed to a picture or image, then of course it is a waste of time. You go to the temple or puja room in order to experience the proximity of God. Then you begin to realise, 'God is here in this man'. But do you feel the same thrill and inspiration in his presence which you experienced in the presence of Krsna or Jesus or Buddha in the temple? If so, there is tremendous value in it. Once you have learned that, then this love must naturally flow towards all. God-consciousness must expand in concentric circles, until it covers the infinite.

I don't know if you have thought about this. This is true, both of human love and of love of God, in relation to temples and icons and so on. First, let us talk of human love. When you hold the face of someone whom you love, you say, "I love you", and then get near him and close your eyes. You hug a child and close your eyes. Why is it so? Don't you like him? It is a recognition of the fact that there is love in your heart. The love does not come from the other person. You did not know how to find it; so, you needed that other person to provoke it. When you have that, you close your eyes and realise, 'Love is in my heart. You are unnecessary now!'

The same thing happens when you go to a temple or church. There are some shrines in the Himalayas. Thirty or forty years ago, it was almost an end-of-life-affair to go there - it was so dangerous and so toilsome. The devotees came from far, far away, spending thousands of rupees and great physical trouble, probably walking 300-400 miles to get there. There is a little icon there of Narayana, placed in a fairly dark chamber. The priest lit camphor, and waved it; and the devotees said "Narayana", and bowed down their heads. If they didn't want to look at that, when the priest was waving camphor, why did they want to go there? Because they could not generate this same feeling in their own home. They knew that the feeling is there; so, they closed their eyes and enjoyed the feeling within themselves.

We need these external props and aids, in order to gain this internal feeling or experience. We need to love someone, in order to know what love means; but, if we get trapped in that, we are gone. Without being trapped in it, having experienced that love, can we allow it to expand, so that it envelopes the whole being of God? That is it! So, such a great holy man as Swami Sivananda was devoted to idol worship right throughout His life, though He insisted that the worship should not be confined to idol worship. Having experienced the presence of God in and through that idol, one should seek to find the same experience in all relationships. God is in that idol or icon, because He is omnipresent. Your mind and heart associate that icon with God, so there is an advantage. When it comes to a person, you know that he is Mr So-and-so and she is Mrs So-and-so, but there is a little bit of difficulty there. I have to say, "She is Mrs So-and-so, but God"; "He is Mr So-and-so, but God." But in the case of that icon or picture the mind immediately says that this is Krsna, God.

God, being everywhere, is in that icon also, and therefore that icon can be worshipped. But if your love stays there, confined to this, then of course it defeats its purpose. If it does not, then you can adopt any form. "Yo-yo yam-yam tanum bhaktah sraddhaya 'rcitum icchati," says Krsna in the Bhagavad Gita. Whatever form you wish to adore, please do, as long as you feel the presence of God there. But, please remember that God is not confined to anything, He is the omnipresent Being. This is one point of view.

Another interpretation is possible. Being embodied, we cannot devote ourselves to the impersonal, unmanifest Absolute, and therefore this God-love must necessarily mean love of all human beings, of all living beings. Being embodied, being human, it is very difficult for us to jump on our own shoulders, and pretend that we can experience the presence of God in an impersonal, unmanifest way. So, we had better apply ourselves to the other exercise of seeing God in all and loving God in all. The moment you see someone, you say, "She is Mrs So-and-so. No, wait a moment - God being omnipresent, she is also a manifestation of the same God."

It needs a little effort to begin with, until it becomes effortless.

## 4. The Least of My Creatures

Often we have distorted but very strong images, and this extends even to so-called spiritual life - we have very strong, well cut, neatly chopped images of a spiritual person, a hatha yogi, a jnana yogi, a karma yogi.

This image building leads to a two-fold problem. If you are not a genuine yogi, and if at the same time you realise what sort of image of a yogi others are holding in their minds, you try to conform to that image, so that you get their testimonial. This image building therefore builds hypocrites on the one hand, and gullible, stupid people of the other - they are easily taken in, and you are tempted to be a hypocrite.

If you are bhakti yogi, you have an exceptionally well-formed image of one who loves God, picked up from descriptions in various scriptures. These descriptions - just one fourth of a verse - are found in voluminous texts, which have five to ten thousand verses, and with the help of these you build an image.

Here are two examples which happened to me. In some scriptures there is this description: 'When a devotee of God hears the name of God, all the hair stands on end, and tears pour from the eyes.' In our ashram in Rishikesh, a very great bhajanist - one who sings God's Names very beautifully - had come on a visit. As he sang, I used to listen with great attention. There was one young woman in the audience who lifted up her sari, and wiped her eyes throughout this man's singing. I observed this phenomenon, and felt a pang of jealousy, thinking, "What a great devotee you are. When will I also start shedding tears of love of God as you do?" A week later, this young lady's husband came to see me, having heard that I was practising homeopathic medicine. He said "Swami, I want to consult you about my wife. She has this problem of constant lachrymation; her tear glands are working constantly, and she has to wipe and wipe her eyes. Can you help her?" What an image - and what a shattering of the image!

There was another example, which was more disappointing. A big fat man who sang inspiringly came from the eastern part of India to the ashram. He appeared to be completely saturated with devotion. Everything he did was interwoven with 'Hari Om, Hari Bol'. His eating was a big ritual. He ate alone, because it took him twice the time that it took to us to eat - not because he ate a lot, but he would say 'Hari Bol' before swallowing each morsel. If he went to the Ganges for a bath, he plunged into the river as we did, but every time he plunged, again 'Hari Bol'! So, with every act he was taking the name of God. It was marvellous!

This man wanted to go on a short pilgrimage in the Himalayas, to a place called Deoprayag. We took him to the bus station, and begged of the man there to let him use the single bucket seat next to the driver. All the other seats were benches which had to accommodate 5 passengers on each bench. So he went comfortably to Deoprayag; but there was nobody at the other end to look after him for the return journey. Unfortunately for him, the bus people had allotted the bucket seat to a police officer; so he had to be squeezed into one of the benches. Even though

he was fat, they wouldn't let that bench take only four people; so he was sandwiched - uncomfortably for him, and comfortably for the others. He didn't like it at all. He arrived at the ashram at about three o'clock in the afternoon. From my room right on the Ganges bank, I heard him splashing in the water; but instead of the usual 'Hari Bol', he was shouting and abusing the bus conductor. The bus journey was finished, and he was taking bath in the Ganges; but even then he couldn't contain his anger. I thought, "What happened to your 'Hari Bol'?"

