

THE APPARENT REALITY

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The text chosen for these talks is called the 'Yoga Vasistha'. It is called the 'Yoga Vasistha' because the teacher is Vasistha. Who was Vasistha? There are as many different opinions as there are people who hold opinions. There are some who say that there was a man called 'Mr. Vasistha' and there are others who say Vasistha is a designation. 'Vasistha' is vaguely related to another Sanskrit word which means: somebody very special, supreme, superior to all others. Therefore the second school of thought believes that there have been countless Vasisthas, in several places, maybe at the same time, and definitely in every epoch.

This particular Vasistha happened to be in the Royal Court of the father of Rama. Rama is considered an incarnation of Vishnu, who is one of the aspects of God, one of the members of the Trinity. Rama becomes the student, a seeker, who starts out as an ignorant being. But how can an incarnation of God become ignorant, become confused and puzzled? The holy man, as usual, says that this is a Divine Mystery, that this incarnation of God wanted to play the role of an ordinary human being. Then we are satisfied because the human mind, being rational, it functions only in a rational framework, in a framework of logic, in a framework of cause and effect. The mind has to find a reason because it assumes that everything that happens must have a cause, must have a reason - and we do not examine that. But we will come to this, because the scripture is full of this subject.

Rama is also a prince, the son of an Emperor. It is said that this Emperor Dasaratha did not have a son until he was 60,000 years old, and so you may appreciate that this Rama must have been an extraordinarily spoiled child, pampered and protected. Then one day, he went to his father and said, 'Father, I would like to see the country.' The scripture does not particularly mention this, but I am tempted to draw a parallel here with the Buddha story, that during this pilgrimage the prince must have come face to face with the realities of life. I am only guessing, but this beloved prince had probably been brought up in an ivory tower, without being exposed to the realities of life. When he wanted to go on a pilgrimage, the doting father could not refuse, so he let him go, providing him with a nice escort. But, like the Buddha, the young man began to respond, not really question, but respond to the realities of life, the misery of life. And so he came back, thoroughly disillusioned. We use that word as it is a dreadful thing, but I love it: disillusionment. It is undesirable and bad to be in illusion, but it is a very good thing to be disillusioned. Why must one continue to labour under an illusion? Get rid of it.

So the prince came back, thoroughly disillusioned concerning life. He had thought that everything was rosy, that everybody lived like he lived, that everybody was beautiful, young, vital. He returned to the palace and promptly secluded himself in what you might have called a 'mental depression'. When does depression set in? When you are forced into a situation that you do not like and what you want to achieve is blocked. Then you withdraw. The young man was

brooding what is this life? He probably looked at a young child, helplessly being thrown around in a poor household, because nobody wants it - that sort of thing, miserable. And so, brooding over the realities of life, he had withdrawn into himself.

The scripture says that the father did not fail to notice all this, but it is impossible for a father, for anyone, to fathom the heart of the other person. The father loves that other person, and so he says, 'He is growing up, he is a teenager. He will come alright. As soon as he finds himself a girl-friend he will be fine.' Therefore the father put the whole thing off until one day the issue was forced upon him. Another sage had come to the palace to ask for assistance and the assistance he sought was Rama. Then the Emperor was forced to send for Rama. He asked Rama's own personal attendant to go and tell Rama that his father would like to see him. The attendant seemed heartbroken and he said, 'Your Majesty, from the day the young prince returned from his pilgrimage, he has been literally unapproachable. He does not take any interest in girls, in music and dancing, in food or dress. He has completely withdrawn. If we are able to talk to him and get through to him, he gives us the impression that he is not a fool, and yet not enlightened; he is somewhere in between, caught between the two.'

When the prince was eventually brought into the court, he was asked what was wrong with him, 'You are young, but you do not seem to smile, you are not happy, please tell us what is wrong with you.' There were a couple of sages, including Vasistha, in the court and, encouraged by this, Rama bursts out and says, 'Happy, what should I be happy about? I am living in this world. Is there anything in this world that is meant to promote human happiness?' And then he takes all the aspects of life, one by one: 'Have you ever seen a baby, how it lies there crying, so utterly helpless, at the mercy of everybody else? And you do not know whether it is hungry, or in pain or sick. What a miserable condition. Then, as a young boy, you divert yourself. You are a slave to everybody else, your elders treat you as if you were nothing. Then you grow up into a youth and you think that now at least you are going to enjoy yourself, but that is not true. Boy runs after girl and girl runs after boy, chasing each other, being thrown out, being discarded. Once again, the same heart break, the same agony, the same craving. Though I think I am independent, I am a slave to a million desires and cravings. This does not seem to be a very satisfactory state of affairs. And then I know that I am going to grow older. I look at a middle-aged man, he is a picture of misery. He is anxious about his house, he is anxious about his business, he is anxious about his property, he is anxious about everything. Making money is anxiety, preserving the money that is made is anxiety, spending it properly is an anxiety and losing it is another anxiety. The whole thing is a mess.'

In this manner, Rama gives a long discourse on the evils of life itself. Every aspect of life is given delightful treatment. The text is beautiful, horribly beautiful; it is shocking, but it is beautiful. As you go on reading it, you see it is true, it is real, it is undeniable fact. But what is of importance to us is Rama's final confession: 'Because I have been able to observe all this and to see the vanity of life, the utter

futility of looking for peace and happiness, for something stable in this life, I am completely and totally free from all craving for pleasure.' That is all. It is the negative state - there is nothing positive. I have left that cliff, but where am I? I have left that, but I have not established myself in anything positive. I have not got a foot-hold, I am dangling. It is at that point that a seeker may need a little help from what we call a Guru - only at that point, not before.

Most of you here, I am sure, have read quite a number of interesting Guru-fiction, like science-fiction - people hunting for a Guru in India, searching for a Guru. Why should one hunt for the Guru as if he were a kind of wild animal? It does not work. Because I have not reached that state of despair. Only when I have reached that state of despair does the Guru become meaningful. Otherwise the Guru is just another piece of furniture. I derive some satisfaction from furniture and this Guru is another piece of furniture from whom I expect some kind of satisfaction. If the Guru is not satisfying me any more, then I trade him in and get another one. It does not work that way. A Guru is meaningful only when I have reached that point of total despair, where I have seen the vanity and futility of life and, perhaps, within myself, I have struggled hard to resolve the problems that present themselves to me through an observation of life. Then completely bewildered and puzzled, I am unable to move one inch. I am not prepared to go back, because I have seen that it is all rubbish; but I do not know which way to go. It is then that a Guru becomes beautiful and meaningful.

Is it possible for one in that state of despair to come to some understanding concerning the meaning of life? Is it possible for that person to see some light, some light concerning the meaning of life, concerning the meaning of existence? It is possible. But something is wrong, there is a 'but'. How do I know that that is the right kind of light, that that is the truth? Why does this doubt arise? I am in that state now. I see that hardly ten years ago I was quite convinced that this is the meaning of life: to marry, to raise a family, to earn, to succeed in business, etc. And now, now that I have seen that to be false, now that I am convinced that those values were false, I have come to the desperate situation. Then I begin to see some kind of light, some kind of a truth concerning life. At the same time, there is just a little shadow of doubt: 'Maybe this also is just an illusion. Ten years ago I was clinging to that, utterly convinced that that was right. Now my own observation and events of life have proved that to be wrong and now this seems to be right. What guarantee do I have that this is not just another illusion?' It is inevitable that this shadow must be cast on that observation, in all right-thinking people. At that point again one needs what is called a Guru.

The story is told in the 'Yoga Vasistha' of another born sage called Suka, and his father was also a sage. Suka one day approached his father and said, 'Father, what is the truth concerning this existence? What is the truth concerning this life? This is how I feel, that there is a cosmic oneness, and we are all so many ripples, thought ripples, in this cosmic consciousness. Is that right?' The father said, 'Yes, that seems to be right and that is what the scriptures also say. It looks as though your own understanding points in the same direction, but it is better to have your

realization confirmed by an enlightened person, an enlightened sage. Only then will this little shadow of doubt that arose in your mind which made you come to me with this question, be completely dispelled.' Then Vyasa, the father, who was also supposed to be a great ascetic and a great sage, directed his son to an Emperor, called Janaka. He told his son, 'Go to this Emperor Janaka, he is an enlightened man, he will be able to help you, to confirm your realization.'

Then young Suka went to the palace, stood at the gate and told the guard there to tell the Emperor that Suka had come. That messenger went to the Emperor and said, 'A young man called Suka is at the gate. He is radiant and looks like an enlightened being himself.' The Emperor did not invite this young man in, but on the contrary, he told all his garbage collectors, 'Empty everything on him, throw all the garbage on him.' For seven days and nights this young man was made to wait there and receive all sorts of insult, abuse, etc. But he was totally unaffected. 'I am here to see the Guru - everything else is of no importance to me.' After seven days, Janaka sent for him, but not yet into the royal presence. This time Suka was taken in, given a nice bath, lovely new clothes and ornaments, and then placed on a throne-like seat and entertained with music and dancing. He did not even look at any of these. 'I am here to meet my Guru, to confirm that what I felt to be true is true, that what my father said to be true and what the scriptures say to be true, that all these are the same, and that my realization is correct and valid, that is all'. After seven days of this entertainment, the King who was also the Guru, sent for the young man. He looked at him and said, 'You shine like an enlightened being. What more do you want?' And the young man said, 'Sir, my father said so and so and this is how I felt, and this is what the Scriptures say'. 'This is correct. Go'.

In these two circumstances - when confirmation is needed or when in the state of despair - one needs a Guru and the Guru becomes valid and meaningful. In that state of despair, Rama approaches his Guru, Vasistha, and Vasistha gives his discourse. It is said that all the kings were assembled, all the angels were assembled, all the gods were assembled, all the demi-gods were assembled, all the demons were assembled, and all the sages were assembled to listen to this fantastic discourse. Here is a man, a prince, who wants to withdraw from life and the immediate response of the Guru is to ridicule the whole thing: 'You cannot withdraw from life.' The first few chapters are almost aggressive, pointing to self-effort: 'Struggle, work, you have no business to withdraw.' Does it mean, then, that the Guru approves of being exposed to the realities of life, becoming aware of the futility of life? It may be true, but that should not force me to run away from it. That is, I should not react to these realities of life and withdraw from life for fear of having to endure all that pain and suffering. etc. I should not be frightened of the realities of life, but I must become aware of them. When I become aware of the truth concerning life, it is quite possible that the same realities are apprehended, once again, but not on account of fear, 'but' as I am not afraid of old age, I see, I realise that all that is born must decay and perish. I see the completely different approaches. Superficially they look alike, but the approach is completely different. One person is frightened of old age, the other person sees

old age and death as something inevitable, as a normal progression. Where one person may avoid enjoying life, in the ordinary sense of the word, because he is afraid old age will come, or disease will come, or he will become emaciated and weak, the other person says that these things are silly, playing with toys. The body will naturally become old and senile and die, so why do you want to indulge in these silly pastimes and pleasures?

These are two completely different approaches. Therefore when the disciple approaches the Guru and says, 'I have seen this life to be full of pain, suffering, death, and I am afraid of this and do not want to participate in it,' the Guru says, 'Nonsense! Come on, get up and do something about it. Enquire into it. Become inwardly aware of the truth that there is no running away from it, that there is no avoiding it. Even the greatest of sages and saints have grown old and often they were sick and they died. See that this is something inevitable, do not be afraid of it, nor ignore it, but face it as reality and let that observation, that understanding of the truth concerning life act in you.' That is the message of Vasistha.

I will mention before concluding how this wonderful sage deals with a few complex philosophical problems. I mentioned a few minutes ago his insistence upon self-effort and that there is always this question of freedom of choice, self-effort versus predestination, destiny, karma. How does he solve this, how does he reconcile it? If you study the scripture carefully, you will be puzzled. A few chapters are devoted entirely to self-effort. He says, 'What is called God and what is called destiny is nonsense. There is nothing called destiny, it is self-effort which is the most important thing.' Then let us roll up our sleeves and fight the battle of life. He says, 'No, that is not it. What can you do, a puny little human-being. Everything is pre-determined, everything is destiny.' Then you are tempted to turn around to the sage and say, 'Please, make up your mind - am I free to act or am I destined to act?' And Vasistha says, 'You are destined to feel you are free and what is called destiny is a choice which you exercised earlier on. You are free, but not free to change your colour, change your shape, change your sex, change your genes. You have already exercised that choice and this is the result of that exercise of the previous choice. And so, what you call destiny is nothing but the fruition of your own free will exercised earlier on. Alright, now start a new chain-reaction, plant a seed now, which will germinate in its own time, which will bring up its shoot in its own good time. Thus, these two are reconciled.

