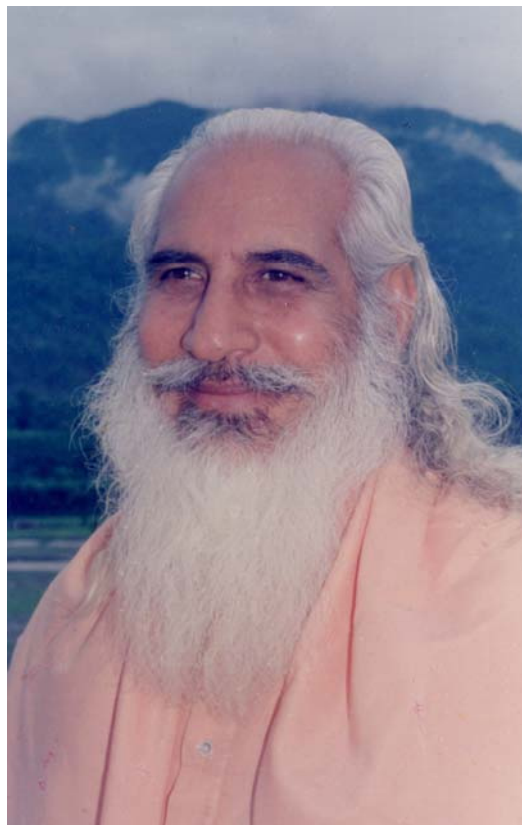


The Practical Approach to Divinity

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DEDICATED

To

The Lotus Feet of my Preceptor

Pujya Mahant Sri Girdhari Das Ji,

As a Token of Deep Love And Sincere Reverence.

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Om Namah Shivaya

Foreword

"...Will you please write the Foreword for the second edition..." revered Swami Ji's command was received by me. A command which I dare not evade ; a command which I must carry out, howsoever incompetent I am to do so.

I am not one of Swami Ji's *shishyas* (disciples).I can, however, modestly claim to be one of his devoted admirers. "But, of all the many deserving, competent persons around, how is it that Swami Ji wanted me to do this onerous duty", was my restless thought, my predicament. For a while some strange thoughts, bordering on unwisdom, crossed my head: could it be my journalistic aptitude and training; my good academic record culminating in Diploma in Journalism and Master's degree in English ; my nodding acquaintance with philosophy, religion and spiritualism ...could these be ascribed to the command in question ? I wonder.I have no claims to merit this honor ; I am just an humble aspirant.

I met Swami Ji for the first time a little over three years ago, when, as a Central Government Officer, I was working as an Assistant Director of Military Cantonments. I am continuing in Government assignment. Prior to my meeting with him, my mother, a devoutly religious lady, had met him at Haridwar during one of her frequent visits there. On her return she spoke to me a good lot of good things about Swami Ji.As I am a bachelor, my mother runs the house for me, often leaving me to the care of the domestic servant, while she goes

to Haridwar "to have the darshans of the supreme Mother Ganga and great Chandra Swami Ji" as she puts it.

Impressed by my mother's account of Swami Ji, I wrote him a letter, an extract of which is reproduced below:

"...O no, Sir, I cannot lay any claim to spirituality. I am just an humble speck in the Big Scheme of God : a restless soul groping for the Way, a trifle earnest soul yearning for the Over Soul. Somehow, however, I have always inwardly and strongly felt that my rendezvous with destiny lies on the path of spirituality and not on the material, worldly way of life, howsoever "comfortable" or "respectable" it may be, judged by the time-honored, common standards of world or life around us. Time refuses to indicate or speak to me clearly what is best for me. But I stick on to my Ishta, Lord Shiva, like a helpless child clutching his hands at some invisible object for support... Perhaps, I am not ripe as yet : perhaps. I am not an *adhikari* (one who deserves) as yet, to put it in spiritual parlance.

...I love silence. Often a strong feeling has been growing in me for the last some years that silence is one of the most apt ways to hear the *silence*... So far I have not been lucky to run into my *Guru* (Preceptor). When he comes, where he comes from-I have left the problem to God... He knows Best ...If all goes well and if exigencies of my official duties give me some respite, I propose to come down to Haridwar sometime next month. It shall be my honor to have your darshans....

Swami Ji wrote to me a few guidelines as under :

"...The true aim and purpose of life is the supramental vision of Truth - a first hand, direct and immediate perception of God. The life of the Spirit, could we faithfully turn to it, is abundantly richer and exceedingly sweeter than the life of the flesh. The things primarily necessary to grow into the life of the Spirit are :

- (1) A burning aspiration, a perpetual earnestness for the Supreme Ideal.
- (2) An inward concentration.
- (3) An unbroken guidance of, and touch with, some spiritually inspired one.
- (4) Regular daily sittings in prayers and meditations.
- (5) Cultivation and contribution of a selfless love and service to humanity.

...I shall be delighted to meet you if and when you come here..."

I have deliberately given a capsule-like sketch of myself and reproduced the extracts from Swami Ji's and my first letter to each other, so that aspirants like this humble self may see a glimpse of their own story and reap the benefit of Swami Ji's lucid directions.

Subsequently, over the period of three years we have met a number of times. Every time I have met him is no less than a rewarding experience. It is a soul-evolving exercise. He is an unassuming, smiling figure whose style of simple living and high thinking, away from the madding crowds, at once captivates you. Though about forty in age, Swami Ji exudes the ennobling wisdom of a rishi (sage) of a thousand years.

His words, spoken and written, move the heart and soul in such a way as you would feel their entwining thrill, leaving you a changed and better person, as it were. His spell is so direct and superb.

Prompted by the spiritual urge and Divine Call, Swami Ji left off his studies in M. Sc. about sixteen years ago and took to the life of a spiritual recluse. Thereafter for a period of about eight years he led an austere life and devoted himself completely to meditation in a solitary cave near Jammu. For the

last seven years or so he is living in a hut on a small thickly-wooded island, by the side of which the sacred Ganga flows, a spot near Haridwar. The eternal, elevating music of the Ganga and the magnificent mountain ranges around fill the spot with an eerie touch and a lofty repose. Where he lives there is no other human soul around. The holy Ganga, the trees and the birds give him company. Sometimes dangerous reptiles and wild animals also come near him, as if to do their obeisance to a great soul, before they go back to their hideouts in the thick forest.

Swami Ji observes *Kashta Mauna* (complete silence) for six months in a year, during which period he neither speaks or writes to people, nor can or should they disturb him with their anxiety to meet him in person. He retires in his lonely hut during the *Kashta Mauna*, the first spell of which is of two months-January and February every year. During the second spell of *Kashta Mauna* of four months every year (15th June to 14th October) in the thick of rainy season the water of holy Ganga rises in volume and fury and flows for miles around the little island on which Swami Ji's hut perches in its unique glory. During the rest of six months every year, Swami Ji gives his *darshahs* (public appearance) in or near his hut daily in the late afternoons for an hour and half. His devotees, disciples and other visitors go to him in the afternoons to listen to his moving *Parivachnas* (religious and spiritual discourses). During these moments in the poetry of Nature around, Swami Ji strikes you as a great artist, a great philosopher, a great yogi and a great rishi, whose words move your entire being-body, mind and soul. A glimpse of his thought-provoking and ennobling *Parivachnas* can be had in this small book (The Practical Approach to Divinity). With most of us often it is the irksome experience when we are bewildered to find ourselves lost in the labyrinths of unmanageable and difficult religious books ; when we are tossed about in the huge mass of words of pedantic philosophy and involved religious thought. Such big, frightening and intricate books break your back and maul your mind, as it were ! But, when you go through this small book of Swami Ji's

the effect is a refreshing and rewarding experience of life. In simple, lucid, effective prose one reads about the salient features of spiritualism and the cardinal principles of human life and its true aim. In brief chapter after chapter the book systematically cuts across the cobwebs of *maya* (delusion) which veils human life and smoothly takes thereader along the path of spiritual aspiration, self-purification, annihilation of ego, selfless work and complete surrender to God.

Before closing, I would like to revert to what I said in the beginning : I wonder how Swami Ji picked this humble self to write the Foreword on his book. Readers would kindly forgive my being reminiscent as I cannot help doing so in the context of the situation. Some years ago I undertook a sort of a vow that I would not write anything for publication till 19.... ! Some years ago I found myself at war with myself.If I may use a figurative and symbolic expression, the choice was between Hollywood or the Himalayas ! While Hollywood represented the material urges and the intellectual "propensities" in me,the Himalayas did the spiritual ! My writings-in the fields of poetry, fiction, drama,short story etc. : some published in journals, some unpublished ; some finished, some unfinished-lie unattended to in some forgotten box.Over the years, since my vow, I have a vague feeling that the scales seem to have tipped more towards the spiritual in me ! I only hope and pray that the pressure of the spirit may ultimately transcend the material and intellectual promptings in me. I leave it to God. He knows Best. Perhaps, it is the result of some good Samskaras (innate tendencies) of one or more of my previous births that I have been called upon to modify my vow before 19.... and do this Foreword only !Perhaps, the reason may be something else.It is a mystery I would continue to wonder about.

Sorry for the digression. To revert to the subject proper, I would say that Swami Ji's book is the enchanting story of the Prakriti (Nature) Jivatma (Soul) and the Atma or Brahman (Self or God) simply and beautifully told.It is not in the nature of a dream, a riddle or empty idealism. True to its name, the main thread of the book is,

indeed, practical approach to Divinity. This book cannot be bettered. The quintessence of great Hindu spiritual thought and lore is compressed in about hundred pages of sublime wisdom. Indeed, a masterly feat of a super mind !

Readers would kindly forgive me for any slip of feeling or thought on my part or in this Foreword. But, may I humbly say: "who forgives whom !"

Jai Shiva !

