



*Swami Venkatesanathu*

# VIGILANCE



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## 1. The Continuity in Constant Change

Each time I have come here over the years, there have been some additions and some subtractions to the families I know. Why is it that, if two of us are riding in the same car, I get killed and he is saved? What for? We live in the same environment, the same house, breathe the same air, eat the same food, and do the same thing, yet I am infected and you are not. Can we stop this? We can neither stop the coming in nor the going out. If I am to be sick, I'll be sick. I'm putting it bluntly, without bringing in theological or metaphysical justifications, without giving biological or physical explanations - saying that it is an infection, or an accident, or that it is my Karma. We keep offering prayers for long life and health. What do these prayers do - do they help at all? That is the fundamental question.

When some doctors don't know what is wrong, they describe your illness with a very learned scientific Latin or Greek phrase which means, "I don't know the diagnosis, and I don't know the cure." We don't know. We don't know anything. So pain itself is as great a mystery as anything man has ever tried to delve into. And what we do not understand, we fear and what we fear, we worship, trying to placate. We do not love, we can only love what we understand. In our everyday life we fear first, and then try to placate that which we fear, hoping that thus life may be less of a botheration for us. On the basis of our own day-to-day experience in this world, we hope by this kind of worship to placate that which we do not understand. I don't know what makes me sick, there is some kind of Creator, some kind of God, or Protector, hanging around the earth, who ordained when I was to be born, and what kind of life I was to have here - healthy or sick, wealthy or poor - so I am afraid of this God. I am afraid of the whole phenomenon, so I'll pray to placate Him. But it doesn't seem to work that way. However much I pray, I still begin to cough. That's what I want to suggest. Life seems to flow on totally indifferent to all our prayers, regardless of what we do to placate these gods or demons, or whoever it is that governs our lives.

That's what we see. I think, however, if you adopt the common-sense approach of my Master, quite a lot of our own unhappiness can be ignored or not created. He used to say, "Don't grumble and grouse if you have little head aches. Go and look at those people who cannot see, who are lame, and who are a million times more miserable than you are. Think of their unhappiness and their miseries, think of those who are starving, and who don't even have a roof over their heads." If you understand the magnitude of human suffering, your own looks silly, not worth mentioning. On the other hand, if every morning, and every night, I go on counting the blessings that I have, I am quite happy, in spite of some toothaches and headaches.

I have a rather simple prayer. "God give me enough health to be able to serve, to work, and enough pain not to forget you." A life without some pain, some heartache - not necessarily physiological - would be useless, impossible. We need this, and if I can see life without getting worked up about my own silly little aches and pains, I am bound to discover that the balance always seems to be in favor of

something positive, something good. Here I've lost two friends through death, but I have gained six new ones-their grandchildren. Why don't I give thanks to God for these, instead of brooding over something that I am supposed to have lost? When I forget all these things, then I see life flowing on smoothly, beautifully, completely regardless of what we do and what we do not do.

Why should we pray at all? In order that I may constantly remember that the only thing in this world that does not change is change. The only unchanging factor in this universe is constant change; it is continuous, the continuity itself is unchanging. Everything seems to be circulating all the time-everything is recycled and brought back. You look at yourself in the mirror. What is this? - recycled banana, and potato, and sandwiches. All that will go down the drain, little by little, day after day, one day a lot more - death. But even this is not lost. You know the saying, 'dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return.' It is literally true. This physical body sitting here in front of you is nothing but what grew out of the earth. It consumes this food, but what consumes it is still more interesting. Fifty-one years ago, I was a baby about eighteen inches long, with a tiny little mouth, and a tiny little tongue. Now they have become a big mouth, a big tongue, and big teeth. How did I get then in the first place? - potatoes, bananas, milk, yoghurt and curd. Can you see the shocking truth? This tongue is nothing but sandwiches, eaten two or three years ago, and these sandwiches eaten then are now looking for more sandwiches to eat. I ate some food, and made this body, which is nothing but the end product of food, now it in turn craves more food. This process keeps going, until one day the body becomes food to fertilize the earth. So that the next time we look at the tomato plant, we might say this is the Swami recycling.

We see that though the whole thing is constantly changing, there is some unchanging continuity in it. Wonderful, isn't it? It is only because we don't seem to grasp this fun - some silly child playing somewhere - that we are frightened. I don't know if you believe in this idea of immortality, but I think there is an extremely simple, direct explanation for this - nothing ever dies. Years before a man becomes old, aged, ready to leave this world, something goes out of his body and takes a form, and that form he gives the name my son, or my daughter. That is nothing but part of his own body, or of the mother's body, or a combination of the two. And it is almost as if the child looks at him and is saying, "I'm already here to replace you, how long are you going to live?" After all, you started at that point, didn't you? If you can visualize your own beginnings, you also started as a fertilized ovum. So that is physiologically and biologically speaking the beginning of your own life. You are worth nothing more than that. The rest of it is pure potatoes and sandwiches. How did you grow inside your mother's body? - from potatoes and sandwiches that your mother ate. All that became what I love to call a benign tumour in the mother's body, which didn't kill her, but produced your life. That's all, and so your own beginnings were nothing but a fertilized ovum, and before you disappear from this earth, you have passed it on. You have given part of this body to make one more, so that even that physiological entity continues.

There is change of course. Your son doesn't look exactly like you, and he may not behave exactly like you. Otherwise there would be a continuation to your foolishness in this world. If my son is as great a fool as I am, there is no sense in doing any thing in the world. So there is a continuity of human-ness and yet there is no continuity concerning the wisdom or foolishness. If you are a wise man, your son may not be as wise a man, or if you are a fool, your son may not be such a fool. In the case of some of us who may not have children in the ordinary physical sense of the term, we leave behind an idea, a thought, an inspiration, a teaching, a message, a memory - these being in no way inferior or superior to the biological babies. There is the continuity of the spirit and yet continuous change. The continuity itself is a continuous change, or the change is continuous and therefore there is a continuity.

There is a proverb which says: "God first makes mad those whom He would destroy, or God robs one of his reason and intelligence when He decides to punish him." Thus, faced with this cosmic bulldozer, we seem to be totally impotent and powerless. Then what are we trying to do here? The answer again was given by my Guru, Swami Sivananda, Who said, "We don't pray to God to take my headache away, but to give me strength to bear it", that as life flows on I may have the strength and wisdom to see that this is as it should be. Just as now all of you are so bright - brilliant, beautiful, sitting there with sparkling eyes; two hours later all the sparkling light has gone. You're asleep. When you know that, then even if you happen to be a talker who is very fond of listening to his own voice, you stop talking. It doesn't need to be changed.

In the same way I think prayer, if it is true, sincere, earnest, and offered in the true spirit in which prayers should be offered, prepares our understanding, not to accept but to observe this continuous change. This "accept" is another grumbling, grouching expression. A man says, "My wife is nagging, but I accept it." There is a resistance, inside something is closed. You're not happy. I don't accept God's Will. When I see it is inevitable, I merely sit back and say, "Lovely . . . good chap. This is what goes on, lovely." And when you observe that this is inevitable, that this is what it is - it is good as it is. There is nothing you can do about it. Then you are least affected by it. And, therefore, my Guru used to say, "Don't pray to God to take your pains away, but pray to Him that you may have the strength of understanding to see it as it is." That's all. We can do nothing else.

It may sound fatalistic. Probably it is fatalistic, not in the sense that everything is going to die - nothing is going to die - but fatalistic in the sense that there is this continuous change, which none of us can arrest or change. It has to go on. There's a quotation from the Bible, "Who can add a cubit to his height by taking thought." We can do nothing. It's absurd! What exactly is birth, and what exactly is death? At birth, if the baby doesn't cry immediately, the doctor holds it up by its feet and slaps it, makes it cry. If it cries he says, "Look what I have done." If the doctor was not there the mother would say, "Look what I have done." So, it's to no one's credit. What makes the baby take its first breath? And at the other

end, a man suddenly ceases to breathe. How did this silly mechanism stop? You know how difficult it is? Hold your nose, stop your breath for twenty-five seconds, already you are straining. It is so difficult to stop breathing. If you practice Pranayama, you will appreciate what I am saying. It is so difficult to stop breathing; one minute is already too much, in two minutes you are bursting. And yet this man, who was breathing very well, suddenly stops. Magic! What made it stop? What made this thing begin? The answer is the same - we don't know. All that we need know is that we don't know.

It may sound fatalistic - it is probably not fatalistic, but realistic. I see these things happening; I see this continuous change, and a continuity in this change. Then I suddenly wake up to the wonderful truth that all this is eternal, but that to certain aspects of this change I stick a label: this is old age, this is illness, this is sickness, this is death. The ever-flowing stream is the reality, and I merely stick a label here and there. The stream doesn't seem to care at all, it goes on. When I see this, sickness is sickness no more, old age is old age no more, death is death no more. I see this beautiful process of recycling. When it comes to bananas, I don't like the unripe one, I like the ripe one. If I love a fully ripened banana more than an unripe, immature banana, why should I be afraid of becoming old? This is nothing but the same thing. And why should I want this body to stay like an unripe, immature banana, and not ripen into a sage. I don't think this man here would want all of his children to stay tree months old. He wants them to grow - "Ah! Lovely! My daughter was only a tiny thing, look how beautiful she is now." Of course, how did she become so beautiful? She grew up. And why shouldn't I grow up - I become beautiful in a different way, but still I can grow. I think, therefore, if we really, truly, and sincerely pray, we come face to face with truth, not some kind of an extraordinary God with four heads, and ten hands and two horns, but the truth concerning life itself. We see to whole of life in a completely different light - that there is immortality without any metaphysical connotation. I see this happening in front of me day in and day out. And then birth, death, old age, pain, and what is called suffering, are all seen as part of the ever-flowing stream, ever changing, and yet never changing. All our prayer is meant to awaken ourselves to this truth.

Once this truth is seen, observed, then we get tremendous inner strength, inner wisdom, which is thus beautifully described in the Bhagavad Gita. Krishna, defining the word Yoga, says: "Yoga is freedom from ever coming into contact with pain." I wonder if you realize the significance of this. You cannot stop pain, it doesn't say so. But you can have freedom from coming into contact with this pain. That is Yoga. Once you get this, then there is no craving for anything greater. I wonder if you see this joke also? When I see that everything in this life is starting, moving along, changing, and is continuous, then I may not really long for anything, knowing that if I have something very precious; it will pass away, leaving me behind cold. Throw it away, I don't crave for it; if it comes along, alright, I'll enjoy it. If it comes along, the stream brings it to me. I'll enjoy it, knowing the next morning it may be absent. You don't refuse to enjoy life, but you don't crave for anything better than what you have. Beyond this



understanding, nothing is more precious to the Yogi.

When he is established in this understanding, and in this wisdom, he is not shaken by the worst miseries or unhappiness. Do you know why? This silly thing is passing. If, for instance, I lost my wife on the 31st of January, 1970, the thing happened on the 31st of January, 1970. Haven't I torn off the calendar since then? Yes, every month I tore off one page. The 31st of January, 1970, is past, why must I hang onto that thought now? So, if I realize that this stream is flowing constantly, constantly changing, if I see it as a fact, I won't cling to one memory, and immortalize the pain. It is when I psychologically cling to this painful event that I renew it day after day, and it is then that it becomes mountainous. On the 31st of January, 1970, my wife died. All people die. I buried her on the next day. That's the finish, the end of it. Hari Om Tat Sat.

So, this is the definition of Yoga given by Sri Krishna. The Yogi knows that all things in this world are subject to change, and therefore he doesn't crave for anything, and he doesn't endeavour to hold onto any pleasures. It is when I try to capture pleasure - to hold it back from flowing on or to enjoy it again and again - that it becomes boring. As long as it came floating, it was delightful. But once you have hugged it and crushed it, it is dead. Now you are dancing with a skeleton - the pleasure is gone, only the dullness is left. In the case of pain, if you allow it to go on, it will go away, it is gone. Otherwise you are unnecessarily and stupidly immortalizing that pain and suffering day after day. It is gone, leave it, let it go. Even the worst calamity is only a passing event, no matter how serious; simply something happening. It is when I brood on this, thus holding it back from flowing, that my life becomes continuous misery. And unfortunately it is not the fault of life, nor of God, nor of truth, but rather that I am clinging to it. Therefore prayer enables us to see the truth of the continuity of change, and thus we are rooted in the wisdom which is the continuity in this change. The wisdom, the understanding, the perception, the realization of this truth, is the continuity in this constant change.

## 2. Within You is Hidden God

When My Guru, Swami Sivananda, chose the name Divine Life Society some thirty-five years ago, He was more or less prophetic. With this name He suggested an approach which would lead to the source of our problem, for in order to lead a Divine Life, it is necessary to discover the Divine Light within. But He made it very clear in His own life and teachings, that leading a Divine Life did not mean running away from the world. This is a silly expression in any case, for it is impossible to run away from the world. Wherever you go it is the world. A person who tries to do this, run from his problems, only carries them with him. I first saw this many years ago, when a few of us were on a pilgrimage in the Himalayas. Our guide, who was a Swami, was famous for his short temper. He was a good and kind man, but his temper was volcanic. The purpose of our pilgrimage was to see God, to be in His presence in this holy shrine in the heart of the Himalayas, and we were filled with spiritual, religious excitement at the prospect. The approach to such holy shrines is supposed to be a solemn dignified affair, carried out in the spirit of purity and holiness. At this shrine there are hot springs, and it is usual for the devotees to have a dip in the springs before entering the temple. We had arrived in the rain, carrying our own baggage, and our guide, who was rather fussy about his clothes, began washing them in the spring, while the rest of us sanctimoniously bathed in the warm waters. As he scrubbed, one of the caretakers approached, and gently asked him not to wash his clothes in the pool where people bathed. The words were barely out of his mouth, when the Swami exploded with all the unpleasant words in the dictionary. I was greatly struck. We left a certain place to come here, into the presence of God, but what came here? Everything came, not only our bodies and clothes, but our problems, our likes and dislikes, anger and hatred, love and compassion, everything. All these things travel with us wherever we go. This is the problem, and therefore we cannot run away from it, because we are the problem. I am the problem, I is the problem. I might leave my house, travel many miles, yet carry the house with me in my mind, the memory of pleasures, the memory of comforts, the memory of all the things I enjoyed. In fact, perhaps this is all I am. Perhaps there is no other me than the memory of what I have been, of what I have enjoyed, or what I have suffered. I cannot run away from these, wherever I go they go, because they are me. Therefore some thing else is necessary, and this is what My Guru, Swami Sivananda pointed to - the light in which life is seen as it is - Divine. But what is this light which we call Divine?

As a young boy, I saw a light so bright, I thought perhaps it was God. We were playing a game, where one small stick is thrown into the air, and hit with a bigger stick. The boy next to me missed the stick but hit my eye. I saw the most brilliant flash, answering perfectly to the description of God given in the Bhagavad Gita : "As if a thousand suns rose at the same time!" Such things are easy. But Divine Light, or the eye of intuition, is best described by one of the greatest sages of this century, Ramana Maharshi, as - the wisdom that is the eye. Not the eye of wisdom, not a physiological or psychological factor, but the wisdom that is awake within that acts as an eye. Through these physical eyes I am able to see you, but

through that eye I am able to see myself. This is the eye that enlightens the whole being. When this light of understanding shines through every pore of my being, there is clear vision or in French, clairvoyance, which enables me to see not only you sitting in front of me, but also me who is seeing you. This wisdom shining within enables me to see life as it is, and if there is any distortion due to imagination, fear, prejudice, or desire, to see this distortion as it is. This is the resolution of our problem, and this is what Gurudev called Divine Life. But if this wisdom is not awake in me, it cannot be acquired. This wisdom can not be transmitted, this light cannot be kindled by another. But when this light comes into being within me, of itself, I am able to see life without any distinction between internal and external, life in the world, and private life. I am able to see life as it is. This is Divine Life.

The Master used to sing: "Within you is hidden God, within you is immortal soul." But He didn't mean to suggest that, within the solid entity called me, is sitting a silly little god. He meant something quite different. In America they are experimenting with stimulating the brain by electrodes, in order to enter into deep meditation. There are also other possibilities here. If we find that the institution of marriage is becoming a problem, we can eliminate altogether this mixing of the sexes. Simply discover what occurs in the brain when a man and a woman come together, then apply the electrode in the proper manner, you have the pleasure with no problems. Soon there will be an automatic dial system - dial 3 and you get the pleasure of eating sweets, dial 7 and there is sexual pleasure, and so on. It is much simpler, all a matter of electrodes. And this is the way we treat this God.

"Within you is hidden God" - like an electrode for us to manipulate. "God give me this, God give me that, give me a good wife, take her away, I'm tired of her." This is not what Gurudev meant. "Within you is hidden God" was said in an entirely different light. Normally I am not interested in looking within at all, my eyes are focused on the external world. I'm constantly trying to experience this external world, without bothering to find out who the experiencer is, or if there is an experiencer. So He sang these words merely to turn my gaze within, upon myself. But to gaze within myself, I need a focus, otherwise I will go to sleep, for I do not know what it is to look within. How do I look within? If I turn my eyeballs once over, I won't even look without again. Then He goes on to say something interesting: "Kill this little I, die to live, lead the Divine Life." This sounds as though this little I is a real entity, like a mosquito or a parasite, but it may not be. I must see, and see with the wisdom which is Divine. When the I is seen for what it is, in the light of my own understanding or wisdom, this is Divine Life. "Kill this little I, die to live, lead the Divine Life." I cannot attempt to get rid of the I. When I do this, I give it a value it may not possess, like shooting a shadow, but I must see it in the light of wisdom for what it is. Because we have neglected this, we are still struggling in the same state that man has been in since the beginning of time. We have not progressed one inch - we are still running round in the same circles, we don't seem to have the understanding to break this circle. You may have seen the Indian fire ceremony - this was invented in order to suggest a way out of this

vicious circle, and as a symbol provides a focal point for the mind. As we pour ghee into the fire, we say. "Swaha." "Swa" means I-ness or mine-ness, egoism, and "Ha", destroy, destroy egoism. So, just as I pour ghee into the fire, even so I destroy all that is selfish. When this ghee is poured into the fire, it is gone, gone for good, beyond recall. Whatever is poured into that fire is turned into pure ash, and seeing this we remember that even so everything will ultimately be reduced to ashes. It is then that I become unselfish, and this unselfishness is the pure ash that is left when the whole life is offered as a sacrifice to the Divine, even as the ghee is offered to the fire. This is the symbol of the ceremony, but we love the symbol for itself. Jesus Christ said, "You must take up your cross and follow me", so we take the cross, a golden one with a diamond inset and follow, what? The procession, not Jesus Christ - nobody wants to follow Him. We convert all these symbols into dead substances, and worship these substances.

Is it possible for us therefore to be free of selfishness, and thus become directly aware of what this self means? What is this self? We have completely neglected this quest and instead have been busy building up relationships, family, properties, endlessly multiplying our problems, then struggling to escape from them and thus creating more. I think, "I am not married, I am alone, no one to look after me, if I marry my problem will be solved." So, I marry and then find that my one problem has become two. We are both dissatisfied, bored, she is constantly looking for my faults, so "I'll divert her attention, give her a baby. When the baby is crying she won't bother about my snoring." Has the problem been solved? No, now it is three. This continues, until eventually I go to the divorce court, and am back to square one. Again I am lonely, and again seek a wife, and the problem is endless, until I begin to turn my gaze within and see me, the ego, the personality as it is. There is this vacuum, this emptiness, and this emptiness draws all these problems to itself. This emptiness has invited all these problems, and therefore I must become aware of this emptiness. But it is not I that becomes aware of the emptiness. I, or the personality, is the emptiness that invites all the problems. If there were no vacuum, the air would not rush in.

So, that which becomes aware of the emptiness is not empty, but seeing with the light of wisdom, becomes an image of the Divine Light. So, first I must completely rid myself of all those images that I have built to fill the emptiness - the image of God, the image of security, the image called my wife, the image called my children, and focus my attention wholly and solely on this inner emptiness. Then let the question arise - I cannot ask it, it must arise - "Who is it that is aware of me," this me which is empty and which has therefore filled itself with all sorts of concepts - concepts of religion, concepts of ethics, concepts of morality, concepts of role - I am the husband and she is the wife, I am the father and these are my children. All these concepts have poured into this emptiness. This is our mistake. We keep the emptiness in its glorious state, and try to rid ourselves of our problems. But the emptiness is still there, and will attract something else. I don't want to have children, but instead I may take on disciples. I don't wish to possess any property, but if the emptiness is still there, I'll build an ashram. Or I may change the name, "Of course I don't eat fish, I eat sea food!" In some countries

cows are no longer cattle, they are "live-stock", stock that walks. And "Thou shalt not kill" has become "Thou shalt not murder!" So, this business of changing the label will not do. I must see the emptiness for what it is, and be prepared at one instant to drop seeing from this emptiness, stationing myself there, and identifying with it and what it contains. I feel myself totally empty, in need of an identification tag, so I say, "I am a Swami". The fact is that I am empty, but unable to tolerate this, I have dropped in the label, "I am a Swami", and now I judge you from that emptiness, "You are something else".

There is an awareness that looks at this emptiness, looks at this personality, looks at this I or ego, and sees that so long as my life is based upon what this emptiness and its contents dictate, it will run in circles. That's all, the limit that you and I can reach. The question must arise one of these days - "Who is it that is aware of this emptiness?" Then there is what is called enlightenment. Such an enlightened life is Divine Life.

### 3. The Need for Constant Vigilance

This evening we have been discussing something which I think might be shared with everyone. Life brings all sorts of situations from day to day - some of them are the same old things, repeated from time immemorial - hunger, thirst, fear, and sleep - some of them are new, and some of them are a mixture of both old and new. How do we deal with them, how do we cope with life, how do we live here?

In a manner of speaking, nothing has ever happened - the same life is carrying on, sometimes stumbling, sometimes falling and then getting up. This falling and getting up is regarded as death, but life does not come to an end; if it came to an end then it would not be called life. It's quite simple, isn't it? There is no life after death - there is no death. Once you die, you die, there is nothing more to do. But life goes on continuously, without interruption. What we call death is falling down, lying down, and what we call illness, is stumbling, tripping on a piece of stone. When you're tottering, you're not quite steady, suddenly you fall flat on the ground, lie down for a few minutes, and get up - that's called death, and what is known as rebirth. From one point of view this thing is continuous, without beginning and without end, it goes on and on and on - it's neither born nor does it die. They have discovered a new word in America for this - it is called recycling. Potatoes and bananas grow, and are transferred to this, my body, which is also growing. The same bananas and potatoes make this grow a little faster, and as it grows in a different form, the potatoes and bananas, also in a different form, are given back to the earth. Then the plant grows up again. Life goes on, everything goes on. From this point of view, nothing is ever destroyed. From another point of view, there is constant change; but this change is change of form - the spirit is unchanging, the form is ever changing. This is, of course, over-simplifying it.

Because of this we have some recurring old problems, and some non-recurring new problems; that is the problem - how do I distinguish one from the other. In the case of the one, recurring old problems, we have perfect guidance. If someone gives me an apple, how will I eat it? - in exactly the same way as Adam ate his first apple 50,000 years ago. There is no change here at all, and I can look it up in the dictionary, the Bible or some kind of holy book. I mention the dictionary because it is one book which contains all the books in the world. In it are all the words of all the books in the world; therefore it is the source of the scriptures. Even so the word "bible" means a book - the book - and so the dictionary is another Bible. If I don't know how to make bread, how to cook rice and curry, or how to peel a banana, I can look it up in some cook book, because these things are recurring, continuing problems. These things can be preserved in textbooks and scriptures, studied, and applied to our own life, and then the problem is solved.

