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# The Secret Knowledge

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# The Secret Knowledge

Insight into the spiritual life

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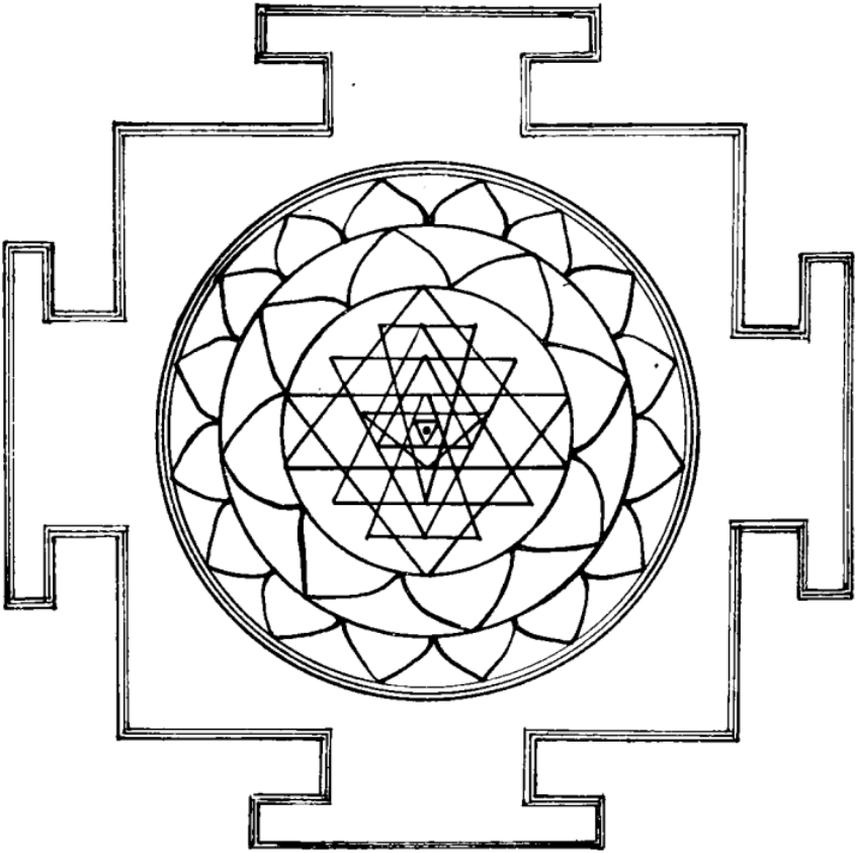
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## The four aspects

The entire cosmos is the play of the Divine. Its mystery cannot be explained even by science. It is only by knowing the Divine that this play can be understood and man can feel fulfilled, contented and complete. Man's predicament is that he is the offspring of the Divine yet he doesn't know his source, and therefore lives in a never-ending whirlpool of suffering and turmoil. He has forgotten his link with the universal consciousness. No state is more precarious than this. This has been the root cause of all his sufferings since time immemorial.

The Self in each one of us and the Universal Self are one in essence. Once the living links with God are revived and the channel opened through the grace of the spiritual Master and the Knowledge which he reveals, man regains God-consciousness instead of body-consciousness, and can, with Christ, proclaim, "I and my Father are one."

*Spiritual Knowledge* doesn't refer to information acquired via the senses or from books, but to the knowledge which is revealed from within, to the understanding and perception emanating from the depths of the inner self. When an aspirant is initiated into Knowledge, he has direct access to the Divine Energy within himself.

The sacred and revealed books of all times and peoples glorify this Knowledge. They place man at the pinnacle of creation, because only human beings can attain the plane of Absolute Truth, Consciousness and Bliss and thus realize the ultimate Reality. Lord Buddha said: "There is a state where there is neither earth nor water, nor heat, nor air....neither infinity of space...it is without stability, without change. Here is the

cessation of sorrow.” Jesus Christ was describing this state when he said, “The Kingdom of Heaven is within you,” and, “Know ye not that ye are the temples of God and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”

Initiation into Knowledge gives us access to four facets of Divine Energy—The Holy Word, Light Divine, Celestial Music and Nectar. We can know God through them. Realizing these aspects of the Divine Power within us is called, in spiritual terminology, *paravidya*, or ‘Knowledge’. These four aspects are like the petals of a flower. Only a flower in bloom emits fragrance. Similarly, it is only through the manifestations of these aspects of the Divine that the full splendour of God is experienced and salvation attained. God unmanifest is like a bud—It is the potential energy hidden in every particle of the universe. However, man is singularly blessed because of all creatures, only he has the ability to realize and make full use of the potential within himself.

Jesus was anointed with the living water of Knowledge and became Christ. Gautama manifested the Divine in himself and became Buddha, the Enlightened One. Moses saw the ‘burning bush’ and was transformed. Guru Nanak, St Kabir and hosts of other saints and mystics were transformed through the illuminating experience of God. How did this illumination take place? How did this enlightenment occur? How, rather than being mere men of flesh, did they become men of spirit? Each has his unique story to tell, and they have left their footprints for us to follow. They testify that it was through the techniques of spiritual Knowledge that their living link with the Divine was forged. This receiving of the techniques of spiritual insight is the real baptism. It is the second birth, the birth in the spirit.

It is one thing to receive Knowledge, but to understand its significance is something else again. Various gurus give one or two techniques, and some may even give three, but the complete Knowledge is not revealed. That is why people stay in limbo. They get some experience, but it is not total, because the four

techniques are like the legs of a table—if even one of them is missing, the table cannot stay upright. The proverb, “A little knowledge is a dangerous thing” is quite right. Incomplete spiritual knowledge is also dangerous, because a person has only fleeting glimpses which are subject to the whims of the mind, but he cannot have a total and constant experience of Truth.

Many people have taken LSD and other hallucogens and say that they had a fantastic spiritual experience. They call it spiritual because it is something novel and non-physical. However, everything non-physical is not necessarily spiritual—it can be psychic also, because the mind has certain layers and regions which can be stimulated by artificial means. This is simply the opening of the lockers of the mind, and whatever is stored there in the form of emotions and impressions will come out. That is why subsequent trips may not give the same wonderful experience—people have extremely bad trips also. The Bhagavad Gita, the sacred book of Hindus, says that true spiritual Knowledge has no adverse reactions or side-effects. If you fix your mind on it, all is well.

Knowledge is an integral whole in the form of potential energy. When this potential energy becomes kinetic and manifests itself, it takes the form of the Word, the Light, the Music and the Nectar. When scientists split the atom, the potential energy in the atom expresses itself as a blinding light, a tremendous sound, intense heat, and powerful radiation. This indicates that the universe is a mass of energy, which has the different levels of expression as solid, liquid, gaseous and ionic.

Scientific research has amply proven that around the nucleus of the atom electrons spin. The nucleus, however, presents a puzzle. Various subatomic particles have been identified, but so far nobody has been able to pinpoint the origin of the nucleus from where its energy comes. The greatest wonder of all is that everything is charged with energy but no one knows from where it comes. Science can observe and classify any expression of this energy in nature, but they can't observe its origin.

Spiritual Knowledge, on the other hand, gives an instantaneous experience of this energy in its perfect and purest form—it can unite the Self with its Source. This is why Lord Krishna, in the Bhagavad Gita, said that this Knowledge is the supreme science, the supreme secret, the supreme virtue. Jesus Christ explained this mysterious Knowledge through parables, using metaphors such as giving eyes to the blind, ears to the deaf, and living water of life which quenches the thirst of man once and for all.

Everything in the universe is striving consciously or unconsciously to attain the state of perfection and inertness. Atoms exchange electrons to become inert. Rivers don't stop flowing until they reach the sea. Man, the crown of creation, is also searching for that state of existence which can give him total peace and satisfaction. It is evident that in the realms of matter and mind, man fails to get that total experience no matter how hard he tries. It is only in the realm of spirit or consciousness that he can be assured of total satisfaction. The only way to attain perfect awareness is the way of the Knowledge, the communion with the Divine through its natural expressions already existing within man.

Science does not have a definite answer to the riddle of creation, but the Masters who had the direct living experience of God claim "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God and the Word was God." Here, *Word* does not refer to products of the alphabets of any language, because all languages came into existence after the creation. St John is referring to the Primordial Vibration that is the First Cause of creation. Indeed, all words are vibrations of varying frequencies, but the Holy Word is the fundamental or source vibration of constant frequency. It does not oscillate. All vibrations are emitted by the Word and ultimately merge in it. This is the real Name of God. All other descriptive names that are dependent on alphabets for their existence are only designatory names—they are not the real Name because they are not all-permeating. These other names

are within the range of time and space, whereas the Word is beyond time and space. It is self-existent and can neither be created or destroyed. Shri Ramakrishna said that God and His energy are as inseparable as fire and its power to burn.

The Vedas, the ancient sacred books of the Aryans, describe the Word in this way: "God was certainly alone before this universe. The Word certainly was His only possession. He then desired, 'Let Me emit this very Word. It will pervade the whole of space.' He emitted the Word and this pervaded the whole of space. It rose upwards and spread as a continuous stream of life." All alphabetical and descriptive names for God are not the stream of life flowing in man, but the Word is itself this stream of life. Glorifying the Word, Guru Nanak said, "With His one Word, in the cosmic reality of creation with its vast expanse, the rivers of life burst forth. The marvel of His creation and its evolutes are beyond all description. Creation has evolved from the Word, the *Shabd-Brahm*, with the interplay of sound vibrations, giving rise to matter and *prakriti* from ether by consummating fission." Therefore, the Word is the eternal inherent quality and creative power and agency of cosmic consciousness through which the Almighty manifests.

Lao Tzu called it *Tao*. He said, "Eluding sight, eluding touch, within it are hid the plans of all created things." Psalm 33 says, "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth." Lao Tzu also said, "The name which can be named is not the true Name. The Tao which can be expressed is not the everlasting Tao."

In Genesis we read that "God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul." The difference between a living body and a corpse is the difference of the Word. In the living body the Word is circulating in the form of the life-breath, while in the dead person it has demanifested. Life-breath is the common denominator in everyone. Blood has different groupings, fingerprints are different, faces are different. Only life-breath is common to everyone. It is in everyone regardless of

a person's beliefs, and it is the manifestation of that Primordial Vibration called *Word*.

Indian yogis refer to this Word as the *kundalini shakti*, which means, 'the hidden serpent power'. It is compared to a serpent because a serpent coils up, and within a coil is potential energy. This energy, or shakti, is not outside—it is right within the coil. When a coil is compressed, it has potential energy. The saints say that similarly, at the base of the spine lies that potential energy which has to be transformed into kinetic energy. When, through focus of attention on the Word, the potential energy is changed into kinetic, a person's consciousness is awakened and he is enlightened.

The science of kundalini yoga talks about *chakras*, which are circles of energy or plexii along the etheric double of the spine. At the base of the spine is the *muladhara chakra*, or root receptacle, which is like the south pole of a magnet, and at the top of the head is the *sahasradakamal*, or 'thousand-petalled lotus', which is like a north pole. Every human being is meant to function as a magnet, but this can only happen when the energy flows from the north pole, returning to the south, and when the energy from the south pole goes to the north pole. When energy is circulating properly, the being is charged and behaves like a magnet, having flux and energy.

Now, the problem is that we are all potential magnets, but our south pole is not giving energy to the north one. We have not raised ourselves from the lower to the higher levels. We have not evolved. The beauty of *sadhana*, of meditation, is that it elevates your consciousness so that energy flows from the south pole up to the north. This is called the 'awakening of kundalini.' When a person meditates on the Holy Word, an awakening of consciousness occurs within the body. The individual soul realizes the Universal Spirit. This realization is called Knowledge, or *gyan*. This is the second birth, without which one cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Real meditation is actually tuning into the life-breath and resonating with it. Meditation is, in fact, the equalization of the ingoing and outgoing breaths through continual practice, so that the inner breath, the life-breath, is freed from the disturbing and unsteady frequencies of the mind. Tuning into the constant vibration of the Word makes the flow of energy natural and spontaneous within man. One then feels free from the impulses of the mind towards sense-objects. This is called in the Gita the 'yoga of mental equilibrium'. Lao Tzu said the same thing: "Continuous return to the root is called repose. The activity of everlasting Tao is in the Inner Kingdom. To possess inner life we enter by our own private doorway." That inner doorway is the breath. Mira Bai, the royal saint of Rajasthan, said, "In the quiet remembrance of Thy name, I have caught glimpses of Thy most sacred Presence."

The Word is beyond sensory perception. It is precisely for this reason that an enlightened spiritual master is necessary, because perception and remembrance of the Holy Name are on a completely extra-sensorial level. The Word technique is the bridge between the manifested God and the unmanifested God, and by it alone is God realized. This Holy Name is resonating within everyone, and its expression is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss. If a person unites his mind with this Primordial Vibration, his mind will automatically vibrate at the frequency of the Name, resulting in the experience of Truth, Consciousness, and Bliss. For example, if a tuning fork is placed on a table, the table will vibrate with the same frequency as the tuning fork. This is why Lord Krishna said, "Remember Me and fight." In other words, while you are doing all your worldly activities, constantly remember the Holy Name. "Pray without ceasing", said St Paul.

The spiritual preceptor has the ability and power to impart the Word, in the same way as electricity passes through a wire. If you study what happens scientifically in the case of electricity passing through a wire, you will find that around that wire is a very subtle magnetic field. In the same way, when spirituality

manifests in someone, around him is a magnetic field. The difference between a spiritual man and an ordinary man is like the difference between a magnet and a piece of iron: every particle in the magnet has the same direction, every particle is aligned north-south, while the iron piece is only a potential magnet. The magnet has a definite alignment—it is direction-oriented. Like the magnet, a truly spiritual person is focused in one direction only. This is called in many scriptures 'single-minded devotion'. An ordinary man's mind has no definite direction—it fluctuates all over the place. We should have proper mental direction and harness the energy which we have within us. To do this, a spiritual impulse is required, which, as Swami Vivekananda said, cannot come from books but only from another soul. Once we get that impulse our magnet begins to function.

The Word, the Tao, the Logos, the Shabd-Brahm, Ram Nam, Holy Name—all are synonymous and denote the all-permeating cosmic vibration that resonates throughout the entire universe. It is the soundless sound, the unspeakable word, the silent energy flowing in man, the stream of life, the current of the Divine. Although it is the single, indivisible and all-embracing universal vibration, it has its expression as Light, Unstruck Music and Nectar. From our limited viewpoint we say that there are four aspects of Divinity, but as we go deeper into the experience, the four are realized to be one integrated whole. Light and music are ultimately nothing but vibrations. If something vibrates within 20 and 20,000 cycles, we perceive it as being within the audio range. As the frequency becomes higher and higher it is picked up as radio waves, then TV waves, then microwaves, and finally cosmic waves. So, ultimately, all is vibration. Our energy is consciousness, and consciousness is vibration. For example, from one aspect, our fingers appear to be separate, but if you trace them back to their source, the hand, they merge and become one.

The scriptures describe the form of God as pure and perfect Light. In the Koran it is said: "Allah is the light of the heavens

and the earth. His light shines as a candle in a niche, although no flame has touched it. Light upon light!" This Light is called the light of consciousness, self-effulgent and omnipresent. Lord Buddha called it "Amitabha, the unbounded Light, the source of wisdom". St Augustine, trying to describe this spiritual light, said: "With the eye of my soul I saw the light that never changes. It was above me because it was itself the light that made me. What I saw was something quite, quite different from any light we know on earth." St John stated: "That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." He also said: "God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness."

There are so many hymns and mantras in the Vedas, but one of the most important is the Gayatri Mantra, which describes the Form of God as being self-effulgent light. The meaning of this mantra is: "O God, the all-permeating, the all-sustaining energy, You are self-effulgent Light. I pray You to withdraw my mind from all directions and focus it on Your radiant Form." In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna said: "You cannot see My true form with these eyes. I will give you the divine eye of Knowledge." This Divine Light cannot be seen by our ordinary eyes.

However, we have another, transcendental means of perception. Through the 'third eye', or eye of Knowledge, we can see the Light of God and ultimately realize it. Buddha called it the "pure and spotless eye of Truth". Jesus Christ said: "If thine eye be single, thy body shall be full of light." In most people, however, this eye remains closed. People try in many ways to get spiritual insight. Yet the Upanishads tell us that the inner light cannot be seen by studying scriptures, nor by power of reason, nor even by hearing much about it. To open the third eye, the grace of a living Master is essential.

Music is divine. God is the expression of the highest harmony and melody, which resonates in the form of music. This is self-generating music, which is called in spiritual terminology *anahad* or unstruck, limitless music. It resonates in man when

consciousness reverts back to pure consciousness. It is called 'unstruck music' because it has no external point of origin such as an instrument. If you clap your hands, there is a sound. When a watch is working, it makes a ticking sound. When an instrument is played, the player strikes something, such as a string. But no musician is playing the unstruck music. It is like a biofeedback of energy. When we put a microphone close to a speaker, we get feedback. Similarly, when consciousness hears itself, there is feedback, and that is called 'unstruck music'.

St Kabir wrote many verses about his experience of this divine music. He said: "The whole sky is filled with sound, and that music is played without fingers and without strings. The middle region of the sky, wherein the spirit dwelleth, is radiant with the music of Light." A Sufi saint said: "In the dome of the natural mosque (the crown of the head) a voice is coming from afar. Hear that." Such experience is not limited to any particular place or religion. Far away from India, and hundreds of years before Kabir, St Augustine had the same experience: "My soul listens to sound that never dies away."

Nectar has been referred to as 'divine oil', or 'elixir of life' which exists right inside the spinal cord. The meaning of 'Christ' is 'the Anointed One', which also means to drink Nectar. To be anointed is to drink that Nectar, that divine oil, which flows within our bodies. If a dog is hurt, he will simply lick his wound. If you cut yourself, you lick the cut, because saliva contains a fraction of that living, healing substance, which cures your wound. Because we eat so much impure food we decrease the proportion of that living water within our system. That is why pure food is essential. It enhances and develops the living water within a person. The inner living water has also been referred to as the Nectar of Immortality, because someone who is accomplished in this technique has control over his own death. Snake bites and poison have no effect on him. His face is lustrous and ever-youthful in appearance. This Nectar is the fountain of youth that explorers once sailed across the world to find.

People drink wine to become intoxicated, not realizing that within themselves is endless, ever-flowing divine wine. No artificially-induced intoxication can possibly compare with the bliss and ecstasy which this inner nectar gives. St Kabir said: "The worshipper is entranced by the taste of heavenly Nectar". St Brahmanand called it the "Mother of yogis...which takes a person across the ocean of mortality." Jesus Christ told the woman of Samaria: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Modern priests do not know about this well of living water, but the early Christian saints did. St Augustine said: "My soul...tastes food that is never consumed by the eating."

So, the all-embracing unity of Cosmic Consciousness expresses itself unceasingly within and without as a primordial vibration called the Word. When the Word expands and resonates it is called Divine Music. When it further expands, it is transformed into Divine Light. Thus Truth shines in all its splendour with its four facets, the aspects of Knowledge. Knowledge is knowing, practising and experiencing this. Realization is the flowering of consciousness. This phenomenon takes place through selfless service and single-minded devotion. Devotion is service in love. Love manifests these aspects of Divinity, and the more they are manifested, the more love surges in the human heart. In this process, upon realization of God, perfect love manifests itself, and God becomes the love, the light and the joy of the devotee.

A mystic saint of India, St Brahmanand, has beautifully described the four aspects of the spiritual experience in one of his hymns:

"O Saints! I have seen a great miracle. I have seen a bell, a conch and a drum creating music without being played. A deaf man hears this sound, and in his ecstasy forgets the existence of his own body.

'A blind man sees light where there is no sun, and there is a palace, without foundation, shimmering with Light. The wonder is that a blind man relates everything in detail.

'There is a well of Nectar in the middle of the sky. A lame man climbs there without a ladder and drinks from that ever-flowing Nectar to his heart's content.

'The miracle is that a man who is living in this world dies and becomes alive again with a great energy that has no external nourishment. Only a rare saint recognizes my experience.'

The devotee who experiences this high state of consciousness can exclaim, as did Lao Tzu, "Without going out of my house, I know the universe."

## On faith

Once a cat saw a goldfish in a jar and wanted to get it, but at the same time the cat didn't want to get its paw wet. In the same way, how can someone want to learn to swim without entering the water?

People want a spiritual experience. They want to understand spirituality; they want to become spiritual. But you can become spiritual only if you are faithful. If you are not faithful to your spiritual master, you will have no spiritual experience, and you will never actually be faithful to yourself. In order to be faithful to yourself you have to be faithful to your spiritual teacher, because if you don't have love and faith, how can you attain spirituality? So it is of paramount importance that a disciple have faith—in God and in the master.

St Tulsidas said that reverence and faith are most important in worshipping God. He said that one can only be freed from attachment and delusion if he associates with the holy and listens to their discourses about God. True and lasting faith is a result of practical experience of the Lord. St Kabir said:

Where can you search for Me?

I am with you.

I am not found on pilgrimages or in temples,

Or in lonely places.

I am neither in statues nor mosques

Nor in Benares nor on sacred Mt Kailash,

I can't be found by chanting, fasting, or austerities,

Nor by the yoga of action,

Nor by renouncing the world.

But if someone searches sincerely,

He will find Me.

O saddhu, I am found by faith.

People can accept the importance of faith, but what is faith? If someone doesn't understand this, his faith can be misplaced. Some societies claim that a certain idol is God. Just as a person can mistake brass for gold, so they can ignorantly think that a certain lump of stone is God. That is why St Tulsidas said that true love is based on faith and concrete experience, and without that true love a person's devotion is as unsteady as water.

The only real faith is faith in God as He is. However, until you have practical knowledge of God you cannot have real faith in Him. Love can't survive without faith, and without love devotion will not be firm, just as water doesn't have a constant shape.

It is a mistake to believe any material object to be God without knowing what God really is. Spiritual love alone is real love. All else is actually deluded attachment. Love of God is necessarily selfless, because without God there is no love. God is love, God is the source of love. The intense desire to know God is itself love. Everyone wants true love, but until a person knows God, Who is Love, how can he truly love anyone?

For example, an aspirant starts to search for God. He sees people going to temples and following patterns of worship and singing the praises of God. So he also starts visiting temples and doing likewise, but he doesn't feel that constant flow of Love. He wants God to talk to him and quench his spiritual thirst. He goes to holy places where the Divine Masters played out their earthly dramas with their devotees, yet he doesn't find peace of mind. He doesn't find God. He then thinks that maybe studying scriptures will help him, but still he doesn't find peace.

There was a devotee named Dharmdas who found himself in this dilemma. In his despair he cried out to God:

I'm searching, searching, O Lord, but I haven't found  
You.

I've wandered everywhere:

Rameshwaram and Dwarika,  
Badrinath, Kashi, Mathura and Ayodhya,  
North, south, east and west.  
I've been to all the holy places.  
I've chanted, fasted and practised austerities.  
My life is one of abstinence and self-discipline.  
I can't stay awake during the day,  
And I can't sleep at night because I am so restless.  
Please draw me to You, and let me see You.

Dharmdas' ardent love and sincerity led him to the spiritual master, who showed him how to meditate on the Inner Light. He was filled with Divine ecstasy, and worshipped God with heartfelt love and devotion. He had achieved his heart's desire. His master was pleased with his devotion and blessed him. He plunged into meditation and reached the highest spiritual states. If he hadn't had such a burning desire to see God, and had instead settled for lesser forms of worship and meditation, he would not have beheld God.

When a farmer wants to grow crops, the thing he needs is seed, and if he doesn't have seeds he can't grow crops. The seed of spirituality is faith.

Lord Rama's discourse on the nine steps of devotion is recorded in the Ramacharitamanasa. He said that first the devotee has to devote himself to saints and serve them. Secondly, he should listen to the praises of the Lord. The fourth step is egolessness. When a person is egoless, desireless and has no vanity, he can have full faith in God.

Faith is essential. That is why one master said, "Have faith, endure, and I will teach you everything." Light bulbs glow when electricity flows through them. Electricity makes the bulb glow. In the same way, faith is the electricity that illumines the light of spirituality. If you don't have faith, at least have faith in the principle of faith.

Sukdev Muni, the seeker, wanted to know Truth, so he approached King Janak, the master. He requested to be revealed

the Knowledge of God. King Janak said, "Very well, but first I want to show you something." He placed in his hands a bowl filled to the brim with oil, and said, "Go all around my palace and see everything. You'll see my queens and many beautiful dancing girls. Come back and tell me your impressions. But I warn you, that there will be guards behind you with naked swords who will cut off your head if you spill a drop of oil from this bowl."

Sukdev Muni cautiously made his way around the palace, keeping his attention on that bowl. His total concentration was on the bowl. Keeping it carefully balanced, he went through the palace. There were many queens bathing, relaxing and enjoying themselves. He returned to the King, who said, "Very well, the bowl is still full and you haven't spilled anything. Now tell me, what did you think of my palace? What experience of beauty did you have?"

Sukdev replied, "I didn't experience anything. The only thing I was aware of was that this bowl must be carefully balanced, and I must see that no oil spills. That was the only experience that I had. I did not see your queens. I do not know how many queens you have, how they look or what they do." Then Janak said, "Sukdev, in this demonstration lies a message, which is—be in the world, but not of it. Just as you went into the palace and saw all the queens but your concentration was on the bowl, live the same way in the world. Concentrate on God, do everything for God, be totally dedicated to God, as well as carrying out your worldly obligations."

A devotee must strive to be on that level where his mind is totally merged in God while he is performing all his worldly duties. People wonder how they can do what they have to do in life and at the same time meditate on God. Let us take the example of a bicycle rider. As he is pedalling, he is balancing the bike, he is talking to his friend seated behind him and he is enjoying the scenery and the fresh air. His eyes are seeing, his ears are hearing, his mouth is talking, his hands are turning the handlebars, etc. How is that possible? Because the function of the

eyes is to see—eyes cannot think. The work of the ears is to hear. Ears cannot see. The function of the mouth is to speak. Each of the five perceptual organs and the five organs of action has its specific function.

Now there is something separate, and that is the mind. How does it function in man? It is just like a car. The function of the wheels is to carry the car along the road. The function of the engine is to turn the wheels. The function of the brakes is to stop the car. The function of the indicator light is to show others whether you are turning left or right. Now, all the parts perform their assigned functions, but, even if the car is expensive and in perfect condition, it depends upon the steering wheel. When the steering wheel turns left, the entire car turns left. When the steering wheel turns right, the car swings to the right. The human mind is like that steering wheel. If the mind goes to the left, the whole body will go left; if the mind goes to the right, the whole body will go right.

Your car may be beautiful and expensive, but if its steering is erratic, the car will go off the road. In the same way, even if you are in perfect physical condition, and you have a superb intellect and great potential, if your mind is not controlled, if it is unsteady, your fine body and intellect is going to swing this way and that. Even the most brilliant scientists and the richest people go crazy. When the mind is not under control it is very unstable.

We can consider a point from various angles. For example, Hanuman served Lord Rama and had the deepest respect for him. Yet the great king Ravanna fought against Rama. Hanuman was totally dedicated to Rama, while on the other hand Ravanna, whose city was made of gold, opposed Rama. A person's mind can function in the manner of a Hanuman, a devotee, or in the manner of a person who is fighting the master.

It's the case of the person who grabbed a tree and started shouting, "The tree has caught me!" We let the mind go and it latches on to certain things of the world. It is not the world, or the materialism, that is holding the mind. The mind gathers the

information and holds onto it. Things of the world cannot steady the mind. This is natural, because the mind's vibration exceeds everything else. Everything in the world is vibrating. Atoms in solids are vibrating, molecules in the air are vibrating. The mind is also vibrating. But the mind vibrates at a much higher frequency than solids, liquids or gases.

We know that radio stations emit certain frequencies, and because they are very high in frequency they have a high velocity. These vibrations can even penetrate walls. They can do this because of their high velocity. Similarly, the velocity of the mind is so high that it can penetrate books, it can penetrate churches, it can penetrate synagogues, it can penetrate anything. That is why physical things can only temporarily satisfy the mind. The longer we live, the more we see that the mind cannot be satisfied, because it experiences all these things and still is unsteady.

There is only one thing more powerful than the mind, and which can satisfy it. I will give you an illustration from the Upanishads. It is written that once there was a quarrel between the sense organs, the organs of action, and the mind. The eyes said, "The body depends on us. If we do not perceive, if we do not see, then the body cannot survive. It is because of us that the body survives." The ears said, "No, you are wrong. It is because of us that the body survives. If we do not hear, the body will not live." Thus each organ claimed supremacy. So it was decided that each organ would be given the chance to prove its point. To do that, each organ in turn would leave the body for one year.

First, the eyes left. When they returned, they asked the body, "How did you survive?" The body answered, "Just like a blind man." The ears went away. The person became deaf, but he did not die. When the ears returned, they asked, "How did you survive?" And the body answered, "Just like a deaf man." The power of speech departed and came back and asked, "How did you survive?" The body replied, "Just like a dumb man."

One by one all the organs departed and returned, yet the body survived. Finally the mind went away for one year. When it

came back it asked, "How did you survive?" The body replied, "Just like holy people survive, because they have no mind, or just like a small child." After all these organs had failed to prove their point, then the vital energy, the life-breath, began to depart. As it was vacating the body, all the organs ceased functioning. The eyes stopped seeing, the ears stopped hearing, the mouth stopped speaking. Everything started failing. Then all the organs realized that it was the life-breath which enabled them to function. They all hailed the life-breath as the sovereign of the body.

Many people think that breath is nothing more than oxygen and carbon dioxide. I'm not talking about the physical aspect of the breath. I am talking about that breath which God breathed into us: "God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." What is that breath which God has breathed into us? We all are living beings, and we are living because God has put that breath of life into us. That life-breath, hailed as the king of the body, exceeds, super-exceeds, the vibration of the mind. The only thing that can actually seize and control the mind, which can subdue it, which can concentrate it, is the Primordial Vibration, the life-breath.

The Ramayana tells the story of Bhilni, who lived alone in her forest hermitage, waiting for Lord Rama to come her way. She waited for a long time, praying every day, every minute, thinking, "I'll be graced if Lord Rama comes to my house." She loved him so much that every day she used to pluck wild berries and taste them to see if they were sweet or sour, and she would preserve all the sweet ones.

When Lord Rama finally arrived, all the hermits and saints living in the forest were very happy, and Bhilni was, too. The saints and hermits started asking him various questions. In the course of the conversation an argument about who was the highest devotee came up. Lord Rama suggested that they all go to a certain pond whose water was stagnant. He said, "Let me see the power of the saints. You people have been meditating, so you

must have acquired power. So go ahead and purify this water.” So they all directed their energy there, but nothing happened. Then Lord Rama said, “Let Bhilni dip her feet in the water and let’s see what happens.”

Now, Bhilni was from a very low caste—she was an untouchable—and she was afraid to come before those sages. She told Lord Rama, “I am an untouchable. If I touch this water, it will become even more impure. I cannot do it.” But everyone was curious to see what would happen, so she finally walked into the water, and as soon as her feet touched the water, it changed and became pure.

Lord Rama arranged that demonstration to teach that only love can manifest spirituality. It is only faith and devotion that can manifest it. And many devotees lack that. Devotion should harness our life. Love should bring about changes in us. It will harvest our spirituality.

When an experiment is conducted in a laboratory, the environment, the temperature and pressure are controlled, because certain phenomena can happen only when the conditions are right and when a particular environment is maintained.

In the same way, a devotee can grow spiritually if the necessary conditions—devotion, faith and love—are maintained. If you lack one of them, the experiment will go wrong.

So devotees must meditate and at the same time hold to those conditions which are beneficial, because when you sit down to meditate, if you have love for spirituality your mind will automatically leave the world and go towards God. If you don’t love the Word, if you have no devotion, then other thoughts come into your mind, and rather than meditating on the Holy Name of God, at that point you will be meditating on worldly thoughts. What has happened so far is that from morning till night you have dealt with physical things rather than spiritual things. That is why saints have regarded spiritual things to be of far greater importance than material things.

I'll give you an example. St Kabir used to weave cloth. Once he went to another village to tell the people about the Holy Name of God. His wife, Loi, stayed at home. Meanwhile a leper came to his house, and said to Loi, "I have heard that Kabir performs miracles and has wonderful powers. So I want to receive the Holy Name. I believe that if I receive this Name, I will be cured of leprosy." So Loi told him to wait until her husband returned home. A long time passed, and the leper was obviously in pain, so Loi felt sorry for him. She said, "You seem to suffering very much. I will initiate you into Knowledge." After she had finished the initiation, the thought occurred to her that maybe she should re-initiate him, so that the Knowledge would be doubly powered. So she repeated the initiation. After the second initiation, the leper was cured and he left singing the glory of Kabir.

When Kabir returned, Loi told him, "In your absence, I initiated a leper, and then I re-initiated him, thinking that maybe the Knowledge wouldn't work the first time. After the second initiation, he was cured." When Kabir heard this, he was furious, and said, "That leper had so much faith that he travelled a long way to come here. He hadn't received anything but still he had faith that Knowledge would cure him. And look at you! You are my wife, yet you doubt the power of Knowledge." And history tells us that he slapped his wife simply for having doubts in the Knowledge. If you have doubts, you lose everything, because the entire structure of spirituality is built on faith.

Many people do not believe that. Let me give a very practical example. If I ask, "What will you do tomorrow?" someone will say, "I will go to work," someone else will say, "I will go to the office," and somebody else will say, "I will attend to my business." Now, what proof do you have, what definite guarantee do you have, that you will go to work? There is always the possibility that the life-energy will depart from your body and you will die. Nobody has a guarantee of life, but still we have faith that we will go on living tomorrow as we have lived up to now,

and this faith assures us and makes us grow. It makes us live from day to day.

Even though love doesn't appear to be scientific, still everyone wants it. So we should understand the importance of hope and faith in relation to love.

You love your child. Now, if you knew that when your child grows up, he's going to smash your jaw, or that he is going to kill you or turn against you and do everything against your will, would you raise a child? But we hope. We hope that he is going to grow up and do everything according to our will, and that he will look after us in our old age. We all hope that, and we have faith in that, and this, actually, makes us carry on.

We hope in our fathers, we hope in our wives, we hope in our friends—and I think we all do that. In the same way, God is not demanding anything more. He is simply saying that, in the same way as you have faith in dollars, have faith in Me, in the same way as you have hope in material things, have hope in Me. He is not demanding anything more than that. He just asks for your faith and your hope, as you have faith and hope in worldly things.

A disciple, in order to be a good devotee, must have hope and faith in Knowledge and also in God. Physical things come and go. It is like a movie. Everything happens; it comes and goes. But we know for sure that all those events in the film are not happening to us. People are shooting bullets, but we are not getting hurt. If there is a fire on the screen, we are not being burned. In the same way, we should understand that the world is like a film, and nothing is real.

Everything is temporary, everything changes, and there is only one thing that is stable behind the changes. There is a law which states that something which revolves, revolves around something stationary. For example, the planets are revolving. They revolve around something which is not revolving—the sun. A wheel revolves around something that is not revolving, and that is the axle. In the same way, everything is changing around the unchangeable entity, which is called *atman*, spirit, or soul. So we

should meditate on that unchanging entity. That alone can give us tranquillity and peace. Other things are not important.