Ram Paul,

New Delhi

May, 1969

Introduction

Nearly a decade ago, I walked slowly up a hill towards a solitary, small, tent pitched on the top, under the shade of an old mulberry tree. The sun was about to set ; there was a shower of golden hues on the majestic mountains surrounding the beautiful Kashmir Valley. The midsummer verdure of fields and forests, of pastures and plains, of rivers and lakes presented a bewitching prospect on every side. Just opposite the hill, at the distance of a few furlongs only, a lotus-lake reflected the charm of the evening as it began to bloom amidst a feast of colors. There was a stillness and silence which seemed to calm the most restless of all things, the mind of man. As I reached the spot, I found a few young men, sitting quietly, in a semi-circle facing a vacant *asana* which lay at the foot of the tree. Except for the rustling of the mulberry leaves and twigs, there was no sound or movement. Even the sheep, which dotted the right and the left sides of the hill, made no motion. I joined the silent, small company, and, with out ever knowing it, in a few minutes the silence and still ness of the scene enveloped me. After a while, I became conscious of a gentle stir inside the tent. Soon the flap was lifted and a graceful figure, wearing the robe of a *sanyasi* walked forth, and occupied the *asana*. All of us got up and bowed to him. As he sat there, he seemed to me like a steady and gentle flame of peace and inward happiness. His eyes reflected the repose of his mind. That was Chandra Swami. I fell in love with him at the very first sight.

My visits to the saint increased ; these became frequent and, after some time only, I became a regular visitor. As evening followed evening, I discovered an inexplicable charm and extra-ordinariness about Chandra Swami. He unfolded himself to me petal by petal. Evening after evening Chandra Swami talked of on many things, on God and renunciation, on purity of mind, on Self-Realization, on

saints and *sanyasins*. I had read of these things before, and even heard many spiritualists on these topics, but I had never felt as much interested in them as I felt when this young *Sadhu* spoke. He made very difficult things ,easy, and he spoke in a simple way. He spoke beautifully and convincingly and frankly ; he spoke from experience. That was the secret of his charm. Prior to him, among so many, I had been deeply moved by only one saint-Swami Laxma Joo, known at home and abroad, as Ishwarsaroop Ji, the glorious Shaiva Saint of Kashmir in the line of the great masters, Abinovgupta and Utpala. Meeting him is meeting rare good fortune, and seeing him is having a glimpse of God. Some people revere him because he is great scholar (the greatest Shaiva scholar of the present age) but I love him deeply because he loves everyone even the sinners like me.

Under the mulberry tree, Chandra Swami continued to give discourses regularly. The number of listeners and devotees went on increasing. He came to be looked upon as Bhagwan Vyasa reborn for the benefit of the erring generation of the Kali-Yuga. Whoever listened to him once, never failed to turn up again. His frankness and openness, his love and affection, and the sincerity of his devotion impressed everyone. Even the non-believers in God, on seeing him, and on hearing him, began to have second thoughts on their attitude to life. It would be interesting to recall how a discourse started. It never started in any formal or academic or ceremonial way.

It started from nothing ; it developed from the insignificant talk on trivial matters of day-to-day life : a spark lit a fire, a scratch let loose a river at its source. The Swami talked and talked till the evening deepened into night, and the stars and the moon too joined the audience.

Those of us who have had the good fortune of coming into contact with the sage, will never forget him. He is the breath of our being ; he is the life of our life. As I write these words and bow to him in love and reverence, I am the dust of his feet.

The present volume is the story of a dedicated pilgrim on the path divine. The reader cannot but feel assured of the truth of the story. It is

this rare quality of the veracity of experience that distinguishes the book from the generality of books written on the great and inexhaustible (and inexplicable) spiritual theme. It would almost be an exercise in futility to define God and His ways in terms of logic. Argumentation and intellectualism can never help us to understand the un-understandable. Human understanding, however powerful, is limited and, as such, it cannot measure that which has no limit. With every new development of spare-age science, we are convinced of the limitlessness of the Creator's powers and the limitation of man's effort. Man is more than man now, say an angel or god performing miracles, but alas ! he is more and more unconscious of the vastness and immensity, and even mystery of a Power controlling the strings. As he will move higher and higher into space, he will only say of himself : "Look at the petty done and the undone vast". The enlightened ones of all ages and countries have shown that one can comprehend the otherwise inexplicable source of creation if one supplements reason with faith and love, if one gives up argumentation and performs the experiment, if "one roasts one's heart with the fire of love" (as the great Kashmiri woman yogi of the 14th century B.C., Lalashori would put it). The book describes that experiment and, hence, its spontaneity, simplicity and appeal. When we have read it once, we surely like to re-read it. That makes a book powerful even as a piece of literature.

This pilgrim's story would not be as interesting as it is, were it not essentially a story of deep and sincere love. The beloved is God. Non-existent, invisible, unreal, factitious -you would say, but for the lover He is real, visible everywhere, lovable and charming. His love has made him a stranger to every other object in the world. He has surrendered himself to Him unreservedly and he has set out on the rare venture of becoming one with Him. Even the atheists cannot but feel deeply touched by the sincerity of the writer's views. Some chapters are bound to instill even the ideas which need to be pursued for their newness, if for nothing else.

The book is valuable because it heightens our awareness of the spiritual view of life. The restlessness of the modern world justifies

the need of such a view but what is more important, modern science in the present hour of its big leap forward, is showing an un-mistakable tendency of disregarding total dependence on sense perception ; there is a weakening of emphasis on the finiteness of the objective world. The atom is in the process of dissolution and if your pursuit continues, you may some day feel the movement of a mysterious hand. A great purposelessness seems to be there in the universe, balls moving in immeasurable spaces, and towards what end ? Call it purposelessness in the language of today's advanced thought or call it "The free will of the Lord" as the sages of the Himalayas have termed it in their writings. Once we choose to think on these lines, the wisdom of the spiritual philosophy becomes apparent. That wisdom is there in this book. It is, as a matter of fact, a digest of the great Shastras, the Upanishidas the Vedas and the Gita. After reading it, you feel that you have gleamed a rich harvest of spiritual thought, that you have heard the great sages and saints, and devotees of God. Chandra Swami awakes us to the greatest responsibility we have-that of knowing ourselves. Once the first rays of this new birth of a new thought are visible, the great question of God, and Soul and life begin to disturb us, and we are set thinking. The first chapters of this book provide valuable guidance towards such thinking, and then we see the footprints which the great lovable sage has left on the path. Let us follow these.

At the feet of the Master !

T,N. BHAN

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Srinagar

May, 1969

Does God Exist ?

God exists. He is so evident that it requires no testimony to prove Him. No proof can strengthen His Being, nor can any refutation weaken it. Things other than Him can be proved or disproved but not He.

God abides in us as our true self. Self is self-evident. Does the existence of one's own self need any proof ? The most immediate feeling of every one : "I am" is not illusion but a real, intuitive experience. On the other hand, if one were to say unto oneself : "I am not", one would be denying what is only real and true. If a person were to force this position upon himself, he would not be a normal individual because his experience would not be empirically valid. A living individual cannot think that he is not live. In other words, one cannot experience one's non-existence or one's unawareness.

Now it may be noted that the "*I-ness*" constituted in the experience, as connoted by the phrase, "I am" is not to be confused with what is conveyed by the term "Ego". Whereas ego is a variable and individual mental operation influencing behavior, the experience of "*I-ness*" is universal, constant and true. One has to dive deep within to get this pearl, this real I. Discrimination of the Ego and the true self is the discrimination of the false and the true, of the unreal and the real. True self is much too real, much too obvious to need any disputation.

This brings us to think of consciousness, consciousness not of this or that object but consciousness as it is in itself, consciousness as it is synonymous with God. God is Consciousness, we can say unhesitatingly. Can consciousness be disproved ? Without consciousness how would one disprove the existence of consciousness ? Consciousness is an indispensable means even for

disproving its unreality or existence. In any argumentation of proof or disproof of anything three factors are involved : the prover, proof and the proved. We could draw a triangle to illustrate the point. In the disputation of consciousness, even this triangle gets illumined because of consciousness itself. This triad is embedded in consciousness and, at the same time, it is transcended by it. This should suffice to show that consciousness is self-proved. If someone were to come to us saying sweetly that he had no tongue, would we not feel amazed ? Could we at all believe him ? Is it not consciousness, therefore, that gives to all proof the very ground of possibility ? All things are dead. It is verily consciousness that gives them life !

TAMAIV BHANTAM ANUBHATI SARVAM
TASYA BHASA SARVAM IDAM VIBHATI.

Those who take consciousness to be a product of matter, an effervescence of a carbon compound or a mere mechanical adjustment of chemical elements and physical energy are only playing, as it were, with the superficialities of Existence. They are strangers not only to the deep intuitions of the Inner Being, but also to the higher flights of rational thinking. Those rationalist friends are required to be a bit more rational. How can matter feel pain or pleasure ? Is it ever possible that matter can by any transformation become capable of perceiving, knowing and dominating itself ? Suppose, for the sake of argument, we take consciousness to be a product created in time. This presumption will naturally make us curious to know the sort of Existence that would have been there prior to the emergence of consciousness. What was pre-consciousness state of creation, we might ask ? One may propose any theory in this regard but it is bound to be hollow owing to the lack of direct proof in its favor ; a direct proof for the existence of anything or any state must involve consciousness. In simple words, such a consciousness-less state of Existence would not, therefore, be regarded as possible or real. It would be absolutely unreal like the

horns of a donkey, which have never been seen. To conceive of consciousness, therefore, as a product or a thing created, is entirely illogical.

"We can think of large spaces as easily as of the small ones-our conception of a mile takes no more room or effort than our conception of an inch. We can think of larger stretches of time or concentrate on a moment's memory. We can, at will, reduce, magnify or combine images regardless of how they have been combined in our experience." Does it not show that consciousness is not limited in time or in space ? Is it not, therefore, a fact that the beings who manifest the highest degree of consciousness dominate creation ?

Consciousness, the central fact of spiritual intuition, is absolute. It is *purna* or complete. Furthermore, consciousness which is perfect must essentially be of the nature of Infinite Bliss or Infinitely Blissful, because it is the feeling of limitation in consciousness that implies non-bliss. Consciousness, which is free from the feeling of limitation, is nothing but Bliss. The Lord, therefore, is synonymous with Existence Absolute, Consciousness Absolute and Bliss Absolute.

Do we not pray unto the Lord Supreme in moments of utmost distress when there is no hope of escape from anywhere ? It is in this way that the assertion of the Invisible Power can be felt. Also sometimes our difficulties, which only a short while ago appeared insurmountable, vanish without the least effort on our part and we feel overjoyed. Would you not then admit the working of the Hand of God ? Again, does not He, as your Inner Conscience, forbid and condemn you from within when you become unduly extrovert and are about to perform some unholy, malicious act ? Does not your inner Being, in the rare moments of mental quiet and silence, leap out and aspire for some unknown, eternal peace ? At times such things do happen and no law of Nature can apply to them ; they elude all explanations. Do not they provide you with a glimpse of something which is beyond and above the laws of Nature ?