But there are other things which are new and different - electricity, for instance. If I do with this electric light what I do with a candle, I get into trouble. When some people put out a candle, they just press the top of the wick, and the candle is

put out. I only pray that they may not do the same thing with an electric light - if they do that then they, not the light, will be put out. Here the rules and regulations that we have learned in Sunday schools, the scriptures and the books that we have read so far, are of no use, because the problem is something which was not visualized by the people who formulated the old rules. These problems are not the perpetually recurring ones - these are something new. So, I have to look at them, and not go by the old standards.

There is a lovely little story in an Indian legend which I'd like to tell you. A man had heard "Thou shalt not utter falsehood", and he was tremendously impressed by the rewards offered - the promise of heaven, of lovely food, great luxury, and celestial nymphs. But then somebody comes and asks inconvenient questions - what does one do? It is not that one wants to bluff, but people make it impossible to stick to the truth. So, he decided to go to an ashram or cave in the Himalayas where there was no one - "only the monkeys and donkeys whose language I don't understand, and who don't understand my language". He took up his abode in a forest and, of course, didn't have to talk to anyone at all, so he didn't tell any lies. He was getting older and older, and was quite certain that in a few months or so he would pass away, straight to heaven. One day he saw a ruffian running with a drawn dagger dripping with blood. Running in front of him was an innocent looking person. The truthful man watching this drama saw the innocent pedestrian take one fork, and then the bewilderment of the man following as he puzzled over which road the other man had taken. "Hey, did you see someone running this way?" "Yes." "Which of the two roads did he take?" "This one" - he was sworn to speaking the truth. "Oh, thank you", said the man, ran and caught up with the other man, murdered him, took away his money and whatever else he had - and that was the end of that part of the story. Then the time came for this truthful man to die, and he was taken straight to hell. He protested, "I've been waiting for the dinner and the cocktail party and the nymphs and the dancing and so on, and you are taking me to hell - what for? Haven't I adhered to the law of truth for over twelve years?" "No, you ruined the whole thing by telling a great lie." "Lie, for years I didn't talk and only once did I talk." "And that's when you slipped." "But I told him the truth - the absolute truth." "Maybe, but your truth led to the murder of an innocent person, and therefore it is worse than a lie." The moral of this story is not that we have a licence to bluff or tell the truth as it suits us, but rather the refusal to lay down a law. The story refuses to lay down a law.

What is happening within me as I demand, "Tell me what I must do." I'm uncertain, not quite sure what to do, and I'm lazy to find out for myself what I should do. But even more important, if something goes wrong, I'll hold you responsible. If I make the decision myself and something goes wrong, I've no one to blame. When we ask someone else to make up our mind, we are literally looking for a scapegoat. If anything goes wrong, I can say, "He told me to do this, he misled me." But if it turns out well, I say, "What a wonderful person I am. Of course he gave me the suggestion and advice, but that was not important, it was all my doing." It is here that we have to be alert and vigilant - and this is what nobody wants. When asked "What must I do", if I'm a wise person, I will follow

the example of God, Christ, Krishna, Buddha, etc., and say "I have told what I consider to be right, but you must make up your own mind", because even in our day to day affairs, certain things are continuous, recurring, and certain things are not, but appear fresh. These we have to face afresh ourselves.

In the Gita and in the Katha Upanishad there is a state of being - liberation, moksha, nirvana, whatever you wish to call it - which is beyond all these pigeon holes and descriptions - virtue and vice, right and wrong. You cannot really capture it and say, "this is right and this is wrong"; it may be right, it may not be right, it may be wrong, it may not be wrong. We were talking about Ecclesiastes. There is a time for loving, and there is a time for hating, there is a time for peace, and a time for war, there is a time for sleeping, and there is a time for waking up. If it is true that life is so chopped up, how does one know which is the time for which? I wonder if you can see in this description of the changing pattern of life some constant which is beyond time. When you inquire into this, you realise that there is an undercurrent of knowledge or understanding which runs through one's whole life. This knowledge is vigilance, alertness or Viveka.

Viveka is not as we often make it sound - discrimination between right and wrong. It is not discrimination according to some scriptures I've read, or according to a tradition or a culture. How do I know what is right and what is wrong, especially if there is no right and wrong, because what appears to be right in one place, does not appear to be right in another. This shock was administered to me by a prominent Jewish lady. You know, Swamis and Roman Catholic priests are not supposed to marry - if they marry, they go straight to hell - OK, good. Then I was introduced to an Anglican Bishop. "Swami, this is Bishop ... and Mrs ... ." I thought to myself, "Huh? ... Oh! ... Mrs ... Mrs. Bishop?" Then I was told that in the Anglican Church it is optional - they may remain celibate, or they may marry. That's alright too - that's their business. Then I went to see an Israeli gentleman, and I happened to meet his wife who is a sharp-witted and rather forthright woman. She said, "Where do you live?" "Madam, I have no home." "Ah, you're not married?" "No, madam, I am not married." "Oh, sin!" And then she explained. "God made you a man, and you must exercise all the faculties that God has bestowed upon you, otherwise he'll think you're throwing it back upon Him, and calling Him a fool, telling Him he doesn't know what to give you." I thought to myself, "Oh God, you must be terribly confused; no wonder you don't show your face anywhere here." Because, when I die, I don't take the body with me, nor the dress, not even the identity cards or the passport. How does He know? Does He say, "You were a Swami, were you - so you were not married - OK, go on." Or, "You were a Rabbi, ah, so you were not married, go to hell." I hope I'm not worrying your conscience too much, but if you look a little closer at this, you will realize that for some reason or another, valid or not valid, we have invented a few codes. We call them morals, ethics, principles, etiquette, manners, and all sorts of things. First of all, we invent what is called sin, and this is drilled into us from our childhood - this is right, this is not right, this is sin, and this is virtue, this is vice, and this is so and so. You can take as much alcohol as you like, but not dagga. There is a big difference between the two - I have a bottle store, but no dagga



store. So, having invented this right and wrong, I jump into it, feeling quite secure, because I have made this myself. I'm quite convinced that this is right, and if I go through this door, I'll go straight to heaven. Even if I suffer there, that's alright, still I call it heaven. Like high-heeled and tight shoes, you suffer wearing them, but still it is the right thing to do. It is the fashion and after all, it is a great pleasure when you take them off, and you wouldn't want to miss this. So, I have invented this heaven, imagined this heaven, and I've also invented this right door through which to go to heaven. I'm clinging to this right door and wherever I go, I call that heaven. It is so secure, so beautiful.

This is the problem of the right and the wrong. Having created this discrimination, and having created this right and this heaven, later, when I'm unable to keep on this path and slip to the other side, I suffer. Marriage for a religious person is not wrong. If it is wrong, Jewish people also must suffer -how is it right for them? I have conditioned myself in this manner - then I struggle, struggle with this condition. "Whew, it's not possible, but adultery is terrible. Thou shalt not commit adultery is there in the Ten Commandments, but to live with this man is also terrible." So, long as I go on divorcing every month, I'm not committing a sin any more; in the eyes of God I'm alright, because I attend the church.

I modify this law, I modify this image that I have made of heaven, and of what is right. I looked at a recent translation of the Holy Bible; they want to make it more intelligible to all of us. In modern language, "Thou shalt not kill" is no longer in the Ten Commandments - it is "Thou shalt not murder." You can, if you find a man who is vicious, shoot him - it's alright, it's not murder. You know, you are protecting society, the good people of the world, you're doing all sorts of wonderful things. You must give a dog a bad name, and then hang it - it's perfectly alright, that's not murder.

I have a friend in New Zealand who is reading the original Greek and Latin versions of the Bible, and he says that, in the Greek language, there is no such word which measures up to the English word sin. The original Greek word in the Bible, which is unfortunately translated into sin, meant you have missed the mark - that's all. You have gone to sleep - that's all; there's nothing more to it. Then comes the famous repentance - what do I do if I have sinned? I'll do some extra prayers, you know, "God, I have sinned, please forgive me". Somehow I don't like the words forgive and excuse. When people say, "Excuse me", sometimes I shock them by replying, "I may not - who are you to tell me to excuse you." Even that "Excuse me", is a command. Why must I? The words excuse and forgive imply that someone has hurt or offended me. I have then judged or accused them, and now I am being asked to forgive them. When someone steps on my toes, I realise that he probably didn't do it intentionally, and I don't accuse him at all. So why should I excuse him? The excuse comes only after the accuse, the forgiveness comes only after the judgment. But why must I ask God to forgive me at all? Why shouldn't I rather ask Him to punish me? I wonder if you have ever asked yourself that question? Why must I ask God to forgive me, why must

He not punish me? If there is a tumour, and I go to a surgeon, what do I ask him to do? I ask him to remove it, not to give me one more to balance it. Why must I ask God to forgive me? I would rather say, "Look, I've been naughty - screw my ears, so that I may remember next time."

But in the original Greek, the word repentance did not mean the thing that we do week after week - I make a lot of profit in the black market, and as repentance give ten Rand in charity. It actually meant re-weighing. Why did I commit that sin, why did I miss the mark in the first place? Because my judgment was clouded. I didn't weigh the circumstances properly, my calculations were wrong, and so repentance means to take aim again - to weigh all the factors again, shoot once more, and not to miss the mark this time.

This is what is called appropriate action - not right action, not wrong action, but appropriate action. This is also what is called balance. Balance is to match my effort with the challenge in front of me. If I meet a thousand challenges every day, I must exert myself in the correct proportion, just to the extent of balancing the challenge - neither too much nor too little. But how much is too much? How little is too little? How do I know? In order to answer the question "How do I know?", and in order to solve all these problems, I have to be awake all the time. I don't have to adopt a certain pattern of life, but I must be alert and vigilant all the time. If I'm alert, I might discover - I might discover, it is not an automatic process. I might discover that most of my foolish actions spring from, either my brain, which is all the time calculating, or from my emotions. "If I do this, I'll get that", all the time calculating, calculating. There is a reason behind all my actions, and all my reasons are calculated towards some gain or the fulfillment of some expectation. If I love someone, whatever he does is alright, but if I hate someone, I don't mind if he is killed. These two constantly lead me into some kind of mess or other. I'm watching - these are not appropriate actions. A man is drowning - whether he is my friend or foe, the fact is that he's drowning. If I reason out the consequences, then I'm not going to save him. If I react emotionally, this is still not appropriate action.

It is only when these two are dropped that I see actions and circumstances as facts. I don't imagine anything, I see the world as it is, the circumstances as they are, and not as I hoped they might have been, nor as I fear they are, but just as they are. I see the circumstances just as they are, without the calculating intellect, and without the emotional heart clouding the whole thing. When I see the fact of my life, and the fact of the world around me, then there is appropriate action, something which is so natural to life. In nature there is no worry. Some trees have no leaves, and there is no worry; but if no hairs grow here on my head, there is a lot of worry. You look at a completely bald tree, it doesn't go to a hairstylist and get some leaves stuck on. If you are able to watch from within, you will realize what appropriate action really means. It is so simple and natural to life. It is so beautiful, and the only thing it demands, we are unwilling to do. This is constant vigilance. To find the appropriate action, from moment to moment, from hour to hour in our life, demands constant vigilance, constant awakened understanding

or intelligence. This enlightened intelligence is Buddhi. Buddhi means awakened intelligence, enlightened intelligence. And one whose intelligence is thus constantly awake, such a person alone is alive in this world. All others are asleep.

## 4. Appropriate Action

The other day we were discussing appropriate action. The problem with this expression is that it probably makes us wonder all the time, "what must I do?" The moment the word action is used, I'm interested in doing something. We are committed to the belief that to live is to act, to function, to work, to do something all the time. "What must I do to become a Yogi?" In order to find appropriate action, what must I do? All the time it is 'what must I do?' If someone says, "ah, forget it, you don't have to do anything, just be", you know the next question? "What must I do in order to be?" How do I find my state of being, or what must I do in order to find the state of my being? This doing seems to be the supreme necessity in our life - possibly yes. When I go into a garden and approach a rose bush, the rose doesn't seem to ask, "what kind of perfume should I wear?" It doesn't ask, "What kind do you like?" Yet the rose is doing something, it waits its perfume, it shows off its beauty, it wears bright beautiful, lovely colors. And it does something to you also. It excites or soothes your nerves, or it brings joy to your heart. How does it do this? I'm not saying anything new. Jesus Christ said, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

Can I, by struggling hard, find my being? As long as I'm struggling, I'm getting farther and farther from my being. The being is becoming the struggle. When do I want to find something? Only when I've lost it. I don't want to find my nose, it's here. And if I want to find my hair, I'm looking for a wig. I was wearing a wig, and I lost it. So when I use the expression, "I must find my being," I'm literally throwing it away, driving it away, and then looking for it. Can I ever search for, look for, or try to find the hair that grows on my head? It is there - I am the hair, I am the head. "Alright, then you are saying let us all go to bed and sleep, just be. Om Tat Sat." Is that my being? No, that's not my being either; I'm forcing myself into a laziness, lethargy. The other man is driving himself to death, trying to find some more money, some more comfort, some more property, and I am doing the reverse, forcing myself to sleep. What the other man seeks, I reject, but it is the same thing. Krishna pointed this out very beautifully in the Bhagavad Gita. "Nature functions in this universe, and it is the foolish egoistic man who says, 'I am doing all this'." At the other end of the scale comes another slap. "Yet foolishly you think, 'I will not do this'. But you are silly because nature will compel you to do it."

Somehow we have become caught in the philosophy of either ... or. Either I must be busy and working for my food, or I must go to sleep. There may be something in between - a middle path. This middle path may be discovered, not by either ... or, but by neither ... nor. This is another possibility. Must I try to find my being? No. Must I then give everything up and not look at all? No. Neither the doing nor the non-doing. Must I be terribly concerned with the affairs and miseries of the world? No. Say I am terribly interested in helping the suffering people of the world. What do I do? Am I really helping anybody? When

I was visiting Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, there was a festival going on. A minister's wife was in charge of a stall that was representing an orphanage. I stepped into the stall, and they greeted and welcomed me. And as I was about to leave, the minister's wife said, "Swami, you must pray for us." I asked, "What do you mean I must pray for you?" "That our work will prosper". I said, "If you ask my honest sincere heart's feeling, rather I'll pray that this institution may close down tomorrow morning." Though she didn't say, "How rude", I could read it in her eyes. In order to be able to pray, I must be confident that my prayers are heard by God, and when I pray, "God let this institution prosper", in effect I'm saying, "May there be more and more orphans". What for? Rather I would tell God, "Hey, stop all this orphanage business and let there be no more orphans in this world."

But we must not jump to conclusions. You know what you do when you jump to a conclusion? You go up about ten storeys - then jump to conclusion. But this is how our minds work. When someone says not to be terribly worried about these social services, the idea is not to therefore be totally oblivious of human suffering. Rather while I am trying to help people, I must be conscious of what is being done. Do I subconsciously wish that there should be more suffering in this world, so that I may engage myself in my hobby of going from door to door, doling out bread? Am I merely finding some kind psychological satisfaction for myself? In which case it is nothing but total selfishness, utter callous selfishness.

On the other hand, if I say, "Alright, let them die, it's their Karma", in a way this is better. I may be cynical, but you know me for what I am. It may be a better solution, for if you kick people against the wall, they will fight better. They may kill me first, but then that's what I deserve. This is what happened in India. The underprivileged people like the non-Brahmins and the untouchables were pushed against the wall, told that it was their Karma to suffer. The Brahmins have wonderful Karma from their previous birth, and therefore are born wealthy and prosperous. The others were crooks and murderers in their past birth, and therefore were born as non-Brahmins and untouchables. They were pushed to the wall, and when they hit the wall, they had nowhere else to go, so they hit back. And now they are ruling. Lovely. A Brahmin in India today is scared to declare himself a Brahmin. I'm not for or against this, but it is good to have a jolt to our own convictions - I'm convinced that this is good. Give them a blow, break them, and then look from a different angle. Look from a different angle, but without jumping to any conclusions.

Seeing all this, I decide to go to a cave, seclude myself, or I establish myself in a nice little niche in this world. I'm a healthy person, I'm quite happy within myself. I do my Puja, I meditate in the morning, stand on my head for half an hour, but who is interested in my standing on my head? Then again I see, "Ah, what am I trying to do? I'm trying to promote my health - silly, recycled potatoes. Why must I do this?" The body is nothing but recycled potatoes, jam, bacon and eggs, whatever you eat, that's all. Why must I be so terribly concerned about this flesh, which is bound to decay and perish. Why must I restrain the bubbling

energies of this organism. The natural function of this organism is to go to the aid of another organism which has fallen down. Why must I avoid this and say, "Let them all work out their own salvation?" Why is it so important that I must attain God-realization? What is the tearing hurry to see God now? God can wait, they say He's eternal, He's not going to disappear, and being eternal, He probably won't even grow any older. But my neighbour will grow older, so it is better to see him now. They say that I am also immortal, so what is this hurry for spiritual enlightenment? For the sake of this, I'm tearing myself out of my place in society. Therefore the "or" is not valid.

Having disposed of the "either" and the "or", the whole of life seems to be meaningless. To engage oneself in social service is absolutely useless, everyone is going to die, everything is going to perish. Why must I polish my shoes, when tomorrow they will be dirty again? Why must I be so concerned with this body, the same recycled potatoes and sandwiches, how is it so dreadfully important that I should live? As if, but for me, how would the grocery be emptied, how would the baker live? Is this my fate, have I been created just to polish off two bags of rice a month, chew a few vegetables, or cut the throats of a few chickens? Is my living, by itself, so important? When Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita seems to ridicule the concern with killing and being killed, this is his meaning. It is not advocacy of violence, but deflation of the value of physical life. It has no value at all. Neither social service nor self service, both are meaningless, and when you have psychologically, intellectually, spiritually, and with all your being, deflated the value of these two, then your being emerges.

A simple formula was invented one day in Mauritius. When I'm there, I usually go to a nearby girls' college on Tuesdays. I'm not paid for it, but I love it, it is a delightful thing to be with the young people there. One Tuesday it was raining, stormy, windy, and as I picked up my raincoat to go, someone asked, "Why do you want to go out in this rain and wind?" I replied, "What do you want me to do, stay here? Isn't that silly too?" Have you ever asked yourself, "Why must I stay here?" We always ask the question, "Why must I go out?" But do we ever ask the other? What is the motive? It is quite simple. To do anything in this world is stupid, and therefore I'm doing this. To do anything in this world is stupid, we pour milk and tea and coffee into this open mouth, knowing that the other end is open also. We try to preserve the body knowing that it is going to perish. Are we such fools, accumulating all sorts of things, and calling them mine, knowing that either I will leave them, or they will leave me. Everything in this world is stupid, so I'm doing this, walking to the college. Here is the neither . . . nor. I'm not interested in going to the college, nor am I interested in staying here. There is no motive that takes me to the college, and there is no motive that restrains me from going to the college. When both of these are knocked aside, then your being emerges. This is a beautiful thing.

Unfortunately we are committed to the pernicious dogma that nothing is possible without motivation. We have committed the grave blunder of thinking that our lives must be motivated, either by something good, or by something bad,

not recognizing that all motivation is bad. Some psychologists have said that children must be motivated in order to learn, and therefore we have provided motivation in the form of examinations to be passed, diplomas to be earned, but look at how many bits of mischief spring out of this motivation. The poor child must pass the examination, get the diploma, and so he turns upside down, takes some drugs, pills, coffee, anything to stimulate himself, works himself to death, cheats or bribes if necessary, and finally through all this corruption and struggle, gets the diploma and finds that it is not worth the paper it is printed on. So, a deputation goes to the Minister of Education complaining that the diploma has no value. They force him to enact some legislation, saying that those who do not possess this diploma shall not have a certain job, even though they may be qualified and able to do it better than the diploma holders. Thus society is divided into many camps, and the process goes on and on and on.

And then somebody said that you must introduce the idea that the whole of life is a game. Indian philosophy says that even God created the universe in the spirit of sport. Therefore children must have games, play games, and in this they will develop the spirit of working together, functioning together. In any game, one party must win, and the other must lose. If there is only one chair, and if two of us are running towards it, only one will be able to occupy it. In a game you learn to accept defeat with a smiling face, because it doesn't mean life or death to you. It is not a life and death affair, but then somebody sets up a pair of goal posts, and it is the death of the game. Now the goal becomes important, and if you are standing in front of it, I'll push you down. The goal is important, not the game. Then came success in the game. You know what success is? Success is what comes after, not what is. So, the success is important, not the game itself. Then as the games went on, there were a few important people who could never play the game themselves, so they formed themselves into gambling units. The players are fighting to win, trying to get to the goal post, and some very clever man comes along with the support of a few important people who have never played a game in their lives, and says, "Come on, tell me who is going to win. If your prediction is right you'll win ten rand, if it is wrong, you'll lose ten rand." This is simple, but then come the politicians, and it becomes the Transvaal against Natal. This is what is happening. Finally it is England versus Australia, and the newspaper headlines proclaim "Australia Defeated". Someone picks up a paper, takes a cursory glance, goes home and says, "You know, Australia has been defeated, we own Australia now". And then we wonder why all sorts of silly things went on at the Olympic Games this year. It was the accumulated effect of all these things. Whereas to play the game is a delightful thing - an indeterminable game, a game which has no goal post, a game which is an end in itself, which is played for the joy of the game.

That is the spirit of Yoga. There is no motivation, not even the motivation of going to heaven afterwards. Heaven may be boring, hell may at least keep us awake. It is the same with pleasure and pain. That is why these film stars get divorced every three months. No matter how beautiful and attractive as sex symbols they may be, they are boring to their husbands after three or four

months. If you see the same thing again and again, it is boring, you want something else. But have you ever been bored with a headache? Every time it hits you, it's new. It's beautiful, never boring, never old, you never take it for granted. You take your children for granted, you take your wife or husband for granted, your nice home and carpets for granted, you don't enjoy them any more, but the headache you never take for granted. When it comes, every time it's new, delightful. That is why it is so terribly important to have both these experiences. And so, when we lead this life, there is no motivation at all, not even the motivation of some kind of heaven afterwards.

This idea of heaven may be another trap, invented by well meaning holy men, to keep us all quiet. When you rebel and make their life miserable, they say, "If you do this you'll go to hell, so obey me, be nice, be gentle, be calm, don't protest, come to my church every Sunday (and bring some money when you come along) - do all these things, and you'll go straight to heaven, and have enjoyment for ever and ever." It may be boring. People say that you suffer and suffer in this world, so that later you may enjoy in heaven, but I don't know if I'm convinced. If it is winter and I'm cold and miserable, and someone says, "There's a fireplace hidden there, you can't see it, but as you approach you will know." If I come closer and closer, and find that it becomes more and more cold and miserable, I'll ask him, "Why is this?" If he says, "Never mind, just suffer this small bit and later you will enjoy," I won't be convinced. If there is really and truly a fireplace, as I approach it, every moment the temperature will rise. Every moment I will become warmer and warmer. This is my feeling toward even what you call God, or God-realization. If this God-realization is all bliss, absolute bliss uncontaminated with sorrow, then every step towards it must make me more happy. If I have to suffer to the last moment before happiness bursts, I may not recognize that happiness. I will have become so used to unhappiness that I may not know the other when I see it.