Many people think that everything can be explained scientifically. This is their approach to things. Inside a lamp is a bulb; inside the bulb is a filament; inside the filament there is electricity flowing from negative to positive. Inside that is nothing but electrons. Inside the electron is nothing but a charge, a negative charge. But what is a charge? Nobody can explain what it is. No one can define a charge. If you say a charge is a potential, then you can say a spring also is a potential. But a charge is not like that. There is no definition for 'charge'. I wasn't taught it. I don't think anybody was taught it. So we come to a point beyond which there is no definition. Something is there, but it is undefined. In the same way, spiritual scientists say that God exists, Energy exists, but it is undefined.

Now, how does a person develop love and faith? If you love what you are doing, you are dedicated to that work. If you love something, you dedicate yourself to that, and once you are dedicated, nobody can sway you. Nothing affects you.

People always talk about love, but they have very different ideas about what it is. Love is actually something that comes from the awakening of spirit, and that spirit can be moved, can be made sensitive, by certain emotions. By throwing stones into water you can cause ripples, but ripples do not mean that you have taken away the water, or that you have completely moved the water. It means that the body of water is simply disturbed. In the same way, the spirit can be moved by certain physical things because the spirit is very sensitive. Pure love can only manifest, can only be reawakened, when a person becomes spiritual, because if you see anything physical in that, the love will freeze.

Say, for instance, a dog is standing before you, and you are calling that dog out of love. As long as you are exhibiting pure love, that dog will stay with you, but as soon as you change your intentions and he sees or feels that you want to capture him, instinctively he will run away.

A bird will sit on a tree, but will fly away the moment you raise a gun to it. Animals have parapsychical powers. In China, people don't depend on instruments to find out if there is going to be an earthquake. They observe snakes, rats and horses. If something is going to happen, a horse will automatically know and start neighing. We don't have that type of ability. A dog can catch a robber's scent. It's amazing. We can only smell food, and not much beyond that. Our senses are not refined, and they are not refined because we are not made for the senses. The human body has been made for experiencing spirituality.

When you have a business, you put money into the business and then the business gives you money back. You reinvest that money in the business and you get more money. In the same way, love gives you meditation, and meditation gives you love; they multiply each other.

A master is a living manifestation of spirituality. By seeing him you have faith that at least someone in this world has True Knowledge. Through his higher perspective, his higher Knowledge, your doubts and your confusions are removed. If your car breaks down, you go to a mechanic. Why? You are a human being and he is also. Maybe you are richer than he is, but because he knows all about cars you have to go to him. Only he knows the car inside and out. He can solve your problem. People have to go to a master if they have a problem, and the problem is that the mind is vacillating, it is moving so much in the world, it is vibrating in the world so much, that nothing in the world can satisfy it.

To quench the thirst of the mind, I personally recommend meditation. Meditation will automatically enhance love, and love will enhance meditation. If you want to hear the sound of clapping, you have to use two hands. So meditation and love—devotion—go hand in hand. For example, when a negative cloud and a positive cloud come together, there is a spark, and that lightning causes the gases to mix together. Though in the spiritual world there is no rain, the two energies coming together,

the two potentials coming together, cause that Light Divine.  
When that Light flashes, love is precipitated.



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## The Gita on karma yoga

When Arjuna<sup>1</sup> threw down his weapons and in despondency said that he would rather beg in the streets than win a war by killing his kinsmen, the ensuing dialogue between him and Lord Krishna is known as the Bhagavad Gita. There are many different views regarding the philosophy discussed in the Gita. Some great commentators, such as Shankaracharya, interpreted the Gita from the standpoint of Vedanta, and said that the Gita favoured the path of pure contemplation and renunciation. Others maintain that the main theme of the Gita is *karma yoga*, or the skill to perform action according to one's duty and station in life in a desireless manner and without attachment: the individual has only the right to act, but should not desire any reward or result thereof.

One important aspect of the Gita which has, however, been ignored is the commandment, "Remember Me and fight." The entire philosophy of the Gita is hidden in this most important instruction given to Arjuna by Lord Krishna.

In the beginning of the book, Arjuna is in the grip of confusion and dejection, prepared to give up the very idea of fighting, but, after listening to Lord Krishna's discourse, he was ready to wage war in order to protect the cause of *dharma*, righteousness. The tales of this battle are recounted to this very day. Arjuna initially wanted to renounce action and become inactive because he feared the sins that would accrue from his actions. Lord Krishna explained to him that one cannot be free from sin simply by giving up action itself. For example, if a *kshatriya*, a knight, one whose primary duty is to protect society from evil, runs away from the battlefield, he is considered to be a sinner. Actions according to the nature and temperament of man

which fall naturally in the life of a man in discharging his duty must by all means be carried out, but in such a way that one does not become stained by them.

There is no denying that the Gita emphasizes desireless action as well as renunciation, but the question is, what is the technique to practise them? How can desireless action be performed? When does one know that his actions are being performed desirelessly? What change occurs in a man on the day when he actually begins performing desireless action? Great religious leaders, statesmen, and philosophers have praised desireless action, exhorting people to work for the benefit of society without any desire for reward. This is stressed in the Gita because it is only through desireless action that one can attain *moksha*, salvation, and release himself from transmigration. If the *jivatma*, the embodied soul, becomes involved or enmeshed in *maya* and performs actions motivated by the desire for reward, it shall remain bound to the cycle of births and deaths. The need for the performance of desireless action is thus evident, but what is important is to know how to perform it. We must know the technique through which such actions can become practicable. We must understand how desireless action can be performed and what transformation takes place in us when we actually perform desireless actions.

If the performance of desireless action came naturally to man, then it would not be necessary to ponder these questions, nor to press people to perform desireless action. By temperament, man is motivated by desire to perform actions for his own selfish purposes, and he also keeps the reward in view. Therefore, man must be taught the technique whereby he can perform actions desirelessly and selflessly. After having learned the technique of *karma yoga*, it is only natural that there will be a tangible transformation in the attitude and actions of the person.

If a person can be saved from the consequences of his or her actions by merely uttering *Krishna arpum astu* (I surrender my actions and the results unto Lord Krishna), it should follow that

we can cure ourselves from the pangs of hunger by verbally surrendering our appetites to God. But this is not so. To understand the practical import of karma yoga, the following story of how King Janak became a karma yogi and surrendered all his actions to God will be helpful.

In another age there lived a great king named Janak. One night, suffering from insomnia, he tossed and turned. Finally he dozed off. He dreamt that his enemies had conquered his kingdom and he had to run into the jungle to save his life. He felt terribly hungry, and in a certain village he begged for food. A woman offered him some uncooked rice and lentils which he could cook for himself. He attempted, with great difficulty, to cook it. Being a king, he was not accustomed to this type of work and it was only after a lot of effort that he succeeded in preparing it. Just as he was about to eat, two bulls came by fighting and trampled his meal. The king was in despair and started to cry.

At this point, he woke up. He realized that he had been merely dreaming and began to wonder, "What is all this? A few moments earlier, I was a beggar, crying over a mere mouthful of food. Now I am awake, I am once again the king of Vidarbha, enjoying the best luxuries life has to offer." He remembered vividly his state of being a beggar, even while living the life of a king. Which of these two states of mind was true? What was the reality? These issues made the king so pensive that he wanted nothing but to know the truth of the matter. Therefore, the very next day he issued a proclamation to his subjects that whoever could satisfactorily answer his questions would receive his entire kingdom as a reward.

A huge building was constructed for the purpose of receiving and accommodating those who wanted to try and answer his question. A sentry guarded the door, allowing only those who wished to answer the question to enter. A high throne was provided for the one who could satisfy King Janak with the answer to his question. That seat of honour was reserved for the person whom the king would accept as his preceptor. On either

side of the throne were seats lined up for the contestants. Whoever approached to answer the question was warned that if he failed he would be imprisoned until such time as the king received a satisfactory answer from someone else. The great learned scholars of the time assembled there in the hope of answering the question correctly. The king's question was: "Is it true that I am a king, or is it true that I am a beggar?"

Everyone tried in his own way to give a satisfactory answer to the question with answers like: "The world is untrue, only God is true." But these superficial answers did not clear up the king's doubts, so one candidate after another was thrown into prison.

In that city lived a young deformed boy named Ashtavakra, whose father was among the unsuccessful contestants languishing in jail. One day his playmates taunted him by saying that he was the son of a prisoner. This greatly upset him, so he went home to find out the truth of the matter. His mother told him the whole story and explained that his father would be released only if someone else could answer the question successfully. Young Ashtavakra determined that he would have his father released, and set off for the king's Court. He entered the great hall confidently and boldly. The sight of one so young appearing to answer the question made all the assembled courtiers and sages laugh.

Ashtavakra went up to the throne and seated himself there. Because of his disfigured appearance, the whole court laughed at him. But he laughed back and said, "Your Majesty, why have you called a meeting of cobblers? How can they, who laugh at my appearance, whose vision is only skin-deep, answer your question?" This naturally shocked everyone, since those assembled were regarded as learned scholars. But Ashtavakra continued, "These so-called religious teachers have only bookish knowledge of God and the soul. They are not able to perceive the truth beyond the external body. None of those present is a seer of the truth, because an enlightened soul is one who perceives the same soul in a cow, an elephant, or a dog, as well as in a man. It

is only the body which is fair or dark, thin or fat, not the soul. Sugar cane is nodulous outside but inside its juicy fibres run straight and smooth. In the same way, the outer appearance of human beings varies, but the inner soul remains the same."

Janak was impressed by this, and so, according to the procedure, the king's minister stood up to read out the king's question. But before the question could be read, Ashtavakra objected that because this was the king's question, he himself should ask it. The king came forward most humbly and asked, "Is it true that I am a king, or is it true that I am a beggar?"

Ashtavakra replied, "Neither is true." Now the king was really astonished and begged to know what was the reality. Ashtavakra replied, "Only the Holy Name of God is real, permanent and all-pervading. To realize this ultimate truth, some people read books, some perform penances, but none of these methods leads to the realization of the truth within oneself. If you are really eager to know the truth you must prostrate yourself for it."

Janak by this time was ready to surrender everything in exchange for the knowledge of truth. He offered Ashtavakra his entire kingdom, but Ashtavakra replied that it was only the king's delusion and vanity that made him think that the kingdom was his personal property. He said, "Even your father and forefathers claimed to own this kingdom, but the kingdom passed out of their hands as it will pass out of yours, when you die."

The king then surrendered himself as the price to be paid for Truth. The master accepted this offering and imparted to him the mysterious knowledge of the Holy Name, asking the king to meditate upon it, fix his mind upon it at all times, and to continue performing his royal duties.

Thus did King Janak receive the knowledge that made him able to perform actions desirelessly. By practising the Holy Name technique he was able to disconnect himself from body-consciousness and attain supreme consciousness. It is only by knowing the Holy Name of God and constantly practising it that

man can become detached from worldliness and render himself fit for the performance of desireless action.

The central theme of the Gita is performing one's duties while fixing the mind on God, the 'Light of all lights': "Remember Me and fight." We must learn the technique of meditation that can be done at all times, even in the midst of battle. The duty of a soldier is arduous. He has to be on the defensive as well as on the offensive. All external forms of meditation are useless for him because they cannot be performed while he is engaged in battle.

Lord Krishna condemns the complete renunciation of actions, saying that even renunciation is an action. Krishna unfolded to Arjuna that method or technique which, if practised, frees one from all types of sins, rendering one a non-doer even while in the midst of hectic activity.

The Gita was written for human beings to solve a basic human problem. Those who think that the consequences of action can be avoided simply by reading the Gita are under a wrong impression. After reading the Gita one should pause and think, "What is that method that Lord Krishna revealed to Arjuna? What is that *raj vidya* that can make one detached from the world even while living in the midst of it?" This very technique has been fully expounded in the Gita.

Both good and bad actions bind the individual. Even after enjoying the fruits of good action in what may be called heaven, one has to return to the earthly world again. For our bad actions we must suffer punishment. The former is a golden chain, and the latter is an iron chain. Just as dirty clothes cannot be cleaned by being washed in dirty water, so actions and their results cannot be annulled by performing more actions. It is only through performing actions while focussing one's mind on the Holy Name that one can save himself from the consequences of action.

We kindle a lamp to remove darkness and the difficulties arising out of the darkness. We cannot see the road at night, but with the dawning of daylight we can find our way once again.

Similarly, to save oneself from the staggering repercussions of actions, one must have the Knowledge of the Holy Name and Divine Light, through which one is able to learn how to perform desireless action.

Generally, people have the concept that desireless action means that, while performing actions, one should have no desire for the rewards. If we logically develop this idea it amounts to saying that one should do his job but should have no desire for the wages, or cultivate a field without having any thought for the crop. This is impractical, because one can only perform actions when he has some fixed end in view. It is not the intellect in man which is to be curbed, but the aimless wandering of the mind and fanciful dreamings for the future.

Yoga is simply a process of concentration which curbs the vacillations of the mind. The aim is to master the senses and not to be a slave of one's desires. It is only through the practice of yoga, that is to say, focussing one's mind on the Holy Name, that one can become free from the binding force of actions. Performance of this yoga has no unsalutary effect on man. On the contrary, even a little practice of it will entitle one to a human existence again and again until perfection is achieved. This most sacred yoga is above virtue and sin because it is unaffected by the three *gunas*, the three modes of nature.

Just as a lamp placed in a windless room lights the whole room, so the infinite Divine Light enlightens the limited and finite mind. Therefore, a man with a discriminative faculty follows only this, the most rewarding and beneficial yoga, and becomes desireless in his actions. The man devoid of discrimination and the knowledge of this yoga wastes his life in other pursuits. People of limited vision practise rituals according to the holy scriptures and so settle for a very inferior form of worship. Moreover, they are very much concerned with the results. A gardener plants trees in a garden in order to eat their fruit, and in the same way the man of limited vision performs rituals only to get the rewards. Thus he cannot break out of the

desire-action cycle, and suffers the good as well as the bad results of actions.

We need to know the knowledge which can release us from the constant cycle of births and deaths. Without the grace of a spiritual master there is no true knowledge, and without true knowledge there is no salvation for the embodied soul. Worldly knowledge is useful only while we are alive, and external forms of devotion do not lead to salvation.

A person devoid of discrimination believes that the pleasures of the senses are the highest type of enjoyment and does not recognize any higher aim worth living for. He never wonders about the absolute truth, nor does he feel an urge to know God and worship Him. Such people never understand the greatness of an enlightened soul. People who waste their precious life in the pursuit of sensual pleasure cannot be called rational. The human form is a means for realizing Divinity, but, foolish as we are, we waste it on sense-pleasures. It is the supreme irony that, in the pursuit of lesser things, man wastes the golden opportunity which God has given him. It is like the hungry man who labours hard to buy food, but then sells it to earn money and stays hungry himself. One who is bound to the pleasures of the world moves in the boundaries of the three gunas and never overcomes them. The really intelligent man should not involve himself thus, but should devote himself to the yoga which can provide him with spiritual bliss. The person of discrimination will devote himself only to what can give him knowledge of the True Self. Different people pursue different paths according to the condition of their minds, while the wise man will follow only the path which leads to God-realization.

Those who are settled in the Self behave humanely towards all without any desire for profit or prestige, and they act in the interest of all. A realized soul disseminates Knowledge of the Self to all who seek it, just as the sun gives light to all. A realized karma-yogi has a natural grace over all creatures, while persons involved in rituals and trapped in the web of desire are motivated

by ego. They can never be detached from worldly affairs. Realized souls, on the other hand, are not concerned with dualities. They are free and enjoy bliss in the Self. This is why Lord Krishna exhorted Arjuna to become a yogi, saying that one who has no control over the mind can be neither a yogi nor a *sannyasi* (renunciate). Therefore, concentration of the mind and control of the senses are the essential prerequisites for achieving an equable state of mind.

This state of mind cannot be achieved without meditation. Even those engaged in the practice of Holy Name may think that they have relinquished all passions and desires, but these may still be lurking in the subconscious mind. If kindled, they can flare up into a raging fire and do considerable damage. That is why constant vigilance concerning worldly pleasures must always be exercised. Just as the branches of a tree which are cut may sprout again, so the submerged desires rise from the subconscious level to the conscious level, if given a push. Therefore, the attractions of the world must be renounced with a determined mind. Even an iota of passion can undo all the progress attained, just as one drop of potent poison is sufficient to kill a man. If we keep the mental modifications immersed in yoga, then even the desire for sense pleasures gradually dies.

When the senses are well under control and the mind is settled in the Lord's Holy Name, then only may one feel that there is a strong foundation for realizing the Truth. Just as a tortoise stretches its limbs and contracts them into its shell as it wills, so one who attains bliss can control his senses and cause them to obey his will.

The knowledge of yoga referred to above is nothing but the Holy Name which the yogi is aware of at all times. It is said in the Gita that the yogi is asleep to the world, while the worldly man is asleep to the bliss of God. Just as the ocean remains serene in spite of the waters of many rivers which flow into it, similarly a yogi with a settled mind and determined intellect is not ruffled or affected by sense-stimulii. He is fixed in God, beyond duality

Just as the rays of the sun and the moon are not polluted by contact with the earth, so the consciousness of the yogi is not stained by stimuli because they do not leave any impressions on his mind. He is always self-contented, finding a never-ending source of happiness within himself.

The seeker after truth must be continually awakened to the path of meditation, for therein lies his hope of salvation in this very lifetime, in this very body. He should concentrate his mind upon God, thus obeying the commandment of the Upanishad: "Awake! Arise! Stop not till the goal is reached." Thus does one cross the darkness of sorrow and enter into the radiant plane of pure joy. The vigilant devotee is beloved of God. Once, Hanuman was asked by Lord Rama, "What is your relationship with me?" Hanuman replied that as far as the physical relationship was concerned, he was Lord Rama's servant, but as regards the Spirit, an unbreakable bond existed between the Lord and himself. From the point of view of the all-pervading Divinity, Lord Rama and Hanuman were one.

God is beyond death, while maya—the cosmic illusion—is itself death; therefore to cross maya we must be established in God. But God can only be realized by the continual and unflinching practice of the yoga of Holy Name and Divine Light revealed by an enlightened soul. God is omnipresent, but invisible to the mortal eye, just as butter pervades milk yet is invisible. Just as milk is turned into curd which is churned to produce butter, leaving a residue of uncreamed milk, so the jivatma, by meditation on the real Name of God, breaks the knot binding self and maya and remains in a state of cosmic consciousness. The method by which we can pull our minds out of the mud of this world is called yoga.

The world is a practical manifestation of the three attributes of Nature—*sat*, *raj*, and *tam*—and the five elements (space, air, fire, water and earth). One who worships these five elements can never know any truth beyond them. It is only through the grace of the Satguru, the enlightened soul, that this all-permeating

cosmic energy in the form of Light and Name can be known. When one is focussed upon this Light, one rises above the three gunas and the elements. Lord Krishna said to Arjuna: "We have been born many times in this world, but I know my previous lives whereas you are ignorant of yours. I am not bound by maya, while you are. This is why you are ignorant of the Truth and are caught up in the cycle of birth and death. When you concentrate your mind on the Supreme Light and Name you will be disconnected from maya and will escape this cycle of births and deaths, becoming free and blissful."

If this same knowledge of the *raj vidya* transmitted to Arjuna by Lord Krishna is transmitted by anyone in modern times, no difference, in essence, exists between the present giver and Lord Krishna, because he had said that there is no difference between himself and a *gyani* (one who is enlightened). Lord Krishna said, "A *gyani* is My own self; he who is devoted to a *gyani*, who has reverence for him and serves him with love and devotion, is My devotee in the real sense."

The Satguru is the real *gyani*, because he has the power to impart the *raj vidya* to others. There are so many religious teachers who are traditionally called gurus, but they are not really qualified for this status. They only instruct people in chanting different types of mantras with varied potential. Such gurus can never lead the *jivatmas* to the highest goal. They are not able to open the 'third eye', the divine eye, through which the knowledge of the all-permeating God is revealed.

The world is never devoid of a real Teacher. From time to time, great souls have incarnated themselves in this world to lead man from darkness to light, from mortality to immortality, and from worldly pleasures to spiritual bliss. Only those are benefitted who approach the Master with humility and love, who receive the Knowledge of God, and obey and live according to his commandments. The Satguru is a reformer. He yokes his disciple to desireless service. In ancient times an aspirant had to serve the master for many years before achieving spiritual Knowledge.

Only one who has bodily and mentally surrendered himself to the enlightened soul, regarding him as the highest focus of worship, can find perfection in that most purifying and eternal Knowledge. Just as a heap of refuse can be burned by a single matchstick, accrued sins can be burned away by the spark of spiritual realization received through the grace of the Satguru.

The Gita describes the world as an inverted tree with the roots at the top and the branches spreading downwards. By watering the roots the whole tree flourishes, but if only the branches are watered the tree becomes dry. God is the seed of the world, and if one meditates upon His Name, a great love is generated towards Him. It is extremely difficult to worship and serve the unmanifest God. It is difficult to focus the mind on something abstract. That is why the path of pure contemplation is difficult to tread. However, the path of devotion, which is love for the manifested Divinity in the form of the Satguru, is enjoyable and easy to practise. It is only through the manifested one that the Unmanifest can be realized.

In today's society people do not know the real meaning of *bhakti*, which is devotion and meditation. Although ignorant of the true Knowledge of God, some call themselves gyanis. They are only hypocrites and deceive themselves and others. By 'devotion' they mean idol-worship and rituals. The devotees of Lord Rama, Lord Krishna, or any other sect adopt different modes of devotion to suit their own beliefs and tastes. But Lord Krishna in the Gita talks about the *ananya bhakti* or continual, non-stop devotion. The modes of devotion practised by these so-called devotees and gyanis cannot remain unbroken. They cannot constantly worship their idol. Therefore, this cannot be the true method of devotion. The *bhakti yoga* referred to in the Gita is that which every individual can perform at all times and in every state of mind. It is an independent path to realization, and no social or political boundaries can affect it. It is beyond the senses. A man who constantly performs this mode of devotion can attain realization even while performing different types of action.

In Chapter 4, verses 1 and 2, Lord Krishna says, "This science of yoga is eternal and everlasting. I imparted this same Knowledge to the Sun who imparted it to Manu..." In ancient days, to learn the science of yoga, the disciple served the teacher for his entire life. In quest of this science, a devotee named Nachiketa sacrificed all worldly pleasures and requested Yama, the Lord of death, to unfold the secret to him. Today the knowledge of this yoga has become confined to a lesser number of people, and its true essence is a mystery to most, yet nothing else can lead to perfect happiness.

Some believe that in this world it is no longer possible to receive that Knowledge imparted to Arjuna by Lord Krishna. The answer to this comes from Krishna himself, for he has defined the Knowledge as eternal and all-permeating, saying that there will never be a time when this yoga will not be available to the true seeker of God. Our job is but to find a realized soul who can impart this Knowledge to us, and to endeavour to be worthy of it. It is only by making supplication to such a saint and serving him sincerely that one can receive the Knowledge of the unmanifested Word of God even now. Self-devised devotion or worship of idols will never lead to emancipation.

The truth called God is to be realized within. But without a true master, a man is not aware of what true devotion is, and he practises various forms of devotion which please him. To know God is the true Knowledge, and to meditate on Him is true devotion. This Knowledge has been called *paravidya*, or transcendental knowledge. Just as a seed should be sown in tilled earth, so it is only through internal preparation and by service to the Satguru that we may be in a position to receive the spiritual Knowledge by his grace. It can be attained only by intense longing and reverential devotion to the teacher.

The Gita emphasizes the importance of spiritual Knowledge, saying that even the greatest of sinners can attain salvation through it. It wipes out ignorance in the same way as the sun removes darkness.



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## Spiritual insight

Spiritual insight is an indispensable aid to introspection. Unlike ordinary sight, which enables one to see external objects, spiritual insight lies dormant in man. It has to be aroused by one's own individual efforts strictly in compliance with the instructions of the spiritual master.

Normal sight requires one or more eyes as well as the presence of light to see any object. But as Lord Krishna said to Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita, "You cannot see me with ordinary eyes. I shall give you a divine eye for this purpose." So saying, the Lord opened the divine eye of Arjuna which enabled him to see the entire panorama of creation within himself.

Light is an essential requirement for the phenomenon of sight to occur. Nothing can be seen in darkness even though normal eyes are there. What is applicable to normal eyes equally holds for spiritual insight. The two essential ingredients of spiritual insight, then, are divine eye and divine light, which the ancient seers of India termed *divya chakshu* and *divya prakash*.

The optical apparatus consists of the two eyes and the corresponding two optical nerves which ultimately converge at one point. Two different images are formed by the respective retina of the two eyeballs, but these images coalesce at the junction of the two optical nerves and form a single image. This junction of the optical nerves is located, in the human body, between the two eyebrows, at the base of the nose (*nasagre*). It is endowed with the faculty of vision—long, short or near—and is further known as first sight.

But the human mind is possessed of a second sight, which is the power of internal vision by which future or distant

occurrences are presented. Sanjaya, who may be considered the forerunner of the modern war correspondent, and who narrated the events of the epic battle of Kurukshetra to the blind king Dhritarashtra, was gifted with such a second sight. He obtained it from Vedvyasa, the great sage who wrote the Mahabharata.

The two normal eyes are capable of functioning only on the physical plane. The third eye, or the divine eye, however, functions on the subtle mental planes or even on transcendental levels. The objects perceived by the third eye are far more subtle than those seen in the gross external world. They present themselves as thought forms or images independently and are directly perceived without the need of the senses or external objects.

Human beings are endowed with the five sense-organs including the eyes. No external object can be seen unless the eyes present their images to the mind, and the eyes have to remain open to perform their task. But not so with the third eye. It needs no help from the sense organs, nor does it have to form any image on the so-called screen of the mind, the *chitta*. Therefore, in order to achieve the third eye for attaining spiritual insight, one must first close any and every access to sense perception.

The withdrawal of the senses from their objects is known in yogic terminology as *pratyahara*. This is the first step for the seeker of truth, in preparation for the next stage, namely, meditation. Practice of meditation, *sadhana*, performed in the prescribed manner, animates the dormant third eye and reveals to the Self within the vast and illimitable vistas of creation, beginning with the unknown and unmanifest, the *mul prakriti* or nature in its static state, *avyakta*.

This formless and attributeless *mul prakriti* represents the universal primordial energy, *shakti*, in its potential form. The act of creation is achieved by the changeover of this potential energy into its kinetic form, which sets up matter in a flux of perpetual motion. Matter and energy, it will be noted, are convertible entities, regulated by the formula  $E=mc^2$ . Here,  $E$  stands for

energy,  $m$  for mass, and  $c$  is a constant equivalent to the speed of light rays in ether. The visible universe (*vyakti*) is merely a display of the energy (*adi shakti*) before the conscious Self or *jivatma*.

The faculty of awareness, which the real self enjoys, is inherent in the conscious stuff of which it is composed. This consciousness is the Light of lights. The chief characteristic of the conscious stuff is that it does not require the aid of any other light to make it aware of its own existence or of any other object. It is akin to the luminosity possessed by phosphorus.

The self-luminosity of the *jivatma* (being) shedding light and thereby imparting energy to every object of creation is the cause of all causes, which in turn sets up a chain reaction of cause and effect, ultimately culminating in the external world of name and form (*nam* and *rup*). The order in which this causal reaction takes place, beginning with *mul prakriti*, is as follows: *mul prakriti*, *maha tattwa* or *buddhi*, the mind, the senses, the objects of senses, and the five primordial forms of matter. All these different variations of nature are like so many glass covers around one self-luminous *jivatma*, each with a different pattern of behaviour. The *buddhi* or intellect, for instance, when aroused into consciousness by its proximity with the conscious stuff of the *jivatma*, begins to take cognizance of the impressions imprinted on the mind by the senses. These impressions are of five different kinds, known as *tanmatras*: hearing (*shabd*), touch (*sparsha*), seeing (*rup*), taste (*ras*), and smell (*gandha*).

The mind receives the impressions of the external world through the five senses. The senses, when they are in touch with their respective objects in nature, produce the sensation of heat and cold, pleasure and pain. But ultimately it is the *buddhi* or intellect which acts both as the knower (*gyata*) and the doer (*karta*).

To achieve spiritual insight, therefore, one has to take the self beyond the mind-intellect equipment. One can do this by practising meditation, whereby an extroverted mind is switched to an introverted mind. The process of this changeover from

extrovert to introvert mind is carried out in two successive stages known as *savikalpa samadhi* and *nirvikalpa samadhi*. In the former, the duality of the knower and the known remains intact, while in the latter, the self is conscious of Self alone, and all duality vanishes. This is the starting point for the unfoldment of spiritual insight where the aspirant reaches beyond the mind-intellect equipment.

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## The eternal flow of Knowledge

Humanity is trapped in a dark age. People doubt and criticize everything, yet faith and devotion can change all this. The sun is shining on the same earth as it always has; the sky is the same sky beneath which the Lord has played out the dramas enjoyed by the devotees. The sky is the same, the earth is the same, the water flowing on the earth is the same, so what has changed? Three Ages—the Golden Age (*Satyug*), the Silver Age (*Tretayug*) and the Copper Age (*Dwaparyug*) have come and gone and now we are living in the Iron Age (*Kaliyug*), the age of darkness. If the earth, the heavens and everything else is the same, then what has changed?

Man's mind has changed. It has forgotten the Source, the Supreme Consciousness, which is within everyone. For this reason, man's ideas have become negative. In order to change this Age, first the mind has to be transformed, and that will only be possible when we awaken the consciousness lying dormant within us.

Karl Marx said that religion is the opiate of the masses. Opium makes a person passive and oblivious to everything, and Marx felt that religion did this to people—that it induced a kind of oblivion. However, Marx was acquainted only with institutionalized Christianity. He observed the influence of the huge and powerful Church and the negative aspects of its authority. He saw how it oppressed people. It was to this that he was referring. He probably did not know that in India in another age there was another revolutionary, the revered Lord Krishna, who changed the course of history. Marx may not have known about the Mahabharata War, which Lord Krishna waged to destroy injustice and oppression and restore the rule of

righteousness. He instigated the largest revolution in Indian history. Truly, all the saints and Divine Masters who have come into this world were revolutionaries in the true sense.

There is also an incident from the time of Guru Nanak. Once, Guru Nanak arrived at a village. The head landowner found out that he had come, so he had various delicious dishes prepared, arranged them on a large tray and took it with reverence to Guru Nanak. After a short while, an old farmer, who could offer only a little chutney and dry bread, arrived there in the hope that the Guru would accept his offering.

With great ostentation, the landowner said, "Master, I hope you will enjoy the variety of dishes which I have prepared." Guru Nanak answered, "Brother, both you and this farmer are offering food. Let us see first what this food contains." In one hand he took a piece of bread from the landlord's plate and in the other, the impoverished farmer's piece of dry bread. When both were squeezed, milk flowed from the poor man's bread while blood flowed from the rich man's. What a great demonstration! Guru Nanak said, "Landlord, you have drained the blood of many people, therefore blood came out of your bread. But this poor man, who hasn't harmed anyone, cooked this bread with great love and devotion, so milk came out of it."

Nanak's type of revolution didn't bind anyone to dogma or orthodoxy. His disciples were known as Sikhs. This word comes from *shishya*, a disciple. 'Sikh' means a devotee who believes in his guru and carries out his orders. There is another memorable event from Sikh history. It concerns the 'forty liberated devotees'.

Once, Guru Govind Singh was trapped in a fort, completely surrounded by Muslims. With him were those disciples who would later come to be known as the 'forty liberated disciples'. His disciples begged him, "Master, please give us the command to go outside this fort to fight. We will finish off the enemy even if we also have to die." Guru Govind Singh knew that they could not survive such a battle, so he refused. He said, "Keep the fort

closed. It doesn't matter if the provisions run out. We will stay hungry." As a result, their food supply was soon exhausted and they had nothing to eat. Finally, they were reduced to stripping the bark from trees and eating that. They were making a solution of mud and water and drinking that. Obviously, a person cannot subsist for long on this type of food. They all began to fall sick, and decided that they couldn't stay with the Master any longer. They grumbled, "Dying like this is not devotion. We are incapable of such devotion. Let's go home."

Their leader went to Guru Govind Singh and said, "Master, we cannot serve you any longer. We want to go home. We cannot go on eating tree bark and drinking muddy water."

Guru Govind Singh said, "All right, you are free. You can go home if you wish, but all I ask is that you put it in writing that I am not your Guru and you are not my disciples, and that you are breaking this connection." This is what they did.

When they reached their respective homes, the first question that their wives asked was, "Where is Guru Govind Singh?" Their husbands answered, "Ask about *us*, ask about *our* welfare. Why are you thinking about him? We have left him." Then those ladies said, "You put on our jewellery, and give us your swords and turbans. We will go and defend the Master!"

Their wives' dedication made those men feel ashamed of themselves. They regretted having left the Guru and not understanding how important he was to them. Filled with a renewed enthusiasm, they were ready to go back and defend him. When they returned, they saw that the Muslims were invading the fort. They pursued them, and a fierce battle took place in which most of the enemy were killed. Finally, Guru Govind Singh and his Sikhs were victorious, but in gaining the victory those who had returned were martyred.

There is a saying, "A mistake committed in the morning and rectified by evening is not counted as a mistake." Guru Govind Singh was very pleased when he heard that those disciples had returned. He started searching for them, and finally found the

one who had written, "We are not your disciples." The Guru said to him, "Your devotion has pleased me very much. If you hadn't come back I might not have been saved. I will grant you whatever you wish."

The disciple replied, "There is nothing left to ask for. I don't want liberation. I don't want devotion. I only want you to give me that paper on which I wrote that I have broken my connection with you." The Guru gave him that paper and he tore it up. Guru Govind Singh was so pleased that he said, "Today I make you immortal." Those forty devotees who had sacrificed themselves became immortal.

Guru Govind Singh placed the word 'Singh' after his name to denote that whoever drinks the nectar of immortality becomes *singh*, a lion. Those forty disciples are famous even today. In their memory we celebrate the Vaisakhi festival. This festival is very meaningful. It celebrates the unbreakable bond between master and disciple. This bond cannot be broken by writing something on paper; it cannot be destroyed by anyone else.

When Arjuna received Knowledge from Lord Krishna, he understood it because he was completely open and ready. Really understanding Knowledge is a very great thing. It is understood through practice and devotion. It is a mystery which is not understood from speeches or discussion. Knowledge is a matter of doing, not talking.

It is true that the Holy Name is the only reliable refuge, but what is this Name? Hindus call it *Ram Nam*, but what is Rama? It is said in the scriptures that 'Ram' means that entity which pervades all hearts. That which dwells in the yogis' hearts is Rama. Now, if that element dwells within everyone, then it must also be within a mute man, and if it is, then what form does it take? If it is within a Christian, what form does it take? If it is also within a baby, what form did it take when that child was yet unborn?

St. Tulsidas said, "God's True Name and Form are inexpressible, but realizing them brings true happiness, and

cannot be adequately praised.” God’s Name and Form are not something which can be expressed. If they could be, then they could be found in one particular language. Practice and realization bring joy and blessedness.

No one can ever praise the Name of God adequately. It is present within everything. It is the life-energy within us, without which we die. It is not something you can speak about. I will give you an illustration.