Who makes the human body with such a marvelous self-adapting and self-adjusting system, which baffles even the highest human intelligence ? Who paints so artfully the feathers of birds, which even a master-artist cannot copy to exactness ? Nature, you may say. But what is this Nature? Is she intelligent or unintelligent? If she be taken to be unintelligent, then such excellent and skilful feats cannot be accomplished by her. Then Nature has to be regarded as a Supreme Intelligent Power. There should be no harm in giving it the name of God, and, thus, accepting the existence of the Almighty Lord.

All things with their dispositions in this universe are found, when carefully examined, to be working not fortuitously but according to certain set laws : the Sun, the Moon, the Earth, the Stars, move in an ordained course with definite velocities and they do not clash with one another. The seasons, the day and night come and go rhythmically. Who is directing and controlling this cosmic play ? Does not all this indicate some Infinite Supreme Intelligence secretly guiding this system of cosmos ?

Who makes your lungs move ? Who makes your heart beat ? Who gives luster to your eyes ? Who makes your hair grow ? Who makes your mind think, your ears hear and your feet walk ? Have you ever tried to know this "Who" ? If we think seriously for a while, we find that the visible world is nothing but a conglomeration of the qualities of sound, color, taste, touch and smell. Can qualities hang in the void ? Can they exist without any base ? What is that which supports these qualities and gives them substantial existence ?

The world may also be conceived to be an incessant flow of energy. Wherefrom does this energy flow ? It must have some source behind it. What is that infinite and inexhaustible reservoir from which all this universal energy is oozing out ?

Everyone wants to live a deathless life ; consciously or unconsciously everyone is ultimately in pursuit of boundless and ceaseless joy. There is also in us an innate desire to know more and more. What does all this show ? Does not it indicate, even indirectly, that there is something beyond rational understanding, call it Life Eternal, Bliss Unlimited and Knowledge Infinite ? Is it

not the Absolute Sat-Chit-Ananda who is calling us from within or drawing us from without, ever on ?

Things of the world change incessantly, that is a common experience. Now, change in anything, say A, can be perceived only when there is some other thing, say B, which is less changeable in comparison with A. Again, the change in B can only be known, when there is another thing, say C, less changeable than B.

Similarly, the perception of change in C inevitably requires the existence of a thing D less changeable than C..... we can go on like this indefinitely until we reach something completely unchangeable, and realize that change can be perceived then and then only when there be something which does not change at all. What is this Unchangeable Something ?

You say, "Seeing such and such things at present, I am the same "I" who saw such and such things twenty years ago". This assertion of yours proves the fact that you are the same being existing at present, who also existed twenty years past. In other words, your "I" who existed twenty years ago, unchangeably exists even today: Who is this "I", the Immutable "I", whom you proclaim to have existed in the remote past and who is immutably persisting even today ? Your physical body, which has been completely changed, cannot, surely, be this "I" because your physical body such as it was twenty years ago is not exactly the same today. It has changed quite a bit. Very similarly your mind, your intellect and your ego too have undergone many mutations and, therefore, cannot be regarded as your "I" which has not changed. Unchangeably persisting in the past as well as in the present, who is this "I" of yours ? As it is yours, so also it is every one's intuitive experience of the unchangeability of "I". Now the question that arises is : "Would this "I" persist even in future ?" Yes, certainly it will. Rather, it already does exist in the so-called future. The experience "I am not" is never possible-as has already been said. Besides, certain cases of pre-vision of the remote future, as established by holy persons and yogins, are quite genuine.

How can these be explained without taking this "I" to be existing already in the phase of time, which a finite Centre indirect-

ly knows as future ? Does not it show that this "I" exists immutably in past, present and future as well ? It would be better if we say that all past, present and future exist in this "I".

The phenomena of extra-sensory perception-telepathy, clairvoyance and clairaudience which modern Psychology has acknowledged as true experiences-happen even in ordinary life. Does it not confirm the Vedantic Truth that Time and Space have no reality for the real "I" ? What is this "I" before whom all space and time are contracted into a Zero? Let us try to know this true "I". It has been appropriately remarked that to know the "I" is to mount to God.

We find men, particularly holy persons, denying the world, the body and the mind. How could such denial be possible if there were not in men `Something' other than body, mind and intellect ?

Modern science is veering round to the position which accepts that behind everything there is a perfect magazine of power. Evolution is now being explained less and less on mechanical lines and more and more on the principle of an involved freedom and spontaneity concealed within everything. Modern Psychology has almost recognized the existence of a consciousness which has no bounds and of which the personal, pragmatic consciousnesses are only but imperfect reflections that *"live and move and have their being"* in the former. Biology and other sciences are also on their way to admitting indirectly the existence of God one way or the other.

There is, on the other hand, no consistent argument for disbelieving God. What is, after all, the proof in favor of the non-existence of the Lord ? Do you deny His existence on the ground that He is not visible ? The stars are not visible during day time, but their existence cannot be denied on that account. Pain and pleasure, too, cannot be seen, but do you not accept their existence ? Can you afford to deny the existence of the places, things and events which you have not seen yourself ? Can

we say that our grand-father never existed because we never saw him ? The existence of our father is proof of the existence of our grandfather. Exactly, in the same way, if we do not see the Lord face to face, it does not mean that He does not exist, because He is found unmistakably revealed all the time in saints and in His devotees.

Provable or improvable, God exists. People ask: "Does God exist ?" The Blessed one answers interrogatively : "Does anything exist except God ?" People ask : "Where is God ?" The Blessed one replies : "Where is God not ?" Yes friend, God does exist. He is always there with you and within you, rather you are in Him and you owe your existence to Him and Him alone. He is not far away sitting in the clouds and giving mysterious orders. Dwelling in the heart of all beings, the Lord moves them, without being moved Himself, through His essential power. He verily is the "Unmoved Mover."

He pervades everything and transcends everything. In fact, He cannot be disbelieved. One who disbelieves His existence, may be compared to a fish who would disbelieve the existence of water, or to an image disbelieving the existence of its prototype.

Yes, beloved friend, God is nearer to you than your breath. He is closer to you than your Sushumana*. He is the Life of your life, the Mind of your mind, the Ear of your ear and the Speech of your speech : *Shoratrasya shrotram manso rnano yat vachoha vacham sau pranasaya prana.*

*Sushumana is a `NADI' running through the spine, generally closed, and the opening of it through Pranayama and other mental disciplines confers upon an individual extraordinary powers and Bliss of the Divine Union.

God is the most compassionate Divine Father who loves you more than your worldly father, mother, sister, brother, your friends and your wife. It is actually you who have turned your back upon Him. It is actually you who have betrayed Him. It is you who are running hither and thither and trying, as it were, to elude His Hands.

It is because of your blurred vision that God seems to be a mere myth or an unapproachable something to you. Should a blind man refuse to accept the existence of Sun, merely because he cannot see it ? Should we drink poison simply because nectar is beyond our approach ? Should we indulge freely in the appetites of the flesh simply because God-attainment is difficult and requires arduous discipline and complete transformation of outlook ? If we cannot have access to the Divine, should we bow to the devil and accept him as our master ?

The Lord has been spoken of as the Real of the real ones, *Satasya satyam*. He speaks to you everlastingly ; but you do not hear Him because of the disturbing noise of the doubts of your skeptical intellect and the tumult of the uncontrolled impulses of your heart. Had you an Eye, you would see Him in the twinkling of stars ! Had you an Ear, you would hear Him in the throbbing of your heart and beatings of your pulse ! Had you a Heart, you would feel His presence even in a speck of dust ! And then filled to the brim with the feeling of the omnipresence of your sweet Lord, you would joyfully exclaim : "This whole world is verily Braham" -*Sarvam Khalvidam Braham*.

How engrossingly sweet and irresistibly transporting it is, O Lord, to find oneself in Thy loving Arms and in Thy soothing Lap !

The Lord is always with you. May you be always with Him.

Om Om Om

God can and must be attained

Whether the foregoing pages can deserve to be classed as an essay on the existence of Divinity or these may appear just ramblings on the great spiritual theme, the main idea set forth therein-the idea of the existence of a Supreme Power-should be clear to the reader. Those who have no belief in Him may, after reading these pages, agree to reassess the situation, and those who have never felt disturbed by the great question, may be prompted to think awhile on the subject, and those, who have believed in Him all along, may find their belief stronger than before. For those who are on the path of God-realization, it is a great advantage to have strong belief in Him. It helps the mind and makes it light in moments of despair and despondence. It keeps up one's hope even in adverse circumstances and it eases mental tension. It improves conduct. A firm and steady belief in God as a loving Father, changes character and does bring, to a certain extent, a transformation in consciousness, too.

Spiritual *Sadhana* may be said to comprise right belief, right method of research, ultimate spiritual experience and Fulfillment. Of these the last three factors are verily based upon the first, viz. right belief. First of all, there must be belief ; then one should start the search and the method of research should be right, because through proper research alone can the ultimate spiritual experience and the Fulfillment possibly occur. A non-believer would neither perform the *Sadhana*, nor would he be able to attain to the Lord. As such, the great teacher, Yamaraja, while teaching the most competent aspirant after Truth, Nachiketa, says in the *KathaUpanishada* : "*To him and him alone, who takes "God is" to be quite true, who believes in the existence of the Lord, is God-realization granted ; how can others who are non-believers, find Him ?*" - "*aste iti bruvato anyatra qatham tad uplabhayate*". Very obviously, the believers alone can ever set out to explore the Lord and may ultimately reach Him.

But to believe in God is not enough. It is insufficient, because it does not dispel all doubts and cannot afford to bring in the unmoved

and immovable condition of being. Mere belief in God is not enough because it is only strong conviction, which creates real self-confidence in the aspirant and helps him to refute arguments advanced against the existence of God. These arguments can also be refuted through the evidence of certain happenings and observations. The crux of the matter is that without the direct perception of God, neither can one have an unshakable belief in God's existence, nor can the intellect have an unalterable determinate conviction about Him. That is to say, that so long as a thorough recourse to the Divine is not accomplished, the faith unto the Lord does suffer from some residue of infirm doubt and indeterminate reason-*na asti budhir ayuktasya na cha ayuktasya bhavana*.