There is another problem with most of us: am I a free agent or is my life pre-destined - absolutely - in which case, what part does Divine Grace play in it? If Divine Grace can do nothing, then why should I pray? If Divine Grace can do nothing, then I do not have to pray, I do not have to meditate, what has to happen will happen. Or, can Grace veto destiny? How does that work? Can I do something about it? Vasistha says again, 'Yes, of course you can do something about it. Grace itself demands that you should do something to earn that Grace and change your destiny. Your destiny demands, and Grace demands, that you should do something about it and change your destiny.' Thus all the so-called irreconcilables are beautifully reconciled in this scripture. At one point something

is emphasized and at another point the direct opposite is emphasized. Then it is pointed out: the two are not opposites - one is the continuation of the other. For instance, you plant a seed and a shoot comes out of it. These are not two unrelated events, the shoot and the whole tree were already contained in that seed, but not as cause and effect.

Another rather irrational - rational theory you find in the scripture is 'kakataliya' - accidental coincidence. Nothing at all in this universe is logical, life is not logical. It is partly psychological and partly biological, but it is not logical at all. If you take the whole thing to its beginning, you are confused. Which came first, the hen or the egg? If God created Adam and Eve and told them specifically to do something and not to do something, why did they violate that? Vasistha would say, 'Just accidental coincidence, it so happened.' Thereby the mind is freed from these fetters of logic. Instead of worrying about all that, trying to resolve an unresolvable conflict, attend to the present. You are bound now. Look at it. Do not worry why this happened. If your mind still bothers you: 'Why did it happen? Why did I ever get into this mess? Why did I get into this dreadful sin?' - never mind, it so happened. Accidental coincidence. Now, what must I do? That's it. The mind is immediately freed from the clutches of logic and its cause and effect chain and the path to freedom or liberation shines in the unclouded, or undimmed vision.

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In the Yoga Vasistha, the Master insists upon self-effort, so that one cannot say, 'Alright, if it has to happen accidentally, it will happen.' This doctrine of accidental coincidence is meant to clear mental blocks, first of all. Secondly, it is to stop this guessing game: 'This must have a cause, therefore I am, I know, I am sure ...' modified into: 'I am pretty sure,' modified into: 'I guess this is the cause.' Then I am on a wild-goose chase so that the attention is always distracted, diverted, dissipated and the effort is prevented. Meaningful effort is prevented, whereas the Master conceives that if one is to have freedom, one must engage oneself in effort. In order to free oneself, there must necessarily be an understanding of the causal connection, that is, right effort. Why do I look for right effort? Because I know that from right effort, right results will arise. So, even here, the doctrine of Vasistha is not terribly cut and dried. I love to call it 'neither-nor' philosophy. Does everything happen accidentally? No. Is there a causal connection between A and B? No. Neither this nor that. Be watchful, be vigilant, then it is possible you will understand when this is applicable and when that is applicable. That which is neither-nor is the famous 'middle path' - the middle being neither this nor that. But at the same time it should become clear that the middle is both - this and that. It is neither this exclusively nor that exclusively, but this middle path takes of the characteristics of both sides.

In all religious ceremonies and rituals there is some fire involved somewhere, as an intermediary between the human and the Divine. Why is it so? Because it stands in the middle of the so-called five elements: earth, water, fire, air and space. Since it is in the middle, it is neither gross nor subtle, which means it shares the characteristics of the gross. Like earth and water, it can be seen, but like air and space it can only be felt and cannot be grasped, unlike the earth or the water, which you can scoop up and throw away. You can throw the burning substance away, but not the fire. As through air and space, you can move your hand through fire. This fire is somewhere in between. That which is in the middle, on the one hand shares the characteristics of both and on the other hand, it is neither exclusively this nor exclusively that. This is the fundamental secret, the key to the doctrine of Vasistha. Neither self-effort, nor Grace; neither accidental coincidence, nor absence of it. There is this famous poem: 'Lord, give me the strength to change what can be changed, give me the power to endure what cannot be changed, and the wisdom to know the difference.' I remember only the last line, because it is the most important - 'the wisdom to know the difference'.

When Rama had concluded his point of view that the world is full of sorrow and life is full of misery and not worth living, the Master was pleased that this awakening had taken place, but not quite pleased because this awakening was not born of a direct vision of the truth. He says, 'What you have said is excellent; let us sit down and enquire into the whole business.' And right in the beginning there is a caution: who will find this Scripture meaningful? One who feels or one who is aware that he is bound and so wants to be liberated. The awareness of

bondage should be there if the teaching is to be meaningful. If that is not there, then the whole teaching seems to be rubbish. That is the reason why in what we regard as 'the ancient days', the teaching was considered secret. When the teaching is imparted to an immature person, it can be misinterpreted and perverted. On the other hand, it is a waste of time. Therefore the masters said: make it secret; which means: not secret because I do not want to impart this knowledge or because I want to trade this knowledge, but because it must be imparted only to a person who is qualified to receive it, who is ready for it. And so they said that only one who is aware that he is bound and wants to be freed from bondage is ready.

Most of my life, I am living conditioned by my upbringing, my culture, my traditions, without ever bothering about finding out my real identity. I am play-acting all the time, thinking that I am, that this is the truth. I am acting, I am full of pretensions, but I feel that 'this is the truth'. I do not even know the difference, I do not even care. Then one may be awakened: 'What is this life that I am leading?' When one becomes aware that this is a limited life, a conditioned life, that this is a prison, he may ask: 'I would like to get out of this, is there a way to get out of this?' One who is in that state or at that stage will understand this doctrine. He can approach the Scripture or the teacher himself and receive the light, perceive the light.

It is usual in spiritual teachings to prescribe the qualifications of a seeker, and in those days it was usual to prescribe a certain set of qualifications which alone would enable the student to be admitted into the presence of the teacher, the main qualification being the awareness that he is bound and that he wants to be free. But a few aids are also suggested: if you want to enter into this domain of liberation or moksha, then there are four gate-keepers to it.

These four are: sama - control of mind or self-control; vicara - enquiry into the nature of the Self; santosa - contentment; sadhusangama - keeping company with holy men and holy women. These four are the sentinels to the domain of moksha or liberation. If you want to enter into this, you must obviously befriend them, or at least one of them, otherwise you have no admission. One of these must be found in you, if not all. You may discover, says Vasistha, that if you befriend one, he himself will introduce you to the others.

When the Sanskrit word sama is transliterated, it is written as s-a-m-a - it means just that, if you read the last 'a' as 'e'. Can there be a sameness internally? In all conditions, whatever be the external circumstances in which you are placed, can there be that equanimity, or that state of inner equilibrium? It does not mean that you are absolutely still, dead still - it is absence of violent reaction, absence of inner turbulence. Sama - it is a different form of self-control, control of the mind of a different quality, control of the senses of a different quality. It is not suppression. If there is suppression, you are dead. Or, suppression is another name for another type of turmoil. The one is excited and expressing all the time, the other person is excited and suppressing all the time - the excitement being

common. Is there not a third possibility, that is, realizing that as long as there is life, there will be motion? Keep it just there, without repressing it, without expressing it. Let life flow on without terrible turmoil and excitement.

This is also beautifully described in the Yoga Sutras where three stages are given: (1) The stage when you cultivate self-restraint; you are used to letting yourself go, so pull the reins in, cultivate the habit of restraint, which may even look like suppression. Learn to say 'no'. (2) Let this become habitual, so that every time there is an excitement, the habit of self-restraint also comes up. The two jump together. There is certainly a certain inner conflict at that point. Let this go on until (3) The third stage is reached, where the two become of equal force. This is a beautiful thing.

I was reading a little book called 'The Alexander Technique'. The whole book is based on this teaching in the Yoga Sutras. Instead of letting yourself go all the time, saying 'yes', say 'no'. When this happens, you will begin to observe this inner commotion. Put on a little restraint so that the commotion is not allowed to express itself. It is possible in the beginning for this restraint to suppress these emotions - then you have lost your golden chance of gaining a balance. The balance is gained when the two are of exact equal force. That is precisely what happens to the human organism. When I am holding my arm up, there is tension and relaxation of just the right amount and strength in the biceps and triceps, in order to hold the arm like this. That beautiful balance is what is needed and that beautiful balance is sama. That beautiful balance is control of the mind, control of the self, control of the senses, the perfect precision balance.

I am sure it is quite clear now that the yogi's life is not one of repression or suppression. Suppression is one form of paralysis. Something, one set of muscles, is paralysed and only then, action is suppressed, motion is suppressed. Life being action, being motion, it cannot be suppressed, unless there is paralysis of body and mind. That is not the yogi's attitude at all. He lives, but for every turbulence there is a counter-turbulence, for every excitement there is a balancing force, and he ensures that these two are in a state of perfect equilibrium. Then, what has to happen happens. Only if we understand this can we also understand how it was possible for some great sages in Indian legends to enter themselves into warfare and killing. Where there is this perfect equilibrium - I do not want to kill nor do I want not to kill - then, what you call 'duty', which is the due performance of what has to happen, takes place. You are not doing anything, nor are you refraining from doing it, you are neither pushing nor pulling back - that is what is called sama. Obviously there is not a single English word which can do duty for this word 'sama'.

Another sentinel is santosa - contentment, which is fairly easy to understand. But let us look at this quality from its other end. When does santosa - contentment become difficult or impossible? When there is anxiety concerning the future, or craving for pleasure and power or pursuit of pleasure, this contentment is disturbed. It is here that Vasistha's doctrine becomes tremendously meaningful.

He says, "You pursue pleasure, which means an object outside yourself. You want to acquire an object outside yourself, you are craving for something outside yourself. That is when this contentment is completely destroyed. Find out if that outside thing has a real existence. Does that external object truly exist, so that you can say, 'Yes, I can go and get it and keep it with me and derive great satisfaction and pleasure from it'? First of all, examine: is that object real? Or, maybe it is not."

The yogi does not assume that something is real nor that it is unreal, and so there is the third discipline: vicara. Vicara is enquiry - but completely and totally distinct from an intellectual game. It is not psycho-analysis, nor psychological analysis, nor mental activity, but direct observation. The word is written: vicara. The first syllable 'v' in Sanskrit often means just the English word 'very', in the sense of efficient, intensified, excellent. The Sanskrit pre-fix 'vi' is literally 'very good'. 'Cara' is the root. In transliteration, 'car' is written c-a-r. Only if the proper marks are not used, it is sometimes written 'char', but 'car' will do. 'Car' in English is car, and the car moves. Therefore vicara is 'very movement', or in other words, very efficient movement. Excellent movement, efficient movement, well directed movement. Hence, vicara is not analysis; vicara has even been translated as 'reflection'. In reflection there is one defect, and that is that, if you look at the reflection in a mirror, the reflection is static. But this one is not static. It is movement of consciousness, it is movement of awareness in an efficient, single beam, so there is efficient observation, direct observation, undeflected observation. This is vicara.

We will look at the fourth sentinel and then come back to vicara. The fourth aid to liberation is sadhu-sangama. Sangama is company. Sadhusangama means exactly the same as satsanga; it is a synonym for satsanga. To keep company with sadhu may mean a holy person, but the word person is not there. It is used here as an adjective without a noun: keeping company with the good. That is precisely what it is: keeping company with the good. But what kind of good? Not necessarily a good person, but good thoughts, good books, perhaps all these can be included in it. Seek the company of good, holy men, if you can find them. If you are holy and you are looking for someone holy, you will find plenty of holy men and women in this world. If you are vicious and if you are looking for some vicious company, you will find everybody vicious. It depends entirely upon you. If you find the company of some holy people, resort to their company. If you do not find them, resort to their teachings, the holy books and scriptures. Also ensure that your thoughts are holy, your feelings are holy and good. What is good and what is not so good is determined by the rest of the qualifications. That which does not excite you beyond endurance is good. This applies even to food, to anything.

Sadhusangama includes the people, the scriptures, thoughts, food, feelings, everything, so that constantly the mind, the senses and the intelligence are being fed with something healthy, holy, so that violent inner reactions are avoided. The inner reactions are not totally stopped, for as long as you are alive, you are going to react, as long as you are alive, the mind is going to function through some kind

of feelings or thoughts. If they are within manageable proportions, you might find some stimulation helpful, but if they are beyond your control all the time, then it must result in tremendous inner tension. You are going to battle and battle - either you are going to get lost or you are going to suppress and get lost again. This applies to food, this applies to the literature you study, whether it is scriptural or otherwise - anything that will keep you not too excited, nor too dull, otherwise you go to sleep. Life is not dull at all if one appreciates the movement, but as it comes along, see that there is no violent excitement or reaction.

It you take the expression to mean 'company', like we are having here, or study of scriptures, these scriptures or holy men stimulate the mind and the intellect in the right direction. They question our scale of values. They ask inconvenient questions, and that is the starting point for vicara. We have allowed the mind, the attention, to drift where it will. We have not learned to look at the mind itself, we have allowed the mind to become aware of something external. We have not allowed the attention, the observation, to look at the mind itself and ask some simple, fundamental questions and it is possible that during this satsanga or study of the scriptures, some such questions arise: I have taken this for granted, is it real? I have taken for granted that my happiness comes from something which I acquire, which I possess, something which I seek. Why do I pursue an object? Because I think my pleasure comes from there. What happens if I discover that the object itself does not exist, except as a projection of my own mind? That is what is suggested in the scripture or in the satsanga. And then you go into this vicara and begin to observe some vital phenomena that had been taken for granted.