In the Upanishads there is the story of a great debate, during which King Janak announced, “The greatest philosopher and Vedic scholar among you may come forward and take all these cows and gold coins.” Everyone remained silent. Only one sage among all of them stood up. His name was Maharishi Yagyavalkya. He told his disciples to take the cows and coins. Then Gargi, another sage, stood up and said, “So you consider yourself a great scholar and philosopher! Then answer my questions, but if you can’t you’ll be disgraced!” Yagyavalkya replied, “Gargi, you may ask your questions, and I will answer them.”

Her first question was, “In what does the universe dwell?” Yagyavalkya replied, “This universe abides in space.” Her second question was, “In which element does even space dwell?” Yagyavalkya said, “Space dwells in *Akshar Brahm*, the Word of God.”

*A* means ‘not’ and *kshar* means ‘destructible’. The element of space is supported by the indestructible element, the Word of God. Our world dwells in space. At one time, scientists did not recognize the existence of space. On the basis of their own research and Albert Einstein’s theories they came to accept space and time as a dimension. Previously it was believed that there were only three dimensions; now it is known that there is a fourth dimension—space-time—also.

The solid earth is surrounded by water. Water is more subtle than earth. Water and earth both are contained by the atmosphere, which is even more subtle. It extends for 220 miles,

beyond which is space. Space surrounds atmosphere, water and earth. That subtle element supports everything.

You speak, you sit, your body is functioning. I ask you: by what power is your body doing its work? You will say that within our bodies are minute cells which take in oxygen from the fresh air. They burn it and release carbon dioxide. Within the 'factory' of the smallest particle, the atom, the most incredible activity is going on. By means of this atom, by means of the smallest particle of matter, the whole world can be destroyed. So much power is within this tiny particle! The element which is the most subtle is also the most powerful. The atom is the smallest particle of matter in the physical world, but even more subtle and more powerful is existence itself. It is the power of God. After all, due to *its* existence, everything exists, and the whole creation is sustained by its power.

Roofs and walls are reinforced by girders. They add their strength to the building materials and make the structure so solid that you can climb on it without breaking it. It can support many people. The weight is sustained by those rods. In the same way, the life-force within the entire Creation sustains it. If it were not present, then the universe could not survive. If the activating power were not within it, the world could not carry on. If there is no petrol in a car, it cannot move. If the Energy that preserves the existence of everything is not within a certain thing, that thing cannot exist. The Divine Energy is hidden within every speck of matter, and if it wasn't, nothing could continue to exist.

You and I are alive; you and I are existing; you and I are conscious. If we are existing, then that energy which creates and sustains existence must be within us. We should realize that this life-perserving power is indispensable. Guru Nanak said, "Even if hundreds of moons and thousands of suns were to rise together, even in such a blaze of light, a man remains in darkness if he doesn't receive the Knowledge from the true Master."

When Westerners come to India, and see someone bow to his guru's feet, they wonder why he does that. Why do they

prostrate to the guru? They wonder at this because the method of salutation in their countries is different. If you go to the Far North, where the Eskimos live, you'll see that their method of greeting is very unusual. It is so cold there that they completely cover themselves and only the nose is exposed for breathing. So when people meet, they rub noses! This is their method of salutation. Every country has its own way of greeting. Some people do *salaam*, some shake hands. In India we do not greet our guru by shaking hands. We do not rub noses to show respect. We prostrate to show our respect and reverence. Why? There is even a scientific explanation for this, too.

Our ancient sages believed that the human body is like a magnet. You know that the earth has a magnetic quality—it has a north pole and a south pole. The human body is also like a magnet. The lowest centre of energy in the spine, called *muladhar chakra*, is the south pole, and, at the crown of the head, is the *sahasradakamal*, the 'thousand-petalled lotus', which is the north pole. The north pole of one magnet attracts the south pole of another; this is a law of nature. A south pole is only attracted to a north pole. The crown of the head, which is like a north pole, is attracted to the feet of saints, which are like the south pole. Their spiritual vibration is felt by us on contact with them. To sit at the Master's feet and receive his teachings is the meaning of *Upanishad*. Saints infuse Knowledge into every activity. It is our misfortune that we don't understand the mystery of what they say, with the result that today people refuse to bow.

Every person in the world breathes. A Hindu breathes, a Muslim breathes, a Parsee breathes, and a Christian breathes. People who believe in God and people who don't, both breathe. What is the life-force hidden in the breath? What is the power behind the life-breath? Very few people know that.

There is a Hindu ceremonial ritual called *yagya*, during which oblations are offered to a sacred fire. Within the human body a type of *yagya* is also going on, which will be successful only when we automatically and consciously dedicate our every

breath to the sacred fire of the life-energy and understand the secret of this dedication.

We breathe in oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide and the heart beats due to a kind of electric stimulus. This is what scientists say. But if this is all, and there is nothing more to it, why does a person die? You may introduce an electric current into him, you may force oxygen into him, but, in spite of everything, energy does not return to that body, and because it has left, all medicines fail, as medicine works only in a living organism.

Beyond physical science there is a metaphysical science which the saints knew. To understand it, first of all they controlled their minds. The human mind is so subtle that its secrets cannot be easily understood. Then, with tranquil mind, the saints explored the depths of their inner being, and they saw the Divine Light, about which is written, "The Supreme Light shines day and night. It doesn't need a wick or oil." Lord Krishna said, "The soul which reaches that Light, which is beyond the light of sun and moon, does not return."

Scientists have observed the motion of light, and they have found it to be constant. When the mind is attuned to the Inner Light, the Divine Light, it will also become steady. If you vibrate a tuning fork and put it on a table, the table will resonate at the frequency of the fork. When you beat a drum, the frequency of that beat resonates through the membrane of the drum, and the same sound is heard. Another example is the guitar. When you make the strings vibrate, the entire neck and body of the instrument will resonate at that frequency. The strings are connected to the whole instrument, and the skin of the drum is connected to the whole drum. If you remove the skin, the drum will not produce any sound. Saints also said that when an object vibrates and is placed on something else, both objects will vibrate with the same frequency. When we merge our minds, which are fluctuating in the world, into the constant vibration of the Supreme Light, our minds will also reach a constant state.

Therefore Lord Krishna said, "Of all lights I am the Divine Light. My Light is supreme. Even a thousand suns cannot compare with it, and after attaining it a soul is freed from the cycle of birth and death." The Lord is talking about a stage inherent with peace and blessedness, and that stage is infinite. That power is both infinite and unitary—it is indivisible. That is why we believe God is both omnipresent and One. His Name sustains the life of everything.

St. Tulsidas said, "I bow to the Name of Rama, which is the origin of fire, sun and moon." Not having experienced personally this Name, Hindu scholars have found an easy way out for interpreting this. In their opinion, Tulsidas was hinting to take 'r' from *krisanu*, (fire), 'a' from *bhanu*, (sun) and 'm' from *himakar* (moon), and put them all together to spell *R-A-M*. But think about what Tulsidas is saying. He prostrates to the Name of Rama which is the *creator* of sun, moon and fire. If the word 'Ram' is *derived* from these, how can it be the *Word* which *created* them? Consider this verse of Guru Nanak's:

'The earth is the Word, the sky is the Word.  
Light shines from that Word.  
The entire creation emanates from that Word  
Which, says Nanak, dwells in every heart.'

Which name sustains the sun, moon and fire? You should think very carefully about this. Which alphabetical word can be earth, sky and light? Is there any word of any language which, when spoken, keeps the sun and moon shining, and fire burning? Could any ordinary word do that?

To understand this mystery, first of all we have to understand what a name or word is. All words are vibrations. Through the medium of your ears, the vibrations which I am speaking reach your eardrums and you hear what I am saying. Similarly, St. Kabir said, "There are many names for God existing in this world, but they cannot liberate you. The silent meditation on the Primordial Vibration is a rare secret." He uses

the word *adi nam* (Primordial Word). What can it be? It has to be a vibration. This same vibration exists within the atom, around whose nucleus the electrons revolve. It is the same vibration which keeps the planets revolving around the sun. Hindus circumambulate temples and sacred fires. This is symbolic. If the sun is removed, all the planets will be annihilated. Similarly, our life revolves around God; we are dependent on God, without Whom we cannot exist. What is that Power, that Vibration, which is present in the atom and across the universe?

That Word makes the earth solid. As well as being able to manifest solids, it becomes so subtle that it can manifest in the form of space also. When water is frozen it turns to ice. If you heat the ice it becomes water, and if you heat it further, it forms water vapour and permeates the atmosphere. However, the element of water remains the same. It is still H<sub>2</sub>O, but due to the change in the frequency of vibration it changes from solid to liquid to gas. Similarly, by this Word, the earth stays inert and solid, but when this same Word assumes a subtle form, as the element of space, it contains the entire universe. The vibration of this same Word forms space, and so it is said, "Earth is the Word, the sky is the Word". That same ultimate vibration is permeating the entire world in the form of energy, as light. The entire universe is contained by the Word, it dwells in the Word, and Guru Nanak says that this Word is within everyone.

The seed which produces a fruit is hidden in latent form within the fruit. You will find orange seeds only within oranges. Similarly, that special power which creates and governs the whole universe is present within us like a seed. It is seated within every heart. Therefore, this vibration is present within the inhaling and exhaling of your breath. By this same vibration the eyes blink, the blood flows and the lungs expand and contract. In simple terms, this vibration is called 'Name' or 'Word'.

Saint Tulsidas described it in a mystical, esoteric way. He had to do this because in his time he faced bitter opposition. Why? Because he translated the Sanskrit epic about Lord Rama,

the *Ramayana*, into Hindi, the language of the common people. His crime was that he made the esoteric symbolism and allusions simple. The intellectuals and scholars of his day refused to accept his 'Ramacharitamanasa' as being authoritative. Once it so happened that the Ramacharitamanasa was put at the bottom of a pile of other scriptures, as an insult to Tulsidas. The next day when the priests opened the temple they were amazed to find the Ramacharitamanasa right on the top.

St. Tulsidas' work explained the essential points of spirituality to the masses. If spiritual Knowledge were a matter of intellect and learning, or a matter of understanding a certain language, then probably devotees like Kabir would not have realized it, probably Mira Bai could not have realized it, probably Ravidas could not have realized it, the Apostles could not have realized it, because they were uneducated. But Knowledge is a matter of devotion and love, not merely of intellect.

Saints understood the mystery, but they kept it hidden, so that only a true seeker would understand it, while the unworthy would not, thus keeping Knowledge pure and uncontaminated.

When the radio is on, we cannot hear subtle sounds. On the road the commotion caused by traffic stops us from hearing natural sounds. At night, when the cars and buses stop running and the road becomes deserted, you can hear the sounds of crickets and other insects, and you realize that even insects produce amazing sounds. You can only hear natural sounds when the artificial sounds cease. Similarly, when we close our ears to external sounds, we can perceive the subtle sounds of the inner world.

Mira Bai sang, "I will always be Your servant. I will plant a garden and see You early in the morning. In the streets of Vrindavan I will sing Your glory". You can also attain this state of love and devotion. Practical Knowledge of the soul is the greatest blessing which anyone can receive, but you must be worthy, and not be interested in anything less.

Once a *saddhu* (a wandering mendicant) arrived at a house. The owner of the house made a delicious meal, and the *saddhu* hoped that this man would also give him a generous donation, as is the custom. After dinner, when the man bowed before him, the *saddhu* pronounced this blessing: "You will become very wealthy, you will have sons, you will have a beautiful car, you will have a long and prosperous life."

When the time came for giving his donation, the householder said, "Sir, you gave me such a wonderful blessing. I want to give you a small token of gratitude." In great anticipation the *saddhu* asked, "Do you mean that you wish to offer a donation?" The man replied, "Yes. I donate to you the cities of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay."

"What!" exclaimed that *saddhu*. "Are they yours to give?" The householder replied, "You were giving me heaven, you were giving me a long life, as if these things were yours to give. I was just being as generous!"

What are true blessings? The greatest blessing is Spiritual Knowledge. It was essential for Arjuna and it is essential for our souls, too. Sometimes when you are extremely thirsty, all you crave is a glass of cold water. Someone may offer you tea or milk, but you will say, "No, thank you. Right now the only thing that appeals to me is simple cold water." You will also refuse hot water, as it only increases your thirst. The satisfaction we get from cold water does not come from any other liquid. The same thing applies in the spiritual context. The soul is thirsty for Knowledge, but we offer it worldly things instead, which will not quench its thirst, but only increase it. To stop the mind and give joy to the soul we go here and there, yet our souls are not satisfied.

We need something which can untie the knots which bind the thirsty soul and satisfy it. Knowledge is transmitted to the disciple from a realized soul. The disciple practises the technique, he has experiences and takes pleasure in his own soul! A mute man can eat sugar and realize its sweetness, but he cannot express

his discovery. Similarly, the devotee is incapable of expressing what this Name and Light are.

When you are introduced to someone, first of all you find out his name. Similarly, if you want to be introduced to God, you must first know His name. God is One, so He must have only one Name. There are so many spoken names for God that a person can get confused. One saint said, "Everyone says, *Ram, Ram*, but no one knows His true Name. Satguru reveals this Name, which is unspoken." That Name, which introduces us to God, by which we can see His real Form, is revealed by the Satguru, the true Master. In the *Ramacharitamanasa*, Tulsidas said, "The invisible Form of God is subject to the Name. You cannot know the Form without knowing the Name."

If you want to meet a particular person, first of all you announce his name over the loudspeaker: "So-and-so please come backstage." Until you utter the name, the form won't come to you. In the same way, God will not appear to you until you call His Name. When a kitten mews, the mother cat knows that her baby needs something. The same teeth which devour mice become as soft as velvet as she picks up her kitten and carries it to a sheltered place. If we mew like a kitten, if we cry, that Power will come to us and protect us. However, it is necessary to cry sincerely. We disbelieve; we have gone so far away from the Truth that we don't want to cry. Devotion teaches us to 'mew', Love teaches us to cry. The devotee becomes totally absorbed in the Lord. What is devotion? Another name for it is Love.

Mira Bai said, "If I had known that loving God would be so painful, I would have told everyone not to love Him." Saints said that both saints and wicked people bring us sorrow. When a wicked man comes he causes trouble, and when a saint goes away, devotees feel sad. In the course of Love, suffering necessarily comes, but devotees consider it to be a good thing. Why? Because when suffering and calamities come, people always remember God, and when there is no crisis, people forget Him. St. Kabir

said, "I don't want happiness if it makes me forget the Holy Name. I welcome suffering if it makes me remember It."

Once, Lord Krishna was pleased with Kunti, the mother of Arjuna, and said, "Whatever you ask for, I will give." Kunti said, "Lord, if you want to give me something, then give me suffering." The Lord asked, "Why do you ask for that?" She replied, "When I am sad I always remember you, and when I am happy I tend to forget you." This is really true. When someone is happy, he forgets God and His Name, and only remembers Him when he is suffering. So devotees consider suffering to be a kind of blessing.

What is love? Love has many forms, and not only human beings experience it. For example, after laying her eggs on the beach and covering them with sand, the female turtle returns to the sea for food, but all the while her thoughts are concentrated on her eggs.

Another form of love is the love between a husband and wife who remain devoted to each other throughout their lives. Did you know that a male and female swan remain as a pair all their lives? If one of the pair dies, the other stays single, so this quality of enduring faithfulness is also in the swan.

In India a devoted wife will never eat until her husband has eaten. Now, the lion rarely hunts, but the lioness is very dangerous and aggressive. She will pursue her prey, kill it and bring it to the lion. First of all he will feed from the carcass, then the lioness and the cubs will eat. So this quality of selflessness is also found in animals.

The queen bee lives in the hive, in which there are two types of bees—the soldier bees which protect the hive and the worker bees which gather the pollen and bring it to the hive. Their sole aim is to serve the queen. Ant society is also disciplined to an extent rarely found among other species.

So you can find many such virtues in animals, too, but what is the type of love unique to human beings? St. Tulsidas said, "God is present in all beings, but He manifests through Love."

What kind of Love is that? Such a love means total concentration. When a child is taken to hospital seriously ill, his mother forgets all about food. She will not feel hunger or thirst. Her only thought is that her child should be saved by any means.

Another example of this was the love of Emperor Babar for his son Humayun. When Humayan fell sick, his father was told, "Offer your most precious possession to God so that your child may recover." The Emperor called all his ministers and advisers and asked their opinion. They said, "Your Majesty, you have the priceless Kohinoor diamond. If you dedicate that to God, your son will be spared." The Emperor said, "Even more precious to me than the Kohinoor is my own life. I will give up my own life to God." It is said that he walked around his son's bed three times and prayed, "God, please take my life and give it to my son." That happened, and his son recovered. He offered his own life to save his child. It is said, "Blessings can work when medicines fail. When you meet the Perfect Guide, you can find God."

There is a great power in love. When we love someone, we are totally absorbed. Perhaps you have heard the story of the legendary lovers Layla and Majnun. Once, a dog came from the street where Layla lived. Majnun knew that this dog lived on her street so he bent down to kiss its paw. People asked, "What are you doing?" He replied, "This dog came from Layla's street, so I am bowing to it and kissing its paw." Everyone burst into laughter and someone jokingly said, "Majnun, you are crazy about Layla. If you were as crazy about God as you are about her, you would become a saint this very minute!" Majnun answered, "I don't want God. If God wants me, then He will have to come in the form of Layla. Otherwise I am not interested."

This is the single-mindedness, the concentration which comes from love. Majnun's vision had become so focussed that he could only accept God in the form of Layla. When a person is in love, he is ready to give up everything for his beloved. He will even be prepared to sacrifice his life. If your close friend or relative falls ill, you lose interest in everything except going to see

him. Similarly, someone who loves God puts Him above all else; he is focussed on God alone.

Once, Lakshman complained to Hanuman, "You are not giving us a chance to serve Lord Rama. You are doing it all yourself." So Hanuman said, "You should draw up a service schedule. You take the service you want to do and whatever is left I will do." Lakshman prepared a list of all the items of Lord Rama's service. He took some, and his brothers Bharat and Satrughna took the rest. Then Hanuman was given the list and told that he could do whatever was left. As there was nothing left to do, Hanuman felt very sad.

Lord Rama noticed this and asked what had happened. Hanuman answered, "Lord, your brothers have claimed all the service. There is nothing left for me." Lord Rama laughed and said, "I will give you something to do. When I yawn, you snap your fingers. If you don't do that, I will continue yawning."

Wherever Lord Rama went, Hanuman went also, because the Lord could yawn at any time, and it was necessary for Hanuman to be present and snap his fingers. That night, as Rama went into his palace, Hanuman followed. The guard stopped him and said, "You cannot go inside. Only Lord Rama and Sita can go beyond this point." So Hanuman turned back, sat down and started meditating.

Inside the palace, just as Lord Rama was lying down he started to yawn. His mouth stayed wide open, because Hanuman was not there to snap his fingers. The whole night his mouth stayed open, and Sita was afraid that some strange illness had struck him. Morning came, and when Lord Rama arrived at Court everyone was astonished. They asked him what had happened, but he couldn't say anything. The sage Vashishta said, "Go and find Hanuman. He may be able to do something." When Hanuman came, Vashishta asked, "What service were you given?" Hanuman replied, "I was told to snap my fingers whenever Lord Rama yawns." Vashishta said, "Hurry up and do it, so that he can finish yawning." Hanuman snapped his fingers

and Lord Rama closed his mouth. That is why Tulsidas said in his *Ramacharitamanasa*, "By meditating on the Holy Name, Hanuman had even Lord Rama under his control."

Tulsidas also said, "Meditation on the Holy Name dries up the worldly ocean." What is this Name, which can instantly start to dry up the ocean of desires and misery within us? Many times the saints have given us hints to help us understand this mystery, but we doubt, and so our situation has become something like this: I say to you, "Look to where my finger is pointing." Instead of looking in that direction, you focus on my finger. But my finger is not the destination—it is only an indicator. On the road you will find signs and milestones saying something like 'Hardwar—50 miles'. That, of course, indicates that it is 50 miles further to Hardwar. You wouldn't stop the bus and sit down by that sign. You understand that 50 miles further on you will reach your destination. The scriptures of all religions are like signposts and milestones. They show us the direction to God.

Once, Indra, the king of the gods, saw a demon king entering his kingdom of Indralok. Light was emanating from that demon's body, his countenance was radiant and shining with an inner lustre. He was fearless, too, and entered Indra's court unhindered. Indra was amazed by his courage. The gods, too, were captivated by his splendour. Indra felt jealous and insulted, so he left his palace.

When they discovered that he had gone, the gods were greatly upset. They said, "Our king has gone. What will we do now?" The demon king stood his ground and said, "I will be your king. I will rule you." He walked straight to Indra's throne and started to rule Indralok.

Meanwhile, Indra wandered around, wondering, "What is his secret? What power does he have that enabled him to reach Indralok, although he is a demon, and take my throne? I must find out." So he disguised himself as a brahmin boy and went back to Indralok. He approached the demon king and requested to be accepted as his disciple. The usurper said, "I have no time.

I have heaven, earth and hell to take care of." The boy humbly persisted. Finally the demon relented and said, "Very well. Start serving."

The boy served the king day and night. The king was very pleased with him and thought, 'How determined and devoted this child is!' One day he was especially pleased and said, "Child, if you wish to ask anything, then do so." The boy, who was Indra in disguise, said, "Master, you are a demon. From where did you get the power to take Indra's throne?" The demon king said, "I served my Guru, Sukracharya. I had firm faith in him and his teachings, and I served him as humbly as I could. My service pleased him, with the result that today I am sitting on the throne of Indralok."

At this point Indra understood. He thought, 'I will follow my guru's commands in the same way as this king served his guru.' Previously, Indra had been very arrogant and on several occasions had disrespected his own guru, Brihaspati. Now he realized his mistakes.

One day the demon king was very pleased by Indra's service and said, "Son, whatever you ask for I will give." Indra said, "Master, If you want to give me anything, then give me that purity of character that enabled you to reach Indralok." The demon king gave his blessing and bestowed his own purity on the boy.

At this very moment a celestial being emerged from him. The demon king asked, "Who are you? Where are you going?" The celestial being said, "I am your pure character. You are offering me to this Brahmin child so you have severed all connection with me." Soon after this, another powerful being emerged and said, "I am your spirituality." The king asked, "Where are you going?" The shining being said, "Spirituality and purity go together. So I am going with him." After that one more powerful being came out. The demon king asked, "Who are you?" He answered, "I am Truth. I am found wherever spirituality is. So I am also leaving you." So all such virtues left

the king one by one, until finally he fell exhausted to the ground, finished. All his spiritual merit and qualities had been passed on to Indra, whose splendour increased.

His power, pure character and spirituality were the reward of serving his Master. Even in this day and age we, too, can gain something from serving the Master.

Only by sacrifice can we achieve anything. Someone once said, "Great things are achieved by great sacrifice." Sir Edmund Hillary planted his flag on Mt. Everest. Some of his companions died on the way, and he too had to endure a lot. He suffered greatly, but in spite of all that, he managed to place his banner on the world's highest peak. Similarly, if you want to scale the heights of Knowledge you have to renounce the pleasures of the senses. Hindus put a decorative spot, called *bindi* on the forehead, between the eyebrows. Why? Because this is the point of meditation and is above all the senses. The ancient sages used this mark to indicate that they had risen above the senses and were concentrating on God.

To understand the secret meaning of the teachings of the sages we need to have the same Knowledge as they did, which found expression in the Vedas. We call the Vedas *sruti* and *smriti*: *sruti* means 'to hear' and *smriti* means 'to remember'. In those days there were no stenographers or tape recorders. There was only one method of retention, and that was the power of memory. The sages expressed whatever they had experienced, and the disciples learned it by heart. In the Yajur Veda is a mantra called the Gayatri Mantra: *Om bhurvasva tatsvitur varamuam bhargo devasya dhimahi dhiyo yonaprachodayat*. The composer of the mantra had an experience, and said, "O God! You are Light, and I meditate on You." To know this, that saint had an experience in the inner laboratory of the Self. Then he expressed it in verses and mantras to his disciples, who memorized it. Thus, through hearing and remembering, the Vedas have been kept alive to this very day.

Knowledge is eternal. It is a matter of experience. It is not like an inert block of stone or a book—it has to be a living experience. The soul is eternal, so Knowledge of the soul must also be eternal. When we have the experience, we understand the infinity and power of this eternal Knowledge. Guru Nanak said, “That which was true in the beginning was Truth, is Truth now and will always be Truth.” Because the saints experienced it, they understood its vastness, its profundity and its perfection.

When small children pester their mother for a story, she will make up a tale something like this: “Once upon a time, there was a king and queen. Both died. End of story.” That story is not written anywhere. We heard it, remembered it and repeated it. Folk stories are like this. Similarly, the knowledge contained in the Vedas was heard, remembered and repeated, but until we have the same experience as those ancient sages, their teachings will be nothing more than a mere fable to us. We must realize the Truth.

During a play, many actors come on stage, and sometimes one actor will play several roles. He may assume many guises and voices, and each time he appears very different, but the man behind the masks is the same. Similarly, behind many diverse manifestations, only one Supreme Being is at work. To know and realize this Power is real devotion. What was the origin of devotion? The sages went to the Source, where adoration, reverence and devotion originate, through meditation. You can, as they did, lose yourself in meditation.

Once a farmer went to visit his spiritual teacher and said, “Master, please give me something to concentrate upon.” The master asked, “What is most valuable to you?” The disciple replied, “My ox.” The master said, “Go home and meditate on your ox.” So this is what he did.

A long time passed and the master noticed that his disciple hadn’t come back, so he went to look for him. He reached the farmer’s cottage and said, “Brother, why don’t you come outside? It’s a lovely day.” The disciple called out from inside, “Master,

how can I come outside? My horns have grown very big and would get stuck in the doorway!" By meditating on his ox, that disciple had started visualizing himself as an ox. That's absorption in meditation on an external object.

We hear about the games that Krishna played, in which he became Radha and she became Krishna. That's absorption in devotion. Thus it is said that true liberation means being totally identified with God. When you completely dissolve sugar in water, you cannot separate them again, and the water also becomes sweet. Similarly, through practice of meditation, a devotee becomes absorbed in the Supreme Being. All rivers lose their names when they merge in the ocean, and they themselves become part of the ocean. Similarly, anyone, no matter what his caste, colour or creed, can become one with the Supreme Lord through meditation. He becomes part of God the Father.

If a devotee advances towards Him, God Himself comes to him. Here is an example of how the Lord reciprocates Love. Lord Rama was being crowned in his capital of Ayodhya. During the ceremony, his younger brother Lakshman started laughing. Lord Rama noticed this and became angry, taking it as an insult. He wanted to punish him, but Hanuman said, "Lord, don't be so hasty. At least ask him why he is laughing."

Lord Rama called Lakshman and said, "Tell me why you were laughing." Lakshman said, "Lord, for fourteen years I served you in the forest. I guarded you day and night. I was so absorbed in devotion that I never felt sleepy. But just then, during your coronation, I was starting to feel drowsy. I thought, 'Goddess of Sleep, for fourteen years you did not approach me. Now, today, during the Lord's coronation, you are sneaking up on me!' I was laughing at this invasion.

Lord Rama thought, 'What a unique devotee he is! See how he served me.' He said, "Lakshman, it means that you must not have eaten anything."

Lakshman replied, "If I had eaten anything I would have fallen asleep." Lord Rama said, "Once I gave you a banana as

prashad." It is said that Lakshman tore open his thigh and took out that same banana, saying, "Here it is." Lord Rama was so pleased by his devotion that he said, "I will definitely reward you." So, in their next incarnations, Rama became Krishna and Lakshman became Balarama, his elder brother, and Balarama could tease Krishna as much as he liked. The Lord repaid Lakshman by becoming his younger brother. If you take a step towards God, He takes a step towards you.

Devotion is like an echo. If you stand near a mountain and shout, the same sound will come back to you. Whatever name you call out will come back to you as an echo. Devotion is like that. The love with which you call God comes back to you multiplied. The form a devotee's love takes determines how he experiences God.

Before a child comes into the world, he experiences two things—sound and light. If you put a baby in a silent room he will cry, so you sing him a lullaby. If you put him in a dark room, he will cry, because he wants light. That child, who was in the womb for nine months, is familiar with light and music. That means he must have experienced them.

The saints have always talked about Divine Music, which is heard within the Self. You know that when the sound from a microphone becomes distorted, there is a shrill sound. The loudspeaker emits a sound, and if you place the microphone near the loudspeaker, that sound becomes a shrill whistle. Similarly, when a person listens to his consciousness by means of his consciousness, there is a feedback which the saints called 'Divine Harmony'. In the Bible it is said that those who were deaf began to hear, those who were blind began to see and those who were lame began to walk. Tulsidas said, "May His grace be upon us, by which the mute can speak and the lame become able to cross high mountains."

The mind is like a lame man, although it doesn't have hands or feet, but with the help of Knowledge it can cross the high mountains of illusion. Someone who doesn't have Knowledge is

like a mute man, but after initiation he is able to speak. That is the effect of Knowledge, but what is Knowledge?

We know that the atom consists of three types of particles. The scriptures say that the universe is created from the three forces of Nature, called *sat*, *raj* and *tam*, which correspond to the electron, proton and neutron. If someone is standing here and I pull him towards me, and someone else pulls him towards himself, and a third pulls in *his* own direction, that man in the middle will stay where he is. One rope cannot hold up a flagpole. If there are only two ropes it will fall either right or left. If three ropes are pulling on it, the flagpole will stay in position. Similarly, your soul is also affected by those three forces of Nature. It is caught in the middle of them. By means of the illusory influence of *sat*, *raj* and *tam*, the soul is bound. How? The air inside an open bottle may be said to be infinite, but if the bottle is closed, that infinite air becomes finite.

Only by breaking the bottle does that finite air become infinite.

You have to realize that thing which is beyond the three forces of Nature. After breaking the bondage to them, the soul merges with the Infinite. The Bhagavad Gita says, "He who is perfect in this Knowledge attains liberation; if not, the soul will remain bound, wandering in this world from birth to birth." According to Guru Nanak: "After wandering through the 8.4 million species, you have received a human body. Take refuge in the Holy Name because you are getting closer to death all the time."

Everything in Nature moves in a cycle. You exhale carbon dioxide, plants turn it into oxygen and bad air becomes fresh air. Water flows from the rivers to the sea. It becomes water vapour, forms clouds and then rain falls, and the cycle starts all over again. The earth has a circular motion, our blood circulates, everything moves in cycles. The 8.4 million species of life is also a cycle, from which the soul is liberated only when it breaks

through the enclosure of the three forces of Nature and is revealed in its pure and natural form.

We have built up a personality, but we were originally something else. A child says, "I want to be a soldier." He is not a soldier, but he will become one. Or he may say, "I want to become a journalist." He is not a journalist, but will become one. We have forgotten our original nature and have become something quite different. Saints said, "Know what you originally were." By changing clothes, by putting on a mask, we have become completely different, but if we knew what we really are, we would laugh. All the masks will fall away when our true Self is exposed. The soul, which was formerly confined to a small cage, will be freed.

In jail a man gets food. The same air is inside the jail as outside, and the same dirt is inside and outside. Outside, however, he can experience something which he can never feel inside the jail. Inside the jail he is dependent, while outside he is free and independent. In the same way, your soul longs for freedom. It doesn't want you to identify with the masks of Maya, no matter whether these come from the mind or from the intellect. It wants to know its real form, to understand what it was originally. It is chafing in slavery to the mind, and it wants only freedom.

The thirst of the soul is not quenched from one lifetime to another. It stays thirsty until it acquires Knowledge. The saints talked about the sounds of the soul, not of the mind or intellect. When the soul is awakened, a person does not remain merely human but becomes divine.

Soul was within Lord Buddha, and soul was also within Adolf Hitler. Hitler slaughtered millions of people, while Buddha spoke out against even animal sacrifice. We should understand how this quality of non-violence arose in Lord Buddha. It happened only when he achieved enlightenment. When his spiritual experience deepened, he saw the self-effulgent Light of soul shining in all beings. When he was practising austerities to

attain spiritual peace and enlightenment, he was labouring for the souls of all creatures, and he took the vow of non-violence.

Growth of non-violence and love is connected to spiritual evolution. This is not something to merely discuss. Emperor Ashoka was a great warrior who waged many wars. After the Knowledge of Buddha changed him, that same emperor spread the doctrine of non-violence everywhere. He declared, "Non-violence is the ultimate religion". To compensate for the many wars he had fought, he preached the benefits of non-violence to all. Non-violence is a result of the flowering of spiritual insight within a person. Ratnakar was not born a thief and a murderer—his environment made him such. Within Ratnakar, the saint Valmiki was hidden. The devotee within you has to be awakened. Everyone has the devotee-nature within them. Saints show that unchantable Name whose existence we perceive within ourselves.

There is a prayer by Rabindranath Tagore: "God, I don't want You to remove obstacles or suffering from my path. I want You to give me the strength to overcome them." The strength comes from spiritual experience. This prayer applies to devotees of all times. Hanuman was given so much strength that he was able to leap right across the ocean to the Ashoka Grove in Lanka. Arjuna was given so much power that he fought the war at Kurukshetra and destroyed the armies of evil. Lord Krishna told him, "You are entitled to do action, not to covet the fruit of that action." Action is a great thing, but ambition and desire for results is a trap.

In the days when the Derby Lottery was still being held in India, a lottery ticket agent came to a certain village and urged the villagers to buy tickets. The landowner and the village accountant both bought tickets. Everyone expects to win; no one thinks that he will lose. Both were wondering how to win, so it occurred to them that since the giver of rewards is God, if He were offered a small bribe, maybe He would shower His grace. So what would be the best kind of bribe? The landowner called in a pandit to read his horoscope. The pandit said, "Your chart is unfavourable,

so you should do something to counteract the adverse conjunction." The landowner asked, "What should I do?" The pandit advised, "You should do something in the way of devotion and worship." That rich man, who had never seen the inside of a temple, became the caretaker of the local one. After his prayers, he distributed sweets to the poor, who were also praying, "God, let there be a lottery every day, so that we can eat sweets."

Seeing the landowner giving alms and charity, people teased the accountant, "The landowner will win. You will stay poor and you will lose respect." He said, "Very well. I will do whatever he does." So he also began to perform ritual ceremonies and give alms. They became the benefactors of that village, and no one who came to them left empty-handed.

Soon that village had acquired the status of a sacred place. Devotion as was never seen before was going on there, and its momentum increased daily. If one of them gave two sweets daily to such poor person, then the other would give four. If one piece of cloth was given one day, the next five would be given. If the landlord gave ten items of clothing, the accountant would give twelve. The end result of all this was that both became impoverished, and even had to sell their land. The prize, after all this, went to a lady living in another town. Those two fellows, who had cherished the hope of winning, got nothing, and lost everything that they had. This desire had ruined them.

There is another story of a foolish day-dreamer who was promised money for carrying some goods. As he was walking along he thought, "With this money I will buy eggs. When they hatch, I'll sell the chickens and buy a cow. When the cow has calves I'll sell them and buy a buffalo." Meanwhile, the goods that he was carrying on his head fell down and he got nothing. That is why Lord Krishna advised us not to desire the fruit of actions. You know how true this is. A lawyer is always advised not to conduct his own litigation. Why? Because he will be too personally involved. So he engages another lawyer. This other person is not so involved, his emotions do not come into play, so

he can present the case properly. If a lawyer handles his own case, he will be thinking of the results, and, caught in this trap, he will forget the legal points and possibly lose his case. That is why Lord Krishna said that the secret of action is to be devoid of ambition for results.