The direct experience of the Lord, therefore, is necessary. As a matter of fact, it will be our greatest misfortune if we miss it in this very life. Kabir says :

"O Friend, hope for Him whilst you live, Know Him whilst you live, understand Him whilst you live ; for in life deliverance abides.

If your bonds be not broken whilst living, what hope of deliverance in death ?

It is but an empty dream that the soul shall have union with Him because it has passed from the body ;

If He is found now, He is found then ;

If not, we do but go to dwell in the City of Death."

(Translation by Tagore)

Thus it is not only possible to find God in this very life, but it is very essential for everyone to do so.

Here it may be useful and relevant to refer to the great rishis of yore. If we make an honest and unbiased attempt to understand them, we shall realize that they have had a scientific approach to spiritualism, and that they have performed rich experiments and found out great truths. They have all along depended on verification as a sure method of establishing the veracity of an

experience. It would be as unscientific to refuse to understand them as it would be stupid not to accept the truth of a known scientific theory. These rishis have always said, "Friends, God is everywhere ; we have seen Him, and you, too, can see Him". Instead of dismissing their experience as fiction, we must come up and make an experiment with Divinity and strive to realize the Lord. The attitude of an "arm-chair-scientist" is nowhere praiseworthy.

Yes, God can be known at first hand. He can surely be sought and found. Not only this, it is He alone who can be attained for certain. The things of the world are transitory. How can you get hold of them or find them ? Their attainment may only seem to be an attainment today, but it will be inevitably changed into non-attainment tomorrow.

Real attainment is that which does not change. The Lord is immutable and immovable. When He is found, He is found forever. It is, therefore, said that it is God alone who can be found in the real sense of the term.

"A bird in hand is worth two in the bush"-you may argue. But in this case, too, a wise man will think seriously. The fowler's satisfaction in catching birds can never be everlasting. Whatever money he may get for the bird he has got in hand, it will not last indefinitely and the next day, if not earlier, he will again have to cast the net with all the uncertainties involved in the process and, thus, the poor fellow can never be at rest. This applies to all worldly pursuits. It is not at all possible to satiate our desires completely and to gain tranquility through the enjoyment of different worldly objects. "Man's desires cannot be exhausted nor satiated through their indulgence and enjoyment. As fire burns more vigorously when fuel is poured on it, so also the desires, which are sought to be satiated through self-indulgence, are positively multiplied, instead of being minimized or exhausted."

It has also been wisely pointed out that "even if a man were to get, at one and the same time, all the worldly riches and worldly objects of enjoyment, they will not be found sufficient to gratify his thirst for enjoyment". The Demon of desire is a glutton whose

hunger can never be satisfied. This being so, instead of deluding ourselves by the concept of "A bird in hand is worth two in the bush" and, thereby, giving up ourselves to the free play of self-indulgence, we should devote our energy towards spiritual fulfillment. In other words, the wise should engage themselves in the task of God-realization.

And, then, why should you fall a prey to the pessimistic idea "God may not be found after all" ? Do you need a greater authority than that of the Great Prophet, who assures, one and all, "Seek and ye shall find" and "Knock the door and it shall be opened unto you" ? Needless to dispute what is already established ! Great saints of all religions and countries have directly visualized God and attained perfection. There are saints living even at present who have known the Lord at first hand. Such blessed ones have appeared in every age and in all countries from time to time, in order to fulfill the divine work of spiritual evolution. Nature functions impartially. The Law of Nature is always impersonal. If Christ and Chaitanya saw God, you can also see Him today. If Moses or Ramdass saw the Light, why can't you see it ? Truth makes no discrimination ; the big and small are treated by it equally. If Socrates or Shankra ever knew the Truth, you too can realize it today. If the Buddha and Ramana attained to Nirvana or Salvation, why can't you ? If one man can get one thing, the other man can also get it, provided he pays the proper price for it. Mere intellectual knowledge of God is of no value. He must be seen face to face. He has to be realized and possessed. It is so because it is "He" alone that can quench the thirst of your soul. Reliance on worldly things and external circumstances for happiness is a great delusion. Is it not a big blunder to expect permanent happiness which is the sole motive power, veiled or manifest, behind every action of man in the objects and events that are of passing nature ? Permanent peace and happiness can only be found in something which must be permanent itself. "Nothing but the Infinity of God can come up to the infinity of the soul and give it complete rest." Money and status, name and fame, and place and power cannot give you entire and permanent peace and

satisfaction. *"The eternal happiness comes to the lot of those wise ones alone who have found the Supreme Lord in their hearts ; and not to that of the others"* - declare the Upanishads. This theme is underlined in the Upanishadic treatises, so much so that, at one place, the rishi goes so far as to say that without immediately perceiving the Divine any effort to be free from misery is as futile as the attempt to roll up the sky. The aspirant must, therefore, be cocksure that the fulfillment of his or her needs and desires lies not in the pursuit of worldly objects and temporalities but in the Eternal Lord and in His attainment.

The Lord can be attained within no time. The delay in realizing Him is not due to Him but due to us. For mounting up to the Supreme Self we can and ought to do something more than reading books, indulging in unnecessary discussions, listening to lectures, devoting a few minutes to daily prayers or following the police-man morality. Certain rules and regulations of spiritual life must be observed ; certain conditions of the Great Way must be fulfilled.

Every science has methods of investigation. One cannot become a Chemist by sitting down somewhere and shouting "Chemistry, Chemistry". For that purpose you have to go to some school or college, study there for some years, and then you are to go to the laboratory to perform experiments. After years of living away from home, keeping aloof from active politics, isolating yourself from all unnecessary contacts, spending a lot of time and money and working hard day and night you get a degree of Doctorate, and are considered a competent Chemist. Even then your knowledge in that branch cannot be taken as complete and your authority in that subject is not final. Similar is the case with the studies of physics, psychology and other branches of learning. The same applies to Spirituality. If for the attainment of limited knowledge of a single ordinary subject such sacrifice of time and money is required and such absorbing hard work is needed, how great a sacrifice would be needed to know God, the Infinite, after knowing Whom nothing else remains to be known-*yad giyatwa na ih bhuyo anyat gyatavayam avshishyate*.

We do not set about performing a task without some prior preparation. It takes only seconds to drink water but days to sink a

well. It requires only one second to switch on the light, but lot of time is needed for completing electric-fitting in the house and for getting the connection from the power house. It takes only minutes to take meals but lot of time is taken in securing and cooking the rations. It will take little time to realize the Truth, but the *Sadhana* is a long process, demanding perseverance and ability.

Come up, friend, and be up and doing. God-attainment is practicable as also urgent. Take to the *Sadhana* of spiritual perfection. In this lies your real good ; in this lies the good of your society, of your nation, of your country. What is more, in this alone lies the good of the entire world.

Om Om Om

The Basic Qualifications

God, in His pure and essential nature, reveals Himself to you when your consciousness rises beyond the confines of Time and Space, and enters Timelessness and Spacelessness. But in order to reach His Divine Threshold you have to be equipped with some indispensable spiritual and moral qualities. The most prominent of these essential requirements for the sacred pilgrimage are sincerity, purity, spiritual discrimination, dispassion or *vairgaya*, self-control, selfless work and service, metaphysical thinking, self-surrender, perseverance and spiritual contemplation. Leaving the last of these for detailed exposition in the next chapter, it seems necessary to shed a little light on each one of the remaining requisites mentioned above.

Sincerity

Majority of people in this world are theists. They do accept and acknowledge, in one form or the other, in this way or that, under this name or that name, the existence of God. Theism generally gives them the feeling that they have a right to approach the Lord when they sometimes find themselves in such a difficult situation as is beyond their control, or else when they implore Him to fulfill their worldly needs. In this class of theists there are, let us admit, a few individuals who, having been convinced through deep thinking or through the association with enlightened ones of the "Must" of God-realization, do aspire to find the Lord. But even all such awakened souls cannot be whole-heartedly striving for divine fulfillment. Doubtless to say, rare are the aspirants who single-mindedly wish spiritual perfection and work for the same in a determined manner : *munushyanam sahastrashu qaschit yatati sidhye*. Such souls, whose only aim is spiritual perfection, perform many acts in order to achieve the Supreme Goal. They go to temples and mosques ; they attend spiritual discourses everyday; observe religious vows; read scriptures and practice charity ; some of them even sit for contemplation and concentration ; but they do not find

God. There is no tangible progress in their *Sadhana* ; their lives do not show any transformation. They are found today to be just the same undeveloped, unregenerate and uninspired individuals as they were when they started their *Sadhana* a few years ago. They do not find inner peace. Why is it so ? It is because they are not sincere about what they want ; they are not serious about what they do ; they do everything mechanically, superficially, conventionally, or, by way of imitation. They fail in their mission mostly because they lack sincerity. Some of them even go astray : "*main bavari khojan chali rahi qinare baith*", they go on performing the *Sadhana* with the motive of achieving something pertaining to some lower level of existence rather than the highest. Sometimes they totally abandon their effort of finding the Truth. How can such people expect to find the Lord ? Can He be realized without seriousness and sincerity ? It may be made clear that here sincerity means spiritual honesty. This is the most important of all the qualifications for a seeker of God. What do you want to achieve in life ? What do you live for in this world ? Let every aspirant after Truth search his or her mind and ask himself or herself the question everyday, " What am I living for ? " .Is God the only goal of your life, or is He only one of the many ideals which you aspire to realize in life ? Spiritual honesty makes it incumbent upon you to make the Lord the only purpose and aim of your life.

Do you give the highest importance to God-realization or do you invoke Him merely for worldly ends ? Sincerity unto the Lord demands that He should be approached only for His sake and not for name, fame or power. Temporal things have to be made only a means to God : God is not to be made a means for temporal things. One who asks for worldly things in lieu of worship, which one offers unto God, is, in the words of Bhakta Prahalad, just a trader and no more : "*yasya ashish ashaste nasa bhritaya sa vai raniqa*".

Granted that you take the Lord to be the highest object which one should achieve and you really wish to find Him ; but what are you doing to realize your ambition ? Are you making the best of the means you have got, in order to find Him ? Is your wealth, your

body, your mental and intellectual power being utilized correctly by you for God realization ? Yes, that alone would determine the depth of your spiritual honesty.

It is a fact that man gives up a thing of low price in favor of another thing which appears to him to be of greater worth. Are you ready to give up your worldly things and relatives if God-attainment requires you to do it ? How much time do you devote for worldly pursuits, and how much do you spend to arouse the latent invisible Divine in you ? That is, indeed, the measure to assess the sincerity of your spiritual aspiration.

