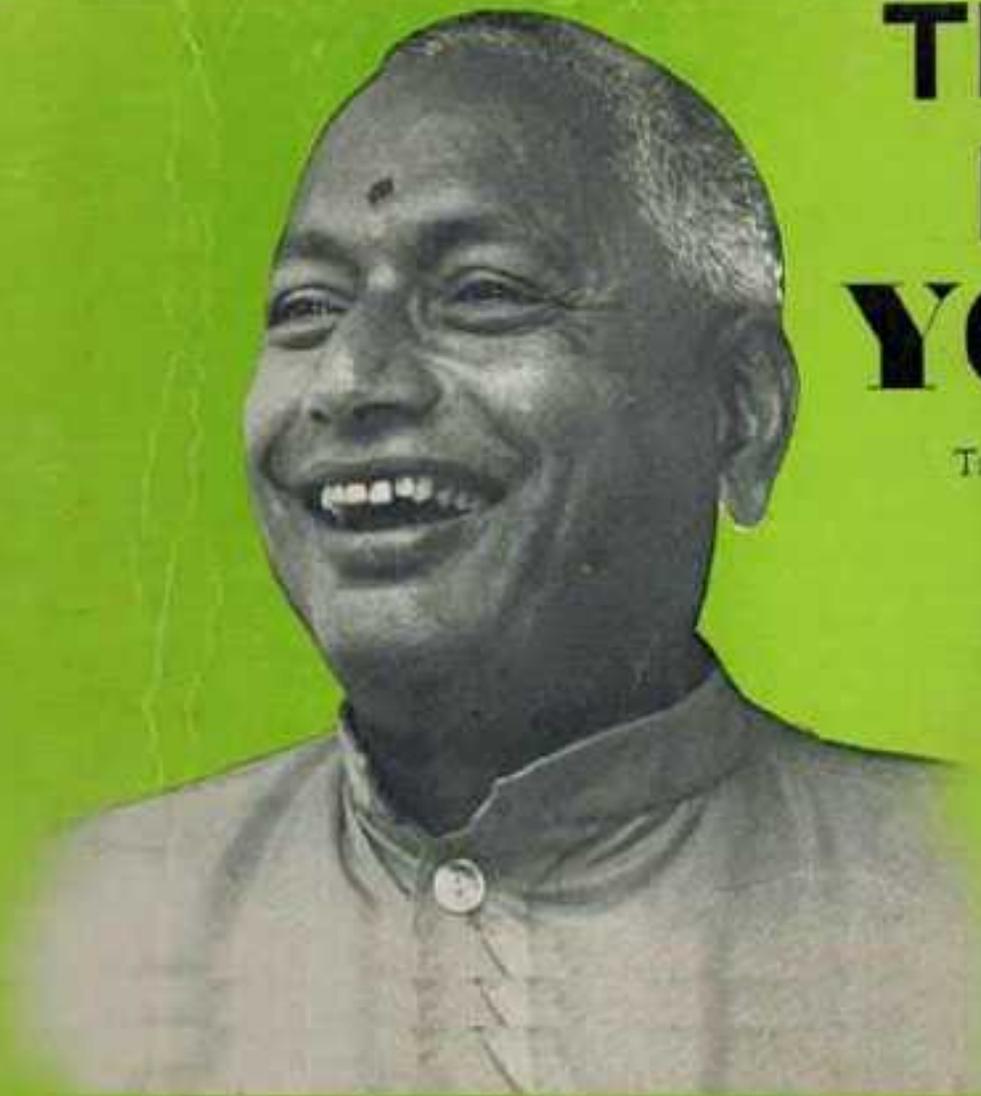


# THIS IS YOGA

Talks by: Swami Venkatesananda





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Swami Venkatesananda

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## 1. Sense

Why is it that, in spite of the teachings that have been handed on to us, which are supposed to have enriched our lives, making us more happy and peaceful, enabling us to live in harmony, our lives do not seem to have improved at all? One of the reasons may be that, even while studying the teaching, listening to the teaching, we are already trying to work out the way in which to apply this teaching to our daily life. Even while listening there is anxiety and so we miss the teaching.

In yoga we are endeavouring to gain self-knowledge. Therefore it is important that there should be no application of knowledge which only succeeds in veiling our real identity from ourselves. Even the mind is not in its own natural state - it is made up, it has make-up on. All the time we are anxious to apply the teachings and so we miss the teaching. The mind either rejects teaching, saying it is impossible, or modifies it, bringing it to its own level to suit a particular condition or circumstance, and therefore the teaching is lost.

Throughout history we have taken these great teachings and enshrined them here and there. The teachings have remained there without affecting my life at all. We have used them like make-up, literally applying them at my level, at my pleasure, and in my way, thus effectively hiding my defects from my own gaze - which is what make-up does.

So, we are anxious to apply religion and yoga teaching in such a way. It hides our defects. If this is the case, we have not benefited at all. And yet the first thing I ask myself is, 'How will I benefit', or, 'What is the use?' I do not ask that question when I sit in front of my dinner - even the day before a man dies he still eats. 'Why must I be kind? Why must I do charity?' For all these questions there is a motivation. 'By doing this, I am going to get that.' All these answers are invented, because the human mind asks these questions - 'What shall I gain?' In our eagerness to find the benefit, we are losing the truth, we are losing the whole yoga teaching. Until I am prepared to drop the pleasure and profit motive, I am not listening, I am not open to the teaching.

This is a vicious circle - unless I listen with an open mind I have not benefited and, while there is a craving for benefit, the real yoga experience is kept away. In order to understand the teaching of yoga, I must be completely free of the anxiety to apply the teaching and the anxiety to know the practice of yoga or the understanding of how the teachings of yoga can be beneficial to me. The moment I am anxious to obtain peace of mind. I do not get it. Only when craving drops will there be peace of mind.

When I eat a banana, it is assimilated - in the same way, is it possible for me to assimilate yoga teaching, so that the assimilated yoga teaching acts? It is assimilated - it is not applied, like make-up. Only when the mind is not conditioned can I assimilate the teaching, so that the teaching self acts - and this

is the art of listening.

A friend asked recently what we study in an ashram We do not study, there is no training course, no classes to attend, no set program. You go to an ashram and stay with the master and assimilate the spirit - the spirit of yoga or renunciation. It may take one year or one hundred years - that does not matter. Once all this has been assimilated, it is that spirit that lives in you, nothing else. There is no problem, no difficulty, the teaching blossoms from inside.

'Yoga' has many different meanings. One is union or coming together. What comes together? With what? Can two completely different things come together? Water can mix with water but can a piece of rock mix with water? So, if water can only mix with water, it does not have to mix, it is already water. Union here means yoga which is already one, although in between there was forgetfulness of this oneness. No artificial idea of oneness or union will work.

In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna declares that yoga must be practised for self-purification. If there is a film or dirt on the mirror and you wipe it clean, there is no gain - all you have done is to make your face clearer in the mirror - what was there already is now seen clearly, is clear-perception, clear-knowledge, self-knowledge. In order to see clearly, what do I need? If I have good eye-sight, I must open my eyes and see that there is dirt. If I remove this dirt, the mirror is clean, and the face is seen clearly. The mirror did not produce the face. The face was already there; but when the mirror was clean, it was realised and seen clearly. The practice of yoga involves self-purification. If I want to purify myself, what is the most essential thing? The courage to see that impurity. That is something we have never done.

We have been told that there is a spark of God in us and that God made us in His own image. So, God is still there even when covered with rubbish. The mind, which craves for pleasure and profit, revels in this self-delusion. Saying that there is a spark of God in me is hallucination, not self-realisation. Yoga aims at self-purification. So, I must first face the impurity, the dirt on the mirror and have the courage to face that. When I face that impurity with all my being, that impurity hurts, because it does not belong to my essential nature - it is like a thorn in the flesh.

When I am able to look at this impurity, and when the sensitivity of my whole being is hurt by that impurity, then the impurity drops. Only when these two conditions are present is the meaning of yoga realised.

## 2. Essence

If what was said yesterday made any sense at all, the next step is easy. First and foremost, I must learn to be receptive in every aspect of my life. I must be open, not closed. If I am receptive, then, whether I am listening to a yogi or master, reading a book or watching the traffic, I shall receive something. This is the first and foremost thing - to be receptive, to be open, sensitive - sensitivity means purity. Then one must have the moral courage, the spiritual courage, to be able to look within honestly. When one thus looks within and sees a defect, a short-coming which is worrying one, when one sees dirt or toxic substance, one must have the courage to look at it without fear, without shyness, without self-deception. Then, when this sensitivity meets that evil within, the sensitivity is hurt. When that evil, that sensitivity hurts, it is then that we commence the spiritual journey. If this does not happen, it is because we have formed callouses within ourselves to protect ourselves against being hurt, and so we continue to be callous and indifferent, totally proof against any wisdom approaching us. We are so callous, so fondly convinced, that we are rooted in our conviction. We have convicted ourselves. We have found ourselves guilty, we have convicted ourselves, we are imprisoned within our own self. Conviction means to go to court and to be sentenced.

We have surrounded ourselves with some kind of belief which helps us to look away from the Truth. Life provides ample opportunities to face the Truth. Gurudev Sivananda used to sing: 'When you get knocks and blows in the daily battle of life, then your mind is duly turned towards the spiritual path'. This is what He thought. But do not think it is all so simple. When you get knocks and blows, what do you do? You take an aspirin. If my wife runs away, I go after somebody else. Even to turn to the spiritual path after all this needs something else - we need to be receptive and open.

There is a beautiful saying: he is a wise man who learns from the experience of other, he is a middling man who learns from his own experience, and he is an idiot who learns from neither - he never learns.

If you are sensitive you can watch the traffic and become enlightened. If you are driving a car, you can become enlightened. Suddenly you realise that though you know there is a road from here to Durban and that the road is beautiful, smooth and without potholes, yet you do not relax your vigilance. Not for a single moment. I hope not. You have driven along this road many times but every time you are alert. We learn a lesson from that - we can learn a lesson from anything - if we are open, receptive, alert, vigilant, and sensitive. Sensitivity is a rather tricky thing. It is made dull by the way in which we have been living. We often say that young people catch cold very easily and we pride ourselves that we do not catch cold at all. Do you know why? Because the life-force in us is so dull it does not want to react. A corpse that is thrown into cold water does not shiver, yet it is not more advanced spiritually than I am; but my teeth begin to chatter if I am cold. Look at that body; it does not even feel the cold - it is dead. A young person is

very healthy and immediately reacts. In our case, because of years of wrong living, we have become wooden, there is no reaction any more. Unfortunately we congratulate ourselves that we are so advanced that none of these things affect us. We have become stone, wooden, and callous. How do we get back that purity?

Yoga is not the creation of something, it is the removal of something. Patanjali in 'The Yoga Sutras' has given a very clear and beautiful definition of this. He says that yoga is like agriculture. The agriculturist does not produce a plant, he does not produce anything, he only prepares the soil. The fertility is already in the soil; he does not make the soil fertile. The plant is already in the seed, all the agriculturist does is to plant the seed in fertile soil and then that which covers the plant in the seed bursts open. The obstacle is removed, and the plant comes out. We practise yoga in order to remove the obstacles, in order to cleanse the body, mind, and spirit. Yoga can be regarded as the science of self-discovery.

In order to discover the self I must have the courage to see the cover. If I do not know what is in the self and I want to discover what is in it, the first thing I notice is the cover. Having seen the cover, I discover it. Yet, if I am ashamed of the cover, I do not want to look and yet I still want to see what is inside. It is like the man who says, 'I would love to swim but I will not enter the water unless I can swim.' In order to discover, I must see the cover. And if the cover is dirty - which it always is in our case - physically, psychologically, spiritually, and morally, I must become aware of that cover, that filth that has accumulated in my body and mind. I must not be afraid of it, not ashamed of it. What am I ashamed of? I learn to meditate. I learn to look within. I see I am a beastly person, violent, aggressive and greedy. What am I ashamed of? It is me. I may not admit it to you, but what am I ashamed of? Most people use their radios because they are frightened, frightened to look within. What they see within themselves is so horrible that they turn the radio on, they do not want to be alone with themselves. They are frightened of themselves. Where will you run away from yourself? Where can you run? One must have the ability and the courage to look within and 'see' the cover - and thereafter strive to remove it, to discover.

The practice of hatha yoga - asanas and pranayama - does not put health into you, health is already there. If health is not already there, nothing in the world can put it into you. You can pour all the vitamins you like into a dead body, it will still be dead. I believe the only exception is formalin - when the undertaker pumps a little formalin into a dead body, it suddenly sits up. Give the dead body vitamins, oxygen, or whatever, it will continue to be dead. Health is there already and as long as it is there, it can be discovered. Yoga asanas revitalise you by opening up the channels called nadis, enabling the prana to flow freely. Have you ever cleaned an old pipe or tube? If so, you know you get a lot of muck coming out. But we do not want to discard our precious accumulation - all the dirt and filth that we have accumulated over so many years. Have you seen some fairly aged people who have a whole lot of junk in their houses. If you ask them, 'Why do you not throw all this away?' they reply, 'Ah, I got this from my grandchild and this is from my grandmother, this was presented to my great grandfather at his

wedding - it has got a sentimental value.' Do you know what sentimental means. What is a centimeter? A centimeter is one hundredth of a meter; so, sentimental is one hundredth of the mind; so, your mind is divided into hundreds of pieces and each one sticks onto some of that junk.

In the same way we have accumulated many wonderful habits, all of them stuck here and there and we do not want to give them up. I we cling to our habits of living and thinking then purification is impossible. Self-purification is impossible. In spite of this we go about telling one another, 'I am trying to purify myself. I am trying to attain Self-realisation', like the man who says, 'I am trying to give up smoking'. What does it suggest to you? The first and most immediate fact is that he is still smoking, otherwise he would not be 'trying' to give it up. Secondly, that he is not serious about giving it up. If he was, he would have given up without telling - he is smoking and he does not want to give it up. The third and the worst is that he wants me to pat him on the back and tell him, 'Good boy'. All this is humbug. If I see this dirt and filth without sentimentality and attachment, it will go - it will not stop till it goes.

Even whilst practicing yoga asanas, you begin to discover that there is a lot of accumulation - internal and external. We do not believe that what God provides - food for today - will still exist next year. So, we save up something every day and very soon it is converted into fixed deposit. Funny is it not? I did not have all this fat three years ago, but I accumulated it and now it has become 'me'.

Do I have the courage to get rid of this foreign matter, this clogging? Do I have the courage to discover it, uncover it and throw it away - or, am I sentimentally clinging to it? This is what hatha yoga means. It does not put health back into me. It enables me to discover the health that is already there. Once you gauge what this health is, then you are safe for the rest of your life. You get back to where you were when you were a child. Your reactions become quick because the life-force is reacting, is dynamic, not dull. When you breathe polluted air, it hurts because you are sensitive - not in the undesirable sense but in the right sense - and because you are sensitive, every little defect hurts so that you do not indulge in it anymore. This means the body is in its own creative healthy condition. Once that is clearly understood, then we realise the body itself is only an instrument, that it did not acquire these evils by self, these came from somewhere else. I wanted something, craved for something and all this filth accumulated in me.

Now I begin to wonder, 'What are these desires. What is this craving, this greed. What is this violence that manifests in my heart as jealousy, anger, hatred, as an inferiority complex or as a superiority complex?' These are all forms of violence. Violence is not just cutting somebody's throat - that is a benign way of dealing with another person. There is a much worse manifestation of violence and that is to go on nagging the other person, like a cat. The tiger kills instantly, but not the cat. You have seen what it does - when it wants to kill a mouse, it bites it and throws it away again and again - it tortures it. In our human relationships, we do this - considering ourselves very holy, we go on torturing other people.

That also must hurt - when I wish to hurt somebody's feelings, it must hurt me first - because this hate, this jealousy, this ill-will proceeds from me. Whether it reaches the other person or not, I do not know, but I know it proceeds from me. Have you seen these old-fashioned chimneys that pour soot into the atmosphere? We do not know if the atmosphere is polluted or not, whether the sky is painted black or not, but the chimney is - it becomes filthy. That hate, jealousy, competition, and violence, proceed from me. Nothing may happen to you but I am polluting myself, my own mind. I do not see it now because the sensitivity is lost - I do not know what it is to be pure, I do not know what is called purity of mind. Why? Because I do not want to look at myself. It hurts and therefore I rationalise it. I come and tell you that this is 'necessary'.

Sometimes so-called religious leaders behave worse than normal men. I had a classic demonstration of this when I went to India five or six years ago. There was a religious conference; on the stage was a blazing fire of orange - all the swamis were there, it was beautiful and very impressive. I was asked to sit with them on the platform. One day I dumped down to have a look at all the flaming coloured robes, Each person had been allotted a certain time to speak. One swami came in late; he had been allotted 45 minutes but he came 25 minutes late. As soon as he had spoken for 10 minutes, someone stuck a piece of paper under his nose - 10 minutes more. Not only was the robe flame coloured, but flames were coming out from everywhere. Somebody tried to argue with him and it became worse. The organiser eventually said he was sorry and that it was alright for him to carry on. Later, all the swamis had dinner at somebody's house and everyone was in a good humor. Someone remarked, 'How is it that even Swamis loose their temper?' This man who had been laughing smiling and joking, suddenly became furious. He said, 'What nonsense, only we should lose our tempers. If I am not cross, stern, and severe, how will all these people be saved?' I looked at him, 'What about you?' I thought, but did not venture aloud.

Since we are unwilling to look at the cover in order to discover, we bring in all sorts of rationalisation. 'Do I not have the responsibility? I am a parent, do I not have the responsibility to bring up this boy - to spank him. Every time I spank my child there is this great philosophy that I am training my child. Why do you not train myself first? It may be more sensible. All this springs from sheer unwillingness to look at oneself and to see for oneself that all this vicious behaviour hurts only oneself and not anybody else. If I am jealous of you, I get ulcers, not you. If I hate you, I get high blood pressure, not you.