One such phenomenon is dream, and this is discussed again and again in the Yoga Vasistha, as also in the Yoga Sutras. In the Yoga Sutras, the Master says: 'Examine, learn, learn something from your dreams and your sleep.' It does not mean that you should note down all your dreams and then go and ask somebody what it means. There have been these people throughout the world; in India also there is a whole text on dream analysis - not really analysis, but more like fortune-telling. If you dream of a donkey, it means you will get a kick in the pants - that sort of thing - auspicious dreams, inauspicious dreams and so on. We are not interested in that, but in something most beautiful and simple. The question is: what is dream? Not: what does it mean? In dream you see even yourself and you see all sorts of phenomena; you see a whole world, you travel great distances, you live several years. Then you open your eyes and you realize that you have been dreaming for not more than half an hour, and you had not left your bed, let alone the room.

Now, the question is: what was the dream? What was the content of the dream? What were those people made of? The planes you took, the distances you travelled, the number of years that you had spent, what was the reality of those phenomena? Nothing more than your own mind. Your own mind was able to create all that within. But what is within and what is without? Were you aware when you were dreaming that all these were taking place within you? Of course

not. You left your house, you jumped into the car, drove to the airport, took a plane from there and flew around, maybe to the moon, wherever you wanted to go. So, the fuel for your dream was what you wanted to do, and the material for the dream was your own consciousness, your own intelligence, your own mind, your self. It is even possible to have a pleasant dream and have appropriate physical reactions, for instance in a sexual dream. Or, there is the nightmare with the appropriate unpleasant physical reactions. These are mentioned in the scriptures again and again. Here was an apparently unreal cause, producing a real result.

When the Master asks you to 'think of this dream', it is not with the intention of analyzing it, treating it as prophetic, but merely to look at it, observe it, and see for yourself the answer to these two questions: what is the content of the dream, and what was the fuel, what was the energy? The energy is your own and so you see what you want to see, the content being nothing more than your own mind. Yet, during the progress of the dream, what you saw was considered to be absolutely real. The Master asks: 'Is it possible that what you are seeing now is also of a similar quality?' In other words, is it possible that you are dreaming now? The moment that question is asked, the inner turmoil and the excitement that nearly got out of control, subsides. That is all that is meant. Nothing more. Because I have assumed that something is real, I want it. If I am able to look at it and say: 'No, I only think that it is an object worth possessing, that my happiness or pleasure depends on it. This also happened when I was dreaming, so probably this is also a dream.' When this counter-thought arises in the mind, then the restraint becomes effortless. It seems to take care of the excitement, the turmoil - and, only the mind that is at peace within itself is capable of pursuing this observation and this enquiry, and thus freeing itself from all conditioning.

part 1 - talk 3

Of the four vital aids to liberation or self-knowledge, two are especially insisted upon by the Master. One of course is vicara, observation - never to let the light of observation become even dim. What course life takes, what it brings us, and even how we react, may be beyond our control. But one thing is possible and that is that throughout our life, every day, every moment, this light of observation can be kept bright. This light of observation is able to take care of the motivations. If they are wrong, they will disappear. If they are right, they are seen, they are observed, and then transcended. And so, throughout, Vasistha says, 'Keep this observation, this vicara, active and bright.' That is one. The other that seems to be especially insisted upon is sadhusanga, good company, which means, as we discussed yesterday, company not only in the sense of holy men and holy women, or fellow-seekers, but also good literature, good food, good thoughts, good feelings, all these. Keep these with you whatever be the course that your life seems to take, then everything will come right.

When you begin to observe the activity of the self in this manner, you will immediately notice one thing: that there is some restlessness within. The author of this text goes so far as to suggest that 'mind' is a synonym for restlessness. A restless mind is dehydrated water - it does not exist. When you remove the restlessness from the mind, it immediately becomes no-mind, it becomes pure consciousness. It does not take any special training or equipment to realize that restlessness is the characteristic of the mind; one immediately notices it.

However, it is not often clear that this restlessness itself is something which has been put into the intelligence, into the consciousness. When your mind is concentrated and not restless, even your eyes do not blink very much. You can immediately spot a nervous person by this half-present movement, when he blinks too often. If you observe a little baby, it does not seem to blink at all. It looks at you; and only when it has had enough of you and wants to turn its attention to somebody else, it blinks and looks the other way. In the baby's case, there is only a certain feeling of 'I am'; the rest of the potential disturbances are asleep in the baby. From there on, you go on instilling several little images in the baby's consciousness: you are my child, you are her grandchild, he is your father, I am your mother, that is your elder sister - all these relationships. These are the limiting and conditioning agents, and there are not only these, but a number of others. If you believe in past incarnations - if you do not, you are going to believe in the collective unconscious, or the tradition of the human race, that is handed down generation after generation - then there is even something built into the baby's body-mind complex, images lying in wait to wake up. In addition to this, you add a few more and then what is known, in very polite language, as a personality, or, what in truth may be a 'junk shop', comes into being.

What is the root-cause of the restlessness of the mind? It is that every present situation is a challenge and one of these little images responds to it. As one image responds to it, the others feel threatened and also jump up. Then there is

confusion. You like somebody and you want to go forward and hug them; then you see somebody else ... 'Oh, he is watching', and that inhibits you. Something pushes you, something inhibits you, something frightens you, something threatens you, and so on. Each situation is played entirely by these marionettes. Therefore, there is this seemingly unending restlessness of the mind and this restlessness is the mind.

There is a lovely word which is used innumerable times in the Scripture and that is vasana. Vasana is almost impossible to translate, but it has been translated into 'psychological tendency'. What does psychological tendency mean? Psychological predisposition. We use all these lovely words, without understanding anything about them. Psychological pre-disposition simply means one of these marionettes jumping up. 'I am pre-disposed to this' simply means that there is no 'me' at all, because all these marionettes themselves, put together, is what I call my personality, or 'me'. So, it is not, as it were, a psychological pre-disposition in me, it is me. If I knock all these images, one after the other, there is no 'me' left.

Whatever makes you act or react as you do - that is what is called vasana. In one part of India, this word vasana also means 'smell'. It has a rather interesting connotation: if you handle some incense or garlic, you want to wipe your hands clean, but the smell is still there. Alright, wash your hands - the smell is still there. Even if you wash with perfumed soap and water, the smell is so strong that you can smell the soap and even the garlic. That is vasana: the mental conditioning has been implanted so nicely, that whatever you do, the 'smell' still comes out. If you have understood something from this, congratulations. But it is only in vicara or self-observation that one is even able to detect the feeling: 'Oh, I thought it was gone.' Suppose that I had some undesirable thoughts which seemed to be overpowering and then I started to do Japa and meditation. As I go on repeating my mantra, I can see that wherever there is a pause even of two seconds, those thoughts come up. I thought all these prayers had eradicated these evil tendencies, but it does not seem to happen. So, what is the cause of the restlessness of the mind? Vasistha does not even call it a 'cause', he says 'this is it'. Your mind is restless not just because this is what is making you restless; there is no cause and effect relationship, but they are synonyms, they are the same. This mental restlessness is also called by the name vasana, so the two do not make a cause and effect sequence, but they are two sides of the same coin. If you knock the one down the other is gone.

If one is able to detect that this is so, then the vasanas clear up and the restlessness ceases to be, without interfering with your life. This is something which needs to be even more clearly understood: desire, craving, fear, anxiety, these are unrelated to life, except that they complicate life. It does not mean that if I am totally rid of cravings, fear, and anxiety, life would become static; nor does it mean that we make things happen by craving, fear, or anxiety. Some psychologists say that a bit of anxiety is good for your natural life. I do not know what they mean. Let us take a simple example: it is winter and it is dark at about 5 o'clock in the morning. You are excitedly telling everyone around you: 'Oh, I

wish the sun would rise, it would be glorious.' You can sit and repeat this sentence like a mantra, two hundred times, but the sun would not rise. But watch, you are excitedly expecting the sun to rise and when it does rise, you say, 'Aha, here it is!' Your mantra did not make the sun rise, the sun rose totally unmindful of your excitement; but since you are excitedly anticipating that event, the event makes you even more excited. Does that mean that if you were not excited at all and you were just looking towards the East, the sun would not rise? Of course it would rise. But then the excitement with which you anticipated that event is carried over as the excitement you experience, and the mind relates to that event. You are excited, not because the sun has come up, but because you excitedly anticipated that event. You may be excited, you may not be excited, the sun would still rise. If you are excited, the excitement would continue after the sun rose. If you are not excited, you will be calm, and that calmness would continue even after the sun rose.

The same thing happens at night, when some people are afraid of the dark. Whether you are afraid, the sun is going to set, whether you are happy, the sun is going to set. The setting of the sun has nothing to do with you, with your private whims and fancies, but because you worked yourself up into this anxiety, when the sun sets, you collapse. Whatever happens in this world, whatever happens in life, will continue to happen and nothing will stop it.

Into this dream of Life, I introduce all my fancies, fantasies, and neuroses. Then, having introduced these fancies, I experience them as if they were somehow related to me, that even the arising or the cessation of an event was dependent upon my promptings - but it has nothing at all to do with me or my fears. One who realizes that, sees that life or the events in this world are totally unrelated to his desires or otherwise, cravings or otherwise. The cravings will only affect me. They are not related at all to what is happening. My wish or my fear do not materialize. My wish and my fear materialize, as my own experiences, later. Life goes on, totally unmindful of my private reactions. When this is seen, this observation of myself is uncomplicated. When I understand that it is not my excitement that pushes this situation up, nor my fear that pushes that situation down, I am able to observe what happens within me, without complicating it with external phenomena. You may have a gun hanging from your belt and I may be afraid, but as long as I relate my fear to that, I am not able to observe that fear. For instance, if you are my bodyguard, I would be quite happy to see that gun hanging from your belt. Therefore my fear is totally unrelated to the external event. When I see that, then I am able to observe what goes on within me and I see that these are merely some of the marionettes reacting. This is the beauty of vicara or observation.

Related to this is the whole concept of creation and dissolution. How do all these come into being and how do they dissolve? You are already aware of the fundamental philosophical, concept where it is held that whatever is in the microcosm is in the macrocosm. Whatever applies to the individual applies to the cosmos, and whatever applies to the cosmos applies to the individual. The two are

indistinguishably, indivisibly, one. Especially in the Yoga Vasistha, it is beautiful to see that when it looks as though the author is talking about individual creation, suddenly he changes and makes it look as though he were talking about the cosmic creation, almost as if to say: 'Why make a distinction?'

What is the process of involution and what is the process of evolution? Or, what are the steps to ignorance of self-knowledge and what are the steps to enlightenment or self-knowledge? There is a very beautiful description and I will give you the steps. Then we will see how they could be applied to our life as a whole and even to our daily life, and to the birth and dissolution of the cosmos. The material universe comes into being, exists for some time going through a lot of changes, and is dissolved. You and I come into this world, we are born, we continue to live, thrive, decay, and then disappear. The same thing applies to our daily life: every morning we are born, we grow, and we decay - in the evening - we are already stooping a little bit and instead of getting into the grave, we get into bed. One is not fundamentally different from the other.

I am relating all this to our daily life, so that we can see how very minutely the yogis have observed this daily life. The first state is just before you really wake up, but it is not always that you become aware of this state that the Scripture, calls 'bija jagrat'. Baja means seed, and jagrat means wakefulness. You are in bed, asleep - then the sleep seems to come to an end and you are about to wake up. You feel the sheet and you feel the bed, but it is not as though 'I am sleeping in this bed'. Nothing seems to be real, nothing seems to be unreal; there is not even a distinction between real and unreal. But this is not Self-knowledge, this is not God-realization, this I is not floating in space, because you are about to wake up. This means that all the mischief that you are capable of is in a seed-state.

The next state is called 'jagrat' or wakefulness. In that period you experience: 'Ah, I am here and this is my bed.' You are just waking up: 'This is my house, I am sleeping in my house, I am sleeping in my room, this I is me.' The man who is waking up at this point is unaware of the whole world, but only of these two concepts: 'this is me', and 'this is my bed, this is my room, this is my house'. The next is 'maha jagrat'; maha means 'great'. This same wakefulness has expanded enormously and 'this is me' and 'this is mine' has also expanded. Instead of merely saying 'this is me', I have now woken up to the feeling that the 'me' is composed of a tremendous number of qualifications: 'I am a doctor', 'I am a yogi', 'I am this', 'I am that' - all these wake up. This is merely an expansion of the first wakefulness; the whole world has come into being.

The next is a very subtle and beautiful state: 'this is me and this is the world' and relationship begins to appear in this consciousness. The Master calls it 'jagrat svapna'; 'jagrat' means waking and 'svapna' means dream. All your wonderful relationships with all these diverse beings in the universe, with which you connect yourself within your own imagination, are nothing more than a waking dream. You think 'you are', I think 'I am' and 'I' think 'you are', and so I imagine some kind of relationship with you. It is nothing more than a 'waking dream'.

Since your whole life seems to be based only on this, the Master calls the entire life a long dream, nothing more than that. Only one thing is awake: the feeling 'I am' and that has projected innumerable objects, with which it enters into certain relationships, all these being mere dreams.