Sincerity unto God is the greatest secret of spiritual *Sadhana*. Be sure, if you become even ninety percent sincere, then one half of your "journey" is accomplished.

Purity

Having known what spiritual sincerity signifies, it may be asked : "How can one be spiritually sincere and what should be done to develop this requisite?" It is the purity of being that gives birth to and rears up spiritual sincerity.

One important thing to be mentioned here is that almost all virtues are correlated with one another. They grow and develop in close relation ; one aids the other. They are interdependent. Evil tendencies, too, are mutually linked in the same manner. If one evil tendency takes firm root in a man, all other related propensities also appear in him. Similarly, if one good tendency gets weakened in man, all other related virtues also become weak. In this context it will not be out of place to quote here a useful piece of dialogue between King Bhoja and the famous poet, Kalidas.

Once the great poet Kalidas went in disguise of a *Bhikhshu* or monk to King Bhoja in order to beg food from him. Seeing his `Kantha'(The dress worn by a mendicant-an apron-like dress) with many holes in it and in a worn-out condition, the King said to the *Bhikhshu* - "Your Kantha (gudari) seems to be very, very old ?"
Bhikhshu- "It is actually not a `Kantha'.It is a fishing-net. "

King - "Do you, the monks, catch fish and eat them ?"

Bhikhshu- "I take wine and cannot do without fish when I drink."

King - "But taking of wine and meat is absolutely prohibited for monks ?"

Bhikhshu- "I don't take them daily. I drink and eat fish and meat only when I have to go to a prostitute".

King - "Oh ! you go to prostitutes also ?"

Bhikhshu- "I fear none. Placing my feet on the heads of my enemies I walk on unalarmed."

King - "But how is it that people happen to become your enemies ?"

Bhikhshu- "I amused to gambling also. For that purpose I need a lot of money, and to fulfill this need I have to take recourse to stealing as well. Thus, many men turn against me and become my enemies."

King - "Oh Lord, this recluse seems to be filled with all kinds of sins."

Replying finally, the poet, disguised as the monk, exclaimed in a serious tone : "When one says adieu to one noble propensity, other good qualities abandon him automatically. Similarly, when one evil tendency possesses you, others do the same and overcome you unfailingly."

The relation between sincerity unto God and purity (both of whom are members of one and the same family of virtues) is circular and reciprocal. They are, as it were, wedded to each other. The more pure you become within and without, the more sincere you grow towards God ; and an increase in sincerity unto Him, in turn, accelerates your efforts to purify yourself.

What is meant by purity ? Does it mean keeping away from conjugal sins ? Does it consist in keeping your body and your house neat and clean ? Does it lie in refraining from telling lies and cheating others ? Yes, it means all that, but it also means much more. Purity signifies complete absence of ill will, evil motives, untamed emotions and disorderly passions in an individual. All the weak-

nesses of an impure mind, such as lust, greed, wrath, delusion, hypocrisy, are to be totally avoided. Cravings and aversions of the vital being (who in the Veda is symbolized as the horse, to be offered as sacrifice in the Yajna of self-purification, performed for God-realization), corruption, self-exaltation, envy and the ego-the mother of all the weaknesses-must be exorcised. So long as even the shadow of such degrading negative propensities lingers in an individual, it is not at all possible to find the Lord in this life, nor is it possible to enjoy the emancipation of a blessed life. This emancipation is not realized by any one except by the person who is free from the weaknesses as mentioned above- it is not tasted by the intellectual knowing different systems of theology or who is well-versed in different schools of philosophy, or by one claiming to be aware of mysticism or claiming mastery over it." ***God Experience, much less its fulfillment, is denied to him who has not isolated himself from sin ; whose mind is ever unsteady and unsatisfied ; it is denied to him also who is not at peace with himself, even though he may possess sharp intellect in his day-to-day life"***, says the *Katha Upanishada*.

On the positive side purity entails the inculcation of all the cardinal virtues, such as frugality, non-violence, humility, selfless service, contentment, forgiveness and simplicity. These qualities lead one to the path of Divinity.

Purity also involves fairness in daily dealings based on justice and impartiality. It demands the purification of all the elements which go to make a personality-the body, the *Prana*, the mind and intellect ; it also implies the purification of *vaivhara*, or external behavior.

How and by what methods and means can this spiritual purity, this lofty state of being, be achieved ? Is the performing of the pilgrimage to the holy places and ablutions, or the opening up of a free kitchen for the poor, reading of the scriptures or going into physical mortifications sufficient to that effect ? These things verily do some good if performed

not conventionally but faithfully, with a spirit of deliberate sacrifice.

As regards the efficacy of severe physical austerities in the development of purity, let it be borne in mind that extreme physical tortures like extreme fasting and harsh bodily penance are not advisable to be resorted to. Instead of purifying the mind, they may bring about a swelling of self-pride and a violent puffing up of the ego. Moreover, they may prove so harmful that even the collapse of the body, and, consequently the collapse of the *Sadhana*, cannot be ruled out. Also, there is a danger of the insurgence of an uncontrollable reaction and revolt by physical-vital consciousness, which may spoil the entire *Sadlaana* and spell spiritual disaster. Instances in this regard are not wanting. We know the cases of some *Sadhakas* who adopted such violent methods to compel God to fulfill them (and to capture Him, as it were, forcibly) either became invalid for themselves and for the society after many years of harsh penance, or else returned to the course of such extreme self-indulgence and self-gratification as even an ordinary *Sadhaka* would like to refrain from.

The most efficacious means of self-purification are a clear understanding of the nature of things, the perpetual invoking of Divine Grace and Lord's help towards that end with constant remembrance of God and constant discrimination.

Discrimination

Today man runs about fast and blindly. He does not know the whence and whither of his life ; he simply runs and runs. At times he stumbles, falls, gets up and runs again, but he does not know where to go and why there is all that fuss. He does not want even to think of it. This is a state of grave degradation. Even animals, through evolution, are rising up from a lower state to a higher one. But alas ! the man of today is, through indiscrimination and blind pursuits, on the way downwards.

Man is considered to be a higher being than the animals because he has the faculty of thinking. He perceives things, evaluates circumstances, chooses and acts, subconsciously in the beginning, consciously when he grows up. He does all this mentally. The animal also perceives, evaluates, chooses and acts but it does it merely instinctively. The superman, who rises up beyond the limitation of discrimination, as also beyond the partial intuitions of mental consciousness, performs all these acts through super-mental intuition, in the form of entirely spontaneous activity.

Another important thing which must be thoroughly understood is that spontaneity of consciousness-the spontaneity of essential Bliss, knowledge and activity of consciousness - does abide, though concealed and veiled in various ways, in each and every plane of world-manifestation, but in the lower hemisphere, which because of being a plane of ignorance, and which is operated upon by three modes of *Prakriti*, there happens to be a difference in the revelation of the essential powers of consciousness owing to the variation in the thickness of the veil which the modes of Nature constitute. In the consciousness, represented by the five senses of perception, are found the bliss, intuition and spontaneous activity of one order, and in the mind-consciousness of the other order. Animal is a being who belongs totally to senses, whereas man is essentially a mental being.

In man consciousness is firstly revealed in the form of mental discrimination and, afterwards, as the partial light of mind-intuition. An animal cannot know the things which are super-sensual. Man is able to get a glimpse, through discrimination, of the existence of super sensual things, forces and beings, and can partially know them directly through mental intuition. The status of super-mental consciousness is actually beyond the grasp of mind. It denotes the complete establishment in the whole being of the perfect "*Jnana-Vijnana*" -perfect knowledge-which is at once passive and dynamic-in relation to the world-manifestation, at once essential and comprehensive, at once the direct spiritual awareness of the Supreme Being and a right intimate knowledge of the principles of this

existence, *Prakriti*, *Pursha* and the rest. The rising up to this super-mental state entirely expels and eliminates all the apparent limitations and dualities created and imposed upon us by the blundering mind - even the duality between awareness and activity is dispelled. This apart, the activities carried out through this supreme state of consciousness are not based on mental discrimination which always works on the basis of the conception of the duality of the real and the unreal. For discriminating things, one has to come down to much lower level. In other words, there is a vast difference between the intuition pertaining to senses and the intuition pertaining to mind; and the super-mental intuition, of course, transcends both these categories of intuition. The actions performed by one who is possessed by, or is at least in touch with, the super-mental sense are essentially divine, quite superior to those which are performed by and through perpetual strife among the modes of Nature. In this sense--supreme state the transcendental divine play of the all-sided freedom of the Divine becomes manifest. Let this state not be confused with "*Chidghan-Sithit*." or else with "*Nirguna Sithiti*". (See glossary).

The animal is completely ruled by Nature ; man is sanctioned complete freedom of choice and partial freedom in completing actions ; the superman enjoys perfect release and achieves complete self-mastery. In order to claim his natural manhood, man must have discrimination and without this he can be no more than a beast, *vivek hin nar pasu smana*. In this context, an anecdote of the great woman-mystic of Kashmir, who was a highly inspired saint, revered alike by the Hindus and the Muslims, deserves to be quoted. Laleshwari by name, she blessed the people of Kashmir with spiritual awakening about six hundred years ago. As regards her scholastic qualifications, she had none ; but the words that she spoke were in the form of rich poetry which, pregnated with profound truths of spiritual realization, directly touched not only the heart but also the spirit. Her VaaKs provide sufficient hints which show that she had gained the highest level of spiritual experience through and by the *Sadhana* of the psycho-physical system of Yoga and that she did possess also the "*Vibhuties*" or the extra-ordinary yogic powers. In a village at some

distance from Srinagar, she lived in the home of her father-in-law. A festival used to be held once in a year in that village just near Laleshwari's house, in which many people from far and near would participate. Some women of a neighboring locality called on Laleshwari in her house and invited her to accompany them to the festival. But the proposal was turned down by Laleshwari's father-in-law who said that it did not look nice for women to go to a place where so many people, not known to them, had assembled. On hearing this Laleshwari laughed and said : "There is no man present in that assembly ; you can just look out through the window." And when her father-in-law looked through the window, he saw there not men but a gathering of dogs, pigs and wolves. He was wonder-struck at this. Laleshwari then spoke seriously : "Man is verily he who has got the power of discrimination, who can distinguish between the real and the unreal, between right and wrong, and, who does constantly strive to give up the wrong and follow and stick to what is right. A man is truly he who, having differentiated the passing from the permanent, shakes off the temporal affections and decides finally to realize the Eternal. One who is bereft of discriminating power and who just wastes away this priceless human life is, indeed, an animal and not a man. The same thing is found in the scriptures. "Dogs, pigs and asses eat, drink; sleep and indulge in sex-relations ; if man, too, spends his life merely in the gratification of such appetites of the flesh, what is then the difference between him and an animal". In the light of what has been said, we see that he alone who has the discriminating faculty and who also uses it, has the right to be called a man.