We have an image of a devotee. If he conforms to that image, whether he is a devotee or not, we worship him. In the Bhagavad Gita, all those images are consistently and persistently smashed. A devotee is not one who sings God's Names, and does this and that only - however ecstatically he may do it all - but one who combines in himself the fundamental characteristics of yogis belonging to other schools.

There is a specific caution in the Bhagavatam - that you are welcome to worship God in temples and images; but if, while doing so, you hate even the least among his creatures, your devotion is useless. It is there in the Bible too. Jesus said: "Inasmuch as you hate the least of my children, you hate me. Inasmuch as you serve the least amongst my children, you serve me." So, it won't do merely to say, "I love God, and hate everything else".

Hatred cannot find a place in your heart if you really and truly love God. That is precisely the reason why loving God is the remedy for interpersonal problems. If you hate her - or she hates you - it cannot be solved by psychoanalysis or psychotherapy. Only if you are taught how to love God, and then to see God in others also, is your hatred gone. You love him, not as so-and-so, but as God. It is a subtle and almost infallible remedy for human hate.

Psycho-analysis, psychological counselling, and marriage counselling etc. are often temporary and very often counter-productive, because you don't love each other. Somebody says that you should love each other, and provides the motivation why you should; As soon as he is gone, and the situation changes, you get back to the rocks. It doesn't work. All love based on human calculation is business, not love. If you are taught to love God, and then inwardly wakened to the truth that God dwells in all, then problem is solved. This devotion involves unselfish service of one another.

Self-discipline is supposed to be the bedrock of raja yoga, understanding the chief element in jnana yoga, and selfless service in karma yoga. Raja yoga, jnana yoga, and karma yoga, are all rolled together in devotion, or love of God - otherwise it is not love. You cannot say: "Oh I love you," and then hug her with your arms, and kick her with your feet, saying, "My arms love you and my feet hate you"! That is not possible, it is absurd. If you love her, the whole of you loves her - your heart, your mind, your body, everything. Then that love is real. Otherwise, where there are reservations, there is something missing - some part

of you doesn't accept her. When that is there, it is only a matter of time and the other parts also join the part that doesn't accept. Hence, bhakti yoga or devotion to God embraces the fundamental essence of other different disciplines.

Mayi samnyasya matparah. In order to be a true devotee of God, there must be sannyasa. You can shave your head or grow long hair and beard - that's very easy, there is no difficulty at all; you can change your hair style - literally at the drop of a hat! - but you cannot change what is inside the head. Great sannyasis might tell you that shaving the head is merely symbolic of getting rid of the habit-patterns built into the brain - shaving the mind of its prejudices and ideologies. But that is not easy, and so we forget that. Is sannyasa just putting on these nice ochre-coloured robes? The robes might often hide rogues! If sannyasa means renunciation - abandonment of the world, abandonment of all relationship, then where is love in it? Can I love God and abandon everything that God represents? Can I love God and hate you, abandon you? Krsna gives very revolutionary definitions of sannyasa in the Bhagavad Gita.

kamyānam karmanāṁ nyasam samnyasam kavayo viduḥ (XVIII:2)  
'One who abandons all selfish activity is a sannyasi.'

That is extremely difficult. You can do that only if you are like a little baby. Now here, another aspect is indicated: ye tu sarvani karmani samnyasya matparah. Here sannyas means 'place it well'. 'He who places all his actions in me.' One does that not by merely mouthing these words, 'I don't do anything, God does everything,' but by entering into the spirit, entering one's heart and mind into God. When the heart and the mind are entered into God, naturally all the actions arise in him, flow in him, and cease in him. If you yourself are in God, who does? You don't. For instance, I am speaking now, not the tongue, because the tongue by itself has no power to speak. The tongue is merely an instrument, I am the speaker. When I am within this God, when I have entered myself into this omnipresent Being, who acts? Not I. He does it. That is sannyasa - to place every action where it belongs. The action is God's, and the action arises in him.

If you enter into this for one moment, you will find it is so beautiful, so thrilling. Simultaneously you become everything and nothing. The ego as such is impotent; but when that is gone, the omnipotence rises. The beauty of sannyasa is that you learn to place an action where it belongs, in truth. We are not asked to hallucinate or imagine, but to realise.

You, by yourself, can do absolutely nothing. He does everything. What you are made to do in him is part of that omnipotence; your existence is part of that infinite. The infinite manifests itself in indescribably infinite ways - the blond and the brunette, the square-faced and the long-faced etc. Don't compare and contrast - this is a beautiful face, this is an ugly face - but merely see that this is the manifestation of the infinite. Why do people do what they do? That is the glory of the infinite God. The infinite is capable of working infinite miracles, in an infinite number of places. When you realise this, it is then that you begin to love anyone, everyone.

The Yoga Yasistha says very plainly that he who is the same in the following two circumstances is an enlightened man. Circumstance one - the most beautiful woman wants to embrace him and rushes towards him. Circumstance two - a murderer with a dagger drawn comes to kill him. He smiles at both, "God can do this, and God can do that. Why not? The infinite God manifests himself in infinite ways." That is sannyasa - to place an action in the truth where it belongs, and the truth being "All these arise in God, exist in God, and are dissolved in God. There is nothing but him. He is the doer of all actions." Billions of cells are performing a variety of functions; but you say "I am digesting my lunch, I am talking, I am seeing", because all these billions of cells are totally dependent upon you, they are your instruments. In the same way, whatever we are doing - actions which are considered good, actions which are considered bad, actions which are considered neutral - all done by him.

ye tu sarvani harmani mayi samnyasya matparah ananyenai 'va yogena mam dhyayanta  
upasate (XII:6)

This is a new yoga - ananya yoga - where there is no other. Not only are you not other than me, but even this omnipresent God is not other than me. Baba Muktananda often quotes the following: "If a worshipper thinks he is different from the God he is worshipping, that worship is useless. If you think that the mantra is different from you, and the God whose mantra you are repeating is different from you, that japa is useless. You must realise the identity of the mantra, the self, and God. Then the mantra becomes activated immediately."