We can only work successfully when we are not greedy for results. In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna explained this psychological truth. There really is an advantage in working like this. But people do not want to work. Everyone thinks, "If I pass on this work, then somebody else will do it." So how will the work get done?

This reminds me of a story. Once, a prince came across a well in the forest, but, being a prince, could not bring himself to do the menial work of drawing the water. So he sat down, hoping that someone else would come along. After some time, a Minister's son arrived and said, "Please give me a drink of water." The prince said, "I am a prince. You should be serving me." The other man said, "I am a Minister's son; I also don't do such things." So they both sat down waiting for someone else to come along. Presently, the son of a nobleman came by and said, "Friends, you have been resting here, so please give me some water." The prince said, "I am a prince, and he is a Minister's son, so how can we give you water?" The third man said, "Well, after all, I am the son of a nobleman. It's not my duty to give anyone water." Then a fourth man arrived and asked for a drink of water. The prince refused, saying, "I am a king's son, he is a Minister's son, and he is a nobleman's son. You should give *us* water!" The newcomer laughed and said, "I also cannot serve water to such great people as you, because I am the son of a vagabond!" So work will not get done if it is passed from hand to hand.

You are uplifted by devotion. Meditation is something to *do*. How? By gradual dedication of your life. If you repeat an action he becomes a habit. No one is born with a cigarette in his mouth. Anyone will cough the first time he smokes, and he may be wary

of smoking again, but friends will urge him on, saying, "Go on, just once more!" After two, three or four times, a habit is formed. Saints say, that if you can develop bad habits, why not develop good ones? If you regularly, every day, practise a little formal meditation morning and night, it will become a habit with you, it will become part of your nature. Once this happens, you will succeed in devotion. One of the benefits of remembering this Holy Name is that it becomes your nature. When it does, you will merge in an ocean of bliss.

We cannot destroy a tree by cutting off its branches or chopping it to pieces. Even if we burn it, we merely change its form to ashes. It may not look like a tree, but still it is the ashes of a tree. How can we completely destroy the tree? Think about it. If we chop down the tree it is converted into fragments. Burning it will merely convert it into ashes. There is only one way to destroy it. This huge tree sprang from a seed, and so we have to return it to the seed. Our mind is like this tree. We can't destroy it by repression, by force, because it will spring up somewhere else. We have to return it to the seed from which it came, so that it merges with the seed. From action there is reaction. The action is that a tree comes from a seed, and the reaction is that the tree produces a seed.

The Gita gives the example of the banyan tree. You must have heard about this tree. It grows in the jungles of Africa and India. Its roots are above ground. It is called *akshay vat*—*a* means 'not' and *kshay* means 'destruction'. This tree can live for hundreds of years. Its roots seem to stand above ground. Lord Krishna mentions this tree with its aerial roots. He wishes to illustrate the point, "I am the Power from which this entire universe evolves." How did it evolve? It is said that God had the desire to manifest diversity from unity: *ekohan bahusay ami*. There was the wish to manifest plurality from unity. Now, if God is Truth, His Will must also be true. If a powerful ruler wants something done, then it is done. The idea is, that if God is Truth, then the power of His Will must also be true, and from One He

created the many. From God this entire universe was made. This same desire is in parents of all species, and in the creation as a whole. The whole universe was created by this impulse.

Is the universe created from matter or from energy? This debate has been going on for a long time, and has not yet been resolved. The scientific opinion is that the universe originated from matter. The spiritual idea is that it originated from energy. Newton's principle is that action has an equal and opposite reaction. If you keep subdividing matter you will break it down into molecules and then atoms. As atoms are broken down, matter is transformed into energy. Energy remains as energy. A nuclear war would destroy the earth and only energy would be left. Whether it would be in the form of radioactivity, or light, or something else, it would remain as energy. Construction must be the reaction of destruction. If you accept the theory of action/reaction, it follows that if destruction is the action, then construction must be the reaction. If, upon its destruction, matter is transformed into energy, then the universe must have been created from energy, whose form was merely changed into matter. Before the creation of the material universe, there was spiritual energy.

There are stars which are millions of light years away from us, so far away that their light has not even reached us yet. God has created such an amazingly vast universe full of wonderful phenomena. There is so much radioactivity in the sun that it can give heat and light to the entire solar system. But from where does the sun get its heat and energy.? Our solar system has only one sun, and just imagine how many other solar systems and suns there must be! Just as our planets revolve around their sun, so countless suns revolve around a 'galactic nucleus'. You can call this galactic nucleus the 'origin', the 'first cause' or whatever, but it is nothing but pure consciousness. Just as the sun gives us light, from this point emanates the Light of Consciousness. Very few people know the secret of this Light.

The Pyramids of Egypt were built in triangular form. The body of the Pharaoh was kept inside in a tomb, and these mummies were preserved for thousands of years. Temples also have a pyramidal shape. On the top is a spire—if lightning strikes this, it travels to the ground and there is no damage to the temple. If you construct a small pyramid and place a razor blade under it, in a few days the blade is automatically sharpened. Scientists have formed a conclusion that a triangle attracts cosmic rays which have a rejuvenating effect. When we sit for meditation, we also form a triangle.

Many objects can act as magnets. You cannot see magnetic forces, but a magnet generates these, and it has wonderful properties. Magnetic power flows between the north and south poles. If you turn a compass in any direction, its magnetic needle will always be pointed north. Similarly, we should always point God-wards. Divine Power is within you, and if you want to be a magnet whose power is directed at God, then you should understand how the magnet works. What is it? Complete alignment of its molecules in a single direction. Similarly, our energies should be focussed and directed and aligned in meditation on God's Holy Name.

Many people hesitate to go to satsang and take positive steps on the spiritual path. If you think like that, you will miss the boat! Such people have difficulty getting anything done. They are like the two farmers who went to a county fair. Both of them had dirty teeth. A hawker was advertising tooth powder, and he grabbed one farmer and scrubbed his teeth with the powder. He proudly showed him to the crowd, saying, "See the results! See how clean this fellow's teeth are now!" People were impressed and started buying his product. The farmer's friend thought, "When we reach home, everyone will notice that his teeth are clean and mine are filthy. Maybe I should buy this powder." The powder cost 25 cents. He had two 10-cent coins and a 5-cent coin, and, keeping them in his hand, he thought, "Should I or shouldn't I?" The indecision in his mind was transferred to his hand. As he thought,

“I will buy it,” his thumb moved forward, and when he thought, “I won’t,” his thumb moved back. Finally he put his money down and asked for the powder. The vendor looked at the coins and saw that the face of the 5-cent piece was worn blank. He returned the money and refused to sell the powder. So, the farmer didn’t get the powder and lost 5 cents. This is the situation. When we hesitate, we wear away our energies. A person who acts immediately with firm resolve is successful in life. When we are hesitant, we cannot concentrate our mental powers. When we concentrate our mind on the Holy Name, all our energies become focussed. There is a true saying, “United we stand and divided we fall”. The forces within a human being are like that. If they are focussed, united, the person’s intellect is sound and maya cannot disturb him. If there is doubt and hesitation in him, he can never stand firm. He will fall before maya and be conquered. So, first of all, we should listen to satsang and make a firm decision to walk with determination on the Path.

One day, while standing at a crossroads, Socrates went into the superconscious state and remained standing there for three days. When he returned home, his wife was furious. His disciples said, “Socrates, we know how great you are, but still it is not right to neglect your family this way.” Socrates gave a very nice answer: “If my wife did not get angry at me, my patience would never be tested!” Crisis and obstacles come to test our endurance and our understanding.

Once, Shivaji, the great ruler of Maharashtra, became overproud and felt that there was no devotee to equal him. He thought, “I, Prince Shivaji, bow my head to the feet of Ramdas. There is no devotee like me. I am the highest.” His spiritual master, Ramdas, saw this egotism in him. He knew that Shivaji would do great things, but if he fell prey to ego he wouldn’t be able to achieve anything, so he said, “Shivaji, one of my disciples has been given the service of grinding tobacco. Go and see if he is doing it properly.” Shivaji went to the ashram and found that

disciple. After preparing the tobacco, the devotee thought, "How is it? I'd better taste a little and see!"

Shivaji was watching and thought indignantly, "What kind of devotee is he! He is tasting the tobacco before the Master! I am always around the Master, yet I would never even think of eating before he does!" His sense of self-righteousness increased even more.

The devotee brought the tobacco to Ramdas, who asked, "Did you prepare this?" "Yes, Master," answered the disciple. "Very well. How did you know that it was ready? Bring me the thing you used to find out." Shivaji was standing there, awaiting his chance to expose that disciple.

The devotee went inside a room. A little while later he came out, staggering, and holding a tray. Shivaji wondered why he was staggering. Then he saw that the disciple had cut out his tongue and was bringing it to Ramdas, as if to say, "Yes, I tasted it to see if it was ready." Shivaji was overcome. He thought, "The Master has disciples before whom I, Shivaji, ruler of all Maharashtra, am nothing!"

It is said, "Guru is the potter, and his disciple is the pot. While moulding it, the potter removes flaws by supporting it inside with one hand and pounding it on the outside." If there is a flaw in the vessel, the potter uses his skill to fix it. The Master is like that. He gives support and consolation inside, and outside he knocks you into shape. A devotee is not perturbed by the knocks. He knows that this is happening to keep him on the right track.

Once, during a satsang program, Guru Govind Singh said, "I want the head of a devotee!" The people in the audience asked each other, "What has happened to our Guru? First he was asking for a mere ten percent dedication and now he wants our heads!" They got up and started to leave. However, one devotee came forward and said, "Lord, I will give you my head." The Guru took that man inside his tent. People heard a cry and saw blood flowing out from under the tent. Then the Guru came out and said, "I want one more head." Another devotee stood up and

said, "Lord, take mine." The same thing happened and blood came out from the tent. In all, only five devotees came forward. After the fifth, the Master called out for more, but there was nobody left to hear. They had all run away. Inside that tent, he had cut a goat's head, so that blood would be seen. He only did that to see how many true disciples he had. He was testing their faith. Those five became famous, and the rest are forgotten. There are so many stories like this from those times. People used to rival each other for service.

What can be done in the way of devotion? First of all, people's hearts should be awakened by satsang. People receive Knowledge like that. Even bloodthirsty people who take a gun in one hand to shoot animals and grab the throat of a saint with the other, can be changed. If such people receive Knowledge, think how much blood will be spared! You may kill an evil man, but you cannot kill evil. You may execute an unrighteous person, but you will not destroy unrighteousness like this. Another evil person will take his place. Only satsang can transform people. It is said, "He who upholds righteousness is protected by it."

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## Questions and answers

*Why is it said that a soul can become lost?*

Definitely there is a meaning to it. If you do not evolve, you reach a state of limbo; you stagnate and don't proceed any further. Then, in that stage you are definitely lost. If something is moving and the power to move is taken away, and that thing stays in limbo, what will happen? Its momentum will gradually be used up. Now, take one second of that, one fraction of a second. What is that stage? If you do not know where you are, then at that fraction of a second you are nowhere, because you have not reached your destination. If someone is lost they can also find the way. It doesn't mean lost forever. If you get lost in New York City, you can find your way again, can't you? So somebody who knows the way can get lost also, and someone who is lost can also find the way. The probability is definitely there. But losing means instead of going to the source, instead of reaching spiritual perfection, you think that maybe material perfection is everything.

For instance, in the past 30 years or so you have had some experiences—not all, but some. Now, maybe you think that the culmination of life is to become a superstar. Now, you buy that, but you don't buy what comes with it. You think that you'll be at peace if you become a superstar, so you strive for that and put all your energy into it. When you achieve your ambition you find that you live in hell. You can't walk down the street because people grab at you. You can't go into a store, and your life becomes hell. So even if a bird is kept in a diamond cage, still it's a cage. The bird is not free. Even, if you become a diamond superstar and have suits like Liberace, still you're in darkness.

Then your soul is lost, because the purpose of life is a spiritual one but you took a detour, you took a different direction. So with that experience, with that knowledge, you'll feel that this was not real, that maybe something else is real, and that experience of 'something else is real' becomes a spiritual evolutionary step. That becomes the launchpad to usher you into spirituality.

When somebody who is very dear to you dies and you go to his funeral, what do you experience there? It depends on your attachment. If your attachment was strong, you will feel that everything is worthless and futile, because you thought that your attachment was real and everlasting. When that broke, you have the feeling that the world is nothing, and that experience pushes you towards spiritual things, towards reality.

That is why when Buddha saw a dead man, it shook him. He thought that if we are all going to die, then what is everlasting? The second thing he saw was a sick man, and that shook him. He wondered how we can escape being sick. Then he saw an old man and thought, 'How can we get away from old age?'

People get educated by certain experiences in life. So many people took LSD, and from that they experienced that the world is unreal. So that became a stepping-stone.

*How can we understand that God is loving us?*

If Mr X. loves me, how will I know? Suppose he comes to my house and says, "You are a nice fellow," and gives me a car, I will think that this is fantastic and that he loves me very much. But there are ways to drive a car. If I drive that car wrongly I can die, and if I use the car carefully then I can be benefitted by the presence of that car.

In the same way, we believe that God loves us because He has given us so many things—life itself, Nature. We see that things were made in such a way that one thing completes another. There is grass, there are trees, earth, and, one thing after another, they make the picture complete and satisfying. To make scenery you have to have trees, grass, mountains; and to make it satisfying

you have to have everything of Nature. So when we see Nature existing and we see that this entire planet has been made for us, then we can accept this as a gift and use this in a proper fashion, just as uranium can be used for therapy, benefitting man, or it can be used for atom bombs. So that is the gift. The use is up to us. We have the choice to use it rightly or wrongly. That choice is ours, and because we have that freedom, we believe that someone who loves us gave us that freedom.

*How can we know what is the proper tension, the proper balance in our lives?*

The more you meditate, the more balance you have in life. A man who doesn't meditate can't understand that, but people who have done meditation understand that the more you meditate the more balance you get. So I think that balance can only come from a spiritual life in which you perform meditation. You have worldly obligations and with those you blend spirituality. After you get the spiritual experience you say, "Okay, I have to work this much for my living, and this much action performed in the world will give me enough food and clothing, enough time to do spiritual practice." I think that it is on the basis of the spiritual experience that you can balance yourself. It naturally happens. When you throw a log in the water it does not swim—it does not have the power to swim. It floats with the water. So in meditation you throw yourself into that stream of life, it picks you up and you can go with that.

*How can we actually see and know God for sure?*

We have to break these three dimensions, because man is a three-dimensional being. If you go past these dimensions, then you can see. That is why the scriptures talk about being above, overcoming the sensory organs, mind and intellect. If you pass beyond them, if you overcome them, then you can see God as God is. Otherwise, you'll be perceiving God either with your intellect or with your mind, and trying to make God something which God is not. That is why the scriptures say that people have

to go beyond mind and intellect; they have transcend all the working organs and sensory organs (*karmindriya* and *gyanindriya*). Cross over them, jump over them, and then experience God as God is. Otherwise, the experience of God will not be pure. It will be diluted.

*How does a person overcome weakness?*

See, any weakness which a person has basically comes from the weakness of his mind. For example, if your stomach is not functioning properly, there'll be diseases in your body. Isn't that correct? In the same way, if your mind is not concentrated, if your mind is not getting spiritual food, then there are weaknesses. So actually, directly and indirectly, when a person meditates, the meditation itself will remove all the weaknesses that he sees through introspection. Through Knowledge one is contented in himself. Through meditation all the desired results are achieved.

For example, I am sitting in a car. Even though my vision, my power to see, is perfectly normal, if there is mud on the glass I cannot see properly. So what I do is get out of the car, clean my windshield, and then I can see properly. Likewise, right before a person who is sitting to meditate, are all his karmas on the windshield. The karmas are simply there, clouding his vision. "Simply by shooting an arrow into the sky I can tie the sky into one bundle, but I cannot control this mind," said Arjuna. His karmas were right there before him. That is why patience is required. When a person was in his mother's womb he waited for nine months.

*But he had no choice!*

So here also there is no choice; there is no choice anywhere Really. From one point of view I simply believe that people have no choice. So, first of all, a person has to clean his windshield before he can see clearly.

*It seems like 'Catch-22': you can't meditate because of karmas yet you can't remove karmas without meditation.*

No, you can definitely meditate even if you have that windshield of karmas, but the point is that your vision will be clouded. The point I'm making about karma is that you can simply see, but because the dirty windshield is there, you are not going to see clearly. You can definitely see something right before you, but it's not going to be clear. I'm not saying that you will remove karmas if you have a clear vision. What I am saying is that you should get out of the car, clean the windshield, and *then* you will have clear vision. That is why I'm talking about patience. For example, because of certain attachments to the world, or due to certain bad karmas, a person is not in a position to completely concentrate his mind. But if he tries again and again —as Krishna tells Arjuna, “..with patience and with the power of perserverance, pursue this path”—he will achieve concentration. If your mind completely flies in the world, try to concentrate it, capture that thing, fix it on the Word of God, and slowly with this practice you will achieve concentration.

For example, a river hits a rock. By simply hitting once or twice the river is not eroding that rock. It is the constant flow of the river that completely changes the shape of the land mass. So maybe your mind doesn't remove the karma, but the constant perserverance of the mind will definitely erode the karmas.

*Can karmas only be erased by meditation?*

Yes, or by suffering it. One example: A person steals something and he is put in jail, and after his sentence he is said to be free. But in jail that man builds up karmas. He meets so many criminals that he becomes a big thief. Even stealing once doesn't make him a real thief, but after leaving jail he becomes a one hundred percent criminal!

If you have perfect concentration, you'll have a perfect experience. If your concentration is lacking, you'll have a different experience. It depends on your efforts. One day your effort is there, and you'll have complete concentration. You put

all your efforts there, the mind is clear and you can concentrate. Effort itself is a karma.

*Is your effort determined by previous karmas?*

By previous karmas and by karmas which are present now. Listening to satsang, coming to satsang, is a karma. Now, if you are encouraged spiritually, if you get satsang, if you get your doubts removed, and you sit in meditation, apply all your energy and your mind becomes concentrated, then you'll have a good experience. But see, meditation should be for the sake of meditation alone. Good experience comes when you don't want anything. When you go above your wants, then you can have a good experience.

*Isn't having a family and living a good life and trying to be a good person what life is all about?*

Having a family, having a social life, having a job, having an education, all that adds up to human life. But what is human life for? Ultimately the answer is that human life is for achieving total satisfaction. Have you ever heard of induction? Induction means, if we have a north pole, then automatically a south pole will be existing; if we have a south pole then automatically we will have a north pole—it's automatic. That's logic. In the same way, we have a coil of wire, and if we pass electricity through that, then it becomes a transformer, it's induced to a higher or a lower potential. In the same way, we are human beings and we have this physical body. At the same time, because we are south poles, we are looking for a north pole automatically. It has to be somewhere. And that north pole becomes the unknown factor, like a mysterious or mystic experience. So being in the physical world we automatically project spirituality and recycle that, just as in a magnet the polarity, the magnetic force, recycles from north pole to south and then back again. So we in our lives want to complete that cycle. That's why people seek harmony between materialism and spirituality. Everybody wants to achieve that. Everybody wants to have mental peace and to be perfect in the

world. You cannot say that man is like a cog in a wheel or that man is like a robot—you cannot say that. A man is something more than that, because man has spirit, man has mind, and that mind wants satisfaction. People get confused by the word ‘meditation’. Many people think that it is imagining something, or concentrating on a physical light like a candle, or maybe having a picture of God before you and just gazing at that; but that’s not meditation. Real meditation is knowing God and concentrating on God.

*Yes, but who is God?*

That’s why the Knowledge is important. That’s what you have to understand. Knowledge means to know. Once we have the experience of God, then that experience *is* Knowledge. Then you definitely know what God is. The scriptures talk about God being Light. They talk about God being the Word. Now, why does the Bible say, “In the beginning was the Word?” Let me explain it to you. The primordial energy was the Word in the beginning. We can only imagine God, Jehovah, to be like a huge superman. And that Word was with Him. But though the Word is also with us, due to ignorance, due to nescience, due to that cloud of ignorance, we do not know that the Word is with us. For example, the sun is shining, then the clouds come and suddenly it turns dark. When dust falls on a mirror, the mirror doesn’t show anything. So that’s the situation. Due to the illusion of *maya*, due to the materialism of the world, we have got dust on our mirror, and it’s not reflecting. The function of a spiritual teacher is like a mirror—he shows who you are, what you are. You have these two wonderful eyes; you can see beautiful things in the world, but can you see your own face? Why not? That’s why we need a mirror. By our brains, by our gray matter, we can know so many things. The problem is, we cannot know ourselves. It doesn’t have that capacity.

*Can you meditate while doing other things?*

You can meditate 24 hours a day. See, you can actually go out and do your shopping and meditate all the time. That's feasible. Have you ever ridden a bicycle? Have you ever taken a second person along with you? Now, you are pedalling, you are talking, you are balancing yourself, you ring the bell and look here and there. So many things are happening at the same time. But where is your mind? It is on the road, your attention is on the road. In the same way, your organs could be doing what they are assigned to do—your eyes could be seeing, your mouth could be speaking, your ears could be hearing, your nose could be smelling—and at the same time, your mind could be in unison with God. Each organ has a different function, and the function of the mind is to meditate. You can think about your girlfriend, your money, or your business, and this thinking causes problems, so the best thing to think about is God, and be in the world, but not of the world. Jesus said, "I and my Father are One", and, "I am in the Father and the Father is in me." The problem is that we all know that God is within us, but we are not in God. Only through meditation do we go in God, merge in God. This is the climax of human life.

*Is Knowledge a religion?*

The spreading of Knowledge is a movement; it's always a movement. The Jews, the Christians, the Hindus, the Buddhists all have organized religions. They believe in the Law; they believe in everything. But Knowledge is a movement because Knowledge can fit into anything. Spiritual evolution can fit into anything. But if that spiritual evolution is dogmatized, if you have to go to a church and do certain rituals and believe certain things, then that spiritual evolution becomes a religion afterwards. Actually, Knowledge itself is not a movement, but the people who have Knowledge participate in a movement. There is no conflict.

*It seems to me that there is so much more going on than only my conscious mind....*

There are four levels. One level is unconsciousness, above that is subconsciousness, above that is consciousness, and on top of everything is supreme consciousness, or God-consciousness. Unconsciousness is dead matter, like a book, a chair or a stone. Subconsciousness is like the radioactive material which has half-life, or like plants. When a creature becomes self-conscious, it supersedes subconsciousness. When consciousness becomes aware of itself, it actually no longer remains as consciousness. It becomes superconsciousness, supreme consciousness.

In the Old Testament, God said, 'I am that I am'—*I am* meaning existence. Doesn't that give you some idea about existence? When I say *I am* it also means *constant*, something that is perpetual. If you say *I am*, in past, present and future, *I am* means that which survives through past, present and future, which is permanent, immortal and everlasting. Now, something perpetual and ever-existing is God only. That is why the Indian scriptures describe God as *Sat-Chit-Anand*. *Sat* means Truth, *chit* means consciousness, and *anand* means bliss. So they say that God is Truth, that God is everlasting, constant, immortal. The energy-mass equation says the same thing—that energy is neither created nor is it destroyed. That's a scientific law; it's called the law of conservation of energy.

*How do we know for sure that we are meditating?*

I'll ask you a question now. Do you need a flashlight to see the sun? Why not? Same thing with meditation, because meditation automatically means Light. It will unfold automatically before you. It is self-illuminating; you don't need a flashlight or a torch to see it.

In the Bible it is written, "God is Light and in Him there is no darkness". Also, Moses experienced the 'burning bush'. Likewise, you will experience that Divine Light right within

yourself. You'll be knowing for yourself; the experience will speak for itself.

Actually, meditation goes on 24 hours a day. Let me explain. I receive a telegram that my father is sick. Now, I love my father very much. When I get the telegram, automatically my mind goes to my father. I keep remembering my father constantly. In the same way, God-consciousness means that you are aware, conscious of God 24 hours a day. It's not limited to sitting in a formal posture.

*How does a person become devoted?*

He becomes more egoless. Devotion is your natural self. When you were a small kid, what were you? Something in the arms of your mother. So devotion is being that. Devotion is actually being an infant. Now people want a shortcut trip. There is no short way to that. The only way to do that is through service, through shedding your pride and accepting that anything that happens in the world is something that is going to make you spiritually strong in the world: When something bad happens, people go to pieces. In one Sanskrit work it is said that if something bad happens, many people will abandon that work. If someone threatens you, you say, "I'm not doing this!" Many people if something bad happens in the middle of the work, they abandon it. But wise people, even if they suffer, they keep on with their devotion. They are called wise. Success and failure, life and death, fame and defamation—these six things are in the hands of God. Nobody can escape these things. You cannot escape success or failure, you cannot escape life and death. Everybody has to go through this. One really has to take this as something which is going to improve the soul.

*Why do I have to listen to satsang before receiving Knowledge?*

When a farmer wants to sow some seeds, before sowing he ploughs the field, clears everything away, and then he sows the seeds. In the same way, your heart has to be ploughed. And once your heart is ploughed, once you become pure, then the seed of

the experience of God can be imparted to you. What is that experience? It is not just believing, it is not just imagining, because we don't sit and imagine things. No, it is not that. It is something beyond imagination.

If I touch a cable and that cable has an insulator of rubber or plastic, because of that rubber I won't feel anything. If I remove the rubber and then touch the wire, I get a shock. We can compare Knowledge to that shock. If you don't have insulation, if you don't have that darkness surrounding you, you have a fantastic experience.

Take an orange, for instance. If you taste the skin, the peel, it is very bitter, but if you take out the bitter part, you taste the sweetness within. It's like throwing away the darkness, removing the insulation and tasting the essence.

It is sacred, it is holy. To open the third eye, we have to have the technique of spiritual insight, and this is where you have to be sincere to receive that. It's just like if I put water in a pot that has many holes it will leak out; it will all flow away. So in the same way, you should not have holes of confusion or doubt. And that's why, in this preparatory period—like the nine months in the mother's womb—what happens is that all these doubts are removed and you become a fine container, so when we pour down Knowledge, nothing leaks out. Once you understand what you are getting, then automatically you receive it. The Master gives and the disciple receives. What you experience is Knowledge.

*Once I get Knowledge that's it, isn't it?*

You plant a seed in the ground, you don't plant a huge tree. That's impossible. Automatically that small seed grows and becomes a plant. Spirituality is not like a trip that you get into for maybe three or four years. Spirituality is a way of life. Once you are initiated into spirituality then actually you have to live that life and evolve spiritually and finally merge into the infinite, because merging in the infinite is salvation. It's like a sugar cube—the cube has length, breadth and height. Now, if you put it into water, what happens? The length dissolves, the breadth dissolves,

the height dissolves. In the same way, these dimensions totally dissolve in infinity.

*When will I experience that?*

The situation is more like the small *me* and the bigger *Me*. Now, the small *me* wants to break out and experience the bigger *Me*. Take the example of a bottle. You have the inner space and then the outer space. Or if you draw a circle, you have the space inside the circle and automatically you have the space outside the circle. So, in the same way, as with everybody, we have the small self and we have the bigger Self. These are known as *atman* and *paramatman*. *Atman* is the individual soul, and *Paramatman* is the Universal Soul. Now you are actually passing the stage where you are starting to break that barrier, that finiteness, and merge into the infinite. This is happening. It isn't over yet—it is taking place. Just like an egg breaks up: that little thing evolves into the bigger one.

When you break a bottle, the space inside the bottle loses its finiteness, it becomes infinite. When the bottle is closed, the space inside is finite, but once the bottle is broken, the space becomes infinite, and that is called liberation. But you have to break the bottle. It is only through meditation that you can do it. It's not a physical process. You don't punch your way out like Muhammed Ali. You have to evolve. Definitely, you have to evolve.

*I can't deny what I see, and my worldly experience....*

The point is, that living in the world you have many different experiences, and when you see happiness and sorrow, then you see that there is no permanence, everything seems to be temporary. Then automatically you will look for something which is permanent. There is only one thing permanent, there is only one thing constant, and that is the speed of light. See, if you can merge in the light, you automatically become constant. Seeing and enjoying this world makes you understand that it is temporary; it's more like a Holiday Inn. You go there, stay

awhile, enjoy and leave. And the cash you are spending are the opportunities you have, all the potential you have, the choices you make.

There is the spiritual life, and there is the material life. Correct? You can only give a fair judgement if you are above the two. So in order to make a fair choice, you have to have Knowledge; you have to be above. If you only have the experience of one type of life—the material, not the spiritual—then how can you know? How can you decide correctly?

*How is it possible a person could be constantly happy in this world?*

That level of constant happiness is called the middle path. You can achieve it. That's feasible. Do you have any doubts about it? It's like the story of Sukdev Muni who came to King Janak and asked to receive the Knowledge. King Janak said, "Okay, wait." He kept him waiting for eleven months. Then he invited him in and put many different kinds of food before him and as he was about to eat, the King hung a naked sword above his head. So Sukdev Muni was eating, but his mind was totally on the sword. He was thinking, 'Oh, maybe it will fall and kill me.' He was ready to move away at any moment. After he had finished the meal, the King asked him, "How was the food?" Sukdev said, "Well, I ate it all, but my mind was on the sword." Then King Janak said, "Live like this in the world. Have God-consciousness, and at the same time enjoy, do everything in the world." That was the message.

Then there was a second test. Janak gave Sukdev a pot full of oil, and said, "Go and see my palace and my queens. But there will be two guards behind you, and if you spill even one drop of this oil, they'll cut off your head." So Sukdev went very carefully right through the palace, and returned to the King, who asked, "Which one did you like?" Sukdev said, "I didn't see anybody; my mind was totally on this bowl." And King Janak said, "Behave like that; be like that." That is why it is said: "Be in the world, but be not of the world".

*If someone achieves God-realization, does that mean he's in bliss all the time and never unhappy?*

We have happiness and sorrow. My understanding is that God-realization is to be above duality of matter. If you use the word 'bliss' to mean the opposite of unhappiness, or something like that, then that bliss is not the stage that I am talking about. Then I have to use a scientific term, which is 'inertness'. Inside a bulb there is inert gas. This gas will not burn the filament; it will not combine with oxygen; it will not burn. Inert means inactive. If you are in the duality of happiness and sorrow, up and down, then you are totally in the world. You can be happy, but then after that you will definitely experience unhappiness. It is just like a wave—you go up, you come down. You have to come down. But when we talk about inertness, we believe that there is no wave, no amplitude, and there is just one line, a straight line. This is the point; this is why we call bliss —*sat-chit-anand*—truth consciousness, and bliss. But if you are going to interpret bliss to be a duality, an opposite of something, then that bliss is not the stage I am talking about.

*But what do you mean by 'mind'? What is your definition of the mind?*

Let me give you an example first. You are seeing me now, right? You can see these people here. If I switch off the light, what happens? Now, we know that darkness is the absence of light, but even the absence of light has existence. If darkness has existence and darkness controls my life, what will happen to me? Mind is not total darkness; darkness is something more than that. The mind is like a car. Imagine going at a speed of a hundred miles an hour at night with no lights on. It's like that. We all want to reach the destination, but we use the mind in the darkness toward the wrong thing. So we need light in order to see our path. That must be there. If we don't have it, then we cannot perceive properly. First we have to have light to understand what the mind is. Darkness can only be understood by experiencing light.

So we can say that not knowing how to move that energy, not knowing how to benefit from that energy, makes us nescient, ignorant. That nescience, that darkness, dominates our life. We are controlled by darkness. So, all the things that we see become negative to us. All the things that we do become negative because they are coming from the darkness. It's like even though you approach the right man and try to shake hands with him, in the dark you may end up putting your hands on his mouth or something like that. In the darkness all kinds of crazy things happen; even though you have the potential to do right, you don't do it right. There is such a big possibility, so many combinations and permutations. It's like betting on the horses with odds of a thousand to one. If you actually take all the combinations, how many bad things can you do? But since there is only one right thing, imagine how many wrong things you can do. And that dominates our life.

Actually, mind cannot be defined as can a worldly object. You cannot say that the mind is like a chair or like a table, because these are physical things. Mind is very subtle matter. It is partly physical and partly paraphysical. That's why the mind has the capacity to go through a wall. It's like a magnet—the magnet has a limit, but the force of the magnet is unlimited. The magnet is a piece of metal, but you can move a pin with it, can't you? That means that it has a dimension, but its force extends beyond that dimension. The mind is more like the *force* of matter. Mind is like a negative magnetism. The mind is like the magnetic power of the body—the body is like the magnet and the power of the body is the mind. The magnet is solid but the magnetism is not solid; it can go through things. I could be sitting in a closed room, and nobody can go in or out, but the mind will go out. Definitely you have to control the mind, because it can go and roam about, but it can be used if you control it.

*You said that the mind can be the cause of bondage or liberation. So controlling the mind leads to the experience of God?*

Let me explain even further about the mind. When we say that God is truth, consciousness and bliss, we are saying that the power that makes everything in the universe move is God, meaning that Energy that flows and controls us and makes us move is truth, consciousness and bliss. Now, that bliss is coming down and the mind gets the pure thing but dilutes it. It is like the middleman. Take the example of drug dealing. The first person gets the pure drug, and the middleman mixes in other things and dilutes it. In the same way, that bliss is flowing, but the mind gets in the way. It says, "Oh, maybe food," and the person will get temporary pleasure and contentment from that food. Or the person will go to wealth, and he'll get temporary satisfaction from it. Don't people feel satisfaction? We seek the temporary experiences of satisfaction, but we all demand that totality, the experience of totality, of total satisfaction, or completion. By eating a little of something, you acquire a taste for it. You like it, and then you eat the whole thing and want more. So, it is because we experience peace, bliss or happiness bit by bit, that we want to get the entire thing.

The mind is like a gate that stops everything, like a dam has gates. When you open the gates, the water flows, and if the gate is closed, the water doesn't flow. Water is the energy, but that energy is still being controlled by the gate which is the mind. So without the mind, the energy simply flows and completely engulfs your life. But if the mind is there, the energy will be checked. So if you actually want to have more experience, you won't get more; you'll get less because of the mind.

Now is it clear that the mind is the problem?

*Do we develop ego because we are born?*

After being born, you start to associate yourself with worldly things rather than spiritual things. You get involved with the maya, and then you develop ego. You say, "I am the body, I am this, I am that, I am physical." And that's ego.

*Can there be people serving the world desirelessly?*

You may say that they never want any reward. Definitely many people are doing actions who don't seek rewards, but they definitely want their work to be successful. So for success they have a desire.

*But they want success not for themselves, but to help other people...*

But they still want to feel capable of helping other people. In that way they have a desire, but concerning rewards, they never want that. In that way they are doing desireless action.

Actually, the only desireless action is when you meditate. Then you subdue anything which is physical. Then any action in which we are meditating also becomes desireless, because meditation is desireless. The meditation which you have been revealed makes you live in the world perfectly, and at the same time it launches you from this world and takes you to another world. If there is heaven here, if life becomes complete here, the.. definitely it will be complete there also. Actually, you are dying constantly. The time that is passing is taking you to death. Every second that passes is decreasing your lifespan. When you meditate you'll live.