The word discernment connotes and covers many an idea. In Vedantic parlance it is most commonly taken to be discernment between the real and the unreal.

What is real and what is unreal ? How can these be differentiated from each other ? It may be easy to speak of this difference, but it is certainly difficult to live up to the standard and principles involved in it for purpose of spiritual fulfillment. The criterion is simple : the unreal is that which at one time exists and at an other time exists

not. Everything that is subject to decay and death is unreal. Thus all the transient things and events fall under the category of the unreal. Now, everything that is finite must sooner or later be shattered into pieces and it must pass away. Hence the Real, to be real, must be that which is infinite. In other words, the Real is that which is unlimited by Time and Space ; it is the Eternal One.

The world of name and form, in all its gross, subtle and casual planes of manifestation, is unreal and God or *Atma* or *Brahm* alone is Real-this understanding is discrimination as defined by the Vedantic school of thought. Let it be noted here carefully that unreal does not, however, necessarily mean an illusion or the creation of any individual Centre. It simply implies the impermanent, transient and temporaneous nature of things.

To distinguish between good and bad, essential and nonessential and between means and ends is also communicated by the word discrimination. As such, it means a deep penetrating reflection and not superficial thinking.

Here we need not discuss what is good and what is bad. We may only say that from the spiritual point of view whatever helps spiritual unfoldment is good, and whatever hampers it, is bad. What should and what should not be done ? Which line of behavior is good, which is better and which is the best to be followed by an individual ? All this involves discrimination.

Right discrimination is not based only upon speculation but on knowledge and experience of things. It should not be mistaken for dry intellectualism, because essentially it implies deep insight into the nature of things. A man of discrimination will always strive to find out the proper value and place of a thing. A man with discrimination feels, even while he is attached to temporal objects, that a time will come when these objects will cease to exist. He can visualize his future state of mind even when the present is very much with him. He is also deeply conscious even while he is alive, that a day will come when he too will not exist physically. All this is so, because he has thought over the basic nature of things. His

discrimination confers upon him the power and ability to be peaceful in life.

When discrimination between the fleeting and the lasting and the good and the highest good is ripe, it inevitably leads to indifference towards things that are of passing nature and a concentration on that which is permanent.

Dispassion

This age may be without any hesitation called the age of distractions. Chaos and confusion prevail everywhere. The most celebrated achievements of modernism, say, for instance, the modern means of communication, the radio, the press and the cinema, instead of playing a really useful role in making the world a peaceful place, have brought us to the brink of disaster. We know only too well what havoc cinema is playing with our youth. The teacher in the class and the parents at home are engaged in a losing battle against the youth misguided by the cinema. It is true that it can play an educative role as well, but the question is : has it played such a role so far ? The press has become a formidable means of spreading hatred and falsehood among people. Honesty and innocence and truth often become casualties everyday, everywhere, to the enormous power of the press. There is a general falling of values and standards of good behavior. Good neighborly behavior, human and cultural behavior, good social and political behavior and even good academic behavior are becoming rare. Everyone could be heard thinking aloud : "O, Good-old Age!" Some areas of the world, known in modern parlance as "backward", were only a few decades ago -before the advent of these modern means of communication-places where innocence, simplicity and happiness prevailed, but visit these places now and you will find that the milk of human kindness has dried up and happiness does not exist. The Demon of desire-the greatest enemy of dispassion- is in its prime youth. The people have become mad after wealth and they are ready to sell out their religion, their character and

their freedom for a few coins of silver. Many persons have started regarding dispassion as a symptom of an impotent mind that cannot face the `blows' of this world.

To say anything about dispassion under such conditions may appear frivolous talk, but a brief discussion of it should not be omitted here ; firstly, because dispassion is a `sine qua non' of Deliverance and Illumination ; and secondly, because there are many misunderstandings about it. The Sanskrit word for dispassion is "Vairagya" which can be translated (rather freely) as "absence of attachment", *Vigatah ragah yasmad sa viragha : Viragasya bhavah vairagayam.*

At its highest, Vairagya denotes that state of mind in which one is completely non-attached to the world. Quite evidently, attachment is a thing of the mind; and dispassion, or renunciation of attachment needs must also pertain to mind. The absence of certain things or of certain outer conditions is neither the test nor the essential quality of dispassion. Absence of certain things should not be confused with detachment with things. A man may possess no wealth at all, but he may be inwardly burning with the desire of possessing the same (Effective poverty and affected poverty are not altogether the same thing). Vairagya is essentially an attitude of mind in which "mystic participation" of consciousness with the temporal objects is abolished by and by. Attachment may present itself in numerous forms. There may be an attachment to wealth, to one's body, to relatives, to friends, to devotees or admirers ; it may also be to one's caste and creed, to one's intellectual, political, social and religious convictions. Dispassion means the breaking of all these attachments.

Maharishi Patanjali defines `Vairagya' as that controlled state of mind, which is completely free from greed for all objects that have hitherto been seen or heard of : *drishatanui shravic vishe vitrishanasya vashiqar sangya vairagayam.*

Most commonly there are three kinds of objects in this world, which allure, entice and assail the mind of man. These are : wealth, name

and fame, and woman. There is another allurement too, and that is the allurement of heaven. The greed of going to heaven is, as a matter of fact, nothing but a proliferation of the desire of enjoying the sensual objects on a larger scale and for a longer period, because the concrete objects of heaven are supposed to yield more sensual thrills.

All these temptations comprise the standing obstacles which must be surmounted and surpassed in order to achieve spiritual perfection. The greed for name and fame is considered to be the hardest of the obstacles in the divine path.

Not to speak of the desire for winning name in this very life, is there any scarcity in this world of people who desire to be remembered even after death, and who keep on striving for the same ? Someone once read to us from a newspaper the report of the case of a murder. A man murdered an important, highly revered leader of his country and was caught red-handed. A legal suit was filed against him. While explaining the cause of committing that murder, the convict said, "I tried many methods to win name but could not succeed in any way. Ultimately, having completely succumbed to this greed, I lost my temper and committed this murder, thinking that so long as the name of this important man will remain in the world, will there be my name also..." Granted that the incident is an exceptional case ; but it is not at all incredible. The desire for name - and fame is a desire deeply rooted in mind.

The greed for winning fame is a great barrier in the way of spiritual advancement and it must be knocked down and crossed over for the complete cultivation of dispassion.

A little reflection exposes the vanity of greed. What if you own grand buildings or even skyscrapers ? What if you have hoarded lakhs of rupees, which serve no other purpose than decorating your unbreakable and fire-proof secret safes ? What if you win, or have won, a high chair in a Parliament ? What if you have built up a fine and strong body ? All these are transient things which can betray you at any time ; you shall have to part with them, willingly or unwillingly, one day. This temporal life is only like a bubble that may blow up at any moment. Is it wise to squander all the precious

time of this human life in gaining and possessing the things which have no firm foundation, things which cannot provide you inner peace ? Is it wise to sell out the `Eternal' for the `ephemeral' ? If you mistake the temporary and transient for what is permanent, you do not have any power of discrimination ; it only implies the total bankruptcy of discriminating power on your part. These perishable things will not make your life secure, nor will they satiate the thirst of your inner soul. They may, on the other hand, only take you away from the path of Bliss if you get attached to them.

Are you really desirous of insuring your life for everlasting peace ?

The only way is to seek and find a place in the heart of the Lord, or to make your own heart a permanent habitation of the Divine. And this will be possible only if you withdraw your entire affection from worldly gifts and direct it to the "Great Giver ".

When you start dwelling permanently in the Lord's Heart, or, when the Lord manifestly resides in your heart, you will develop a great sense of security. When you possess the tree, you also possess its shade. The Lord has said Himself in holy scriptures, time and again, that He provides the devotee with every kind of protection. He has pledged Himself to grant full security, spiritual as well as material, to His devotees. *"I bring full protection and personally attend to your needs ; I confer the liberating knowledge on you ; I shall absolve you of all sins ; grieve not"* - all these are the words of the Lord. These are not empty words ; but they are the voice of the Master. He has fulfilled them always, and He will fulfill them every time. The lives of His devotees and saints, whom He did own and whom He did rescue, show the truth of these words. But all this has been promised for those devotees and those saints only who are perfectly sincere unto Him ; whose faith in Him is unshakable ; who, depending upon no one else, constantly think of Him and who are ever united with the Lord through meditation and through singing His name and His glories with single-minded devotion and love. And this firm and constant love unto the feet of the Lord cannot be achieved without a good deal of dispassion. Towards this end it is necessary to be

perfectly detached from the world ; for all this, one must develop Vairagya.

In certain circles of asceticism, dispassion or Vairagya is identified with a hatred or contempt towards the things and beings of this world. This interpretation is wrong. The word Vairagya can never imply hatred of the world. Hatred, in whatever form it may be, is, in fact, only inverted attachment. Hatred towards certain things or persons indicates the fact, as the science of psychology tells us, that attachment to certain things and persons is concealed in the hater, though he may not know it, or knowingly, may not let it appear in him.

Besides, real vairagya is not based on disgust and frustration of a defeated life. It does not imply running away from life. In this context an incident can be quoted. This incident brought about an enormous change in the outlook of a Buddhist Yogi, Tamino by name, who was known to be the follower of the Hinyana School of Buddhism.