But one must live without any motivation whatsoever, not even the motivation that I'm going to enjoy life now. Motivation leads one into a mess. He who looks for happiness is one who is totally unhappy within. This is my standard argument for those who say, "Swami, you don't know how to enjoy life, take a glass of beer." I'm tempted to turn around and say, "You must be terribly unhappy - otherwise, why do you want to drink?" I'm happy as it is, I don't want it. If my happiness depends on that, if I'm seeking happiness there, then I must be unhappy within. So, instead of seeking this happiness that is supposed to be outside, rather let me become aware of that unhappiness that is in me. Therefore there is no motivation, either of enjoying an immediate happiness, or of suffering now so as to enjoy happiness later. No motivation at all. Neither am I seeking happiness, nor am I running away from happiness. Neither am I seeking success in life, nor am I running away from success in life. If it comes, alright, if it doesn't come, also alright, because I am what I am. There is a beautiful verse in the Bhagavad Gita that expresses this. "The Yogi does not run away from what seeks him." It doesn't say pleasure or pain, happiness or unhappiness, success or failure, but whatever comes ... How do you complete that sentence? There is no expression for it,



because we have never reflected on this. Whatever comes ... not accept it, not enjoy it, not suffer it. If you walk outside at noon, the sun shines upon you. What do you do? Enjoy it? No. Let it shine? As if you have a choice to restrain it from doing so, but say, "OK, let it shine." "Let it shine", is a terribly arrogant attitude. We have no expression to convey this, because we have never, never in all history, thought about this.

Therefore these things are expressed in a negative way - not because we love negation, or because the factor is not positive, but simply because we have no expression to cover it. We have never lived such a life, and therefore we have never coined a phrase to express it. Just as in French there is no equivalent for "good morning". Bon jour, bon soir, bonne nuit, but never bon matin. You know why? They don't know what morning means. If you never get up in the morning, to whom are you going to say "good morning". There is no need for such an expression. So we do not have a positive expression for this.

Therefore Krishna suggests that you examine your heart when things come to you - anything, the object is not mentioned. Whatever seeks the Yogi, he does not reject. Whatever goes away from him, he does not hold. Being absolutely neutral, being what he is, he leads an absolutely non-volitional, non-motivated, non-egotistical life. That in itself is supreme felicity, supreme blessedness. Then, if you want to bring God into the discussion, you say that the Yogi is a perfect channel for God's will. He is a perfect channel, because he is as God made him, without private motive, without private desire, without a private egotistical approach to life - again neither . . . nor. He is not interested in doing anything, nor is he interested in not doing anything. Neither ... nor, and when all these things just drop away from you, right action or appropriate action manifests itself.

## 5. Neither Reason nor Emotion

The last few nights we have been discussing how to live without creating headaches for ourselves through either "doing", or "not doing", both of which lead to the same destination - more and more complexity in our lives, and thus more and more problems. Both "doing" and "not doing" spring from the same source - me - I want to do it, I don't want to do it, and so long as this I decides, the problems will continue to worry and harrass us. But we have also noticed that there is a middle path, which is neither this nor that, and here we notice something interesting in human tradition. That which I cannot see clearly, I deify, I worship. That thing which I cannot understand must be God. Since I do not see this middle path - 'neither this nor that' is too much for the mind - I bring in God. "It is neither this nor that but God's will be done". To be neither this nor that demands what my Guru, Swami Sivananda, called eternal vigilance, and though this eternal vigilance is not disliked by the mind, it is at least unliked. Who wants to be eternally vigilant? So, therefore the middle path remains unclear, and I bring in God's will. But how do you know what is God's will? I know what my grandfather's will was, something he drew up just before he died. So, when I hear 'God's will', I am tempted to say, "Has God then decided to die?" If you and I can be honest with ourselves, I think it won't be difficult for us to admit that we do not know what God's will is at all. This is the whole fun. It is more difficult not to bluff others, but if we are honest, it is not hard to see that we do not know what God's will is, and that it is because we cannot see this middle path that we bring in God as a substitute for our own ignorance, and say "This is God's will". I'm not saying that there is no God's will, or that there is nobody in the world who knows God's will, this is another stupid statement. How can one know that nobody knows? How many people does one know, fifty or a hundred, and what is the population of the world? Have I asked them all?

So, without making any such statements, I am simply interested in seeing this middle path, not using God's will as an excuse to do what I like, but beginning from the honest confession that I do not know what God's will is. Now, what must I do, what can I know? I can, if I earnestly and sincerely look for it, discover the springs of my own actions. This is possible. I don't know if this is God's will or not, but I can know who it is who prompts me to do this, or more simply, the motivation. The majority of our actions are motivated, either by reason or by emotion, this we must be able to recognize. If we are real, sincere and earnest students of Yoga, we must be able to recognize this. But, motivated by reason, what does this mean? What does reason do? Somebody doesn't like me, gets up and smashes a couple of eggs on my head, what do I do? I remain quiet and say, "Om Shanti Shanti". But why do I do this? Because I know that then all of you will think, "Oh what a marvelous man!" My mind calculates all this in a split second. I want your good will, good opinion, so the reasoning suggests to me, "Keep quiet, pretend you are not affected at all, just say 'Om Shanti, Shanti'. So far only one doesn't like me, but doing this, I can make a hundred people like me." Inside I'm boiling, I could tear the man to pieces! Is it difficult to see what a tortured personality I'm bound to be? I gamble that, in return for suffering one

man's insult, I'm going to be rewarded by a hundred people's admiration. Then someone who is very fond of me says, "You shouldn't have done that, you should have given him his due!" I think, "Good heavens, I wanted this person's admiration, but all that I really and truly get is some more shouting, disappointment, and frustration" - the reward of my own mind's lengthy calculations. You know, the mind can calculate very fast. Computers calculate quickly, but the mind is a thousand times more efficient than a computer, and its calculations are usually directed towards an end result, a goal. If I achieve that goal, then, like most of these medical scientists, I will be tempted to repeat the performance.

So, if the calculation succeeds, I go on repeating it, until inevitably I am frustrated, and I realize that my calculation has failed. Because, though my calculation is directed towards the achievement of a result or a reward, this reward is not always dependent upon me alone, but on others also. If I am working in order to win your respect and admiration, I am taking it for granted that you have no brain of your own. But you can judge, you too can see, and there comes grief. So, in this way, the path of reasoning, of calculation, proves faulty.

The other thing is emotion. If when he gets up and smashes a couple of eggs on my head, emotion runs riot, and I roll up my sleeves and start boxing him; then he turns dentist and puts out a few of my teeth. It hasn't solved the problem, has it? When I react emotionally, there again I multiply the problem, I do not solve it. That's what we're seeing the world over today. An Arab hits an Israeli, the Israeli hits back, and the Arab hits the Israeli again - the ping pong goes on. Emotion is very closely related to one's own vanity, the ego sense, so that it becomes extremely difficult to know when to stop. I don't think I've seen a more mature person in this respect than my Guru, Swami Sivananda. He had fantastic control. He could even snap a sentence in the middle, to switch from the topic that was heating your system. That is when your emotions are completely under your control. It doesn't mean that emotions are not there; they are there, but your reactions do not spring from the emotions.

One must be able to observe oneself, and see these motivations. Is the mind or the reasoning the motivation of my actions? Or are the emotions motivating me? This I'm sure any mature person must be able to know. I do not know God's will, or even what God's will means, but I certainly know that this action springs from my reasoning faculty, or this action springs from my emotion. With some amount of inner discipline - but not discipline in the sense of controlling, rather, calm and peaceful observation of myself - it should be possible for me to eliminate these two. It should be possible to keep them in abeyance, knowing full well that they are bound to lead me into trouble.

Reason or calculation leads me into frustration. If I expect something to happen, when it does happen, I'm distracted, and if it doesn't happen, I'm frustrated. And emotions so cloud and complicate life, that one doesn't know where one's going, one is completely blinded. Therefore, if I vigorously avoid

these two, what remains? The I or the ego, or what you call the self, functions only through these two channels. Most of us don't know a third thing, omitting a discussion of instinctual behaviour. If you look into your own life, fifty per cent of your actions spring from your mind, the calculations of your brain, and the rest spring from your emotions. The ego knows only these two paths or extremes, one this and one that. But if I say 'neither this nor that', is living possible? That's the question : is living possible at all? Living means acting here, functioning and working. Is this possible if I avoid these two, neither nor?

I will give you a quotation from the Gita, but when I quote, I'm only hinting at a possibility. It is not that I can make an image from this quotation. Then this image is only going to be another mental gymnastic calculation, which will lead to frustration. When I do not know what something is, and I do not want to admit that I do not know, I create an image. So, if you avoid that danger of building images, I will give you a couple of quotations. "I do not do anything," says Krishna in the Gita, "Thus should a wise man mentate." Let's use a new word, thus should a wise man mentate - not think, it's not think or feel. The mind should be filled with this consciousness, "I do not do anything, even while performing all the actions inherent to life." It is not merely thinking, "I do not do anything", because the moment I think, I'm not doing anything, I have to fill up a vacuum. If I think that I'm not speaking here, then I have to supply the answer to the question, "Who is doing it?" And therefore I bring in God. "God is speaking through me, with my lips." I may say this, but it is only bluffing myself. But my inner being knows, "I am doing nothing at all", and therefore the very source of both these - reason and emotion - is removed. It is only after the very assumption, "I am doing this," disappears, that these two collapse. The reasoning (the calculation) and also the emotion, both of them collapse.

But still the question is not answered. "Who is it that is doing?" There is a lovely aphorism attributed to the great Yogi, Patanjali, though unfortunately it does not seem to have received the treatment it deserves. It is this, I'll translate literally and you construct the meaning. "The seer, sight only, vision only, pure." Supplying the verb is, "The seer is sight only, vision only, pure." It is beautiful, beautiful. When you open your eyes, there is seeing - seeing takes place. Sorry, that's an error, when the eyes are opened, not when you open your eyes, seeing takes place. And now, if you can, actually do what we are talking about. As the eyes remain open and seeing happens, how is it that there is the thought, "I am seeing him." Seeing is the only fact. Seeing is the fact.

But that seeing seems to develop a polarity, and the polarity divides the two sides of the seeing, the two ends of the seeing, the two poles of the seeing, into I and you. There is a very interesting exercise, which all of us can practice. Take a walk along the beach or in the garden, preferably alone, somewhere close to nature, so that you are surrounded by its abundance and are alone. As you walk, concentrate your mind first on the footfall. Instead of walking automatically, make it deliberate, so that you actually and literally feel the ground under your feet, each foot is meaningful. It is as if all your attention is concentrated on the

soles of your feet. Walk like this, and if you have a mantra, repeat the mantra along with, synchronized with the footfall. Om ... Om ... Om ... Get absorbed in this, in the footfall, in the sound of the footfall, and the mental chanting of Om. You'll find that in a few minutes there is a slight sort of hypnotic state, a light-headed feeling. It's better not to force the next step, the next step must somehow happen; but if before you start walking you have already made up your mind that this question must pop up at some stage, it will. The question is, "What if I am not here?" I'm walking, I'm listening to the sound of my footfall, I'm repeating the mantra, the I is very prominent in all these - suddenly you stop - "What if I'm not here?" This question can obviously not be answered by the mind, because the mind is the product of the I, so the mind cannot answer this question. Suddenly you stop dead and say, "What if I don't exist?" You'll probably experience what has beautifully been described as "the peace that passeth all understanding."

Then suddenly it is possible for one to wake up to the fact that the world goes on, everything goes on, totally regardless of me! Nothing in the world is altered, because I am here or I' am not here. That is the moment of truth. When you return with this experience, you are prepared to let life happen, let whatever happens, happen. If there is hunger, the hunger eats the food. If there is thirst, the thirst drinks the water. If there is fatigue, the fatigue goes to sleep. So, all things happen, and nothing is cut off - you're still a wonderful mother, or father, or husband, or wife - everything goes on, but just one thing is absent, the I. "I am doing this." Things happen, and they keep happening, and a lot more effectively than if they were products of the reasoning and the emotions. Life becomes so beautiful, so fruitful, so delightful because you let things happen. It is a bad expression, you don't let things happen, you don't accept things, you don't reject things, nothing. No words can describe what that life can be, a life totally devoid of the ego sense, totally devoid of emotional motivation, totally devoid of calculation. But one must be very careful here. It is not that the life of that person will be completely free of emotions, oh no. Even the emotions happen, even these happen. A child comes in front of him, and there is hugging; he doesn't hug, there is hugging. Why not? If there is cotton, and a lighted match comes near it, the cotton catches fire. It happens. So, here is a wonderful young man, there is his wonderful young wife, and when they come together, it happens, that's all. Even the husband and wife relationship, or father and son relationship, or mother and daughter relationship, all go without the polarisation of I-you.

There is only the acting, the experiencing, the seeing. That itself is the truth, and in that there is no defect. In seeing there is no defect, in seeing there is no expectation, there is no hope, seeing does not hope. When the eyes are open and there is seeing, the seeing sees the grey hairs, and there is no expectation of seeing black hair, because the seeing can only see what is true. But when I see you, what happens? I see you as my friend, and there is an expectation, or I see you as an enemy, and there is another expectation. But this seeing is not a glassy, stony affair. The seeing can go on, emotions can come up, thoughts can come up, everything can happen. The only thing that is not called up in this seeing is either like or dislike, hopes or fears - these things do not exist. You enjoy, of course you

enjoy; if there is pain, the pain is felt, but I do not feel pain, pain is felt. If someone screws your nose, the mouth cries. Both are mere happenings, it is not as if my nose is screwed and I cry; the nose is screwed and the mouth cries.

If one can enter into this spirit, then one's behaviour in this world becomes spontaneous. Spontaneity is not instinctual behaviour or spasmodic behaviour, but it is the behaviour of the person in whom the ego sense has been dispelled, the shadow of the ego sense has been dispelled, and whose actions are not motivated by reason and emotion. It is such a person we call a Yogi or a saint or a holy man. We say God works through him, because we don't understand how he ticks, how he functions in this world. It is only here that our problems can all be dissolved - not solved, dissolved. Because when you and I solve a problem, we usually create two more. What we call a solution is really the bride, the problem is the bridegroom; and as soon as they come together, they give birth to two more. A few more problems, never ending. It's only when we enter into the spirit of these teachings, and our actions and behaviour become spontaneous, that the problem dissolves without mating with the solution. The problem itself dissolves, and then there is no worry.

## 6. Yoga - The Science of Discovery

This evening I have been asked to recite the second verse of the morning hymn.

praatarbhajaami manaso vachasaamagainyam,  
vaacho vibhaanti nikhilaa yadanugrahena,  
yannetinetivachanairnigamaa avochuh,  
tam devadevamajamachyutamaahuragryam

In the early hours of the morning, I adore Him, Who is the God of gods, Who is beyond the reach of mind and speech, and by Whose Grace alone speech is illuminated, Whom scriptures describe by the Neti-Neti formula, Who is unborn, Achyuta, and the Primordial Being.

It is beautiful. Without even necessarily mentioning the word God, here we adore this being, and who is this being? Agryam, he was the first. I think that we should get rid of the idea that God is either he or she, masculine or feminine. We naturally feel reluctant to call this God Almighty, the creator of all beings, by a neuter gender. It offends our logic, so we think either he must be a father or a mother, either a he or a she. This is all due to our own incapacity, inadequacy. And our spiritual and intellectual inadequacy is adequately reflected in the language that we use. I do not use words that my mind cannot reach. If someone refers to God as a he, it is because he is a he himself, or he prefers the masculine, and so therefore God is created as a he. And then someone else creates a God who is a she, and as neither of these seem to be satisfactory, we combine them into a hermaphrodite. But God may be something other than this masculine, feminine, and neuter. So, to avoid all conflict, all trouble, all argument - we adore in the early hours of the morning God, who is not mentioned here at all, the first, the first being, primordial being. Primordial not in the temporal sense, but the first one, unborn.

The first one must naturally have been unborn, because, if it was born of something, then it was not first. Unborn, and therefore eternal, and therefore the first. It is quite simple, if you go on asking yourself which came first - the hen or the egg - about half a minute before death you will come to the conclusion that something else was first, before both of these. Until then you keep on struggling, about to come to a conclusion. But when one is about to come to a conclusion, he realizes neither this nor that, there is something else. That's the end.

So, this first being was unborn, but this next word, Achyutam, is a bit difficult to translate. Achyuta is something that does not slip from your hands, or something which does not allow you to slip from its hands, both ways. It is a beautiful expression, though hard to translate into a single word. Chyuta is to slip, Achyuta is the opposite, unslipping; but who slips what? It may mean either that you cannot let God slip from you, or God cannot let you slip from Him. There is this inseparable eternal relationship. In other words, it says you are caught.

So this being we adore in the early hours of the morning is unborn, Achyuta, and the primordial being. I think I know what unborn means, but what is true is

that I think I know, I don't know. The thing that you know, really and truly, that you conceive in your own mind, is either born already, or is about to be born. Everything that is conceived, is either born in one way, or about to be born in another way. So that, which is conceived, cannot be the unborn. Or the unborn cannot be conceived. And therefore the verse starts with manaso vachasaamagamyam. It is something which your mind and your speech cannot reach. You cannot conceive of this primordial first being, the unborn, you cannot express or describe this being that is unborn, eternal, primordial, first. And yet what am I doing? I am trying to describe and before trying to describe, I am obviously trying to conceive. So the holy man who composed this, comes back, and hits you from behind. He says vaacho vibhaanti nikhilaa yadanugrahena - the very act of description is made possible because of this. I don't know what this unborn being is, but I must be able to understand, and come face to face with that which enables me to speak. And now a great and tremendous challenge is hurled at you. You say you don't know God, you don't want to know God, then forget it, that is not important. It is not important at all to realize or understand the God who is unborn. If he is not born at all, why look for Him? Also the verse assures us that He cannot slip from your hand, and you cannot slip from His hand, so it is alright, why bother? But here is the challenge - that which enables you to express yourself, that which enables you to function, that which enables your speech to function, can you know what it is?

The Yoga Asanas lead us from one to the other, from the gross to the subtle to the subtler. I think I know what my body is. I think I know - I don't know at all. I am able to sit very straight, I go on sitting like this for about one hour, why is it I am not able to sit any more? I am still alive. And if I am standing here and my heart fails, I just collapse. My blessed two feet which have carried me around the globe are unable to support me when something is missing. I don't even know my body and how it functions. I am drinking milk, I am eating sandwiches, lovely rice and curry, but up comes hair. I don't think I have eaten anything that could be spun into hair. If I had swallowed some balls of cotton it could be explained. But I have not eaten anything like that. Yet whatever I eat, hair comes out. There is apparently an energy within me, which is able to perform magic, a miracle. The milk that I drink is converted into the Swami, and the milk that you drink is converted into you. Silly isn't it? I don't think, if you and I were in charge of this mechanism, we could achieve this.

This energy is not like electricity, however. This energy seems to be endowed with a certain undescribably great intelligence - this energy seems to know what to do. Energy functions blindly, but this energy in the body functions supremely intelligently; it knows exactly what is needed. That is the difference between electricity and Prana, or the energy that functions in the body. There is a tape recorder here, and I want to have a hot cup of tea. I set the water on top of it, nothing happens. Nothing happens, because that energy is blind energy which knows only how to run a tape recorder, it doesn't know how to warm a cup of tea. But the body's energy, Prana, is able to do fantastic things. It is again beyond conception, beyond description. When we are able to name a few bones, we



become scientists. There is even a thing we've called innominate bone. Innominate means without a name, and that itself is given as a name. We are very easily satisfied, we read these two words, and are quite satisfied. We don't enquire, we don't try to see exactly what something is and how it functions. By this I am merely trying to suggest that we don't even know the body. As science dives deeper into each individual cell, and discovers what marvels it performs, divine mystery is uncovered. This body is maintained, made to function by this energy, and either this energy itself is intelligent, or there is an intelligent controller behind this energy. One can look at it both ways. The intelligent controller we call Purusha. If you can visualize each cell in the physical body as an individual in a city, this Purusha is king of the city. As there are a few billion cells in the body, it is a most populous city over which this king presides.

There are these three, the body, this physical body which apparently functions because of a certain in-dwelling energy, and both of these functioning in obedience to this Purusha. But it is not as though there is the land South Africa, and on top of it there are some people, and in Pretoria there is the government. It may be another way. There is a copper wire, and through it passes electricity, but there is not a hole in the wire for the electricity to pass through. When electricity passes through the copper wire, it is totally unlike water flowing through a pipeline. When water flows through a pipeline, the pipeline is not water, it is still cement, and the water flows inside it. But in the case of electricity, when electricity flows through the copper wire, the whole wire is electricity. You dare not touch it. Even so, when we say that Prana flows through this body, it flows through every cell of your being. It is as omnipresent in this body as the physical cells themselves. This whole mass, the physical body, is interpenetrated by this energy called Prana. What then is the Purusha or king? The king seems to be a certain intelligence, or law, which the Indians call Chit Shakti. Chit meaning consciousness.

If we go back to the copper wire, the copper wire is the body, and electricity, the energy that flows through this copper wire, is Prana. Either water or electricity can flow through a copper tube, though you can easily see that the flowing is different. But what exactly is the difference? In other words, what makes electricity, electricity and water, water? Why doesn't one behave like the other? There is a certain characteristic in electricity which makes it electricity, and that characteristic or Dharma, its own, is what makes electricity, electricity as distinct from what makes water, water. This is the mysterious intelligence which endows each element with its own peculiar unique characteristic. This is what is called Purusha, the intelligence that makes you, you and nobody else, and the Swami, the Swami and nobody else. And this Purusha is able to utilize the energy or Prana, to assimilate all matter that enters into the body. Assimilate means to become similar to. Therefore, this matter, the potatoes, the tomatoes and the sandwiches, is all assimilated and becomes like unto this body. This is the remarkable intelligence or inner king presiding over the city.

The purpose of yoga is to discover this. Discover, not conceive, because this is

something which is unconceivable and therefore undescribable. But it can be discovered. Vaacho vibhaanti nikhilaa yadanugrahena, as the verse says, it is by the grace that I am able to speak and you are able to hear. But we may make an error and think, "Ah, the thing that enables me to speak, vocal chords, that must be God." Then we cut out the vocal chords, and put them on a pedestal. But then I can no longer even worship - I can't sing. So that we may not commit this blunder and foolishness, the verse repeats again, Yamnetinetivachanairnigamaa ayochuh. Don't try your mental powers here, because though this is positive, it can only be approached in a negative way. When you have eliminated all this, you'll see or you'll discover what the truth is.

Yamnetinetivachanairnigamaa avochuh, tarn devadevam. It is a difficult thing again. Deva is supposed to be God, but the root of the word Deva is exactly the root of the word day, divine, light. Devadevam, the light of all lights. What is the light of all lights? Here is an electric light, the sun is another light, the moon is another light, fire is another light, but what is the light of all lights? Sight. If the sight is not there, light or no light, I cannot see. What is sight, what is able to see? When you perceive this, then you discover the intelligence.

So the practice of Yoga enables us to discover, not to conceive, not to describe, but to discover. When you try to discover something, the discovery is genuine only if you did not anticipate it. If you anticipated what the discovery was going to be, then it is no longer discovery. It is as if you had lost a bunch of keys and now you have found them. That is not discovery. Discovery is genuine discovery, only if you have never anticipated what was going to be there. You are sitting on a mat. If you lift the mat and there is a mamba, that is discovery! If you lift the mat and find the floor, that is not discovery, you knew it was there.

Yoga is such a science of discovery. And the science of discovery approaches the whole subject without prejudices, without any preconceived notions, knowing that all these conceptions are conceptions and not truth, that all these descriptions are descriptions and not truth. As I undertake this adventure of discovery, self-discovery, I dare to become aware of the body and its potentialities, what a marvelous piece of machinery it is. How does it work? I'm discovering. Who makes it work? I'm discovering. Who is I? You go on discovering, deeper and deeper, until you discover that what was engaged in this adventure, is the ultimate truth. And this is the end of Yoga.