*What is the significance of the breath in relation to meditation?*

People simply think that breathing is a physical thing. They say that when you breathe in you take in oxygen which is absorbed by your lungs, and what comes out is carbon dioxide, and that's it. But there's something more to it than that. Breathing is actually vital energy. Hospitals have respiratory machines, and if you are hooked up to one, you breathe artificially. But if something leaves your body, the doctor will say, "I'm sorry," and put a white sheet over you. So breath is not just breathing in and out, it's not just a physical phenomenon. There is a source of activity, a source of power behind it. That power is hidden and if you understand that power, then that power will make you conscious of certain things. That is consciousness. So through meditation on the breath, one begins to be conscious of

his own consciousness. He begins to be aware of his own awareness. He begins to enjoy his own soul, with the soul.

*I don't have Knowledge, but I think I've seen light inside and I feel that I know God in my heart. How do I know if it's the same light that you've seen, as you describe it?*

You have to see whether it is just faith or whether there is something more to be obtained. If you haven't seen what the saints have glorified throughout every land in every age, then there might be something more to know, something to know which is even mightier. That's possible.

There was a man called Dattatreya who had twenty-four gurus. He got inspiration, he always got something from each one of them. But when he met the twenty-fourth guru, and when his own heart was totally filled with the Light of God, then he was not curious for anything else. When he saw within himself the great Light of God, then he went no further to anything else—that was the last stop for him.

So, when you experience that which was understood and glorified by all the saints, that greatest of all things, then you can say, "I know that. When you understand that which has always been glorified, then you can understand whether or not what you know is the knowledge of the highest thing, the knowledge of truth.

*Could you explain the verse in the Gita that says it is better to do one's own duty imperfectly than another person's duty perfectly?*

If you see your neighbour's fields which are totally green and have a good harvest, and then look at your own field which has nothing, simply looking at his fields will not make your field green. You have to work for your own field and grow your own crop. It means that if you yourself have not developed, then what is the use of doing certain things which others are doing? This also means that some people preach perfectly, but they do not practise. The idea is that one should practise what one preaches.

*You said to know that there is a doer. So who is this other person that I am?*

There's a confusion here. When you do something bad you say, "I didn't do that! There's another person in me, God is doing that." The point is, if you believe in the doer and that you are merely an instrument of the doer, simply saying it is not sufficient. In the physical world we can get away by saying things, but in the spiritual world everything is to be lived; it is not to be spoken. You are trying to describe a situation, a spiritual stage which can only be lived. If you say, "I am not the doer, there is something spiritual in me which is doing everything," then that has to be lived. That means, through the Knowledge that you have, through the experience that you have, every moment you should experience that you are an instrument and dissolve yourself there.

*While you are here, I want to ask you about devotion....*

Devotion is not something to ask about; devotion is something to do. You cannot just hear satsang on devotion; you cannot get devotion by reading about Kevat or Bhilni or Mary Magdalene. You can only get devotion by doing it. Yes!

There is the story of the girl who had a cookery book with instructions that said to cut this much, do this, do that, use this pot, and she was doing all this, and yet the food wasn't cooked for the simple reason that there was no fire. So you can read everything to try to get devotion, but the real thing is to do it. That is the fire—to do it, to want to do it. Without wanting to be a devotee, you cannot have devotion. Even wanting is not trying, because in wanting you do it, you *be* a devotee.

Wanting devotion is the first step to becoming a devotee. Anybody who wants to be a devotee must seek service. Service is important for a devotee because devotion must have a cause, and that cause is service. Service must have a cause, and that is sacrifice.

Service must depend on something; sacrifice is there because you are doing something for a cause. In the world, don't you sacrifice your life-breath for something physical? So instead of doing that, do it for spirituality, even sacrificing your life. Sacrifice means that you become selfless, desireless. If a person wants to be a devotee, then he should be devoted to *seva*—service. This is very important.

See, a person may say, "I am a devotee," but simply saying that doesn't make him a devotee. When a person is a devotee, the devotion will manifest in certain things, with certain qualities, and they will be service and sacrifice. If there is a guava, its smell will be there. There is a perfume wherever there is a sandalwood tree. In the same way, if there is devotion, the fragrance of devotion will be service and sacrifice. Let me give you a small example because devotion is something more than that. A mother has love for her child. Now, that is not devotion because devotion is something more than love. She wakes up in the night to take care of the child. The child is not paying her. To get your car cleaned you have to pay, but she cleaned you and you didn't have to pay. So there is sacrifice entailed and there is service entailed. That is only a physical thing, but I am talking about devotion which is much more than that responsibility. When Christ told Peter, "Follow me and I will make you a fisher of men," Peter left his net and followed Christ. Wasn't that sacrifice and service?

*Where does the 'want' come from?*

It should come from inside. For example, people say, "I want Knowledge, I want to be spiritual." Simply wanting to be spiritual is the first step they have taken towards spirituality. Krishna said that there are four types of devotees: One is a seeker, one simply remembers God in time of danger, one is a person who bargains with God, and one is the person who has Knowledge.

One is a seeker, who is searching. One is a person who, for example, has an accident or is in trouble and says, "O God!"

Then he remembers God. Another person says, "I want to pass the exam" or, "I want to win the lottery", or for some particular worldly reason thinks about God. Then there is the *gyani*, who has Knowledge; he is a person who takes God's Name spiritually, not for physical reasons.

For example, a woman is going to have a baby, and she is in a lot of pain, and her husband prays, "Oh God, please let her have the baby safely!" He's remembering God just for a physical reason. Before that, he may never have thought about God, but because of some trouble, he bargains, saying, "I'll remember You." He's trying to pray and meditate just for a physical thing, not for his soul. That is a spiritual thing. Krishna said, "People who have Knowledge are actually Me; they belong to Me."

Knowledge is a process which is only completed when the object of Knowledge and the knower become united. Knowledge means to know, and to know means to live. So if you are not living it, you are not making it come true. The only way you can make it come true is to live it.

*Does everything actually happen for the best?*

Yes. The only thing is that you have to see, you have to go into the subtleties of that action, and you'll observe that everything that has happened, happened for the best. But at that point you have to completely surrender yourself to the force of God. See, here's a window. You look out and you see the sun, and you know that it is going to be very pleasant. So your window is your meditation, your communication channel. The only communication channel that you have between you and your Self, yourself and God, is Knowledge. It is through Knowledge that you completely surrender yourself to the will of God.

For example, if you want to swim against the current of the river, what will happen to you? You will get very tired. If your boat is in trouble, and you are right in the middle of the ocean, and you try to swim, you will feel tired and you will be gone. But if you completely let go, then the salt water pushes you up. If you

swim along with the current of the river, you will go very far. In the same way, the current of the river is the life-breath which is flowing through you. So through meditation you swim along with it. Don't cause any friction. See, when you meditate, everything will change. Your personality will change, your hate, your anger, everything will change. The whole thing will become transformed. But if there is no meditation, there is no chance. Meditation is the key, and once you have the key the whole book belongs to you.

*Could you tell us a story about a devotee?*

Once a devotee prayed to God, "God, I know that you can move mountains, but I don't want that. I want you to give me courage so that I can move them myself." So the idea of meditation is to become strong enough so that you can cross hurdles. See, suffering comes in everybody's life. Jesus Christ suffered, Rama suffered, Buddha suffered, everybody suffered. That is why Buddha said that the three realities of life are that a person gets sick, old and dies. No one can escape that. Everyone has to go through that at some time.

Once Lord Krishna was very pleased with the service done by Kunti, the mother of Arjuna and his brothers. He told her, "I want you to ask for a boon. What do you want?" Kunti said, "I don't want anything. I have you, I have your meditation and meditation gives me everything and answers all my questions. And if I ask for anything worldly, then it belittles you and the meditation."

But Krishna insisted, so she finally said, "Very well. I want suffering." Krishna was very surprised. He said, "People want happiness, they want money, but you want suffering." So Kunti said, "I want suffering because when a person suffers he cries to God. When I suffer I'll think of you."

The same thing has been said by Kabir also: "I will abandon happiness, because it makes a man forget God, but I will embrace suffering, because it always makes a man remember God."

*I find that one of the hardest things in the western culture is that we don't have a background of scriptures. Even though the books are there, still we don't understand them.*

Scriptures are not required. Actually a spiritual life is a way of living. In India it's true that it's different because the scriptures are there; in satsang we narrate examples. We talk about the saints because they've expressed Knowledge in words. The idea is to explain the importance of devotion in people's lives, how to live life, the devotion that the saints had, and the result of that devotion and what made them so great.

See, people talk about love, and if you go into the depths of it, 'love' is a virtue expressed by the soul. The church makes a saint, canonizes a saint—they need evidence of three miracles—but people neglect the saint's teachings, people ignore his way of life. They become systematized. What was the life of St. Francis of Assisi? How did he achieve that? Because he went completely opposite to the way of the church. His life was completely the other way around.

Recently, they found the Dead Sea Scrolls, which completely change the meaning of the scriptures, the Bible. They talk about Knowledge—they talk about the Name of God, they talk about the 'drinkable' knowledge of God, which is nectar, they talk about the Light of God and the Knowledge that you can hear.

*How can you make a clear discrimination between something either bringing you down or elevating you, in your actions?*

One way is that you see it, you experience it, you feel it, you know it by your consciousness. The second way is that you don't experience it directly, but indirectly you have a feeling, indirectly you come to know that "This is going to be wrong." And the third way is by reading the scriptures, by reading the teachings of the people who have already had the experience, you know what is right and wrong. For example, you are doing something that causes anger in you, so indirectly you know that you are actually

descending, you are not evolving. You are not giving out love, instead you are giving out hate; so you feel hollow inside, empty. Because if you have love, you cannot feel hollow. Only hate, jealousy, these things make you feel hollow.

*What do you think about all the recent interest in the Shroud of Turin?*

Some Christians will say that the Shroud of Turin is a very auspicious thing, that it's very holy to go there and to touch that shroud, but nobody is talking about Jesus' teachings, nobody is implementing those. They are only talking about the shroud, so that thing is no good at all. Why did Jesus come? To sign the shroud? The church talks about the shroud because they need some proof that Jesus existed. That is the point. At one time they found some skeletons and there was a big skeleton that had holes. The bone was pierced, so the rumour started that this is the skeleton of Jesus Christ. Some people questioned this, saying that many people were crucified at that time. So the church wants to prove that He existed. But a man can be known only by his teachings, not by a skeleton or a shroud.

Today we know about Socrates through his teachings because he had Knowledge. Once, when he entered his house, his wife, who was very bad-tempered, threw a pot at him. Socrates just kept quiet. His disciples said, "If you like we will take care of her!" He said, "No. I am a great man because I have been made great by her. My patience is tested by her."

Socrates was a great man. Plato was a great man. Aristotle was a great man. I think they are remembered for their works, not by their skeletons, because this body is dust, and dust will go back to dust. So the important thing is to understand the teachings, and to implement those teachings, to bring them into your life. That is more important than other things.

*How can we hope to achieve the kind of devotion we read about in the scriptures?*

You don't hope, you just do it. In doing there is hope; in hoping there is not action. Right?

See, God is not a thought. You can't create God by thinking, because God is infinite, and the more you think, the more you make it finite. Whatever you think becomes finite, and whatever is finite is not God. The meaning of God is total contentment. The meaning of God is completion, perfection. The meaning of God is energy. So God is to be experienced only.

*How can you combine a worldly life with a spiritual life?*

In your body everything is there, the total combination. You have the body, you have the spirit. So, the combination starts from there. You can only write if you have the pen, the pad and the ink. No writing can come on the paper without ink. And even if you have ink, you cannot write without the pen. The combination of the ink and the pen must be there. So our life that we have, the body is like the ink; and the writer is your soul. The combination starts from there, the union starts from there.

*Can everyone in this world experience God?*

Ask the question for yourself; forget about the 'everyone'. Do you earn money for everyone, or for yourself? Do you eat for everyone or for yourself?

*For myself.*

Then? If you want, you can receive Knowledge and experience God. If everyone in the world receives Knowledge, then what will happen to hell? You see, that stage cannot come because this whole universe is going through a process, an evolution. Eventually, everybody will reach infinity. That is a process that everybody has to go through.

*How can one be selfless?*

If you're selfish for God, if God becomes the prime target in your life, then you have no selfishness for the world or worldly things. How does one do that? All through meditation;

meditation is the key. If you turn the key and open the lock, you have access to everything.

*But how does one cultivate determination?*

Determination is very important. Cultivating that is like this: For example, somebody is not well—he drinks. He completely forgets about his home and his family, and he simply drinks. He will forget about his health as well. His will is there, but his will is functioning in the wrong direction. So he is going to perform many experiments of that type, and through all this he will come to the realization: ‘All my experiments have failed; all the connections and relationships of this world are temporary and have strings attached to them. What I must find is something more permanent, something which is completely eternal.’

When Americans go to India they don't have their spring water there. The comforts of the West are not everywhere. India doesn't have all these comforts. But God is everywhere. And all you have to understand, the essence of the scriptures, lies in the understanding of these three words—omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. If you can understand these three words, you have understood the entire Britannica of the scriptures. If God is omniscient, then He is going to take care of you. If He is omnipotent, He is going to look after you, right? And if He is omnipresent then He cannot neglect you. It cannot happen that God will lock Himself up in a room and say, “Forget about this man.” No. The point is, we have closed our eyes. He is everywhere, but we have closed our eyes.

There is light everywhere in this room, but we have closed our eyes, we have locked ourselves up. So when we open ourselves and open our understanding, then we understand that God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. Then we surrender ourselves to the will of God and flow according to His will. So do not be blind. Open your eyes. Open your eyes to the energy, to the presence of God manifesting His omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence.

*How can we believe that God is real?*

Many people think "Everyone tells us to believe in God. How can we believe? There is no proof." Do you have a father? How do you believe that he is your father? Do you have any proof? On what grounds do you trust? You simply say, "My mother told me." In the same way, spiritual teachers are like your mother. They tell you about your Father, about God. But they just don't tell you to believe; they also make you experience. That's why Jesus said, "I and my Father are One," because there is a process, there is a way by which he and his Father became one. If you know that process, then you and your Father can also become one.

You may believe there are a lot of minerals and iron under the ground, but belief won't do anything. You have to dig at that place and get it. Belief is good but it is a secondary thing. Belief must grow into practical realization. You feel hunger, but hunger is not satisfaction. It is longing for food. Simply being hungry is not the aim. The aim is to be hungry for food and then to have food and eat it.

Imagine the primitive people: they saw that the wind was shaking the trees, that a force was causing a volcanic eruption, that something was moving and shaking the earth. They said that a Spirit is behind all this, so they worshipped It. When we study science, we learn about Newton's Law, that any object will either remain stationary or move with a constant motion unless acted upon by a force; because if something is moving and there is no resistance, then that object will continue to move—nothing will stop it. Or if that object is stationary, it will not move unless there is a force to push it.

So, if we are moving there must be a force functioning within us that is making us move, which is making us stationary, which is making us talk and do everything. So even through scientific knowledge we come to understand that there is a force behind everything.

The analytical knowledge of the primitive, of the religious and of the scientific is the same—that there is a force behind everything that is happening in the world. Now, the spiritual people went further and talked about realizing that Spirit, while the religious people were simply worshipping it. The primitive people were worshipping it, so if you are just worshipping then you are no better than a primitive person. When you know it you merge with it, and then you understand what it is.

*When a person honestly can't take himself out of his own predicament, what enables him to be in the company of a saint?*

St. Kabir said, "When a person puts his head down and the head is sacrificed, it's just like when you cut the top off a candle—only then there is light." When you trim the wick of a candle, then you can have light. What he means is that when a person sacrifices himself totally, only then is there light, only then there is life. As you know, when the wick of a candle gets black, you have to cut off the black part to get it to burn, then you burn the white part. The head comes and the head goes; the head is cut and there is another head. The new head comes up only when the other one is gone.

*Does a person make that choice after he meets a saint, or can he meet a saint by taking that choice himself?*

If your mind says, "I'll visit a saint" and you don't go, then? You just go. Just wishing at one point doesn't mean that you do it. Your mind sometimes wants to be a king. Sometimes it wants to go around the world, sometimes it wants to be rich. But can it be done like that?

A person is inspired to become like the company he keeps. If he keeps the company of a wicked man, he also becomes wicked. If he keeps the company of saints, then they will make him great. St. Tulsidas said that this is not just something to hear about—it is something that you can see.

The whole world is said to like a marriage procession. The procession itself doesn't get married; people go there as witnesses,

to give their presents and to enjoy. In the same way, maya is the procession. What is maya? It is the servant of God, and as well as that that it is also the servant of the devotees of God. This maya helps us in our devotion.

The wedding procession comes, and when we meet our Lord, our love is for Him, the One who is the Father of all. Then the world becomes tasteless and insignificant; it loses its importance. In the whole world there is no happiness. All the happiness and joy is in devotion to God.

It is said that only by a great deal of good deeds does a person meet a saint. It is also said that only by doing many good things does this human life even come about. Any other species—a dog or a cat, for example—has no choice, no opportunity to do anything. If its master feeds it, it eats. If the master lets it go, then it has to go. But we have a human body, and only by accumulating many good deeds does a person meet a saint. And if you are extremely fortunate, the saint will give you the Knowledge which frees you from the whole world.

Man is not doing what he came into this world to do. The love for the world only binds us, traps us. It doesn't lead us anywhere. Isn't that true? Just as a spider spins a web from out of its own body, in the same way a man spreads his own web which traps him. He traps himself. He never knows that he is spinning his own web to trap himself, but spreads it everywhere not knowing that he's getting stuck in it. There are so many who get trapped. So many millions and billions have been trapped and so many are now trapped in their own webs.

The saints never say that you leave your parents or leave everybody. They do say to be not so attached that it comes in the way of God. Work for them, earn money and serve them, but keep your love for God, and meditate on God. The saints always say that you can meditate on God right within your own heart. The only way that the doors of the heart are opened is when there is a great deal of love for God. The words of the saints are very strange and very mysterious, but if someone does what they say,

then at once he sees God. It's very difficult to understand the words of the saints, but if a man understands them, at once within his heart he sees God.

*But how can a regular man know that?*

The saints are just like a cloud which takes water from the ocean, which is salt water, and then pours out sweet water over the land. Even though they look like ordinary human beings, because of the Knowledge, because of their upliftment of others, because of their great deeds, because of their merit, they are addressed as saints. It is said that only after a great deal of the company of saints, only then are all doubts in a man removed. When you think back to what you were and what you are now, what you've learned and understood from being in holy company for only a short time, you'll see how much you've learned. Guru Nanak said, "Throughout his life a man should remember the Name of God." The scriptures of all times and all saints have one belief, the same belief, that without the Name of God you can't be free.

*Does the soul have personal attributes?*

The soul or atman is attributeless. Its only attribute is that it has no attributes. Its only quality is that it is qualityless, formless (*nirakara* and *nirguna*), and virtueless. Atman is impersonal. Therefore, the question of its personal attributes does not arise. But it doesn't mean that there is no such entity. The yogis and prophets, the spiritual masters, realized that atman which exists, yet cannot be described. They explain their experiences of the absolute reality through similes and parables so that it may come within the intellectual grasp of human beings. Yet the understanding of the reality through the intellect is incomplete, indirect, limited and secondhand, as the infinite, formless and virtueless atman is beyond the grasp of bodily senses and organs. It cannot be realized through reading books or by scholasticism. It can be known by the self, through the self, with the grace of a

realized soul. He, the Satguru, is the compassionate giver of the Knowledge of that spiritual entity.

*What causes the separation of the soul from God?*

Illusion, maya, is the cause for the separation of the soul from the original One Supreme. The cause of darkness is the absence of light. Similarly, not having the knowledge of soul is the cause of individuation.

*What is the atman's true nature, and what is its present condition while dwelling in the body?*

The nature of the atman in the abstract form is that it exists and is all-permeating. When the abstract 'negative' atman expands, it gives birth to 'positive' manifested atman which dwells in the body. There are two types of bodies having their inherent potencies lent from the atman: one, the gross body, the outer form, and the other, the subtle body, called *suksham sharira*. The biological compulsions of the gross body, because of inherent tendencies, drag man to the attainment of material objects, and create unquenchable thirst for worldly achievements, running from one object to another and ending in death. But the atman, working through the subtle body born out of its inherent tendencies, has a natural desire to rise to the higher level of life, both moral and spiritual. This explains the split within a man and the dualistic tendencies working in opposite directions. The animal nature, born out of the gross body, drags him downwards, while the higher nature, born out of the *suksham* body, pulls him upwards. This conflict can only be settled and rooted out by the union of the atman dwelling in the body with the cosmic Atman. That is, the merging of the individual self with the cosmic Self which is free from all inborn tendencies of the mind and body.

*What is it that reincarnates?*

The dictionary meaning of reincarnation is 'to embody again'. The process by which the individual soul takes a body and casts it off is called reincarnation. It is only a liberated soul that

can escape the cycle of births and deaths, but the soul tied to worldly attachments through mind and body has to take births again and again. It is only to get rid of the pangs of birth and death that an atman has the natural desire for redemption, to find a heavenly abode not affected by fluctuations of life and death and the miseries and sorrows thereof. According to the Gita, by reaching the abode of the Lord, where there is neither sunlight, nor moonlight nor firelight the soul finds eternal rest.

*What is reincarnation?*

The individual soul has to take birth after birth to achieve oneness with God, which it is destined to do, and to achieve the highest goal of self-realization. If the negative and positive aspects of atman remain and dualism persists, then illusion is natural and inevitable, and the soul has to pass through countless lives. Just as the blind suffer blindness, and the diseased suffer disease, similarly, an individual soul devoid of spiritual Knowledge suffers incarnations in search of it. Only a good doctor can cure disease and free a man from the misery of blindness, and only a spiritual master can free the individual soul from the cycles of births and deaths by the Knowledge of Holy Name and Divine Light.

*What is the Word, and where did it come from?*

Saint John says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God." The Word in its primordial stage existed as the soul of life of God. The Word is uncaused yet is the cause of creation. There was only the Word in the beginning in its latent form. When it manifests in human bodies, it dwells among us in potent form. The 'Word was with God', means that the Word is the soul of God, the body of God being the creation. God was conscious of the Knowledge of the Word, and the Word itself was inseparable from God, so 'the Word was God'. God is immortal, so the Word which dwells in us is immortal. In its potent form in the human body it energizes the body and gives life to the mind and organs. After death it is in

latent form, having no body or object to provide life to. The latent form is the primordial form. We are not conscious of the latent form because it is not potent. If a man realizes the potent form, by practice he can realize the latent form, too.

*How did the Word create the universe?*

The Word plays its part in the creation by descending and ascending from latent to potent and from potent to latent form, whereby the action and the reaction neutralize and exist as essence like the 'plus one' and the 'minus one'. That is, negative and positive electron collide to annihilate matter.

*How are the Word and the spiritual master related? Are all masters the disciples of other masters?*

The Word is associated with *Shiva* and *Shakti*. According to Indian philosophy and religion, it is believed that Shiva and Shakti have manifestations and are present in every age. The Word incarnates as the spiritual master at the prayers and intense love of devotees. Lord Krishna declares in the Bhagavad Gita that when any devotee offers anything with intense love, then He, the Lord, the Word, embodies Himself using *prakriti* as the means. So the manifestation of the spiritual master is not temporal but divine. The perfect master manifests himself again and again to destroy evil and to enlighten people on the path of righteousness. The perfect master's manifestations are the same as the countless images of a man standing between two parallel mirrors. So, to take the *jivas*, the embodied souls, out of the clutches of *maya*, the master can manifest himself as many times and in as many forms as he likes. Only he knows what he is.

*What happens to someone when he receives Knowledge?*

When the devotee is initiated into Knowledge he knows the means to be one with the Lord. With practice of the Holy Name and an indifferent attitude towards the world, developed by non-attachment, the *jivatma* merges in the Word. Tulsidas, the mystic poet and saint, says that it is only by meditation on the Word that

the form of God, that is, Light, is seen and the Cosmic form of God realized. Only a devotee knows the wonder of it. When the self sees the Divine Light, it is overwhelmed with joy and finds its true form. The seer and the seen become one and the same. The jivatma gets liberated and attains perfection.

*How can we know who is a true spiritual master?*

In fact, a true spiritual master needs no test, just as the sun needs no other object to illumine it. The true spiritual master is known by the knowledge he imparts. Mere outward show does not make a real teacher. His crystal-clear path shows his absolute truth which cannot be limited by time and space. It is a law of nature that a true disciple will always find the true master. Love him and he will bless you and manifest himself to you. Man's intelligence fails to understand the greatness of such a guru. It is only his grace which can unfold himself to us.

*In Christianity they say to bring Christ into your heart, to bring God into your life. How do you do that?*

The point is, bringing Jesus or Krishna or that Reality into our hearts actually means to know the Knowledge and to live it. You don't bring God into you; God is already there, that Reality is already there. "God is Light and in Him there is no darkness." God is omnipresent, God is always there. God is within you. You have to unravel yourself. And you can only do that when your eye is single. "When your eye is single, your whole body will be full of light." The singling of the eye means concentration. For example, if you concentrate sunrays on a piece of paper, what happens? The paper burns. Though the sun is millions of miles away, its power and heat manifest. In the same way, when you concentrate, that omnipresent God manifests right before you.

*If all religions believe in one God, don't they all lead to God?*

Some paths are of the mind, and something fabricated by the mind cannot take you to God.

We definitely know that force applied in a particular direction will push an object a certain distance. You cannot push an object from any angle and have it go to the north or to the south. If you are pushing it to the south, it will go to the south and not to the north. If you are pushing it towards the north, it will not go to the south. It is not correct to say that if you simply push an object in any direction to anywhere it will reach its destination; the object must be pushed in a particular direction with a particular amount of force to take it right to the point. The idea that all paths lead you to God is in itself a universal idea, but all the paths must have a proper direction. If they don't have the same direction, it can become very confusing. If you study Judaism, or Christianity, or Buddhism, you can see that in essence they are talking about the same initiation. But if the directions are different, if the philosophies are different, then they can create a doubt in a person's mind rather than resolving it.

Before making a general statement that all paths lead to God, we should ask ourselves this question: "Do we believe in evolution or don't we?" If you do, if you believe in numbers evolving, (as you have 1, then  $1 + 1 = 2$ ,  $2 + 1 = 3$ , etc.) then you have to evolve from one path to another one. The first one takes you to the second one, the second one takes you to the third, and you keep on going until you reach infinity.

Only one number has the power to make other numbers infinite, and that is infinity itself. No other number, no matter how large it is, has the power to make another number infinite. Take any number—let it be  $x$ —and add that number to 100,000. The result will be  $100,000 + x$ ; it won't be infinite. But if you add infinity  $\times x$ , or any number, then it becomes infinite. Also, infinity times anything is infinite, correct?

So other paths can definitely help us reach the final stage. There was an Indian saint and someone asked him, "How should one attain God? What is the path?" At that time, the saint was planting onions. When you plant onions you first plant them in a

nursery plot and then transplant them. So the saint was doing that. He said, "The path to God is very easy. You just have to take the mind from here and put it there, just as I am taking this onion plant from this place to that place." If you fix your mind on God, you attain God. You take your mind from here and plant it there. Nothing else.

So, if you believe in evolution, then all paths definitely lead us to the final path. Vivekananda was educated at a Christian school; he went to so many places, to so many religions yet he wasn't satisfied. Buddha was born into Hinduism, still was not satisfied. Jesus Christ himself was a Jew, yet he was not satisfied.

The spiritual language is one and the spiritual path is one. There is no duality there. You cannot have many paths. That is why one saint said, "When 'I' was interesting to me, there was no God; and when God was interesting to me, there was no 'I'." *What does it mean when it says that it doesn't matter what caste or color a person is, if he meditates on God then he becomes one with God?*

If a man is very sick and goes to a doctor, the doctor doesn't ask him what caste he is. That question never arises. He just gives the man the fastest cure he can give him. And the scriptures from time eternal say the same thing. Even if the greatest of sinners comes to the court of God, he's engaged not by his body but by the soul. At the time he surrenders himself to the great souls, he is freed from all the things which he has done wrong. Not if he just comes; it's only when he surrenders his life at the feet of the great souls. Whenever someone dies, the only thing that's looked at is what action he's done not what degree he has or how much wealth he's accumulated or any of these things. The only thing that counts at that time is what he has done. Did he meditate on God?

It says in the Ramayana that only by a great deal of the company of saints are all the bad ideas and difficulties in the mind removed. Only then can a man become free. People think that by receiving the Knowledge of God they will automatically awaken. But you'll see by their lives that they obviously don't. The

question comes of pleasing the spirit of the great souls, and then the freedom is bestowed.

*It bothers me very much to see spirituality regressing to the point where we're just pushing away the world as if it's not important. We have to live here.*

Saint Tulsidas says that there are two ways of looking at the world. One is the escapist way, which says that you run away from the world, and the other theory advises being in the world, to live in the world. The prayer of Rabindranath Tagore was, "God, I know that You can move mountains and I also know that You can actually eliminate all my difficulties. But I don't want that. I simply want You to give me courage to climb those mountains. Give me courage so that I can remove my own obstacles." Arjuna was actually running away. He became despondent. And what Lord Krishna actually gave him was the obligation to fight, to do his duty. To perform karmas. So the idea is not to run away.

*You have said that we must have firm faith, and belief also. What do you mean by 'belief'?*

By belief I mean that even if you have turmoil in your life, the ups and downs of life, you should remain constant in God; your devotion must remain constant. That constancy is belief. In the West, I think the religious service rendered by the Church has become very sophisticated, it has become very technical, and very mind-like. Then there was the drug explosion. People were taking different drugs, and through these their entire perception changed. They were walking on the same streets, they went into the same stores, they had the same fathers and mothers, but their whole perception changed and they started searching. The idea and inspiration of 'search' or 'quest' is right within our primordial nature. Whether we are manifesting that idea of searching through physics, through chemistry, through drugs, or through anything, the idea of searching is there.

*Yes, but many people begin to search for God but later on get caught up in materialism...*

People all want to acquire. The whole idea of acquiring things is again primordial nature. Man wants to become infinite. People in this world, what do they want? Nobody wants limited love; everybody wants infinite love. People don't want 2,000 dollars; they want unlimited money. There's no end to it. The more money you have, the more you want. It's an infinite lust. There's no end to it. Actually, man's primordial nature is to search for the infinite. The whole idea is that we want to become infinite. But to do that, you have to go back to the Source. With the Source you can be infinite. See, the end of the river which merges in the ocean is infinite, not the other end. The other end is always finite, isn't it? But the whole idea is to understand our primordial nature, to understand what we were before we came here and what we will be after we go. "From dust we came..." What exactly were you before the dust? And what will you be after the dust? That is spiritual insight. Spiritual vision begins when material vision stops. Where the the United States ends, Canada begins. So wherever you have the end of materialism, there spirituality begins.

*Is that achieved through meditation or after we've left the body?*

No, through meditation. You can actually experience that. When you merge with the Word, that experience is so intense that it is nothing of this world. Any deep experience makes you forget this world. Try it—any deep experience, maybe the experience of a book, maybe the experience of a friend—any deep experience makes you forget other things.

*So is it varying degrees of the experience?*

Yes. You see, the mind is like a rocket. It's leaving, it's going towards the moon, and the moon is its target. Now, when the rocket leaves the earth, what happens? The gravity of the earth

pulls it. But once the rocket breaks through the barrier of the gravity, then the gravity of the moon will automatically pull it.

When we meditate, the gravity of the maya pulls the mind. Whenever people sit in meditation and start experiencing the Word, they experience other things also; mundane things come to mind. For example, you are sitting here listening to satsang. Many things are not coming to your minds, but when you close your eyes, all the thoughts of the world will come. They're pulling you. When Christ was fasting for forty days, Satan came to him. When Christ was walking, when he was travelling, nothing happened to him; Satan didn't come. This is the same idea that when a person meditates, the demons, the devils, the gods and goddesses come and spoil his meditation. Why? Because the gravity of the earth pulls your mind. But with your determined efforts, your concentrated efforts, the rocket will simply break through the barrier of gravity and once that's broken then God will automatically pull you. That is why saints and masters have said to constantly meditate.

Meditation is food for the spirit. We eat bananas and sandwiches and different things, and they give us nourishment and new cells are formed. In the same way, constantly meditating, or at least, meditating every day, makes you grow in spirit. It burns up all your maya, all your illusion, and it gives you a new form, a spiritual form. This is the real baptism, because baptism is not of the flesh, the real baptism is the birth in spirit, and then a person is born. And it takes time. Every birth takes time, doesn't it?

*Is the Knowledge some kind of evolved mental process?*

It's not a mental process; it is the process of concentration. Also, evolution means to be reborn, to come out. See, we are already spiritual, the spiritual entity is already inside us. We have to evolve in order to really taste it. It's like having food ready, but you have to go into the dining room in order to taste it. Then your understanding will be a balanced understanding. It is called the middle path. The will then has a spiritual inclination. Or you can

call it a baptism, a spiritual baptism. These are all different words, but they mean the same thing.

*I don't have Knowledge yet, but I meditate on what I imagine God to be...*

You have to have the correct object of meditation. What you are doing is not really meditation. What you are doing is like going into a dark room and imagining that there is a ghost standing there. I think that when you receive Knowledge and you have the experience, this lack of vision will automatically go away. See, there are many things attached to this, and these things are in your subconscious—they are recorded there. Consciously you are not aware of them but certain fears are there. When you get the proper technique of meditation, when you meditate, then you'll see the difference.

You had to wait in your mother's womb for nine months and then you came out. In the same way, you have to go through a preparation period. When you are ready for Knowledge, it will be given to you. You have to understand what you are getting before you actually receive it and know how to apply it in your life. That is why satsang is very important.

*Does a person see negativity in others because of that fault in himself?*

There are two approaches. For example, I see a person writing a word wrongly; maybe he is making a spelling mistake. I can simply say, "You are making a mistake," and pinpoint that, not telling him what is right. But if I help him, my approach is different. Everyone can say that there is going to be a war, a crisis, which will be the end of everything. I can also talk about the alternative. There can be a negative approach and there can be a positive approach. If we have a positive approach we can even turn anything which is dark into something which is nicer. So, if you observe a person's fault and correct him, then you are helping him. But if you tell him his faults in such a way that he doesn't know how to improve himself, then he's stuck with an inferiority complex.

For example, a person has cancer and you tell him that he is going to die within two months, what effect will that have on him? There was a person who had cancer in his spine, and the doctors told him that he was going to die within six months. That person is still alive. Why? He said that he did many experiments because nobody knew anything about the type of cancer which he had. He did two things: he changed his eating habits and developed a good, positive attitude.

Attitude is important. A positive attitude has in itself some power to neutralize certain karmas. If you simply believe that life is going to be very miserable for you, then that is enough to make it miserable. But if you think that this life has been given to you by God, to meditate on God, then your life can improve, then the whole thing will change. That is why on many occasions when you have a good attitude you will also have good meditations, and when you have a bad attitude you will have bad meditation. If people constantly talk about Satan the result will simply be fear. But if Satan exists then God also exists. You can talk about God and cause love instead of fear. These are completely different approaches.

*Are there really such places as heaven and hell?*

In English you only have the word 'heaven', and if you talk about second or third heavens people get confused. In India, *mukti* is liberation and heaven is called *swarag*. Now, according to the Hindu philosophy, heaven is simply a state which you attain by your good karmas, and that place has all the luxuries, so you are very happy. And when your karmas finish, you come down to earth. You don't stay up there. But Christian philosophy believes that heaven is a place where God is residing, and once you reach there you cannot come down. This is *mukti*, total salvation.