This is the yoga of non-division. I am not doing anything to please God, nor do I want God to please me. There is no petitioning, no praying. Praying has somehow become so distorted that we have changed the spelling. We no longer p-r-a-y, we only p-r-e-y, we are constantly preying upon God: "God give me this! God give me that." That God is frightened, he doesn't come anywhere near us! Swami Ranganathananda once remarked that God hesitates before He blesses you with devotion. He would rather liberate you, because if you are liberated, there is no problem, you are finished; but if you are made a devotee, then from there on His headache starts. Day in and day out you are going to say, "God please do this. God, please do that. I want to meditate, so God please ask all these dogs to keep quiet, etc."

Ananya yoga. What is true of the relationship between the devotee and God, is true of us, on a purely interpersonal level. If two of you love each other, that love is real or valid only if there is non-difference - if there is not even the idea that you are different from her, and therefore you love her. People may exalt certain attitudes, for instance, "I love you so much that I can subject myself to all sorts of inconveniences in order to satisfy you." I don't know if some of you have been subjected to this - to me, it is a torture. When someone says, "You know, I love you so much. I am tired, I want to sleep and my back is aching, but still I'll make something for you," it turns into poison. Yet, this is exalted in society. We think that, by torturing ourselves, by some sort of masochistic behaviour, we please our

partner. It's absurd. The other person is temporarily pleased; but sooner or later this relationship will sour and break. Sooner or later there will be the taunt: "For your sake, even though I had a headache, I did this." That is not love at all, though normally it is considered to be the very height of love. Neither by trying to please the beloved, nor by trying to derive satisfaction in that relationship, can you find fulfillment. In both cases there is a division. This division will bring about conflict sooner or later.

In love, can there be complete self-forgetfulness, where you don't exist, and I don't exist? Then there is bliss. You don't try to please me, nor do you expect me to please you or give you satisfaction. The 'I' dissolves and the 'you' dissolves, and 'love' remains. This is true of human relationship and of divine love. There is absolutely no difference. Ananyenai 'va yogena mam dhyayanta upasate. In that love, the truth is born, liberation is born, peace is born, bliss is born. You find what it is to be divine.

tesam aham samuddharta mrtyusarhsarasagarat bhavami nacirat partha mayy avesitacetasam  
(XII:7)

This worldly existence is described as mrtyusamsarasagarat - 'ocean of birth and death'. The moment you find this love, you are uplifted and redeemed from this ocean of birth and death. The world and life in it, which you had experienced as unending sorrow, unmitigated suffering, suddenly cease to be so. There is bliss wherever you turn - because you have entered into God, because you realise that all that happens, happens because of God. If somebody embraces you, that is God; if somebody wants to kill you, that is also God. And therefore you are lifted out of this ocean of birth and death, this ocean of sorrow. But there is a very big 'but'. It is not for 'me' to jump out of this ocean of sorrow; it is not for me to attain enlightenment; it is not for me to attain liberation; it is not for me to find love; it is not for me to find peace. The more the 'me' struggles, the less peace, love, enlightenment, joy, and harmony, will it experience.

The only thing that the 'me' - ego - can do, is to realise its own impotence, and offer itself in humble surrender to this omnipotent Being - that you can do and that you must do. Don't say that even that has to be done by God. You can examine life and see that it is full of sorrow, and you can try to kick yourself out of it, and find that it is impossible for you. You can realise that you are impotent. Whatever you do becomes one more bondage, one more problem. Every solution that your mind produces for a problem, becomes a worse problem. When you realise this, you let yourself go - "Lord, I don't know what it is. Thy will be done."

Then, bhavami nacirat partha mayy ave sitacetasam - "When they have thus offered themselves unto me", says the Lord, "I immediately lift them out of this ocean of sorrow." Not until then. As long as you feel that you can solve your problem, God will say, "Alright, try a little more. No harm. You want to swim? Swim. Go on, try." When you say, "No, not possible," then He says "Come on, I'll pull you out of it." Instantly!

## 5. Surrender

How do I surrender myself to God?

mayy eva mana adhatsva magi buddhirh nivesaya nivasisyasi mayy eva ata urdhvam na  
samsayah (XII:8)

Here, in this verse, a few details are mentioned. Mayy eva mana adhatsva - 'Place your mind in me'. That is, let the mind be drowned in him, so that whatever the mind thinks of, in whichever direction it flows, it realises it is all God and God alone.

In such a mind, is an evil thought possible? Certain thoughts are possible which somebody else says are evil, but in the case of this devotee, there is no evil thought at all - his mind has been completely offered unto God. Only if we understand this, can we understand the strange and mysterious behaviour of prophets all over the world. Some have behaved violently, some have cursed and blessed and done all sorts of things. Why? They had no mind of their own. Their mind had been offered unto God, and what had to happen, happened through them.

I will give you a funny example. This story occurs right in the beginning of the scripture called the Mahabharata. A holy sage was walking along the bank of a river. Suddenly it occurred to him: "If this moment I can beget a son, he would become the greatest sage." How does an ascetic, wandering alone, beget a son 'at this moment'? He looked around. There was a little girl, six years old, a fisherman's daughter, standing at a distance. He called her, "Come, come, come! Quick! I want to give you a child." She said, "Me? You look like a holy man, a sage, and I am a fisherman's daughter. I smell. And moreover, I'm only six years old." He said, "Don't talk! Quick, time is going! This is the auspicious hour." It is said that instantly he converted her into a young woman, removed all the bad smell from her, and made her smell fragrant. And there was a baby.

What kind of morality is this? Can we also do that? Yes, if you know what God's Will is! You know what God's will is when you have no mind of your own, when the mind has been completely offered unto God. Then, God's Will works through your mind. It is not your mind anymore, it is his.

Mayya eva mana adhatsva mayi buddhim nivesaya.

Buddhi here stands for the principle that makes a decision. The mind sees two alternatives, and something within you decides "This is the better alternative". What decides? You can call it your conscience or what you like. That is the inner judge, as it were. However much we pretend we should not judge, we realise that even in that there is a judgement. "I don't judge at all, I'm so holy, so wonderful. I follow Jesus Christ one hundred per cent. I don't judge, but He does." That's a judgement! You have judged yourself 'super', and He is supposed to be 'not-so-super'.