## 7. Lifting the Cover

The practice of Yoga is becoming more and more popular, and quite naturally most of us begin with the Yoga postures. They are something that I can do, something that makes me feel that I am "doing Yoga". When I first started practising Yoga as a little boy of thirteen, this was where I began. To stand on one's head seemed the ultimate thing. In India it is not very difficult for young people to sit in the lotus posture, though to sit erect and stare at the tip of one's nose, this was something unusual. Yoga had to be something unusual. And I, as a practitioner of Yoga must be unusual, exceptional, a special person different from others and therefore superior. This often forms the basis of our Yoga practice.

So, I got a few books written by my Guru, Swami Sivananda, on various aspects of Yoga, and started to practice seriously. He had said that perfection in a Yoga posture was attained when one could hold it for three hours. I was heading towards this when I joined the Master's ashram in 1945. However, I was surprised to discover that not many there were practising Yoga Asanas. I used to wonder, "When do you people stand on your head?" It was then that I discovered that standing on one's head was not all, that there was a lot more to Yoga than twisting and turning the body. The final disillusionment came only this year when I happened to see a troupe of Russian acrobats. A young man and his wife jumped onto the stage, she clasped his hands and with a few quick movements just flowed up his body until she stood upside down on his outstretched arms. Then he dropped one arm and she, balancing on his other arm, did all sorts of scorpions and other fantastic poses. I sat there fascinated. "How is this possible? I can't do that! Not in fifteen lifetimes, let alone in one. No, no more Yoga."

But what is Yoga, and what am I looking for? Am I seeking physiological perfection? But what then is physiological perfection? One culture may think it is attractive for women to be slim, another finds beauty only in plump, solid women. There are not even any standards for such perfection. Yet even if we do achieve some measure of physiological perfection, the silly thing doesn't seem to last. Up to a certain age, the body may be supple and beautifully proportioned, but past this point one can do nothing. So, what is it we are trying to achieve? The only thing that one can really and truly say is health. Neither the attempt to attain a certain physical form, nor the absurd desire for physical immortality is meaningful. If you wish for physical immortality, the sensible thing is to hire a sculptor to immortalize you in stone. No other physical immortality has ever been achieved by man. But health, yes, this is possible. Though what exactly is health? We say absence of sickness, but what is sickness? What is disease, and where is it located? Is it in my body?

Once I nearly did a very stupid thing. An aged Swami in our ashram had been suffering from asthma for many years, and one very cold morning in December we came into his room and found him dead. He had collapsed during the night. In Rishikesh, when a Swami dies, the necessary arrangements are carried out simply, with a minimum of expense. There is a bit of ceremony, the body is

bathed in Ganges water, some worship offered, and then it is carried to the middle of the river and thrown in. As we prepared the old man's body, someone called for the water and I almost said, "You know, he was an old man suffering from asthma, rather get some hot water from the kitchen." I stopped myself just in time. I looked at the body. "Did the body suffer from asthma? Then it must be suffering even now." But the face was so peaceful and wonderful. Then I watched as we poured bucketsfull of cold Ganges water over the body. "Did the body feel cold?" No, not a shiver. Then where is this thing called disease? Is it in the soul? What exactly is disease?

We have never asked ourselves these simple and relevant questions. We have been taught that disease is the opposite of health, but it may not be. Disease may be one thing and health something entirely different. The word health comes from the same root as the word whole. To heal is to make whole. But this wholeness has been shattered in us. My body has not been shattered, it is still intact, but the health has been shattered. Now if you look at the word disease, you see quite another thing. Disease is the opposite of the absence of ease. There is no ease, no bliss, no peace. I am worried, anxious, fearful. This is disease. Disease is not in the body, but change may occur in the body as a result of disease. There may be change in the structure and functioning of the body. For example, if a young man suddenly develops grey hairs, one may suspect worry and anxiety as the cause. This change may be the result of disease. However, if an aged man's hair turns grey, this is not the symptom of disease, but part of a natural process. The body builds up and up until it reaches its peak, then it slowly builds down and down until death occurs. While coming down, the organs of the body give out one after the other, and if I am a sensible person, I will be aware of this and make the necessary adjustments. Not fight it, or be shy of facing it, but see it as quite natural. If I want a little boy to grow up into a young man, I also want the young man to grow into an old man, naturally. There is nothing wrong with either one or the other, with either growing up or growing down. Certainly there are physiological changes connected with growing old, but I can't call them disease. What then is disease or dis-ease? In order to discover this, I must discover myself, I must see this dis-ease in myself. And in order to discover what health is and how it has been shattered, again I must discover myself. Yoga is the science of that discovery.

The Yoga postures, if done properly, are merely part of this self-discovery. One of the most foolish things in this practice is to compare oneself with another. I am not discovering the person next to me, I am discovering myself. So, one must not even look at one another. There is the fact that within me the wholeness has been shattered. I must see this. There is also the fact of disease, absence of ease. I must discover it. But what is discovery? My hands are covered by this shawl. If you wish to discover my hands, what must you do? Before you can discover my hands you must see very clearly what is covering them. You cannot see my hands, but you can see the cover. It is the same in this business of self-discovery. I cannot be ashamed of my physical weakness, restlessness, lack of peace or nervous struggle. It is much more sensible to see clearly that there is something wrong, see that

there is anxiety and fear, see this disease. I must see the pain which means that something has been shattered in me, that health has been shattered. As I see these things I am seeing the cover. I am seeing the tension, anxiety, vanity, but not health because health is not there. When I see clearly, I cannot bluff myself. I am not relaxed. I am not at peace. I am full of tension and I must see this tension, see it as a cover. When I see the cover clearly, then I can drop it. When I see the shawl clearly, I can lift it and discover the hands.

This is true even with what we call physical illness. I tend to regard these physical Yoga practices and diet as a discovery of the purity of the physical organism. Through wrong living and wrong eating, the physical cells of the body become covered with toxins. Through the practice of these Yoga Asanas, I discover this. I discover that what was once pure and healthy, is now covered and asleep. This discovery is important, because only this understanding will prevent me from covering this purity even more and more by the use of what you call intoxicants. What is an intoxicant? Something which, when taken inside, becomes toxic. It is fantastic what people will do. They practise Yoga hoping to purify the brain, have psychic vision and fly through the air, and then immediately afterward they have a glass of wine, knowingly calling it an in-toxicant. Then we wonder why after practising Yoga for twenty-five years, nothing seems to have happened.

This is not discovery, but more and more covering, more blankets on those pure brain cells. To discover one must have the courage to see the cover, and also a certain calmness is necessary. The Yoga postures bring about physiological calmness. When you assume these unusual positions, parts of the body which have been asleep for a long time, begin to wake up. This is why you feel a bit of pain, the sleeping parts may not wish to wakeup. But this pain is a healthy pain, one which the student of Yoga should learn to enjoy. You are discovering something which had been forgotten, something which had long been covered by blankets of laziness and ignorance. Then, as you go on with this practice, another wonderful thing happens. The circulation of Prana is restored. This is what had been shattered. This is the health that was shattered.

Physiologically, other changes will come. The blood circulation will improve, the toxins and poisons that have covered and cluttered the cells of your body and brain will gradually be cleared, and you will discover the purity of your physical being. With this a wonderful sense of well being comes. It is not as though while you stand on your head some kind of angel will come and pour nectar into your ears. When the toxins disappear, the purity of your own physical being is revealed. Naturally, therefore, the Yogis claim that Yoga can "ward off old age and enable one to conquer death". I am sure you have seen this in some Yoga texts. However they don't tell you exactly what this means. Of course you ward off old age. If I had not practised Yoga I would have grown old when I was twenty-five, but practising Yoga, I grow old when I am fifty-five. It doesn't mean that old age never comes. And conquering death means only conquering the fear of death. This is the true conquering of death. One becomes so pure that one sees nature as

it is, without misunderstanding either life or what one calls death.

The physical aspect of Yoga is only one part, however. As I go deeper within myself I must discover the nature of this disease that troubles me. Where have I lost this peace or how has it been submerged? In order to see this disease, this cover, I need a quiet, silent mind and the ability to turn within. Again the Yoga Asanas must teach me this. If they don't, they are merely gymnastics. They must teach me to observe my own body - what happens in each movement, how beautifully the whole body adjusts itself with every new position. I must watch and learn that for each action there is a compensation - this is the discovery of balance. The delicate balancing is so beautiful. When I observe this, I discover that there is a lot more intelligence built into each cell of my foot than I ever suspected. When I discover this, my fear and anxiety disappear. What am I worried or anxious about? Left to itself the body is capable of living in great health and peace.

As we go on in this great adventure of self-discovery, all anxieties disappear. They disappear because they were born of ignorance. I did not know myself, I was not even interested in self-discovery. Or perhaps I was afraid of self-discovery because the moment one turns within one sees the cover, how ugly it all is, how full of fear and anxiety. I didn't want to look at that and therefore I lived in a world perpetuating this inner fear, loving this disease and going from doctor to psychiatrist and then gradually to the undertaker. But Yoga must teach me. Here lies the science of self-discovery. Even the Yoga Asanas are framed so as to bring about this inner awakening and awareness, the consciousness and awareness of the disease inside, the shattered pieces of the personality. It must happen and it will if I let it.

As I begin to discover my own personality, I see brutality, violence, selfishness, jealousy and vanity. When I see this, it hurts me. I look at children - they are so pure, so beautiful. When and where did I pick up these covers? Then I am able to lift these covers, one by one and again find the purity of my whole being. And if I have some faith in God, I may discover the wonderful architect of the whole universe, including this body. Even if I don't believe in God as some kind of super Divine Creator in the sky, when I look within and see my own body and how marvellously it functions, I must believe in some sort of God. How in spite of the atrocious life styles we have adopted, we still live, is a fantastic miracle. The air we breathe is polluted, the water we drink is polluted, the food is contaminated, and still we live. Such fantastic power and wisdom is built into each cell of our body. And it waits to be discovered. Discovered not with the view to attaining physical immortality, but with discovery itself as the goal. This self-discovery is the goal of Yoga.

## 8. I am what I am

What we need in life is a certain simplicity which is not something you can hang on a tree and reach towards. Holiness, harmony, Yoga, love, God, none of these can be positively described or positively grasped. That which is grasped becomes dead almost immediately. Happiness ceases to be happiness the moment I hold it. When I hold tight to it, it is dead. The salve is true of the thing called holiness. Holiness means to be whole. Harmony, holiness, Yoga, all mean the same thing. If I am whole, there is no problem, there is no difficulty, there is no conflict or contradiction in my life. It is only when the mind says something, the heart says something else, and life flows in another direction that we are torn into many little bits. We all think lovely thoughts, wonderful thoughts, but deep down inside there is non-acceptance of these concepts produced by our thinking, and life is bewildering. The mind says one thing and the heart says something else. In which direction should life flow? This is the problem, a tug of war all the time.

Yoga is merely a technique to find a solution to this problem of inner conflict. It has nothing to do with any religion whatsoever. The conflict is within me, not outside. I see some problems outside, but they are a reflection of what is in me. If I get a newspaper I see about 2.000 such problems in each morning edition. Newspapers are supposed to tell us what is happening in the world, but they are only full of crimes, riots, murders, and wars. These are not the only things that take place in this world. But the newspaper only tells us something grim, something vicious, something to upset the mind. It is not even a one-sided picture, but a small corner of one side of the picture. Who is responsible for this? Why shouldn't someone report that today 30.000 people got married, 500.000 fell in love - why does nobody tell us? The fact that nobody, nobody tells us anything good is to me almost conclusive proof that there is a streak of violence in us. There is this conflict in us, this aggressiveness and hate already itching, itching to express itself. The trouble is not outside. Many of you are familiar with the scripture called the Bhagavad Gita. In the Gita Krishna tells Arjuna to get up and fight. He is not sanctioning fighting or violence but showing that Arjuna's argument against fighting is to cover up his own cowardice. When I use a wrong argument, I am covering up the truth. Is it possible for me, therefore, to strip the truth of all shoddy argument and to see it as it is in all its nakedness? When I was in Europe they were having a dock workers' strike in England. The newspapers reported that a hundred thousand chickens were to be gassed - "tragic victims of the dock workers' strike." If the dock workers had not stopped working, they would have only lived another month before being sent to market. The objection is not to the killing of the chickens. The important thing was that they were going to be killed before they came to market.

One must see this thing clearly - the violence is in me. So long as the violence is in me I can always find a reason why this should be done, why that should not be done. This violence is wrong, that violence is right, that was aggression, this was defence. The moment the mind does this you become part of that violence. And therefore Krishna tells Arjuna that he is using a wrong argument to cover up

something. If that is removed and you look into yourself, face the violence within, you see that death is inevitable in this world. Nobody who is born is going to live forever. Death is inevitable in this life, but that is not to say that violence is therefore permitted. If I see that that which I am defender is also bound to die, then I will not defend it, and therefore will not be violent. If I know that the thing that I defend in a violent manner is also bound to perish, I will not defend it and therefore will not be violent. People will indulge in violent behaviour until they realize the utter futility of killing one another. If someone whips out a gun and points it at me, I would merely tell him, "Why are you degrading yourself, why are you wasting your time? Leave me alone and I will die in a couple of years. You are angry, you want to get rid of me, but you don't have to get rid of me, I'll go. Just wait - a year or two won't make any difference."

That is what Krishna pointed out in the Gita. We are all going. What are we defending and what are we offending? There is no value in it. The reason why this goes on and on endlessly is because we are evading a vision of ourselves, the discovery of ourselves. In order to make this discovery we will have to become intensely aware of this aggression and this violence. Here I am caught with something that I cannot get rid of - I cannot get rid of it because it is me. How can I get rid of myself? It is me, it is not a garment that I can take off and throw away. I cannot get rid of it, but then can I sanction it? "If I don't hit this man now, he is going to hit me later." Then he is forced to hit me. In anticipating his violence, I become violent. There is violence in me and if I see violence in him it is only because it is in me. This violence is looking for an excuse to express itself - the violence in me is going in search of a cause. I must become intensely conscious of this aggression in me searching every day for a cause. One day it will find some social injustice, the next day it will find some religious intolerance or dogma, and another day some domestic problem. I go on day after day, finding one excuse after another for the expression or manifestation of this violence within me. It is not only within me, it is me. I must become intensely aware of this and from here meditation comes. Meditation starts from here. All the breathing techniques, all the Mantras are mere aids - very powerful and terribly valuable aids, but aids. I must know how to turn my mind within, I must know what it feels like to look within and therefore I create the Mantra, I visualize the form of God, etc.

But to discover the inner personality I must first become intensely aware of the cover, which is beastly. However, I am not ashamed of it because it is me. This violence that I have seen is a cover and I, in order to lift it, must know what the violence is made of. I must know its inner substance and so I use a Mantra or the image of God. I wonder if those of you who meditate have ever thought about this. When you visualize an image of God within, you see it sitting there quite real, but have you ever asked yourself what it is made of? Even while looking at me you can visualise a picture of Buddha or Jesus Christ within you - what is it made of? Don't say mind or imagination because we don't know what that is. Imagination only means image-in. But what is it made of? Paper? Stone? When I ask myself that question I acquire the ability to see my own mind stuff. And therefore, when I look at this violence again, I know what it is made of.



But this is another tricky thing. Just before a soldier takes off in his bomber he takes leave of his girl and his heart is full of love - from head to toe he is only love. But soon he is ready to bomb and kill everyone in sight. How does this happen? One minute I am full of love and affection and the next I start bullying. Are these changes going on within me, or am I changing from moment to moment? What is it that is changing from moment to moment? One minute I am love, then I am jealousy, next I am hatred. But once I am able to look within and see this cover, I have discovered the most vital and wonderful truth, that the mind is one, and this one undergoes constant change. This one substance undergoes constant change. Once you have discovered this then the next step is extremely easy, but there is a danger also. So long as you live you will never really and truly be free from any of these things. You cannot say, "Once I was a terrible bully, but now I am practising Yoga and have become holy, holy, holy." You cannot say this because the mind stuff, the mind substance is still there, and with the right stimulus can again be converted into aggression.

Therefore the Yogi is constantly vigilant, discovering himself all the time. When I know that it is only the mind stuff that is changing all the time, I am able to observe these changes that take place within and see that I am free from it. Then a revolutionary change takes place in your whole personality. This light that has become aware of the substance that changes realizes that it is free from the changes that take place in the substance. A tremendous revolution takes place in the whole being. Then by nature I am good - I don't want to be good, I don't wish to be good - goodness becomes inevitable.

There is a story told of a holy man who went to have a bath in the river, and as he was bathing he saw a scorpion which had fallen into the water and was being borne downstream. Almost without thinking, he stuck his right hand under the scorpion and tried to lift it ashore. But as soon as he raised his hand the water drained off and the scorpion stung the hand and the hand instinctively dropped the scorpion back into the water. But he still saw the scorpion struggling for life so he stuck his left hand underneath and again the scorpion repeated his performance. Only then he began to think - "As soon as the scorpion comes into contact with my hand it naturally stings. I must be a bit wiser." This time he put both injured hands together, scooped up the scorpion with a little water in his palms and saved it. This performance was watched by two people, an old lady and a young man. As the holy man came out of the river the old lady was saying, "Ah, he is a marvellous saint. Even though the scorpion stung him twice, he still saved its life." But the young man said, "Silly old fool. The scorpion showed its nature and stung him twice and instead of letting it die, the silly fool saved it." The holy man just looked at both of them and said, "I am neither such a great saint nor such a fool as you think I am. I am - that is all. I am what I am, and the scorpion is a scorpion. It is no good saying it is vicious - it is not vicious. The scorpion is a scorpion, and I am what I am. The scorpion being a scorpion stung me, and I being what I am saved him." That is Self-realization.



## 9. Seeing the Fracture Inside

I think that all of you know what Yoga, means - yes? Thank you, that's all. However, I think it is very important for us to remind ourselves occasionally of the true spirit of certain things, including Yoga. As one goes around the world it is not difficult to see that somehow or other we tend to use whatever comes to hand, and as we try to use things we often misuse them. Therefore, just as we remind ourselves every few days of our relation to God, or who or what God is, in the same way it is good to remind ourselves of the true spirit of the things which we use, including Yoga. Otherwise there is always a tendency sooner or later to abuse good things and Yoga is no exception. As we look around, we discover some people taking whole-heartedly to Yoga. "Oh, it is marvellous! You know I lost ten pounds without going on a diet." But philosophically speaking, I think Yoga enables us to carry less weight on our shoulders, not necessarily around the waist. We have less of a burden to carry and learn to be less of a burden to others. Certainly Yoga seems to relieve the burden of the doctor. If one suffers from ailments which the doctor cannot handle or is not interested in because he has had enough of you, he says, "Practise Yoga."

But there are ailments which are neither of the body nor of the mind, and which do not respond to any medical treatment. They are somewhere deeper, far deeper in the mind. It is not just psychosomatic, it is a lot more difficult than even this. These are ailments born of long habits which one knows are wrong but which one loves with all one's heart. What is one to do then? Smoking and drinking are two common habits, for example. You ask someone why they smoke, "Oh, of course I know it is terrible, but I enjoy it." That's it. And drinking? "Oh, I know it is the devil's own concoction - I hate him but I love his concoction." I wonder if you see the essential incurability of this problem or illness?" I want peace of mind, but I do not want those things that will give me peace of mind. I hate tension, I would love to be free from this tension, but I cannot possibly give up those things which produce this tension." So they ask, "Can you help us?"

Medical scientists and psychiatrists can now deal with everything from the common cold and headache, to cancer. They have even carefully studied and labeled all sorts of psychological disorders. Every three days a new phobia is born, every four days a new mania is born. We are discovering more and more. Sometimes, though very rarely, a psychologist or psychiatrist looks in the mirror and discovers another disease. But we still have not discovered a remedy for this basic common illness which afflicts all of us without exception. "How do I get rid of that which I like most." Intellectually, mentally and theoretically I realize that it is bad, that it is destroying my life, but you know, God must have made a slight error. He made my head fairly large, filled it with lots of brains, but the brains are made ineffective by this bottleneck below the head. The neck is too small and all that I think doesn't necessarily percolate to the heart. I think, "Ah, Yoga is something marvellous." But by the time it gets to the heart - "that's true, but these Yoga teachers are a bit tricky, they want me to give up smoking, drinking, all the things I love." The feeling is something different. And when it finally

comes to doing, the feeling is divided. My right hand says one thing, my left hand says another, my right leg wants to go one place, my left leg wants to go somewhere else, and so it is all a state of utter confusion.

Is it possible for me to get to the base of this confusion, this inner conflict and tug of war? My mind says one thing and my feeling says something completely different. My thinking is quite clear, I believe in this and I believe in that, but that is all. It is all belief. So long as belief stays belief, it stays a lie. There is a lie in belief itself. Spell it. The central core of believe is lie, and therefore unless this thing called "I believe" is immediately converted into knowledge, unless it is transformed by the heart, it is nothing more than a lie. It is worse than useless for it stops me from striving to know.

This is our problem. We have a completely fractured personality, a fragmented and broken personality. And Yoga, if practised in the right spirit, must enable me to repair this fragmentation, to recover the wholeness. Yoga means wholeness, Yoga means health. But health is not something which one can acquire from the chemist, nor from standing on one's head alone. If you stand on your head for a considerable time, surely your brain power will improve, surely you will be mentally alert and intellectually keen, but that is all. It makes your mind alert merely by cleaning the cells of your brain. To put it rather crudely, Yoga postures clean the cells of your body. They act as inner soap and towel to purify the cells of the body which have become cluttered with toxic substances through wrong living, wrong eating, and wrong emotions. But purify does not mean remove from the body. That is another problem. The Yoga postures merely dislodge the toxic substances from the tissues. There is better circulation of blood and Prana with the result that all the toxic substances that lay hidden are dislodged. But if you continue with the same wrong habits, they will not leave the body, they will still circulate from one part to another. Then we will wonder why after practising Yoga for ten years, the body and mind are not absolutely clean and clear. They are not because your life has been anti-Yoga. You are trying to clean the tissues with one hand and smear them with dirt with the other. This is our problem. "With my mind I want to be healthy, with my heart I want to be sick - I want to be sick because I love those things which I know make me sick." It is fantastic.

Therefore, it is good for those of us who practise Yoga postures and meditation to know exactly what is happening. These things have been invented by Yogis and they have been practised from time immemorial. Obviously there is some great benefit in their practise, but why is it that in spite of my practice I remain the same old fool with the same old headaches and heartaches, the same old inner psychological fracture? If I'm knocked down by a car and have a serious fracture, the intelligent doctor immediately takes an X-ray before trying to fix it up. There is something wonderful in this. He wants to see exactly what the fracture looks like, where it is and what bones have been broken. In the same way, when I realize that there is a fracture in me, that there is a conflict between my head and my heart, that there is something discordant inside and disharmony in my personality, I must first have the courage, then the willingness and eagerness,

and lastly the ability to perceive this fracture, to see it for myself. This we don't want to do. Very few want to do this and therefore we depend on some God, or some priest or someone outside who will allow me to keep all these fractures. We love sickness, staying awake all night playing games, gambling our lives away, and yet we want to enjoy meditation and be elevated. It's a bit tricky, I'm sure, It is because there is this deep misunderstanding that more and more young people are turning to drugs. There is a desire for a short cut, to sweep the dirt under the carpet. We don't want to sweep it out of the house, that is too much bother, so we sweep it under the carpet where it is very useful later when we want to throw mud in someone's eye. Instantly the room is clean - instant God-realization. Because we adults have been looking for this kind of gimmick, the young people try LSD when they discover that the suggested methods do not yield such immediate enlightenment.