There was meeting in New York two or three years ago where somebody from the UN's Secretary General's Office came to talk to the meeting about world peace. Some of us were there. You have heard about 'world peace'? The world was at peace before these fellows came on the scene. Suddenly somebody looked at me and said, 'Swami would you say a few words?' I said, 'I see that the world is going to pieces. Man will not abandon violence and killing until he realises the sheer stupidity of it.' For instance, if this gentleman picks up a pistol and says he is

going to shoot you me, I will reply, 'Why do you want to shoot me, why waste your time and a bullet and get yourself arrested?' If I were immortal and you are afraid of me, there would be some sense in killing me, but I am going to die anyway. Why do we not realise that everything that is born must die, that everything that has been created must be destroyed. When I see this, when I see that I am hurting myself and not the other person, when I see that hurting one another is a waste of time, only then will I stop doing it. Until then we will continue to be foolish, because we love this foolishness.

In meditation, the yogi comes face to face with himself, face to face with the cover and the dirt, the filth which has accumulated there, veiling whatever he is within him self. If he has the courage to look at himself in that light, and if his inner sensitivity is hurt - sensitivity here means purity, then that evil goes - not that it goes of its own accord, but because I will not stop till it goes. As we go on with this tremendous work of self-purification, we should also beware not to accumulate more. Naturally, if I am sensitive, if I am sincere, if I am serious, I will not accumulate anymore - I am cleansing my system of poison, I will not imbibe more poison. This is where vigilance is required.

Gurudev Sivananda was fond of saying 'Eternal vigilance'. It is because we do not want to be vigilant that we assume that we have got onto the right track. But this same thing comes up again and again. There are obstacles throughout the path, so one has to be careful, vigilant, eternally vigilant. In this vigilance, this sensitivity, we are constantly getting rid of all this dirt and rigorously avoiding impurifying ourselves again. It is called karma yoga or Self-discovery.

Once I begin this adventure of self-discovery and I am able to push these deceptions away, even a little, the mind is already at peace. The mind and the heart are not pure, but in the very act of looking at oneself, at this agitation, jealousy, anger, craving, and hate, there is peace. Fantastic. It is not the peace of purity but it is the peace of a sense of awareness. We spoil this by risking the wrong question, 'Why am I angry now?' I know why I am angry - it is because he insulted me, he called me a fool, and ... he told the truth. If I blame my wickedness on someone else, then I am not looking at myself, I am looking away, and therefore there is restlessness in me, there is no peace.

Even when you are angry, even when there is an impure thought, an impure motive, the very act of looking within enables you to find that peace. Once that peace has been tasted, you do not want anything else, nothing is of greater value. There is nothing for the sake of which you will barter that peace, there is nothing for which you will sacrifice that peace. It is the same with physical health. One who has enjoyed physical health does not want to abandon it, does not want to ruin it and one who has tasted this peace of mind is not interested in anything else. He lives, naturally he lives. He is dynamic and active because he is pure. He is more active than the other person, he is more active than the ambitious person, because ambition is a cover. Since there is this cover of ambition on the heart, on the consciousness, on the mind, the mind does not function to it's fullest capacity.

Once that cover has gone, the mind functions much better, and there is peace of mind.

Here is a trick. Find a lonely spot and go and sit there - on the beach, in the bush, or under a tree where you do not hear distracting noises. If you have your own technique of mediation, meditate in your own way. If you have no other technique, then this one is very good. Breathe loudly for a little while and keep listening to the sound, listen to your own breathing. Or you may repeat a mantra, listen to the mantra. Sit for a little while, listening intently to your breathing or to the mantra within. In a few minutes you will not fail to realise that your mind is at peace, not agitated any more, that there is a silence around you. Then you hear the sound of the wind rustling, the leaves or the sound of the waves, and that sound seems to penetrate through you. It is a beautiful feeling. The mind is not agitated, it is calm, transparent. When mind becomes transparent, the mental activity seems to be suspended for a little while. Enjoy it, it is beautiful.

Then the family will call you. There is work to do, dinner to be cooked. Get up when thoughts begin to stir in the mind. But, as you get up, watch. A few minutes ago there was this tremendous peace within myself which I consciously enjoyed, tasted, touched. Get up from where you are seated and watch carefully. I have this spectacle case in my pocket. Now, I can get up from here, walk out of this hall, get into the car, go to Durban, get into my room and it will still be there unless I drop it somewhere. Every time I bend down or prostrate, I catch hold of my pocket to make sure it does not fall out. Or, if I am in a crowd and I am not sure whether I have dropped it, I touch it to make sure that it is there.

So, as you come away from that lonely spot, you touch it to see if the peace is still there. Yes it is. Get into the car, start it - touch. Yes. Peace is still there, I have not lost it, I have not dropped it anywhere. Unless I drop it, and I must be a fool to drop it, I cannot lose it, the peace is still there. I come home. 'Where have you been?', someone, asks. For just a tenth of a second you look within - the peace is still there, you have not dropped it. Every time something happens, look within - the peace is still there. Value it, cherish it. Why should I drop something which I value, something which I cherish, something which I love. No, I keep it. I make sure again and again that it is there. This is a beautiful exercise if you wish to try it.

Yoga enables me to get rid of all these impurities. It does not put God back into my heart - God is already there. It does not create enlightenment - the light is already there. It does not put health back - health is already there. It does not create peace in me - peace is already there.

I think God, if he is omnipotent, could have done quite a lot of other things. For instance, he could have abolished sleep. We are supposed to be active, dynamic and unselfish; but if God wanted us to be very dynamic, he could easily have dispensed with this thing called sleep, and put in a pacemaker or something else. We have got two lungs. It would not have cost God very much to have put in two

harts. Then we could function with one heart during the day and go over to the other heart during the night. With some kind of adjustment it would have been possible for God to have cancelled sleep altogether, so that we could be busy in his service twentyfour hours a day. But he was wiser than this. Sleep has been built in to our lives not so much to regain something which we lose, such as energy, but to teach us a lesson. Why must I lose my energy during the day and recuperate again during the night? If it is possible not to lose energy at all, there is no need for sleep.

However, sleep reminds us every morning if, only we are receptive, of the possibility of a peaceful state. It is within my reach to be at peace, to enjoy this peace, to live in peace and harmony. It is not only possible, it is within my reach. I had it when I was asleep. Good heavens, it is only when I wake up that I lost it.

I am certain that if I get hold of this first sign of restlessness, of agitation, it is possible for me to regain the state of inner harmony that prevails during sleep, to face the mind and ask this extremely simple question of myself, 'What are you worried about? Ten minutes ago you were snoring, you did not worry if the world existed, or was blown to pieces, whether you were going to get up or sleep?' Immediately I wake up there is all this anxiety, this worry, this animosity. 'Is it necessary?', I ask myself, knowing I could have slept for a couple more hours. You may get up at five to meditate for forty-five minutes, or one hour. You think you can sit down and start meditating. Fifteen minutes later you think you must boil milk for morning tea or your husband or your child will soon wake up. All this sounds so marvellous and gives such a wonderful sense of responsibility, so you think, 'I am such a good mother or such a good father.' You have heard this, have you not? 'You know, he worries such a lot and therefore he is such a good father.' If he is such a good father, why does he worry? We put all these together to rationalise our own stupidity. Why is it that at that time, half past five, the mind thinks of some work I have to do? Can I not look within at that mind and say, 'Hey, stupid, would you have produced all these thoughts if I had not got up at five o'clock, if I was still sleeping?' Early in the morning I look within myself and ask, 'Why do you start all this now?'. Then I get back to the state of peace again, I enjoy that peace again. For the rest of the day I touch my pocket, watch within and see. I ensure that I have not dropped it anywhere.

Only the heart that knows this peace, this harmony, the bliss and joy that flow, only that heart is pure - that heart does not want to pollute itself, that mind does not want to pollute itself. This yoga is self-discovery. In this self-discovery, one has the courage to look at the cover and strive to remove that cover. This is the essence of every yoga practice, from yoga asanas to meditation, to worship, through to what is called self-realisation.

### 3. Non-sense

If we practice all aspects of yoga and if yoga is meant to cleanse us, to purify us - purify our heart, purify our mind purify ... I did not complete my sentence? I am waiting for an answer. What is going to happen then? What will I experience? Will I see God? Or will I see some lights, coloured or blazing lights? There are various descriptions in our scriptures - there is the description of Arjuna witnessing the cosmic form of Krishna.

What did Arjuna see? Arjuna saw the cosmic vision and it seemed as though a thousand suns had risen in the horizon at the same time. Such brilliance How do I see such brilliance? How do I see such brilliant light? I am looking for something. What are the signs of a purified heart? What will I experience and how will I know that my heart is pure? Will I still love my wife or my husband? Will I still enjoy ice cream? Will a book that I may read in the English language still make sense? If I have got enlightenment, will my heart and mind be pure? These are some of the worries that we have. Will I lose my individuality, which is something very precious? Will I still be me, I? In other words, will there be a revolutionary change? If there is going to be a revolutionary change, I am worried, afraid. How do I know that it is going to be for the better. If there is going to be no change at all, then I am worried again because then what is the use of all his? If I am going to continue to be the same person, then there is no use. Yet I want something to happen - some magic, some extraordinary thing.

As an illustration. I have never heard it said from the lips of Gurudev Swami Sivananda: 'I saw God and he came with four arms.' Do you know why we want these gods to come to us with four arms? To bring us plenty of gifts. With one arm, they must give us fruits, with an other arm, they must give us something to eat and so on. We want all the gods to have four arms. But Gurudev never saw that He saw God in a certain form on a certain night or morning or noon. I have met people who declared, 'I have seen God'. I have met them. There was one holy man who has even written a small booklet. He was a great ascetic, totally devoted to one spiritual practice - japa. He said, 'Do nothing else, disciple yourself, lead the most rigorous simple life'. Which means that you should not put into your mouth that which is not necessary to keep the body and soul together for the next three hours. You should not sleep one minute more than is absolutely necessary, about an hour or half or two hours a day. The rest of the time, you should not talk or communicate with anyone, or read or do something. Go on doing japa. Lovely. He said that after a certain period of time of doing all this japa, he went to a place in the Himalayas and heard voices, 'Narayan, Narayan,' and then he saw a celestial vision. That is japa. Beautiful.

I have seen an other wonderful lady saint in Calcutta. She also told me that one day in her kitchen she saw Krishna standing next to her. She is a remarkable person. But the fun was that she, and I think even the other swami, were tremendously devoted to Swami Sivananda. She used to visit the ashram quite often and, whenever she went, she was like a small girl in front of Gurudev, even

though she was a middle aged woman. What is it?

Here is a man who never said, 'I have seen God. He is two-headed, with four ears.' If you lived with this holy man, you would not have seen anything extraordinary, except that he was extraordinarily simple, human. If you ask me what was extraordinary about Swami Sivananda, I would say, 'It was that He was a pure human being, an unpolluted human being.' If he was 'human', we are all not so human though we look like human beings.

You ask, 'What does yoga do to me when it purifies my heart, my soul, my mind? Do I have extraordinary experiences, do I see lights and visions and things like that?' You may. You may, but that is not the criterion for holiness, for perfection. The criterion for perfection seems to be that there is not even a craving or longing for experiences - you are interested in purifying your heart, your mind. That zeal, that interest in self-purification continues as long as there is a body, a mind, and a heart. Unrelenting vigilance is needed, so that the body and mind - which are still functioning in this world, in this universe, in this creation - do not once again get caught in dirt. This was what I saw in Swami Sivananda and this is corroborated by a beautiful saying in the Bhagavad Gita. 'A holy man need not necessarily wear a different dress or garb, a holy man does not necessarily appear to be different or holy.' As a matter of fact, there is almost an injunction contained in that verse - let your external appearance and behaviour be exactly like that of an ordinary worldly man but, inwardly, let there be a tremendous difference - which literally means unattached.

Non-attachement does not mean dislike, indifferent. Non-attachment is total psychological freedom, which means - I recognize that this is my child but he is an independent creature - I cannot eat for his sake I cannot breathe for his sake, he is an independent creature and he will grow. I live, he lives - all of us live, and we are free. You are free from me and I am free from you. I say something and you listen to something, probably something completely different, without getting worried or anxious, knowing that each one is totally independent, that there no attachment in reality.

It is not as though the holy man, the sanyasi, or the yogi denies the existent reality. We say we are attached to each other. Look around and see if you are really attached to anything. You will discover you are not. Attachment is not confined to the family or social relationship, but includes psychological dependence. I do not even know what is real and what is not real. I do not know what is good and what is not good. You tell me, 'This is good, Swami, and I accept it. Because you say it is good, it must be good. So, I am dependent upon you, you are the boss of my mind, of my heart.

The holy man however has no such attachment - he is free. Non-attachment is not what we have construed it to mean. Non-attachment is total inward freedom - it is not something which did not exist and which I have to bring into existence, and that total psychological freedom alone is true. One is not attached to another.

When the heart is pure, when the soul is pure, the yogi sees there is no attachment, and then non-attachment or freedom manifests itself. It is there already - nothing has been created by yoga. Yoga merely purifies, removes the impurities that pervert our vision. This freedom is what I saw in Swami Sivananda's life. He had no illusions, no misunderstandings at all about His life and His missions. There was no ambition to be like the other person, there was no ambition to be famous or to be non-famous. Something very interesting.

There were two people who were both neighbours of Swami Sivananda. One was a swami who attracted tremendous publicity and public attention, who loved the limelight and was the limelight. And there was the other swami who would pelt you with stones if you took a photograph of him. So, here were two of His contemporaries who went to the opposite extremes. But He was not affected at all.

I have to find the self and the self is already there. There is not single moment when the self, the 'you', the 'I' has been absent, but it is hidden, veiled. It is thickly veiled, by all sort of ideas we have picked up, all sorts of prejudices we have accumulated over the years. Yoga is the art of getting rid of this. When I was growing up, somebody told me, 'You are a boy, not a girl.' One layer of dirt has been laid on this self - 'I am a boy, not a girl.' As I grow up a little more, someone says, 'You are a Brahmin, and he is non brahmin.' 'Oh I see, I am a brahmin, very good.' An other layer of filth. Then they said. 'You are a South Indian, not a North Indian.' An other layer of dirt. Now they say, 'You are an Indian, not a Chinese.' One more layer of dirt. 'You are educated and not uneducated.' Another layer. 'You are a clever man and not a dull man.' One more layer. With every one of these, the self is being covered up by more and more filth. Then, after fifty years of this, you look within yourself and you become confused. You do not know what you are; someone says you are a good man, someone says you are a bad man, someone says you are a clever man, someone says you are a stupid idiot. Mad. All this could be true until one looks inside and asks: 'Who am I?'

When you look at yourself asking, 'Who am I?', the first thing that comes into your mind is the top layer, 'I am a swami'. What makes me a swami and, in the bathroom, am I still a swami? It is an important question. But, you know, even in the bathroom you can still recite the Gita, sing 'Hari Rama'. Alright. Then she says, 'You know, last night you were singing Hari Rama but the tune was different - snoring. Was I a swami even then - I was not singing Hari Rama and I was not wearing these clothes? What do I mean by this? Gradually I realise that 'I am a swami' is another layer of dirt. All this may be necessary for social communication. I do not believe that I am an Indian, that I am Eastern - but I have to have a name, I have to have a passport. These passport details maybe necessary, like names on the the world map. All these are no more than labels stuck on the outside of the bottle - they are of no intrinsic value at all - they do not represent reality.

Yoga enables you to wipe out all these labels, and you realise that they are not true, that they are not real, that they do not represent reality. We have stuck these

labels on ourselves - they were necessitated by some consideration or other, but inwardly I know that a label is just a label, a veil, a layer of dirt. Look within and that goes away. What do I mean by 'I am an Indian?' I was born in India, but what is India? It is another piece of earth. But apart from that, I still think of myself as a man, because my grandmother told me when I was three years old that I was a boy, not a girl. All this is nothing but ignorance. When I was fast asleep, what was I? I did not know who I was - that I was a brahmin, a swami, a literate man, etc

Yoga enables us to cleanse ourselves of all these notions we have concerning ourselves. Even nationality, which comes from the word nation, is also a notion - only the spelling is different. When all notions have been got rid of, when the darkness of ignorance that prevails in deep sleep is also got rid of, what remains? In that there is no 'spiritual experience'. You are pure, absolutely pure. This is perhaps what the Bible refers to as man made in the image of God, a simple and straight forward image. No, an image that 'is' God, that proves the existence of God. You see the image, but the image does not see you. You hold a mirror in front of you, you see the image in the mirror. The mirror does not see you. So, it is God who sees the image, the image does not see God. If the image says, 'Oh, I have seen God', it is not God, it is my own mental projection.

So, in the words of Gurudev Swami Sivananda, the yogi is 'constantly vigilant', his one continuous, unceasing effort is to remain pure. It is perhaps more difficult to remain pure than to purify oneself initially. There is a lovely quotation in Sanskrit, it is used whenever the poet wants to emphasize that what we are engaged in is a useless, fruitless task, and that whatever you are doing is stupid, a waste of time. The expression means 'an elephant taking a bath'. Have you seen this? I have, in Rhodesia. You watch a herd of elephants get into the pool. They wash themselves; but as soon as they come out, they suck some dust and sprinkle it on themselves. As soon as an elephant has had a bath and made itself clean, it must dirty itself. Although we laugh at the elephants and think it is something funny, many of us do this.

We purify ourselves and say, 'I have renounced this, I have abandoned that.' Then we say, 'I am a sanyasi.' Why did you have to shave your head and be come like this? Why couldn't you just be Mr. So-and-so? So, I get into the water and clean myself - I clean my mind and my heart. But I do not keep my self clean - something else creeps in. I myself pick up some dirt and sprinkle it on my own head. One set of ideas have been removed and another set takes its place. This is what I learnt from Swami Sivananda.