So, whatever you do, if you observe this buddhi, which judges, discriminates, and decides, you see that it is committed to some kind of judgment. Can that also be offered unto God? Honestly and truly, knowing: "Lord, I am not the judge. I have no idea. I don't know what is right, I don't know what is wrong." A verse in the second chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, put in the mouth of Arjuna, says, "I don't know anything at all. Lord, please instruct me." The same beautiful truth is revealed when Jesus went onto the Mount of Olives, and prayed "Lord, let this cup pass." That is what the judgment, the buddhi, said. Then He said, "No, not My Will, Thy Will be done." Can that be said honestly and truthfully? Then His Will is done.

His Will is done all the time; but, as long as realisation doesn't arise, there is a state of confusion within us - confusion before the action, confusion during the action, confusion after the action - whether what was done was right or wrong. Can this confused mind be honestly and truly offered unto him too - not because you evade responsibility, but because you have seen that it is not up to human endeavour. Having seen the impotence of human mind and human intelligence - that is, having exercised it, having come to the definite and final conclusion that this human intellect is impotent - it is then that this surrender is real, sincere, honest, and truthful.

*atha cittam samadhatum na saknosi mayi sthiram abhyasayogena tato mam iccha 'ptum dhanamjaya (XII:9)*

Krsna says: "It seems to be alright, as long as we are sitting here; but, when we go away, confronted with real-life situations - then it seems to be a bit difficult. Here we join the cult of yogis and, as soon as we go out, we join another 'cult', known as diffi-'cult'! Everything becomes difficult, it is no longer possible. What happens then? Try again and again and again - which means: you do not really surrender, but you go through the motions of surrender, telling yourself again and again, "Lord, I surrender myself to you." The next minute you are going to do something else: "I have surrendered myself to God. Krsna, have you got some petrol in the car?" I have surrendered myself to God - but I wonder if He has some petrol in the car to get me home! So, there is a life of contradictions. "But," says Krsna, the supreme optimist, "even this is of some use."

There is a nice story to illustrate this. There was a robber who wanted to steal from a rajah's palace. He had found out where the iron safe was, and he knew that the keys to the safe were next to the king's bed. One night, he crept along the corridor, very carefully, without making a sound. He had come very close to the royal bedroom when he heard some noise; so, he froze. He heard the queen talking to the king: "Lord, I just had a fantastic dream in which an angel appeared and spoke to me, saying, 'My dear queen, I know you are worried about your daughter's wedding. She is eighteen; so it is time for her to get married. There is only one man who is fit to be her husband. You must not question my judgement, but do exactly what I tell you to do. Wake up your husband and tell him that he must leave the palace at half past three this morning - it was about midnight -

and go in an easterly direction about two miles. There, under a great big peepul tree, he will find a yogi, clad in nothing but a loin cloth, sitting in meditation. That is the man who is fit to be your son-in-law. Don't argue. Make this possible. Don't take no for an answer".

Having heard this, the thief ran in that direction, and sat under a big peepul tree. At half past four, he heard the rustling of leaves. He knew that the king was coming, and drew himself up taller - because he was meditating, he was a yogi! The king stood and waited for some time. The 'yogi' wouldn't open his eyes. The king gently placed a garland around his neck. The yogi felt a chill - but, never mind, you have to put up with all that - and after another ten minutes or so, he gently opened his eyes. "Om. Who are you? You look like a king." The king thought, "Ah! He is a supreme yogi, he knows I am a king." He caught hold of the yogi's feet and said, "Maharaj, please come to the palace." "Oh! We are ascetics, we don't enter houses, let alone palaces!" The king cried, "Please, please, please, I won't leave this place, I won't leave your feet." "I see. Such is God's Will. Alright, alright, I will come."

He went to the palace, and there he was placed on the throne. At every point, he started protesting, protesting, protesting - then relenting, "Alright, this is God's Will." The queen and the princess came, and all three started worshipping his feet. He said, "I don't want to be touched by this female. Om Narayana." Then the king caught hold of one foot, and the queen caught hold of the other and started weeping and crying. He said, "Now what?" The king replied, "We have a request, a prayer, a humble submission. This is our daughter, you must marry her." "Marry her? Oh! Terrible, terrible, terrible! I must get up and run away now." They caught hold of his feet, and held him there. Once again he looked up, "Ah, I see, this is the Divine Will. Hari om tat sat. Lord, Thy Will be done. Not My Will, Thy Will be done. Alright."

Oh, they were thrilled! Somebody brought the royal robes for him to put on, and he was taken to his chamber, where he dismissed the servants. He put on all the royal jewellery and the royal robes and was shining brilliantly. He looked into the mirror. There was nobody in the room, so he was talking to himself: "See what a clever man I am. I wanted to rob the king of a few thousand pounds. Now I've got the whole kingdom!" He was looking, looking at his own reflection in the mirror. He blinked and blinked again. "My God! If for pretending to be a yogi for two hours I could get this, what would I not get if I really became a yogi?" He tore off the uniform, jumped out of the window and ran away. The moral: if you pretend to be a yogi now and then, even that is a great help.

*Abhyasayogena tato mam iccha 'ptum dhanamjaya.*

Keep on saying, "Lord, Thy Will be done, Thy Will be done, Thy Will be done." Go on, go on. One of these days, you will discover the magic. Abhyasa means constant practise and routine practices. Abhyasa also means even mechanically repeating God's Names, and even mechanically studying scriptures. Don't let the

mind say "What is the use of routinely sitting for meditation? My mind is not there." Alright. It is not there today, tomorrow, or in ten days. Never mind. Ten months, never mind. Go on. One of these days you will experience it. This applies to human relationship too. Even if you don't like the other person, pretend that you love him, pretend that he is your friend. Keep on, keep on. Keep on calling each other 'Darling'. It may be a mere word; but, one of these days, the spirit also might enter into it. It is better to do all these things, even though meaninglessly, than to drop them. If you drop them, you are left with nothing-neither, the form nor the spirit. If it is possible for you to hold on to this form, one of these days you might be awakened to the need to fill it with spirit.

abhyasayogena tato mam iccha 'ptum dhanamjaya (XII:9 )  
abhyase 'py asamartho 'si matkarmaparamo bhava madartham api karmani kurvan siddhim  
avapsyasi (XII:10 )  
'By the yoga of constant practice, do thou seek to reach Me.'