It is this basic stupidity on our part that binds us and prevents us from looking within and finding the fracture. It is this thing that is driving some people to drugs. One must have the courage to look within and see personally, "There is the fracture, there is the fragmentation, there is the problem. My mind says this is good, but my heart does not want to accept it." This is what the Bible says - one must love one's God with all the mind, all the heart and all the being. This is true not only with love of God, but with everything that we do. If I am able to stand here and talk to you with my mind, my heart, my soul, with all my being, there is tremendous power in it. If we have this total integration of personality, there is tremendous power in anything we do, even in chewing sandwiches. Through this harmony, a power is generated within which is able to work wonders. This is health. When this is not there, there is no health no matter what you do.

But one must know what is wisdom and what is an obsession. I love organically grown food, but there are some people who, before they eat a lettuce, question, "Organically grown? Inorganically grown? It smells of DDT." I must be wise and not obsessed. I must certainly choose the right kind of food, but not be obsessed by it. That person always suffers from indigestion. Again there is fragmentation, there is worry, there is anxiety, "Maybe I'm not eating the right food, maybe it isn't balanced." You are not eating food any more, you are worried about carbohydrates, proteins and calories. A young man will look at his beautiful young wife and see only twenty-two ounces of hair and four miles of arteries.

Someone said something very interesting. The Prana or vital force in food, the energy, is not chemically discoverable. That is what gives each thing its taste and so it is only when you chew the food and discover the taste that the food actually becomes nutritious. I don't know how scientific it is, but it is a beautiful idea. When you say, "I love that food," your mouth is already watering. That is health. Then you are eating with all your mind, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. Then it is nectar, whatever you eat. In Indian villages, I've seen people eating the most unbalanced diet and yet enjoying wonderful health. Once a very healthy looking, aged man came to our ashram in Rishikesh. My Guru, Swami Sivananda, looked at his robustness and his vitality and asked, "Sir,

you are very healthy, what is the secret of your health?" And he replied, "Swamiji, I have never eaten food except from the hands of my wife." He had been married for forty or fifty years, but he said, "Wherever I go, even to a hotel or a restaurant, it is my wife that must serve me and I know that whatever she gives me, she gives with great love and I accept it with great love. Therefore I am healthy." I think there is a tremendous truth in this, and I recommend it to you all to practise.

Therefore the problem is not whether I can stand on my head or twist myself into a figure eight, it is not what kind of food to eat, nor even whether I go to church and say prayers. All these things are a tremendous help, but it is in the total integration that health lies. Therefore I must have the courage to face myself and see the fragmentation within. Only when I am aware of the trouble within will I be able to rectify it, heal it. Heal means to make whole. I am broken into several pieces and I must put them all together, delicately, just a matter of a slight little adjustment and the inner being is healed. One doesn't need a sledge hammer. It is just a minute and delicate adjustment and this delicate adjustment is possible by the practice of Yoga.

First we start with the Yoga Asanas which enable us to discover our physical being. But the postures must be done with the spirit of discovery, as if you are God's child playing hide-and-seek with Him and asking, "How have you made the shoulders? How much can I rotate the arms? Ah, lovely, all round, fantastic." Then I ask, "How about the neck, how far will it turn?" He says try. "Only this, not clear around?" "Only once." It is playing hide-and-seek, there is no spirit of competition. I don't want to do Yoga postures as well as somebody else. I am discovering myself, he is discovering himself. I am doing my bit, he is doing his bit, and this is the beauty. I am not interested in comparing myself with anyone in the world - it is my dialogue with God the creator. "What have you put into this body?" Let me see, let me discover for myself. And like a child I look at this body and say, "This is fantastic, it is a marvelous machine you have built into me." When in this manner I have learned to discover the body, then I go deeper within trying to see what makes it tick. These two legs enable me to stand, walk and run, but if I become unconscious or die, I'll fall, they are no longer able to support me. What is it that supports me? What is it that enables me to function? I want to discover that. I approach this without any anticipation or assumption of what I am going to discover. Deeper and deeper within I see some energy functioning. What is this energy and how does it function? It seems that I cannot live without breathing, but when I breathe in deeply what prevents me from breathing more? What is it that switches the breath off like a thermostat and reverses the process? Who has the switch - that is the most important thing we have to discover. I am alive, I am breathing, I must know how all these things take place. And so in Pranayama practice I try to discover this and eventually I see that there is some tremendous intelligence working through my brain, working through every cell of my body. How does it function? Does it function because of me? If so, what is me? Does it function because of some God sitting on the roof? If so, who is this God?

And the Yogi goes on with this quest of discovery, because as he discovers one thing he sees that even that is a cover. Lift that, then lift that, keep lifting, keep lifting, and this is an endless adventure of infinite domain. This is Yoga.

## 10. Starting Where the Great Ones Started

The life of my Guru, Swami Sivananda, is the best illustration of his teachings. I will tell you of an incident that occurred in the ashram in Rishikesh about the year 1948 or 1949. It was summer, and summer in India is terribly hot. It was about three o'clock and Gurudev had come to the office to do some correspondence. A young man entered the office, took one look at Gurudev, and collapsed on the floor. Gurudev immediately abandoned all work and sent everyone running here and there, one to get some curd, another to fetch some Ganges water, and a third to the dispensary for medicine. Quick, quick. He himself sprinkled water on the boy's face. As soon as the boy opened his eyes, coffee was ready, curd was ready, and fruits were ready. After half an hour he felt better, but Gurudev would not even let him sit in the office. He must lie down with two people to fan him.

Gurudev then returned to his chair, and after a little thought said, "You know, this once happened to me." Then He told this story. When He was a young man, He decided to go to Malaya to take a medical post. He was born in a very orthodox Brahmin family, and in those days it wasn't considered right to take food from the hands of just anyone. But He could not carry a Brahmin cook with him on the ship, you are expected to eat what is provided. But do you know what a ship's kitchen usually is? A floating cemetery. Even when you ask for pure vegetarian food, one stew is prepared with a chicken and a few potatoes, the non-vegetarian is given the chicken, and the vegetarian the potatoes. He knew this. So He took with Him a large supply of laddu, a sweet. He planned to subsist on this and water. Laddu is very delicious, but have you tried eating only laddu for just two days? You will never want another sweet again. By the time Swamiji reached Malaya, His body was undernourished, and He was terribly weak and hungry. But He was anxious to confirm His job. So, not minding the hunger or the weakness, He went directly to settle his position. It was only then that He felt hungry, only after this did He look for food. But He didn't know the country and what things He could eat. So it seems He wandered until, nearly at the point of exhaustion, He saw a temple. He went in and was given food. In a few more hours He would have collapsed. This incident happened many years ago, but the beautiful thing is that, when Gurudev saw this young man in the ashram years later, He remembered His own experience. He did not even ask the boy what had happened, but immediately gave help.

From this I think that we can learn two lessons. Number one, never forget your own past. I also may have suffered - suffered hunger, suffered thirst. I also may have gone astray, had my ups and downs. Now I may be wealthy, now light may radiate from the top of my head, but once I could not even see with my eyes. It is better to be a little humble and to communicate with people. You must have seen people, once confirmed alcoholics or smokers, who now go about with several haloes, displaying contempt for others who smoke and drink. Gurudev always used to say, "Every saint has had a past and every sinner has a future". That is lesson number one.



Lesson number two is what I really wish to convey. One must pass through all the experiences of life oneself in, order to understand. If you have never been hungry, it is extremely difficult for you to sympathise with a hungry person. You don't know what hunger means. If you have not been through these stages in life, how can you understand what it is to feel destitute in a strange place, what it is to face danger, what it is to face death. Until these things are experienced, they are meaningless. We read the teaching of Swami Sivananda, we read the teaching of Buddha, but what does it mean to us? Buddha asked a few very simple questions. "Have you seen a sick man, and has it ever occurred to you that you will also be sick one day? Have you seen an old man and have you ever thought that you also will grow old one day? Have you seen a dead body and has it ever occurred to you that one day your body will also die?" These are the Buddha's words, but do they mean anything to you?

In the ashram we used to have Sadhana days, and people would come from all over India, many of them very wealthy. Gurudev used to say to them, "You are hunting for the spiritual path, but you have never understood human suffering. Take off your suit, leave it here, tie a towel around your head, carry a gunny sack and walk away from here at night, in the winter without even telling your wife. Keep walking until you feel the need for sleep. Lie down at the side of the road, cover yourself with that sack, and then see what happens to you. Then a little bit of the spirit of renunciation will come; a little bit of sympathy and compassion will come into your heart." He had done this very thing himself in 1941. One day He left the ashram - where He went nobody knew. It seems that He just wandered along the bank of the Ganges, sleeping wherever He could find shelter, until He was persuaded to return.

It is only through having had these experiences - having been poor, despised, laughed at, and spat upon - that we understand. Otherwise these things have no meaning for us. We often make the mistake of trying to start off with the foundation of Gurudev's or Buddha's or someone else's philosophy. However, it doesn't seem to work. We must start where they started, go through life as they did, enter into the experience as they did. I was born when my father was twenty-two, but how old was I on my next birthday? One year old, not twenty-three. We often think, 'Why must I start where he started? I'll start where he left off.' But it doesn't seem to work.

I once met a woman who said she was a follower of Ramana Maharshi. I was very interested, because it is very difficult to understand His teachings. So I asked her, "You say you are His follower, what do you do?" She answered, "I get up in the morning about eight a.m., wash my face, have a cup of coffee, sit down and ask myself, 'Who am I?', and the answer comes, 'I am not the body'. So I ask myself again, 'Who am I?', and the answer comes, 'I am not the Prana', and again, 'I am not the mind', and again 'I am not the intellect, I am not the ignorance - I am the immortal self!' Then I get up and have another cup of coffee. From where did she get the answer? From the book. But from where did Ramana Maharshi

get the answer? This is interesting. One day, when He was a little boy, He suddenly thought that He was dying. The thought became so powerful that He actually seemed to be dead, His body was cold and rigid. But, in this state, something was awake and he asked himself, "If I am dead, who is seeing this body?" Do you understand the question? I don't understand it at all. To understand the question, you must be Ramana Maharshi. And He continued to ask himself, "What am I? Who is walking? Who is talking?" And when His body returned to life, he got up, walked away and found asylum and seclusion in a cave. The cave was full of snakes, mosquitoes, scorpions, and other lovely, wonderful creatures. I say wonderful creatures because they touched him, clung to him, they were more than his disciples, they entered into him. And while these devils were devouring him, He sat there and inquired, "Who am I?" And the answer came, "I am not the body". If I also can do this, then I can call myself a disciple of Raniaana Maharshi. Not merely by reading a book and repeating the answers. But we don't want to do this.

One must start where these great ones started, one must experience life as they did. Until then you only imagine that you understand your Guru or that you are a disciple. This is the great lesson that we learn from a simple incident in the ashram. Number one, never forget your own past. And number two, you must pass through all the experiences of life for yourself. Only then can we truly be humble, only then can we truly lead the Divine Life.

## 11. The Meaning of Darshan

It's nice to be here, but not so important as why we are here. Why do we come together, and what do we do when we come together? Why do we build these temples, and churches, and what do we do with them? Why do we organise institutions and societies - what do we do with them, and what do they do to us? Those of you who have been on a pilgrimage to India, and have met Swamis or holy men, perhaps realise that there is more to these holy men than meets the eye. The devotees hardly talk to them or question them - not that one is forbidden to, but the questioning is not so important. What a Swami can tell you during a course or a talk you may be able to gain from a book.

Recently I took part in a symposium in New York state. Just as I was taking leave, one of the Roman Catholic nuns, who had a great part in organising the symposium, handed me a candle. Something she said on the paper with which she had wrapped the candle was very interesting; that it was addressed to me was not important at all. "It's not what you said that is important or of value, but what you are." It is not what you say or do that is important, but what you are. So, it is Darshan that is important.

Many of the Swamis in India won't even talk to you, and if they did you would go away, wishing they hadn't said all that. Because while talking, we betray a certain anxiety, and display a certain arrogance that is totally contrary to the spirit of religion. Why does one talk? Because there is a feeling that, by talking, I may be able to persuade you to drop your point of view, and see from my point of view. But is it possible in a conversation or a dialogue or in a lecture to persuade someone to drop his own point of view and accept another? Can I see from your point of view at all? If I lose one eye and get a transplant from you, will I look at the world from your eyes or my eyes? If as I am about to die because of irreversible brain damage, my heart is transplanted into you, do you feel with my heart or your heart? This has to be very carefully thought over. Is it possible for you to look at anything from my point of view?

If one stands up to talk, foolishly thinking that thereby he will be able to persuade another person, then he is a fool. If he succeeds, he is doing terrible violence which even a god wouldn't do. It says in the Bible that God created man in His own image, and immediately gave him the freedom to disobey Him. He said, 'don't do this', and immediately the man went and did that first. If only God hadn't said this, he would never have done it. A child is playing here and he is not interested in the tape recorders; but if you say, 'don't touch that', he will immediately go there. This is exactly what Adam and Eve did. At the conclusion of the Bhagavad Gita, this is exactly what Krishna said: "I have told you what I consider to be the Truth. Consider this, consider this from all aspects, and do as you wish to do." You have all sorts of things to consider - your friends, your enemies, your duties, the situation in which you're placed - in addition to which I am also placing my point of view.

If you travel round the world as I have been doing the past few years, you will discover something very interesting: where a lot of preaching or teaching has taken place, there is a lot more corruption than in other places. You begin to wonder why. If you go to those places where Jesus Christ was supposed to have lived and walked, and look around, where Buddha was supposed to have lived and preached himself hoarse and look around, you see lots of Christians, but no Christ, and lots of Buddhists, but no Buddha. I think basically this is not only an impossible and inadmissible task, but an unwise task. For one to impose upon oneself the task of persuading another is violence. The English language uses the words brain-washing for this, but I don't like those words. When I wash my clothes, they are dirty, and they become clean and pure. So, brain-washing should mean that when the brain is dirty, it is washed and becomes clean. But brain-washing is actually used to mean brain-coloring. It is terribly different. It is unwise to persuade one to drop one's own point of view and adopt another's.

But what happens in Darshan is beautiful. When you go to a holy man, you don't ask a question unless it arises in your heart and you find it inevitable. It's like going to the toilet - if it is necessary, you don't ask anyone's permission. If you go to the holy man and feel you can't ask a question, this isn't important. What is important is the Darshan, the rubbing off. A very holy man, Kabir, said this very beautifully. If you go to a holy man and have His Darshan and what we call Satsang - just to keep His company - that's more than enough. Your whole life may be transformed. You know, in order to catch the contagion of tuberculosis, you don't have to go and question a man who has the disease. You sit in front of him, and he merely coughs - you simply have Darshan - and you come back with tuberculosis. If it is possible for a disease to be transmitted so easily, asks Kabir, why do you feel that it is difficult to transmit something spiritual, which is even more subtle than these germs? So you just sit there and watch - Darshan. There sits a holy man, and you go and sit with him and enjoy his company for a little while, then you begin to see that the transformation has taken place within you. It has to happen.

How does anything happen? I've been coming here for the past ten years. Some of those who were little children, later became young ladies, and now they themselves have little children. I know of one girl whom I asked about ten years ago, "Would you like to get married?" "Oh, no, Swamiji!" Now she, herself, has one or two children. Why is this so? At that time, as a child, the inner consciousness was not mature, and therefore she had no alternative but to say, "I don't want to cook the food and scrub the floors and all that nonsense." But then as she matured, as she grew, she realised something, something else awakened in her, and of course the right person also came along. She looked at this young man who was quite possibly the same boy she had met and was not interested in when she was a child, and there was no alternative but to say yes. Again it happens. As a child I need toys to play with, not a husband or a wife - I wouldn't even know what to do with one. I need sweets and cakes, but as I grow and mature, I am not so fond of them any more. This is the beauty of growing up - it just happens.

It's the same in this Darshan also. When I am a baby, I cannot possibly persuade myself that I understand all this high philosophy, what God is and what God is not. You go to the holy man. He doesn't know how to live - he looks tired and clumsy, silly, he shaves his head, he doesn't know how to dress himself, and he doesn't know how to make money. Later you discover he is far more clever at making money than you are. My Guru, Swami Sivananda, used to say that a Sanyasin is one who has no house of his own, but lives in the houses of everybody, who has no car of his own, but enjoys a ride in everybody else's car, and who has no bank account of his own, but operates on the bank accounts of everybody else. He has a beautiful way of persuading you to believe that, if you part with your money and give it to him, you will have a ticket to go straight to heaven. At first you think, "What can he do - he is a fool; he is sitting there meditating and thinking that he is going to see God, whereas if he went to a shop and did something, he could at least make a decent living." When you are a spiritual baby, he doesn't appeal to you at all, his Darshan means nothing. Then you grow, mature, and he is no longer such a fool - he is still a fool, but not such a fool as I thought he was. He is clever, able to talk, and quite able to converse. You grow a little bigger, you have your own headaches, problems, heartaches, and then you look at the Swami. He doesn't have all this - possibly he is wiser than I am. So this again has to happen in you. Nothing, no amount of propaganda is going to bring it about. That is Darshan.

In exactly the same way, like the toys we need these buildings, these societies, these scriptures and religious books - provided we realise they are meant as Darshan. I go to a temple or a church and stand there, I see a beautiful altar with its lovely idol or cross, or the Torah or the Ark; I am having Darshan. What does it do to me? When I am asking this question, where am I looking? I am not looking with my eyes at those idols, but at myself - looking with all my being within, into myself, experiencing the presence. Then I am having real Darshan, otherwise I am merely looking.

When I look at that crucifix or some other symbol, I look within and then find my own level of maturity. At one stage I have been told, "This is Krishna, bow down!" I bow down, "Krishna please help me pass my exam, I don't want to go and take my exam, will you go there?" This is where I start, somewhere I have to start. As I come into this place, this holy, holy temple, this church, or mosque, or synagogue - I remember the famous words God said to Moses, "You are standing on holy ground, take off your shoes!" "So for about half an hour I shouldn't do anything naughty. Just for half an hour I'm not going to deprive myself of a smoke or a drink forever. Just not here - let me not be vicious, just for a little while." As I'm doing this, I'm looking within, into myself, at myself, coming face to face with myself, my own cravings and my own viciousness.

There is also a possibility of something else. A chain smoker gets into a church or a temple and suddenly he realises, "I can put out a cigarette, not only when the plane is about to land, but even here. And I can resist the temptation of picking up the next one for a little while. If I can do it here, why shouldn't I do it

elsewhere?" He will ask that question only when he reaches the next stage of maturity. It's no use telling him, he must give up smoking - it must come from within. And that happens in our encounter with these religious objects, like the church, the temple, the mosque, like these idols, and the scriptures. I go on reading this same scripture again and again, the scripture seems to be the same - but I am not. I am growing, maturing day by day. Please don't make the mistake of considering the word mature to mean 'growing in wisdom'. Growing in foolishness is also maturing. A banana also becomes mature - becomes ripe, becomes more mature -becomes filthy. Something is happening in me all the time. So, every time I go into the temple or into the church or come into contact with you, I am new. Therefore at every encounter I am trying to look within and discover myself anew - the new change, the new outlook, the new person.

This is actually what the ancient Indian sages seemed to have felt when they invented these temples and idols. Even the Vedas were divided into a few sections: the first section being composed of Mantras which the young student memorized; and the second containing the application of these Mantras in rituals in which he saturated himself - ringing the bells, waving the light, throwing flowers, and offering fruits and sweets. I'm sure you have heard of this 'offering to God fruits and sweets.' If you offer me a couple of bananas, what will I do with them? Eat them. In the same sense, if you offer a basket of fruits and sweets to that God in the temple, and he eats them, that will be the last time you offer them. You won't offer anything more to that God. It all sounds silly; we think we are offering to God, but we are not.

In all this there is a symbolism, but it is not to be taught. The child is not to be told that a doll is a useless toy, or that it is not her baby. To the child it is a real baby, just as in a dream the object of the dream is intensely real. So, if you are a devotee of Krishna or Christ, you shall not be told that all this is merely symbolic, that God is not there, and that He doesn't look at any of your offering. And even if you are told, you will think I am blasphemous or heretical. To you as to Ramakrishna, Mira and all these great holy saints, that image there is real; it is the presence of God. I go there and worship.

If you watch very carefully, you'll understand the beauty of this. The immature person - immature in the sense that he is not grown-up and not in a derisive sense - goes to the temple, garlands the statue, and feels, "Ah, Krishna has accepted my worship, what a wonderful devotee I am," and goes away completely satisfied. All his sins have been washed away, and he is now clean. So the temple is used as a bathtub, and this goes on for some time. During this same period it is quite possible that another man, completely convinced of his righteousness, goes to the church on Sunday, sticks his tongue out, and receives a wafer or a piece of bread and a few drops of wine, and all his sins are gone. Very good - I go to the temple, and do this worship again and again and again, and in the meantime I am growing up. I have been taught how to behave in a civilized society, in Western society, how to say thank you very much, and then I go into the temple, make my offering to Krishna, but he doesn't say thank you. And suddenly it hits me. Here I

come, I worship this statue feeling it is Krishna - garland it, pour milk and water, place fruits and wave camphor - and go away feeling both happy and blessed without this statue bowing down and saying, "Thank you very much, come again," for not doing anything at all. Then I come back and look at my friend - I am doing a similar thing to him, and I am offended if he doesn't respond, if he doesn't say thank you or reciprocate in some way. Why should I be offended? If only I adopt this same attitude in my relationship to him, probably I'll be happy here too. I come back, do something, and as soon as my job is finished, I get up and walk away. Why must I stand there waiting to be thanked? When I don't expect this reciprocal reward, I have no disappointment; I don't expect anything, I have no despairs, and therefore there is no disappointment, no frustration. That's fun. I go back to Krishna: "Thanks very much for teaching me this lesson, by merely keeping quiet."

This is what Darshan is. First I go to the temple, feel the presence of God there, experience that turning within myself, and learn to recognize this feeling of standing in the presence of God. Then, as I mature and keep going there for more and more Darshan - the statue remaining the same and not speaking a word - I receive the message. This is Darshan. Even in the case of holy men this is what was insisted upon. Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita said, "Never disturb anybody's faith or belief." Leave it there, let them go! If you can shine the light on their next step, that's very good, the best you can do. Shine your light on the next step in front of them, not in front of you; then it is possible for them to be helped. People are devoted to their own activity; they want to make money, to get married, raise children and so on. Don't try to preach at them; just be what you are, and in that light they will see the next step. This is what Darshan implies. If one approaches the scriptures, the holy men, the temples and the societies with this attitude, then all these can be great blessings. When you call this a temple or a society, how does it function and what does it mean? Who made these tube lights - exactly the same factory that made the lights which shine in the night clubs and theatres. The same people and the same materials were used to make the most unspiritual, anti-religious buildings. There is no difference at all. Then, why do you call this a temple hall? Where is the temple hail? Only in one place, in your mind, an idea in your mind. When you see this, then you are already having Darshan of God. When I have this feeling that this is a temple hail, what does it do to me and what do I do to it? In this encounter there is enlightenment.

Otherwise we lay down rules and regulations - you must believe in this, you must believe in that - without realizing that every belief contains within itself a lie. Can you spell the word belief? There is a lie there. So whatever belief a man has, let him have it: he must realize eventually that there is a lie in that belief. It is no use telling me your belief, because it is one belief against another - you're a liar and I'm a liar. If I say my belief is truth, I'm a liar already. We have one man converting another, one group converting another - pure silliness, it's absurd. So, leave all these beliefs where they are - in the mind. Let each one have his Darshan, let everyone come into this temple, each one bringing his or her own beliefs. Let them go. And as they grow up, they will themselves discover that

there is a lie in their belief. And when the lie is dropped, the belief also will disappear, leaving truth as it is.