I still remember once rather a moving incident. Swami Sivananda was a great man, many of us regarded Him as an incarnation of God. Even though He had thousands of disciples and thousands of admirers, He did not mind people writing His biography and He would publish it. This was a paradoxical combination. He even used to have plays, depicting His own life, enacted on the stage right in front of Him. He said, 'Why not? As long as it is inspiring, let them

do it.' At the same time, He did not discourage people from criticizing Him. Once, early in 1946, there was a religious conference and some person had taken it into his head to spread some kind of scandal against Swami Sivananda. One of Swamiji's sanyasi disciples had heard this. He came to the Ashram and he was furious. 'Swamiji So-and-so is saying so-and-so about you. What must we do about it? Gurudev laughed and said, 'Let him. Put up a platform so that he can stand up there and say it aloud.'

Gurudev neither discouraged people from glorifying Him, nor discouraged people from scandalizing Him. He knew, 'I am what I am, nothing outside is going to touch me'. The egoism of 'I am a great swami' or 'I am a man of great renunciation' must not creep in, because if they do, I am no better than I was before. Like the elephant taking a bath.

During the 'All India Tour' in 1950, not only did people gather in their thousands to listen to Swamiji, to sing kirtan with Him and to have His darshan, but literally, at every centre, thousands would come and worship Him, treating Him as God, as an incarnation of God. When we were in Delhi, Swamiji's physical health was not good; so, we arranged for Him to spend the afternoons in the house of a devotee. When the morning program was finished, He would go to this house where no one would know He was, and spend a couple of hours there. On the last day of the tour, Swami Sivananda was resting at this house. He had an appointment to see someone at quarter past three; but at three o'clock Swamiji was still sleeping. We did not want to wake Him; but at five past three He suddenly stirred. Immediately he got up saying, 'We are late.' I said, 'No Swamiji, it is only a five minutes ride from here, we will make it.' He went out, stepped into the waiting car, turned round and saw the lady of the house standing there. She said, 'Namaskara.' He returned the salute and the car started moving. As we turned into the road, he asked me, 'We are coming back?' 'No Swamiji, in the evening there is a public meeting and then we go to the railway station.' A minute later He asked the driver to go back to the house. The driver turned and went back, and as soon as the car stopped, He got out and went to look for the lady of the house. She was in the kitchen. The scene that followed was almost shattering. He was a big man, tall and hefty - she was a small woman and there was this giant of a man, a saint, a sage, a yogi, God incarnate folding His palms, bowing down as though He was ashamed. His first words were, 'Manika vendam' - forgive me. She did not understand; so, He explained. 'I should have taken leave of you properly. We get in the car and forget. One could see that He was miserable. We say 'sorry' laughingly, but that is hypocrisy. When He said 'sorry', there was sorrow in His voice, sorrow in His heart, sorrow in His soul. She burst into tears - she thought he had come back to fetch some thing and here he was apologising to her for having been rude enough to say 'goodbye' from the car. She did not know what to say. He repeated again and again, 'I am sorry. Please forgive me.' Eventually He got back in the car; but for a few minutes He would not talk. Then he said, 'You see, however careful one is, this vanity comes from somewhere - this vanity that I am a great swami. One must be very careful'.

This is yoga. Nothing else is yoga. All other experiences are external, are projections of these layers of dirt. I am still in darkness - there is a lot of dirt covering the self. When these layers of dirt are removed, I watch myself - in my relationships, in my daily life, to see if this arrogance, this vanity, this prejudice, manifests itself in my actions and my reactions - watching myself all the time, endeavouring to purify myself again and again, and thus to discover the self.

When all these impurities have been removed, will I have an experience called self-realisation? Will I be able to see that 'this' is the self? There is a beautiful mantra in one of the major Upanishads, A sage asks a simple question, 'The self being the seer, the self being the knower, the self being the intelligence, what else can see the self?' I can see my hand, but with what will the eyes see themselves? You are the self - with what can the self be seen?

The self is beyond thought, it is indescribable. It is beyond the reach of the mind. Therefore it is total nonsense, and from that point of view all our experiences are non-sense,- that is the state of self-knowledge. Does one who has self-knowledge remain inert, immobile? Oh no. What is it that inhibits you? Your own self image. 'I am so-and-so and I must not do this.' Drop all these inhibitions and ambitions, attractions and repulsions, loves and hates - then you have dropped the veils that cover the self, the self that is pure, absolutely pure.

There is a beautiful saying in the Gita: 'The yogi is an extremely efficient person.' This is something we saw in Gurudev - an enlightened being who has nothing to achieve, nothing to gain, and yet was extremely dynamic day and night. What is the question that arises in your mind? 'What for?' That question never arose in His mind. Out of self-knowledge arises spontaneous action, and that spontaneous action is known as karma yoga - the rest is karma, what we are doing is karma. When there is self-knowledge, when there is neither ambition nor inhibition, then whatever action takes place in and through this person 'I' is spontaneous action - in his sight there is no God, no 'another'. Therefore, in the eyes of Swami Sivananda, the whole world, everything was God - not in the dualistic sense, but in a non-dualistic sense, that God and God alone exists.

We must see this for ourselves. Who sees God in all is God himself. In him there are no divisions. Swami Sivananda did not say that this is a worldly activity and this is a highly spiritual activity. What was most inspiring to watch was that He did not make any difference between himself and others - He almost made us feel that we were the enlightened ones. Here we realise a wonderful truth: to the ignorant, all are ignorant, but to the enlightened, there is no ignorance, the entire universe is one.

## 4. Action Does not Bind

There is a very interesting verse in the Bhagavad Gita: 'Not even for a single moment can you totally abandon action'. This thought occurs quite a few times when Krishna commands: 'Do your duty'. He may not say it just that way; though we often translate swakarma or swadharma as duty, it may not mean exactly that. Swadharma means 'action which is in conformity with my nature.' So, if I am a rose, I walk with the fragrance of a rose; if I am cow dung, I walk with the fragrance of cow dung. This is quite simple. One should not get caught up in concepts. One of the reasons used by Krishna for insisting that Arjuna should fight was - 'It is your nature and you cannot suppress it.' Your nature goads you, compels you to do what your nature demands. Can you act contrary to your nature? Can you bite your tongue? If you suppress yourself, you will explode.

One cannot be inactive, even for a single moment. My lungs demand that there should be breathing. This does not cause me any trouble. I am never unhappy breathing, and when it stops in the natural course of events, I am not unhappy either. So, why is it that in the discharge of what we call the direct duties of daily activity, as a result of my own action I seem to make myself unhappy. If to act, to be active is natural to us, what is natural should not create any problem, should not make me unhappy, unless unhappiness is also part of my nature. If unhappiness is a part of my nature, then I must be perpetually unhappy. But this is not so. I begin to examine what exactly this action is - what I am supposed to do, and how the action is linked - or if it is linked - to what we call reaction.

This is how we evolved the theory of karma. I see that if I do something good, I will get something good. That seems to be pure business, does it not? But whether there is action or reaction, I see that after doing something, sometimes I am happy and sometimes I am unhappy - there seems to be no hard and fast rule. This is the first thing to understand very clearly. For instance - is slapping good or bad? You are going to say it depends which hand it is, in what mood it is done, and how you take it - it depends, it depends, it depends - then we see that the reaction is not from the slapping itself.

How do we determine that this is the reaction to that action. In the Yoga Vasishtha, Sage Vasishtha says repeatedly that all things are accidental coincidence - that if this follows that, it is merely an accidental coincidence. There is a story that occurs a few times in Yoga Vasishtha about a coconut tree. Have you ever tried to dislodge a coconut with a stone? You will never be able to dislodge it, as it is strongly attached to the tree. One day, a young man was sitting underneath a coconut tree trying to figure out how to knock down one of those coconuts. Just then a crow landed on one of the coconuts and it dropped. The boy said, 'My God. It is so easy that even a crow is able to dislodge a coconut?' Was that the truth? The truth was that the coconut was about to fall in any case, and yet it happened at that psychological moment. The crow landed and, as it landed, the coconut fell, without causal connection. Even so is our birth and even so is our death and every thing that happens in life - we cannot say that this action is followed by that

reaction.

How do I act now? What do I do? What is it that makes me unhappy? How is it that action which is inevitable, life which is inevitable, brings unhappiness in its train, and how can I avoid it - that is the question? Action is supposed to bind you to this world existence called samsara.

You know what samsara means? Samsara means some sorrow which you pick up in this world. If there is no sorrow at all, there is no samsara - then it becomes Gods world, it is no longer my world. Action does not bind you to this world existence, because action is inevitable - it is part of the divine nature. Krishna says that you live only for the sake of yajna - there is no bondage, otherwise you are bound.

What is yajna? Yajna is symbolic. The fire-worship that we do is not yajna in itself, but is symbolic of it - just as a picture or image of Krishna is symbolic. We know that this is not Krishna standing there. We know that if the idol is broken, Krishna is not dead. But when you look at this figure you think of Krishna. Krishna is not there, he is in your heart. But in order to focus your mind on Krishna, you may need an image. So too I may need the symbolism of yajna in order to turn my attention upon the spirit of yajna within me.

'Ya' means who and 'jna' means the knower, the man who knows or one who is wise. That action which enables you to discover yourself or become wise, is yajna - it is that action which leads you to the understanding of the self. How does yajna make understanding wisdom possible? Then you come back to this symbolism of the havan ceremony. One word used repeatedly in the havan ceremony is 'swaha'. Swaha means the destruction of selfishness. In order to make this symbolism more symbolic, they insisted that you offer the things that you value most. In those days, what Indians valued most was ghee - clarified butter; so they poured ghee into the fire; they took the best grains and poured them into the fire; they took the food which they had prepared and poured that into the fire. Do all this with a cheerful heart - swa-ha. What happens to that ghee, to all the food and grains that you threw into the fire? It has gone - no, not gone - the whole thing is reduced to pure ash. Siva is supposed to wear ashes on his forehead which maybe interpreted as meaning - that purity born of complete unselfishness, the total destruction of selfishness - is dear to God. It is then that we become pure - not otherwise.

In those days, in every home, there was a sacred fire and householders were supposed to perform this havan ceremony twice a day. This is a very beautiful thought if only we can enter into the spirit of it - every day I put a little food stuff into the fire and I put a little here, in me. There is one fire outside, in the havan kund, and the other fire inside is called the gastric fire - it is the same thing. Part of the food and grain is poured into that fire and becomes ash immediately - it has served the fire in that way - some part of that same food is poured into the gastric fire and becomes this flesh and bone and skin and so on, and eventually

even this will be offered into that same fire. If I remember this, I will never be selfish. As I pour the grain into the fire and say 'swa-ha', I am destroying selfishness - even now it is turned into pure ash. This body will also be offered into that fire one day, and will turn into pure ash - this is the symbolism. When I throw those things into the fire, it is immediately reduced to ashes - if you want to use that word. I do not know what happens to it, but the action is complete - there. The moment I offer this arati into the fire, the action is complete - there.

Just as when I pour that ghee into the fire with the mantra 'swa-ha', I see that action has come to an end. Can I also do this with my life? Can I perform all my actions in this spirit, that the action ends as soon as it is finished? I am not interested in what happens afterwards. One who lives like that, has success all the time. Success is whatever happens after an action has been performed. If I write an exam and pass, that is success, or if I write and fail, that is also success, because the results come after the exam. Failure is non-performance of an action. When I sit on the fence wondering, 'Shall I or shall I not?', that is failure - failure to act, failure to do your best - that is failure, and not not achieving something which you hoped to achieve. A person who acts in this manner acts in the spirit of yajna. The moment that particular action comes to an end, it is finished. In the same way in everything in my life - as soon as one action comes to an end, it is the end of it. It is because I expect something and it does not happen that I am frustrated. 'I' am not frustrated. What is frustrated? The desire was frustrated, the hope was frustrated. I must see these two things - one is that the sequence of action is unpredictable. I cannot possibly say that this action will lead to that result. Secondly, it is the motive behind the action, the craving, the desire that prompted the action in the first place. It is desire that gets knocked down later on. When I drop the craving and yet perform action. then action is performed for its own sake.

Do we know what unselfishness means. If you watch yourself very carefully, you may see this. Before I joined Gurudev's ashram, I was a wealthy man. Then I decided I did not want material rewards and so on, and thought I would join an ashram - I renounced all desire for worldly reward, money, position etc. Now watch the feeling of satisfaction that arises in your heart and you will know what havan means - this subtle argument within yourself. 'Ah yes, I have renounced all wealth and desire, I do not touch money, I do not look at people even - and when they bring me cakes, I do not touch that either. Am I not a good chap?' The strange inner psychological satisfaction I derive from this 'is' heaven, and there again my unselfishness has been defeated. I 'am' selfish.

Is it possible for me to be completely free from all this? When I look at the ghee I poured into the fire, I ask myself if I can become like that. Gurudev used to sing, 'Kill the little 'I', die to live'. Die to live - there is a snag here: can 'I' die? I want to die, but ... I hope to go to heaven afterwards. This is not dying, this is being hopeful, and that hope keeps me alive, keeps the selfishness alive. Can I live an absolutely pure life without hope? If you can, you are safe, otherwise you are bound, you are caught - caught, not by the so-called law of karma, but by your

own desires, your own hopes. If you learn to live in the spirit of yajna - sacrifice, seeing that every action comes to an end as soon as it is done, then you are free.

Lord Krishna says: 'Do not let these things cling to you in the form of hope, expectation, and desire - let the action proceed.' Snap the thread there. This is what I saw in Swami Sivananda's life. It was a marvelous thing to watch - as soon as one item, whatever He was doing, was over, that was it. He would never discuss it again because it was finished, past. Within half an hour from returning from the 'All India Tour' where He was literally worshipped by millions of people, He was back in the office as if nothing had happened. You could look at His face - there was no elation or pride - that chapter was closed. This was what He used to do every day. After work in the office, He returned to His kutir, where He would chant God's Nam. He was very fond of saying, 'There is no I, there is no you'. Sometimes He would lock Himself in, and sometimes He would pace up and down the verandah of His kutir, chanting a deep 'Om.' One could see the office, the Sivananda Ashram, the Divine Life Society and all the rest of the world simply dropped away. Each day was an end in itself - it did not have an expectation and a hope which extended the headache to the next day.

This is the best way of traveling - there is no excess baggage at all - we are forever light. That to me is what is known as enlightenment. Enlightenment does not mean switching the light on. It means lightening your burden, feeling light-hearted. There is no excess baggage, excess baggage accumulated by these hopes and desires and expectations - and never being able to die. We are so afraid of death that we have to be told that there is a soul and you will survive and go on, that you do not really die. 'You do not really die', I do not know what that means. In other words, we are never willing to die. Gurudev reminded us, 'Die to live'. Die and then you will know that you are immortal. Only if your selfishness is completely sacrificed, will action be pure ash, and that action will never lead you to sorrow. There is no sorrow in that action, because there is success all the time - the doing itself being the success. Whatever comes after it, is also success, and since there is no hope, there is no disappointment, and since there is no expectation, there is no frustration.

## 5. Who is the Divider?

The other day we were discussing what is called yajna. Yajna is the spirit of sacrifice - making something sacred, of recognising that something is holy. If the whole universe has been created by God, as we believe, and if God is omnipresent, as we believe, then there must be holiness, divinity in us, outside us, around us in all our relationships - there can be nothing else. The non-holiness arises because there is often misunderstanding. How are we to recapture that holiness - how are we to re-enter into that holiness? This what yoga is about, whether you call it karma yoga, bhakti yoga, raja yoga, or whatever you wish to call it - the whole thing is meant to restore God-consciousness.

'To restore God-consciousness' - what does that mean? Gurudev pointed out very often that there is no division in yoga, just as there is no division in you. We use these words loosely - that man has a brain, a mind, that he has a heart, emotion, feeling, and man has the limbs with which he works here - therefore we think we can see a division here - because it is a division which we have created somehow, and the creation of division leads to hypocrisy. I think something and I say something else. I feel something and I think something else. There is conflict here, because I am still thinking that I can do one or the other.

Hypocrisy springs from the fact that I have made up my mind that I can think in one way, say something else, and do something else. But very soon I discover that this thing leads to trouble. If you continue to lead a hypocritical life, sooner or later it catches up. Then what happens? There is nervous tension, blood pressure, this, that etc. Then nervous breakdown which means madness. Previously we used to call it madness, now we call it breakdown. Nerves do not break down, they may break up. I do not know what happens then. Do you know why a man goes crazy? Because there is tension. Why does this tension arise? Because my personality is pulled in two different directions and that happens because I think I can get away with this hypocrisy.

Therefore Gurudev insisted that all these must be realised to be in harmony already. It is not as though the yogi creates this harmony - the harmony is there - your body, mind and spirit already function in harmony. You can disturb it, just as you can tip an old-fashioned scale. When the scale is at rest, the needle points to the centre - there is harmony. But you can disturb that harmony by dropping something in one pan or knocking one side. Then it goes on see sawing till it comes to rest.

If we, you and I, think that we can cheat nature, that we can take liberties with this harmony or dignity that is inside, we are fools. You cannot do that. What is called the law of karma or the law of cause and effect, action and reaction - is based on this principle. Once I disturb the inner equilibrium or harmony or divinity, that divinity is powerful enough to restore its own balance.

You go on eating sweets morning and night see what happens to you? As you

grow a little older, you will develop diabetes, which means your sweet ration is exhausted. For the rest of your life the doctor will tell you: 'Do not touch sweets.' Diabetes is merely nature's own way of restoring balance. In the same way you go on hitting people, slapping people, and that sort of thing. One day your arm is paralysed, and God, nature or whoever it is, comes and tells you, 'You have had enough. Why don't you keep quiet now?'