If you are too busy to do even that, mentally tell yourself, "I am doing this all for God's sake." It may be a formula; but, even this way you might one of these days awaken yourself to frequent remembrance, and then to constant remembrance of God. But, I do all this. The 'I' is very much there. I do all this, but for God's sake, in order to please God. Sooner or later, you will realise that that attitude is insufficient, inadequate.

athai tad apy asakto 'si kartum madyogam asritah sarvakarmaphalatyagam tatah kuru  
yatatmavan (XII:11)

If you cannot do even that, then do what you want to do, with all your vanity and egoism, but abandon desire for rewards and specific results. Once you learn to abandon rewards for your actions - tyagac chantir anantaram - immediately you experience great peace. This is pure and simple common sense. If you had kept a log book, and in it you had noted down what you did today, with what intention, and what happened, you might discover something disgustingly beautiful - that most of the time what happened was completely different from what you intended it to be, even prayers.

If you had noted down the number of times you had prayed for something, and so few times that these prayers were really answered, you would be disgusted with praying! I am not asking you not to pray; but, when you discover this, the prayer will take on a very different form. You will pray because you want to pray, not because you want to get something or avoid something. More often than not our prayers go unanswered, and the other few times that they are answered are probably accidental. For instance, if you go to the hospital, hold some ash in your hand, and say a prayer; and then put it on the forehead of hundred patients, telling them that they will be alright tomorrow - at least ten will be. This is purely accidental, not because of your prayer or ash!

Real prayer is something different, something very beautiful. It is an expression of your love of God, not asking for anything at all. To illustrate this, there is a story which is attributed to Ramakrishna, another great saint of India who lived

about one hundred years ago. I am sure you will remember it forever.

A young man had been brought up right from childhood in a cloistered monastery; seeing only a few male companions. When he was hardly fifteen, the old head of the monastery died; and so he had to go out begging for his food. He ventured into the village with begging bowl in hand and stood in front of the first house. It happened to be one of those districts in India where unmarried girls go topless. A young girl of thirteen or fourteen came forward to give him some food. Behind her was her mother. This young boy looked at the girl, and said to the mother, "My friend, I used to have this problem when I was in the monastery with my master. Every summer I used to get big boils. My master used to crush the leaves of a certain herb, apply them, and the boil would go away. This boy has got a couple of boils. So, better get those leaves and apply them."

The woman knew that he was too innocent, and said, "My child, they are not boils." "What are they then?" "She is a girl, and they are feeding bottles, provided by God for children, that she may give birth to in a few years time." He just looked, and then said, "Do you mean to say that God is so great that he provides sustenance for children that may be born years later? And I have to go begging for my food? Thank you very much", and went away.

When you recognise that what you need has already been provided long before the need arose, then something arises in your heart which may be called prayer. It is not asking for anything - why must I ask? This thing that I need has already been created. You merely say, "Oh God! I love you." Even 'I love you' is not there. Just, "Oh God!"

That is prayer.

## 6. The Search For Truth

The last eight verses of the twelfth chapter are considered important enough to be exalted in the minds of students of the Bhagavad Gita and devotees in particular. They call them amrtastakam - the eight verses which are immortal and immortalising. These verses are very easy to read and to understand; there is absolutely no mystification or complication in them. They describe the nature and characteristics of one who loves God and who is loved by God. "He is my devotee and I love him," is the refrain which occurs in every verse.

You read descriptions of a holy man and biographies of great men because you want to become like them, otherwise there is no sense in reading them. How do you become like Swami Sivananda, for instance? Or Baba Muktananda? You read His biography, pretend that you are like Him, and do what the book says He did.

A picture of Baba Muktananda sitting in a particular posture was published some years ago. A young man wanted to be known as a siddha; so, he had a photograph taken of himself in the same posture, and published it. If it is as simple as that, then everybody would become a siddha! You do yoga postures - cat stretch and dog stretch - but you don't become cats and dogs. Hopefully not!

So you may go through the movements of a holy man, but you will not become a holy man; you may imitate the actions of a holy man, and it is possible you may become an imitation holy man. In these days, when imitation diamonds sparkle even more brilliantly than real diamonds, it is possible that you may even attract great attention!

I'll tell you a very nice story. A guru was telling his disciple, "In these days, the real thing is not valued, only imitation stuff." The disciple said, "No sir. You are an enlightened man, and you are valued wherever you go. You are worshipped and venerated, not the imitation saints." The holy man did not argue.

They were wandering from place to place; and, one day, they passed through a village where there was a little tent. Outside that tent was a banner which announced: "Come and see a man grunt like a pig. Twenty cents admission". The guru said, "Buy tickets and let's go." Both of them went inside; and as soon as the tent was filled with about fifty people, the gates were closed and a young man came through the back entrance. He came on stage and grunted like a pig for a couple of minutes. Everybody clapped. Marvellous, marvellous!

The guru and the disciple came back the day after this show had come to an end, but before the tent was pulled down. This guru went to the man whose tent it was, and asked to have the use of it for a couple of days. He changed the banner: "The Grunting of the Pig - the Truth. Admission twenty cents." The next day, a few young people gathered round in front of the tent. Six of them paid twenty cents, and went in to see if it was worthwhile for the others to follow. The holy man entered through the back door leading a pig. He twisted its tail and the pig

grunted. He said "Ladies and gentlemen, that is the truth," and walked away. These six people walked out and said, "It is nothing - only a pig grunting." There were no more customers.

The guru looked at his disciple and said, "Do you understand now? When a man grunts like a pig, it's very attractive. When a pig grunts as only a pig can grunt, it is not valued. This is the reality, this is the truth, but you don't value it." If you want to become like a saint, you will possibly attract a lot of attention; but, that's not the reality, the truth.

We cannot study the lives and descriptions of these great men, and apply those descriptions like cosmetics. That's what most people do. They read these books, and then apply the teaching. They think they have become saints - they have not. Growth is from within outwards. It is one thing to dab some paint on your cheeks, another thing to blush. When you blush, it is beautiful. Moreover, when these things are applied as cosmetics are applied, there is always the danger of them being washed away. In exactly the same way, if you imitate the actions of a holy person, that pretension will be washed away at the least provocation or temptation.