The fundamental wakefulness of 'I am' is the only thing that seems to be real in this world-game and the rest is dream. We enter into these relationships and we think they are all real, factual, unshakable, unquestionable, until we begin to question that. We have changed so often that we do not even realize when we are in the next dream. We do not realize: 'I have walked into this illusion so often and I have been disillusioned so often. Why must I get into this again?' This does not occur to us. Because, while we are engaged in that dream, that dream seems to be real. This is the tragedy.

There is another aspect: while life goes on like this - 'this is me, this is mine', 'he is my brother and she is my sister', 'this is my wife and that is my husband, father, mother, children, etc.' - to some extent these things seem to share some quality of truth. Why? Because they are all related to me and this 'me' seems to be a stable factor. Why? The stable is usually closed after the horse has been stolen - that is what we do with the self and so it is called the 'stable factor'. In the waking dream, there is some mixture of reality and unreality, but all of us are capable of the next, which is 'svapnat' - pure dream. This does not mean the dream in bed, but our present dream. We go and sit in the meditation room or at the beach and, having heard all this, we begin: 'Oh, it is marvellous, I am going to be enlightened one of these days and once I am enlightened, what a wonderful thing - one foot here and the other foot on Mars. The whole thing is imagination and this kind of day-dreaming is called 'svapna'. We think we are awake, but we are not. We are completely disconnected with reality; it is some kind of hallucination, day-dreaming. That is also part of our daily life.

Then there is 'svapna jagrata', which means 'svapna' - dream and 'jagrata' - waking. Here again there is a mixture of something that is not and something that is. We revive the memory of a past experience as if it were happening now. We are all capable of this. Pure and simple memory, but vivid memory. We remember something that happened in the past. If we were awake to wisdom, even the past experience as it happened, would have a different character - we would not enjoy nor suffer with it. But we revive this memory now, and experience it as if it were happening now. This is another state of mind we pass through every day.

Then, when we are tired of all this, we go to sleep and forget everything. This is the story of a person's daily life. This is also the story of our total life-span. This is what happens to us throughout life. I am born, I am a little baby in whom all the seeds of potential mischief are lying dormant, and then the baby wakes up to the feeling: 'I am so and so, this is my father, this is my mother.' Then the baby grows a little more and its world seems to expand. Can you visualize this? As I grow up, 3, 4, 5 years old, my world seems to expand far beyond my house, to my

neighbours, to my friends, to my schoolmates. The world seems to grow: maha jagrat. Next, I forge relationships which do not exist. 'He is my friend and he is my enemy, he is my rival and he is my competitor', and so on. I may throw out these relationships as dreams, but they return to me as ropes, tying me to all sorts of difficult situations. Caught in this web woven by myself, I dream of liberation and freedom, I dream of pleasure, I dream of happiness. These are all nothing more than dreams.

Then we come to my stage, my age-group, and the only thing we are left with is memory. All the good things are past and we go into the woods and think of all the nice things that happened and experience them as if they were happening now. This goes on for some time and then we seem to get tired of all this experiencing and reviving of memories and hallucinations, and we fall asleep and do not wake up - we wake up in another body. Thus what applies to our daily life also applies to the whole life span.

It is also possible that the entire cosmos or universe, or what we call our solar system, the universe we are aware of, also passes through the same stages. In this little body, there are billions of cells, each of them functioning in a dual relationship; that is, each cell seems to be independent of the other and yet all cells are interrelated. Each cell seems to know its function and performs only its function, seemingly independent of the others. It can even fight with other cells and throw them out. And yet they are interrelated, they are cells of one living being, so that, if I die, all the cells die. If my heart stops, the cells in my foot do not say: 'Alright, you have stopped, but we will go on.' Each cell seems to function independently up to a point, but not totally. Is it possible that even now all these hundreds and thousands of stars that we see in the night sky are similarly cells in one enormous body of a 'Mr. So and So' - it does not have to be 'God' - and that we are all tiny little microscopic entities in that enormous body? It is quite possible. And all these things happen in that enormous body, which we call creation, preservation, and dissolution. Creation exists and so does dissolution. That Cosmic Being also undergoes these several stages of involution and we shall discuss the evolution tomorrow.

part 1 - talk 4

What we described yesterday as the seven stages of ignorance, constitute our normal life. We live in a long dream, calling it the waking state. This waking state is intensified by creating and projecting relationships, which are not based on truth or fact. All relationship is entirely and totally dependent on one's own mind. Outside of that mind there is no relationship. But, having assumed this relationship to be true and strengthening this relationship by persistently affirming and reaffirming that this is the truth, very soon the relationship seems to be an absolute fact. Even so, a long dream might have all the appearances of an absolute truth. There is a funny story told of a king who persistently and daily dreamed that he was a beggar. That dream continued for twelve hours, from 6 pm to 6 am, till very soon he was entirely confused. From 6 pm to 6 am he was a beggar, and from 6 am to 6 pm he was a king. He was wondering: 'Which is the dreamer? Am I the beggar dreaming from 6 am to 6 pm that I am a king, or am I a king, dreaming that I am a beggar from 6 pm to 6 am?' His ministers and servants tried to convince him that he was the king. He said, 'I see that this is also part of the same dream. That these people are bowing down to me is also part of the same dream.'

There are all kinds of beautiful stories to illustrate this simple truth that what we are in, may be a long drawn-out dream. For instance, a statement is made at one stage in the Scripture that the world is a long dream, and because we are in that dream, the dream-objects appear to be real, the dream-personality appears to be real, and the dream-situation appears to be real. All this appears real to us only because we are still in the process of dreaming a long dream. But then, what is long and what is short? The story is told in the Scripture of a king who dreamed he had passed through the horrors of a life-time in the course of one hour. We also, in our dreams, seem to live through many years and the time-scale in a dream has its own length. It is not a film which I know starts at 6 pm and will conclude at 8 pm, even though a whole life-time is projected on the screen. Here I am quite aware that this is not connected with my time-scale, the time-scale I am aware of while I am watching this film. But in a dream you are caught up in it so that to you it is a life-time. Only when you come out of the dream do you realize, 'Oh, it was only half an hour.'

What is length of time? It is purely psychological. We are caught in this, and as long as we remain caught in this, that which we think we experience, appears to be experienced as a reality. Even that experience is not independent of thought: I think I experience this and naturally I experience this - apparently. All of my pleasures and pains, happiness and unhappiness, all these are conditioned, governed, created by this jugglery whose origin I do not know, and whose sorrow is the only thing I am aware of. I begin to realize that the sorrow imposed upon me by this long dream is real - like somebody jumping on my throat in a nightmare - the sorrow is real.

Pleasure also seems to be real for the time being, but it is not really so. There is a

vital difference between pain and pleasure. Pain seems to be almost absolute, pain seems to be ever new. You are never bored with pain. Pleasure seems to be relative and pleasure seems to be contaminated; it is not pure. There is no pure pleasure in life; even when I am enjoying something greatly, there is a sneaking suspicion somewhere: 'This is going to come to an end soon, what then?' I do not think like that when I have a headache: 'This is coming to an end soon, what then?' But when I am enjoying some pleasure, there is always this suspicion that this is going to change very soon. So, one is aware of this change - that this is short-lived, even when he is happy. This is one of the propaganda slogans for enjoyment: 'You are young only once in your life-time, so enjoy yourself' Already you are being told that enjoyment is not perpetual and unalloyed. It is not absolute, it is relative, and it is contaminated by some kind of fear, some kind of suspicion, some kind of worry. When we are together, it seems to be glorious, but immediately the thought arises: 'When are you leaving?' I am here, but that pleasure is not taken in, without being adulterated, diluted by the fear that 'you are going away, we are going to be separated'.

Patanjali Maharishi says in his Yoga Sutras that the wise man sees the whole of life as unhappiness. The unhappiness being unhappiness, there is no question about it, but even the brief periods of happiness are not pure. In this long dream there is a perpetual churning. Now the first step on the way of evolution is tricky: when does one realize the painfulness of life? Of course, we are all aware of aches and pains inherent in life, and even though we do not get reconciled to that, we come to terms with it. If there is a problem in one direction, I will go in another direction; if there is a headache, I take an aspirin. Realizing that these problems crop up again and again in our life, we have also evolved palliatives to soothe, not to cure, but just to ease the pain. Again, this is what we call the normal life of the human-being. When does this truth - that this life is full of pain - really hit us?

Vasistha comes back to his pet theories: first of all, when one is in holy company. It is here that there is talk of this naked truth, of which the wise ones are not ashamed. So, we hear the truth, but even when the truth is spoken by a sage, a holy man, a yogi, a buddha, we pay just a nodding compliment to such truth. I have experienced this in India. Someone sits there, admiring the discourse, saying, 'Oh, it was marvelous, inspiring.' It was not supposed to be inspiring, it was supposed to shatter you! I have heard such funny remarks after a discourse where the yogi had exposed the evil of wealth, for instance, and the best part of the audience were wealthy people. It does not touch them at all.

When does such teaching make sense? When I am mature. This is obvious. When a seed drops into mature soil, it germinates. Is there a criterion by which I can know whether I am mature or not? Is an immature person or semi-mature person going to admit, or realize that he is only semi-mature or immature? Would a totally immature person seek this holy company at all? How does one know when one is really mature and able to respond to this teaching instantly? Obviously, one does not know. Again, it is a circular argument. One waits to see it - the teaching takes root - then he is a mature man. When the shoot comes up, one can

say, 'The seed has germinated.' When you sow a seed, you do not know that the seed is potent and the soil is mature. You are only going to declare this after the event, when it is not at all necessary to make such a declaration that the maturity is there. This is the reason why Vasistha comes back to his theory that a mature seeker must come into the company of an enlightened person and even then the germination is unpredictable; and so is this 'accidental coincidence'. It may happen sometimes. Accidentally, subheccha may sprout in that heart - that is the first step. Subha is auspicious, good and noble; eccha is wish, resolve.

In the heart of every person, not only in one who is called mature, there are two forms of conditioning or habit patterns. One, the good habit pattern, and two, the not-so-good habit pattern. It is possible for one to strengthen the good habits and weaken the bad habits. Even so, in this holy company, it is possible to expose the brighter side of one's nature and thus strengthen it and thereby weaken the darker side of one's nature. So, even this vasana that we were discussing before, may be both good or not-so-good. I do not want to use the word 'evil'. If, in associating with the sages, one is able to expose one's better nature and thus strengthen it, the darker side is weakened. But this has to be brought about without conscious effort. You cannot make a conscious effort to raise this right resolve. It is like love - either it is there or it is not there. You cannot make yourself fall in love with somebody, nor can you make yourself fall in love with this truth. It has to happen. Since it is seen that this can happen accidentally, in a certain situation, you may regard it as a gift of God. Vasistha uses the words 'accidental coincidence'. If you are so inclined, you can call it a 'gift of God'. Since it is a gift of God, you will cherish it. It happened to you accidentally and since you do not know how to produce it again, you cherish it very carefully.

What form does this subheccha take? The resolve is to enquire into the nature of this, into the nature of life, not the purpose of life. The yogi does not really engage himself in enquiring into the purpose of life. That is left to the sociologists, politicians, economists, and so on. The yogi is not interested in the purpose of life, because - how do you know that there is a purpose? First of all, there is the assumption that there is a purpose, which in turn asks the question: 'What is the purpose?', and then provides the answer: 'This is the purpose'. It is like the dummy in the mouth of the little infant. It is not the truth at all. You are crying: 'What is the purpose, what is the purpose?', and somebody says: 'This is the purpose', and sticks the dummy into your mouth.' You spit it out and then she comes and says: 'This is the purpose', and puts in another dummy.

Ignoring all this, if you believe in the purpose of life, and you have found your purpose, carry on. In either case, you are going to live, with or without purpose. Instead of getting into all this unnecessary discussion, the yogi does not discourage people from assuming that there is a purpose and assuming that something or other is the purpose of life. No objection. But the yogi's question is: What is life? What is this thing called 'me', and what is this world? What is the truth concerning this? Who am I? That is all.

If the answer to this can be found, the purpose manages itself. If you know that you are a living organism and that the thing in front of you is a fruit, then the purpose is obvious - that the living organism should eat the fruit. But what seems to be important here is whether it is fruit, or a plastic thing which looks like a fruit. If it is merely a plastic thing that looks like a fruit, I will leave it on the table. Its purpose is not to be eaten, but to be kept on the mantelpiece as a decoration. So the yogi's approach to this problem is: What 'is' it? What is this world? What am I and what is this life?

This question is not as simple as perhaps we have been made believe in the past three or four days; it is much more complex an affair. If you are blessed with someone with whom you can communicate on the same wave-length, there is an interaction and this vicara does not run into a groove, thus making another habit pattern. However noble, however good it may be, if it is mechanically rolling along the same groove, it loses its vitality. The very essence of vicara is vitality; it must be alive. For this very reason the whole Scripture - the whole Scripture is vicara - looks at the same truth from as many different points of view as possible. What is this world? The world may be nothing more than an atom in existence. And then there is a long story, which makes this clear to our understanding. Then, another approach is taken - the world maybe nothing more than an idea - and there is another long story to illustrate this. What is this world? Maybe it is nothing more than a dream - and a whole new, story is given to illustrate this.