According to the Law, suffering is hell, and while a person is suffering he is at his lowest ebb. It could be suffering as an animal, or as a human being. Happiness is heaven, even if you are an animal, especially if you are a millionaire's dog! You are more

fortunate than most human beings! No problems at all! For example, we had a dog and then we bought a second dog. The first dog couldn't stand that second dog. He went crazy and starting biting. So even he was so much attached that he thought someone else had invaded his territory. He was also suffering. But only bliss, only salvation, neutralizes heaven and hell. Happiness will come and go; suffering will come and go away. They are all transitory. Even hell or heaven, happiness or suffering can never be permanent. It is like a pendulum. The only thing that can be neutral is salvation, *mukti*. The Knowledge is the essence of that. The pendulum goes left and right, but there is a point from which the pendulum is hung, and that point doesn't move and is above the extremities.

*Then is there any such being as the Devil?*

We don't have the idea of the Devil in India. It's very prominent here, but we don't have it. Something which places an obstacle in your spiritual path is taken to be a force which is trying to disturb you, and that is defined here as 'the Devil'. In India that force is of Indra, not of a devil. They are forces of certain beings who do not want you to have more power than they do. It's a basic human quality, and even gods have that. There are many similar stories in Greek mythology—they also don't talk about the Devil. They say that the gods were jealous of certain people because they were more powerful and were enjoying their lives. So the gods started punishing them.

We have the same mythology. We don't talk about the Devil; hell is there but the Devil is not. We make our own hell. The concept is that if a person is doing bad karmas, then he makes his own hell. And he can also make his own heaven. From that point of view, having a nice house, living a good life, being honest and righteous, is heaven. If you make everybody crazy and become crazy yourself, then that is hell. It's a state of mind that, through karmas, you acquire.

The story goes that when people meditate to reach salvation, Lord Indra becomes upset. Now, Indra is supposed to be the king of the gods. When a person meditates, the power of his meditation causes Indra's throne to start shaking and he gets very upset. So he sends his heavenly dancers to go and disturb that person's meditation. So they come to earth as a temptation and they do their best. If they succeed, the man stays on the ground; he never goes above that. If they don't succeed, that person attains Viṣṇu, the Supreme Being. That is the idea.

*How does this relate to the karmas that we are stuck with?*

This means, in scientific terminology, that through spiritual practice, when we meditate we are actually breaking and disturbing the karmic law. It's like a fire roasting seeds. To a point, the fire eliminates the possibility, the potential of a seed to grow, and after that it completely burns it. So, in the same way, through meditation we are eliminating the potential of multiplying the karmic law. The entire physical universe and the cause of the physical universe are disturbed. If you are doing karmas, you are sowing seeds which are again going to multiply, but breaking the karmic law means that if you do meditation you are going to eliminate the karmas. You totally remove the illusory impressions.

*How do our karmas keep us attached to the world?*

You do certain things, and by doing them you get involved and the karmas multiply. They could be good or bad karmas. Simply having many karmas keeps you on earth; they keep you revolving through the cycle of birth and death. Through good karmas you'll have good opportunities in life and through bad karmas you'll have bad luck. You could be born in a good family or a bad family. That is karma. Actually, through Knowledge, one begins to eliminate the karmas. If your karmas are eliminated, you'll get salvation. A seed has the potential to grow. When it has grown, what happens? More fruit and more seeds. So if you take a seed and roast it, what will happen? Can you grow

popcorn? In the same way, when the fire of Knowledge, the power of Knowledge, roasts the seeds of karmas, then they do not multiply.

*Could you explain about the types of karmas?*

Yes, there are three basic types. There are karmas, the seeds which you are reaping, there are karmas which you are suffering now, and there are karmas which you will suffer: it's like past, present and future karmas. Now, the karmas which you have done in the past you are suffering at present, but you will, through Knowledge, be eliminating the karmas which you will suffer in the future or even at present. You can correct your present and completely change your future. What you are cannot be changed—that you have to suffer. You have not broken, you have not saturated your karmas; you are still under the karmic law. You are not above that. Coming here is due to karma. But through the company of saints, through practising Knowledge, one can actually break that cycle of karmas.

## Stories and thoughts

What is the real Name of God? There are many opinions about it. I am going to discuss this by referring to the actual words of the saints.

Saint Tulsidas, the writer of the Ramayana, who was a very great saint, and who is revered by all Indians, said, *sumiri pavan sut pavan namu/Apne bas kari rakhe Ramu*: “Hanuman, a great devotee, meditated on the Holy Name and had even Lord Rama under his control.” He mentions ‘Holy Name’. He says further, *Bandaun nam Ram Raghuvara ko/Hetu krisanu bhanu himakar ko*: “I bow to that Name of Rama which is the cause of fire, sun and moon.”

If we study the teachings of any saint, we will see mentioned a ‘Name’ or a ‘Word’. Guru Nanak said, *Shabd hi dharti, shabd hi akash/Shabd hi shabd bhayo prakash/Sagli shristi shabd ke pachhe/Nanak shabd ghata ghat achhe*: “The earth is the Word, the sky is the Word, light comes from the Word. The entire Creation emanates from that Word, which Nanak says dwells in every heart.”

He is talking about the Word. Which Word is it? Many people say it is the Sikh scriptures, but the scriptures came later. while this verse says that the earth, sky and creation come from the Word. The *Guru Granth Sahib*, the Sikh scripture, was written much later, long after the Creation. So where is that Word? In the hearts of all.

Saint Kabir said, “There are thousands of names for God in this world, but they cannot give salvation. That Primordial Name which is remembered secretly within is rarely known.”

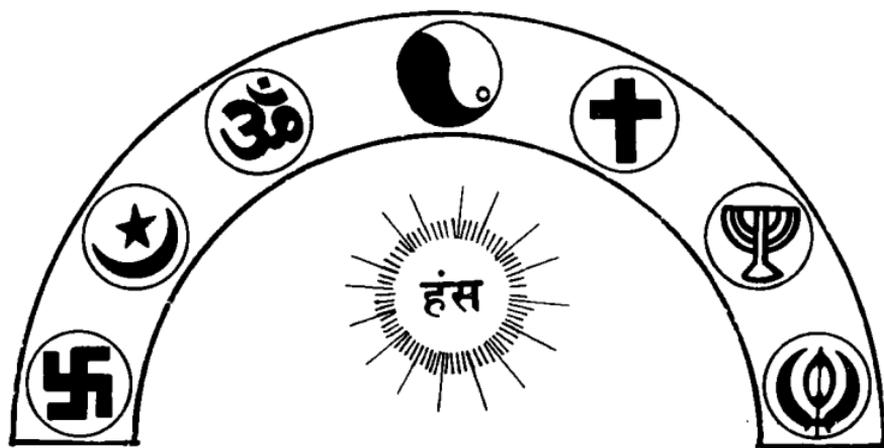
Any name expressed by the tongue falls within the realm of worldly knowledge. The true Name of God, however, is a matter

of transcendental knowledge. Therefore, to understand it, we should study deeply what the saints mean by 'Word' or 'Name'.

Saints make use of words because they have to. This is not a perfect medium of expression because people get entangled in words. The saints had to use an imperfect medium to talk about the perfect Name of God.

Saint John wrote in his Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God." Here again the Word is mentioned. In the Hindu scriptures it is said, *Mahima jasu jan Ganrau, /Pratham pujiat nam prabhau:* "Ganesh knew the greatness of the Holy Name, and therefore he is worshipped before all other deities."

Saints all tried to express the same thing. What is this Name, this Word, this primordial vibration?



Once some people asked Jesus Christ, "Master, you instruct us to be devoted to God, but we have to pay our taxes to Caesar. This is the difficulty. You say that only God is our king, that God is the Lord of the universe. So please tell us whether we should pay taxes to God or to Caesar. If we give everything to God, we can give nothing to Caesar."

Jesus answered, "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things which are God's." We must also do that. We must fulfill the duties which we owe to the soul dwelling within. We must also do what is necessary for the upkeep of the body.



Saint Raidas, the guru of Mira Bai, was a cobbler. Once, a king came to him and brought gifts of gold, precious jewels and clothes. He begged, "Master, saints can do miracles, they can do whatever they like. Please give me some knowledge." Guru Raidas was cutting leather, and there was a bowl of water next to him for wetting leather. So the master took some water from this bowl and gave it to the king to drink. The king was expecting some kind of blessing or boon, and when he saw this water he was disgusted. He took the water in his hand but didn't drink it. It fell on his clothes and stained them. He took off the stained clothes later and gave them to a washerman. The washerman's daughter started washing them, but couldn't remove the stain. Angrily, she started sucking the cloth in a bid to remove the stain, and as soon as she did that she merged into incredible Light within herself and was liberated.

When the king found out, he was ashamed of himself. He went to Guru Raidas and said, "Even though I am a king, I am

most unfortunate." The Guru said, "If there is any water left I will give it to you." But the bowl was completely empty.

We really are helpless, and only the Master can lead us. His greatness is that he can bestow liberation and make us prosper spiritually. It is said,

*Dhyana mulam, guru murti,  
Puja mulam, guru paduka.  
Mantra mulam, guru wakyam,  
Moksha mulam, guru kripa.*

"The root of meditation is the Guru,  
The root of worship is Guru's feet.  
Control of mind comes from Guru's words,  
Liberation is only by his grace."

Liberation means being bound in his grace. When he gives grace, the devotee is liberated.



People think that only science can explain everything because they don't understand the mysteries of spirituality. I'll give you a small example. In the Hindu scriptures is a metaphor that the sun god travels through the sky in a chariot drawn by seven horses. Scientists cannot accept this and prefer to believe that there is nothing in religious books.

I want to draw your attention to one thing. It doesn't say that five horses pull this chariot, it says seven. Why? Any science student knows that when sunrays pass through a prism they are divided into seven colors. A rainbow contains seven colors. The seven colors are represented by the seven horses. There are many scriptural ideas that we don't understand.



In the Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna asked Lord Krishna, "There are two types of devotion: devotion to the unmanifested God and devotion to the manifested form of God. Which one do you prefer?" Lord Krishna answered, "The worship of my manifested form is preferable to me." Why? There is a reason. When we learned the letter *A*, we were shown the picture of an apple. Whatever we learned was through some form or object. Similarly, knowledge of the unmanifested God comes through the manifested form. How does this happen? For example, the sky is infinite, but can you buy a piece of it in the market? No. But if you go to a real estate agent and buy a block of land, which has form, along with it you automatically get some sky, which is formless. Therefore it is said, *Nirguna bahut sulabh ati, saguna na chinhe koi*: "It is easy to know the unmanifested God, but very difficult to find the manifested form."

The manifested form of God is the gateway to the other world. A gate has structure and form, and if a person goes through it, he can enter a huge field. Similarly, it is easy to know the unmanifested God, but first you have to find the manifested form. When you enter through this door, automatically you get knowledge of the unmanifested.



Lord Buddha did severe austerities to realize God, but one day it occurred to him that even this was not helping him. Just then some ladies from that area came by singing, “Don’t tie the sitar strings so tight that they break, and don’t leave them too loose to produce a sound. Keep them moderately tight so that they don’t break, yet produce the full range of sounds.”

This inspired Lord Buddha. He thought, “I will not be able to realize truth if I destroy my body through austerities, and if I am absorbed in maya I’ll forget God.” So he decided that the middle path is the most suitable. In this way, people don’t waste time and can also realize God. We can walk on this middle path when we give up the dualities of profit/loss, good action/bad action; and when we work for our salvation.



There are five powers or senses acting within us: sight, sound, touch, taste and smell.

*Sound:* When a snake-charmer plays his flute, the snake is attracted. Because of the sound, it is imprisoned its whole life in a small basket.

*Sight:* People are attracted and deluded by external appearances. What wisdom can this illusion give? The black bee,

charmed by the sight of a beautiful flower, gets trapped in it when the flower closes up at night.

*Touch:* To catch elephants, hunters make a model of a female elephant. The male elephant thinks it is real, and rushing towards it, falls into a specially-prepared pit. He is then trapped forever. The pleasure of touch ultimately becomes the greatest cause of suffering.

*Taste:* There is a bird called the chatak which drinks only rain water. Because of the taste, the chatak will drink only water which falls from the sky, and it waits for that. If it doesn't rain, the bird dies. Because of their desire to taste the bait, free-roaming fish are caught in the fisherman's net, and they die. All for the sake of taste.

*Smell:* The musk deer is fascinated by the sweet smell of musk that emanates from its own navel. It roams in the woods searching for the source of the smell but never finds it.

In other words, these five forces can lead a being to hell. If you are led by the senses, if you are overpowered by them, ultimately you will be ruined. If you can revert the senses from being externally-oriented to being internally-directed, if you put them into meditation, they will become a means of enjoyment only. So control these five senses and put them to work for spiritual realization.



Scriptures cannot give us that peace and happiness which we seek. That peace lies only in spiritual realization. If you see pictures of food or listen to descriptions of delicious dishes, your hunger will not be satisfied. Hunger is removed only by eating. Similarly, peace will not come into our hearts if we only hear descriptions of the soul or read scriptures. To achieve peace we have to experience it.

To have this experience and to realize it, you need a realized Master, because only he can reveal the aim of our life. To fill a bucket you place it beneath a tap, not above it. Similarly, a devotee sits humbly at the feet of his spiritual master and listens to his satsang with love. Then he believes that Knowledge can be realized. This is the definition of *upanishad*.

In the Upanishads it is said that we are alive because we breathe, but what is that power which draws in air through our nostrils and then expels it? That power is called the 'Word'. Before receiving the Knowledge of the Word, you must listen attentively to satsang. Before sowing seeds farmers plough the land and fertilize it. Satsang is like this. Through satsang the field of the heart is prepared, and then the seed of Knowledge can be planted.



The scriptures say that a person whose mind is not under his control is neither a yogi nor a renunciate. Once, a woman said to Swami Vivekananda, "Master, I want to marry you and have a child like you." Vivekanandaji said, "Then just accept me as your child. I won't be naughty or cause you any trouble. Just regard me as your grown-up child."

An actual yogi is he whose mind is controlled. He whose mind is not, no matter what kind of holy robes he wears, is nothing at all.



A king was travelling in the jungle and became very hungry and thirsty. He saw a woodcutter chopping wood. The king said, "Woodcutter, please give me something to eat and drink." The woodcutter welcomed him and said very respectfully, "I have dry bread and salt and a jug of water. Please accept this." The king ate the bread and drank the water and was quite satisfied. He said, "I am a king. If you ever need anything, you can come to me. I can give you anything, and I will solve your problems."

Some time passed and the woodcutter had chopped down the entire forest. He thought, "What will I do now?" He made his living cutting and burning the wood and selling the charcoal.

Now where would he get wood? He started to feel extremely hungry. He went to the king and said, "Your Majesty, I am having a hard time. The whole forest is chopped down, so how can I make a living? Please have mercy and give me something."

The king told his minister to put that woodcutter in charge of a certain large forest. The minister assigned an entire forest to him. The woodcutter went away happy. He cut and burned the wood, made charcoal, and sold it. Thus he earned his daily bread.

After some time the king thought, 'Let me see what my woodcutter is doing.' He reached the forest and was dismayed to find that the woodcutter had chopped down all the trees. The king thought, 'And to think I put him in charge! He obviously doesn't realize what type of forest this is.' He went up to the woodcutter and said, "Listen, after chopping this wood, take it to the market and sell it." The woodcutter said, "But I usually sell charcoal. What would I get for just a piece of wood?" The king said, "Just do as I say."

So the woodcutter went to the merchants with the remaining wood and said, "Will you buy this?" A merchant looked at them and said, "I'll give you five rupees." The woodcutter said, "No, I'll go further on." The merchant said, "Wait! I'll give you six rupees! Seven rupees!" The woodcutter went to another shop and asked, "Will you buy these pieces of wood?" The merchant said, "I'll give you fifty rupees." The woodcutter thought, 'I was selling charcoal, and it was very hard to make two rupees, but these pieces of wood are fetching me fifty rupees! I wonder what kind of wood it is?'

As he went on, the offers increased. One merchant offered him sixty rupees. A man who was standing nearby said, "Why are you cheating him? This is sandalwood. It is worth five hundred rupees!" So the merchant gave the woodcutter five hundred rupees. Then the woodcutter understood. He thought, 'I chopped down that entire forest and turned it into charcoal to sell for two rupees! What an idiot I was! If I had known that it was sandalwood, I could have sold the pieces and become so rich that

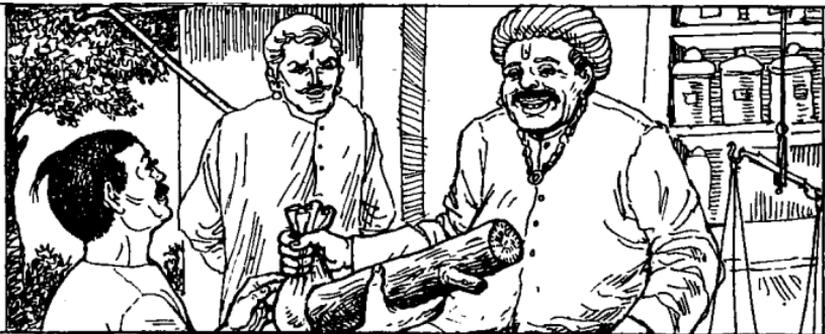
I wouldn't be a woodcutter today!'

Our breath is like that forest, and God has assigned it to us. When we get this human body, the farmer is also in it. The body is like a field, and its farmer is also there. The Divine Energy is within us, but we don't realize its importance. We waste our breath, like the woodcutter exhausted the forest. Without breath you cannot listen and without breath I cannot speak. We should understand the importance of this breath.

No one can give you an extra breath. You cannot buy breath in any market. While breath is in your body, the doctor can keep you functioning with medicines, but when the breath leaves your body, the doctor will say, "I'm very sorry, this person has died. I can do nothing more to keep him alive."

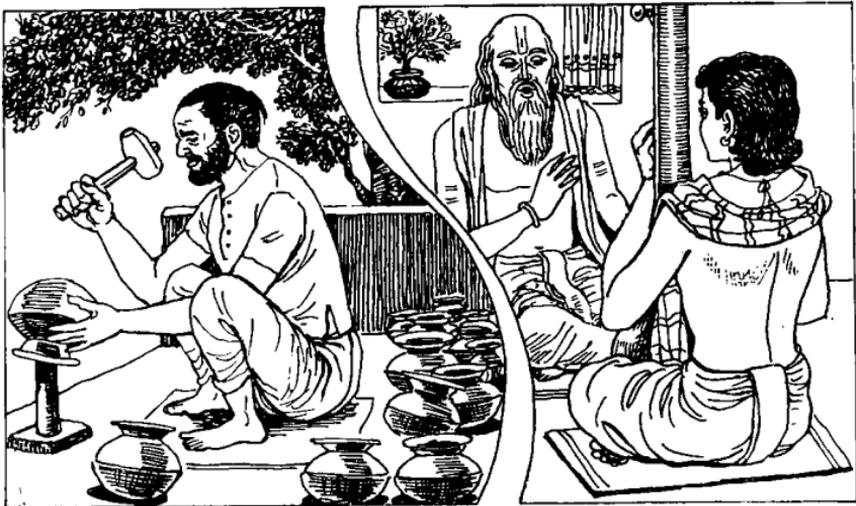
This energy is within us all, but we don't realize how precious it really is. Even a powerful king cannot buy it. The value of breath increases when we receive Knowledge. Without Knowledge there is no liberation. Without Knowledge we cannot understand. When that woodcutter realized that the wood was sandalwood, its value increased for him. Similarly, if we don't have knowledge of these things, then we won't understand their importance. We won't understand their spiritual significance.

This energy is within you, regardless of your religion. There are many flowers in a garland, but only one thread. The life-breath is within us like that thread, although our external appearances are all different. We should understand the Essence.



A devotee understands that there is only one objective in his life. A person can have several relationships. He can be husband to his wife, father to his sons, brother to his sister. There are so many relationships. When a person is initiated, he adds one more relationship, and that is with God, that is as a disciple of his master. Just as in the world we maintain all the other relationships—we act as a good father, we want to be a good husband, we want to be a good wife—in the same way, a devotee tries very, very hard, extremely hard, to be a good disciple. Because when you behave well in your relationship, then you receive. But before you receive you have to give.

In order to get juice from an orange you have to squeeze it, you have to apply energy. In the same way, a disciple applies his energy, he gives all he has, and in this way he receives. Many people cannot understand how a person can be a disciple, and why he should be a disciple when he can be a master. But nobody can be a master without being a servant. In order to be a master you first have to be a servant. And every great spiritual teacher was a servant.



On the shore of Lanka, Lord Rama crowned Vibhishan king of Lanka, even though he himself had no kingdom to bestow and

he hadn't yet conquered Lanka. At the time he was barefoot, wore a deerskin, and had ordinary arrows in his quiver.

Vibhishan humbly said, "Lord, you don't have a chariot. Your enemy Ravanna will drive his chariot to victory. He will come with a huge army. You don't even have shoes! He will have twenty types of weapons and fine armour. Lord, you don't have anything at all!" Then the Lord said, "You don't understand. That chariot of Ravanna's is not the chariot of victory; it is the chariot of defeat. My chariot is the chariot of victory. Its wheels are my two feet—they are truth and non-violence. Above me is the canopy of my Guru's blessing. My armour is truth. This armour can withstand the attack of any arrow. The arrows in my quiver are dipped in the poisons of lust and anger, and they can destroy not just one, but thousands of Ravannas."

We also have this chariot. We are walking on foot, and we don't have bow and arrows, rifles, cannons or bombs. But what do we have? The support of the Holy Name. Truth is always victorious, therefore that Name is victorious. It is not our victory, but the victory of the Holy Name, and whoever knows this Name will be victorious.



Once, the sage Uddalak sent his son Shwetaketu to Benares for education. The boy returned to his father's ashram with the attitude that he was a great scholar and that his father was illiterate. He thought, 'Why should I bow to my father? I am a learned scholar.' So he stopped bowing. Uddalak Muni noticed this lack of respect and felt that his son had become very conceited.

One day he called Shwetaketu and said, "Son, I am not at all educated, but I want to ask you a question." The boy replied, "Ask, and I will answer to the best of my ability." His father asked, "What is it, after knowing which nothing remains to be known? What is it, after attaining which nothing else remains to be attained?"

The boy thought, "This is a very peculiar question. How should I answer it? I haven't studied anything like that. There is no food that will satisfy hunger forever. There are no clothes that will last forever. We sleep through the night, but then we have to sleep again. After drinking water, we will again feel thirsty. Human life is a series of repetitive needs." He remained silent. His father said, "Your education is incomplete. Go and ask your teachers."

Shwetaketu went back to Benares and asked his teachers, "Please tell me if there is such a thing, after knowing which nothing else in this world remains to be known." His teachers laughed and said, "Son, your father has asked you something which is not a matter of debate. You will find the answer only through faith and reverence. Go to your father, respectfully prostrate before him, serve him, and when he is pleased with you he will answer this question. It is not something which you can learn through lectures. It is not learned from books. It is the most profound, infinite knowledge."

So Shwetaketu returned to his father, prostrated at his feet, and surrendered. He then asked, "Revered Sir, please answer this question. My teachers were unable to tell me." So Uddalak Muni laughed and said, "If you examine the clay of one pitcher, you

will automatically know about the clay of all pitchers. If you rub a part of a gold ornament and discover whether it is genuine or not, you will thus know if the rest of the ornament is also pure. In the same way, if you realize the all-controlling Power which is the quintessence of everything, you will discover that all worldly knowledge is included in it."

It is essential to surrender in order to receive Knowledge. Only when a seed dissolves itself in the soil does it become a green shoot and later on a huge tree, which gives shade and sweet fruit. If sugar didn't dissolve in water it could not make the water sweet. If the mind does not merge in God, Who is absolute truth, consciousness and bliss, this bliss cannot permeate our lives.



After receiving Knowledge, a devotee visited his sitar teacher. He discussed the Knowledge with him, and his teacher said, "The spiritual master doesn't live in society. He stays in the

Himalayas.” Now, the question is, why shouldn’t the spiritual master live in the world? Do you think that if the master lives in the world he either is not perfect or will become imperfect? Is his perfection limited to the Himalayas only? It would mean that he doesn’t have the Truth.

Suppose, if I take a piece of iron into my house it becomes gold, and if I take it outside it becomes iron again. Can we say it is a piece of gold? No, because it is always changing. So if a man becomes perfect after living in the Himalayas and becomes ordinary again after he returns to the mundane world, he could never be called a spiritual master. The value of the true master is that he is perfect wherever he goes. If a perfect teacher can only survive in the Himalayas, that is not our loss. What could we get from him? Not much.

The true spiritual master lives simply in the world. He must be within you, amongst you and with you. He is an example of how to live. He reveals all secrets.



Once, when I was in Copenhagen, some Russians came to see me. They said, “We are Russians and we don’t believe in the existence of God.” I said to them, “There has always been controversy about whether God exists or not and there always

will be. But tell me, do you exist or not? Is there any doubt about that?" They answered, "No, there is no doubt about it. We know that we are alive and that we exist." So I said, "You accept that, but what are *you*? What 'you' are remains to be known."



If you really want to go within and have the experience of beautiful light, the infinite light of God, without using drugs, right within you, you can do it. The only way to do it is to have the technique of spiritual insight. It's not a philosophy, it's not a pep-talk. There is a practical way you can really do it.

When you go home, you don't want a fine lecture on food—you want food. But with God, we think that we don't need a practical experience. Instead, we want a good lecture; we only want to listen. And then people involve their emotions. I think that's wrong. For example, if I am a scientist and I am boiling water in a flask to prove something and I say, "O flask, O flask, please help me! Please boil this water!" it's useless. If it's right there, it will happen. What happens when you become emotional is that you lose your intellect.

For example, if someone makes you angry, you will want to kill him, and you will do something, anything, to kill him. At that

time you become so emotional that you lose your reason, and you don't think, "I will go to jail if I kill this man."

In the same way, don't be emotional in spirituality. Spirituality is more like studying science. You have to be very scientific and very, very rational. It's like that. It's not emotions or praying, because praying is asking and meditation is receiving. When you meditate, you receive.



Actually, what is truth? Mohammed propagated truth, and it is not different from the truth propagated by Lord Rama and Lord Jesus Christ. Can there be two or three truths? Truth is only one. If it is absolute, it means that it is all-pervading.

You people are all sitting here, so I can say that very many devotees have assembled here. That is a truth, but is not absolute truth. It is only a relative truth. It is true only for this one place, not for every place. This place is not everywhere. You are not sitting everywhere, only here. We should worship only the

absolute truth. We should leave relative truths and experience the absolute truth, that which is one for the entire creation. After we know it, we should worship it. While you are alive you should definitely make the attempt to realize that truth which is true for the followers of all religions.



We should live in this world like the lotus, which lives in muddy water but doesn't get wet. There are two types of people in the world. For example, if a rock and some soil are both put in water, the soil will dissolve, but the rock will keep the same shape. If we practise Knowledge, we become solid like the rock; we will not dissolve in the water of worldly illusion. If we are like the soil, we will be obliterated in the water of maya.

Saints say that when you receive Knowledge from the master, you become fearless. St. Kabir said, "I've caught death and made him my disciple; I've cut off the ears of fear. I meditate on the Holy Name, so to whom should I bow!" Maya tries to deceive everyone, but a saint deceives the deceiver. Maya does his bidding. This is possible through the Knowledge which the saints give. Maya is subject to Knowledge in the same way as darkness is subject to light.

Knowledge is also a light. Just as the sun dispels the

darkness of night, the darkness of maya is dispelled by the sun of Knowledge. When the night has passed, light permeates everywhere. St Kabir also said, “Maya fools everyone, so I bow to that trickster who has tricked even maya.”



There are many devotees of Krishna in India. If you read his story you will find out that his uncle, King Kamsa, did not want him to be born, because a prophecy had foretold that a son of Kamsa's sister, Devki, would kill him. He did not want any of her children to survive, whether they were divine incarnations or not, so he killed each of them at birth. But you cannot prevent the birth of an *avatar*. Greatness does not bow before evil. Before Lord Krishna was born, his parents had been imprisoned, and each of his brothers had been killed, but Lord Krishna survived. When he grew up he spread spiritual Knowledge. He also killed Kamsa.

If Lord Krishna was an *avatar*, a divine incarnation, why did people treat him like that? Why didn't Kamsa recognize his divinity? Why didn't he bow before him and worship him? Also, King Sishupal insulted Krishna 101 times. He abused Lord Krishna and accused him of 101 faults. If Krishna was divine,

why didn't Sishupal realize that? Why didn't he prostrate before him?

The point is that only a realized soul or a devotee can recognize a divine master. Therefore, in the Bhagavad Gita Lord Krishna said, "Of the four types of devotees, the one who has realized Knowledge is best, he actually knows Me." Without understanding Knowledge you cannot recognize the Master. People with natures like Sishupal's and Kamsa's can never accept saints.



Once there was a brahmin who was very poor. His wife said, "Please do something to bring in money." There were many poor people in that village so one day they all went to the king and said, "Your Majesty, our village is very poor, and we don't have the means of making a living. Please be gracious enough to do something for us." The king said, "Very well. I will establish a market there, and anything that is not sold, I myself will purchase."

Traders came from far and near and set up a fine market. The brahmin's wife said, "You should make something and sell it." The brahmin said, "I don't know how to make anything." So his wife made a nice statue of Shanishwardev, the god of bad luck, and told her husband to take it to the market and sell it.

The poor brahmin took the statue to the market, and people were interested, but when they found out whose statue it was, they were not prepared to buy it.

Evening came, and the king's officials came to buy up whatever was left over. They came to the brahmin and asked, "Whose statue is this?" He replied, "Lord Shanishwardev." The officials said to each other, "If we take back this statue, it will bring bad luck to the king, and even the kingdom. We won't buy it." They returned to the king and said, "We don't think that it is a good idea to buy this statue. It will do you great harm." The king said, "I have to keep my word. I said that I would buy whatever was left over, so you must buy this statue."

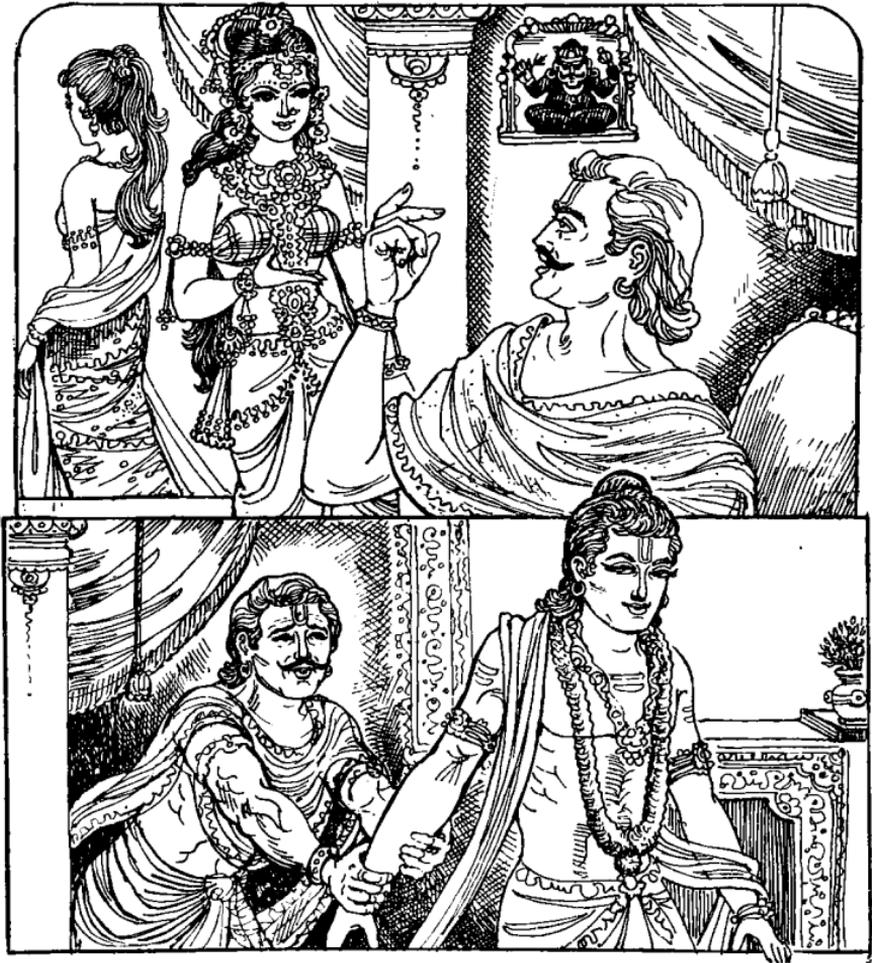
So the king bought it, and immediately bad luck and ill-omens started appearing. Ill feelings arose in people's minds. Ministers started resigning. The common people started noticing that something was wrong. The king's officials were confused and they deserted him. Soon the king was all alone.

One night the unfortunate king had a dream in which he saw a beautiful goddess leaving the palace. He asked her, "Who are you and where are you going?" She said, "I am the goddess of wisdom. Now that Shanishwardev is in your house, knowledge and wisdom can't stay there." After she had disappeared, another goddess started to leave. The king asked, "Who are you?" She said, "I am Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity. Where Shanishwardev lives, Lakshmi cannot." Other gods and goddesses followed her. The king was in despair.

After a while a shining celestial being appeared. "Who are you?" the king asked. "I am Satyadev, the god of truth. All the other virtues have left your kingdom, so why should I stay?" The king caught Satyadev's hand and cried, "Look, I bought that

statue to defend your honour! I sacrificed everything for you, and now you are leaving me?" Satyadev said, "What you say is true. I won't go. I am very pleased with you, so I will restore your kingdom to you." Satyadev went back inside the palace. After a while, Lakshmi and all the other gods and goddesses returned, saying, "We'll go wherever Truth goes."

The moral of this story is that we should never forsake truth, no matter what sacrifice is necessary.



It is the duty, the proper role of the guru to give spiritual Knowledge to his disciples and to see that the disciple reaches the goal. A farmer doesn't plant a seed and leave it to the mercy of the sun, rain and wind. He makes sure that his seed gets balanced nourishment. Similarly, a true spiritual master sees whether his disciple is progressing in Knowledge or not. The disciple must, however, dedicate his mind.

Like guru, like disciple. Nowadays there are a lot of gurus. It has become all show and nothing else.

Many people speak without understanding. If God is almighty, He can do anything. We cannot impose any limitations on Him. He can be bound only by love, and he can be called only by love. He can never be known by intellect and debate. He is something beyond reason and intellect.

Some people call themselves great sages and spread their own fame. Actually, they are only degrading themselves. They cannot give mankind the true Knowledge, so they are only pretending to be gurus. If someone has nothing, how can he give something to anyone else? If someone doesn't have true Knowledge himself, how will he be able to give it to others?



After Ravanna had kidnapped Sita, Rama was wandering around grief-stricken, looking for her. At this time Lord Shiva and Parvati arrived. Lord Shiva prostrated before Rama. Parvati was confused by this and asked, "Is this whom you came to see? This youth is King Dasaratha's son, and he is pining for his wife. He is sunk in ignorance. Why did you bow to him?"

We can assume that Parvati didn't have the necessary insight to realize who Lord Rama really was. Parvati had eyes like everybody else, so what was that thing, that special eye, by which Lord Shiva recognized Rama? Parvati was the wife of Lord Shiva; she lived with him. Even so, what was lacking in her that kept her in ignorance of who Lord Rama was?