If you misuse this body and the energy that is contained in it - which is naturally in a state of harmony, if disharmony is produced in the body, the mind, the heart, the harmony will be restored by God, by the divine intelligence that is within you. That restoration of balance may take the form of an illness or madness. We cannot cheat nature because the whole thing is one, the harmony is there already. This is the most important point - the harmony is there, you and I are one. If you or I think we are different from each other - 'I am superior to you, inferior to you' - nature will more or less create those conditions in which this error is corrected. It is an error, it is a confusion, it is a misunderstanding. That misunderstanding has to go, it will go.

All that we do in our life, whether in the name of mere living, or in the name of spirituality, or yoga practice, is meant only to remove this misunderstanding and, in a manner of speaking, to restore harmony. But then we have a problem. We are fond of carrying a problem on our shoulders and protecting it, creating it where it does not exist. I had a very beautiful lesson in this years ago, in 1948. Some of us went on a pilgrimage in the Himalayas, to a place called Badrinath. There was a man in our small group who used to visit Badrinath every summer. All of us were young, we could walk for long hours and we did the whole thing in record time, although we had to carry our own baggage. Most of the way it was raining, we were filthy and we could not wash our clothes properly. In Badrinath, there is a hot spring and all the devotees bathe in it before going into the temple. It is a most delightful thing to see that even in the icy cold Himalayas you have hot springs. This makes you think of God and that is why they built a temple there, I guess, otherwise not many people would go there. Eventually we reached the place. The first thought that occurred to all of us was that we should have a hot bath to refresh ourselves. All of us were bathing and this man, who used to be a frequent visitor to this pilgrim centre was trying to wash his clothes in a subsidiary spring near the main pool. One of the attendants went up to him and said, 'It is forbidden to wash clothes here.' This man sprang up like a leopard and said, 'Who are you to tell me? I know all about this place. Shut up.' I thought. My God, this is a good lesson. We have come over 200 miles from Rishikesh feeling that here, in this holy place, God is manifest in a very special way, and that when you come here you should have left your anger and passion at home. That seems to be difficult. Even to a holy place you bring your own unholiness. Why can I not leave the mind and go?

Even when we practise yoga or go to a temple we bring our own mischief making mind into it and create division there. We say, 'I am a karma yogi. What are you?' And you might say, 'I am a raja yogi.' And so it goes on. Yoga means getting

together, restoring harmony, and yet we use it as a dividing factor.

Whether I practise bhakti yoga or karma yoga, or whatever I practise, unless it becomes an integral yoga, it will cause division - that same mind which created a division between you and me in this world will also create a division there. 'I am superior to you, I am a jnani - you are only a karma yogi', or, 'I am a bhakta and you are only a hatha yogi.' Is it possible to tackle the whole thing at the root? It is possible, but only if we recognise the divider in us. Who is the divider? How is this division created in me and is it possible to deal with it there? Is it possible to see that such a division is absurd, that any disharmony must be eliminated as soon as it manifests itself? There must be concerted attack on the total problem - that was what Gurudev Sivananda insisted on. And so we practise all these 'different' yogas. Why do we say this? Because we still have the feeling, the misunderstanding that one yoga is different from the other - as long as that exists we must practise all of them.

If I have this idea that, as a swami, as a yogi, I must sit in padmasana for sixteen hours and look at my nose, meditate, that I should not do something or the other - go and do it. When Swami Sivananda was a mendicant ascetic in North India, it was unthinkable for a holy man to engage in singing and dancing - he should sit and meditate or repeat some nice mantras. Yet, here was a swami, a very holy man who would pack up a couple of clappers and clap them and dance and sing 'Hare Rama, Hare Krishna'. A swami must not even carry his own water pot, he must have a brahmachari trailing behind him. Swamiji did not have a waterpot, but He used to carry a lot of other things in His hands. He had bags - one containing books or pamphlets, an other containing a pen and paper and so on, an other containing sweets, biscuits, an other had all sorts of odds and ends, including a flash-light, a screw driver and some aspirin. He used to wander around, and if He found you had a headache, He would give you an aspirin. Only when you have a headache when there is no dispensary and you meet the swami who is ready with an aspirin, then you regard him as God. Yes? He would give a student a pamphlet or a book to read; if there was a little child he would give it a toffee or sweet. Seeing this, some of the more established swamis used to laugh at Him, mock Him. I believe they would say, 'He is no longer a sanyasi but a samsara.'

So, it is possible that what I have undertaken as a sadhana, as a yoga practise, can itself be turned into an obstacle if I am not vigilant. I do not become a swami because that confers special privileges on me. I do not practise yoga because it is going to make me psychic. All these are meant to remove the source of disharmony - internal disharmony, social disharmony, disharmony between God and me or me and nature. In order to achieve this, Gurudev insisted that we should practise a little of all these. Karma Yoga in the beginning means any service to the needy, not necessarily to the deserving. If you start discriminating there, you may find that you become more arrogant. You might wonder, 'Who deserves my service? Who deserves my charity?' Once I met a man who was fairly wealthy, but very miserly. I soon realised that it was because he was such a miser

that he became wealthy. He said that when he gave something in charity, he would think, 'He is not so wealthy but then he can find a job,' or, 'Yes he is old - too old - but then he smokes, he does not deserve charity.' And so he does not find anybody deserving his charity. I suggested, 'If you are a devotee of Swami Sivananda and if you want to do charity, do one thing: as soon as you receive your salary, put one tenth of it in a box and leave it there. Tell yourself you will not use it for yourself or for your family. Be sure you do not touch it. You may avoid giving it away for two or three months, but then you have to get rid of it somehow or other. Now you will find everybody worthy of your charity.'

Poor people may not measure up to your expectations of a deserving person. Gurudev never thought who was deserving and who was undeserving - anyone who was hungry was fed, any beggar got something from Him. On one occasion, it was pointed out to Swamiji that people who were reeking of alcohol came and sang bhajans and that, as soon as they finished., Swamiji would give them some money. Somebody said the singers would spend the money on drinking and smoking. 'That is not my business. Give to the man who needs it, that is all.'

In the beginning, karma yoga takes the form of this kind of service - service which is less selfish than before. The service we render is not strictly unselfish, but is no longer brutally selfish. Previously, if someone demanded a cup water, we used to say, 'All right, but how much will you pay? Water does not come free. I am paying water rates.' Now we do not do that; we say, 'Okay', and then wait to see if he says thank you. Still, that is an improvement. On the previous position I used to be terribly selfish, but now I am trying to serve the needy in my own small way.

I can even sacrifice a little of my own comfort and convenience and share what I have with others. It is not easy to sacrifice what has become a necessity in our own mind. There is still some selfishness involved - we either have our eye on name, fame or good reputation, or somebody tells us, 'I if you do this, you will go to heaven.' If I tell you that if you serve me you will go to heaven, you will never be able to prove I am wrong, because by that time I shall have disappeared, and when you go there - and you do not find yourself in heaven, you cannot come back and hit me. This is one of the safest predictions. In India, there was a great teacher who said, 'You do not have to do anything I take your karma All you have to do is to serve me and donate all your wealth to my institution. I will look after you and see that you realise God.' Very good. You know, we love an easy thing. The guru suddenly dies. What can you do?

Pure unselfishness is very rare. Why? Because it involves something other than merely thinking. I try to examine my motives - I see that I am becoming less selfish, that some of my actions are no longer grossly selfish, but they are subtly selfish. And so, Gurudev insisted that if we neglect any aspect of yoga, like worship of God, singing kirtan, meditation or study, it would be possible for us to regain the old gross selfishness in other subtler, more dangerous forms. Now I have to be vigilant, more careful than before. I can pretend that I do not want any reward from you, not even thanks. 'I am serving, I am doing all this work.'

Fantastic. But then, inwardly, something happens, and I become a despot, a dictator, a tyrant. Why? Because I have a large following of people who worship and adore me as a great karma yogi. My karma yoga leads me into politics or into social reform or this or that. I am not saying that these things are not good, but the same ego plays innumerable dirty tricks.

The ego can expand in such a way that superficially it looks good. I give up my family and become a swami. Immediately it impresses many of you, but what you do not see is that now I have a larger family, and that the same little ego has expanded and become a sort of corporate ego. Now, instead of fighting for myself and my small family, I am going to fight for the welfare of my community, for the devotees of Swami Sivananda and so on. They are all extensions of my personality, and therefore I am bound to fight for them, to ensure their welfare against the welfare of others. This is also ego. This is also selfishness. Why do I do this? Because I want to retain the leadership of a certain group, of a certain community. Therefore Gurudev used to say that karma yoga can never stand by itself. By itself it is a danger, a menace. It has to be combined with the other limbs of yoga.

Yoga is harmony, integration - I must see clearly that I cannot discover my oneness with you unless I transcend this selfishness, this ego-sense. How do I do that? My thinking has to change, my feelings have to change, my vision has to change - how does all this happen? First we are told to remember God is omnipresent. Simple. Remember God is omnipresent and slowly that will bring a change in my thinking. I read the scriptures and so on, so that this idea becomes more and more clear as the days go on. Then, when a wicked thought, a selfish thought, a violent thought arises in me, I tell myself, 'Oh no, God is omnipresent,' and that thought immediately restrains the other one, restrains the mind. Then, through bhakti yoga, through the worship of God in all forms, I develop this feeling of the presence of God. I develop the understanding that God does not exist in temples alone, in forms alone, until finally, I become aware that God is omnipresent.

## 6. Observe Yourself

On the last occasion we were discussing how we should live our lives without making it difficult for ourselves or for others. Why is my life so full of grief, so full of sorrow, so full of disharmony, so full of bitterness? The first and deadliest error I commit is that, instead of looking at this problem and tracing it to its source, I rationalise it. I say that we I am miserable because he said so-and-so, that I am unhappy because somebody did something else, or that my son failed in his exams. Why should this be my misery? It is probably the misery of his teacher who is more responsible for the results than I am. But somehow I get involved in all of that.

Why am I unhappy? Not because I am a fool, but because somebody else did something, and since I found a very real reason to be unhappy, I continue to be unhappy, without bothering about it, without thinking about it or looking at its cause - this is called samsara. Samsara is not outside us. It is not something which somebody and in which we are all drowning. Samsara is within us. If heaven is within us, then samsara or hell is also within us. If both these are in me, why am I in hell and not is heaven? This is a simple question. Lord Krishna makes it very clear in the Bhagavad Gita. Uplift yourself by your own self. Do not lower yourself. Do not demean yourself.

Why do I feel that I am so terribly important? What is this sense of responsibility and what are all these silly notions concerning myself and my relationship with other people? No one can uplift others, nor can others uplift one. When will I realise this? When will I throw off this unnecessary sense of responsibility and be free? These are all false ideas - 'I love you' or 'You love me'. People who say this are ready to shoot each other a few days later. This is common, is it not? It does not take a sensitive person, an intelligent person, long to realise that you are here and I am also here, that you cannot destroy me and I cannot destroy you, that you are not my enemy nor am I your enemy, that you are not my friend, neither am I your friend. I have to find out who I am and then perhaps who you are. I cannot know who you are before I know who I am. I try to understand you before I understand myself and this leads to misunderstanding.

Misunderstanding arises directly from your stupid attempt to understand somebody else before understanding yourself. If you and I have any relationship at all, it is based on 'me'. Is that clear? If I am a doting parent, I hold on to this relationship feeling that I am this child's father or mother - it is entirely dependent upon me, not upon the child. In the same way, if I am devoted to someone, if I love someone, it is my business. I must not look at the other person - if I do, then I am not sincere. You go on telling your mother or father, your wife or husband, your guru or teacher, 'I love you if you do what I want you to do'. That is not love, that is bossing them. When there is an 'if' or a 'but', love is not there, friendship is not there. Such is human relationship. Can you touch your own heart and say that you love someone totally irrespective of what that someone does? Do you have that love? Be honest with yourself. Can you touch

your own heart and say that, even if that person sticks a gun at your head you will still say, 'I love you'? Can you do that?

So, I see that the only relationship in this world is what I make from moment to moments. I think I am your friend, so I behave as if I am your friend. A little later you stop doing what I want you to do, and then you are no longer my friend, you do something that dishonours me, irritates me, and I become your enemy. What is our relationship? Nothing except what I think it is - when I realise this, I realise immediately that the only thing I must understand very clearly is myself. You are your own friend, you are your own enemy. Do not look outside. So, if I want my life to be free from violence, free from unhappiness, free from misery, free from confusion, free from misunderstandings, then I must look within and see how I live, what makes me live, what makes me do what I do. This is called yoga, this is called meditation.

What makes me do what I do? I am sitting and talking - what makes me sit and talk, and who is it that talks? Who is it that looks? Who is it that sits here? This is called self-knowledge. Self-knowledge is not sitting, looking at the eyebrows and suddenly a light appears. If you want such experiences, marvelous, carry on. From the day we were born we have been looking for some experience or the other. Why do I want those experiences? Because I want the satisfaction of knowing that I am superior to an other person. We look for experiences in various ways. We looked for toys when we were babies, we looked for sweets when we were children, and when those toys and those sweets were of no more interest, we looked for other things, boys and girls. That boy laughs and talks to me, winks at me and does all sorts of crazy things, whereas those toys did not. Later, when we are no longer satisfied with this type of toy, we want superior, psychic toys. So we go from one experience to another, making and breaking relationships without coming to grips with what it is that is craving for all this.

The one thing that we do not seem to be interested in is what I am, what am I looking for, why am I doing all this, why am I living at all? When I ask these questions, I realise that living is beyond me. Did you hear that? Living is beyond me - life is something which is not involved in me, the 'me' is involved in life, the ego is involved in life, but life is not involved in the ego. Life continues, life is like energy, it is consciousness, intelligence. How do I know? In the state of deep sleep I have no feeling that I am sleeping, and yet life goes on and intelligence functions. Then I begin to wonder - in sleep I did not have any problem, I did not feel that so-and-so is my friend or my enemy, my wife or my husband, is a crook. Nothing at all. Yet, when I wake up, all my problems wake up. Are they my problems? Where do they arise? How do they mess up my life, destroy my life? Once I begin to ask those questions, I live, because life goes on whether I attain self-realisation or whether I continue to be stupid - life is not interested in all that.

When I was asleep, there were no problems. When I woke up, the problems woke up. Ah! Did they also wake up? Or, as soon as I wake up, do I manufacture those

problems? That is why holy men like Swami Sivananda insisted that we should meditate as soon as we wake up. What does meditation mean and what do I do while meditating? They say, sit up right - if you have a problem with this, pile a few cushions behind you, close your eyes and look at the tip of your nose; then you repeat a mantra and visualise an image of God, calling upon God to come. Supposing somebody else calls him, what is he going to do? Do you see the arrogance in it? Most of us are charmed by this idea of a divinity coming and serving us and yet you know why? Because later on we shall be able to dominate everybody else. As long as the desire to dominate is there, we have still not grown out of our childhood. A child wants everybody to obey him and if mummy and daddy do not obey him, he will cry and break things. This is how we carry on. You want to be a swami? Carry on and dominate your disciples. You want to be a man of realisation? Carry on and dominate some fools. 'I have seen God. I am going to dominate every body else, if possible even the gods.' If possible we dominate even the gods.

Why do I use a mantra and why do I meditate early in the morning? Because I want to discover for myself how, when, and where I wake up, and therefore the problems wake up. I wake up and my attachments wake up. I wake up and envy, hatred, enmity, quarrels - all wake up, silly viciousness, my beastliness, my violence, my aggressiveness, my desire to dominate - all these things wake up. Half an hour ago I was asleep and there were no problems, no difficulties, no evil - yet here I am awake and vicious. How did this arise? Is it inevitable that as long as I am alive, as long as I am awake, all these things must also be there? That is what I want to discover.

Now I want to turn the attention within myself to see why and where life's problems arise. So I create a picture and a sound image within myself - 'Om' or one of the Names of God. By repeating the Name of God, by visualising the image, is it possible for me to acquire other experiences like psychic powers? Sometimes they are gained accidentally and sometimes they are gained deliberately, but I am not interested in them - I want to discover why I crave for physical, sensual, mental or psychic experiences. Who is it that craves for these experiences and where do they arise? Where the mantra is heard, where the image of God is seen - within yourself, that is where all these troubles happen. If I am alert to this, I am able to discover the source of all my troubles and difficulties.

In meditation I see that there is something beyond the ego, that the ego itself is thought which arises. Daily I see this - when I wake up the 'I' wakes up, the ego-sense wakes up, and immediately all the others wake up. I see, I hear and I think. In meditation I see that when I-consciousness or ego-consciousness disappears, something happens - I discover that life is beyond that 'I', the ego, that intelligence is beyond the ego. I come back to the drama of life and discover that it is not the 'I' that sees - I do not see anything. The eyes see, the brain centre sees; take it one step further and it is memory that sees. Otherwise how do I know that this is a microphone? What do you see? You do not see a piece of metal, you

see a microphone. But if you placed this in front of a six weeks old baby, he will not see it as a microphone.

There is no ego to see or not to see. It is memory that sees, memory acquired during this lifetime or cultivated by the genes for the past hundreds or thousands or millions of years - what is conveniently called the subconscious mind. There is no ego-sense to act. I discover that in meditation. When I meditate against the background of sleep, I discover that there is no 'I' to respond to all this. I do not think. Thought thinks. Me. The first thought that arises after waking up from sleep is called 'me', and once that thought has arisen, it begins to organise the other thoughts, and so we think. That becomes attention and it focuses - I want to think of this now and I want to think of something else later. It says 'I think, 'I hear, 'I speak, and therefore 'I am miserable, 'I am happy, 'I am unhappy. Then, what do you do? The first instinct is to suppress it - 'I do not want to think. I do not want to think I am unhappy.' Have you ever done this? You must have.

When I see all these troubles and difficulties within myself, I see that it is not 'I' who dislikes someone, it is some kind of memory that reacts to that person in a negative way. It is not 'I' who loves this person, it is some kind of a memory. The memory found that, at some time, he was nice to me, so I remember him, he is my friend. Who says he is my friend? Not me. There is no 'me' here. It is memory of what he had done sometime ago. That memory thinks he is a good man. Somebody else criticised me or abused me and that memory which is planted in the mind says, 'He is a bad man. I hate him.'