Most resolutely, working with remarkable patience and steadiness, constantly living in solitude, Tamino had performed the *Sadhana* of unbroken contemplation for a long period. Through the process of self-negation, adopting the negative way of approach-"not this, not that"-to self-realization he had earned, very painfully, a deep inwardness and was privileged to enter the seventh stage of contemplation, where the world disappears totally. Dwelling uninterruptedly in this state of consciousness (in which the world vanishes completely in name and form) he found it irresistible to enjoy this profound peace of silent self, and lived in a Buddhist temple in a forest, usually visited by no one. Thus, he spent his days. A strange incident took place one day. Just as Tamino was sitting for contemplation at some distance from the temple, a traveler passed by him. As Tamino was absorbed in attributeless *Atman*, some robbers rounded up that traveler. The traveler called on Tamino, again and again, and cried for help ; but the latter was not at all conscious of the traveler's miserable condition because he was completely merged in the profound depth of silent and passive

self. They beat the traveler, wounded him, robbed him, and thinking him to be dead, left him there and slipped away. Badly injured, unable to get up, lying in that most serious condition, the traveler kept on calling on Tamino for help and then fell down unconscious. All this Tamino came to know only when he opened his eyes on returning to consciousness, as we would call it. He was surprised to witness the scene and for a minute became paralyzed, as it were ! Then he recovered, stood up, walked on to the unconscious traveler and examined him. His pulse seemed to be still working ; life was still there in his body. Tamino brought water and sprinkled it on his face ; bandaged his wounds. But by then the patient had lost a lot of blood. The victim once opened his eyes after some moments, and speaking with much difficulty in a staggering voice, exclaimed, "What good is in coming now and doing all this... when I was crying for help, you did not come !" And with these words, he breathed his last. Tamino's soul got utterly perturbed ; and he trembled with extreme sorrow. All the inner peace which he had earned in so many years, with unbroken practice of moral discipline and contemplation, by living the life of a saint, fled away in a moment's time. With a restless heart he walked slowly to the temple and sat before the statue of Lord Buddha. This incident created in his mind a doubt which disturbed the peace which he had been enjoying prior to the occurrence of this incident. He wanted to get this doubt removed directly by the very person of Lord Buddha. Having come to know the true aspiration of His devotee, whose faith had been shaken by the present suspicion, Lord Buddha appeared from the statue before Tamino. Consequently, a dialogue developed between them as follows :

Tamino- "Lord, was Your gospel true ?"

Buddha- "True, and false also".

Tamino- "What was true in it ?"

Buddha- "Dispassion."

Tamino- "What was false in it ?"

Buddha- "The escapist attitude towards the struggle of life."

The whole burden of this story is that *vairagya* does not teach the running away from the struggle of life ; as a matter of fact, such an attitude is quite alien to the true spirit of dispassion. It does not necessitate the giving up of one's honest profession. The true meaning of dispassion is non-attachment which is a necessary prelude to the attainment and development of divine love, or to self-realization, or else to the realization of and establishment in the Supreme Lord.

Running after the world and its things is spiritual degradation, but to discard, indiscriminately, all that you have got, or all that God has given you, is a blunder born of immature thinking.

If you have no resources to maintain yourself, if you have not got very deep faith and full confidence in God, if you have no spiritual power with you, do not think of giving up the world under the cover of *vairagya*. By taking to the life of a recluse in such a faithless state of mind, you cannot perform *Sadhana* in the right way and in the right spirit. It will simply make you totally dependant upon others ; and in addition to finding a foothold somewhere, you shall have to run from door to door for bread to sustain your body.

Dispassion does not go against doing some work for the maintenance of body and for meeting the bare necessities of life. It also does not go against the performing of selfless service ; but these means are not, of course, to be confounded with the Ultimate End which has not to be lost sight of anywhere, at any time.

Vairagya is not philosophical indifference. It denotes complete renunciation of the sense of I, *me* and *mine*. The main factors by which the spirit of dispassion can be developed and strengthened are :

1. Perpetual meditation on the transitory nature of all worldly objects and events.
2. The association of, and living in close touch with, those saints and holy ones who are imbued with dispassion.

3. Contemplation on the nature of relationless *Atma*.

4. Constant remembrance of the glories of the Supreme Lord who, transcending all false relations, is the disinterested Lover of us all.

5. Day-to-day reading of such books and the life stories of saints, as awaken in us the spirit of dispassion.

Alone we come and alone we go ; whom, then, should one consider to be one's friend or relative in this world ? This body, the objects and the relatives are not ours. May we not be theirs !

It is on the grave of attachment that the foundation-stone of the "Spiritual Project" can be laid. It is the death of desire that gives birth to dispassion ; and only through detachment with the temporal world can the love unto God be secured as well as protected ; only thus, can liberating knowledge be made the very breath of our being.

Vairagya is always a rare transformation and a great privilege. Who is not made happy through dispassion? - *qasya sukham na kroti viraga*.

Self-Control

Self-control and self-mastery is the same thing. Man is made of body, *prana*, mind, intellect and the inner being, the Self. This Self is essentially the Lord Supreme, who, dwelling in the body, is the guide, enjoyer, sustainer and controller of the entities mentioned above. Self-control means perfect control over body and its actions : perfect control over mind and intellect with their corresponding psychic functions. Self-control is a tremendous task, indeed. But, if it is true (and it is most certainly true) that

the inner *Pursha* is the real upholder, sustainer, and Lord of *Prakriti* or Nature, then at a certain stage of evolution - the evolution which implies the process of progressive unfoldment of the real nature and essential powers of the *Pursha* involved in Nature-complete self-mastery must become not only practicable but it can also be a natural and spontaneous activity having power over the evolving soul.

This is not the proper place to discuss at length such a vast subject as spiritual evolution. Here we will restrict the import of self-control to a certain command over the body, senses and the mind, by virtue of which the path of absorption in the Lord is made easier and smoother. A *shaloka* of the Gita -a *Shaloka* the import of which also appears in the *Katha Upanishada*, with some change of words,says: "*The senses are superior to the visible objects including the body ; the mind is superior to senses ; the intellect is superior to mind ; and superior to intellect is the inner Pursha.*"

To make the import of this verse clear, the *rishi* of the *Upanishada* puts forth, at another place, an analogy in which the body is compared to a chariot ; the senses are , compared to the horses who draw this chariot ; the mind is taken to be the bridle ; the intellect as the charioteer and self as the master of them all. Safe, smooth and quick journey is ensured if the chariot is of a high standard ; the horses are strong and young, but, adequately tamed ; the bridle is good enough to hold the horses ; the charioteer is a well-trained driver who knows the way and who can control the horses ; and, above them all, the master sitting in the chariot is constantly vigilant and majestically powerful to govern and rule his driver, so that the latter may not turn disobedient or may not conspire with the master's enemies so as to do him any harm.

On the other hand, if the vehicle is not in a proper condition ; if the horses are old or untamed (even though vigorous) ; if the bridle is unfit and weak ; if the driver is not wise but a careless fellow; and if the master sitting in the chariot is weak and incapable of giving proper direction; the journey may present innumerable difficulties ; it may become dangerous enough and even disastrous.

Now, coming from the image to that which is imaged, we see that this world is not our real home. The soul having been separated, since time immemorial, from its Supreme Father, the Lord, is wandering away in this world forest. To the Jiva (the individual soul) who is very harassed and troubled by the beasts of fear, hatred, attachment, wrath and death and disease who are at large in the world-forest, the Lord has given him the vehicle of this body-as an instrumental means-equipped with mind, senses and intellect, so that he may take the road to his real Home, which is God. Once set out on the pilgrimage of God-realization, he has to travel most of the way, though not the whole of it, with the help of the very body, mind, senses and intellect. It would be naturally easier for him, the Jiva, to reach his destination if these instruments are sufficiently developed as well as controlled. Thus, the possession of a healthy body, the control over senses and mind, and the illumination of the thinking power become indispensable means for spiritual effort. Quite truly is it said that mind is the cause of bondage and also the cause of freedom, *man ev manushyanam qaranam bandh moqshshayo*. A purified, developed and controlled mind becomes a means of emancipation, whereas an uncontrolled and undisciplined mind turns out to be the cause of bondage-just as a man riding a horse is free when the horse is under his complete control, and not free if the horse is running fast uncontrollably. Self-control, however, does not imply the suppressing or killing of the senses and of the mind ; they must be regarded as useful servants but dangerous masters.

Self-control denotes that capability of soul whereby the body is consciously controlled, mind and the senses are restrained from going into any such physical, sensual or mental actions, as the higher intelligence or the inner conscience does not permit, and, whereby they are driven at will to perform such acts as are sanctioned by the inner conscience or higher intelligence. Thus, a self-controlled man is he who can withdraw, at his sweet will, his senses as well as his mind from any object or subject and fix them wheresoever he thinks it proper to do so.

"The control of senses and the control of mind are interdependent. It is through the control of mind that complete control over senses is possible ; and the control over senses helps us in assuming proper control over the mind, because it is mostly through the senses that mind gets out of control and wanders away. Turbulent by nature, the senses even of a wise man who is practicing self-control, forcibly carry away his mind, Arjuna," says Lord Krishna to Arjuna in the *Gita*. Nor is this all. When the wandering senses carry off the mind, they take away the intellect as well—just as a strong wind carries along a barge upon the waters. Intellect stands above senses and mind and it has to control them, through enlightened reasoning and discrimination, to total restraint.

Meditation on the true nature of *Atman* renders great help in discovering and realizing the proper relationship subsisting between body, mind, senses and soul. Identify yourself with the true 'I' and proclaim victory and freedom. Thou art the soul immortal and eternal. Why should you, the infinite spirit, be the slave of nose, eyes and ears ? Don't put the cart before the horse. Be up and doing and reverse the current. Through the alliance of intellect launch a crusade against the tumultuous senses and mind and come out victorious. It is through self-control alone that the day-to-day ordinary peace, and also the Great Peace that passes all understanding, can be found and made a permanent possession.

Selfless Work or Service

Selfless service is the service rendered quite spontaneously unto one and all regardless of caste, creed or color and without any motive behind it ; or it is that type of service which is done in the name of the Lord, with the motive of pleasing Him for His sake only. It is no less important a qualification for spiritual *Sadhana* than those mentioned earlier or than those which follow. In fact, all these qualifications, the ornaments of the soul as we may call them, do not contradict one another, rather they fulfill one another.

In selfless service the desire for reward has no place, not the

least ; nor is an act to be adjudged by its appearance only. It is not the physical aspect of the act, but the inner motive behind the act, that counts. An action may be as insignificant as, say, that of dusting or sweeping or as high as freely feeding or teaching the poor, it makes no difference from the spiritual point of view. The outward form or the visible result of an action does not count. Selfless service enriches the life of the Spirit as much as meditation and spiritual concentration or worship of God.