As you go on reading these stories, the truth seems to enter into you, but it still is not quite clear. Vicara is not merely sitting and gazing at the blank wall, though you may do so, but it is a dynamic and vital process. It is not something which is a dull routine or a habit pattern. In this vicara, one looks at this life and the world from as many points of view as possible, so that all the assumed theories and realities get a good beating. 'But I assumed this to be true'... wherever such an assumption presents itself, you look into it from different angles and see if the truth concerning this can be sustained. That way the Master comes to the inescapable conclusion that the only thing that can really be affirmed concerning this life and concerning the entire creation, is that the whole thing is pervaded by consciousness. That is the only thing that can be really real. All the rest is an assumption. That you exist and I exist are assumptions; that your parents are Mr. and Mrs. So and So, and that my parents are Mr. and Mrs. So and So, are assumptions. Who is my mother and who is my father? The father's contribution to this body was very small, and equally so was the mother's. The rest of what is called this body, born of the parents, belongs to the vegetables. Even as this body begins to take shape in the mother's womb, it is still the food that is eaten by the mother that is transformed into the baby's body. Even so, your mother is the same as my mother, the same vegetables. Therefore, whenever there is an assumption, look at it from a different point of view. This, in brief, is the vicara method. Nothing is assumed, and if an assumption, arises, you knock it down with something else. The road-block must be cleared so that the vision becomes undimmed.

For instance, I have a distinct feeling that I exist - but it is only a feeling. If the feeling were not there, would I still know that I exist? As for instance in sleep: what happened to the 'me' in sleep? It is totally absorbed by sleep. The body is still alive, all systems going, and yet 'I' was not there. The feeling 'I am', the feeling 'I exist' was not there. So, perhaps even that is a notion, even that is an assumption. Examine it again, look at it again. This is called vicara.

This vicara is an endless process. As this vicara or direct observation proceeds, the mind becomes finer and finer, so that it is no longer gross. You may still live, you may still enjoy life - that is, the body-mind complex may still continue to live a normal life - but there is a certain refinement; it is not gross any more. Relationships still seem to continue, but in a very refined manner, not overly possessive, not overly aggressive. Of course, I still think she is my wife, she still thinks I am her husband; that is alright, but there are no violent reactions. There is a certain refinement and the mind becomes fine. From being opaque, the mind is gradually becoming transparent. A glass-pane is made opaque by a coating of silver on the other side so that you will not see anything beyond, and you will only see your own reflection. To the person who is looking into a mirror, the whole world is 'myself', there is nothing more important than 'me', there is nothing more beautiful than me, the whole thing is 'me'. Once that silver is wiped off and the same glass becomes transparent, then you are able to see clearly what may be on the other side. In the same way, when the mind becomes fine, transparent, you are able to see the truth, without being totally biased and self-centred. It is then that there is comprehension of purity.

The Master, at that point, calls the mind itself 'purity'. The mind is no longer mind, the mind is no longer distorted, the mind is no longer restless, the mind is no longer muddled; it is pure, it is clear, it is purity itself. And that again enables this vicara to continue. Vicara or self-observation does not stop; it continues through all these different stages. The mind has become thin, transparent and steady. Because the restlessness is gone, it no longer needs to be called 'mind' - it is purity. The actions of such a person are pure, naturally pure, effortlessly pure; there is no perversion. All these little marionettes do not jump up and down, clamoring for expressions. There is purity, and in and through that purity, the light of God shines; and in that light, the body-mind complex functions purely, without blemish. It functions, not according to your moral code or my moral code, but in strict accordance with this infinite consciousness or God. It is then that you are able to say that he is an expression of God's will.

There is still a sense of individuality, which is the reason why the vicarana, or the direct observation or enquiry continues. But this individuality is not walled in by conditioning or complexes; it is walled in only as long as the mind is opaque. When the mind is transparent, the individual personality is not walled in, it is able to stop identifying itself with the rest of the world, it is able to see that this is part of the whole. Not even part of the whole, but intimately one with the whole. That is known as non-attachment.

What does non-attachment mean? When I am attached to you, I think your company gives me pleasure, and therefore you are more a tool to gratify my pleasure. I use you to gratify my pleasure. That is when there is attachment. Attachment means: I am quite different from you and I pursue my own pleasure. I am your student, I may even make you believe that I am here only to satisfy you. But in reality, if I am able to be honest with myself and with you, I cannot escape the conclusion that I am pursuing pleasure and I am treating you as a means to gratify my pursuit of pleasure. And so I am attached to you, but not because I want to serve you. Basic to this attachment is the feeling that you and I are completely different and separate. Only because we are separate beings is that contact or attachment possible.

Now the Master talks of non-attachment. When is there non-attachment? Not when I keep away from you - then there is no relationship at all. You may just as well say, 'I am not attached to the 2 billion people in the world, I am attached to only three, my children.' You do not even know the best part of these 2 billion, you do not even know that they exist - that is not non-attachment. Non-attachment means not coming into contact with anybody - but I am never in contact with anybody at all in any case. All of you are seated there and in half an hour I will be in my room and you will be somewhere else. But that is not the point. The point is that this non-attachment implies non-division. We are not separated at all; and because we are never separated, because we are one, eternally one, there is no separation and the consequent contact. This is quite a different thing, and that is what is called love. Love is the experience or the expression of a perennially existing non-division. We do not come into contact, for we are never separated. The problem of coming into contact arises only when we are separated. When it is realized that we are never separated, there is no coming into contact, there is no attachment. I can be there, then you recognize that I am here; I can be thousands of miles away - I am still here; I can be on another planet - I am still here. We are still one, because the opaqueness of the mind, which seemed to raise the notion of division, has gone. When the mind has become transparent, you realize that we have forever been one, in the infinite consciousness - or, if you want a smaller word - God. That is called non-attachment, that is called love. The reason why the yogis did not use the word love was because here we assume that it is the relationship between two people. It is not a relationship between two people, but it is a relationship that transcends these two people - where there is only one - never two.

The next step is very interesting. The two-ness is gone and oneness has come, but that oneness is not the antithesis of duality. The oneness is not something which says that all of us must have the same shaven head as I have, so that we will all be one. It is not the antithesis of duality. What was regarded as the object so far - because the individuality is still there - loses its objectivity in the understanding and realization that in this cosmic ocean of infinite consciousness we are all floating ripples. 'I' is there, of course 'I' is there. Not 'I am' there, but 'I' is there, as a ripple, as a wave, and 'you' is also there, as another ripple, another wave - the content of one ripple or one wave is exactly the same as the content of another

ripple or wave - the same water, the same salt. The shape may be different, the colour may be different, but it is the same water here and the same water there.

That stage is given the name 'padarthabhavana'. The word is interesting. 'Padartha' as one word could mean 'object', and 'bhavan' could mean 'cessation', so that at this point one does not feel that there is an object of consciousness. You are not my object. I exist as a sort of transparent being, and in that total transparency, 'I' is reflected in you and 'you' is reflected in me. It is seen that what are called the two of us, are the same. Take the two corners of this paper - you are this corner, I am that corner - but it is only one piece of paper. These corners cannot be taken off without leaving other corners, the corners cannot be freed from the paper. And this is another beautiful expression that occurs again and again in the Yoga Vasistha. 'What is consciousness, or God? God is that reality which exists between me and you.' So I pick up this paper again. Paper is that which exists between this corner and that corner - but the corners are also included in that paper. It is not as though this corner stands outside the paper - the corner is corner of the paper. So, when it is said that God is that which exists between you and me, it means that the whole thing is God. Instead of saying, 'I and you', as if we are two completely different entities, it is realized that between us there is God and that in Him we are linked together. Then you cease to be an object.

part 1 - talk 15

There are a lot of practical instructions in the text of the Yoga Vasistha. Laya Yoga is mentioned, 'laya' in the sense of absorption of the Shakti into consciousness. But somehow the author does not seem to like Hatha Yoga, probably because at that time Hatha Yoga meant violent practices. Even now, in the mind of the Indian villager, hatha means some violent and stubborn activity. 'Stubborn' itself is called 'hatha'. Probably some people went to extremes, we do not realize that such things were possible. Even I know of a few Hatha Yogis who are so fond of the asanas that they spend about 10-12 hours each day, just doing asanas. I also heard of one pranayama enthusiast who insisted on passing out each time he held his breath. When one sees all these things, one begins to wonder, and one also understands the great caution given in many texts, that this could be dangerous.

However, Vasistha does seem to like pranayama. There are a few chapters on pranayama which are very obtrusive. We think that prana starts from the tip of the nostrils, but the Master says that about twelve inches in front of the body is the origin of prana and the termination of apana, so that the field of pranic movement extends to about twelve inches outside the body. Therefore, any pranayama exercise must also involve that extension, the pranic shield. How that is done, each one has to discover for himself. That is highly recommended as an exercise that will enable you to live physically for any length of time. There are also wholesome instructions on diet and on the avoidance of psychosomatic disorders, all very beautifully described. But the main-stay of the yoga of the Yoga Vasistha is vicara - relentless observation, unblinking vigilance - that seems to be the message. Vasistha seems to suggest that it is when you nod, when you wink, that a new creation arises. When you go to sleep at night, the world is gone, and when you wake up in the morning, you are creating a whole new world. When it happens to look like the one that was there before, then this is accidental coincidence. If this morning's world looks like yesterday's world, that is merely what you think it is. Even concerning what we call death - there are lovely descriptions of death and what happens and how one goes to another world, there is a long story in the beginning of the text which suggests that whatever happens, happens within you, right here. Then you understand the whole trick of the mind. I will give you one of the stories which illustrates just that point.

There was a devout and pious couple who had ten sons and the sons were very devoted to the parents. Nobody has been able to arrest time and so the parents grew old and died. These ten sons were heartbroken. They had not gone to school or qualified for any type of job, and so they did not know what to do with themselves. After their mourning, they suddenly found themselves adrift. They got together and discussed what they should do. One of them suggested: 'There is no sense in working for a living because one is going to die in any case. We shall strive to become the king, but then the king also dies. We shall strive to become the king of heaven, but then even that is called 'temporary immortality'. If it is temporary, it is not immortality. It may last longer than the human life-span, but even that comes to an end. We should become creators of the world, for at least

the creator lasts longer than the world in which we live.' This idea was unanimously passed. Then arose the question: 'How do we become creators of the world?' The eldest boy suggested: 'I have heard father recite some verses from the scriptures and there I heard that a man becomes what he intensely contemplates. That is it. Now let us sit in the lotus posture, keep the neck and the back straight, the eyes and say, 'I am not this body any more. My limbs are the limbs of the creator, my head is vast, my body is cosmic in dimensions. I am the creator of the whole universe. Contemplate this and do not open your eyes till you are quite certain that you have become the creator.'

And so the sons contemplated and they contemplated, and if there remained the least little bit of suspicion that they had not become the creator, they were not going to open their eyes. Since they were completely and totally absorbed in their own contemplation, they were unmindful of what happened to the body. Now you must exercise all your imagination in order to get this point. Here is a young man in this particular physical space. The body appears to be there, but inwardly the mind is not related to the physical body, nor to enlightenment; that mind seems, to you and me, to be limited to that spot on earth, but the mind is contemplating: 'I am the creator of the world.' Only this notion exists, only this notion persists, and after some time the physical body disintegrates. In that physical space there has arisen a firm notion or conviction that. 'I am the creator of the world', and so it becomes! I am explaining this quickly, so it is not impressive. But if you go home and read chapter after chapter, the mind will become boggled and you will suddenly begin to see: 'My God, this is true.'

It is because of a deep-seated conviction that I am a man, that I am a human being, that I am an impotent, limited, finite little thing, that I experience all these in my own tile. I am convicted by my own conviction and therefore I am imprisoned in my own experience. How do I get out of this? Contemplation, - vicara. After a superficial study, this looks like science-fiction, but when one enters into it, it is obvious that it is the truth. The external world exists only because I think I am the body, limited to the skin. When the body is not there, what is internal and what is external? There is this division into external and internal only because I feel that I am the body and I am limited to the skin. When that skin is gone, what is internal and what is external? When that is realized, you see that even when the body exists, there is really no internal and no external. The body does nothing, it is just there. Why bother about it? This seems to be the basic message of tremendous hope, of tremendous optimism, of inconceivable glory. The method suggested is contemplation or vicara, which not only means enquiry and observation, but also deep contemplation of the truth, undeflected by the rational mind's activity of doubt, hope, and despair. When the rational mind gives some explanation, the explanation is rejected as the product of the rational mind which is itself a product of ignorance. Who is interested in its answers? I want the truth.