'If he had wanted to, Lord Rama could do anything, but he always followed the normal path of action. No divine incarnation ever declared his divinity—we say that he is divine. God never says, "I am God." The devotees call Him that and only a devotee can recognize Him.

If you don't know my name, what will you do? You will ask me. Only I can introduce myself to you, because I know who I am. Similarly, a divine master makes himself known to devotees, and no one else can do it. The soul is in ignorance but God is all-knowing. There is no use in listening to ignorant people. They can never recognize the Lord.



Once there was a very learned brahmin. A businessman arranged for him to give a recital of the scriptures. Afterwards, he gave a donation to the brahmin and said, "It is written that after Sukdev Muni gave this same reading to King Parikshit, a celestial plane came and took the king to heaven. I don't see any plane coming for me."

The brahmin knew the scriptures and said, "Well, this is the age of darkness, so you have to hear it four times." So the businessmen heard the same reading three more times and gave three more donations: Still the plane didn't come. The brahmin was also confused. He said, "I did everything according to the scriptures. I don't know what is missing."

On the way home, the brahmin came across the cottage of a sage. He had great faith in saints, so he asked him, "I don't know what went wrong. I gave four readings, still that plane didn't come. According to the scriptures that plane should have come by now." The saint said, "Both of you come here this evening, and I'll explain it all to you."

In the evening they both visited the saint, saying, "We are at your service. Show us how to get to heaven."

The saint tied their hands with a rope and put them facing each other in another room. They wondered what was going on. After a while the saint opened the door and said, "Why haven't you untied each other?" They said, "We are both tied up, so how could we free each other?" The saint said, "You are both tied up in the world, just like you are tied up here. So how can you reach heaven?"

This also applies to us. We are doing practices, but we don't get the pleasure from them that we should, because we are lacking something. We are worshipping God to fulfill our desires. We bow and pray to get happiness and prosperity, never for misfortune! However, we should understand one thing—we have to control the mind. People do religious practices, but their minds are flying everywhere else. So how will they get peace and happiness? □

Once a swan was flying from the east towards the west, and it was evening so he rested on a tree. On that tree he found two young owls, and they asked, "Who are you?" He said, "I am a swan, and I am coming from the east." They asked, "Where is east?" He said, "East is the direction where the sun rises in the sky." They asked, "What is 'sun'? We do not know what 'sun' is." The swan said, "You are just children; when your papa comes home, ask him and he will tell you."

When their father returned home, the young owls asked him, "Papa, can you tell us what 'sun' is?" Their father looked in the dictionary, but it did not have the word 'sun', because owls do not know what sun is. Their papa thought it was probably a hoax, but the young owls said, "No, that swan was very sure of himself." Sun must be something, so please, papa, go and find out." The father owl went to the priest and said, "I have a question. What is 'sun'?" The priest said, "My son, my hair is all grey now, and in all my life I have never heard this word 'sun'." So the father owl was satisfied with that. He came home and said, "This swan character is trying to deceive you."

The very next day the young owls grabbed the swan and said, "You are a crook, you are a liar. You will go to hell." The swan said, "Okay, wait; I'll show you what the sun is." So they waited together and as the night was about to end, the young owls said, "It's night for us now; we are sleepy and we want to go to bed." The swan said, "No, stay here; you are going to see the sun! Stay awake!"

Finally the big round ball of the sun began to rise, and the swan said, "Look! There is the sun." The owls said, "We can't see anything. This is our nighttime, and we can't see at night." Then the swan realized that the owls can't see in the daytime, so he opened their eyes for them, and for the first time in their lives they saw the sun rising in the east. They experienced the sun.

People are like this. You tell them about Knowledge but they say it's crazy, it cannot happen, it's all lies. They say that anyone who talks about Knowledge or God-realization is a deceiver. But

no. Maybe your dictionary is not complete; maybe you don't have the experience of God. But there are people who have seen, there are people who have experienced. If man cannot experience God, then why do we have the word 'God'? If you follow the path of the master, of spiritual people, then you can have that experience. It's not a deception. If you follow the path, then you can see. Like the Bible says, "If thine eye be single, thy body shall be full of light." But the question is, how can we make our eyes single?



A man read in his encyclopedia that whales are found in sea water. So he took a test tube to the ocean, filled it and brought it home. He looked through a microscope and wondered where the whale was. There was no whale so he thought to himself, 'But the book must be right.' The book was right; whales definitely live in sea water, and he did have sea water, so what is wrong? The problem with us is that we are so limited. If he had a much bigger container, he could have captured a whale.

Our organs are limited, and through them we cannot experience God. That is why God is said to be beyond the working organs, mind and intellect. Only a true spiritual master can show that to you.

The most important thing in life is to understand and to experience. For example, somebody tells you, "There is a nice religious movie playing now. You should go and see it." You buy a ticket and sit down. Now, before the film starts, they show advertisements, some supporting features, and when you see all this you begin to think, 'This is not religious. This is not much of a movie,' so you stand up and walk out. Then you tell that person who told you about the film that he told you a lie. Now, the problem is not with that person, because whatever he told you is correct. The problem is that you didn't wait patiently to see the film. The film hadn't actually started. In the same way, real experience, mystical experience, only comes when your mind is in unison with the Divine Word, and not before that.



A lighthouse on the seashore sends out signals to warn ships that dangerous rocks are nearby. The life of a spiritual master is like a lighthouse. He acts like a lamp. His work is to uplift and save us from our evil actions.

If there are any dents or irregularities in a pot, the coppersmith places one hand inside the vessel and beats it on the outside with a hammer. Then the pot becomes round and smooth. Any fault is corrected. Similarly, the spiritual master

supports us within by his grace and outwardly moulds us so that we become strong and flawless. Guru is the potter and the disciple is the pot he hammers again and again. Guru supports us from within and from the outside he removes the flaws. He heals the wounds of māya, and sees if we are strong or weak.

We should be determined. If a building, even a palace, is built on sand, one day it will collapse. If it is built on stone it will remain firm and never fall. Make your devotion so strong that it is indestructible. The foundation of that indestructibility is truth. Nothing except truth is everlasting.

The spiritual master wants to give us everything which will benefit us, and we should accept that. Within our hearts should be keen eagerness and reverence. We often say, "I will do this work tomorrow." We believe and hope that we will be here tomorrow, and by this faith we carry on. Understand the greatness of faith.



A farmer had two sons. He wanted to see how intelligent they were, and whether they were industrious or lazy. He called them both and said, "I have some capital and I want you to take care of it. See that it doesn't get wasted." He gave each son a handful of seeds.

The first son thought, "They have to be kept safe, so I will wrap them up and keep them in a box, put this small box inside a bigger box and close it tightly. Then they will be safe."

The second son had more initiative. He went to his field, prepared it and planted the seeds.

After some time the farmer called his sons and asked them to return his capital. The first son brought the box in which he kept the seeds, but when he opened it he saw that the seeds had decayed and had turned to dust. Then the farmer asked the second son to return the seeds. That son went and filled a bullock cart full of grain and brought it to his father. The farmer asked, "Where did you get all this grain?" The son replied, "I planted the seeds you gave me for safe-keeping. They grew into grain whose seeds I also planted, and this is the harvest. So please take it; it all belongs to you."

It is obvious who took proper care of the seeds. Similarly, we receive spiritual Knowledge by the grace of the saints. If we lock this Knowledge up within ourselves, and don't practise it, it will decay. But a clever disciple will plant this seed of Knowledge in the field of his life. Every minute of his life will flow in that current, and thus his life will be successful.

This Knowledge has no limits. It extends everywhere. Knowledge dawns when ignorance is dispelled. The second son reaped the benefit because he planted the seed in his field. Similarly, if the Knowledge becomes an integral part of our lives, then we really become wealthy. We won't just know Knowledge, we will become Knowledge. We won't just be meditators, we will become meditation; we will become that very stream that flows constantly from God. Lord Krishna said, "He who attains Me, never returns to this world. He reaches eternal salvation from which there is no return."

Like that second son, we should be tending our fields day and night. We should dive into this Knowledge. If we don't, the Knowledge will decay and we won't reap the benefit. When a farmer plants seed in a field, he waters it, gives it fertilizer and

takes care of it. Similarly, we should protect this seed of Knowledge from the mind, intellect and senses. What is essential for that? The saints say that satsang, service, meditation and being in presence of the Master are essential. If we don't have these, it is all useless, and the Knowledge won't flourish. After receiving Knowledge, our duty is to do service, because a devotee who does not serve cannot cross the ocean of illusion.



Once a saint was explaining to his disciple that true joy lies in renunciation. The disciple disagreed. He said, "No, master. Joy is in the world, joy is in wealth. All happiness depends on money."

One day they had to cross a river. The saint didn't have any money, but he knew that his disciple did. He was thinking that the disciple would pay the ferryman. The disciple understood this. He thought, 'This is a good chance to show my master that there is power in money.' He kept his money in his pocket and walked behind the saint, thinking, 'My master is very stubborn. Why isn't he asking for the money?' Finally the disciple hired a boatman to take them across. When they had reached the other

side, the disciple said, "See, master, how much power there is in money!"

The saint said, "No, my son. There is no power in money, but there is power in *renouncing* money. When you kept the money we were left standing on the riverbank, but when you parted with it and were empty-handed, we were able to cross."

There is joy in renunciation. You put aside important work to come to satsang, and so you enjoy a spiritual environment. A person evolves spiritually when he comes to satsang and listens to discourses about God.



Once Guru Nanak was bathing in a river when he saw a brahmin praying and throwing water at the sun. Nanak asked him, "Sir, what are you doing?" The brahmin said, "I am offering water to the sun god." Guru Nanak said, "That's a very good idea." He turned in the exact opposite direction and began throwing water. People said, "Sir, the sun is in the opposite direction. Turn around and throw water like that brahmin is doing." He replied, "If the water he throws can reach the sun, then from here I can water my fields!"

Simply thinking won't accomplish anything. Similarly, nothing happens through mere talk. We should be practical. If we

want a child, we want a real child, one that we can experience. Nobody wants an imaginary child. However, people think that it is all right to have an imaginary God. What mistake has God committed that you want Him to be only imaginary?

I once met a man who said, "Devotion doesn't bring me any joy." I asked why. He answered, "When I imagine God, His crown is always too big. When I try to garland Him, the garland gets entangled in the crown. I feel very frustrated." I said, "Listen, if you can imagine God with a large crown, why can't you imagine Him with a small crown? Or else imagine a larger garland that won't get entangled." So, imagination can also be imagined. It is very temporary, but soul is eternal. God does not change. God is the only thing in this world that does not change. The rest is imaginary and changeable. Everything changes.



Jesus Christ said that the abode of God has a gate, and anyone who has pride in his wealth, traditions, family or reputation, becomes so swollen with this burden of pride that he cannot go through that gate. He will get stuck. It is a narrow gate, and a man carrying too much baggage cannot go through. He must become small, very small.

Concentration of mind refines a person so that he lets go of his pride and enters the kingdom of heaven. That is why we stress concentration of mind. It is not enough to look at a room through a hole in the door. You should open the door and go inside. If a camera is not steady, the photo will not be sharp and clear. So without concentration of mind you cannot have spiritual experience.



You may have heard the term, 'spiritual revolution'. What does it mean? If science is controlled by spirituality, then it can help man along the path of progress and evolution, but if it is controlled by materialism then it will ultimately be the cause of destruction.

For example, I talk about truth, duty and faith, but if I receive a million dollars and start thinking about how to spend it on myself, what will happen to my noble ideals? But if I use the money in the cause of faith, duty and truth, then there is no discrepancy in my words and my deeds and I will stay firm on the spiritual path. Until my foot is firmly fixed on the path, I will be tossed about like a boat in a storm. My words and actions will be totally different.

How can a spiritual revolution start? Imagine, for example, that I am an expert telephone technician. If a phone becomes faulty in any way, I can fix it. Humanity declines through jealousy, hatred and dissension. If I have spiritual power, I can change people by my path, by my wisdom and spirituality. Even though people may criticize me, I will make them good. People can tire of criticising, but I will never tire of transforming people.

In the Bhagavad Gita Lord Krishna said, "This Knowledge is such an enigma that many people hear about it and don't understand. Many who have Knowledge don't understand, and those who do understand are surprised at how subtle it is."

Deceit is hidden in the heart with the curtains drawn. Truth, its opponent, is expressed boldly. A powerful ruler can oppress and coerce his subjects. He can enforce his rule on others, but he cannot win their hearts. The ruler of the heart, the leader of the spiritual revolution, is the one we call the Satguru. To be awakened spiritually, we have to find him, realize the truth and become involved in establishing peace on earth.

An ancient prayer says:

*Guru Brahma, Guru Vishnu,  
Guru Devo Maheshwara,  
Guru Sakshat Parambrahm,  
Tas mai Shri Guru vai namaha.*

"Guru is the creator, Guru is the preserver,  
Guru is the destroyer.

Guru is the highest manifestation of the Supreme God,  
I bow my head and heart at his feet."

'Manifestation' means that something or someone appears before you. Who is he for whom this prayer was written? Scriptures tell us about him. Saint Tulsidas said, "I bow to the feet of Guru, who is the ocean of mercy and God in human form. His words dispel illusion, just as the sun dispels darkness." How wonderful those words must be that they can transform the

darkness of ignorance within us into the Light of Knowledge!

People mostly see only the badness in others. Their words are full of bitterness. But within gentle people is gentleness, and we can know it from the way they talk. A saint speaks the plain truth. He says, "Realize Knowledge! Realize it!" Knowledge can be realized. Only the living Master can make you realize. This is why everyone glorifies him.



Devotion is not only an end, it is also a means, or a process of evolution, to attain constancy in spirit and steadiness in mind. Through devotion a disciple attains immunity from the modes of nature and thus becomes constant in his experience. This is why meditation is a must. But to strengthen oneself in meditation, the accessories satsang and service are necessary. Meditation is a vigilant attention on the Word, the primordial vibration, which identifies the individual being with the Supreme Being.

Sometimes conviction or faith gets blurred because of the play of the modes of nature, which blurs and covers the inner conviction with the smoke of *samskaras* and effects us in the negative, which we take as a doubt. Take it as natural in the process, and instead of getting disheartened, become more

objective and vigilant, and understand the fleeting nature of such doubts. If your understanding of this Knowledge becomes strong, you will have no doubts. The goal of constant meditation and uninterrupted devotion, which was attained by people before us through persistent practice and the spirit of discrimination, will be attained in the future also through the same process. The principle and the way of spirituality is eternal. It can't be different for different people. Grace is vital no doubt, but mind it, God helps those who help themselves.

The most important thing is to do meditation. If we have a connection with a great soul, we have a chance to become holy and pure. Life does not last long. When death will come, no one can say. Now we have this human body; even if suffering and difficulties come, only in this human life can we attain liberation. The lives of the saints were full of struggle and difficulties, but they always continued meditation and encouraged others to do likewise.

The leaves of the *neem* tree are bitter but beneficial. Similarly, it is difficult to sit for a long time in meditation, but it is beneficial. No matter what difficulties come in the path of devotion, the main aim of this human life must be achieved. We should endure all difficulties and carry on.

Huge waves rise in the sea, but this doesn't mean that we drown. We can be saved by means of a lifeboat. We must try to save ourselves from the waves of maya in the worldly ocean by the lifeboat of Knowledge. For that we must do meditation and service. This is a golden opportunity. Knowledge never fails; it will never let us drown. The light of the beacon of Knowledge can never be extinguished by the darkness of ignorance. Now we have an opportunity to actively work for our salvation.

Our minds roam in the external world, so we practise disciplines to control it. For example, when the teacher is explaining something, many children do not understand because their minds are elsewhere. To attract their attention the teacher draws something on the blackboard to illustrate a point. But why

don't they understand? It is because they lack concentration.

A driver may be very capable, but if he lacks concentration he will have an accident. You may have seen the knife-throwing act in the circus. A woman is tied to a board and a blindfolded man stands in front of her and throws knives. If his attention wavers at any time, then definitely the knife will hit the woman. But his concentration is so firm, so steady, that even though a band is playing and thousands of people are watching, his concentration never falters.

A tightrope walker's concentration is so centred that he can walk the rope. The path of devotion is like walking a tightrope. If you lose concentration you will fall down. So where should we fix the mind? In meditation on God. A saint said, *Karat karat abhyas se jara mati hota sujan/Rassi awat jat se sil par parat nisan*: "Grooves are worn in stone by the constant rubbing of a rope. By practice of meditation, even a dimwitted person can become wise."



One day a saint was strolling along a river bank, when he saw a scorpion drowning. He pulled it out and was about to put it on the ground when it stung him and again fell into the water. The saint again took it out and again it stung him and fell into the river.

A man was watching all this. He said to the saint, "You are saving that scorpion and it is stinging you, and yet again you try to save it. If it doesn't want to be rescued, why are you trying?" So the saint said, "It is a small creature and its nature is to sting. If it cannot change its nature, why should I change mine? My nature is to be gentle and compassionate, so I try to save it."



There are many ideas about how to gain peace, but any attempt we make is so feeble, so inefficient. This speedy mind cannot be caught. If the mind is running at such a high speed, how can it be brought under control? Patanjali in the *Yoga Shastra* describes yoga as 'control of the fluctuations of mind.' Lord Krishna also said, "He whose mind is not under his control is neither a yogi nor a renunciate." How is this control achieved? Can the fluctuations of mind be controlled by a rope or a stake? How can this mind be stopped? If you put an object weighing one pound on one pan of a scale, and a half-pound weight on the other, then the first pan cannot rise. To make it rise you have to place one pound or more on the other side. Similarly, to control the mind you need something more powerful than the mind. You have to find that thing which can tie the mind.

The word 'Ram' is composed of R—a—m. It can be spoken, and it has a beginning and an end. Even while it is being uttered,

who knows in what circles the mind can spin? It can go off on so many tangents. Your body is sitting here, but how far can your mind go? Without the aid of an airplane, the mind can travel far and then return. So practices like chanting are useless for controlling the mind. It can only be controlled by a technique more powerful than the mind itself. What is that? The Holy Name of God. It is eternal, unutterable and indestructible. It is not something you can talk about. It is the unchanted chant. This means that it is within us. Guru Nanak said, "Remember the Word which is omnipresent in land and water. Why remember anything else that has a beginning and an end?" Anything that is pronounceable has a beginning and an end, and remembering it does not bring the mind under control.

Now, how does one find this Word of God that the saints have spoken about? What is it? Where is it hidden? You do not have to search outside yourself, but within your breath. Anyone who stops breathing dies. All the actions we do are dependent on the breath. This life-energy is hidden in the breath alone. Search for it. Only the spiritual master, the knower of God, can make others perceive it. He reveals it. Therefore, saints have always glorified the master.



There are eight types of yogic powers, and one is the power of becoming huge. When Hanuman met Sursha, a demoness who challenged his passage through her territory, he made himself

become as big as an elephant. Sursha also became just as huge. Then Hanuman used his powers to become very small. He entered her mouth and came out of her ear. By his powers, Hanuman flew across the ocean. Hanuman had these powers and what did he do? He served Lord Rama.

You can attain all the yogic powers—becoming big or small, walking on water, walking underwater, etc. but what good will it do you if you have no devotion? So instead of falling into the trap of these powers, we should put them into devotion. This is the straightest and easiest path. You should follow the straight path and not fall into the snares of illusion.

This maya is very deceptive. It has fooled the greatest of sages. The only way to avoid being trapped is to follow the living Master. Otherwise, there is only suffering.



Do you know how they catch monkeys in India? They put some chickpeas in an earthen vessel which has a wide mouth and a narrow neck. The monkey's hand can go in only when it is straight. If the monkey closes his fist, his hand can't go in or come out. When the monkey sees the chickpeas, he puts his hand in and grabs a fistful. He wants to take them out, but can't because his hand is closed; his fist cannot fit through the narrow neck of the pot. Then he is easily caught.

The monkey can get free if he lets go of the chickpeas and straightens his hand so that it can come out. But he is so greedy that he will not let go! He keeps his fist closed and cannot free his hand.

In the same way, we have created around ourselves a net of maya, and we are so attracted by it that we are caught in that net, like the monkey's hand gets caught in the jar. We are wasting our lives by not seeking spiritual peace and freedom.



Scriptures are the history of saints. The greatness of the saints and the opposition they faced are both described. Saint Kabir spread the plain and simple truth, but his contemporaries opposed him bitterly. There was a Persian saint called Shams -i- Tabriz whose skin was torn off in strips. Jesus Christ was crucified. Mohammed had to leave his country. Even though today they are glorified, during their lifetime they had to face opposition.

The sun rises and gives light, but the sun itself doesn't come to us at all. First the sky slowly reddens, then gradually the sun rises above the horizon and spreads its light to the world. The earth could never touch the sun, and even if it could, at that time you would say that there is no sun, which would be nonsense. There definitely is a sun, but for some time it is not perceptible.

Similarly, when the work of any saint met an obstacle, they rose above it and continued to spread the Truth. A saint is a leader who uplifts the people of his country and humanity at large. How can we tell who is a saint? What is the proof? Gold is first tested before it is called gold. Similarly, there is a way to tell who is a saint, and we should find out what it is.



Before you receive Knowledge, you should check it out. If you don't do this, you will not grasp it properly. To examine it, three things are necessary. First, you must listen about it. Otherwise, how will you know what it is? Then you should think about what is told to you. Then, when you receive it, you must practise regularly. First listen, then think deeply, then practise regularly. Have some understanding of it; have some experience of your own.

In a market are many things which are imitations. For each genuine article there is also an imitation. The fake is worthless but the genuine article has value. How can you differentiate between the two? You must examine them thoroughly. Similarly, there are both false and genuine types of people. Some people chant hymns or mantras but actually are hypocrites. Some people are true devotees, and there are some who appear to be devoted but actually harbour the intention to hurt others.

If a donkey is given a lion's skin to wear, it doesn't become a lion. Wearing a lion's skin won't make it king of the jungle. Similarly, a man does not become good just by believing that he is good. He may wear a prayer shawl, he may be very learned and consider himself great, but inside he is sinful. When the real test comes, the badness within him will be his downfall.



Once someone said to me, "I don't believe in God." I said, "Very well, you don't believe in God. If you don't experience something, why should you believe in it? But do you believe that a person can attain peace of mind or some state like that?" He said, "Yes, I believe in peace of mind. Everyone should have that."

Every father wants peace in his family. Relatives also want peace in their homes. All members of a society want peace. Citizens of a nation also want to live in peace. Why do we have such huge armies and police forces? To maintain peace. Peace is essential for everyone. Political leaders generally want to avoid war so they make peace efforts. The United Nations was formed for peace. It tries to maintain peace between nations. But all wars and quarrels have one origin and that is man's mind. All crises arise in the mind of man. If you want to end fighting, if you truly want peace, first of all establish peace in your own mind. Then

Peace will come in the family, in society, in the nation and in the world.

This mental peace has been expressed in different words, such as Knowledge, samadhi, experience of God. Different religions have given it different names. Different beliefs have arisen from the differences in language, but the peace is the same for everyone. Everyone wants peace, but we don't get it because we don't know where it is.

Why don't we find peace? Think about it. Suppose there is a great treasure beneath a poor man's hut. Until that poor man discovers it, he won't be benefitted. First he has to find the treasure and dig it up. His hut won't turn into a palace just because it is above a treasure. Similarly, until a human being realizes what a great treasure and power his own soul is, and until he can link up to it, he can never experience the bliss that it contains.



Today the sky is clear. Our hearts should also be clear. When clouds cover the sky they block its heat and light. Similarly, illusion and ignorance obscure anything we gain from God. We want to be enlightened. Only when ignorance and illusion are gone, can we directly experience the Truth.

A person who doesn't see the Light within himself is spiritually blind. He who doesn't hear the Divine Music is deaf,

and he who doesn't know the True Name of God is actually dumb.

Saints and divine masters come into this world to give us that Light. When we take their shelter, we are freed from th blindness, deafness and dumbness.



We hear about 'holy men' who can pluck objects from thin air or make things fall from the sky. By their yogic powers they can walk on water. They exhibit amazing powers, and people are very impressed. For a while they may be greatly awed by all this, but spiritual Knowledge doesn't come through these magical displays. I believe that a person can fly through the air if he practises years of austerities, but his austerities are worth 28 rupees, because that is the cost of a plane ticket from Patna to Gaya. Someone can materialize raisins and oranges after many years of penances, but you can go to the market and buy as much fruit as you like. So what is the value of so many years of austerities? Only a few rupees.

Gautama Buddha renounced his family and kingdom to search for truth. As he was travelling along a road he became sick, and was so weak that he almost fainted. An old woman saved him, and after regaining his health he continued on his way and reached a monastery. The abbot of this monastery taught him some techniques to gain wealth and power through yogic powers.

Buddha asked the abbot for spiritual knowledge. The abbot replied, "I don't have that kind of knowledge. I have techniques for material enjoyment. But these things mean nothing to you. I myself do not have the knowledge of the soul."

So, miracles won't give you spiritual insight. For that, you have to go to a realized soul.



A man was drowning in a river. Someone standing on the bank saw him and threw him a rope. The drowning man used the rope to pull himself out of the water. Then he thought, "I am out of the water now, so I don't need this rope." He let go of the rope and again fell into the water.

This is our condition, too. When the spiritual master sees us drowning in the sea of illusion, he throws us the rope of Knowledge. We catch hold of this rope and afterwards start wondering what to do. We do some meditation and have a few experiences, then we stop. We fall with a crash from where we were.

Therefore, keep hold of the rope of Knowledge. When a man loses strength and starts to drown, he says, "No, no. I will not let go of the rope," and grips it firmly. The person standing on the shore pulls in the rope, and the drowning man starts to rise up. When his feet touch the shore, then he can let go of the rope, then

he doesn't need it any more. Similarly, the spiritual master reels in his devotees by the rope of Knowledge and draws them to himself. Then he takes them to his highest abode. He then says, "Now you have realized who I really am. You don't need the rope. You can let go." If the devotee lets go before that, he will fall. That is not the fault of the master, it is our fault because we let go prematurely. Therefore, don't stop meditating. Practising Knowledge will definitely liberate you.



Once a queen lost her necklace. A hawk found it and, thinking that it was something to eat, picked it up and hung it on a tree right next to a lake. The king was upset and told his courtiers and soldiers to look for the necklace. At last one of them reached this tree. In the water he saw the reflection of the necklace. He called others and told them the news. When everyone saw the reflection of the necklace they thought it was the real thing, and to get it they jumped into the water, but couldn't find it. They went to the king and said, "We can see the necklace, but it is impossible to get it." The king listened to all this and was surprised. It was indeed strange. Finally the king himself went to the lake. He too saw the reflection in the water but was unable to reach it.

After a while, a saint arrived. He saw all those people trying in vain to find the necklace. He knew it was impossible, so he told all of them, including the king, "You are trying to catch a reflection. The real necklace is hanging on a tree. Climb the tree and get it. Don't waste time trying to grab a reflection."

This is also happening in our lives. We read the scriptures, which are a reflection of God, a reflection of the truth. We go to temples and churches which are only an indication of the existence of God. We are going for reflections when actually we should search for the truth, otherwise, all our actions will have no beneficial result.



I met a gentleman who asked me how much I had read of the Vedas and Upanishads. Now, the root of *veda* is *vid*, knowledge, and that religion whose nucleus is the Knowledge of God is true religion. Knowledge is a matter of realization, not reading. We learn from experience.

A person who does not know Sanskrit cannot read the Vedas, so how is liberation possible for him? Which Veda did Lord Krishna teach Arjuna? He gave him practical spiritual Knowledge. If Knowledge only meant learning the Vedas, the significance of the Bhagavad Gita changes—the verses in the Gita do not remain verses but become Vedic mantras. But this is not so. Krishna did not teach mantras—he revealed the Knowledge of God.

Scriptures existed before we were born, but we won't get salvation just by reading them. Once some people said to Jesus, "Master, you criticize the holy books." He replied, "I have not come to destroy the scriptures, but to fulfill them." He had come to reveal the Light mentioned in the scriptures.

Great souls do not come to negate the Vedas or any other scripture. They come to fulfill the scriptures by revealing that Knowledge mentioned in them. Then people can understand the real meaning of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bible and other scriptures. Lord Krishna told Arjuna, "I am neither true nor untrue. I am inexpressible. I cannot be expressed in words."

Ramakrishna Paramhansa said that all the scriptures are the result of speech—they are not Truth. The Word of God cannot be uttered by the tongue, therefore it is pure. That Word is functioning non-stop within us, and its true form cannot be expressed in speech. It is consciousness itself. To know this Word is to know the mysteries of all the Vedas and scriptures because they all point out that we should realize this eternal, indestructible Word of God.



King Shivaji was very impressed by Saint Tukaram's devotion. Once, Saint Tukaram was holding a devotional program. King Shivaji disguised himself as a brahmin and sat in the back of the assembly. Another brahmin recognized him so he silently left the meeting and went to the camp of the Moghuls, Shivaji's enemies. He told them, "Saint Tukaram is holding satsang and Shivaji, dressed as a brahmin, is listening. You'd better go and arrest him. If you don't, he will escape. I've told you that much, and now I'd better go."

The Moghul emperor sent some soldiers to arrest Shivaji, saying, "Go to where Tukaram is holding satsang, and arrest Shivaji, who is dressed as a brahmin." The soldiers reached the place where satsang was being held and saw many people sitting there. Saint Tukaram was singing devotional songs which he himself had composed. The soldiers were looking for the brahmin they were supposed to arrest but couldn't find him. They asked someone, "Is there a brahmin here?" The villagers knew only the brahmin from their own village, who happened to be the traitor, and pointed to him. So the soldiers arrested him. He cried, "It's not me! It's him!" But he was arrested and taken away. When Shivaji heard this, he believed that he had been saved by Tukaram's blessing. His love and reverence increased enormously and he decided to become his disciple.

As an offering, he sent two trays of jewels to Tukaram's home. Tukaram was not at home, but his wife was. She put everything inside the house. When Tukaram returned, he asked, "Where did all this come from?" His wife said, "Shivaji regards you as his guru and this is his dedication." Tukaram said, "I think only of God. Who will take care of all this? It will be a burden for me."

One of Shivaji's soldiers was standing outside, so Tukaram said, "Take all this away. I don't want it." When Shivaji saw the saint's spirit of renunciation he was greatly moved. He went to Tukaram, and, clasping his feet, said, "Sir, I want to be your disciple." Saint Tukaram said, "No, you should go to Saint

Ramdas if you want Knowledge of God.” So Shivaji became the disciple of Ramdas.

Saints come to show the way. They themselves are a model. Tukaram’s exemplary life impressed Shivaji, who was thus able to receive Knowledge from Ramdas, who was the spiritual master of the time.



Thousands of fish are caught in nets. However, if there is just one hole in the net, many can escape. Similarly, within us there is a ‘net’ which absorbs knowledge, and if the hole of ignorance forms in it, then whatever knowledge we have gained will escape. Lord Krishna explained to Arjuna, “You may read all the scriptures and worship all the deities, but all these actions are useless without spiritual Knowledge.”

Our duty is to worship the supreme God within. Saint Kabir said, “My mind is Mathura, my heart is Dwarika, my body is

Kashi". The body has been described as a temple in which the soul resides. We should also worship in this temple. The soul makes its home within the heart. What is soul? A part of God: *Ishwar ansh jiv avinashi*—'Because the soul is a part of God, it is indestructible.' We must worship and adore the soul. St Kabir said that the words of the saints are mysterious, and not easily understood. Someone who understands sees God. The words of saints are not easily understood and are usually interpreted by the intellect. You should understand what they are really saying.



Saints tell us to break the bondage of materialism, but we are free only in the worldly sense nowadays. The soul is enclosed by the three active forces of Nature—*sat* (purity), *raj* (passion or activity) and *tam* (inertia), and is drawn into incarnation after incarnation due to illusion and the impressions left by previous actions. How can such a soul be called free?

Space is inside a bottle. When the bottle is closed, that

element which is boundless becomes bound, because the bottle has dimensions within which the space is trapped. When the bottle is broken, however, it has no more restricting dimensions.

Similarly, through the power of spiritual knowledge, we have to break through the three attributes of Nature. Only then can the soul be free. We have to emerge from the bondage of maya to gain spiritual freedom, to realize Knowledge and perform desireless actions. The saints always emphasize the value of receiving Knowledge. By the power of Knowledge the bondage of the three attributes is broken.



Once, a hunter caught some parrots and was taking them away. On his way he met a saint who asked, "Where are you taking these parrots?" He said, "I'm going to market to sell them." The saint said, "Sell them to me."

The saint then taught the parrots to say, "The hunter will come, he'll spread his net, he'll throw some seeds, but don't get caught." After the parrots had learned this, he set them free. They returned to their flock and taught the others. Gradually all the parrots learned to say it.

One day, that same hunter came along and, hearing the parrots, thought that he would never be able to catch any of them. He returned very depressed. The saint saw him and asked what

was wrong. The hunter told him, "Nowadays those birds are very clever. They know how I'm going to catch them."

The saint said, "That's not so. Spread your net and see." The hunter said, "Sir, they are telling each other not to get caught." The saint said, "Cast your net again and see."

So the hunter went back to the forest and cast his net. Chanting, "the hunter will come, he'll spread his net, he'll throw some seeds, but don't get caught," all the parrots flew right into this net and were caught.

We are like that. We talk, but we don't act accordingly. Finally, however, everyone has to come before God, and be judged.



We cannot call any material thing *v. tchitanand* —truth, consciousness and bliss. Only the soul can be called that. We cannot find these qualities in wood or stones.

If a person becomes concentrated in spirit, he will automatically experience that bliss. Bliss comes when the mind is

concentrated. If it is not concentrated, then even if we are listening to sweet music we will not enjoy it fully. If the mind is centred we will have a beautiful experience.

If you are not hungry and you are given dry bread to eat, you will throw it away. But if you are very hungry and that same bread is given to you, you will gladly eat it. It will seem wonderful because you are concentrated on it.

If you have nightmares you do not sleep well. If your mind is restless and tense, your whole body is tense. Even if your bed is made of gold and the sheets are silk, you cannot sleep properly with a tense mind. Only a tranquil mind is peaceful, and a fluctuating, unstable mind causes tension.



Clouds shower rain equally on all places but the rainwater doesn't remain on the mountain peaks. It flows downwards and collects in ponds and lakes. Similarly, when great souls come to

show the true path to humanity, they shower their love and Knowledge equally upon all. There is no place where their sweet and holy message does not reach. But that message cannot stay on the mountaintop of pride. It flows into the lake of devotion and stays there. So to receive the benefit of the message of the great souls, we should not be like a mountain, but like a lake.

We read in the Gita, "Go to the realized souls, prostrate before them and humbly ask for Knowledge. When the saints are pleased with your service, they will bestow the Knowledge on you." However, those who teach the Gita are arrogant in their learning. How can they bow to anyone? Socrates said the real knower of soul knows that he knows very little. Similarly, if you have read all the world's scriptures, so many other types of books remain to be read. If you are well-versed in the Vedas, then so many Upanishads remain to be read. If you know Hindi, then English, Sanskrit and other languages remain to be learned. We should understand that the more we learn the more remains to be learned and the less we actually know. But if we take the shelter of the living spiritual master, we can get that Knowledge 'knowing which nothing remains to be known.' To gain this we have been born many times.