What shall we do? I had a German friend in Singapore who was a buddhist monk. Until a few years ago, whenever I went to Singapore, and there was a public meeting, he also used to share the platform. If I introduced him saying, "He is my friend, he is a buddhist," he would protest, "No, I am not a Buddhist, I want to become a Buddha." He used to say, "Don't be a buddhist, be a Buddha. Don't be a christian, be a Christ. At least aspire to be." In order to do that, you have to walk the path that they had walked. To walk the path of Moses, Jesus, Buddha, Baba Muktananda, or Swami Sivananda, is not easy. To pretend to be like them may be easy, and therefore it is of no use.

What is the vision, what are the ideals that led them along the path that they trod? Can you acquire that vision? You don't have to be a prince, and renounce like Buddha did, nor do you have to go into a place of worship and chase people away, and ask to be crucified, in order to become a Christ. What was their inner vision? What was the spirit that moved them in their lives? Can you acquire that spirit? Then you will become a Christ or a Buddha.

When you read these eight verses, which are descriptive of one who loves God and who is loved by God, please remember that this description is not some sort of cosmetic which can be applied onto oneself, but it follows the previous teaching of what it is to love God. If you have learnt to love God in accordance with the teaching which we have already looked into, then these qualities will be found in you. These are the characteristics, the hallmarks which will be found in a devotee. At best you can use them as a measuring tape. If these qualities are there in you, it is quite possible that you are growing in the love of God. If they are not found in you, then you are just not there.

The very first two words - advesta sarvabhutanam - hold the key. 'In his heart, there is no hate towards any being whatsoever.' This one quality would do.

Is it possible for me to eradicate hate completely and totally? Hate means a lot - envy, jealousy, ill-will, even fear. Can this hate be completely eradicated from one's heart? Then, and only then, in that heart will love manifest, will God manifest. Advesta sarvabhutanam maitrah karuna eva ca. 'He is friendly towards all, and he has compassion.' There is something interesting here. In the Yoga Sutras, and also elsewhere, it is said that the yogi - or a serious student of yoga - would have four qualities in his relationship with other human beings: maitri, karuna, muditha, and upeksha. The usual explanation is that maitri is friendliness towards equals, karuna is compassion towards those who are inferior, muditha is complacency or joy towards superiors, and upeksha is indifference towards the wicked.

In the twelfth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, only two qualities are mentioned - maitri and karuna. Muditha is not mentioned at all because, as a devotee, you don't compare yourself with anyone in this world, and therefore there is no need for you to be particularly happy that so-and-so is superior to you. You regard everyone as God. That is enough. What is even more interesting is that upeksha - being indifferent to the wicked - is completely dropped, because in your eyes no one is wicked. You see God in all - even if that person be a murderer in the eyes of others - feeling 'It is God who is doing this. I don't know why he does it.'

I am sure a thousand questions crowd your mind right now: "What happens if all of us are like this? Wouldn't knaves and thieves flourish in this world?" That is not your concern. I would suggest two counter-arguments. They are just counter-arguments, nothing whatsoever to do with the attitude of a devotee. Argument number one: can you honestly say that religious and social reformers, who have taken upon themselves the duty of eradicating evil or viciousness in this world, have put an end to evil in this world? If you go round the world and visit even those places where Buddha, Krsna, Jesus, Rama, or Moses, lived, and see what goes on there, you ask yourself: "Is this the humanity for whom those great ones lived and struggled and died?" Argument number two is borrowed from another great saint of India called Prabhudatta Brahmachari, who had quite a number of ashrams in North India. He wanted to do some writing, and felt that he needed complete isolation, undisturbed seclusion; so, he bought himself a houseboat, and anchored it in the middle of the river Ganges. He went on doing his work undisturbed. In the meantime, the ashrams were being run by somebody else.

One day, one of his lieutenants went to see him, and said, "You know, So-and-so who is running the ashram in such and such a place is stealing, cheating, doing this and that!" This holy man heard all that, smiled, and didn't respond. The man asked him, "What are you going to do about it?" He said, "Nothing. God has not appointed me a magistrate. That is not my job, that is his job."

If you are a policeman, it may be your job to get hold of a thief and thrash him, without being emotionally involved. But otherwise to you all are the manifestations of God. There is no need to judge anyone. 'Judge not' is final, because you are not God, you do not know why So-and-so does what he does. It is God himself who has put on these diverse garbs, playing diverse roles in this universe.

When this attitude or vision arises in you, there is a tremendous inner change. You see the entire world in a very different light. You don't feel like judging, and you don't feel like condemning anyone. You don't feel like accusing anyone, and therefore even forgiving anyone doesn't arise. Nirmano nirahamkarah samadukhasukhah ksami. 'He is totally selfless or egoless, and he does not regard anything as this is mine.'

If you bestow some thought or attention on this, you will find it very interesting. There certainly is a feeling that 'I am' - it is unmistakable. It is possible that that feeling is confused with the body and the personality, but no-one can deny that it exists. In sanskrit, this is known as aham bhavana. Great sages like Ramana Maharshi have pointed out that, if you pursue that feeling to its own source, you will discover that it is not the individual personality that gives rise to it, but the cosmic Being. The expression, 'I am' is based on some truth, or fact - though there may be some confusion concerning it. But is 'mine', 'she is mine', also based on a fact, or is it complete fallacy?

Swami Satchidananda gave me a beautiful idea when He said, "When you use the word 'mine', be careful, it might explode." It is not based on truth. Nothing is mine, not even this body. In one of the scriptures, there is a caution: "Don't think that this body is yours, there are quite a number of claimants to it." A vulture is circling around, watching a dying animal. "It's still breathing. As soon as it stops, it becomes meat for me." If the body is to be buried, the worms and vermin of the earth are waiting to have a good feed, the body belongs to them - or to fire, or to the fish in the Ganges. Even the body does not belong to me. Then what belongs to me? What is mine? Nothing but the foolish idea that something is mine. Drop it.