When you discover this, what do you want to do? You want to suppress it. It does not work. So, Krishna said something delightfully beautiful - Do not try to fight, you will fail. Look at all this and realise there is no 'me' in this at all, that it is the nature of eyes to see, of the ear to hear, of the stomach or the prana, life-force to feel hunger and thirst and to eat. It is the nature of the mind to function, to think thoughts. It is the nature of something else to choose - I like this and I do not like that. It is the nature of the social structure which is also in our own minds to cultivate relationships - 'He is my friend. She is my wife.' These are all words whose meanings are found in the memory cells. I am wearing these clothes and the tradition in which you are brought up says that this is a swami; therefore that tradition in you perceives this as swami - which is also a memory. Let all these things happen, let life function as it will, let all these senses happen, perform their own function. The only thing that is totally absent in all this is - 'I' must do this, 'I' must do that, 'I' want to do this, 'I' love this, 'I' hate that.

Says Krishna - I will liberate you from all sins. What are sins. Krishna himself gave a definition earlier on in the Bhagavad Gita - These are the sins. Sins are not born of desire and hatred, sins are not born of attachment and aversion, they 'are' the sins. Attachment and aversion are sins themselves. Is it possible for me to say, 'Well, there is craving in me. I crave for chocolate or ice cream.' If you have learnt to observe yourself to see where the mantra sound arises, where the image of God is, and if you are able to look within and see where this craving arises, the

craving that is painful, then the craving will not be there anymore. Then will I be like a stone-image, all the time looking within? No. Life goes on. All that is inherent in life, all that is natural to life - but there are no cravings. Even the greatest sage continues to eat, continues to drink, but without craving. It is not Swami Sivananda that eats, it is hunger that eats; it is not Swami Sivananda that drinks, it is thirst that drinks; it is not Swami Sivananda that speaks, it is the voice that speaks, speaking happens at the appropriate time; it is not Swami Sivananda that looks, but looking happens, the eyes see. Swami Sivananda might smile, or frown - not He but the pigeon-holed memory which may still function. Let it function. There is no need to express it or suppress it. When the 'I' is not there to entertain the desire to do something or to suppress something, then what happens, happens, and that is called God's Will.

When you thus continually observe yourself, continually meditate, you are meditating on God or the inner self, the inner consciousness, and your life becomes divine life.

## 7. Conviction is a Prison

Whether we are hatha yogis and know anything about yoga asana, whether we are bhakti yogis and have devotion in our heart for what we believe to be God, singing kirtans, doing japa and puja, whether we know anything about what is called meditation or not, whether we have any idea of what vedanta means, self-knowledge, self-realisation, jnana - one thing seems to be inevitable for us all and that is that we are active, that we are doing something or other.

There have been those who insisted that what is known as karma yoga includes all these practices, and every practice involves some action. So, no one 'in the world can escape action. As Krishna pointed out in the Gita: 'Not even for a single moment can you be truly inactive', and, 'If you refuse to be active in this world, you cannot even live.' The very act of breathing is action. One cannot live without being involved in activity.

In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna concerns himself with the philosophy of action. This does not present a problem for most of us. 'Shall I do this, or shall I do that? Shall I do this or shall I not do this?' These questions do not seem to arise in the minds of most people, because they are convinced that a certain action is right. This conviction itself imprisons them. Do you know what the word conviction means? I do some mischief and you have me arrested. Then I am tried and convicted by the judge or magistrate. If I say, 'I am convinced', or if I say, 'I have the conviction', I am literally convicting myself, imprisoning myself in that conviction. I am imprisoned in that conviction, and so I feel quite safe.

It takes God's Grace, Guru's Grace, or repeated knocks and blows, to awaken us from this morbid state. We become more and more afraid of this confusion. We do not want to expose ourselves to anything new, because we are afraid that it will cause more confusion. We say, 'Do not confuse me', and yet I love this confusion. Why am I afraid of confusion? Because I am convinced that 'this is right and that is wrong.' In that conviction, there seems to be a certain solid consolation, some kind of peace, the peace of the grave - and I am frightened that any confusion would revive me.

Confusion means that there is a challenge, a new knowledge which fuses, which comes too close to my conviction, threatens to break the walls of the prison in which I have imprisoned myself. I must realise that what I am convinced of may be a prison. It is in such a state that we go to the guru, that we approach Krishna, that we approach God.

It was in this state of confusion that Arjuna went to Krishna saying, 'I am confused. What you are saying seems to run completely contrary to what I have come to believe in. I have been brought up in the tradition which says, 'Honour your friends, your relations and so on', and here you are saying, 'Get up and fight them'. If Arjuna had not jumped onto the horns of this dilemma, we would never have heard of the Bhagavad Gita, and if Krishna had been frightened to disturb

the conviction of Arjuna, we would never have heard of the Bhagavad Gita.

There is a certain moment when we are quite sure that we are in a prison - a prison, not a fortress. At sometime or other we must be prepared or wake up, otherwise we will go on mechanically repeating the same action again and again, like a tape-recorder. A tape-recorder repeats itself from morning to night throughout its life - what will happen to me if I do the same thing? There is a lovely verse in the Bhagavad Gita, 'Whatever be the state of your being at the time you drop this body, that will determine your next birth'. If I behave like a tape-recorder all my life, in the next birth I will be a tape-recorder.

One must be prepared to consider and reconsider the dynamics of activity, the philosophy of action, from moment to moment, from day to day. We saw this in the life of Gurudev. We do not know whether He experienced it even before He gave up His career as a prosperous doctor in Malaya and went to live in the Himalayas. One was tempted to ask Him why, having preached all His life that one 'must' serve the sick and the poor, He renounced a life in which He himself did. just that. Somewhere, somehow His convictions must have been shaken - 'that not this'. There is something else, some other element in this - not merely the action. An awakening must have happened when Gurudev was in Malaya - so He dropped that life and came to the Himalayas.

In the Bhagavad Gita, when Arjuna was utterly confused, when his conviction had been shaken by a new commandment, he collapsed at the feet of Krishna asking, 'What must I do?' Krishna dropped another bombshell. After describing atma-jnana, mortality of the body and immortality of the soul, he then said, 'Exercise your wisdom and your understanding - buddhi. Intelligence - buddhi means awakened, awakened intelligence. This awakened intelligence is superior to any actions. Mere action, if one could use such an expression, is inferior, is not worth aspiring for. Far inferior is action to buddhi yoga. Resolve. Go deep into this buddhi, dive deep within yourself and see what is happening there.

Arjuna probably thought Krishna would remove his confusion - but he made it worse. When he collapsed at the lord's feet asking him, 'What must I do', Krishna told him that was not so important, that only buddhi was important. Krishna also insisted, 'Get up and fight'. To Arjuna, this did not make sense. This is a beautiful thing - if something did not make any sense, it may make nonsense, which will lead us to something beyond the senses. But we are afraid of nonsense - everything must be somehow squeezed into our senses - like children we must smell something, see something, taste something. When we go beyond that we are frightened. Arjuna says, 'On the one hand you say that I must fight, I must do whatever I have to do, my duty, and on, and on the other hand you say that all action is far inferior to the awakening of intelligence. Now, please Krishna, tell me decisively, what is better for me?'

This question occurs again and again in the Bhagavad Gita, 'Tell me decisively what I should do.' Krishna never gives me a precise answer. If people come to you

with the question 'Tell me decisively what I should do', who is to answer except themselves? It is like asking you my own name, which suggests you know it better than I do.

Yes people do funny things. They go to a doctor and say, 'Doctor please tell me what is wrong with me'. You do not know what is wrong with you the doctor must tell you? I come to you, asking, 'What must I think?' I go to him, asking, 'What must I do?' I come to him, asking, 'What is wrong with me?', and I ask somebody else, 'Am I hungry or not?' We are in a dreadful predicament.

'Tell me what I must do.' Krishna turns round and tells us the lovely philosophy contained in the Bhagavad Gita. In the end he says to Arjuna, 'I have told you what I think is nice, what is good. Go and think it over. Then, whatever you want to do, do it.' It is as though he had lifted Arjuna off the horns of a dilemma only to drop him on to them again.

One has to be on the horns of a dilemma throughout one's life. I saw this in the life of Swami Sivananda and I was only absent from Him for the last few years. Throughout His life, there was this question, 'Is this the appropriate thing to do now?', or, 'Must this be done this way or this way?' These questions were there constantly - 24 hours of the day - 365 days of the year, throughout His life. We go on mechanically repeating the same actions again and again, because we are afraid to face the fact, the truth, that this mind, in the absence of the awakened intelligence, misleads us all the time. Thus we remain like small children - immature, selfish, brutal, violent and aggressive. We never grow out of them.

Not two days at His Feet were exactly the same. This could be troublesome for those who were close to the Master. We never had the courage to say that, because Swamiji said so-and-so last week, it holds good now - it does not. Here is an example. In 1946, Swami Sivananda was trying to persuade the visitors and the residents in the ashram to come to the early meditation class at 4 am. To some people, that is a very peaceful time - when you really enjoy sleep. The visitors would not come and some of the residents would not come. The Gurudev said, 'Stop the morning tea if they do not come'. Right their tea was stopped. Three days later Gurudev would ask someone. 'Why did you not come to meditation?' 'Ah, Swamiji, I was meditating too late at night and so I got up a little late' 'Oh, he is exempt from that'. There were soon more exemptions than rules and the whole thing was very quickly abandoned.

What is a rule? Something you draw on paper. And the piece of stick with which you draw is called a ruler. A ruler is not a king or anything like that, it is not a rigid law, it is something which is changing all the time. If it does not change, it is inert, non-living, and a non-living thing cannot govern a living substance. The making of rules was a constant headache for the master and for those around him. Eternal vigilance is needed and then the awakened intelligence looks at each situation as it arises, and action takes place. In that light there is no doubt at all. There is no 'conviction' that this is right and that is wrong. But neither is there

any doubt because, in the light of this awakened intelligence, the truth concerning action, the truth concerning activity, becomes abundantly clear. It is not clear forever because, the moment I am anxious to make it into a rigid principle or rule, it is killed, destroyed.

In the absence of the light of this inner intelligence the mind functions only on the basis of one single question: 'What will the consequences be?' The mind does not ask if this action is right or wrong in itself - it only asks what the consequences will be. The mind is not the awakened intelligence. The mind it is the calculating intellect which says, 'If I do this, I will get that. If I do that, I will go there. If do this, I may lose that or gain this.' It is a small heart and a dull impure mind, which constantly calculates the reward, the punishment, the consequences.

I never saw Swami Sivananda do that, never. Often He did what the calculating intellects of some of His own immediate disciples thought would cause the total destruction of everything that He had built up - but it did not. It worked the other way round. He would say, 'It is alright, God is there'. Some formula he would use. The formula He used might seem non-sensical, because one could always bring in arguments for and against it. But not being interested in the consequences, He was unmoved. In the light of the awakened intelligence, there was absolutely no doubt in him. He saw that 'this' had to be. Thus, whatever action He took proved to be the ideal one. He was not interested in the consequences, there was absolutely no doubt in Him.

Can we reach that point, can we awaken that intelligence in which there is unquestioning, doubtless activity, activity without any conviction, without any principle? Conviction is a prison. It is only in the light of this awakened inner intelligence that there is freedom, total freedom. One who is not interested in the consequences of actions, is free - his actions are free because they are not motivated at all. Such action, such activity is really and truly non-activity or non-volitional activity. It does not spring from ignorance, it does not spring from ego-sense - it is what we may call divine activity or karma yoga.

## 8. Can Action Cause Unhappiness?

The problem of life is simplified by reducing it to its fundamentals. I can not avoid living, life means activity. There is a very interesting concept given to us by Sage Vasistha in the Yoga Vasistha. He says, 'You cannot separate a being and its functions. It is the function that denotes the being, and it is the being that denotes the function. What is a fish? Something that swims in water. It may look almost exactly like a bird, but it is not a bird, it is a fish. Why? Because it swims under water. A bird does not swim under water. One cannot separate the being and its function. The function of life, activity, is inherent in every living creature, and yet somehow this activity, when it is blindly, foolishly, and ignorantly indulged in, seems to create trouble, fear, anxiety, worry, sorrow and grief.

What is natural must be free from all this. Why is it that something that is so natural causes such a lot of unhappiness? After having asked this question, we should look a little deeper and see if it 'is' action that causes unhappiness or something else. It is our misfortune that we have always taken something for granted and worked from there. We have taken it for granted that action or activity is bad, and having decided that we have tried to rationalise our concept of it, this is true of everything we do in our life.

There is fear in my heart and that fear goes looking for ghosts. Ghosts are not produced outside, they are the extensions of our own fear. If you 'love' a person, all that he or she does is right, because that love in your heart goes looking for something nice to appreciate. Yes? If you hate a person and if he appears to be good you say he is a hypocrite. Whatever he does is wrong, sin, evil, bad. We have all be subject to this at some time or other, but we are hardly ever aware of having been trapped in it. Why? Because I see it is possible - this is what my mind says now, 'I see it is possible - I know why I hate this fellow - he is a crook and I know why I love that person - he is a saint. I know all this, I am never trapped.' This is what the trap says.

No evil man in history of the world has ever stood up on a platform and said, 'I am a demon and I am going to destroy all of you.' Ravana, Kamsa and all the demons right down to modern demons have all said, 'We stand for justice', and in the name of justice, in the name of God, in the name of religion, all except in the name of the devil, we have killed, murdered, and destroyed each other. The only person served in all this is the devil. Ignorance is likened to darkness, and in darkness you do not see. Therefore, when I am in the grip of this demon of hate, of dislike, partial love - which is not love, attachment and this sort of thing, I do not see myself at all because I have taken the whole lot for granted. I have taken it for granted that I am So-and-so, that I love So-and-so, or hate So-and-so, or I say, 'I do not hate the man, I only hate his evil qualities' - in order to hate him and yet rationalise it, I call it an evil quality. 'Why is it evil?' 'Because I do not like it.' 'Why do you not like it?' 'Because it is evil.' Our logic does not go beyond this. 'Why do you not like me?' 'Because you are a bad man.' 'Why do you say I am a bad man?' 'I do not know. I do not like you.'

We have still not found the real fault. Does activity by itself bring us sorrow or unhappiness, or is it something else? I see that whatever is natural - natural action, does not cause sorrow. Lord Krishna pinpoints this mischief very beautifully, 'You have no enemy outside nor have you a friend outside.'

What is sin? Desire is sin, craving is sin, hatred is sin - insatiable. All good things of life produce satisfaction and sometimes satiety, but evil does not. Have you ever considered this? You love a person, but sooner or later you get used to them, you take each other for granted, and there is no longer the delight, the thrill you had before you got married, that wears out slowly. But if you begin to hate a person, my God, it grows day by day, you never get satiated.

We say sexual extravagance is a terrible evil, but we are ready to tolerate hatred and violence. If you look at these two, they seem to be two poles of the same evil, but one cannot go on with sexual extravagance, somewhere nature puts a full stop. But this violence, it never ceases. It is there day and night, morning and evening in your dreams, in your thoughts, words and deeds.

Lord Krishna characterises it by saying, 'No one can fully satisfy another's craving, and the fire of hate cannot be quenched so easily - it grows wilder and wilder.' Therefore we see that it is not activity that is evil, it is craving and hate that are evil. Can I free action from these two deadly motivations? Can I live without craving and without hate? I see that these are not inherent in the actions themselves - I see I can love him or I can hate him. We do this constantly in our own lives. If you are my son and do exactly what I tell you, if you bring me good name etc. I will love you, adore you and so on, but one day, if you are found drunk or you become a thief, I hate you and disown you. This may happen even in the extremely beautiful relationship between a father and son, or mother and daughter. As long as you keep my good name, I am proud to call you my son, my disciple, or whatever it is, but the moment you behave in such a way that my ego is hurt, my personality is hurt, my image of myself is hurt, shattered, I want to destroy you.

So I see that it is not inevitable that when we form a relationship, it must be either a love relationship or a hate relationship, it is possible to interchange these - which means that the love or the hate was not in the relationship itself. It means that unhappiness sorrow, grief, disappointment are not the inevitable, invariable consequence of certain actions. What are they due to? Kama and krodha - desire and anger. So, is it possible for me to look within and be aware of the springs of my own actions - to see whether they spring from craving?

Am I trying to please myself, am I indulging in sense gratification - whether subtle or gross, or am I motivated in doing this by ill-will, hate - its own counterpart. This is not terribly difficult. Krishna gives us an exercise for this and that is the spirit of sacrifice - yajna. Sacrifice means to make a thing sacred. Do I know how to make my action sacred, how to make my life sacred.? The rishis wanted to

teach us, but they had no way to record their teachings. It was the custom to illustrate with a story, which is remembered more easily than the abstract truth. Each time you recall the story you go back to the truth. They saw that craving and hatred are directly related to selfishness. When one is selfish, craving arises and, as a direct consequence of craving, hatred arises.

Selfishness must be rooted out and the spirit of sacrifice must be cultivated. But am I able to understand the spirit of sacrifice? They said, 'Oh, it is your duty that is keeping your selfishness away and perform whatever you have to do as duty. It worked up to a point. Who does the duty? I must do my duty. Yes? But you may say, 'what about the duty of the children towards the father? Perhaps the son is not studying well, what do you do? You tell the father that it is his duty to be gentle, nice, and sweet towards the son. Immediately he asks, 'What about the son's duty towards the father?' The swami has to say that the son must obey the father in every way, respect him, honour him, be devoted to him and treat him as God. Do you know what happens now? You forget your duty completely and go about telling them what they must do. But who is going to tell you what you must do?