Therefore all these have a great value in our life, and the value is discovered by Darshan. A society or an institution cannot possibly enlighten me - it's absurd - but the institution as a building has a purpose. We need a certain amount of protection - otherwise we'd be miserable when it's cold, windy and rainy, or snowing, or when it's hot and dusty. If I remember that these walls and these roofs have been put there by me as protection, and that they have no other use, no other value, no other meaning, then they are meaningful. But if I start bluffing myself that these walls are special - that they came direct from heaven, that if you kiss them you'll go straight to heaven - then they no longer protect or shelter, but divide. "This is my temple and that is your temple - if you want to come into my temple, you must become a Hindu, if I want to go into your temple, I must become a Buddhist." Then there is trouble already; there is no Buddhist, Hindu or Christian temple. Temple is temple. And if you don't have a temple in the right place, between the ears, the outside temple is going to be a nuisance.

This must be right. If this is right (the temple between the ears), then I can understand why a temple is necessary, and entering into that temple, learn to have Darshan - to see, not merely to see with my eyes, but to see with all my being. That is why, when you go into an Indian shrine or temple, and stand in front of the statue or do some worship, you close your eyes. Similarly, when you go into a Christian church, you bow or kneel down and close your eyes when someone says, "Let us pray." Why did you come if you didn't want to look, to see? There seems to be a wonderful lesson. "I didn't come here to look at this, but rather to look at myself." That was probably a bit more difficult at home where there are children, a telephone and a radio or stereo set. "I came here not to look at all this, but to make it an excuse to look within, to have Darshan". If this is clearly understood, then we may enter into the right relationship with teachers, scriptures, temples, and what is more necessary, spiritual institutions.



## 12. Satsang

Satsang, Japa, and service - these were the words that Sri Gurudev emphasized in His talks. When He used the word meditation, He meant mostly Japa and Satsang. In His own life, He regarded Satsang of such paramount importance, that He himself never missed a day at the ashram Satsang. He lived in the most miserable room in the ashram, and in the winter, when the wind howled, it was very difficult to get out of the Kutir and walk up to the Satsang hall, but this never stopped Him from attending. He would put on His overcoat, tie a huge turban around His head, if it was raining, carry an umbrella, but go to Satsang He would. That was the tenacity with which He adhered to the Satsang principle. It was considered not so polite to lie down in the Satsang hall, but when His physical condition made it impossible for Him to sit up, He would rather come and lie down than miss the Satsang.

To us, His disciples, He was the Sat - Satsang means to keep company with the Truth or the good or the wise -to us He was the embodiment of the Truth, He was the Sat in the Satsang. From the point of view of His contribution by talking or singing, He was the least needed. He did not do anything. He did not do anything except by being there. As the Sat or the Truth, He hardly ever spoke. Yet He had such infinite devotion to Satsang that He never missed it. At the end of his All-India Tour, we were in Delhi, and the last day was packed with private visits, going from house to house, rather than speaking at huge public meetings. He said something that was very interesting, and opened the window of His soul and personality. "All these public meetings, mass meetings are a waste of time. One talks to ten thousand people, but how many of them come for the right reason. Probably 9,800 of them just came to see what 'the great Mahatma from Rishikesh' looks like, and of the other two hundred, one hundred and fifty probably came to show themselves to others, 'I also was there, didn't you see me?' Hardly two or three really come to listen to what is being said." There were always these few genuine seekers, and it was in order to address Himself to these that Gurudev had to address the ten thousand. I'm sure many of you have been to Kimberley, and seen the diamond mines there. Thousands of tons of earth, mud, and rocks have to be crushed in order to get one small diamond. It is the same process here also - out of ten thousand, there are only two or three small diamonds. And so He said that the huge meetings were a waste of time; small Satsangs were much more important.

The Sat or the Truth is not something which can be described. This Self-realization cannot be obtained by a lot of talking, not by intelligence - many of the great Self-realized people were illiterate. One can go on listening to talks about Self-realization, but it is never a Self-realization talk, it is always a talk about Self-realization. We are walking round and round, but never entering into it as Krishna demanded in the Gita, "Not by going round, but by entering into Me". But how can I do this if I don't know who I am?

Listening to these talks is probably better than listening to the radio or to

gossip. I watched a very saintly Swami, a highly evolved soul deliver a talk on Self-realization and all sorts of great and wonderful metaphysical truths. Fifty or sixty per cent of the audience was totally at peace - sleeping. So when we sit and listen to someone deliver a discourse, we are entirely peaceful, and that's something. It's wonderful, perfect peace, but this does not lead to Self-realization. So the disciple asks, "How may I attain Self-realization?" "He whom the Self chooses, by him is the Self attained." He whom God chooses, to him alone God reveals Himself. So what must I do? Do I have no function at all in Self-realization? Gurudev used to tell us to keep ourselves open by Satsang and Japa, repetition of the Mantra. He insisted that Japa alone was meditation, and that this was all that we needed, all that we could do. Ask silly questions about meditation, and you will get silly answers. What meditation is, He never revealed, because He could not reveal it. He said, "Go on repeating God's Name, a Mantra, and meditation will come." Meditation also has to come.

In Canada I was confronted by a desperate woman who could not sleep. "I want your help - I have not slept for six months." So what must I do? Sleep also must just come. Self-realization comes to the person to whom Self-realization wants to come, and this applies to sleep also. So long as the "I" is awake, so long as the ego is awake, Self-realization will not come, and so long as you are worried about why you can't go to sleep, sleep will not come. But the moment you ask yourself, "Why is it so important that I sleep? I may not want to sleep," then sleep will come because you are not worried any more. Self-realization, God, will come to you only when He wants to come. So, what must I do until then? What do you do in order to get anyone's attention? Call his name. It's extremely simple, merely shout his name. He may be drowsy, asleep or deaf, but keep shouting his name, and one day he is bound to hear. Therefore attend Satsang, and while you are attending, you are not important there, no one is important there. That is what Swami Sivananda taught us. He was there, but He was the most non-participant.

In Satsang we do not come to listen to each other's voices, we come to sing the glories of God. In a way Satsang was - we sat and we sang. Sat-Sang. Nobody was exempt, everyone had to sing some Mantra, some Kirtan or other. In Satsang gradually the inner personality opened up. I was shy, that's gone, I was afraid, that's gone, I was egotistic, that's gone, I was selfish, that's gone - the inner personality slowly opens up. After each person sang, he read from the scriptures, and there was something interesting also. As you hear someone read from Gurudev's teaching, it may be extremely profitable to say to yourself, "I am not listening to the reader, I am listening to Swami Sivananda." As I listen I can nearly see Gurudev and hear His voice, because I have seen Him. If you have not seen him, you must still not listen to the reader. You are listening to Swami Sivananda, and if you have not seen Him, construct an image and listen to Him talking to you. If I hear someone reading from the Sermon on the Mount, I am not listening to the reader, he is not sitting on the Mount, he is sitting on the carpet - his is the Sermon on the Carpet. If I want to listen to the Sermon on the Mount, I must completely forget the speaker and visualize Jesus standing on the Mount, and listen to Him. Once again this is the way that I learn to open myself.

When personalities are involved, the beauty of the Satsang is lost. One will say, "What business has this man to say all this nonsense?" So I completely ignore the personality that is sitting in front of me, and I commune with the Truth. Then it becomes Satsang. So Gurudev used to sit there, completely withdrawn, indrawn - the embodiment of the Truth itself - not talking.

Can this Truth be described? This Truth is. But what is this Truth? In the Bible somebody asks Jesus, "What is the Truth?", and Jesus did not even bother to reply. Was He rude, indifferent or contemptuous? If Jesus or Krishna or Buddha or Swami Sivananda stood in front of you and said, "This is truth", would you be able to recognize it? What does the word recognize mean? Re-cognize - to cognize once again. You saw me somewhere and when you see me again you think, "Ah yes, this is the Swami whom I saw before." But if I go to Iceland where they have never seen a Swami, there will be no recognition. Even so, to recognize the Truth, I must keep myself open by going to Satsang, doing Japa and so forth. I must listen to the same words, the same Kirtans, the same Bible, the same Upanishads, and one day suddenly say, "This is it, this is the thing." Until then Satsang has to go on.

When we returned to Rishikesh after the All-India Tour, Gurudev wanted to get a small station wagon, and take a Kirtan party from village to village, from house to house. When we arrived at someone's house we would say, "Namaste, we don't want anything, we only came to have a private Satsang. May we?" Then, just sit down and sing, "Jai Ganesha, Hare Rama," etc., finish "Om Shanti", and go. We didn't come for any favour, we don't even know who the people are, we don't want to leave any Propaganda material - visualize it. It can have a tremendously shocking effect on everybody. Just walking into somebody's house. "We want to have Kirtan here for ten minutes with your permission," finish and get out. They won't forget it for a long time.

As we go there and hold a Satsang, we help them to break open their minds. When the mind and the heart are broken open, Sat will take place by the Grace of the Guru and by the Grace of God. But even they cannot do this alone, we have to keep trying ourselves. In order to sleep, you must go to bed. You cannot go to sleep, it must happen, but for it to happen, you must go to bed. So, you go to the Satsang, and going to Satsang you keep yourself completely open. You don't become anxious or worried, thinking that nothing is happening. You are still a normal person, a simple Satsangi, one who attends Satsang, singing God's name, feeling His presence. This is important - just as when one listens to Swami Sivananda's talks one must hear Swami Sivananda, when you sing God's name you, must feel that God is sitting there listening to you. It is quite possible that I may have the worst possible voice in the world, but I can tell God, "Look, you gave me this voice, I give it back to you. You enjoy it." It is a completely private affair between me and Him, the God who is sitting and listening to me. Somebody reads from the scriptures, I am listening to it, not to the voice of the person, but to the original, the author of the words, and leaving myself open. Into the heart, when the heart matures, by the Grace of God, by the Grace of the Guru - which is

none of our business at all - into that heart the light is poured. This Satsang can be held not only in ashrams, but in every house - the more the better.

### 13. Fear is a Denial of God

About 1936, just before the ashram in Rishikesh was founded, I had a little correspondence with Gurudev. I was still a student at the time, and I wrote and asked if I could come and join His ashram. In reply He sent me a little pamphlet in which He said, "I don't want an ashram, I don't want disciples, I don't want anything." Later there was a huge ashram and today one would not recognise it from what was there twenty years ago. But still in a manner of speaking, Gurudev maintained until the end of His life that he didn't want an ashram. His attitude was, "I don't want an ashram, but the ashram is here - very good. Do you want the sky to be blue? Why not red? But the sky is blue, not because you want or don't want - let it be. I don't want an ashram for myself, it is not mine, it is God's will it is there, it is His will to maintain it." An ashram is a place for people to go when they need refuge. So, when the ashram came into being, He didn't have the idea, "This is my ashram, and therefore I will do this and not that." Nothing of the sort. If someone come to the ashram and said, "These dhotis are no good, you must all wear trousers," He would tell everyone to get a pair of trousers. Or if someone said we must all grow beards, He would say, "Go ahead, carry on, because it is your ashram." This was the idea and the feeling with which He functioned in the ashram.

The ashram was a place which belonged to everybody, without any distinction whatsoever. It was more democratic than any government in the world. If the majority of those who lived in the ashram wanted something, He would feel it. He was a person who could feel what people wanted and let that happen, just let it happen. Nobody forced anything upon anyone else, He just let it happen. For instance, in the beginning He didn't even want a harmonium to be played in Satsang. We sat quietly, sang Kirtan in a meditative mood, and nobody was asked to talk except distinguished visitors. Satsang meant reading from the scriptures, and afterwards singing God's Name and meditating. Later musicians and dancers came, great and wonderful intellectuals came. He said, "Good, all of you want to have music, have music. All of you want to have dancing, have dancing. You want to have lectures, have lectures." It was a fantastic thing to live with what we called "the Master". He was the Master because He never claimed to be the Master. He never commanded anybody, He never even ordered anybody, "Do this," except when some of us grew so close to Him that we were like His hands and feet, then of course He commanded us. His feeling was, "You have sought asylum in the ashram and it is yours."

But this was not so easy. If all of us were deciding everything, who was going to run the ashram from day to day? Who was going to feed us, who was going to buy the groceries and organize the rooms and beds? These problems also had to be solved. We had a wonderful secretary, efficient, dynamic, a wonderful man. We were in financial difficulties - we were always in financial difficulties, that was one thing Gurudev always made sure of! We had not one bank account, but three or four. A couple of them were always overdrawn, but He was still quite optimistic. A man came to the ashram, he had run away from home, and said,

"Swamiji, I want to join the ashram." Gurudev said, "Very good, stay." But we asked, "Swamiji, how is this possible? We are already in debt, is it wise to take more people into the ashram?" His first argument was, "Where will he go? If I send him away, where will he go?" And then seeing that the secretary was not quite convinced, He would say, "Before this young man came to the ashram, his food was already sent by God ! Each man brings his own Karma." Isn't this true? Before the tiny baby is born, the milk supply is assured, before you become hungry, the bread is ready. According to the Christian Bible, it is said that God created the earth, the trees, the plants, the flowers, everything, then He created man. Because God knew that as soon as this fellow was created, he would ask for food. So, better to get the food ready before creating him.

To Gurudev this was not a belief, He actually saw it. He literally saw that each man brought his own food. Therefore He wanted everyone to come, seeing that the rations are sent ahead beforehand. No problem at all. To Him it was not a belief nor a faith, but a conviction born of actual seeing. He was never worried about financial problems - if one started something, the money would come. We were always having financial crises, but once it came to rock bottom, finished. Even the people in Rishikesh were reluctant to give more groceries, unless something was paid. So Swamiji decided to close the kitchen, it was the only expendable item. There are alms houses in Rishikesh where, if you wear an orange cloth, you can walk in and ask for food at the proper time and they will give you a few rotis (pancakes) and dhallt (soup). Gurudev called me and asked me to visit the alms houses and fix some thing up. We had about two hundred people, and if we all went to the same alms house it would be bankrupt the next day. So, Gurudev said to go to the manager of each and say, "We have decided to beg for our food from tomorrow, how many will you take?" So, I went from one place to the other and they said, "Give us notice and we will be prepared to feed you all!" I went back to tell the Master and what He said was interesting. He said, "I may not be able to walk, so I'll go in a tonga, a horse cart, to beg there." We would pay the tonga five rupees a day, and that would probably be enough to meet His food expenses, but He said, "No, I'll also come and beg." In other words, "I'll go in a motor car and beg for my food, though the petrol charge would be enough for my lunch." But then it wasn't necessary, for the next morning somebody came and gave Him enough money to carry on for another two months.

For Gurudev there was no problem. Most of us only talk about God, and this God is usually a baker or some kind of domestic servant. "Oh God, I have a headache, get me an aspirin." Or, "Give me bread and butter." If God is real, He was real even before you thought He was real, and if one truly realises that God is real, then his whole attitude to life is different. There is a certain fearlessness, a certain courage. Swamiji used to refer to the word abhayam in the Gita again and again. The first and foremost quality of a Yogi or a God-man is absolute fearlessness. Most of us men shave every morning, yet the next day the beard has grown again. Why is it that we cannot believe that in the same way our wealth will grow, our crops will grow, everything will grow? Why shouldn't I think that

the same mysterious power that makes my beard grow, is somehow capable of making my money grow also? This is what breathing teaches me. In order to inhale (which is also called inspiration) I must empty my lungs first. If I say, "I don't know if there is going to be fresh air in the world a little later, so I'll take a deep breath and hold it," I am finished. The more you hold your breath, the closer you are to death. The more you let go, the more freely you live. This is the rule of life. We do not grow because we hold on to things. When I hold on to something, then I am dead. When I hold on to something, it means I am clinging to death. If I hold on to the breath for five minutes, then I am dead, but if I throw it out and renounce it, I am alive.

This is the lesson that I learned from Gurudev. Absolute fearlessness comes from coming face to face with this law of life. Fear is born of anti-God. Fear itself is a denial of my understanding of God. When one is constantly worried, anxious, and fearful, and also talks about God, he is only talking. Men of God are never anxious, never fearful, never worried. It is only when you do not know that there is a supreme power which makes the hair grow on your face, that you are worried. It is only when you do not realize that there is a cosmic power which is functioning all the time that you worry and ask, "What will happen to me?" What will happen to me? You dig up a whole plot of earth to build a house, but a small hole will be enough for me. Why must I be worried at all? Why must I be anxious - about what? Why must I be afraid - of what? I have seen Gurudev when His body was in the worst of conditions, when He couldn't even stand up - yet there was no fear, no anxiety over illness. We are born with illness. Life itself is illness. And to be afraid of death - is there anything more ridiculous than this? Death which is bound to happen today, tomorrow, a year later, twenty years later - can I be afraid of this? Fear of death is too silly - death is inevitable, you cannot escape it. And illness - what is illness but one part of my body dying? Illness is the malfunctioning or non-functioning of some part of my body. So, if I am not afraid of death, I am not afraid of illness. Let it come. One of these days both of my arms are going to be cold and dead, so if I can get along without both of them then, I can get along without one of them now. In death I'm going to do without both of them, so now I am getting proper training in how to die, little by little and eventually the whole.

Even when Gurudev's body was full of illness, He was still cheerful. He would say, "The legs have lost their strength", not "I have lost my strength". One day after a serious attack of typhoid, He said, "Take me to the verandah, I want to look at the Ganges, the Himalayas, I have been confined to this room for a long time!" Two of us lifted Him up and literally dragged Him to the easy chair, but as soon as He was sitting, everything was marvellous. He would sit and crack jokes and laugh. This went on for a few days, then one day He tried to get up but collapsed back on to the chair. "Ah, the legs have lost their strength!" Not I have lost my strength, but the legs have lost their strength. Very well, the legs have lost their strength, but what does it matter to me? That is probably an advanced state of a Yogi, but you and I can have this inner vision. Something which is inevitable - let it happen. The power which transcends the whole universe knows what we

need and when. If we have this vision, then we will be bold, we will be courageous, and we will be Godly.



## 14. Spiritual Discipline

My Guru, Swami Sivananda, when asked about His teachings, once remarked that in His books He had only conveyed the traditions and their ways, Christianity, Islam, etc. - whatever teachings had been there before, He had recorded so that anyone could pick up whatever He wanted. But for those who had the good fortune to be with Him - to live with and observe Him - there was a certain glorious divine purity in what He did which was possibly inexpressible and could not possibly be grasped and recorded in any book. One of those mysterious factors was discipline. What is discipline? Is discipline something which can be done or something which needs to be done?

From stories told by the senior most among the disciples and from living with Swamiji from 1945 onwards, one could see a certain stability which was constant, and a certain flexibility which perhaps prevented the constant factor from breaking. It was a remarkable synthesis of what we would normally consider opposites. It looked as if He was fluid, but underneath it all there was this firmness. When one observed this, it was not difficult to see the lesson - the lesson is, what are we battling against, what is my problem? God is not a problem at all - He is everywhere, eternal, immortal, and is not going to disappear even if I disappear. The self is also supposed to be immortal, eternal and infinite, so why must I worry about it? The problem is the self that assumes itself to be I. I am the problem; I is the problem. But what does one do about it? Can one observe, deal with, suppress, sublimate, transmute, or transform the I?

Transform is a lovely word. If you have taken a big lump of dough, made it into nine-inch diameter cakes, then someone comes along and says there are more guests than expected, what do you do? Gather up all the nine-inch cakes, throw them into the bowl again, kneed them back into the original form, and then make six-inch cakes. This is transformation - the dough is exactly the same, there is no change. That is not what we are looking for - the ego is still the ego, the stuff hasn't changed. It may have changed its size, but probably the smaller it is, the more dangerous. However hard I may have struggled, as long as it is there in whatever form, all the effort that has been put into the transformation is of no use. The quantity, the quality and the mischief are still the same. Can you somehow transform the dough in such a way that it will have no form at all? Whatever sort of shape you make it, it still has a form. Whatever you do, this ego will assume some shape. Therefore Gurudev often insisted that we not try to deal with the ego, because it's a little bit difficult.

With what am I going to watch the ego, with what do I know the knower? How am I going to know the knower? I cannot know the knower at all, for I is the knower, or something behind the I is the knower. So Gurudev used to say, "watch yourself - the periphery of your own ego - very closely." What you are inside, you reveal most of the time unconsciously, in your actions, in your thought, in your words, and deeds. Therefore if you learn to watch these, it is possible to take an almost distant view of what you are inside yourself. It is better to watch out for

these little, little things, the way you walk, the way you answer a question, the way you talk to your friends, the way you shut a door. These are the things that remotely convey to you - not immediately, it's still far deeper down - the nature of your own personality, whether it's gross, or pure, whether it is possible to work on it or not. As you go on watching the manifestation of your own ego in all the 100.000 ways, you'll begin to discover major trends. Am I short-tempered, am I greedy, do I crave for name and fame, pleasure, or power. These major trends are a bit difficult to detect, because one always justifies, or has a reason for doing anything. It's also difficult to watch, because the watcher, the observer is involved in the game. Therefore it is here that a Guru will be of great help. Only He may be able to detect what goes on in you.

From here on it becomes a very tricky path. The Guru may not want to upset you, and He may be watchful of His own ego too. He may be equally concerned that He shouldn't lose His own balance in trying to correct you. If I'm going to train your ego, restrain your ego, or curb your ego, it can only be done by making my own ego big. If you're a short-tempered man and you're coining to bully me, the only way in which I can restrain you is by resorting to violence - and two violences do not make no violence. Therefore He adopted a very simple method. You are a calf - there is no sense in milking you - nothing will come out except ego. Eventually some came right and some didn't. If some didn't come right, His next reaction was, "I sow the seed, if not in this birth, then in the next birth he'll be alright." To deal with the ego is not a simple job, it's not a joke. I may say, "I'm very careful, I'm watching the ego." Of course I'm careful, but who is careful? The ego is careful; it's very careful that it doesn't hurt its reputation and so forth. What watches the ego is ego, what corrects another person's ego is my ego. The message is simple - observe your ego, watch, watch, watch. But this message has to be conveyed without losing one's balance.

This is where we learned a tremendous lesson from Him. He would not and did not impose a discipline on anyone else, and definitely not the same discipline upon all. It is possible that one is at a certain stage of evolution where a certain discipline is not only unnecessary but dangerous. You can't milk a calf, it's a bit risky; you may get nothing out of it but a couple of kicks. The calf must mature, and then you may milk it. I'll give you a few incidents from the ashram. There was a Swami, one of Gurudev's own disciples, who lived in a room adjacent to the temple, but who didn't like to go there. He was not interested in the Puja, but only in the kitchen - Prasadam. I used to do Puja in the temple and I remember Swamiji saying, "Did you send him Prasadam today?" That is the point. Gurudev knew that he wanted Prasadam. It's no use sending him to the temple; if he is asked to go to the temple, perhaps he will disturb the devotion of others. So, it's better not to send him to the temple at all. He's a very good man - a good worker, a great lecturer - so leave him alone; this job is not for him, this discipline is not for him. That only Gurudev could know.

There was another young man who, if he came to the ashram, would be asked by Swamiji, "Did you go to the temple to the Puja?" "You didn't go to the temple -

what is this? You came here and didn't go to the temple!" And there are certain persons to whom the whole concept of discipline may be repugnant. "I don't want to obey you, who are you to tell me?" How do you deal with that? Someone was terribly upset; he was a hard worker and a very good and noble person, but he didn't know how to behave with the Guru. Swamiji used to go around the ashram every day greeting everyone. As He went to this Swami's room, He asked him if he was getting coffee, milk, and fruits. The Swami erupted, "Your kitchen is hopeless ! The food is bad, the rice is full of stones, etc." It was fantastic - Swamiji sat there listening to this disciple's peroration for forty-five minutes, and didn't say a word. While sitting there quietly every few minutes, He'd calmly say, "Is that so!" And then He came up with an extremely simple suggestion. Give him a separate kitchen and a cook.