If you are seriously and earnestly searching for truth, in the light of that truth, you will realise that nothing is 'mine'. This shirt is mine, but if you give it to your friend, two minutes later it becomes his shirt. You can use that word 'mine' as long as you realise it is not true. It is a convenient expression, and nothing more than that. When you call someone 'my wife', that is just a temporary feature. She was not your wife some time ago, she may not be a little while later. Even though, while living in this funny world, we may use all these expressions, it is good to remember there is no truth in them.

Another wonderful characteristic of the devotee of God is said to be an evenness of mind, a balanced state of mind. It is exalted in the Bhagavad Gita, and

repeated again and again that the yogi, the devotee, or the sage, does not get elated when something nice happens to him, and does not go into a deep depression when something not so nice happens to him. When something nice happens to you, when someone gives you something, you are thrilled.

What exactly do you mean by saying, "He has given something to me"? In that very event, there is a tremendous confusion. 'He' has not given to you, and his giving it does not make you happy or unhappy. If what he gives you, or what he does to you, makes you happy or unhappy, you are a slave your happiness is illusory, it is in his hands. He can withdraw his favour, and you will be miserable again.

What is happiness? What is unhappiness? What is pleasure? What is pain? Who determines all this? There are neurological responses - a certain neurological response is considered pleasure, a certain neurological response is considered pain. Even that is not one hundred percent invariable. If I pinch her, she smiles; if instead of me a schoolmaster had pinched her, saying "Don't do that again", it would upset her. The thing is exactly the same - pinching is pinching! The body has its own way of responding to neurological pain and pleasure, but there is nothing called happiness and unhappiness, except in the dictionary or your mind.

The yogi is balanced in happiness and unhappiness, but not as an ideal - "I am a yogi, and therefore, even when I am unhappy, I must pretend" - which is hypocrisy. I saw an honest commercial on television, about a brand of beer. The fellow said, "Please, have it once and have it twice. The first time you won't like it, it will be bitter. Have it a second time, and then you will begin to like it." If it was bitter and disgusting the first time, it is bitter and disgusting the second time too! But then, such is the pressure of advertising - brain pollution - that you are made to feel that it is pleasure, otherwise you think you are not 'with it'. So, in order to conform to others, even though you want to throw it up, you still say it is nice.

Who defines what is pleasure, what is pain, what is happiness, what is unhappiness? If you examine this, you will realise that it is a circular argument. You decide this is happiness, and then it becomes happiness. You pursue it thinking it is happiness, and because you pursue it, you call it happiness.

He who treads the path of truth has absolutely no patience for all this. He sees through both happiness and unhappiness as mere mental concepts. When the inner intelligence recognises this, the mind is no longer agitated.

## 7. Knock and It Shall Be Opened

samah satrau ca mitre ca tatha manapamanayoh sitosnasukhaduhkhesu samah sargavivarjitah  
(XII:18)

Samah satrau ca mitre ca - 'He is the same to friend and foe.' There is the beautiful expression in the Bible: 'Love your enemy.' I understand what it means, but it is not literally true. You cannot love your enemy. Jesus meant: 'Love those who regard themselves as your enemy.' This is a complicated expression; and so, he used the simple 'Love your enemy'. If you regard someone as your enemy, you cannot love him. You have already accused him, judged him, condemned him, and there is no love. He thinks he is your enemy, but that is of no consequence to you at all. As far as you are concerned, he is as much a manifestation of God as the greatest saint and the greatest lover of God. Equanimity arises in this vision of the cosmic Being. If that vision is not there, merely pretending one way or the other is not going to make a saint of you.

yasman no 'dviijate loko lokan no 'dviijate ca yah (XII:15)  
'He who is not afraid of anybody, and of whom nobody is afraid, is my devotee.'

This is a beautiful expression. Perhaps you are a very advanced yogi, and not afraid of anybody; but how can you make it possible that no-one is afraid of you? If you have that cosmic vision, only then is it possible - in your very presence everybody feels at ease.

I have seen this in the case of My Guru Swami Sivananda. No one was afraid of Him. I will give you one extraordinary and beautiful example. A couple who were both disciples of Swami Sivananda, had a number of daughters, and then a son. Naturally the son was spoilt. It was the custom in that family that the hair should be shaved off when the child was two or three. The father and mother wanted this ceremony to be performed in Swami Sivananda's presence. It was a ritual. Coloured threads had to be tied to his locks before they could be shaved off. A pandit was trying to tie these threads; but it was impossible. The child was shouting and crying, and everybody around was a bit concerned - if you can't even tie a thread to this little boy's hair, how is some one going to apply the razor and shave the hair off? Only the father was totally unconcerned. He said, "Let Swamiji come, everything will be alright." A little later, Swami Sivananda appeared, and the mother handed the boy over to Him. Swamiji was fat, and had a big belly. When this little boy was placed on His lap, He just looked at that boy. The little one kept on looking at Swami Sivananda's face, and at the same time his hands were automatically shampooing the holy belly. It was amazing! The barber shaved this little boy's head in ten minutes - he was so quiet, so peaceful and blissful. There was not a whimper, not a sound for ten minutes.

I have seen boys and girls run from the roadside into the ashram, and ask, "Swami! What time is it?" No one was afraid of Him, no one had any reservation in His presence. They could come and talk to Him, they could weep, they could laugh, they could do what they liked. It was so beautiful. There you saw a person

of whom no one was afraid, by whom no one was agitated. It is not easy. You can pretend - you can sit down and meditate to radiate friendliness in all directions - which may be very good, but after having done all that, when you come out and see somebody who gives you a dirty look, you are agitated, that person is agitated, and the whole thing is gone.

This quality is not something which can be practised by self-hypnosis or mesmerising, but can only arise as a sequel to the vision of God. Therefore - to repeat the words of Jesus - 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you.' All these qualities will follow you, will radiate from you naturally. You don't have to acquire them or cultivate them - they will be there, provided you seek God and his love. Only when we understand each other, when we recognise God in one another, are these qualities possible.

I have seen this in a few holy men, and only in them. In their case, these qualities are effortlessly produced. They may even frown, and you love them! It is a funny thing. What their attraction is, we don't know. Why it is that, in spite of all this, we are not afraid of them, we don't know. Consciously, subconsciously, or unconsciously, we realise that whatever they do, they love us. How is that possible? The master himself might tell you, "I'll hit you!", and you say, "Yes, yes, if you want, you can hit me. But still I will love you, and know that you love me." It is not something which the human mind can understand, grasp, and apply.