Certain spiritual practices are recommended: constant investigation of scriptures dealing with self-knowledge - not reading, not even mere study, but constant

investigation. In order that one may not misinterpret or misunderstand the Scripture, it is necessary to get close to spiritually, advanced or enlightened people, and discuss the truth with them. The other practices are the abandonment of mental conditioning and the restraint of the movement of prana. Elsewhere, in the same text, it is mentioned that the mind is made restless by two factors: one, the movement of prana or life-force, and two, the habit patterns, the vasanas, the conditioning, the psychological tendencies and predispositions. These are all built in, somewhere in your brain, or maybe in your entire anatomy, and when the life-force flows through these, these latent tendencies are activated. I think this is quite simple. Even if you are a genius, if you are ill or if you are made to fast for a few days, your memory seems to fail you. This happens because the prana is not flowing in those memory-cells, or the flow of prana is very weak. If one is so low, he is not able to function brightly. So, it is said that when these two come together, that is, the latent tendencies and the movement of prana, the mind is activated. The mind becomes restless and the restlessness itself further strengthens the mental conditioning, and as this prana moves in it, we get more and more confused and deluded.

Vasistha says: 'Get hold of either one of these and the other also comes under your control.' That is, if you are able to control the prana, then the restlessness of the mind also comes under your control. But pranayama does not mean merely inhaling and exhaling. Pranayama literally means suspension of breathing, which is the highest stage of pranayama. What we are doing is a mild form of pranayama, inhaling and exhaling, making the breath rhythmic, gentle, unhurried, unexcited, and these qualities are already reflected in the mind. If you are able to breathe gently, the mind also functions in a gentle way. If your breathing is rhythmic, the mind also gains a certain order. If your breathing is unagitated, your mind is also unagitated and still. This restlessness is not beyond your control. So you can obviously see that if this practice is taken to its fullness of complete suspension of breathing or complete suspension of pranic movement, then the mental impressions are made inoperative. They will all be there, but they have no energy to function. All the electrical equipment is there, but the main switch is off, the current is shut off, with the result that they are all inoperative. That is when the mind is made 'no-mind'.

Now, taking the same analogy of electricity, you can work from the other direction. The power is there, but you destroy all the equipment, the bulbs, the fans etc. The main switch is on, the current can flow as much as it wants, but none of these things will work, because they have been smashed. The current cannot flow now because there is no channel. Therefore, destroy either of these and you will have control over both.

How does one abandon mental conditioning? These words have to be very cautiously and intelligently understood, otherwise one creates the conditioning. It is like walking in the forest or a cemetery and saying, 'Oh, of course I am not afraid.' Why am I saying that I am not afraid? It is when I keep telling myself that I am not afraid, that I am afraid. A man who is not afraid does not say so; he just

walks in. So, here we are caught. I recognize this mental conditioning limiting my life, ruining my life all the time and I am enquiring into its real nature. This enquiry into the real nature of the mental conditioning and the discovery of this real nature, is itself the abandonment of mental conditioning.

Let us take an example from our normal life. I feel hungry and the first thought that arises in me is: 'I am hungry'. What does that mean: 'I am hungry'? Certainly 'I' am not hungry, but it is a biological conditioning. There is this hunger, this need for food, built into the physical organism. It is that which is demanding nourishment, so let the body go and have some food. On the same level, I look at the food and say, 'Au, I do not like this. I would like to have something else.' Now what is that? Obviously it is not biological. If it is a simple biological urge, it would take any food and digest it. But there is something else operating here: I like this and I do not like that. Such a thing does not exist in a pure and simple biological system. The mouth may accept food of a certain temperature, neither too low nor too high. The mouth may accept what the body can digest as food - not stones and glass pieces but the system does not demand chocolates. Now we are entering into something else.

What does this vicara do? Vicara eliminates all imaginary factors. If she picks up that tape-recorder and throws it in the direction of my head, my head will tilt to one side, trying to avoid being hit; that is natural, biological conditioning. Whether he is a sage, a yogi, God himself, he will still do that. But when she merely picks it up to put it somewhere else and I duck, that is not biological, that is some psychological problem. Your enquiry, or observation or contemplation eliminates the imaginary factors. What does that expression mean? The imaginary factor did not exist in the first place. What is eliminated? That is maya, that is our battle with illusion. An illusion can not be eliminated, but we had assumed, unfortunately, the non-existent to be real and that assumption that the non-existent is real is eliminated. At night, when you walk out of here, something moves on the ground and you get frightened, you flash a light and there is nothing. You wonder: 'Why did that bear run away?' There was no bear, it was only the shadow of the branches cast in the moonlight. There was nothing there in the first place to run away from. That is the type of phenomenon that vicara or contemplation eliminates. That is the type of phenomenon that you abandon.

The truth cannot be abandoned. You can say, 'Well, there is a biological need for food, but it is not necessary to satisfy that need, because I see that there is already a lot of fixed deposits and the biological function will consume that.' That functioning cannot be arrested at all and there is no need for it; it has nothing whatsoever to do with you or me. The body is body - it is there, it will function, it will eat and drink, and it will perish. The material world exists because someone, like the ten sons who became creators, was sitting in this area and contemplating: 'I am the creator of the world. I am going to bring a lake into being. I am going to bring some human beings into being. I am going to create earth, water, fire, etc.' All this has come to be in his consciousness and we are all part of the dream objects of that fellow. The whole earth is but a dream object of someone who is

still dreaming and we have nothing whatsoever to do with it. It has not been created for me, it has not been created by me, it is not me. It can exist as long as it wants to exist, it can dissolve when it wants to dissolve, it has nothing to do with me. That is abandonment of the world.

Thus, this contemplation or vicara leads to the complete elimination of imaginary factors and realization that there is nothing which is mine and that what I have been brought up to believe to be 'me', is not 'me'. If all these are abandoned, what exists is existence, and that is 'me', that is what I referred to earlier on as 'me'. This is a bit tricky to understand, so there is a lovely story to illustrate it. It is a long story in the second volume, a highly romantic thriller.

There was a king called Sikhidhvaja who was a brilliant man and he married a princess called Cudala. There are a few interesting chapters of how they enjoy life. Then this young and vital couple were getting old and suddenly they realized that, instead of all their childish enjoyment, they should devote themselves to something more stable. They decided that they should attain Self-knowledge. They both studied the scriptures very hard, resorted to holy company and then continued discussing Self-knowledge between themselves, so that there was constant feed-back. It so happened that the queen was able to reach enlightenment, whereas the king was still clinging to his ideas and concepts. One day the king looked at her and said, 'There seems to be a light, your face shines so brightly, what is this?' She said, 'I know what all this is, I have realized the Self, I am and I am not, all this is and all this is not, I own nothing and I own all and everything.' She was making disjointed, contradictory statements. The king looked at her and said, 'You are prattling, you are a silly ignorant girl. How can you throw everything away and then own everything. It is absurd. You are still young, enjoy yourself.' The queen felt sorry for the king, because although they had studied the same scriptures and discussed the same things, this poor man had not been able to reach enlightenment. However, she continued her contemplation and the king continued his life.

Then one day the king also felt that he had to attain enlightenment. His idea of attaining enlightenment was like the Buddha, to abandon the home and go into the forest and so on. He announced his intention to the queen: 'I am leaving you and I am going away. You can be the queen and rule the kingdom, as you are an ignorant girl and attached to all this. I am not interested in all this, so I am going away.' Then the queen told him something very interesting: 'There is a time for abandoning this world - not now.' He did not agree and at night he slipped out of the palace and went away. Although the queen had reached Self-knowledge, the Scripture takes care to note that even she was shocked. The first impulse was: 'Oh, I must be with my husband.' Incidentally, she had acquired some psychic powers, though she had not looked for them, and so with the help of these powers she left the palace and went through one of these air-holes and came to the forest, looking for the king. And there she saw him. Again, through the use of her psychic powers, she was able to see into the future, and she said, 'Alright, let it be as it has to be.' Then she returned to the palace and became the queen for

nineteen years.

In the meantime, the king had built himself a small hut in the forest and was doing tremendous austerities, meditation and so on. After this period of nineteen years, the queen once again hovered over the cottage to see in what condition the king was and she decided that it was time for him to be enlightened. She considered: 'If I go to him in my true form, he might throw me out again.' So, through her yogic powers again, she put on a male body, and appeared in front of him, introducing herself as a sage called Kumbha. There follows a long discussion, a beautiful dialogue, with all kinds of questions and answers, repeating the fundamental philosophy of the Yoga Vasistha. The fundamental philosophy of the Yoga Vasistha is repeated again and again in different contexts, using different characters. Once again, the philosophy is stated here, that whatever you see is nothing but the perception of your own mental conditioning. The king asked, 'How do I reach this?' And Kumbha said, 'Your wife was a clever woman; you could have easily listened to her words and attained enlightenment. However, if you take to the path of renunciation, what is needed is total renunciation, not just partial renunciation. That is, you must renounce not only the superficialities, but the vital essence.' So the king said, 'What do you mean, total renunciation? I have renounced my wife, my children, my kingdom, power and wealth.' Kumbha replied, 'That is true and it is not true, because none of these things belong to you. The kingdom existed before you were born, you were born in the palace, so it did not belong to you, and your wife also did not belong to you as she was there before you married her. Renunciation means total renunciation, the vital aspect of renunciation.' Then, one by one, the king said that he would renounce the cottage and anything that was left. Again Kumbha said, 'That will not do. Total renunciation. Until the essential element is renounced, shaving your head and such things are not of much use.' 'Then, let me abandon the body. Does that constitute total renunciation?' 'No, the body will go in any case, so why bother about it? Even that does not belong to you.'

Then the king said, 'What belongs to me? None of these things is really mine and all my fears, anxieties, sorrow and happiness, spring from an imaginary sense of possession. Through vicara I can see that these things do not really belong to me; then there is no sorrow concerning them, there is no elation concerning them; I am not terribly excited if I get something, nor miserable if I lose something. What is there to be renounced? That is all there is to be renounced - the feeling that I am this body and that these things belong to me, that I can possess anything in this world. When that is renounced, then everything is renounced. Wherever you are, this is the spirit of renunciation. When the feeling that I can possess someone, that I can possess an object, that this is 'me' and that is 'mine' is abandoned, everything is abandoned instantly. I could just as well have been in the palace with my wife.' - 'Ah, now you are seeing the light,' and Kumbha gave him elaborate instructions.

Then Kumbha and the king became inseparable friends and continued to roam in the forest. There is an important and fairly shocking statement attributed to the

queen, in the disguise of the young man, the Guru of the king. She thought, looking at the king, am I wasting my time, pretending I am a boy?' She felt attracted to him again and there is the statement: 'Why do I feel attracted to him even now? But as long as there is the body, its natural functions will continue and only a fool will try to suppress them. Enlightenment has nothing to do with biological functions, so let them go on.' Therefore she thought of a trick to change things again, without exposing herself as the queen. She - he went away and returned after a couple of days looking miserable and said to the king, 'I was flying in the air to visit the god of heaven when I encountered a sage who was clad in dark clouds. I made fun of him and he cursed me, that every night I would become a woman. I do not know what to do.' The king said, 'It does not matter, this is only an illusion within an illusion. This girl is only an imaginary, projection of the sage's curse, it does not matter.' And so, from then on, became a 'she' at night and every morning 'she' became a 'he'. But still the queen's desire had not been fulfilled, so one day she said to the king, 'You are an enlightened man and I am also enlightened; there is absolutely nothing that we should do or should not do and in any case, every night I am going to be a woman and you are a man. Why not let us get married?' And so, one night, they get married and that life goes on for some time.

In the meantime, the queen tests the king in several different ways and one such test was rather dramatic. It seemed that the king was not interested in anything at all, so she wanted to know if the new relationship between them had any binding influence upon him. One evening, she created a garden by her own magic powers and in that garden she created a young man, more handsome than the king. When the king had finished his evening meditation, he found his wife frolicking with the young man. He said, 'Oh, I am sorry to intrude upon your privacy. I am sorry, please carry on.' She replied, 'I am sorry to have been disloyal to you, I hope I did not hurt you.' 'Not at all, it is quite natural, I am not offended at all.' Then she said, 'There is nothing here, I have only created this with my own magic powers, to test you. You have come out victorious.' As they were talking, quietly she shed that form also. The king said, 'Who are you? You look like my wife, the queen.' 'Exactly. I saw that you had abandoned the palace and run away, so I put on all these disguises in order to help you.' The last chapter is highly romantic - it says: 'Such should be all the wives in the world, such should be all the women in the world.' Then Cudala and Sikhidhvaja go back to the palace and rule as king and queen. That is total abandonment of mental conditioning.

The only thing that needs to be abandoned is the notion that this is 'I' and that this is 'mine'. Then there is the realization that the personality is but a bubble, a ripple that arises on the wave on the ocean, non-different from the ocean. The appearance can still continue as a ripple, it does not have to become flat, it does not have to abandon its form, but there is no conviction or no feeling arising that this is 'I', or that this is 'mine'. One can continue to live; one has to live somewhere. One cannot abandon the world; it is an absurd expression that we all use. Wherever you go, there is a world.