It was a remarkable thing. I don't think I have ever seen a Guru so obedient to His disciples as Gurudev was. Once a Swami who didn't like coffee or tea, but was a good eater, became the kitchen manager - one of the most powerful positions in the ashram. One day he came up to Swamiji and said, "As soon as these fellows get up in the morning, they all want coffee or tea. It's not good for the health Swamiji; we must increase the quantity of khichdi prepared for the temple, and they must all eat to their heart's content." Next morning the bell rings - no coffee or tea, but two buckets of khichdi. Then as though Swamiji has completely forgotten the change in the routine, he asks, "You haven't had your tea?" He is watching very closely, feeling the pulse, seeing how they react - "No tea today?" This man wants a discipline to be observed: OK, I observe your discipline, but then what does one do with a man who cannot do it? How does one balance this? "Go to the shop and get him some tea!" He is not interested in the ashram discipline at all, he doesn't interfere in it. Whenever there is a misunderstanding, two people fighting or quarrelling with each other, he always made the statement, "Both of you are dear to me, I love both of you. Now you are quarrelling amongst yourselves, what must I do?"

It's a direct appeal to your heart; your heart begins to melt, and it makes you turn within and watch. That me has to be watched by me - discipline can never be imposed by anyone else. So where are we - that's the biggest problem. If I say I surrender myself to you, who is it that surrenders what? The ego still stands firmly behind, surrendering something, but that is of no use. That means the me is still there, adamant, impossible to deal with. One of the best ways of dealing with this is, as Gurudev used to say, total, implicit, unquestioning obedience. His obedience was a remarkable thing. I think we saw in this obedience to His disciples the glory of sheer obedience. Since He did not live with His own Guru for more than half a day, He treated even His own disciples as His Guru. I have never heard Him contradict or begin to argue with any of them.

In total, implicit and absolute obedience you have a fantastic key. But it must come spontaneously and uncalculated, because the moment you calculate, it is the ego that is calculating. When He discovered you were ready for this, He would twist you, turn you half a dozen times, so that you didn't know which way you

were facing. Then came the vital, very important and difficult training to see if you could spontaneously respond, "Yes, Swamiji." That training is marvellous. I guess that is the only way in which we can ultimately come to grips with the "me". But then once you tell yourself, "He is my Guru, I'm going to obey him implicitly, one-hundred per cent, every time," what is the question that immediately arises in your mind? "What if he gives me a wrong instruction?" What is a "wrong instruction", why do I, why does I consider something a wrong instruction? The I is there, sitting in judgment over what the Guru says, "This is right and that is wrong." Isn't that the problem that the Guru is helping me to deal with? That's exactly what He wants to knock out. And so a wrong instruction in the hands of the Guru becomes the right instruction. Look within, see, see who it is that says, "This may not be right." That is the Guru's business. Even this much thinking and counter-thinking has no business in our life.

If it hurts, it is meant to hurt, it is good for you. You are alive and at least sensitive. Gurudev was insistent upon this: "When someone has said something, insulted you, why do you get upset, what is wrong? What is he insulting? The me. Why are you here, why do you want to become a Swami, why do you want to be a student in the ashram, to attain Self-realization? Your own effort is to negate, to overcome this me. The man who insults you, who hurts you, is really helping you. As soon as the me is hurt, if you can look within, you can come face to face with the me, the ego." At no other time in our life can we be as keenly, as clearly aware of the ego as when it is hurt. Then you are one-hundred per cent sure that it is there. Now go on, work on it. Why do I get hurt, and who is this I that gets hurt?

All these disciplines that have been laid down or recommended are meant to tackle this basic problem of the ego - the million ways in which it functions and worries us. Absolute obedience - this is the light in which the me, the ego, the shadow is dispelled. Once the ego goes, the light of God shines through that person and there is no problem. That total submission - even to what appears to be human will, the other person's human will - was Swami Sivananda. To be constantly watchful of this me and to say, "Lord thy will be done", not Thy will be done so that I may go to heaven, "Thy will be done", and without any reserve whatsoever - this was Swami Sivananda.

This, I think, is a clue as to how difficult spiritual discipline can be, and how it may be made possible. It may be possible, but I'm still skeptical, because if I begin to calculate that from now on I'm going to be obedient, the ego might still be transformed - flourishing in a transformed condition. I may appear to be very good, very nice, but the I is still there. And thus to use his own two words, it needs eternal vigilance.

## 15. Renunciation

Today we are celebrating Gurudev's birthday. I was looking at this lovely picture we have of Him here - full of compassion, kindness, mercy - a love that was His characteristic. We bow down to this picture, to statues, to photographs, and Swami Vishnudevananda in America used to explain the significance of this idol worship very well. He said: "Why do we more readily fall at the feet of a picture or a statue than at the feet of a living man? Since God is present in all, why don't I fall at your feet as often as I fall at the feet of some idol? Because the picture or the idol has no ego." It is a beautiful explanation. If somebody drops at my feet, I may look down to see if there is a currency note left. The human being is moved by likes and dislikes because of this ego sense, whereas the statue has none. The only human being whom I have seen who had not the least trace of ego sense in him was Gurudev. It was marvellous to live with Him, because you were living with nothing, with everything, with a total human being, a human being who was human. I think we have forgotten this. We are all trying to be human beings, and this very fact shows that we are not human beings.

But total egolessness - that alone can characterize a human being who is a totally human, human being, absolutely human and pure as God made him. That is what we saw in Him. As a human being, He was totally perfect. He could cry, he could laugh, anything. Anything you could name, He had. He was a beautiful human being - one who never denied his human-ness in order to become divine.

We all talk about attachment, non-attachment, but once in the ashram a Swami passed away who was sort of a pillar to the mission. He was bitten by a rabid dog, seemed to get better, then suddenly developed intense pain in one of his arms. Gurudev sent him to a hospital and the next morning we received a telegram - the Swami is improving. Swamiji was visibly happy, there was no doubt about that. The next morning there was another telegram - the pain is gone. Three hours later we received another telegram - the Swami has died. When the pain went, he also went, it was not a good sign. When the pain went, he was paralyzed. We took the telegram to Swamiji and He was shocked, visibly shaken.

It is these human qualities that are important. He had a quality that could enjoy with you. If you were happy, He also was happy. If something happened to you, it also happened to Him. A terribly transparent personality, completely egoless, and therefore able to respond to everything with you. The fire of renunciation was constantly burning and reducing all ego sense and its manifestations to ashes. This is what endeared Gurudev to all of us.

Night after night we have been hearing that God is everywhere, and if God is everywhere, what stands between me and God? It is simple arithmetic. If God is everywhere, what stands between me and God is me - if you remove the me, God is everywhere. The renunciation of this me is the renunciation we saw in Gurudev. But to renounce the ego is not like renouncing potato chips - when you no longer want them, you give them to someone else. This is the renunciation we

know. If I quarrel with you, you renounce me, but when you need me again, you call me back. This is what goes on, but this is not renunciation. You are a human being, endowed with this body, what are you going to do? You can throw away all your clothes and run away, but as soon as you catch cold, you will go and buy some more shirts. Renunciation is not even a concept. This is one tremendous lesson that we learned from Him. You cannot say, "I have renounced this and therefore ... " No, then you are caught in the trap called renunciation. What have you renounced? What is the sense in saying that you have renounced the body or that you have renounced the world? Have you? Or are you carrying it all in your own mind? What you have renounced is still there inside. Even before you renounced it, it was only an idea in your mind. "I have a business that is worth five million, I have property worth ten million," they are all in your mind. So also in the case of the Sanyasin, the whole thing is in his mind. "I had all these things, I have renounced them," but he is carrying them in his mind.

The ego-sense cannot be renounced like a shirt that can be thrown out the window and it's gone. The Sanyasin's shaved head reminds us why. He cannot say, "I shaved my head last month - finished." It comes up again. I met a Zen Master in New York who shaved his head every morning. That is the point - before you have finished shaving, something has come up again. Again Gurudev's words - one has to have eternal vigilance. This eternal vigilance is not the action of the ego. One has to watch eternally, vigilant for the form and the shape in which the ego exists to trap you.

At the end of the All-India Tour, we were in Delhi, and Swamiji was not feeling at all well physically. The house where we were staying was overcrowded, and we knew that Swamiji could not rest if He knew that people were waiting outside to see Him. So we asked Him to go and take rest at the house of another devotee. We drove there, had lunch, and Swamiji lay down and began to snore quietly. He had an appointment at three o'clock, but we were conspiring not to wake Him and to cancel the programme. But at two-fifty-five He woke up and said, "Let's go". When He got into the car, He saw the devotee's wife standing on the verandah, and He turned to me and said, "Are we coming back here?" I told Him 'no', and He folded His palms and took leave of her. The car started up the road, but a minute later He said, "Stop, stop. Ask him to return to the house." We returned and then what happened nearly took our breath away. He slowly walked into the house, very grave, not smiling. The devotee's wife was there and He said, "Please forgive me, this was a mistake." He bowed down, "I should have come into the house and taken leave of you properly instead of doing so from the car. Please forgive me." When she heard this, she nearly burst into tears, she didn't know what to do. Even if He had not taken leave at all and just walked off, she would still have considered it a supreme blessing to have been able to accommodate Him in her house for a few hours. But from the car He had taken leave of her. We got back into the car and after a few minutes He began talking very softly more to Himself than to me, "Just for an instant the feeling, the vanity that I am a big man, tried to enter I think. One has to be very careful."

If one is as vigilant as that, then perhaps by the grace of God it is possible to discover how and when the spirit of renunciation is put out, and how to rekindle it. It is this fire of renunciation that made Him a pure human being. A totally egoless person and therefore a complete human being. I don't think that it is possible to describe it, because by the time you have finished the description, he is something else. That was dangerous. You pick up the microphone and say, "Om Swami Sivananda is full of love." And He says, "Ah, sit down, sit down." It was beautiful - a person who was totally transparent, in whom there was no ego sense at all. It was difficult to understand, even while living with Him. From moment to moment He changed. One day He seemed to be flowing like liquid, and then He seemed very strong and firm. Another time He seemed to be just like a grandfather indulging in everything the grandchildren might do, then He seemed to be a stern God who is the uplifted rod. The moment there was a concept of form to Him, that spirit of renunciation burned it down.

I don't think that Swami Sivananda took Sanyas at a certain time, it was there right from the beginning of His life. He was born a Sanyasin, a man of renunciation, and whatever He found on the way which was an impediment to His being, a total and complete human being, that He burned immediately. Perhaps Swami Sivananda was not even a human being at all, I don't know. Probably He was just a blazing fire of renunciation. If you have a ball of cotton soaked in benzine and you take a match, strike it and set fire to the cotton, what is it that sets the fire? The match. And if the box of matches is dropped into the fire, what happens? The matches cannot say, "I helped to start the fire, you should not burn me." The fire, once it is kindled, burns everything, even what is called renunciation. So, the man of renunciation does not even say, "I am a man of renunciation." No, that is gone. The same fire burns even that concept. Marvellous.

When the ego is thus burned down, the fire of renunciation throws this light within your being in such a manner that no trace of individuality, of personality, of ego, will ever rise in you again. To this fire of renunciation, of divine light, we pay our homage. I only hope that you will not stop with paying homage, but will also one day enshrine this fire, this light, in your heart.

## 16. Ganesha - Symbol of Wisdom

Today we are honouring Ganesha. In the Psalms of David one again and again comes across the expression "Lord of Hosts". Strangely or significantly, Ganesha literally means Lord of Hosts. Gana in Sanskrit means hosts and Esha means God. There must be some significance in the parallel. That the ancient Aryans and Jewish people were using the same expression seems to be not mere coincidence. In India this Lord of Hosts, Ganesha, is adored and worshipped by everybody. Even though the various sects of Hinduism oppose each other in many respects, here they come together. It is usually said that unless a function is begun with worship of Ganesha, it may not attain success. It is said that in ancient days even dacoits and robbers used to worship Ganesha before they went out on their business. After all, this is just another kind of business. The businessman gets his money in one type of robbery, the Swami gets his money in another type of robbery - even making you feel happy and blessed to give - and the robber does it in a more plain way, that is all. There is no serious difference between them. So even robbers used to worship Ganesha before they embarked upon their enterprises. This is universal.

And we look at this figure of Ganesha - it is quite a lovely character. Someone who has the form of an elephant, and yet is a Divine Being, a being of light. Deva in Sanskrit means an enlightened being, a being of light, a light that may enable you and me to walk the path of life without stumbling. Like all of us, each God has his own type of conveyance or transport. Some of you have bicycles, I have a scooter, others have motor cars, a few may have private planes, but all these serve the same purpose, conveyance. And these Gods also have their own transport. Shiva had a mighty bull, Vishnu had a bird, Durga had a tiger, and this fat, lovely elephant-sized deity, Ganesha, had a mouse. I guess it is too ludicrously simple, yet you find this mouse sitting there very comfortably, waiting to take his master wherever he wanted to go. When we come across such concepts, which obviously seem absurd, and yet which have survived all these hundreds of centuries, I think it is good to take a look into them. It is totally unscientific to dismiss such a thing, saying it is just superstition - but maybe it is superstition. Just because a bunch of fools have believed in a superstition for thousands of years, it doesn't become valid. It may be an absurd superstition - or it may not be.

Therefore it is scientific to examine these and not to dismiss them as nonsense. All good things are non-sense - while your senses may not grasp them your intelligence may. I have been given this intelligence so that I may grasp what my senses may not be able to grasp. That is called non-sense. Non-sense is not to be confused with stupidity. Non-sense is something which I cannot see, I cannot hear, I cannot touch, I cannot smell, I cannot taste; it is something beyond my senses which demands the use of intelligence. One who says, "I cannot understand this, and therefore it is nonsense", is like the schoolboy who goes to the university, picks up a textbook, and not understanding it, says it is nonsense and throws it away. If he could understand it, he wouldn't need to go to school - a waste of time and money. So one must examine this, an elephant riding on a



mouse, the mouse is not crushed, and the elephant goes very fast. It is up to you to unravel this riddle.

When I was in Rishikesh at the feet of my Guru, Swami Sivananda, I was in charge of the ashram correspondence, books, publications and things like that. I was not afraid of anything on earth except a rat. I was terribly afraid of rats. You know why? My small room was literally littered with papers, books and very precious manuscripts. If at night I heard some little munching noises, I would jump up, search until the rat was found, drive it out, then shut all the doors and windows before I could sleep again. The rat destroyed papers and books. It didn't eat them - if paper was its food, I wouldn't mind giving it some paper, it is the best use for the newspapers - but the silly thing doesn't eat paper, it merely chews it. It reduces books and manuscripts to tiny bits, leaves the litter there, and goes away. Silly, isn't it?

But that is not the point. There seems to be within us another rat. If you like to play these word games, you can build the word r-a-t, and then continue i-o-n-a-l-i-s-t, a rationalist. A rationalist is nothing more than the first three letters of the word imply - a rat. A rationalist always asks, "Why is this so, why must I sit and pray, why must I sit and meditate, why must I not hang myself upside down from the ceiling?" Such a rationalist is nothing but a rat. And this rat of a rationalist is nothing but destructive - he doesn't want to learn, he doesn't want to know. He picks up some theory, and without the least inquiry, study, or effort to understand, he chops, chops, chops, and throws it out. Wherever you come across this phenomenon, you will know that there is a rat there. You must be able to smell a rat from quite a distance, and you can smell a rationalist from quite a distance. He is very loud mouthed and destructive. But this is something funny. This destructive rat is itself indestructible. Now this is a dangerous position. We have something which destroys knowledge as represented by books and paper, but which itself is indestructible. After all these thousands of years carrying an elephant on its back, the rat is still sitting there quite comfortable, quite alive, quite alert. One must wonder what it means.

It is obviously symbolism. What is the rat in relation to me? There is a lesson here which I must learn. There is a rat in me, can I discover that rat? In order to discover the rat, I must become a cat. But what are the main characteristics of a cat? Number one, it can see both by day and by night, and number two, it treads softly, making no noises. Unless your mind can also function with these two characteristics, you will not discover the rat. It is within you, within your own mind - your mind, not your intelligence. Your own intellect is the rat, a destructive thing, questioning and doubting all the time. And in order to discover this rat within, you will have to become a cat, you must be able to see by day and by night. You must be able to see where ordinary people see, and you must be able to see where ordinary people cannot see - within themselves. We must be aware not only of the outside world, but also of the inside world, which is dark for most of us. That is what is meant by becoming a cat. And when you enter this inner world where the rat reigns supreme, tread softly, silently, otherwise the rat

will run away, escape.

When you enter into this inner world, in order to become aware of your own thoughts, feelings, concepts, illusions, and mental conditioning, you will have to tread very softly. That treading softly within yourself is called Yoga, is called meditation. When there is a great inner silence, there is great inner tranquility, calmness, quietness, and peace, and you are able to see the rat and exactly how it functions. You cannot kill it, impossible, the intellect cannot be destroyed, but its destructiveness can be controlled. Your whole attention must transform itself into a cat, and treading softly in meditation must come face to face with this rat, then the rat doesn't move anymore. The rat must be under control of the elephant.

Look at this elephant again. What exactly is the difference between the elephant and you and me? The trunk. Otherwise some of us look very much like elephants, physiologically there is not much difference. The elephant walks on four legs, but some of these circus elephants can perform on two. Probably we are perpetually performing circus elephants. But the basic difference is this - if you watch very carefully, you discover that the elephant's arm and hand is its trunk. We work with our hands, give charity with our hands, embrace each other with our arms, hit each other with our hands, all these actions are performed by the arms and hands. But where are they? Hanging down from the shoulders. Look again, our actions in this world are three-fold - thought, word and deed. We live in this world and perform our actions with the help of these three instruments. Thinking takes place in the brain, on top, speaking takes place in the throat and mouth - quite a distance from the brain - and action takes place in the arms and hands which are quite far removed from the thinking and speaking organs. This is why you find some people who think one thing, say another, and do something entirely different.

If you are engaged in charity work and have to collect some donations, you will see this. You go to a very wealthy man, explain your mission - he listens, smiles, and if you are very experienced in these things, you see that he is impressed and see the thought "a thousand rand" forming in his brain. When you finish he says, "Alright Swami, you are doing very good work, I'll give you five hundred rand." You think, "Not bad, from the brain to the mouth, only fifty per cent loss". But unless his arms have been amputated, he doesn't write his cheque with his teeth. If he did, you might still get your five hundred. Then another problem arises. You have heard the term bottle neck? Bottle neck means a serious obstruction in some work. As the five hundred passes down from the mouth through the neck, there is a "bottle neck" and a hundred more is lost. And then though there was but one mouth to speak, there are two arms to do and so it is divided, two hundred for each arm. And as it flows down, it finds that there are five channels or fingers, forty rand each. When he finally takes up his pen and writes, if you are very lucky you will get fifty rand. From a thousand it came down to fifty.

This is true, not only of charity, but of everything that we do. This terrible

hypocrisy is nothing but discrepancy between thought, word and deed. And what is even more terrible is that modern civilization has elevated hypocrisy to the status of culture. I don't think that I need to take your time explaining this, but there are hundreds of expressions we use in the name of being polite which are nothing but hypocritical. I don't say that we shouldn't be polite, but why shouldn't we be polite in thought, word, and deed? Be polite, be courteous, be loving, be affectionate, be all this, but actually be it.

This is our position, and we wonder why we are restless, why we are frustrated, why we are miserable. We are miserable and we know no peace of mind, no joy, and no health, only because of this constant tug of war going on within. You think something, say something else, and do something entirely different. Harmonize these three, and immediately all the problems are solved. You lose the friends that you have made through this hypocrisy - good riddance - and you'll gain the whole world as your friend the moment people know that you are truthful and honest. Now you look at Ganesha again, and you see that in the case of this elephant God, the discrepancy is not there. The organs of thought, word and deed are all together, one and integrated. Therefore the elephant is the symbol of wisdom, honesty, truthfulness, and sincerity. There is no hypocrisy and significantly, the organ of action hides the mouth. There is less talk and more action, while in our case it is the reverse. All our charity is words, all our sweetness is words, all our goodness is just word deep. We don't mean a thing.

That is the symbolism of Ganesha, the symbol of supreme sincerity, the symbol of wisdom, the symbol of truthfulness. If this wisdom and sincerity ride upon this rat, the rat doesn't die but is sublimated. The rat or the principle of rationalization is instantly sublimated, under control, and doesn't bite and destroy any more. It becomes constructive. Destructive intellect has become constructive intelligence when thus governed by sincerity, by harmony between thought, word and deed. That is the symbolism of Ganesha.

But what does this wisdom do? What is the role of this wisdom in our lives? There is a strange custom in India, where today we would have been worshipping Ganesha. Early in the morning an earthen image of Ganesha is purchased - it is used only on this occasion and its lifespan is only a few hours. It is bought, taken home, used for some Puja, and then taken and thrown into the sea. There its life is over. This again is interesting, for wisdom is not a thing which you can bottle. It cannot be made into a statue or enshrined in a temple. That is why Ganesha traditionally has no temple. He is supposed to be found under trees and at cross-roads. If you observe this tradition carefully, you will discover that it is hinting at the true role of wisdom. In India when a Yogi wanted to acquire wisdom, he sat in the shade of a tree and meditated. Sitting under a tree and meditating, it is possible to acquire wisdom. And we need wisdom at cross-roads, not when the road is smooth and straight. Therefore traditionally Ganesha is installed at all cross-roads. And traditionally the image of Ganesha which is used on this day is temporary. Do not keep it, throw it away. Don't try to capture wisdom and make it a set of rigid do's and don'ts - it won't work. But this is what we have all been

trying. Thousands of years ago someone said, "Thou shalt not kill", but what has happened to that commandment? Have we stopped killing since then? We have been killing more and more. We have it in print, we have it on slabs of stone, but there is no wisdom in print, there is no wisdom in stone. There is no wisdom in this idol. When I look at this, it must come alive in me. And so, throw this idol away, and let this wisdom spring up in you alive, anew, every day, every minute. Hereafter Ganesha must wake up in me. I must become wise. And if I am wise the intellect which was so far destructive, is immediately transformed into constructive intelligence which takes me very far very fast.

Basically this Ganesha represents honesty, sincerity, and truthfulness, and these are the great qualities that our Master, Swami Sivananda, represented to us. Greatness or Self-realization or God-realization does not lie in levitating and such things. I have heard stories of people who remained suspended in the air for long hours, but what for? Was there no chair to sit on? Why must one waste his time learning how to remain suspended in the air? Then by what symptom can one recognize an enlightened soul? I lived with my Master for sixteen or seventeen years, but I have never seen Him sit publicly in the classic pose for meditation. I have never heard him use the words, "I went into Samadhi", never. Never the words, "I saw God". There was nothing like this. When you went to the ashram, all He would ask was "Which would you like, tea or coffee?" This is the most important thing, are you kind, are you compassionate, are you loving, are you truthful and sincere? These are the things you find in a holy man. It is this total sincerity, total integration of personality, represented by Ganesha, that identifies the Sage or the Saint or the Yogi for you. He even wove the whole thing into a beautiful song and with this I will conclude:

Serenity, regularity, absence of vanity,  
Sincerity, simplicity, veracity,  
Equanimity, fixity, non-irritability,  
Adaptability, humility, tenacity,  
Integrity, nobility, magnanimity,  
Charity, generosity, purity.

Practice daily these eighteen 'ities,  
You will soon attain immortality,  
God is the only real Entity,  
Mr. So-and-So is a false non-entity,  
You will abide in Infinity and Eternity.  
You will behold Unity and Diversity.  
You cannot attain this in the University.