This road to the qualities or characteristics described in these eight verses seems to be God-realisation. We'll look into one more characteristic.

anapeksah sucir daksa udasino gatavyathah sarvarambhaparityagi yo  
madbhaktah sa me priyah (XII:16)

The second line is a bit puzzling. It literally means, 'One who abandons all commencements, undertakings, beginnings'. That is, the person who is totally devoted to God does not commence any undertaking. What does that mean? Ramana Maharshi suggests the interpretation that the yogi, or a sage, or a devotee, does not undertake an activity on his own initiative, but always in response to what someone else suggests. This is one point of view. But, if you have lived quite close to some of these great saints - I am referring to Swami Sivananda and Baba Muktananda in particular - they seem to have even initiated great activities. What about them? They know directly that this desire does not arise in 'me', but in God. When this 'I am'-consciousness is seen to be not the ego, but the cell in the cosmic body of God, a spark in this cosmic conflagration called God, then even though it might look as if you are initiating a project, it really does not emanate from you but from God. It is not something which the mind can grasp, or the personality can pretend to apply. It has to happen. As a devotee, it should be our constant endeavour to remember God, to contemplate the divine all the time. That contemplation itself acts as a light that prevents the shadow of selfishness arising. As long as the light is there, shadow cannot arise.

This is a reason why enlightened men ridicule the idea that there is a thing called non-enlightenment, and the idea of maya, illusion. They say, "What do you mean by illusion? It doesn't exist." What do you mean by 'the darkness of ignorance'?" Can you prove to even a small candle that a thing called darkness exists? Supposing you are able to talk to a candle, and you say, "Candle, there is darkness in the other room". The candle says, "What is darkness? Show me." As soon as you enter with this candle in your hand, the darkness is gone. To the enlightened man, there is no darkness; to one who has the vision of God, there is nothing but God. How do we work this out?

First, we have to have some faith, not belief. Every belief has got a lie built into it: be-lie-f. Faith is something different, it presupposes a certain experience. If that experience were not there, it would still be belief. You may start with belief, but you proceed to examine that belief. For instance, these great ones say that God dwells in all. Is that true? As you go on, you will begin to experience the truth. At first, you do not see this truth face to face. It is a veiled experience; but, out of that veiled experience, faith arises, and you are prepared to proceed with greater confidence. That is what is called faith, not 'religious faith', which to most of us is nothing but a set of beliefs. Then, gradually, by God's Grace, we are led to direct realisation.

The ultimate realisation of God is a gift of God, it is not for us to 'get' it. It is not for us to attain God-realisation; only God can realise God. But we can knock - as Jesus said - and it shall be opened. The key is not with you, but you have a right to knock - until your knuckles break. This knocking is what is called the practice of devotion. In the practice of devotion, there are a few vital factors which My Guru Swami Sivananda emphasised most of all. The most important of all is a mantra, a name. When we want to attract each other's attention, we call out the other person's name. In exactly the same way you call out to God using a mantra, a name. In most of these mantras there is no petitioning, merely calling out. All our requirements have already been provided by him, so we don't need to ask for anything. All that we need do is call out to God. "Oh God, oh God."

How do we know that God listens to this? We don't know! In the Philokalia, there is a beautiful expression. A teacher hands a copy of the Holy Bible to his illiterate disciple, and says, "My son, keep it always in your bag and close to your body wherever you go. It will protect you against the devil." The disciple says, "But sir, I can't read, I don't know what it is all about." The teacher replies, "That doesn't matter, but the devil knows that that is the Bible and won't come near you!" In a similar fashion, you do not know where God is, or whether He is going to respond to it; but you keep on repeating your mantra, and he whose name it is, knows that he is being called. He will come. A little faith is necessary. That faith will arise when, as a result of this practice, you begin to experience something occasionally. When that experience arises, you realise that God is hearing. Then you carry on with greater and greater intensity.

Swami Sivananda had a very simple approach; that is to start repeating your

mantra as soon as you open your eyes in the morning, so that this current is started. Then have a little wash, sit down, and repeat the mantra. If you feel like it, use a mala, and if you are alone, and feel like it, even a bit loudly. When the mind is in tune with the mantra, then stop repeating it aloud, and associate it with the breathing. Repeat it once when you inhale, and once when you exhale. Let this be a background of thought which continues throughout the day. Even when you are at work, every hour or two - with eyes closed or eyes open - for even as little as ten seconds, reconnect the consciousness with this mantra. That is the most vital and important practice. It seems to be so simple; but it is tremendously effective. After some time, this mantra current goes on throughout the day and, surprisingly, throughout the night. You know that someone is repeating the mantra even during sleep if, when awakened suddenly, instead of saying, "Hey! Who is this?", she says, "Om Namah Shivaya, Om Namah Shivaya!"

Swami Sivananda also recommended another practice known as vibhuti yoga. This is described in the tenth and eleventh chapters of the Bhagavad Gita. Here we learn to remember God whenever and wherever possible, to allow God-consciousness to expand in concentric circles. We don't imagine that we can attain cosmic consciousness straight away, but we start somewhere and let this God-consciousness expand in concentric circles. How? For instance - this is a good practice which I find amongst many - when you pass a church, you cross yourself, and for a moment you think of God. When you see some holy person, you remember God again. In this manner, let all these extraordinary phenomena remind you of God - the sun, the moon, the ocean, something marvellous, something wonderful. When you look at the ocean, you remember 'The infinite is God'; when you look at the sky, you remember 'The infinite is God'; when you look at the brilliant sun, you remember 'That is a manifestation of God.' Then you begin to see God in people who are handsome, beautiful, holy, kind, gentle, generous. Then it expands still further, and includes all humanity, and then all living beings and so on.

These are some of the ways in which we can expand our God-consciousness. At the same time, if we are sincere and keen, we should also kindle this flame of love in our hearts, and ensure that in the presence of that flame, no hate, jealousy, fear etc. ever enters our hearts. If we practice these simple methods, I am sure that we will, by God's Grace, be led into his cosmic presence.