Abandoning the world means abandoning the inner feeling that this is the world I live in, this is my world, and 'I' have a relationship with all these several objects or beings in this world. This is freedom of a very different quality, a beautiful freedom. He who is really and truly free in this sense is able to live a very full life without being trapped anywhere in it. That was the purpose for which the teaching was given. After giving this message, Vasistha commands: 'Rama, get up and engage yourself in the normal activities of the world, in appropriate action.' Even so, when one observes the phenomenon called hunger, an appropriate action takes place, and food is eaten, and the craving for unhealthy food, chocolates and so on, drops away. Then if your father and mother offer you some chocolates, you may consume some, but without any craving. Thus, without any dreadful craving, without any violent emotionalism, life continues and appropriate actions take place all the time, without the individual will coming into use at all. That is what is called 'God's Will', that is what is called 'Living in tune with the Divine Will', or, 'Living in tune with the Infinite'. and that is what my Guru called 'Divine Life'.

part 2 - talk 1

The Yoga Vasistha is a scripture of great importance, but it is perhaps not as well-known in the world as, for instance, the Bhagavad Gita may be. Especially in the west it is very little known, because there are no translations available. In India, it is considered the monopoly of swamis - I do not understand why - perhaps because the philosophy is revolutionary. There are some stories woven into the scripture which are fairly unacceptable to the orthodoxy.

The scripture contains a cosmology which is most modern; it contains theories of physics which are not only nuclear, but sub-atomic; and - what is extremely important - it gives a vision that is at the same time both grand and subtle. Recently I was reading a very interesting book titled 'Lives of a Cell' by Lewis Thomas, where he describes the human body in cosmic dimensions, meaning that every cell in this body is an enormous organism, within which there are independent organisms, which themselves house other organisms, worlds within worlds. That is just about the basic theory of the Yoga Vasistha. Thomas says that on the basis of his studies, he does not even visualise the earth as an organism, but that the best view of the world could be that it is one single cell. The Vasistha gives a beautiful story which resembles exactly that. If one has this view, then I think all the division that haunts our vision will disappear. You and I, including the dog, are not only one, but we are all cells, little things within one cell.

The scripture contains wonderful health hints, psychosomatic theories, wonderful instructions for meditation and for worship and beautiful descriptions, if not instructions, concerning warfare. All this and highly romantic stories.

However, we are not really concerned with all that. What is our life? What am I? What must I do? Why am I here? Most of our problems revolve around these questions. The question itself is introduced with a story. The story concerns Rama, who is regarded by the Hindus as an incarnation of God, and this incarnation of God becomes a student of the sage Vasistha. The sage is held in such esteem and respect that even an incarnation of God sits at his feet to learn. Rama had gone on a pilgrimage and perhaps it was the first time that he had been exposed to the human problems of suffering, old age, disease, and death. Rama returns to the palace and goes into seclusion. When he is eventually brought to the court of his father, the king, he is asked, 'What is wrong with you?' He says, 'There is nothing wrong with me, but there is something worse. I have examined life, it does not seem to be worth living. We are protecting the body with such great care, but it is aging day after day, hour after hour, and whatever we do it is going to die. Look at this ungrateful body. I feed it, clothe it, shampoo it, and it kicks me out. And I build mansions and they become ruins. What is life and what is it for?'

All this seems to be reasonable, but it is not wisdom. Some of us, at some time or other in our lives, reach this point: 'I am living a useless life. What is all this for?' I feel so insignificant, I feel I am a dry leaf which is wafted in the wind. There

arises despair, what St John of the Cross might have called the dark night of the soul. The response to this question is the teaching contained in the scripture.

Vasistha declares right in the beginning that this is the qualification for one who can profit by study of this text the feeling that I am bound psychologically and that I want to get out of this prison. If this qualification is not found, then perhaps you can read the scripture and perhaps write a thesis on it or deliver talks. If your thesis is accepted, you may get a diploma, but nothing more. If the soul experiences this dark night and that soul, craving for light, is exposed to this teaching, it is instantly enlightened.

So that I may not forget this, I might add now that, at the conclusion of the discourse, Rama enters into deep contemplation. When Rama enters into this deep contemplation, on account of the grace of the guru Vasistha, another sage present in the court says, 'Ah, Vasistha, you are the guru, because you have, by Shaktipada, brought about enlightenment in this disciple.' That is when a teacher becomes a guru. Rama is completely absorbed, but Vasistha says, 'Not yet, get up, you have to do some work.' Another interesting sidelight to this aspect of the teaching is that the sage considers nothing to be extra important. Only then is it possible to live without expectation of reward, to live without attachment, when neither this nor that makes any difference. When Rama was awakened to his duties in this world, he says, 'What have I to do with meditation and what have I to do with ruling the kingdom?' Neither need I withdraw from this, nor need I get involved in that. Whether you do this or that, is not important, and so, let what happens, happen. That is the highest spirit of Karma Yoga also and that is what is meant by surrender to God and doing God's Will.

However, that is the end of the story. In the beginning, Vasistha asks, 'You are in despair, why does despair arise in your life?' Why does fear arise in our life? Why do we get attached to anything in this life? Why do we hate anything in this life? All these arise from hope or desire. 'I want happiness, I want peace of mind.' This hope inevitably leads us to its own destruction, leads us to unhappiness. Why? Vasistha says, 'Give up all these ideas of running away from this world. Do not even try to examine what this despair is, do not even try to investigate whatever is a passing phenomenon.'

Then there is a resounding statement from Vasistha: 'Why do you waste your time considering unreality?' Religious people are very fond of pointing out to us all the time: 'This is unreal, this is maya, you must avoid it, abandon it', with the result that I am thinking of maya all the time. You tell me, 'Swami, when you sit down for your meditation, do not think of so-and-so.' As soon as I sit down, I remember what you said and that lasts until my meditation ends. If you had not told me that, I would not have thought of it. Why not say, 'When you sit down, think of God.'

Therefore Vasistha says, 'Do not even let your mind dwell on what has been considered unreal.' I will give you one verse, which is extremely beautiful:

bhramasya jagatasy 'sya jatasya 'ksavarnavat

apunah smaranam manye sadho vismaranam varam

The meaning is very beautiful and simple. The world is 'bhrama' - an appearance, hallucination. Vasistha compares the world-appearance to the blueness of the sky. You know that there is nothing blue there, but look at it again and you will still see blue. This hallucination will continue as long as you continue to look at it and wonder. You have hallucinated this world and you have strengthened this hallucination by constantly thinking about whether it is real or unreal. Vasistha says, 'It is better to think of something else'.

What is the reality? That which is, is real. This example occurs quite often in the scripture: there is a bracelet made of gold. Bracelet is a word which we have used conventionally. We also see this as a form, and as soon as the form is seen, it generates a concept and a word in the mind. If we dismiss the word and look at the form, we can play a very interesting game: is it gold or is it bracelet? Both. How can only one thing be two? The substance is gold; the reality is gold. It appears in a certain form, and convention has given it a name. If that is clear, everything is clear. There is despair in my mind: mind is a word, despair is a word. I look at this thing called despair and perhaps I see a cloud of despair, a form. Where is it? In the mind. What is it? Mind. Then the despair is gone because despair is only a word. It had a certain psychological form, but the reality of that is nothing but pure consciousness within. Something that happened in the outside world sent me into this ocean of despair. I became afraid and I did not bother to look into it, because I took the external circumstance as something real. And so my attention was completely and totally directed towards this external appearance.

For instance, if somebody called me a fool, by reacting to that, I am accepting that I am a fool. If I am not a fool, why should I react to him at all? In such a situation, can I look for the reality? What is the reality of one I call the other person? What is the reality of that body, that mind? At the same time, what is the reality that I call 'me', which reacts? Are these two completely separate and independent realities? This dual enquiry has to continue together, not one alter the other. The subject and the object have to be looked into together. Then one arrives at this understanding that what was called 'me' is nothing more than memory - the first two letters of memory is 'me'. Is there anything other than memory to which I can point as 'me'?

A student of the Yoga Vasistha discovers that enlightenment consists of just three steps: there is an appearance; what is the substance behind the appearance? What is the substance of memory? The mind. What is the substance of the mind, and who understands all this? That is pure consciousness; in that consciousness you and I, the subject and the object, appear to be divided.

There is another interesting exercise, using a handkerchief - this is one end, this is another end. But it does not have a beginning and an end. Where is the handkerchief? Between the two ends. But these two ends are also handkerchief. Do you see two ends with handkerchief in between, or do you see just one piece of cloth? There are three things here - the left end of the handkerchief, the right end of the handkerchief, and a handkerchief in the middle; or, is there just one handkerchief? You see both. You can blink once and you see just the handkerchief; you blink again and you see this end and that end, and handkerchief.

Such is the world. We have accepted that the subject and the object are two inevitable ends, that these are two completely different things, one opposed to the other. We have transferred this division onto everything in our life: you, I, we, death, happiness, unhappiness, success, failure, friend, enemy. Somehow we have divided the one and we saw two; by constantly reaffirming this we have made that into a reality.

Consciousness, being omnipresent and infinite, manifests - no other word is possible - itself in infinite ways everywhere. It is not possible for this diversity to disappear, but what can and should disappear is seeing it as diverse objects opposed to one another. The infinite remains infinite all the time and the infinite conceives of all this infinite creation Within itself.

A beautiful symbolism is given to us: Vasistha says that this objective creation is like uncut figures in a marble slab. Visualise a marble slab - you are a sculptor and you think of the lovely figures you can carve out of it. All those figures exist in it already, potentially. You can visualise one big Buddha, or you can even visualise hundreds of smaller Buddhas in that one figure of Buddha. That is how this whole world exists.

The world exists not as a reality. The world is a word and there is a psychological form. The psychological form is nothing more than a hallucination which arises in consciousness. Accepting it as an independent reality, we chase one thing and reject something else. All these experiences again form impressions on the mind, strengthening bondage or rather strengthening the idea of bondage that we have. There is another favourite theme in the Yoga Vasistha: without cancelling the theory of karma, Vasistha suggests another point of view. Happiness, unhappiness, prosperity, adversity, honour, dishonour, all these come floating down life's stream. Some of us, I am sure, can bear witness to this. We have never aimed at unhappiness, but unhappiness comes to us. How did it come? Somebody says karma, somebody says something else. Vasistha says that it is accidental coincidence, it just happens.

The advantage of this theory is that you do not take these passing phenomena too seriously, with the result that your attention is constantly directed towards the reality in all this. The external world and external circumstances arise in this cosmic consciousness - which you call God. The same consciousness experiences

these external circumstances and these are known as subjective experiences, which also change - that is all. You are freed from the delusion of considering these appearances as the reality. Having been freed, says Vasistha, you do not sit idle, because when you sit idle, you are rejecting that which is the flow of life. Finally Vasistha tells Rama to live in this world, as life is lived here, but completely free of all sorrow. Then, if you have to weep, weep; if you have to express suffering, express suffering; if you have to express joy and happiness, do so - because you are free.

I have seen only one person who measured to that description and that as my guru, Swami Sivananda, who was a completely enlightened and liberated person and also totally human. If you went to Him with an unhappy story, even before you shed tears, you would find tears in His eyes. If you had something joyous to tell Him, He was more happy than you were. He was completely uninhibited, free psychologically and spiritually. And he was extremely busy, not because He wanted to achieve anything, but because He had realised that achievement or non-achievement are both irrelevant to life.

Your life is not your life. It is part of this cosmic being. Whatever that cosmic being decides, has to happen, will happen. The direct understanding of this is surrender. In order to see this, I must have passed through this despair. I must have come to the direct understanding that what I want to happen, does not happen. If you want something, work for it and it happens. Vasistha would say it is accidental coincidence. It does not happen all the time, and you might notice that more often than not it does not happen. When one sees that, he completely surrenders, and at that point he directs his attention towards the source of all these cravings, desires, hopes, and anxieties, and comes face to face with the mind - not my mind or your mind, but the mind. He realises that that mind itself is pure consciousness. In it, there appears to be conditioned motivations, and even that appearance is discarded. That is a life totally free, instantly freed and divine.

part 2 - talk 2

The first thought that arises when one thinks of the qualifications of a student of yoga is 'Who is to decide?' It has been my good fortune to have lived at the feet of a great master, and I have met several great masters since. Strangely - but not so strangely - every master has got a different set of qualifications. So please bear that factor in mind

Is there a means of arriving at an understanding of these qualifications independent of an external prescriber? If you can do that, then you instantly understand all the great masters' teachings, because all these masters have also examined the problem and arrived at their own teachings. In order to understand their teachings, you must learn to look within.

There is a fantastic mantra in one of the Upanishads: utthisthata jagrata prapya varannibodhata

Sanskrit is a versatile language and you can use different words to represent the same thought. Different words are picked for their tonal value, and if you want to express a certain emotion, you choose a word that represents that emotion. Here we have a very strong word: utthisthata - get up, wake up. If I am asleep and you sing sweetly, 'Swami, please wake up', I will probably sleep more soundly. So you knock - utthisthata; wake up - jagrata; be alert - prapya varannibodhata - then approach a superior person and attain enlightenment or awakening. This seems to be the path and it suggests the qualifications necessary in a student of yoga.