I am going to illustrate with a simple anecdote. There was one of Gurudev's devotees in Madras, a good man, a wealthy man. If we went to Madras he would take us round, meet us at the airport, provide tea and coffee and things like that. Whenever we told him, 'If you are busy we will take a taxi', he would say, 'No Swamiji, I am duty bound.' 'Duty bound'. Sometimes one does not feel so happy about this. It makes you feel the other person is not happy to do it.

Do you know why we do not have the quality of unselfishness? Because we do not know what the self is. How can I know what unselfishness is unless I investigate what the springs of selfishness are? Craving and hate spring from selfishness - this is easy to see. But where does selfishness arise and how does selfishness arise? Again, we have taken something for granted - that I am sitting here and talking to you. I have never thought that I could be sitting here alive but unable to talk or unable to express myself, or if I were mad, I could do the most atrocious things. It is not 'I' that sits here and talks, although we are committed to that, because it is from that foundation that we have raised the whole structure of our lives. We have never questioned what it is that is living, what I call the self and from what selfishness springs?

Is there a thing called self, is there a thing called 'I' that sits here and talks, or is it the vocal cords that talk, the brain cells that talk, or something else that talks? We have never bothered about this, and therefore, having based our entire life on this false structure, we have had to cover the whole thing up with ignorance and then blame some devil for putting the ignorance there. No devil places ignorance before us. It is we who are unwilling to look - not unable, but unwilling to look. You can see that I am sitting here and talking, can't you? You say 'yes', and I am satisfied. The falsehood which seems to work is accepted as truth. Even if a million people say they see water in the desert, it will still be a mirage - no one

can quench his thirst with that water. Even if everybody says, 'I am sitting here and talking to you,' it is still wrong. I must investigate it, because this seems to be the hierarchy of sorrow, the hierarchy of unhappiness.

Where does this self arise? When one investigates this, it disappears or it is not seen. Then one discovers what Lord Krishna said very beautifully, 'It is nature that functions'. The wind blows and the curtain moves, just as I am moving. The window makes a noise when there is violent wind, and this voice box also makes some noise; but since we are committed to the convention of language and we think we understand the meaning of these words, we distinguish this noise from that noise, and attribute some value to this noise and not to that. What is it that makes the noise? Nature, prakriti - nature means everything - material nature, the matter of which the universe is made - that is what is sitting here and that is what is talking.

There is a dramatic little story in the Chandogya Upanishad where a teacher explains to the student what the self, the atman might mean. He says, 'Recite the Veda that I taught you yesterday.' The student started reciting the whole thing from memory. 'Ha, very good, beautiful. Now go home and eat nothing for the next five years and come back after that.' If you go without food for five or ten days, then the memory plays tricks. This boy comes back to the guru who says, 'Yes, now recite what I taught you.' The student remembered only one line from here and two lines from there. There was no cogent memory function. 'Right, go home and eat your fill. Come back after two days and recite.' The boy did this. 'Hm, beautiful, it flows like water.' Then he says, 'Have you understood now?'

There is something deep within you which is activated when you eat food, and which becomes inactive when you withdraw that energy from it, and that is the self. The memory was there; it was made operative by the material substance, and when that material substance was withdrawn, it collapsed. It is not dead, it is still there; it can be revived. That is the self. The illustration is brought in to point out that it is not the thing called 'I' that is sitting here and talking, it is the bread and butter that is talking. There is something more, obviously - if you keep a packet of sandwiches on the table and come back after a week, it smells; and I do not think I smell so much. That may be why God is called 'Sugandhim' - 'Trayambakam Yajamahe Sugandhim' - you are fragrant. But for the presence of the fragrance which is God in me, this would also smell as bad as the sandwiches.

So, it is the body, the voice box, the living brain cells and memory that is stored in those brain cells, the intelligence in those cells - all of which are parts of God's nature - that function, that sit and talk. You can take the whole thing apart without finding the category called 'I'. You can say these eyes see you, you can say that this throat, these lips, this brain talks to you, or the intelligence talks to you, or something else - if you are a believer in God, you say that the God within talks to you. But there is nothing to which you can point to as 'I', and say that this 'I' and this 'I' talks to you.

If you investigate this truth, you probably will come to the point where you discover that there is no such thing called 'I' or ego-sense which functions in this manner. The eyes see, the nose smells, the ears hear and so on, and there may be a co-ordinating centre in the brain which measures up to the description of the ego-sense. But that is not the fellow that is sitting and talking and who is doing all this, who is living - it is not the ego-sense that lives.

When that is discovered, and only when that is discovered, does selfishness go. Most of us have one big doubt. Is it possible for me? For 'me' - already there is trouble. Is it possible for me to live without ego-sense? Who asks this? The same ego-sense. It is taken or granted that without ego I cannot live. And yet, if the ego-sense is removed, life goes on and life will go on. Life does not depend upon our whims and fancies, it takes no notice of our cravings and hates; it is our own foolishness that indulges in this kind of perverse notion, not perverse activity.

There are no perverse activities, but there are perverse notions. I have seen this in the life of Gurudev. His own actions were pure, untainted by personal craving or dislikes; even if He was 'angry' He would just pick them up and throw them out - even that action is possible. What superficially appears to be aggressive is also possible - just as the wind can be a gentle breeze or a hurricane. Do you see this?

There are two disastrous words which often arise in our minds when we hear a talk like this. You are sitting, listening and trying to work it out: the swami says a yogi must be like that and therefore I must be like that. 'And therefore' are two disastrous words. When you hear that right action is free from craving, hate, aggressiveness and violence, you immediately think, '... and therefore a swami, a holy man must be looking at the tip of his nose.' He may not. Then his ego must try to prove that he is a saint - on the basis of your ignorance.

A person may even be engaged in what appears to others to be aggressive activity, but inwardly he is free. 'How does a perfect, enlightened person live and function here?' In exactly the same way as the unenlightened person. He also eats, sleeps, and dresses himself. Krishna says, almost as a commandment, 'A wise man should behave externally like a non-wise man. but with this tremendous difference that there is non-attachment.'

In Gurudev's case, if He had to be angry, He was angry. Why not? What is wrong with that? They are not bound by rules, regulations and principles. Non-attachment does not mean indifference, callousness and cruelty, and total psychological freedom. This total freedom one sees only in divine beings like our Master. When you looked into His eyes, even when He was angry, you saw compassion there, the compassion of a surgeon - but even to discern this, one must have devotion and the right attitude. In him there is no personal hatred, nothing at all.

A yogi must be free from craving, free from all these desires. Now watch this very carefully, because it needs a razor-sharp intelligence to see that this is also the

play of the ego. It is not possible for anyone other than you to determine this, or, if there is a God in you, that God may know. But how do you know he knows, or he does not know? It is dangerous to assume. Only you may know that this action springs from desire, that this action springs from hate, or that this action springs from self. Can I station myself as a guard, to ensure that the ego does not motivate my action?

That intelligence that is in you is cosmic, universal - is God, Atman, Brahman, and it is able to watch the ego. This cosmic intelligence is non-moving, it is like space in which the personalised intelligence moves - like wind, moving the space, and it is possible for this space to watch the wind moving. In the same way, it is possible for that intelligence, which is in you, but which is not confined to you, and in which there is no movement, to look at this movement which is going on, and which we call the personal mind. This watching is possible - it is almost like the ego watching the ego. Once that is done, then deep within you there is utter stillness, and actions that have to proceed from this body and this mind go on. That is called karma yoga.

## 9. Who is the Monitor

We have been spending a few evenings concluding what may be understood as karma yoga or in what manner we live and function as human beings, without creating a problem for ourselves and for others. Can I live without making life a problem and without making the lives of other people a problem for me or for them? How does one do that?

We saw from the teachings of Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita that first of all life, living means action, activity, and we are all caught up in that. There is no getting away from that, every atom, every particle of dust is caught up in this movement. I cannot withdraw from it, except to fool myself. And yet I see that if I act blindly, selfishly, egotistically, it is then that I create a problem for myself - it is not action that brings trouble, it is motivation that brings trouble. Then we saw that if we carefully understood the spirit of yajna - sacrifice, and if that spirit can be imparted to every one of our actions, it is possible to overcome the problem. 'Overcome the problem' - be careful here. If I adopt the spirit of sacrifice, I can overcome the problem after it has arisen, I cannot solve a problem before it arises.

This becomes an endless game. I do something and naturally there is motivation, there is a feeling 'I am doing this' or 'I am sitting and talking'. Then I cut this out saying, 'Well, I sacrifice it.' Brahmarapanam. This is better than doing it selfishly. Take the havan samaghi and the ghee and pour it into the fire, saying, 'This is 'my' ghee, this is 'my' foodstuff that 'I' am offering into the fire.' There is still a certain amount of ego-sense in it.

At some stage I may miss the spirit of sacrifice. For instance the motive that if I do this I will go to heaven, or that I will enjoy peace of mind. Anything that you and I do in order to get peace of mind drives it away. I may renounce worldly attachment and develop some other attachment; then the mind, the intellect and the ego find some reason for it.

So, I rationalise all my actions. There is an axiom which states: any action which needs rationalisation is evil. Have you ever explained to somebody why you are breathing? Are you ashamed of it? Of course not, it is natural, I do not have to rationalise what is natural. I rationalise only those actions whose rightness I doubt. Listen carefully, 'I want to do all my actions as a sacrifice to the Lord.' 'I want' is still there. There is desire and so there is a motivation.

When the heart and the mind become pure, the question must arise: if this is done as sacrifice to the Lord, who is the Lord and what is doing it? Is the motivation in my feeling 'I like to do this', or is the motivation in my thought 'I think it is good to do this?' One can observe these two at least - is thought the motivation of these actions, or is emotion the motivation of these actions? Am I able to see these motivations clearly? When I look at a distant scene, it maybe vague but when I become aware of something deep within me, there is no vagueness, it is clear. It shines clear as daylight, it shines even in total darkness'.

Then I have posted the intellect that is within me as the monitor, to see whether actions spring from thought - thought means calculation, doing this in order to get that, or from emotion, which means, an instinctual drive, physical or psychological pleasure.

Who is the monitor? 'I' is the monitor. Therefore I come and tell you my actions are pure, that they are not motivated by thought or by an emotion and that I am pure, holy. The ego says all this and says it very aggressively.

Does one know how to get beyond that point? There is a hint given to us in the Bhagavad Gita: 'Fooled by the ego-sense, this foolish man, this ignorant man, thinks he is doing these actions, where as truth, prakriti, nature functions.' It is the nature of the eyes to see, they will see. If, when the eyes are open, the ego stops the eyes from seeing, is there any need for the ego to see? Can the eyes see without the ego-sense? Then, what is it that is behind the eye which recognises the other person? Can this be discovered? Then it is possible to see that even the mind, the memory cells, are part of nature and that there is no 'I'.

When one sees this, then it is possible to arrive at a stage described by Krishna in the Gita: 'I do not do anything.' The yogi should not merely think, but thought, knowledge, should exist in him. 'I do not do any of these things, they just happen.' The yogi who knows the truth knows that the eyes see, speech happens, tongue or throat speaks, brain cells think and action takes place.

Unless one comes face to face with the possible mischief of the ego, it is not possible to be confident that any action takes place non-volitionally - one can always fool oneself. The ego fools us in a million ways. When I see that 'I' does not do anything - not 'I' do not do anything - then I see there is no need for 'I', for an ego-sense. Digestion, circulation, breathing, living and death take place. But somehow there is the notion 'I must do, or not do'. 'Not do' is an absurd expression, it is not possible 'not to do'. Either I do this or I do that. It is possible or me to sit and talk to you - but do you see any opposite of sitting and talking to you? No. There is only another action somewhere else. There is no option, this happens, this takes place.

Only when the truth become clear - I cannot make it clear because it is the 'I' that thinks it is making it clear - that 'I' does not do anything have I gone beyond the ego-sense and am I therefore a jivanmukta.

When I try to bluff myself that I am an enlightened being, living a completely non-volitional life, the bluff will be called sooner or later. To live a completely non-volitional life is not possible as long as the ego exists, even potentially and, until the body drops, there is no future embodiment, the ego exists potentially and is capable of repeating the same mischief. Therefore, there is no relaxing the vigilance. We cannot say, 'This is the state of cosmic consciousness where the ego-sense is not playing.' We may say we have no ego-sense, but it is there, hidden, paralysed, impotent, inactive - and it can revive. Knowing this, one is

constantly vigilant.

What are the signs by which such a person an enlightened being can be recognised - if he needs to be recognised? Please remember, that person does not want to be recognised as an enlightened person, because it could become a motivation, a danger to him. But the teaching is not complete if the characteristics of this person are not given - a mere academic need, because you cannot apply them to yourself - you have to grow as he grew. For a non-volitional person, once the bluff of the ego has been called, they are no longer deluded.

We started with the word confusion. Arjuna collapsed at the feet of Sri Krishna, saying, 'I am confused, and so I fall at your feet and ask you, I am your disciple, tell me decisively what is good for me.' This is a beautiful thing, 'I am your disciple', and not, 'You are my guru'. To say 'I am your disciple' leads to knowledge, but to say 'You are my guru' is a kind of appointment, an honorary title, a job. 'You are my guru leads both the disciple and the guru to hell. 'If anything goes wrong, I blame you'. Sri Krishna was not the guru throughout the Gita. Even after saying 'My delusion is gone,' Arjuna questions him further.

It is only towards the end of the Gita, when Krishna reveals his cosmic form to Arjuna that the gurutwani started, that the enlightening experience happened - that experience itself being the guru. He in whose presence you have that experience, he is the guru, and if that experience has not happened, you have not found the guru. You are a disciple, yes, carry on. The guru is the experience of cosmic consciousness, and when that has happened, you will say with Arjuna, 'My delusion is gone, my confusion is gone and knowledge has been gained by your graces.' Krishna becomes the guru and Arjuna has no more doubts, ' ... so, I shall do thy will.'

From there on only does it become karma yoga, and not merely by repeating parrot-like, 'I am doing this for God's sake', as if God needs this kind of service. Nor do I do all this for the sake of psychic or other experiences, because it is still the ego that wants those experiences. It is not unselfishness; it is not pure karma yoga.

Perhaps Karma yoga is possible only to the enlightened person who knows

Brahmarpanam brahmahavirbrahmagnau brahnana Brahmaiva tena gantavyam brahmakarmasamadhina  
- Gita Ch4-24

Brahman is the oblation. Brahman is the ghee. By Brahman is the oblation poured into the fire of Brahman. Brahman verily shall be reached by him who always sees Brahman in action.

A strange samadhi is described here - brahmakarma samadhina - where the action karma itself becomes Brahman. When does this happen? Brahmarpanam - when the action itself is seen to be divine. Sacrifice means to make the action sacred; but here even that is absent - it is seen that whatever happens in the universe is the action of that one divine consciousness, that one divine energy.

Whatever happens is divine, I did not make it divine. Brahmahavir - all the instruments with which this action is made possible are also divine - the body, the mind, the voice, everything. Brahmagnau - the person or the situation towards which this action is directed is also Brahman. Brahmanahutam - there is no 'I' here, it is the cosmic being, the supreme being. This is true karma yoga.

## 10. The Meaning of Meaning

The other day we were having a spontaneous discussion. Someone who has been on the spiritual path for quite some time said, 'I have tried this and I have tried that, and yet I go on struggling.' Many of us have done this - we have an alarm clock by the bed which is set for six o'clock. It starts ringing; half asleep we stop it and sometimes it rolls on the floor and breaks.

We have all tried these things - prayer, repeating a mantra and chanting, and everytime we change the procedure, it seems to hit the mark. Have you had this experience? You use your routine prayers, day after day, to help your meditation. Later this becomes boring; it does not seem, you know, to take you up. Someone comes along with other chants. Wew, this is it. 'Why did I not discover this years ago.' I sit and listen and think, 'Ah, I am rising.' But after a little while I am back in the same seat. Something else is necessary. So we carry on trying one thing after another.

'Why is it that after years and years of all these practices I am back to square one?' Even being in square one is a great blessing. It is sheer God's Grace that we get back to where we started, because this means we still have some aspiration, some inspiration to keep us going. If we keep going, then suddenly we discover that somewhere along the line we have misunderstood something which is of vital importance. They tell us in the yoga texts that, when we repeat a mantra, we must contemplate the artha of it. Unfortunately artha has been translated as 'meaning'. Let us take a mantra like 'Om Namah Shivaya'. Just repeating is no good, I must contemplate the artha of it. I asked a pundit, 'What is the meaning of the mantra?' and he said, 'Om' is the Name of God and 'Namah' means salutations. 'I' is not in the mantra, but the pundit feels it should be, and so he says it means, 'Om, I salute Shiva.' I go on repeating this mantra but nothing happens. Why? Because we have not understood the artha. Artha does not mean a literal translation, it means the thing itself.

Pen is a word, and a pen is the artha of that word pen. How do you explain to me what a pen is if I have never seen one? You can only say a cylindrical thing with which you write. Then I say, 'Oh, like my little finger?' You cannot explain it except by showing it to me and saying, 'This is a pen.' Then there is no doubt at all. Everything else is a description, a paraphrase, a translation, and therefore absolutely meaningless to 'me'.

We were discussing the word 'Om' and you say it means 'the absolute'. The absolute? What is that? If this is pen what is Om? If this is pen, what is Christ? If this is pen, what is God? The whole thing is absurd. If I repeat a name which denotes nothing to me, with which I have no relationship at all, which I cannot realise, what am I trying to do?

So, there is a spirit of enquiry. I want to know what happens in me when I do what is called 'meditation'. I repeat 'Om' and I am supposed to see the blazing

lights of God; but I do not know what blazing means, I do not know what light means, and I do not know what God means. So, I visualise a nice lamp, like the orb of the sun. All this is very good but we have missed something, that vital thing called artha. We have missed the vital meaning of the word 'meaning'. We can adopt the technique we like, but if we repeat all these words meaninglessly, without seeing any sense in them, we may become senseless or go to sleep or keep chewing over it like a cow chewing grass. Nothing happens, there is no meditation.