Moses saw God in the burning bush. He had an experience, and then he came down to speak about it. He asked God, "What shall I tell the people? How shall I tell them whose message I bring?" So Jehovah said, "You tell them, 'I am that I am,' and 'I am that I am' has sent you."

A person says, "I am a writer", or "I am a sannyasi," or "I am an actor". Everyone talks like this. For example, the same piece of gold can be made into a ring, a bracelet, or a necklace. These are separate forms, but the gold remains gold. In other words, everyone says, "I am me," "I am a writer", etc. but actually what am 'I'? We don't have that realization; we don't know that essence.

Jesus came after Moses. He went to John the Baptist and said, "Baptize me." John said, "No, you should baptize me." Then Jesus said, "Let it be done; you baptize me." So John went into the river and baptized Jesus, initiated him. The Bible says, "The heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon him. And a voice from heaven saying, 'This is My beloved Son.'". So Jesus had an experience. He said, "God is Light and in Him there is no darkness."

Like the divine Masters, we also have two eyes, two hands, and two feet, but what is that unique thing, that difference between us and them? What can we gain from them? You may say, "They had an experience of God. That is the difference. We don't have that experience, so we are ordinary people."

What did Lord Krishna give to Arjuna, what did he teach him, after which Arjuna said, "Lord, I called you my friend, I called you my companion. Please forgive me." Whoever receives Knowledge has a direct experience. Lord Krishna then says, "I am giving you the supreme Knowledge, the sovereign science, which is directly experienceable, enjoyable to practise and eternal."

You may say that this sounds very fine, but what it is? We say that God is formless and beyond the senses, so how can we

experience this? There must be some science, some path to experience this. So we have to search for that path.

All the great souls had a message. What was it? You should experience God, search for God. The Bible says, "The Kingdom of heaven is within you." To experience that you have to be born again. Any religion you study will tell you that religion is realization. What is religion? It is the experience of God. Anyone who has that experience understands the mystery of religion. A person who doesn't have that experience says, "I belong to a Hindu family, therefore I am a Hindu," but he doesn't understand the secrets of his own religion.

So awaken that consciousness within you, so that you know and realize God practically. If God exists, but I cannot experience Him, then what is the point of being devoted to Him? It is a matter of practical experience.



Swami Dayanand Saraswati set out in search of spiritual knowledge. He wanted to know 'Who am I?' He had studied the four Vedas thoroughly but still was not satisfied. He set out in search of a guru. Finally he heard about Swami Birjanand, a great saint. History tells us that Swami Birjanand was blind from birth. *Vid*, the root of *Veda*, means 'to know'. What was that knowledge, that *veda*, which Swami Birjanand knew and which had nothing to do with being able to see, and which the eyes cannot read?

If God can be realized by reading, then how did God exist for Surdas, the blind poet-saint? How did he realize God? But God is beyond the senses. God is Truth, consciousness and bliss. When people sing a prayer called *Arti*, they say, "You are invisible to the senses and You are the Lord of the breath." Do people ever think about what they are saying? If God cannot be seen with the eyes, if He cannot be touched by the hands, if He transcends intellect and mind, and yet is the Lord of all beings, how can He ever be known?

Science has progressed so far that man has reached the moon. But has science been able to bring us peace of mind? No. Modern man has made all kinds of progress, but have we realized truth, consciousness and bliss? If it cannot be experienced, why do the Vedas and other scriptures all glorify God?

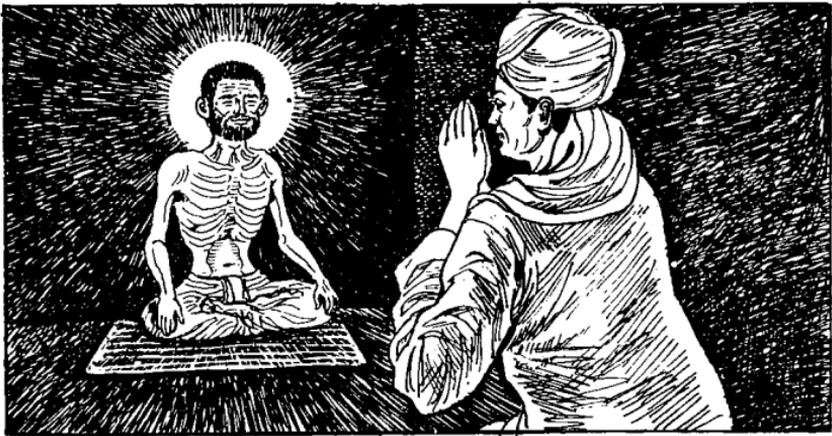
To solve this dilemma, Swami Dayanand set out to meet Swami Birjanand. It was night when he reached the Swami's house. He knocked on the door and Swami Birjanand asked, "Who are you?" Swami Dayanand said, "Master, if I knew who I am, I wouldn't have come to you at this hour of night."

What kind of knowledge did Swami Dayanand receive from Swami Birjanand? Swami Dayanand could read the Vedas, and he also wrote commentaries. So why did he have to go to Swami Birjanand?

Swami Vivekananda was very learned, while his spiritual master, Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa, was illiterate. What did Shri Ramakrishna teach him that Vivekananda, although well-educated, had not been able to learn? Even though Vivekananda

was an intellectual, he was ignorant of this Knowledge. Swami Dayanand was well-versed in the four Vedas, so what was that secret knowledge, what was that *veda* which Swami Birjanand taught him?

Everyone has two eyes to see the beauty of this world. We can see each other, but we can't see our own faces. You have to use a mirror to see your face. Similarly, we don't know our Self. The spiritual master acts as a mirror. He can show us what we really are. Swami Vivekananda and Swami Dayananda by themselves could not find out who they really were. Even they had to go to a spiritual master. By the grace of the master they, through Knowledge, saw and realized God.



Everyday you read in the newspapers about murders, violence and quarrelling. Why does this happen? Because humanity lacks peace. People are not peaceful within themselves. Peace is not a physical thing: it should be in the heart. When does someone find peace? When he receives spiritual Knowledge.

The true saint wants to establish peace in the land. By spreading truth he teaches the lesson of equality. In the fellowship of the saints, the educated and the illiterate, the rich and the poor all sit together and listen to spiritual discourses. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians sit together to listen to the truth. The saints

don't just talk about truth; they also give the practical realization of it. By the inspiration of the saints, Knowledge can be understood. Without inspiration, Knowledge cannot be known. Therefore, only through the company of saints can real peace, happiness and equality be achieved.



If you see me writing a letter, you will ask to whom I am writing. I must write the person's name. If you write a letter, you must address it, otherwise it will not reach its destination. Similarly, the letter of meditation must have an address. Did you ever wonder what you are meditating on? If you know the address, you will also know the destination.

A very learned person came to me and said that he performs *yagyas* (sacrifices to the sacred fire) and chants the *gayatri mantra*. When he was asked the meaning of this mantra, he replied that God is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient, and he interpreted *bhargo devasya dhimahi* as "O God of Light, I meditate on You." So I said, "This is your interpretation. Please tell me how you meditate and on which light do you meditate?" He was actually astonished by this question. If he had Knowledge he would definitely have been able to tell me how he meditates. But he said, "Maharaj Ji, it is formless, so how can anyone meditate on it? It is beyond words." I said, "If it is beyond words and mental

repetition, how do you know it?" He then said, "No, it is *nirgun*, attributeless." I asked, "What does that mean?" He replied, "You tell me." I explained, "*Ni* means no and *gun* means attribute. Pure consciousness alone is *nirgun*." He said, "No, it doesn't mean that. It means, 'that which is beyond attributes'." I asked, "If something is beyond qualities, how can it again acquire attributes? You and I are a combination of *sat*, *raj* and *tam*, the three qualities of Nature, so something that is attributeless is dwelling within these three attributes. So how does it exist within these three attributes? How do you know that it is attributeless?"

Actually, people are just observing rituals. They don't attempt to experience reality.



Draupadi was the wife of the Pandava brothers, heroes of the Mahabharata War. When she was wagered and lost in a bout of gambling, no one came to her aid. Then she remembered the Lord. With complete surrender she prayed, "Lord, now I depend on You." Then the Lord came and saved her from disgrace and humiliation. He said, "Draupadi, when you were in trouble, why didn't you call on me first? If you had, then no power on earth could have forced you here."

Draupadi said, "Lord, what could I do? When that wicked Duryodhana grabbed me by the hair and dragged me into the middle of the assembly, I thought, 'My husbands are sitting here;

Dronacharya and our other teachers are here. Maybe they can do something.” Then I saw that they sat motionless. So I called on all the members of the assembly in the name of decency and honour, but they just hung their heads.”

Finally, Draupadi remembered Lord Krishna. Even though he was about 400 or 500 miles away from there at the time, he saw what was going on. When Draupadi started to meditate on him, on the Holy Name, he protected her by making her sari endlessly long. Duryodhana pulled and pulled and pulled but the more he pulled, the longer her sari became, and he couldn't reach the end of it.

Stories like this tell us that there is a God, there is a power that protects. If a person remembers Him constantly, that power protects him.



If a person does not eat food for some time, he can still remain alive. Staying alive does not depend on food. If he doesn't drink water it will be more difficult for him, but he can still stay alive. But if a man does not breathe, he cannot live. What is the life-energy in the breath? What is that breath of life which is the

Lord of all creatures? What is it that creates and sustains human beings and all other creatures?

That life-breath must be realized. We should know what that power is which can make an unconscious thing conscious. If this energy, this soul, this Word of God, enters a non-living thing, it becomes living, aware. If that energy leaves a living being, the creature dies.

We have to search for God; we have to search for this energy. We have to realize what it is. Divine Masters come again and again to explain it to us, so we should try to understand, and for understanding, it is necessary to listen attentively to satsang.



When any divine master comes into the world, free souls come too, just to play their part. Tulsidas was one such soul.

It is said that once Emperor Akbar said, "I have heard about the greatness of Tulsidas. He has done some great miracles. I want to see some." When summoned, Tulsidas came and said, "I am a devotee of God, and whatever I do, I do for Him. I don't show miracles to kings, and in any case, I can't do miracles." So the emperor said, "Very well. Show me God." Tulsidas said, "That is not in my hands. It is up to God to whom He wants to show Himself." The emperor told his guards, "Put him in water." He was put in water coming from the same place as the water supply for Old Delhi.

He started praying to God. When a devotee is in danger, the Lord sends help. So, it is said that at that time an army of monkeys arrived and besieged the entire city. They tore at people's clothes and wrecked the palace. The citizens were frightened and confused. They went to the emperor and said, "Tulsidas has been imprisoned in the same water used for Old Delhi. That is why this is happening."

Tulsidas was brought before the emperor, who begged forgiveness. Tulsidas said, "Those monkeys were my Lord's army. If you want to see Him, just put me back in the water." The emperor said, "If I do that, my entire kingdom will be destroyed." After that, Akbar left Old Delhi and built a new city.

Such opposition and struggle often come in the lives of great souls, but they always stayed totally devoted to God. They were even prepared to give their lives for others.



Dhanna Jat was a simple man. Once a priest told him, "Take this stone image of Krishna and worship it. First of all, you have to feed the stone. Without feeding it, don't feed yourself." For three days Dhanna Jat was offering food but the statue wasn't eating. In our case we would say, "Oh, it's only a statue. How will a statue eat?" But Dhanna Jat's love was so intense, that it was beyond reason. And God is beyond reason! So he thought, "Maybe God is very busy and that is why He is not coming. Maybe Krishna has many other appointments."

But after three days he began to get angry. He took a stick and said, "Okay, Krishna. If you won't come down here, I'm going to beat you!" And Krishna quietly came, manifested himself, and ate the food. As he was about to finish the entire meal, Dhanna Jat stopped him and said, "Leave something for me! Don't eat everything!"

Such is the intensity of love. That intensity even caused the energy in the stone to manifest. And these people are called mad. But everybody is mad: some people are mad after women, some are mad after wine, some are mad after money. Spiritual people are mad after God. Everybody's mad! You can choose to be mad after God or mad after the world. You have a choice.



People say, "We want to see miracles." But I think the greatest miracle is that we have this human body. Without this body, no one can do any miracles. This is like the climax, this is the peak. Just imagine the dust of the ground formed in this way, experiencing, talking, listening, seeing different things. It's the biggest miracle; it's just amazing.

So this is the greatest temple, the highest temple, and once we know that energy within us, we can worship it in the temple we have; we can actually experience that power. And for that we need something which can actually provide us with insight. God has given us eyes, but we cannot see our own faces. We need a mirror to see our own face. In the same way, in this world, to actually learn spirituality, to know who we are, what we need is a mirror, a teacher. The teacher tells us and shows us who we are, and then we begin to see that. And that is why the guru-disciple relationship started a very, very long time ago.



Saint Kabir said, "If your mind is free you are bound; if your mind is bound you are free. If in this state you do action, you won't be affected by it." He who considers himself to be free and independent is actually bound. He whose mind is bound by the thread of Knowledge, by peace, is actually free, he really is independent. He is not the doer of action. He does action but does not consider himself to be the doer. He is liberated from the consequences of action. But he who believes that *he* is doing action becomes bound by the fruits of that action. He who thinks, "I am doing everything," who is egotistical about it, will receive the fruit of that action. He will not be liberated by that action, but bound. But he who acts without considering himself to be the doer, and instead considers himself to be only an instrument, cannot be bound by the results of an action. This means that he is free.



To cure his disease a patient goes to a doctor, but he won't benefit by just seeing the doctor. He must describe his symptoms and ask for medicine. The doctor will examine him, prescribe medicine, and give him strict instructions. If after taking the medicine his condition does not improve, the patient will return to the doctor. Then the doctor may say, "When I gave you the

medicine I imposed some dietary restrictions. You didn't follow them, so you are not getting cured."

We suffer from the disease of a restless mind. To be cured of this we have to go to a saint and ask for the medicine of peace, which is spiritual Knowledge. Saints give this medicine, but if we don't observe the restrictions that necessarily are part of the cure, we won't get any benefit. We must observe moderation. If we don't do this, we let this chance slip through our fingers. But if we follow the instructions, our disease will be cured. The first and foremost thing is to abstain from maya, from worldly temptations. Saint Tulsidas said, "The spiritual master is like a doctor, who gives the medicine of Knowledge. We should have faith in Knowledge and abstain from worldliness. Then we can be confident of liberation."



Once Dronacharya wanted to examine his students in archery. He placed an image of a bird on a tree and told all the students to aim at it. Before letting each one shoot, he asked,

“What do you see?” Each one replied, “I see you, I see the other competitors and I also see the tree.” Then he asked Arjuna, who replied, “I see only the bird’s eye and nothing else.” When Guru Dronacharya gave the order to shoot, all except Arjuna missed the target, whereas Arjuna hit the target right in the eye.

If a person has Knowledge and is devoted, automatically his mind becomes steady in its aim. He does not concentrate on worldly things and is not subject to pleasure and suffering. At the time of death as he leaves his body his mind is fixed on God.

When a soldier aims at a target, his rifle must be completely steady. If the rifle shakes, he will miss the target. This also applies to a devotee. If his mind goes to Bombay or Calcutta or to his home, how will he hit the target? How can he progress spiritually if he has an unsteady mind? It is most important that the mind be steady.



In the Gita, Lord Krishna, describing the greatness of Knowledge, says that when a man reaches an ocean or a lake, he’s no longer interested in a small pond. To explain this further, he says that those who receive spiritual Knowledge don’t rely on the Vedas any more.

How far does our intellect reach? As far as the small ponds, I think. If you judge objectively how far your experience of peace

extends, your inner voice will say that it is as limited as those small ponds. You haven't yet reached the ocean. You should leave the small ponds and try to reach the ocean. The soul can give us more joy than we can imagine, but we only will know that by experiencing it, not by mere discussion.

Various types of delicious food can be placed before someone, but if he doesn't eat, his stomach will not be filled. Similarly, everything we do is externally-oriented, but all these activities are useless if our minds are restless.



During the American goldrush, one rich man bought an entire mountain, brought in machinery and started mining. This went on for an whole year, but he didn't strike gold. Finally he decided to sell the mountain because it was unprofitable. He advertised in the newspapers that he had a mountain believed to contain gold for sale.

A stranger came along and offered to buy it. The owner was very pleased. The terms were settled and the contract was drawn up. Then the previous owner felt guilty and decided that he'd better tell this person that there really was no gold in the mountain. So he confessed everything, but the other man bought the mountain anyway.

After some time, the new owner struck gold. The man who had sold the mountain was very distressed and asked, "How did you find gold? For one year I tried but it took you only a few days!" The new owner said, "You were a fool. The gold was only five feet further down. If you had kept digging, you would have found it. But you gave up, so now you are the loser. I kept trying so I found the gold."

This also applies to us. If we stop practising, if we stop our spiritual digging, then we can't realize the spiritual treasure within us. But the devotees who kept on digging throughout their lives, who kept diving into the depths, found it. So first and foremost, we should constantly meditate and dig deep within. Lord Krishna's command was to constantly meditate. But because of some inner weakness, people do not understand. When do we get rid of weaknesses? When we make an effort, when we labour. Striving is necessary in the path of devotion.



Meditation is essential in life. Meditation is a must, because if you don't meditate on God you'll be meditating on your wife or your girlfriend or your son or your job. These objects of meditation are temporary; they will soon pass away. But if you meditate on God, if you meditate on the Word of God, then

nothing can harm you. Through meditation, you can merge in God, and you can experience the bliss which is within us.

We should not be inhibited. We should come forward to have and to share that experience which is already within us, and which is to be manifested. It is like a magnet. That magnet can only exhibit a force when it is brought in contact with an iron piece. In the same way, we can experience that spiritual magnetism when we function like an iron piece and go before a spiritual magnet. A preceptor, or a spiritual teacher, is like a spiritual magnet. He imparts the spiritual vibrations which we can perceive if our hearts are pure. If you are pure, then you shall find God. And really, we must be pure in heart; we must do pure deeds



Many people in India believe in Hanuman. There are even more temples dedicated to him than to Lord Rama.

Once, Sita said to Hanuman, "You have served us very well, and I am very pleased with you." She gave Hanuman a pearl necklace. He took it and started pulling it apart. People saw this and said, "He is breaking that valuable necklace. How can a monkey know what is valuable!" They asked him, "Why are you breaking such a valuable thing?" Hanuman replied, "I am

looking for God in it." People said, "How can God be in this necklace?" Hanuman replied, "God lives in the hearts of all, so I am looking for Him." Someone asked, "Isn't God in your heart, too?" Hanuman replied, "Yes, He is," and the story goes that he opened up his heart and showed everyone Rama and Sita there.

Doctors also open up hearts. Do they see God there? So what does it mean that Hanuman, by tearing open his heart, showed everybody the Lord?

Saint Kabir said, "Draw aside the veil and meet your Beloved; God dwells in every heart." Nowadays, many ladies in the East don't wear the veil. Does that mean that they have met God? No. So first of all we have to understand what that veil is and how to remove it. It is not easy to understand what the saints say. To understand their secrets, we have to associate with them. He who understands their mysteries will see God. The first step in the ninefold path of devotion expounded by Lord Rama is association with the holy. Then we can understand the intricacies of their words..



Blessed are those who have understanding. Even in common day-to-day living it is the man of understanding who matters. Understanding has a wider connotation. The deeper the understanding of a person, the higher is the level of his consciousness. The understanding of the world around us soon makes us feel that there is a permanent substance under all that is fleeting and passing over. Without permanent substance, even the temporary fleeting phenomena perceived through the senses are not understandable. They also exist because of it. Therefore, the highest level of understanding is to understand the highest substance, that is, the permanent in the impermanent, the intransient in the transient, the infinite in the finite. Men of such understanding are called the wise men in this world.

The Knowledge revealed to you is essentially the knowledge of the permanent in the impermanent, which is known as the pure consciousness. The petals of consciousness, which are so tender and sensitive; intelligent and all-knowing, pure and innocent, remain closed without this Knowledge. With this Knowledge, the blossoming of the consciousness to its natural extent starts taking place. This is the real revolution, the only revolution which spiritual people work for. All other revolutions bring changes only, but this revolution brings transformation. All other revolutions are collective, social and political, but this revolution is individualistic. And the real revolution starts with the individual.



Once there was a devotee who read that Lord Ganesh is the greatest deity of all, so he decided he'd better worship him. He installed an image of the deity in his house and followed the prescribed rituals. He offered food. One day, while he was carrying on his worship, a mouse came and carried off a sweet. The devotee thought, "If Lord Ganesh cannot protect his own sweets, how will he protect me?" He concluded that the mouse is more powerful than Ganesh, and started worshipping it. Many mice came and ate sweets.

One day a cat came there, pounced on the mice and killed one of them. The devotee thought, "The cat is greater than the mice. I should become a devotee of the cat." That very day he installed an image of a cat and started worshipping it. Many cats came around and he fed them milk and sweets.

One day, a dog came to the shrine. It barked when it saw the cats, frightening them away. That devotee thought, "The dog is greater than the cat, so why shouldn't I worship the dog?" When he started worshipping dogs, the dog had the free run of the house.

One day, the dog went into the kitchen and starting eating something. The devotee's wife got angry and hit the dog. It yelped and ran away. The devotee thought, "Even greater than the dog is my wife!" So he began to worship his own wife.

As sometimes happens in domestic life, the husband and wife had an argument, and he slapped her. Then the idea occurred to him, "I slapped her so I must be more powerful than her but didn't know it."

Similarly, the infinite power of God is within you. That power sustains the whole universe. Those who have known it say that the same energy which moves the atom also moves each and every human being. A car moves only if there is an engine inside it. What is the engine within us that makes us move? We have forgotten but we have to know it. We have to realize this engine. The true spiritual master gives us the knowledge of that engine, of that energy. That Knowledge is not bound by any religion. It is

all-pervading and the essence of all, but only a human being can realize what it is.



Radios run on electricity. The radio station transmits signals which the radio receives. It needs electricity to do that. A car needs petrol and oil. To stay alive a person needs food. Similarly, to become worthy of God's grace, we have to do something. We have to stay firm no matter how often the worldly illusion tempts us.

Aruni was a disciple living in his master's ashram. One day the master said, "Aruni, my boy, go and see if the water is entering the fields properly, because the level of the river has risen." Aruni went to inspect it and saw that a section of the riverbank was broken and too much water was flowing into the field.

He tried to stop it with stones and mud, but this didn't work. Finally, he lay down across the breach and stopped the leak. He lay there all day, because if he stood up the water would again burst into the field.

When he did not return, his master became concerned and started looking for him. He found Aruni lying there and said, "What are you doing?" The disciple humbly answered, "Master, I tried several times to dam up the water. This was the only method that worked. Otherwise, the field would've been badly damaged." The master said, "Is this field worth more than your life?" He was extremely pleased by his beloved disciple's spirit of service and self-denial. This is how Aruni became worthy of his master's grace. To become worthy, a disciple must do something. There is a saying, "God helps those who help themselves."



It is said, "Saints are very benevolent. Just like the clouds bring rain, saints bring the gift of Knowledge and extinguish others' distress". When the ground heats up, clouds form. When the clouds cool, rain falls. They give the gift of coolness; they make everything cool like themselves. This same quality is in saints. Shri Ramakrishna gave spiritual insight to Swami Vivekananda, and then Vivekananda worshipped him. He made Vivekananda like himself. Today, Indians worship Hanuman as well as Lord Rama, because Lord Rama didn't make him a mere servant, he made him like himself. Saints and divine personalities have the ability to make men into gods. They awaken the divine

qualities within us. Then a man is not just a man; he becomes a saint.

Once, Angulimal, a robber, accosted Lord Buddha and said, "Give me whatever you have." Buddha said, "I don't have anything except spiritual Knowledge." Angulimal said, "I don't want your Knowledge. Give me your clothes and bowl." Buddha said, "Very well. I'll give you everything, but first do one thing: break off one leaf from this tree and give it to me." Angulimal pulled hard on the branch and the whole branch broke off. Buddha said, "I said to pick only one leaf, but you broke off the whole branch. Put this branch back on the tree." Angulimal said, "I can't stick this branch back on the tree." Buddha said, "If you can't do such a simple thing, how can you bring back to life all those people you have killed? If you cannot bring them back to life, what right do you have to kill them?"

When Angulimal received Knowledge, a great interest in meditation arose in him. He changed completely. He took the refuge of Lord Buddha, received Knowledge and became a saint. He spread the Knowledge to many places.

Saints bestow the great Knowledge that elevates a person and makes him great. Thus it is said, "A saint makes you like himself." A saint takes the lowest of the low and makes them like himself.



A man is his father's son, but that doesn't mean he remains only a son. He can also be a father to his own sons. There is a mystery in this that you should understand. In the Gita, Lord Krishna told Arjuna, "In the beginning I gave this Knowledge to Vivasvan." At that time, the Lord was in his eternal, absolute form. When he came as Krishna, to maintain the spiritual tradition, he served his guru, Sandipan.

Arjuna surrendered to Lord Krishna, saying, "I take refuge in You. I don't know what is best for me. Please tell me what I should do."

The Lord said, "I will give you that eternal, self-existing Knowledge." When he gave Knowledge of the soul to Arjuna, he assumed the role of Guru, and devotees believe in him thus. As the Lord, he came to establish the true and eternal religion, and is worshipped thus.

When obstacles come in the path of devotion, when devotees are confused and the right path is not being shown to them, the Lord manifests. A tree is not made from a seed; it manifests. The tree is present in the seed. God has all power. When unrighteousness dominates the world, and religion becomes perverted, that Supreme Energy, having all powers, manifests and He propagates His own Knowledge.



The Lord comes to the devotee who serves sincerely and desirelessly. Samarth Ramdas had a disciple who was very innocent and simple. Ramdasji said to him, "I have to go away for a few days. Take care of the temple. Look after the Lord's daily routine as carefully as you perform your own. There should be no difference." The devotee said, "I will do that."

In the morning, the devotee brought a water pot and said, "Lord, it's time to go to the bathroom." His heart was so pure, and his devotion so sincere, that the Lord was enchanted by his innocence and simplicity. He could not help but obey. If a devotee loves Him, God automatically loves him.

So that devotee was doing all his duties, and the number of sadhus coming to the temple was increasing. So the devotee said to God, "See, I can't serve You properly. I need help." So he said to a statue of Hanuman, "Hanumanji, what's the use of just sitting here all day? Please turn the wheel of the mill." So Hanuman himself appeared, saying, "If the Lord Himself obeys this devotee, why shouldn't I?"

In other words, true devotion dwells in the heart of a sincere and selfless devotee. Lord Krishna said, "If someone offers Me even water or a leaf with sincere love, I manifest Myself to receive it."



If we stand beneath a tower, we can see for a short distance. If we stand on top of it, we can see the entire city. We can see it all. Knowledge is like a tower. After receiving Knowledge, a person stands on top of the tower of spirituality from which he can view all religions. He can perceive the truth in all religions.

After reaching the top of this tower of Knowledge, we really can see the whole world. We can understand all the scriptures and theories: we can understand what all the saints and divine masters were saying. But if we remain standing at the base of the tower we will never be able to see. We will see very little. We won't be able to see what is in front and what is above. This tower of Knowledge is essential for everyone, and we should climb it.



Once I asked a priest, "It is written in Saint John's Gospel, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.' Could you please tell me what that Word is?" He said, "That Word is Christ because Jesus was the son of God." Then I asked, "How can it be that the son existed before the father? Because in the *beginning* was the Word. If we believe

that the Word was Jesus Christ, then the meaning is that Jesus Christ was in the beginning. How can it be that the son is born before the father?" Then the priest said, "No, no. The Word is the Bible." So it means that he believed that the Bible was that Word which was in the beginning. But the first book of the Bible describes the Creation. If the Bible itself is a creation how can it describe the Creation and how can it be in the beginning? This means that it is ridiculous to say that the Bible is that Word.

Knowledge of the Word is the gift of the saints. It is the origin of everything. We cannot pronounce that. It is within you.

Jesus Christ was fasting for forty days. Satan said to him, "Tell God to turn these stones into bread for you." Jesus replied that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that God utters in him. We are alive, aren't we? That means that God is speaking that Word within us. To know this we have to become introverted. When you become introverted, the Knowledge will be revealed to you. That Knowledge is eternal, it cannot be destroyed. When you go within, you will see that this Knowledge is inside, not outside. You will know what that Word is which keeps you alive. Saints come again and again into this world to give the holy gift of Knowledge.



Once a sculptor made two identical statues. He brought them to the king's court and said, "I challenge anyone to tell me the difference between these statues, even though they look alike." The king and the courtiers examined them, but couldn't find any differences. They were exactly the same in weight and colour. They were exact duplicates of each other. There didn't seem to be any difference at all. So the king proclaimed that anyone who could find the difference would be highly rewarded. So people started coming, and they said a great deal about these statues. They evaluated and praised them, but nobody could tell the difference between them.

Finally one person came, and thought, 'There must be a difference.' So he asked the king to get him some thread. He inserted the thread into the right ear of one statue and it came out from the left ear. He then inserted the thread into the right ear of the other statue, but all the thread went into the stomach of the statue. So he found the difference.

So even though human beings might seem to be alike—they could appear to be very intelligent, they could be exactly the same, but the difference is that one may hear and never think about what he hears, while another person hears and digests it; he hears and lives it. So the first quality of a person who is treading a spiritual path is that he should listen to holy discourses, then think about that then live it. This is the first criterion for becoming a spiritual being.



Most religions and sects preach that God is within, that the body is the house of God. So if God is within us, why should His Name and Form be somewhere else? They must also be within us. Do we ever search for Him there? What is His Name and Form? 'Name' means something to be known, and 'form' is something to be seen. God has simply become a topic of discussion, but actually His Name and Form must and can be experienced.

I am sitting here. Are my name and form separate from me? If I close this envelope and send it to Bombay, will my name and form reach there also? No, because my name and form stay with me. Similarly, if God is within us, then His Name and Form must also be within us. If you want your child to come to you, first you will call his name, and then automatically he will come. This same principle applies to the path of devotion. The relationship between a name and its possessor is everlasting. They cannot be separated. When we call God's Name, when we meditate on the Holy Name, then the possessor of the Name automatically comes to us. It is said that the relationship between Name and Form is extremely intimate, in the same way as heat and light exist together within fire. The relationship between the Name and the referent is so intimate, that when we call the Name, the possessor Himself appears before us.



Once, some milkmaids complained to Yashoda, Krishna's mother, "Your son is eating dirt." So Yashoda grabbed Krishna and said, "Are you eating dirt?" He said, "No, mother." She said, "Yes, you are! Open your mouth!" The Lord closed his mouth tightly, so Yashoda forced it open. Then what did she see? Within his mouth she saw suns, moons, galaxies, all the universes and creations. She was totally confused, and thought, 'I can't be seeing all this! Is this my child? How did all this get into his mouth?' The Lord saw that his mother was afraid, so by his power of illusion he made her forget everything. She only remembered that he had eaten dirt, and she scolded him.

We enjoy the story but we don't understand its significance. If thousands of worlds were inside the Lord's mouth, then what is inside us? Within us are also thousands of universes, but we don't know. This subtle microcosm is projected as macrocosm in galaxies and solar systems. In the centre of the solar system the sun functions as a nucleus, and the planets revolve around it. In the centre of the atom is the nucleus around which the electrons revolve. Whatever is outside is also within. The saints said that whatever is in the external universe is also in the inner realm. Therefore we have to become introverted, we have to dive within. This is called meditation.



Once someone asked me, "Why do you talk about *realizing* Knowledge? Everyone says that if you teach a child from the start to do good work and to speak the truth, he will be able to acquire knowledge wherever he goes."

I replied, "Imagine there is a closed, dark room which is full of dust. Will the dirt be cleaned out first, or will the light be turned on first?" He said, "You will have to turn on the light first, because you can't see the dirt in the dark." So I said, "Right. You were saying that we should first speak the truth, clean the dirt, and then attain knowledge. It's the other way around. First have knowledge, turn on the light within yourself, and then automatically you will come to know everything. Then you will really be able to clean your heart. If this does not happen, the darkness will never be removed and the Light will not shine."

So first, receive Knowledge.



Once there was a royal minister who had many bad habits, one of which was taking bribes. Finally the king got fed up because so many people complained, so he told the minister, "I'm going to post you near the harbour and your job will be to simply sit there and count the waves." So the minister went to the harbour and every day he would sit there, count the waves and

write the numbers down.

One day, the prince's ship returned from a foreign country. As his ship was entering the harbour, the minister stopped it and told the prince, "You cannot enter the harbour." The prince asked why. The minister replied, "Because my job is to count the waves, and if your ship comes into the harbour it will disturb all the waves so that I cannot count them. So you cannot bring your boat inside."

The prince was very puzzled, and thought, 'I am supposed to be a prince, and this fellow is stopping me from entering my father's harbour?' "Very well," said the prince, "I'll go to my father and get an order." The prince obtained a royal decree, which was, 'STOP NOT, LET HIM GO.' He brought this to the minister and said, "Now let me go into the harbour." The minister said, "No, I can't let you through. This decree says, 'STOP, NOT LET HIM GO.'

So words can be twisted and changed. If Knowledge could be transcribed on a piece of paper, then it could be twisted, it could be mutilated. That is why Knowledge is given to a living soul by a living soul, and this makes it a living Knowledge of God. It makes the Knowledge alive. If you transcribe anything into books, it makes it dead.



Now people should meditate because the times are very bad. The world is passing through a great crisis, and the crisis begins with *I*. It's all *I*-ness: *I* for Iran, *I* for India, *I* for Iraq—it's all a crisis of *I*. So all must meditate, because the power of concentration is so great that if people want to help themselves and mankind, simply by the power of concentration and by positive forces we can eliminate the negative forces. Otherwise, there is no way out.

Many prophets have predicted calamity and destruction, and many predictions have turned out wrong because through concentration, through Knowledge and through positive forces, people have been evading those catastrophes. But if the negative forces increase, there is no way out. To a certain point we can avoid, but the whole fight is between the forces of light and the forces of darkness. What is day and night? It is a fight between night—darkness—and light. At night we sleep, we close our eyes, and in light we wake up. People who live in light will be awake, and people who remain in darkness will sleep—they'll become unconscious. And the people who simply imitate others will have a lot of problems, because one must know reality for himself.



There are four types of sound. Three emanate from the diaphragm, throat and lips, and the fourth is beyond speech. We use the first three in speech. What is that sound beyond speech? To understand this we must go beyond the first three sounds. To

know this transcendental sound, we have to find a realized spiritual master. A master is important, because he gives Knowledge and shows the path to liberation. Life has no time-guarantee on it. Therefore, take advantage of this opportunity to receive true Knowledge.

When a body dies, where does the soul go? If soul is everywhere, how can it leave? The point is, first of all you have to understand that soul is not everywhere. Let me explain it to you. If a bottle is open, the space inside the bottle is infinite. When the bottle is closed, that space inside becomes finite. In the same way, when we have a soul in a body, that soul is bottled up, it is closed, in a way. Even though it is infinite, still that soul is limited, completely caged by the attributes of nature, the three modes of *prakriti*—in scientific terms you could say electron, proton and neutron. So the soul is caged, even though it is infinite. When the soul is released, or when through meditation we break the bondage of the attributes, then it becomes omnipresent, it merges with the infinite. When a drop of water merges in the ocean, it becomes absolute; you can't separate it. But before that, it is separated. In the same way, due to this *prakriti*, due to this darkness, we have been separated. The difference between our consciousness and God's consciousness is only one step. It's only one step.