Are you prepared to wake up? If so, you begin to see life itself in a very different light. 'I am in darkness, I am in bondage, I am a conditioned being. I have been asleep spiritually and I would like to get out of this.' This means: 'I have been asleep', not 'someone else put me to sleep'. The person who wants to wake up does not throw responsibility on others. I am asleep, I am in ignorance, and I have conditioned and limited myself. The person who continues to blame others for the state which he is in, is asleep and he wants to sleep.

When you are asleep, life is awake - I am not talking of the spiritual awakening now. When you go to sleep tonight, what is it that wakes you up? Life. Some people have died during the night and they do not wake up. So, it is life that wakes you up. Now, transpose this to spiritual life. Life brings you all sorts of experiences. Life brings you what you call pain, what you call unhappiness and sorrow. That is the awakening knock. But we think that the unhappiness comes because of someone else, because of circumstances and, like the person who slaps the alarm-clock shut and goes to sleep again, we go to sleep. The first and foremost qualification of a keen student of yoga is that he does not blame anyone for the state in which he is. That is perhaps enough for most of us, because most of us are trapped in this.

Most psychologists suggest today that I am unhappy or I have some psychological

aberration, because my mother was so and so, my father was so and so, or I fell down from a cliff when I was six. Even that is blaming someone else. If I hate fear, I have got it now, it is in me now. We are not talking of my childhood; that child is 'dead' too. I am something different now. So, unless I stop blaming others, including myself, I am not awake. When you are walking through a tunnel, you see the light in front of you and the light behind you. Even so, when you are in darkness, you think you see some light in the past or in the future. It is an absurd pastime.

The first qualification therefore is to realise that no-one is responsible for the state I am in. No-one can bring about a spiritual awakening in me. Someone can help, anyone can help. But I have to do it. This spiritual awakening is brought about by life itself. But even to be awakened by life, a certain grate and a certain inner alertness is necessary.

Then it sometimes happens that one who is thus awakened from sleep, soon goes back to sleep. When the challenge has disappeared, we go to sleep again. A certain glimpse which we had seems to disappear. There is a beautiful expression in Sanskrit: *smasana vairagya*. It means the dispassion or inner awakening that one experiences when attending someone else's funeral. Somebody young and very closely related to me suddenly dies. I say, 'My God, one day I will die too. I must be very careful from now on, because I may also die soon.' This usually lasts until I get back home; then the same life goes on. Can that light, can that shock be sustained? It is not the final awakening or enlightenment because I have not really experienced death within myself, but I have a glimpse of the fact that I too, will die.

So, coming back to the qualifications again, can the truth concerning life become part of my life, part of my consciousness? This is how Swami Sivananda described *maya*: *maya* is not something which you can avoid, push away; it cannot even be defined properly; that which makes you forget the truth that you have glimpsed is *maya*. Ask yourself, within your own heart: have I not made so many resolves in life? What makes me forget that? Let us continue with the funeral idea. I have attended this funeral and I know that I am also going to die. I may die today, tomorrow, one hundred years hence. What makes me forget that? The question itself is light. As long as that question shines in my heart, I cannot forget it. It is so simple.

Again, if I am observant, I will see that I look at an object and think my happiness comes from it. It is then that this alertness is completely destroyed, the little awakening that I had is also gone. I am fast asleep once again. Until life brings another knock. Thank God that we have plenty of these in life.

This alertness is described variously in the different yoga texts. Patanjali calls it *yama*, and Vasistha calls it *satsanga*, *vicara*.

First we will deal with *yama*. The Sanskrit word '*yama*' has many meanings. Two

are important for us: one is self-restraint, discipline, and secondly, it is the name of the god presiding over death. I think there is a very significant connection - self-discipline is not possible unless I am constantly conscious of death. I think all of you understand that discipline by others is not discipline at all. If you tell me I must do this and I do it, it is only superficial; inside I am rebellious. But self-discipline is also not possible, unless this death is brought into daily life. It is then that that discipline takes on a wonderful new meaning. In English the word discipline also means study. I must study myself and when I study myself, this discipline arises spontaneously.

Therefore, one of the important factors of yama is 'satyam' which has also been interpreted variously. Some say that you must speak the truth and that is all it means. You may be very honest and truthful, and if you think that I am an idiot, you tell me so. Then you will be quarrelling with everybody all the time. That is not honesty - that is called rudeness. Satyam means truth, not only truthfulness, but truth.

What is truth? I am observing myself, I am alive and this life includes constant change. Truth is not something which is crystallized, sitting there like a piece of stone, but truth is dynamic and therefore it is changing constantly. Therefore there is a constancy in it, and there is a change in it. That contains a paradox, 'paradox' in the true sense of the word, that this is something which cannot be taught by anyone. It cannot be taught, but it can be caught, if one is alert. There is something constant and there is something constantly changing - when you see that, you do not shy away from this thing called death. Nor do you disregard that which is for the moment. One gets a tremendous sense of balance, which arises from this vision of truth. Then a disciplined life becomes natural. You are not going to run away from happiness because it floats down the stream of life - while it is there, enjoy it. When it goes, let it go. Change. Something else comes along, which somebody else may call unhappiness, but since it has come to me, it is most welcome. I do not ill treat it and it does not ill treat me also. A little bit of unhappiness and it goes away. Thus the beautiful qualification of a student of yoga, called equilibrium, becomes natural.

The other side of this is hypocrisy. I want to show off: 'I am a student of yoga. She is pinching me but I should not react.' She is pinching me, it hurts, but since I have an image of yoga and I think that you told me that a yogi must always be in a state of equilibrium, I do not respond to it. That is hypocrisy. I have seen my master Swami Sivananda behave in a most extraordinary way, with no hypocrisy. Somebody put some scent on his forehead and it flowed into His eyes and burned His eyes. He was sitting on a platform with a few thousand people around Him. So He stopped one person and asked for some water, washed His eyes and everything was normal. The problem was immediately solved.

Can I similarly face life in all its aspects? Does reality make me subtler or does the appearance make me suffer? Am I in love with reality or am I in love with an appearance? Am I loving you or am I loving the appearance, the body with what

appears to be a charming beautiful face? This body is subject to change, so one must face this truth, this reality. It is when I love you as Mrs. So and So, that I am unhappy when you go away. But if I love the truth, that which may dwell within that body, which is more permanent, more constant, then I am not unhappy at all when you leave me. As long as you are here in physical form, I enjoy it. I am not saying that since I love your spirit, then you can starve, you can go, you can jump into the lake, I do not care. No. Your form is part of this total reality, so it is appreciated, it is loved. There it is, balance again.

Therefore, my guru, Swami Sivananda used to say constantly, 'Remember God and remember death both together.' Then you are established in the constant and you are able to participate in the changing. Then you are able to live your changing life but realise the eternal here and now. That is truth.

There is another interesting aspect of this truth. You sit for your meditation in the morning and ask yourself a few questions: 'What do I want to do now? I want to meditate, I want to repeat a mantra, I want to observe my mind.' One minute later I am thinking of something else. Why do I do that? In the same way you want to enjoy peace of mind. When you lose your peace of mind, you ask yourself: 'Did somebody snatch it away from me? Is it a sort of purse which somebody steals from me? I want to be happy. So, why do I do things which make me unhappy?'

If I pursue happiness, very soon I will realise that the only person that disturbs this happiness is myself, because I am running after a temporary thing called pleasure. I am mistaking the form for the spirit, the appearance for the reality. The reality does not make me suffer. Even the appearance does not make me suffer, but when I pursue that pleasure, it makes me suffer. The understanding of that will enable me to drop all this pursuit of pleasure and there is instant happiness, unbroken happiness. Even when the unhappiness comes along, I am only going to greet it and give it a send-off a little later.

When I want happiness, why do I make myself unhappy? When I want to practise yoga, why do I do something else? I want to bring about an inner awakening, samadhi, but most of the time I am only thinking of my figure, or my business. Am I practising yoga or something else? The most important connotation of the word satyam is sincerity. I am asking this question at least a hundred times a day: 'Am I sincere or not?' If I am sincere, nobody in the world can make me insincere.

When I stop blaming others for my unhappiness and when I see the truth that life itself brings happiness and unhappiness, pain and pleasure and so on, I am not offended or hurt by anyone in the world. If you call me an idiot, that is your problem and not mine. If you jump into the swimming pool, do I get wet? Even so, if you use your own mouth, your own tongue, and use an insulting expression, it does not affect me, it only affects you. Thus the yogi can never be hurt. That is a great blessing. When you are unhurt, and only then, do you become 'himsa' - totally non-violent. Non-violence again is not something which I can do - all that

I do is violent. But when I am completely unhurt, then my relation with everyone in this world is pure love. Whatever you do is helping me. If you say, 'Swami, you are a lovely, wonderful man, you are a good man,' I am looking within, to see if I am such a wonderful man. Then, if someone says, 'Swami, you are an idiot,' I am also looking within, to see if I am such an idiot. Therefore, all are helping me, and nobody is trying to destroy me, and so I am friendly and in love with all life. This love arises spontaneously from this discipline, self-discipline.

Since the yogi constantly pursues this truth concerning himself, there is what is known as 'brahmacharya'. Brahmacharya does not merely mean continence or chastity. Brahmacharya is a constant flow of one's awareness towards truth or brahman. When the mind is constantly aware of the truth, it does not pursue pleasure, because it realises that if there is pleasure in life, it is in me and not in an object. And even when there is pleasure in the course of life, the student is conscious of it arising within himself. He is aware that that pleasure or sense of happiness arises in consciousness. Pain is another experience that also arises in consciousness. Happiness arises in consciousness, unhappiness arises in the same consciousness, in the same mind. That is brahmacharya.

Of course, some people must have the opinion that the sexual drive is the most intense, and so decided that brahmacharya must mean celibacy or chastity. At one point, Hanuman is said to have declared: 'I have conquered lust, sexuality, but I have been overcome by anger.' Sexuality is not the only problem with man. There must be several very chaste people, where sexuality is concerned, who are completely occupied with making money or gaining power and more power. There are many problems arising from one's intelligence, one's mind, that constantly distract his attention to truth.

Who avoids all these distractions, has brought death into his daily life. That which we have pushed away from our lives, imagining that by merely not thinking of it, it will go away, the yogi brings into his everyday life; this has a tremendous effect. When I remember death from moment to moment, realising that that is what is happening even to this body from moment to moment, then the past is cut off. Since our life is normally propelled by the past into the future, the future does not exist for a man who does not have a past. For instance, if I had some terrible experience last year so that, whenever I remember it, I am afraid, from that memory and from that fear arises a hope that it may not arise again in the future. That is why an infant is unafraid. If I am able to die from moment to moment, then I am not haunted by fear, I have nothing to protect.

What do we protect in our life? We protect all that which we call 'mine'. If the student of yoga dies from moment to moment, there is nothing called mine and so there is nothing to protect and there is nothing to defend. What is the result? I have tremendous energy, because all the energy that I have been wasting protecting this rubbish and all the energy that I have wasted hoping and fearing, is available to me now. This is brahmacharya. This is alertness.

With this alertness, 'prapya varannibodhata', go to any person superior to you and enter into a dialogue, because it is possible that in all this you might have missed something important; it is possible that you might once again have jumped into another trap. There is this lovely saying in English: 'From the frying pan into the fire'. Very often we escape from one prison and get into another, because once again we want to protect, we want security. The yogi, looking at life itself, knows that there is nothing that needs protection. In fact, there is nothing that deserves protection - everything is going to be destroyed by time, so what are we protecting? When all that is gone, there is brahmacarya and there is total devotion. But it is a master who can tell you if you have fallen into another trap.

When I go to the guru, again I may go because I think I am awake, I think I am alert, and still I am puzzled. There is some confusion, there is some doubt: 'Is this the correct state, is this the truth?' One needs confirmation or correction from the superior person. If you have had all these disciplines, then satsanga becomes an instantaneous life-transformer, and in the dialogue with the guru, verbal as well as non-verbal, there is vicara. Vicara has been translated into English as enquiry, but the root meaning of the word is efficient movement of consciousness. The student of yoga constantly resorts to this satsanga and vicara, so that this inner awakening may become confirmed or corrected. Then the alertness may be permanent and the shadow of doubt that occasionally comes in and goes is also dispelled.

That is the only role of the guru in our life. The guru is the light dispelling this darkness. The guru is not a person who is going to take over my responsibilities, and he is not going to do my spiritual practices for my sake. My guru Swami Sivananda often made fun of that idea. If you have a guru who you are sure will do all your yoga practices on your behalf and will carry your burden, please ask that guru to go in and take dinner on your behalf. If the guru cannot eat for you, how can he do everything that is necessary on your behalf.

If you have devotion to the guru and a heart to heart contact, then in that presence there is a verbal and a non-verbal dialogue. In that dialogue the cloud is dispersed. Therefore, another qualification for a real student of yoga is a complete and total devotion to the guru. Then, enlightenment, in the words of Vasistha, is easier than crushing a flower in your hand. Even to crush a flower that lies in your hand needs some effort, but for enlightenment no effort is necessary.