I repeat 'Om' mentally and I hear the shouting of the word 'Om' within me; it is so powerful that inwardly I feel my ear-drum is splitting. Do you hear it? No, and yet you are hardly sitting two feet away from me. This means that I am only imagining the sound of Om within myself. I am not telling you not to do all this. Please do it, but do it meaningfully.

How does one infuse meaning into this? Only by discovering the meaning. When I say, 'I am mentally repeating this mantra', what do I mean? A sound is being heard in me which I cannot ignore, and so I watch myself - to see where the sound, the mantra is produced, where it is heard. What do I mean by 'mental repetition of a mantra'? What do I mean by 'imagination'? If I know what I mean by imagination, I have found everything, everything - the truth.

What says So-and-so is ugly? What says So-and-so is my friend, or my enemy. It is all the imagination. Once I discover this thing called imagination during meditation, I have discovered the key to all my relationships, the key to my whole life. 'Imagination' is a beautiful word. It is not one word, it is two - image-in. 'In' is introduced into 'image', and so 'imagine' means the image is in. What is the image in, what is it made of and where is it? When I observe the image, when I observe with imagination, then I am observing what is called the mind-stuff. That is yoga. That is meditation.

It is interesting, beautiful, when we do not leave it there, when we go on observing what happens inside. I meditate upon the Buddha sitting in the lotus posture. I see him clearly, a beautiful man, strong and powerful, sitting the middle of my heart. I can almost touch him, feel him - he is so real. But when I open my eyes, there is no Buddha. Though it appeared to be so real, it was only imagination.

Now what happens? A little later, an angry young man walks into my house and says, 'Hey swami, what kind of a crook are you?' He says all manner of things. This seems to be real but it could be my imagination - am I sure I am not imagining it? What happens then? If I sit quietly and watch him, if I think, 'Maybe you are also a Buddha' - how does he fight with me? Maybe he came to fight, but now he has forgotten. In this way we can handle all life's problems with great calmness because, if we can sit and watch, we are also Buddha.

All emotions have the same externalised motion of energy, and yet love is called a

positive emotion, and hate is called a negative emotion. Both are the same - you love somebody and you hate somebody else - how is one different from the other? When you are very happy, you laugh and tears pour down - when you are unhappy, you cry and tears pour down. What is the difference? You call something comedy, and something else tragedy. What is the difference? I do not think there is one thing called 'positive emotion', and another thing called 'negative emotion'. So-called yogis may behave like statues, saying, 'I have no emotions at all - hari om tat sat'. When I see this, I treat him like a statue. No, the yogi is not a statue, he is a human being, perhaps only he is a human being. He is not easily provoked, though he is also subject to emotions. But in his case the switch is in his own pocket, not in somebody else's.

This is what I saw in the life of my Master, Swami Sivananda. He also could laugh, He also could cry, He also could become angry - that was rare - but the switch was with Him. If I deserved a reprimand, He reprimanded me sternly, but as soon as He saw the reprimand had got home, He would say, 'Alright, give him some fruits', and that chapter was over. But in our case, when we are angry with the husband or wife or somebody else, we keep on throughout the day, banging the door, smashing the car, or driving through red lights - we do all sorts of things.

This is the problem - can I become the master of my own emotions? Can I become the master of my own thoughts? When can I do so? When I know exactly that this is a thought and this is an emotion - that this is where thought arises and this is where emotion arises. Emotion and action are both internal actions and meditation is a clear and thorough understanding of this internal action.

In yoga texts mind and all the rest of it inside are known as 'antahkarana'. Karana - limbs or instruments, antah - with which I function inwardly. I know my hands and feet are the instruments with which I work, but do I know the instruments with which inner action takes place? How do I know that? Only by practising all these techniques of meditation. Once I have mastered the technique, once I have become thoroughly aware of the meaning of the words or symbols used - not as a paraphrase or description, then I shall know.

I can sit here with closed eyes and say, 'I am seeing the figure' - means what? With open eyes, right now, sitting here, I see you, but I am visualising somebody else, something else, my child or my friend. How is it that, sitting here and looking at you, I am able to see Swami Sivananda. I can see Him walk, I can hear Him talk, what does it mean? Memory. 'Memory' - what does that mean? Imagination - what does that mean? Thoughts, right thoughts, wrong thoughts, bad thoughts - what do these words mean? If I know what thought is, I do not care whether it is a good thought or a bad thought.

In meditation, you are looking straight within yourself to see what thought is, and then suddenly you realise that thinking about thought is a waste of time. I think about what you said yesterday about thought. What did you say? You quoted

what somebody else had said and he had quoted somebody else as being the master. All this is a waste of time. Thought is happening in me right now. In order to understand this, why must I ask somebody else?

Thought arise in me all the time. Emotions are flowing out of me all the time, healthy emotions or unhealthy emotions, whether they are positive emotions or negative emotions. How do I know? How do I come face to face with this? This is the first part of yoga, of meditation.

The next part has to happen itself - you cannot make it happen. I watch this emotion - I am seeing my mind, I am seeing the mind-stuff. Suddenly the questions pop-up from somewhere - what is 'I' - I am observing myself, I am seeing myself - what does this mean? Who is this I? What is I? Go back to the same mantra, to the same technique, and suddenly you will see the possibility of an other problem. Mentally I am repeating the mantra and yet I am also hearing it. Am I the chap that is repeating the mantra, or am I the chap that is listening to the mantra? Who am I?

When you ask yourself this question, two things are happening, and I am watching both. Oh ho. Now, which one of the three am I? The moment you ask that question, you take one more step behind and you see three of you in front. It is endless - which one of these am I? Gradually all these merge into one and you again come back to square one: 'Ah, I am repeating the mantra and I am one, how is it that I listen to the mantra as if I am a different person, how is it that I am able to listen to it myself?' Can you 'listen' to this question? When you do, listen deep within yourself - you will find you have to bring God in. Then, by God's Grace, if you have enough courage to go on, that division disappears. Then you have become a completely integrated, normal, beautiful human beings, as God mad you.

## 11. The Meaning of Temple-worship

For those of you who have not been to India, it may be of some interest to figure out what brought temple worship into such prominence and what a temple represents to the people of India.

I am not very fond of history, but let us take just a brief look at it. If you go to South India, you will find enormous temples. North India however has been subjected to many invasions and so there are not many temples. The invaders kept destroying the temples and so, at one stage, the people gave up and said, 'Alright, we will not build anymore temples, we will think that the Himalayas is the temple and that Ganga is the temple. Now what are you going to do, you cannot destroy them.

In the place where I was brought up, if you have walked round the outer walls of the temple, you have walked one mile - when training to take part in the school games, we used to run round the temple. Between the outer wall of the temple and the inner wall, the whole town could take refuge in an invasion or something like that. Four huge gates, never ordinarily closed, could be closed.

As young people, we used the space surrounding the temple to play in, to enjoy ourselves. Every temple had a tank adjacent to it where everybody, not only the devotees, bathed. When you entered the temple proper, there was room in it for everything - not only for what is called worship - everything. There was an enormous place where pilgrims could make themselves at home. There was a place where dances were held - most public dances in those days were free and they were conducted on the temple premises, because the artist liked to offer his art at the feet of God - the dance was not performed for the sake of the gallery. I remember in my own boyhood days that true artists would get annoyed if there was any clapping - we were not allowed to clap or talk, and even to express some kind of appreciation, like shaking your head must also be done only by the experts who sat in the first row. You and I would not do that, we would keep quiet, we would humbly sit in a corner and listen and then go away, because the artist was not performing for the audience, but for God. Weddings also used to be performed in an other part of the temple. Except for funerals. I do not know why there were no funeral ceremonies in the temples. This makes me feel that the temple was for the living and not for the dead. As long as you are alive, you need a temple, but when you are dead you can do something else. Apart from funerals, the temple was the centre of all activity, all life. People who believed in God, people who did not believe in God, people who wanted to play, people who wanted to listen to talks and discourses and music and dance - all of them went to the temple. It is a beautiful thing if you understand it, enter into the spirit of it.

So the temple was like a fortress, a shelter, a place of entertainment, a place of joy, happiness, a place where man communed with God. When a young married or unmarried went to the temple, she decked herself in all her glory, not because she wanted to show off her hat in the temple, but because she felt, 'I am going to

my father and mother, I am going back to my parent's house and I must express all my joy.'

They say that the Aryans did not have temple worship because they were a nomadic people, tribes, they did not lead a settled life and therefore they did not need a temple. Instead they carried their own little 'temple' like structure with them in which was a havan kundam, and did their worship with the help of that fire. If you enter into the spirit of this, you might understand a tremendous truth - they wanted us to remember God in order that we may transcend ourselves. Why should I remember God? In order that I may not be completely self-centered - thinking only about myself - my happiness, my joy, my sorrow, my dislike, How do I transcend myself? By making the mind flow towards some higher power. These ancient people wanted us to remember this higher power all the time, and if not all the time, a few times, and if not, a few times, at least once a day.

How to make a person remember this cosmic power, God, at least once a day? What does a man invariably do at least once a day? Eat. While cooking, think to yourself as you kindle the fire, 'First I must worship God.' Kindle the fire and worship God. Then you can do what you like. I is a very clever, beautiful way of weaving religion into our live. If you go to some of the ashrams in Rishikesh, you may find the same story. Usually there are about a hundred people to be served, and this takes time. They do not pass ready-made dishes, they make you all sit and then go around serving two or three simple items. At this time, one chapter of the Gita is recited. I do not know if all the people who recite this chapter of the Gita remember the Gita with understanding, or whether they are mechanically repeating it. This may be imperfect but still something is done.

When you come to the temple, you are not always looking at God, you are looking at one another also. The mind may not always be one-pointedly devoted to God, it may be thinking something else - your heart may not be overflowing with love of God, it may be thinking of something else. Still a little seed is falling somewhere and it will grow in its own time. This was the idea. Therefore, in most of the South Indian villages, the tank used for bathing was adjacent to the temple. You had to have a bath in the morning and it is not too much trouble after having the bath to go around the temple and even from outside say, 'Om Namo Narayanaya.' The seed has been sown in your mind, in your heart.

Some of you may not be interested in entering a temple because it takes time, you have to take half an hour or an hour. For those people who do not want to enter the temple they said that looking at the tower is good enough. Therefore, the enormous number of carvings on the temple towers. Again I remember this while we were going to school - we had to walk about three or four miles. On the way to school we used to have a darshan, a reminder, we could see the tower of the temple five or six miles away. Looking at that tower is not going to give you moksha, but it serves as a reminder that there is some power higher than 'me', that there is some truth higher than 'me', that there is someone who governs this whole world - Nataraja, and we are all his creation, his children, and he will look

after us. All these thoughts were compressed into two or three moments when we saw the tower. Then we went on to school. One has to experience this tremendous uplifting, soul uplifting adventure, otherwise one has no faith, no belief. The temple formed the centre, the very heart of the life of the community, and around the temple were the houses of the priests and the trustees; and then there was the bazaars, the market, and so on, which flowed out of this, away from it.

One of South Indian saints said, 'Do not live in a place where there is no temple.' I wonder why? Perhaps it is because, if there is no shrine, no temple, to remind people of some power higher than themselves, it may be dangerous to live in that community where nobody has any respect for anybody else. Yes? If you have no fear of God, what stops you from killing me, what stops you from robbing me? When you have the impulse to rob me, injure me, and when, at the same time you happen to look at the temple tower, you think, 'Oh my God, perhaps God is looking. Aha, it is better not to do any mischief.'

Good neighbourliness demands the ability to be unselfish - only then do we become good neighbours. So, the temple, or our idea of God, was a kind of a door through which we saw something other than ourselves - God, some higher power. Without this we get more and more self-centered, more and more selfish, more and more small-hearted, narrow-hearted, narrow-minded. This is disaster - you cannot live in such a community, because one man will be at the throat of the other.

Many people in each small village or town visited the temple at least once a day. Those who were near enough visited the temple once a day and those who were far away looked at the temple tower with its images of God, which reminded them of God.

So, we worshipped God inside the temple, we worshipped God from outside the temple, and in addition to all this, there were little shrines in our houses. In our house, there was a kitchen which was fairly large; it also included the dining room and the living quarters. There is a little hallway between the kitchen, the dining room and the living quarters - a small room where invariably there was a small shrine, in which we enshrined an image of God. We never ate before puja was performed. Puja might last three minutes or two hours, depending upon how hungry you are. The food was offered, normally with a mantra. This is a wonderful way of offering food to the Lord, and it gives you an opportunity to remember that food is not bought in the grocery store. That what grows on the trees and in the fields and is locked away by people who say, 'It is mine, how much will you pay,' that fellow did not create. This food is offered with the full conviction that it belongs to the Lord. 'This O Lord, is yours. You create the food, not me, and this I offer to you.' And then take it and eat it as prasadam, not as food. You are eating the Lord's prasadam, and so the mind is cheerful and peaceful. That is very important for health.

All of us invariably went to the temple whenever there was a festival - some

people walked ten or fifteen miles and this too gave us a great feeling of togetherness. Everybody gathered from all the neighbouring villages. Often we had to wait a long for the deity to be dressed and taken out in procession. At that time, everyone, especially the grandmothers, congregated in little corners. Most of the matchmaking took place in the temple and marriages were also performed in the temple. The whole of life went on there.

It is true that temples are not indispensable. People have lived without temples, and also the scriptures remind us that ultimately there is the temple, which is you. God is within. One of the mantras used for the puja says that your body itself is the temple of God, that what we call the jiva in you is God. It says, 'Abandon ignorance and worship the Lord in you, feeling that I am one with the Lord.' I recognise that this body is the temple of God and that I must keep it pure, clean, healthy - not because I want to be physically immortal, and not because I want to attract attention, but in the recognition that this body is the temple of God. When this body is understood to be the temple of God, then I understand that all bodies are the temple of God.

So, first I come to the temple feeling that it is God's place. I keep it clean but I do not get a remuneration for it, because I am doing this for the sake of God. Gradually I cultivate the spirit of living, of working, for the sake of God. From there on, all I have to do is to switch the mind from selfishness and to feel that I am doing this for the sake of God. When you say that this body itself is the temple of God, is it not possible to come straight to that - so why waste time coming to the temple, walking around it, sweeping and cleaning it, and doing all this puja and so on? The Hindus are not unaware that ultimately this temple is made of bricks and mortar, that the idols are made out of stone or metal, and their only role in life is to remind us of God, and that ultimately God is omnipresent, nameless, formless.

What is God? 'That which cannot be seen with your eyes but whose grace you are able to see.' Is it possible for everybody to think like this? Perhaps for some - yes. When we say 'some' - you remember Krishna admonishing Arjuna, 'Among thousands one man aspires for liberation - God-realisation, and among thousands of aspirants, one man perchance knows me.' One man perchance attains God-realisation. So, that one man perhaps could dispense with temple, with worship, and straight away attain samadhi.' For most of us it is extremely difficult.

How to concentrate, meditate - sit erect in padmasana, close your eyes. God is nameless, formless, all, everything. But what happens? Immediately after I close my eyes, I begin thinking - I think of the little boy who has not come, of the tabla players. The mind starts working immediately. How do I stop that and how do I become aware of the nameless formless being? So, it is suggested that you think of Krishna, of Shiva, Nataraja - then concentration is easy. Then you say that this is a symbol of God, this is a manifestation of form which represents the formless - I may get to that stage. There is however an other simple but significant factor - I

have a ring stone with a picture of Venkateswara on it. If this stone is broken, I am not going to say that Venkateswara is dead, I shall buy another stone and stick it on there.

If you have a picture of Rama, Krishna, Shiva, Durga - whatever you wish to worship - and there is a problem or some unhappiness in your life, what do you do? If you ask me what I should do, I may say that I would go to the temple, close my eyes<sup>1</sup> and pray, 'Bhagawan, what is this? What do you want me to do with this? Please God, can this somehow disappear?' Sometimes it goes away and some times the Gods tells me, 'But I gave it to you for your own good, so keep it.' Now I am quite satisfied. I have laid my problem at the Feet of God.

However, when you think of the nameless, formless God, can you also do that? No. Therefore there is panic, restlessness, uncertainty. In the very act of praying to this God, when you are in trouble, the trouble just melts away, but that seems to be possible only if there is a focal point. That is the reason why people whose lives were somehow related to these temples, public temples or private shrines, were carefree. They were not wealthy people and had large families and all the problems you can think of, but still they were care free, happy people.

Just as the images of God that we worship are symbolic, there is a lot of symbolism in the deities. There is a lot of philosophy enshrined in each image - some are devoted to Shiva or Vishnu, Krishna, Rama, but all adopt more or less the same ritual. It is usual to perform puja, and there are a few items, about sixteen, that are generally used. In Vishnu temples you do not do abhishekam everyday, in a Shiva temple you do abhishekam all the time. First you grind some sandal-paste, This was usually done in the temple just before the puja, and while you grind that sandal-paste, you are looking at the piece of sandalwood and you remember, 'I cut the sandalwood and now I am crushing and rubbing it against this rough stone, the grinding stone, and yet it gives me its fragrance.'

During puja we offer the Lord sandal-paste, flowers, incense, camphor and prasadam. My Guru Swami Sivananda used to say, 'Bear insult, bear injury. This is the highest form of yoga.' So, as I grind the sandal-paste, I say, 'May I also be like the sandalwood, patient and forbearing.' As I apply the sandal-paste to the image of the Lord, I remind myself that, because of this quality of forbearance and forgiveness, sandal-paste goes on the forehead of the Lord, and even so if I am also forbearing and forgiving. I will also earn a place in God. Then you offer flowers and recite some of the Names of God. These Names themselves have sublime meanings. Take a flower in your hand, take it near your heart, then offer at at the Feet of God, with great concentration, devotion, and inner feeling, 'Lord, I am offering this, not as a flower I picked from the garden which is yours, but as if it is the flower of my heart. As I offer it to you, I must remind myself that even so I should offer everyone of my actions at your Feet.' This is the feeling I must generate.