## 17. Can I know God's Will

To me the teachings of Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita are best illustrated by the life of my own Guru, Swami Sivananda. The other day, a couple of young men told me that all that had so far been written concerning the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita was wrong, that only the book written by their Guru was correct. But none of us has seen Krishna, so how do we know what he meant? It is not possible to understand the Bhagavad Gita from the words that have been transmitted to us, because the thing that understands the words is the mind, and how is one mind more qualified to understand the teachings of Krishna than another.

When people of different religions come together, the Christian quotes from the Bible, the Hindu quotes from the Gita, and the Muslim quotes from the Koran. There is no meeting point - one will say the Bible is the truth, another that the Gita is the truth, and the third that the Koran is the truth. Who or what is the authority? We often bring God into these discussions, but this wonderful God doesn't even have a chance to defend himself - He is accused and sentenced in absentia. So what must one do? If one looks at the scriptures, he finds that they contradict one another, even contradict themselves. The truth concerning Dharma is hidden away in the caves of our own neglect. We are unable to understand the scriptures, because we have never tried to do something about them. If I ask a little child if he can lift this tape recorder, he will never know until he actually bends down and tries. When someone told Gurudev that they could not do something, he would reply, "How do you know you can not do it - did you even attempt?"

We cannot know whether we can or cannot do something until we have taken the first steps. Nothing is the authority except our own effort and experience. This is what we learned from our Master. How do you know you cannot do something? You must try, and if you fail you will also learn a lesson if you are sincere. This was the great message of Krishna, "To work alone you have a right, but you have a right to work." It is a double-edged sword. You have a right to work, but not to the fruits, not to the results, don't let motive cloud your vision, confuse your mind, or disturb your heart. You have a right to work, go ahead - don't let that right also drop away from you. I have a right to do something, I have a right to stand here. Who gave me that right? These two legs gave me that right, and this right cannot possibly be surrendered, because I'm not asked to look for results.

Unfortunately in what we call the modern world, we have come a to associate action with a goal, but when I fix a goal for myself, I keep going round in circles. If I reach my goal it is no longer a goal. Like climbing Mt. Everest, they climb and climb, but what do they do when they finally reach the top? Come down, they can do nothing else. I would have asked, "If you had to come down, why did you go up at all?" If you reach the goal, you have to come down, if you don't reach the goal, you are frustrated. Before I take a job, I ask, "How much are you going to give

me?" I am not interested in working, I am not interested in using the body that has been given to me, I am only interested in how much I am going to get out of you. And naturally you are interested in seeing how much you can get out of me. This produces conflict, confusion and frustration. If on the other hand I can see that I have a right to work, a right to stand here, a right to say something, I'll say it. But for what? There is no for what. When I am breathing, I don't ask for what, who is going to pay me for breathing. I have a right to breathe. To live I need to work - I work, asking no questions, looking for no reward, no consequences, no goal. If I have a goal, how do I know that goal is right? Therefore I think that the whole message of the Bhagavad Gita is contained in that one verse. You have a right to work, do it without asking any questions. Look within, see what talents you have, see what capacities and energies you have, use them and in that use you will discover yourself.

Self-knowledge or Self-realization is not seeing lights or staring at the tip of your nose, but rather the knowledge of what is happening in the tip of your little finger. How to stand, how to walk, how to talk, this is what Arjuna asks Krishna. He doesn't ask what kind of light does a Yogi see, or how high does a Yogi levitate. After Krishna describes the glory of Yoga, Arjuna asks, "How does a Yogi sit, how does a Yogi walk, how does he talk, how does he behave in this world?" This is the question - not an illusory goal, not lights and sounds. Why should I go through all this for lights and sounds? I can see them without Yoga, these things are easy.

Yet I must ask myself what it is that wants these things - selfknowledge, spiritual experiences - and what for. How am I so terribly important that God should reveal himself to me. Mosquito! One sees how vanity enters into even so-called spirituality. "God must work through me!" Why not through this microphone, why through me? "I am doing God's will!", we often hear this, but how do I know I am doing God's will? Here lies the danger; can I ever know that what I am doing is God's will? Here we have absolutely no help outside of ourselves. For instance, I can listen and watch the Master, but how far can I understand him, how far can I grasp him and the spirit of his action? I can see what he does, I can see how he sits, how he walks, but with what spirit he does these things, how can I ever know? There is a very beautiful verse in the Gita - "It is your body that walks, why do you say I am walking?" And tremendous work is going on in your stomach just now, fantastic work, more than you can imagine. This little child has eaten about two hundred chickens in her lifetime, but put all those chickens in a basket and they will not become like her. There is something mysterious in us that converts those chickens into this girl. "I am the power that dwells in your body," says Krishna to Arjuna.

But can I know God's will? God has given me two legs and the power to stand, so I am standing. God has given me a voice to speak and a brain to manufacture words, but how do I know what He wants me to say or that He wants me to say anything at all? There is another beautiful verse in the Bhagavad Gita, "Be an instrument in my hands". We often say, "I am an instrument in the hands of

God", and by this we mean, "I am an instrument in the hands of God and therefore what I am doing is right and if you are doing something different, it must be wrong." How do I know? When I take up my pen to write, the pen is an instrument in my hand. But I look at that pen; does it say, "I am an instrument in your hand?" No, I write with it and it writes, I lay it down and it is there, I break it into pieces, it is broken into pieces. Can I be like that? What is meant by being an instrument or by doing God's will? I say, "I can do nothing, it is God working through me", but again it is me, always me. Krishna goes on to say, "If you do all these things thinking you are doing them you are a fool, but if you say, 'alright, I won't do anything, let God do it', then again you are a fool", a greater fool, perhaps. But in either case it is the ego saying either, "I am doing this", or "I will not do it".

This is the problem, how do I act, what do I do, how do I live, how do I know what my ego is, how do I know what God wants me to do, or does God want me to do, or does he do through me? How can I know the answers to all these questions? This we learned from Gurudev, I cannot possibly know the answers to these questions, for there is only one answer and that is eternal vigilance - these two words are His. You must eternally and vigilantly watch yourself and watch the ego in its own play. I don't know if God wants me to stand here and speak to you, I don't know at all. But if I am wise enough, I can watch myself to see if it is my own vanity that stands here and makes me speak, if the desires of my heart make me speak, if it is my own foolish idea that makes me speak - this I can know. It is possible to watch within, look at one's own mind, one's own heart, and arrive at some kind of an understanding of oneself. Does this action spring from my reason, from my mind, or does this action spring from my feelings, from my likes and dislikes? The mind and the feelings are the two instruments through which the ego manifests itself, and it is possible to watch and make sure that whatever I do is not done because of a motive, a feeling, an emotion, or from a reason - the reason is the motive. I cannot know what God's will is, but I can certainly keep watch to see that it is not my will making me act.

Even in God-realization it is the I that we consider important, "I must realize God!" Why must I realize God, what for, why not somebody else? It is the ego, vanity, "I have seen God, come fall at my feet". Just as the London-returned doctor is going to put up his fees by twenty rand, so this God-returned man will put up his fifty rand. If you have seen God, keep it to yourself, I may not be interested. It is always me, all these things must pass through me, even God must work through me as if he is silly and impotent. Why must God speak through me, He can as well speak through a buffalo, and if you cannot learn from the buffalo, you cannot learn from this donkey either. It is up to you to learn, and if you cannot learn from the one, you will not learn from the other. It is only when you watch vigilantly for this I, for this ego, and ensure that it is not this ego acting, that you will know God's will, or perhaps you will not know His will, but you will spontaneously do His will, as an instrument, though not even claiming to be an instrument.

This is what we saw in the life of Sri Gurudev. He didn't have any rigid rules and regulations, no rigid principles, there was not even what you call consistency in his behaviour. Things changed. In 1935 He said, "I have no ashram, I have no disciples, I don't want an ashram, I don't want disciples". Then disciples came to Him, and an ashram grew around Him. "Alright", he would say, "That is then and this is now". At one time there was not more light in the Satsang than a wick lamp, and later there was blazing electricity, also alright. This is true consistency, the consistency lies in watching the ego and ensuring that it doesn't function or dictate. There was another very holy man who actually proclaimed that he had seen God. One of his devotees invited him to stay with him and he accepted, but as they were arranging his room he said, "Where is my bed?", for he was used to sleeping on a sack filled with hay. He would not sleep on a conventional bed, nor on a carpet, only on a sack filled with hay. They said that as the car was small they had left it behind, thinking he could sleep on something else. But he would not take 'no' for an answer, and insisted that they return for the sack of hay. He was consistent in his behaviour. This type of consistency may spring from the ego, though not to say that this was so in the case of the holy man. I have built up a reputation that I am a very simple man, that I sleep only on the floor, but when I come to your house and there is no floor, all furniture, what must I do? If I don't want to sleep on the bed, I'll sleep under it, why should I trouble you?

This is the message from the Gita - watch, constantly watch. As Gurudev used to say, eternal vigilance is necessary to ensure that your actions from moment to moment do not spring either from your mind, which is constantly calculating, "What will I get out of it", nor from your feelings which are the immediate manifestation of your ego. "I like this, I don't like that". So, though one cannot know God's will, though one cannot know what it is to be an instrument in His hands, one can definitely know from where one's own actions spring. And when one is thus constantly vigilant, constantly watching oneself, that is meditation, that is Yoga, and that itself is Self-realization.



## 18. Sincerity

Early in 1961 I had Darshan for the last time of Swami Puroshottamananda, the very holy sage who was the Guru of Swami Nischalananda. This wonderful holy man had lived for a long time in a cave on the Himalayan hillside. He led a type of ascetic and simple life which I don't think many of you here can even visualize, because the mind can only comprehend that which it can compare with something which is already known. For years his only friends were the tigers and cheetahs of the Himalayan forests. We used to visit Him quite frequently and have His Darshan. He was a very stern and severe type of man though also extremely loving. He used to come to the ashram quite frequently, and Gurudev asked Him to address the Parliament of Religions in 1953. He was perched on top of a big table - a tiny little person seated in the diamond posture - and everybody was watching Him waiting for Him to deliver a lecture. He said one word, "Sincerity". The lecture consisted of one word repeated thrice, "Sincerity, sincerity, sincerity", then he got up and left the stage. I thought that was the best lecture in the whole world. He did not say sincerity is important or sincerity is most important, or sincerity is necessary - why qualify it? Leave alone! "Sincerity", he said it three times and walked out.

Why do we go to these holy men and what do we get from them? We can talk to them and say, "Swamiji I smoke." "You smoke - what do you want me to do, manufacture some cigarettes for you?" "You know, Swamiji, I would very much like to give up smoking." "Ah yes, then what stops you from giving it up?" "But I like smoking, Swamiji". When you go to a holy man, look at yourself, why do you go at all? You have some problems - or you can substitute any other problem - you say you want to give it up, then why don't you? After you light the cigarette, put it down, then sit watching it. The cigarette smokes, you don't smoke. Keep watching very carefully. Does the cigarette jump into your mouth and say, "Please smoke me?" It does not, so why must you give up your smoking? Why must you take up smoking to start with? You have never asked that question. I don't need anyone to come and tell me how I should stop fighting with you - I don't want to fight with you, and if I don't want to, can anyone make me? So if you say, "I want to give up smoking, but I like it," then smoke, please go ahead. It is a terrible sin to give up something which you love, whether it is your wife or cigarettes. Smoke until it burns your lips and burns your lungs, because until you decide not to take up the next cigarette, nobody on earth can help you.

So why do I go to a holy man? Whatever he will tell me I know already. Is there one thing that happens there that you can't get at home from books or television or radio? Turn on the radio and you get some Bhajans, pick up a book and you can read all that you need to know about religion, philosophy, or Yoga. Why do we go to these holy men? Some go to visit these holy men just as some go to visit zoos, just to look at the monkeys. Just as people go to the Kruger National Park, some people go on pilgrimages to India to look at the holy men. Why do I go to meet a saint - what does he give me? Ah, isn't it dreadful, even when I go to these holy men, my only thought is what will they give me. What are you going to give

them? Have you ever asked yourself that question? In India there is a tradition that you should not go into the presence of a holy man empty handed. Very good - this was probably started by a holy man, but that holy man was a tremendous optimist if also slightly foolish. There are a few good devotees who take some fruit, some sweets, or something which the holy man may have use for. But many find it a bit difficult to carry a bag of fruit with them, so as they enter the ashram grounds they pick some flowers from the Swami's own garden, or some fruit from his own tree, then go inside and place it at the holy man's feet.

When I go to a holy man, must I ask him what he is going to give me? Why shouldn't I ask what I am going to give him? It is easy to offer a flower, it is easy to offer a fruit, and it is probably easy to offer some money, but what is most difficult to offer is yourself. Instead of asking what is he going to give me, why should I not approach the holy man with this feeling, "I am going to offer myself to him." If I do this for one single moment, all my problems are solved, all my problems are over. If I feel that my clothes are getting dirty and I have no one to wash them, what must I do? Throw away the clothes and walk around naked - the root of the problem is destroyed. So I see that all my troubles are created by me. I want this, I want that, I have all these problems but all these problems are basically selfishness. Is there any problem in our life that cannot ultimately be traced to this simple thing - selfishness? So if I give that away, I am free. When a sincere seeker goes to a Guru, he never asks, "What are you going to give me?" All that he wants is to give himself away to the Guru, so that negatively the problem is solved. Negatively in the sense that I have gotten rid of this big problem, selfishness. It is over, that is all, the end of it.

But it is not the end and do you know why? "I have been such a selfish rogue all this time, now that I have found the Guru and have surrendered myself to him and destroyed all the selfishness, now I am going to get heaven, I am going to attain Self-realization." That is what he said he wouldn't do. He said, "I do not want to get anything, I do not want to ask for anything, I want to surrender myself, finished." There is a lovely picture by a famous painter depicting a sage who had fallen in love with a nymph and produced a baby. Suddenly he realizes that he has fallen from his asceticism, and in great anger he turns from the nymph and baby, and not even wanting to look at them, he covers his eyes. But from between his fingers one eye is still peeping through. Just a corner of him still wants to look. So I want to turn away from selfishness, I want to go away from this world and be free, but through one corner of my eye I am still trying to see. "I have renounced selfishness, what am I going to get in return for having given up selfishness?" You are utterly selfish. This is the most difficult thing to do in life, because we have got into the habit of thinking in terms of logic -when I give up something, I get something else. We have been told that if we suffer in this world we will go to heaven and enjoy there. We have been conditioned to think that in order to enjoy afterwards we must suffer now. This suffering is therefore directly related to some pleasure later on. We cannot abandon the idea going of pleasure altogether. Let it go, I don't want it either here or hereafter, neither physical nor spiritual. I don't want this at all, it is a nuisance.

This complete and total abandonment is something which is totally unfamiliar to us. Therefore we go to the Guru, we surrender ourselves, "You are the Master, I am your disciple, I do not know anything at all." If so, what he says must make sense to me. I don't know anything at all, and whatever the Guru says must make sense to me. If I do not know anything at all, then it is quite simple, whatever he says is true. But we go to him saying, "I surrender myself, I don't know anything at all, you are my Guru, please tell me what the Truth is," he says, "Do so and so," and we reply, "But that does not suit me, tell me something else." This means that in all the profession there was no sincerity. Do we go to the Master merely to hear what we want to hear, merely to get something out of him? Even if I want some instructions, they must be what I want to hear. If you want to hear what you want to hear, there is a simple thing to do. Switch on the tape recorder, say what you want to say, then play it back and hear what you want to hear. Then you will hear what you want to hear when you want to hear it. Easy, nowadays the problem is solved. If I go to the teacher, I must go symbolically holding a flower in my hand, but not a flower pinched from the Guru's garden - though even this is alright, provided you understand the symbolism of it. "It is the flower of my heart that I offer at your feet." And having offered myself at his feet, I stand there not expecting a thing, knowing that expectation itself is the parent of all unhappiness, of all misery.

Therefore those disciples and devotees who are sincere, go to the holy man for Darshan. This Darshan is a strange thing, a peculiar thing. It means 'to see'. Can you open your eyes and see? What do you see? Is what I am seeing now the Truth or is it a projection of my own mind? Am I seeing things exactly as they are, or am I seeing them in the manner in which I want to see them? For example, take the case of a baby not more than six weeks old. Stand in front of the baby and for one little moment try to forget your identity and figure out what exactly the baby sees. It does not know the difference between a Swami and a non Swami, between an Indian and an American; it does not know the difference between an oval shape and a rectangular shape, between a human being and an animal, between a living thing and a picture. What does it see? It has no concept at all in its mind to relate to what it sees. You and I have such a lot of mental furniture, junk. We have a huge junk shop in the head, and it is extremely difficult to get rid of this junk. How can you get rid of it - where will you put it? It is like a friend's house where I suggested they have Yoga classes. They had lots of furniture in all the rooms and didn't know what to do with it. Eventually they had to build another room in order to shift the furniture from the Yoga room.

Our minds are full of junk. If I want to get rid of it, where must I put it? When we say, "My mind is absolutely clean, pure and clear," we are only thinking it is pure. It is not pure, it is not clean - to the already existing junk I have added one more piece called, "I have clarity of vision now." This is another lot of junk. So, when I go to this holy man to look at him, am I able to look at him without the least junk in my brain? Am I looking at him or is this furniture looking at him - the preconceived ideas and notions that a holy man must be like "this" and if he is

not, he is not a holy man. Do I go to this holy man with my own image, with a ready-made garment and ask him to fit into it? Then I am not having Darshan. In order to have the holy man's Darshan, I must go there completely free, with no junk, and then and only then I may be able to look at him. Darshan means looking, but it is not looking like going to a museum and looking at all the paintings and statues. That is easy, but to look at a man, something living, with all my being, I have to be so completely pure that what is, is seen, what is, is known. That is called Darshan.

When this Darshan takes place, there is a miraculous transfer of something mysterious, of the light, because you are standing in the Divine Presence, the Holy Presence, that is the Guru. The Guru is the light and you're standing in the Holy Presence, completely free. You tell yourself, "I do not know what he is, but I am not going to project anything." If you think he is a good man, that is a projection; if you think he is a crook, that is a projection. You do not know what he is, you do not know if you can ever become aware or conscious of what he is, but you can definitely know that these are all your own thoughts. If you can get rid of all this, you stand in the presence of the Master. That is all you can do. Then you are having his Darshan.

To achieve this without bluffing yourself requires sincerity. "I went to the Swami having absolutely no preconceived notions, but as soon as I went in he told me a lie." But who told you that Swamis don't tell lies? A preconceived idea. It is this idea that was projected and made the Swami unworthy of your attention. This is why we get trapped in our own ideas, our preconceived head notions, and we never benefit. We go around from one Swami to you another, from one ashram to another, visiting each one as we visit cinemas, theatres, or lecture halls. This is a famous pastime for many people in India. Unlike here, in India there are hundreds of holy men to choose from - some bearded ones, some naked ones, some ash-smearing ones, all sorts of lovely varieties, some non-speaking ones, some stone-throwing ones, some very here lovely looking ones, male ones, female ones, neuter ones, all sorts. There is such a variety of Swamis in India that it often becomes a jolly good pastime to go and visit these ashrams. Marvelous, marvelous, you have been on a tour of India, but what lot happened to you? You are still hanging on to yourself, very safe and sound, and you have come back with some more junk. Previously you had some furniture, and now you have collected a little more, now Swami furniture. Previously you had all sorts of other furniture, and now you have collected some Swami furniture. If you are sincere, you will examine yourself all the time to see if there is any insincerity coming up. "Am I sincere all the time?" That is the most important thing. But the old man, Swami Purushottamananda, did not even say that this was the most important thing, because then there is the suggestion that there are less important things. "Sincerity," full-stop.

Another obstacle or danger on our path seems to be a peculiar diversion of those who are engaged in business to make money. The man works day and night, twenty-four hours a day making money. When asked, "Why are you doing this,

killing yourself?" He says, "I have to support my wife and children. It is for their sake that I work myself to the bone." But then the next day the wife picks up her courage and asks her husband for some money to buy a new dress. The answer comes, "Why do you want a new dress? How do you think I am making this money? I have to sweat and toil and struggle hard to make it and you want to squander it." Yesterday he had said that it was for his wife's sake that he was working, and today when she wants the money he does not want to give her any. Funny, isn't it? We think that we want this money in order to be happy, to have a comfortable living, to have a nice car and things like that, but after making the money this is forgotten and the money itself becomes the goal. The money becomes the goal, the prestige of getting things, and the original thing is completely forgotten. We don't want to enjoy the wealth that we have earned, that is completely forgotten and the prestige becomes important. We are still the same silly little suffering people, but the money itself has become important. Our whole heart and path seems to have been diverted. This is another form of insincerity; if we were sincere it would not happen.

Somehow, somewhere life takes a turn and something is forgotten. I started with an idea - to undertake this spiritual life and become a Swami, to renounce everything and lead a life of total freedom - but after some time the Swami business itself becomes important. I love the respect, I love the adoration, and renunciation is forgotten. Instead of one family, I have created another family - the same thing comes back because I have forgotten the spirit with which I started the journey. There has been a diversion. I must be careful, I must watch - again the old man's watchword, sincerity. If I am sincere, if there is this light of sincerity burning constantly in my heart, then these things do not affect me. That is what we learned from that one word repeated thrice. Sincerity, sincerity, sincerity.

## 19. Realize God

Question: How is one to realize God?

Swamiji:

There is a small problem when one has a desire to realize God. To realize means to make real, and when one wants to realize God, I think there is some slight feeling somewhere that God is not real. This is the first problem. The second problem is this. When there is a desire to realize God, does it really concern God-realization, or is it merely another desire? Is my question clear? A desire to have a cup of coffee means that I do not have a cup of coffee now, and so I desire to have one. "I desire to realize God," but God seems to be already real. So if I desire to realize Him, what does it amount to - it amounts to a desire. Previously I desired to have a cup of coffee, a nice house, to marry a beautiful girl, to have some children, and now I have a desire to have God-realization - probably because I cannot support my wife and children. God becomes sort of an insurance agent.

What is this thing called God-realization? We all use the word, we all use this expression. Is God not real? God is not real because I am not looking, I am not aware, in that sense God is not real. Therefore it is only in this indirect way that it seems to be valid to speak of realizing God. Otherwise it is an absurd expression. To make real is absurd when it is related to God. God is real, but since this reality is not real to me, I use the expression. What is the problem? The me is the problem. God is real, but God is not real to me. What must I do that God be made real to me. One can use the analogy of the man standing under a cloud. The sun is shining above the cloud, but it is not shining as far as I am concerned, I am shivering and cold. What must I do? I must somehow blow away that cloud. Once the cloud has gone, I am basking in the sun. However, the analogy is imperfect, because sunlight is not all-pervading, and God is supposed to be all-pervading, omnipresent, everywhere. If God is everywhere, then what is blocking me from realizing Him? What stands between me and God? It is obvious - if you remove this me, then there is God. This can be very easily illustrated. If you have a lovely blackboard, black everywhere, and you write that little word "me" on it in white chalk, you can immediately see that it is black everywhere, except for the "me". As soon as you take a duster and wipe the "me" out, the blackness is omnipresent again.

To come back to "I wish to attain God-realization", so long as "I wish" is there, I am not going to attain God-realization. Therefore the person who is sincerely - for want of a better word - desiring God-realization, will very carefully watch the source of all these desires, the me, and cut out every desire as it arises. If he is sincere, he might at one stage realize that the desire for God-realization is not for God-realization at all, but merely a desire. It may be a terrible thing to say, but the desire for God-realization is not for God-realization, but merely a desire. If you watch this closely, and again sincerely, it is easy to see this.