Then we have incense and, as we wave this in front of the Lord, we see something

marvelous - the fumes rise and are gone, become invisible - invisible, but not loss. The fragrance is still there in the air. Even so, that which is visible is also invisible, there is no difference, no distinction. I remind myself that the subtle and the gross are one, I am making an unnecessary distinction. Some people feel that God is only here in the temple and some people feel that God is only outside, but there is no distinction. I can worship God here in the temple and afterwards. I can remember God all the time, wherever I am.

Then there are lights which are waved in front of the Lord. We use a single faced lamp or a multi faced lamp, various shapes and sizes - all representing some physical, vital, and psychological aspect of our own personality. While I wave these lamps, I pray, 'God, in the same way may all these factors, my past words and deeds, the five senses and all aspects of my personality be illumined with Thy light.'

Finally we have camphor, lightened camphor, and this is a very beautiful thing if one understands it. We wave this camphor in front of the Lord. If it is good camphor, it burns itself out completely. leaving no trace, not even ash. Even so we pray to the Lord, 'May my whole being become illumined, so that there is no more 'I', that You alone may shine.'

We also offer prasadam, all that the earth produces, saying, 'Oh Lord, all that there is on earth belongs to you, and what is Yours I offer unto you You.'

Thus the temple and all that goes on in it can be of tremendous social, religious, personal, domestic and spiritual benefit to all of us if it is rightly understood and rightly adopted in our own manner.

## 12. Remember God

Speaking is not an essential part of satsang. For these few moments we all sing God's Names, bhajans and kirtans, or whatever you wish to call it, we seem to be in a different world. We seem to be happy, peaceful, blissful. Why is that so? Because we have abandoned something which has been worrying us. We have detached ourselves, freed ourselves.

Shankaracharya sang very beautifully, 'Do not run after all these physical, mental, intellectual, and psychic powers, but get close to God.' This is what satsanga means, and the natural consequence is that there is an inner psychological freedom, what we call non-attachment. When there is this psychological freedom, there are no illusions, no false ideas. There is no confusion at all, there is steadiness. Once you are completely and firmly well grounded in truth, then you are liberated, you are freed.

From satsanga comes total non-attachment, unattachment, freedom - there is no delusion, there is no illusion, the perception of truth is clear. Then you become a liberated saint. However, do not try to start from the other side, saying, 'I want to become a saint, how must I work towards that?' If you do, you will miss the whole thing.

My guru Swami Sivananda had a little song which we will sing as His prasada. The message is clear: we do not know where we are going to be, in whatever garb or dress - we do not know what our fate is. So, it is good to remember God. You may be a great yogi or a very sick man. You may be enjoying yourself - all these are a part of life. Whatever happens, remember God.

## Discussion with Ministers and others

Introduction: Swami wants this to be an informal gathering. So, let your hair down and relax. He felt it would be far better if you would ask questions and from that he will develop his theme.

If I may just start off one of the things that I have noticed about western society and, speaking particularly from the western christian point of view, is that we have lost the art of contemplation, the whole sense of newness and mystery in our religion. I believe that we can learn so much from the people from the east, from many of the swamis, and I remember how uplifted I felt after your last talk. It seems to me there is a great need in our lives for this spiritual element. I do not know if you agree with me on that very generalized statement, Swami?

Swami: It depends. What do we call east? I know a thing called (y)east, which is added to dough to make it rise - you add to it and something rises - something like spiritual elevation I guess. Otherwise I do not believe in this thing called the east or the west. If you and I go to whatever we call east, whether it is India, Japan or China, we might find as much non-spirituality there as anywhere else in the world. If we went to the most atrociously materialistic country in the world, whichever it may be, we might still find some spirituality alive there. Is the spirit divided into something called east and something called west? Is the spirit divided into something highly evolved and lowly devolved? I do not see that at all. I can see what is called eastern civilisation and western civilisation, and I can see something good in both and something horrible in both. But no part of the world has a monopoly in wisdom, in foolishness, in kindness or anything else. So, where are we?

Contemplation has been the heart of all religions, and if western, what is called christian religion, has moved away from it, so too have the eastern religions, How do we grow? Look at thro baby - probably in the third or fourth month the foetus is all heart and nothing else. Slowly somethng sticks out - a couple of legs and a silly thing called a head. Right from there we are running away from the heart and as we grow older, larger, there is more outside the heart than inside, and probably that is how all complications begin - as a constant movement away from the centre. This happens throughout the world - whether we call it the Japanese or the Indian or the Chinese or the American or the European or the African culture.

Contemplation, according to me, is the reversal of this movement. If the temples are here - pointing to forehead, instead of permitting the rays of the mind to flow out, bring them in. This has nothing to do with geography or history or biology - it is some kind of perception, some kind of sincerity and seriousness. If you are sincere, and if you perceive - you will see the truth as it is. This is a cup, this is a saucer, and what was in it? Some tea was in it - was - where is that tea now? It is slowly being transformed into this swami. So, this swami is nothing but a walking teacup. When that is 'seen', then the perception is becoming clear. If I am not

sincere, not serious, then at some stage I shy away from the truth. For instance, I have a bag overflowing with money and I am walking through the bush, ; somebody who is hungry and who needs the money comes along and demands it from me. What do I see? I see clearly that it is the money that is threatening my life, not the man. Am I prepared to drop it there and go? If I do, then I am safe. It is that clear, that simple, is it not?

First there must be perception, then there must be seriousness or sincerity - then I am free, immediately. That is what was said - if you see the truth, it will immediately make you free. So I must see that if what is called materialist civilisation - I do not want to call it western, as eastern is also more or less the same thing, causes all my unhappiness, tension and blood-pressure. Then I must drop that. For contemplation, this is necessary - perception and sincerity - then perception itself becomes contemplation. Is that right. Sir?

Question: That is right. Well, perhaps I should not have talked about eastern civilisation, but about material civilisation?

Swami: Correct.

Question: It seems to me that part of the problem in today's society is that we are materialistic, and there no room for spritual values, for spiritual growth. What you say is - have perception, be serious about it, then act on it.

Swami: No. If you are serious, the seriousness itself will act.

Question: What message can you give to people here?

Swami: Nothing, no message. This is a trap. Are we caught in it, or am I caught in it? These are two different things. You say, 'We are caught in it' - but are 'we' caught in it or am 'I' caught in it? I am caught in it, and because I do not want to perceive that I love it, I use the word 'we', 'we' are all in it. Yet I may not be in at all. Some of my friends may say, 'Oh we are fools', and I say, 'Sorry, you may be, but I may not be. You have no business to assume that I am a fool.' Why say 'we'? Say 'I'. I am caught in it, I perceive that I am caught in it, and if I am serious and sincere, I see that action follows immediately.

Some of you smoke, I guess. This once happened to me. I had a cigarette in my hand and was sitting thinking very seriously about something. The funny thing had burned - it did not wait for me to burn it - and the finger knew it was burning the finger. I did not have to work it out. 'Oh, it is burning my finger, I should drop it.' No. As soon as the fire touched the skin, the fingers opened and the cigarette dropped. It is as smple as that. But the difficulty is that I do not want to see that I am caught in the trap. There is no sincerity

I think I see this dreadful thing called materialistic civilisation and that it is killing me. I see that it is taking my spirit away, I see that it is taking me away

from my own heart. I think I see, but do I see or do I merely think I see? Do I know the distinction between these? Those of you who smoke can try this. Light a cigarette, hold it in your hand, look at it and say, 'Yes, if I do not pay any attention to it, I see it will burn my finger.' You are not seeing anything. The cigarette is still cold. You only think you see how it can burn the fingers. You do not know. But when it burns your finger, you do not think, it is real

Is my experience, my perception - of the danger of modern civilisation - as real as that? No, I love something in that civilisation - the comfort it gives me, the power it gives me - and yet, having chosen to be in it, I am still ashamed. Even we - so-called religious men - are also trapped in the same thing. We also love comfort, etc. Yet we also say, 'Well, we are holy men. We see the danger, but we have no choice, we are trapped in it.' When my house catches fire, will I turn over in my bed and say, 'Alright, everyone is in it, I am also in it.' No, I will leap out of the window. I cannot save you by remaining inside the house. I must jump out of the window and fetch a gas-mask or something and then come and help you. This is what religious men are supposed to do. Is it not? The physician has to heal himself, to be whole unto himself, and only then can he help others. If I am miserable, I cannot pull you out of your misery - first I must find the way out of sorrow, out of materialism, and then come and tell you, 'I have done it, you can also do it.'

Question: How do you find your way out of it? Perhaps, as a religious man, you would seek God? Would you agree that all of our ideas of God are too small?

Swami: Thank you. Do I seek God, or do I create God? Why do I seek God at all? How do I know that such a spirit or such a truth as God exists? When I seek, I must seek without any preconceived notions. What is pre-conceived? You only conceive when you conceive, not before. There is no pre-conceived idea, there is merely an idea created by me which is nothing compared to what God is supposed to be. How do I come to create this idea within me? Because I am miserable, I am tortured on all sides, and life is intolerable. Then I read the experiences of spiritual men. I see they were happy all the time and they speak of God who is blissful, who is love, who is peace and who is harmony. Again I look at my life and see it is full of tension and disharmony. I see that some one else speaks of a state of consciousness, of meditation, of contemplation, in which one is free from all this. So I create an image of God. I go on chewing over this idea, but it does not bring me that bliss, that peace, and I wonder why. Then, if I am not sincere, I do something even worse - I create an illusion of peace.

There is only one proposition that I am quite sure about - that my life is full of disharmony, worry, sorrow and misery. If I enquire into that life, asking, 'Why is there this misery?', then - forgive my impertinent statement - I will become Christ rather than a Christian - because I would have started exactly where Jesus Christ started. This only happens when I come to grips with life and not when I think I understand all these problems, and that therefore I have found a way out of these problems, or that the way has been shown to me by someone else. 'What

I have done, if you do, that is the way.' No. It does not work that way. We fight shy of coming to grips with the problem - we are fond of finding the solution before the problem is clearly understood.

Question: Swamiji. We say the material world is in disharmony. But, if God is omnipresent, then he is in material things as well?

Swami: Possibly. But does that God appear as material things, or is It merely our belief that God is omnipresent?

Question: It is only a belief.

Swami: It is only a belief - which means?

Question: I do not know.

Swami: Which means that it is not true for me. If it is not true for me, it is not true. His saying that God is omnipresent merely raises confusion in me, confusion in the sense that there is fusion - my God and his God fuse and there is confusion. I see that you are So-and-so, that this is a cup and this is an ash tray and yet he says that God is omnipresent. If God is omnipresent, why does tea taste like tea and cigarette like tobacco? Then I am awake to my problem, then I go on solving it.

Question: Yes. But how do you solve it?

Swami: By becoming aware of the problem itself, by asking if all these diverse things can be one.

Question: You cannot realise it with the intellect?

Swami: No, because the intellect is only a small part of the whole thing. Go on contemplating - again and again - asking yourself why is tea different from tobacco when both come from the same earth. The same potatoes and bread have gone into that body and this body - what is the difference? Why does he call himself a christian, and I call myself an agnostic? At some stage, we encounter a dreadful wall - thinking. How do you know you are different from me. Because you think - that is all. So, deal with this problem - what makes me think that I am different from somebody else?

Question: Heaven knows.

Swami: Haha. How do you know that heaven knows?

Question: Ignorance.

Swami: How do you know what ignorance is? Again we come back to this subtle

question - 'I think'. How do I think? Now I am able to see one thing more - that it is 'I think' that creates all these divisions. If all of us lie down here and sleep, there is no feeling of distinction, no idea of separation, we are absolutely at one. What is it that wakes up when I wake up, creating all these differences? Three of us go to sleep there and there is oneness, I wake up and say that he is to my right and he is to my left. But, in sleep, there was no right, no left, nothing at all in sleep. 'I' am the dividing factor. Yes? 'I' is the dividing factor. As soon as 'I' arises, the world is divided, everything is divided. 'God is omnipresent' - this statement is true only in an egoless state. The saint or yogi was in that state when he made that statement.

'I am very fond of the statement God is omnipresent', which seems to solve all my problems. People often say, 'Why is it that, if God is omnipresent, and God is love, he loves me and she hates me, So-and-so likes me and yet So-and-so wants to kill me?' The whole thing may be the expression of divine love? No, not quite. God created water. I bow down to it and say, 'Water, God created you, I touch it and it makes my hands wet, God created you, God dwells in you.' 'Fire, God created you and God dwells in you.' I touch it - ouch! Then I go to the ice block and say, 'God created you'. I touch it, it is freezing. Yet God's own love flows through water as water, through fire as fire, through ice as coldness. If a cobra loves me, it might bite me, so too. If a child loves me, it might kiss me. The kiss of the cobra and the kiss of the child are the same - one makes me die, and the other makes me live, but only in relation to the body. So, whatever I get from any creature is a manifestation of the same love, the love that God is. If we contemplate that for a fifth of a second, and if that is true for one fifth of a second, then all your hostility has gone, our problem has gone.

Question: But I might die.

Swami: I does not die. Dying is inevitable. This body can die at any time. It is bound to die.

Question: But if I saw a cobra coming at me, I would kill it before it bit me.

Swami: Well, one of you has to die and the cobra seems to be the victim now. Why am I afraid to die now? Perception must be closely bound with sincerity. Then I am not worried at all.

Question: I cannot understand why people are so afraid to die. They must die, this is only physical body.

Swami: Yes, but apart from the fact that nobody wants to die, everybody wants to go to heaven. Haha. It is absurd.

Question: Don't you think you make your own heaven or your own hell?

Swami: Yes, all the time. It starts here, what I am inside.

Question: Swami, when you leave the physical body, what do you take with you? What leaves the body?

Swami: I can answer enigmatically. If I know what lives in this body, I will know what leaves the body. Have I found out what is in this body?

Question: Something called spirit?

Swami: What is spirit?

Question: Life, intelligence, mind.

Swami: Intelligence, mind, life. What is the difference between them.

Question: They are one.

Swami: Right. What is the difference between mind and life?

Question: If there is no mind, there is no life.

Swami: If there is no life, there is no mind either - these are mere words. The psychologists say that there is subconscious mind, conscious mind, super-conscious mind, cosmic mind, and so on, but this is all topdy turvy. If life is mind and mind is life, it means there is something in between which I not know - and that is what might leave the body. I say might because I am not quite sure. All we know is that there is an idea called 'I' that thinks, is living in this body now, and which, at that moment of time called death thinks it is no longer connected with the body. That is all. What lives in this body cannot be destroyed, can it? If it can, it is no longer life. It is like water, drinking water, it is never exhausted.

Question: Can we get back to the cobra - do you not believe in preserving life?

Swami: If I had the fear that life could be destroyed, I should certainly believe in preserving life.

Question: No. What I mean is that we teach children not to eat a certain berry because it is poisonous. Now, according to you, we should just leave them?.

Swami: No, no. I did not say that.

Question: But we are going to die in any case - sooner or later?

Swami: Why not later? It is not killing or non-killing that matters. It is the understanding of consciousness that matters. I am going to die and you are also going to die,. I need not kill you and you need not kill me - there is no sense in either. If I come to grips with this truth, then there is no animosity. I may even be

able to fight without hostility.

Question: Then you will not fight well.

Swami: Or you may fight better, as you are no longer nervous. The situation has to be dealt with - if for instance there is a cobra wrapped around my child's arm, one of them has to die. Very calmly something tells me that the child is going to live and the cobra is going to die. I take a knife or something and kill it. So that, without any emotional involvement, I deal with the whole situation. If I worry about the application before understanding the principle, it creates a misunderstanding. When I understand the truth, the principle, then that acts.

Question: Where is the power to understand?

Swami: Intelligence or mind, which is non-different from life, understands everything - you might call it God or a spark of God. There is something living in this body which knows how to maintain it and sustain it, which seems to know everything - what to do and what not to do. By handing all these problems over to that intelligence, life is easy. That intelligence may permit the cobra to bite this body, or this body to kill the cobra, it is not for me to decide, it is not for the 'I' to decide. It is life, it is mind, it is intelligence which leaves the body. Lucky you did not use the words 'I leave the body'. So we see that this thing called 'I' does not exist at all, except as an idea and that, if 'I' as an idea is pushed away, then the intelligence looks after itself. It is that intelligence which has been referred to as 'the image of God in us.'

Question: To sit down and talk like this is quite simple but in real experience it is quite different. For instance, if there are two men in a lifeboat, and there is enough water for only one to survive, then the natural instinct for survival arises and the 'I' comes forward, perhaps by religious conviction, and says, 'The way for me to get to heaven is for me to give up life.' This man slips quietly over the side of the boat and drowns. On the other hand, I might say, 'I must live. So, when the chap is asleep, I throw him over the side.'

Swami: That is more likely.

Question: In such a situation, a man must be guided either by his intelligence, by his religion, or by the actual brutal fact that he wants to survive.

Swami: Good. First of all, let us dispose of one small factor. You and I are in that sinking lifeboat. Suddenly I become a very holy man 'Ah by jumping into the water and dying for the sake of my brother I will go to heaven and live there forever.' I am not unselfish - I am more selfish than you are.

Question: And if you chuck him out?

Swami: I don't care - it is the intelligence that must decide - not me, not you. The

silliest concept to which we foolishly cling is that there is a thing called survival, as opposed to destruction. When I know there is no destruction, that neither I nor you will die - what happens. I cannot predict. The rest is brainwashing, calculation. Again and again we come back to this - that it is always 'I' first in human concepts. How can I help others to overcome this? By first overcoming it myself - by getting rid of self-ignorance, of sorrow - so that I may become the raft for others to save themselves.

What removes ignorance? Only understanding removes real ignorance, only knowledge removes that ignorance.