As a matter of fact, selfless service cannot be performed without a good deal of contemplation. It is, in fact, founded on it. In contemplation we receive what is Eternal and in self-service we perform what is regarded as virtuous in time. The expenditure, however, must balance the income. Without deep spiritual meditation service does not become completely selfless because there lurks the ego and consequently you become desirous of reward.

He alone who is serious spiritual contemplative *cum-sevaka* can be a perfectly selfless worker. Through the regular practice of deep contemplation he comes to realize deeply the fact that whatever things he possesses his body, mind, intellect- are the tools of the Divine Cosmic Power. The entire universe is His free, spontaneous, and playful cosmic action. A devotee who is at once a witness of, and a participant in the cosmic movement, is, as it were, a "conscious automation" in the hands of the Lord. Putting all his energies in selfless service and rendering it in the name of God, he always believes, feels and says : "Seated in my heart, O Lord, in whatsoever way thou drive me, so am I driven". This is not mere faith or sentimentalism. It is not merely mental belief or imagination, but a central and vital fact of spiritual intuition for a devotee who is wholly free from ego and who is full of the spirit of self -surrender. Through this direct experience he feels most intensely that whatsoever the movements, internal or external, occurring in his whole personality, they are actually the action of the Light and Power of the indwelling Lord.

The ego, which sometimes overwhelms us as we perform some service, can be expelled only by and through perpetual recollection and contemplation. By supplementing *Sadhana* with selfless service we heighten the capacity of meditation, and make the contemplative life more abundant and sweeter.

Service performed in the name of God and for the sake of God, is actually devotion or *Bhakti*. Such service is really the deepest devotion, flowing out in the form of work. A truly devotional heart expresses itself through the eyes, the hands and the feet.

Some people give a higher place to devotion and knowledge than selfless service, taking it only to be a preparatory course. Even the great *Acharyas*, the scholarly religious theologians, are found so preoccupied with their theological systems that they are out for mutual denunciation - every one striving to exalt, through the display of his scriptural learning, his own view-point and denounce that of others. All this shows the narrowness of their vision. All these-devotion, knowledge or selfless service - are equally valid, equally efficient and equally fruitful in the pursuit of God-realization. There is no difference of the so-called superior and inferior means employed to realize God. The question which of them is more difficult or easier becomes unimportant when we know that the individuals, possessing the different capacities and capabilities of their psycho-physical and physiological constitutions, are standing at different relative positions in the Cosmic Scheme. They approach the Lord from their respective positions.

Selfless service, in a way, is an avowed acknowledgement of the immanence of the Supreme Lord in the Cosmos. The experience of God, Who informs the world and yet exceeds it, has to be accomplished not only in the timeless silent self, but also in the comprehensive fullness of His world-manifestation. Without the immediate perception, *Ishawasayam idam sarvam yad kinch jagatyam jagat*, spiritual attainment cannot be regarded as complete. In and through the integral realization of the Divine, who is both immanent in *Pursha-Prakriti*, *Khashara-Ashshara* and in the passive and dynamic powers of Existence, and also

above them, the concepts of knowledge, devotion and selfless service are properly reconciled.

Moreover, in the path of exclusive one-pointed contemplation there is the danger that the unemployed capacities of the being, especially of the vital being, could be wasted. Why not sublimate the capacities of the vital and use them in the direction of spiritual unfoldment ? And this can be done most properly through selfless work and service.

It must, however, be remembered that the work must proceed from the poise of self and not from the seed of desire. Our actions must become more and more unselfish and detached. They should be free from the ego and also free from the obsession of "I" and "Mine". They must not be allowed to eclipse the inner light of the timeless spirit. In brief, work you must but let not the work work you up.

Always serve but serve selflessly. Help the sick, the poor, the invalid and the needy with money, food, clothes and education, according to your capacity. God comes to you in the garb of the needy and the troubled; attend to Him in them.

Metaphysical Thinking

The task of metaphysical thinking is to investigate intellectually the fundamental nature of the world and of God. It must be more hypothetical and less practical, because it has to deal with the things which lie behind the apparent forms and which are supersensible.

What is the nature of this world and what are its laws ? What are matter, life and mind and how are they mutually related ? Can there be anything like soul or Spirit ? What is God ? What is the relation between man and God; and between God and the world ? The whence and whither of this life ? Does this world go on mechanically, moved by the blind laws of insentient nature ? Do things happen in this world by chance, or is there a secret Intelligence working behind the veil of forms ? - all these problems come in for investigation within the field of metaphysical thinking.

There have been great teachers of humanity like the Buddha and Christ, who have considered metaphysical thinking: as a useless thing for attaining Peace and Enlightenment. They would very much say that heart is the seat of soul. On the other hand, there have also existed great teachers like Shankra and Socrates who have regarded head as the dwelling of soul ; they have encouraged metaphysical investigations as not only the most efficient but the only method of attaining Enlightenment also. Who is to be followed ? What is the value of metaphysical thinking in spiritual pursuit ? Is it at all necessary for the spiritual aspirant to qualify himself in metaphysical matters ?

It is obvious that God cannot be made a victim of intellect, howsoever high and penetrating it may be. All the revealed scriptures as also the spiritual adepts declare with one voice that God cannot be seen through senses and mind, because He is beyond them all. Realization of God is not a mental process. Direct spiritual experience is always super mental and super sensual because the senses, mind and intellect have by no means the power to find the Divine. We find at many places in the *Upanishadas* scattered hints confirming the veracity of this statement. Here, we will rest content with quoting only five couplets from *kena Upanishad* :

1. "That which has not been expressed through speech but by which speech gets informed, take that to be *Braham*. The one which can be expressed by speech and whom people worship is not *Braham*".

2. "Whom no one can know through mind but by whose power mind knows, take that to be *Braham*. The one which is subject to the perception of mind and whom people worship is not *Braham*."

3. "Whom no one can see through eyes but by whose power eyes see, take that to be *Braham*. The one which is subject to optical vision and whom people worship is not *Braham*."

4. "Whom no one can hear through ears but by whose power ears can hear, take that to be *Braham*. The one which is subject to the hearing by ears and whom people worship is not *Braham*."

5. "That which is not moved by the *Prana* (vital force) but by whose power *Prana* is moved, take that to be *Braham*. The one which can be moved by *Prana* and whom people worship is not *Braham*."

It is clear, therefore, that the capability of metaphysical thinking is by no means a qualification without which the *Sadhana* of Self-realization cannot be successfully completed. If the aspirant is sufficiently mortified; if he is not stubborn in holding to his ready-made beliefs and prejudices; and if he is sufficiently sensitive to the inspiration and delicate touch of the Spirit, there can be no doubt that he will find the Lord revealed to him, even though he is not thoroughly acquainted with metaphysical matters. Nevertheless, the fact remains that it becomes easier for the spiritual aspirant to reach his Destination if he is not handicapped by false and inadequate beliefs in the choice of the correct path. And towards that end Knowledge of metaphysics is a great help, indeed, but the indispensable condition is that he must not get so engrossed as to lose the practical aspect of Spirituality.

Let it be remembered that true wisdom does not lie in learning various definitions of spiritual principles as given in philosophical and theological books. Through intensive and exhaustive study of (or even through ever-listening to) the books on different systems of theology, one's formal knowledge of theological terms is enriched, but it certainly does not help one to know the real self, nor does it

even give one spiritual experience of a high order. If one considers oneself a Jnani merely by virtue of having learnt a number of definitions of the various aspects of spiritual Reality-as that of Soul, Providence, Godhead, Spirit and God-one really falls a victim to self-delusion. Such a person, it is said, is only a "*Vachak Jnani*"- that is one who talks too much about God in theological terms, but has no spiritual experience, nor even sincere spiritual aspiration. The question is what do you aspire for ? Do you aspire to learn the definition of Truth or do you aspire to realize Truth ? There is a lot of difference between having the experience (or the attainment) of a thing and possessing the mere intellectual knowledge of that thing. The seeker of God should, therefore, be very careful that he or she should not become a mere intellectual and lose the ambition of direct perception of the Supreme. Mere philosophic discussions and polemic commentaries about Spirit or God are, in the eyes of the enlightened souls, entirely useless; it is really nothing more than mental gymnastic. As the ideal of having the first-hand experience of self and of the spiritual fulfillment is the real ideal, one should practice devotion, contemplation and even selfless service along with metaphysical studies.

The *Bhakta* or the devotee gives his heart to God very cheerfully, but he is not ready to give his intellect ; the *Jnani* gives his intellect to God very cheerfully but he is not prepared to give his heart.

Better be perfectly sincere to Him and offer Him both head and heart. Let us offer our `hands' as well.

Self-surrender

The purpose of all spiritual endeavor is to possess God and to be possessed by Him, to get absolutely delivered from the yoke of time, and to attain to that Highest State where pure and infinite bliss, the eternally resplendent light and life and unlimited power saturate the being, and where all ignorance and pain, death and darkness cease to exist for ever. But this task is too arduous to be completed by any individual through un-aided and limited self-effort.

Moreover, self-effort being a process of Time, cannot by itself deliver us from Time. Consequently, the direct intervention of the Supreme Lord in the temporal domain becomes an inescapable necessity for the achievement of real deliverance. And the Lord does not directly and super normally intervene, unless the individual makes unconditional self-surrender unto Him. Surrender, therefore, proves to be inevitable for complete emancipation. This seems to be the reason why even in the *Raja Yoga of Patanjali* (which mainly underlines self-effort) the "*Ishwar Pranidhana*" or surrender unto the Lord has been acknowledged as a primary condition for spiritual achievement.

Self-surrender means offering willingly and completely all that we have, and all that we are, to God. A piece of marble is placed in an artist's hands, and he makes it a useful and beautiful thing ; we place ourselves in the hands of God, and He transforms us into a useful instrument of His will and purpose, and, as we receive His touch, we are set on the Divine path-the path which ultimately leads us to Him. Surrender requires of us perfect trust in and full reliance upon God. One should be so full of this faith that one may spontaneously say : "I will trust in Thee, O Lord, even if Thou slays me." But such a degree of faith and confidence in the Lord is not easy ,to achieve. Self-surrender cannot be achieved all at once in a day or two. Self-surrender is a dynamic process. Slowly and steadily, as we advance in spiritual *Sadhana*, the virtue of surrender grows in us progressively. Our inner experience (which we have by going deep within), and the external happenings in which the Lord comes to our help, make our faith in Him more and more firm. Self-surrender is born of this very faith. Yet beware ! On the pretext of self-surrender some people turn `tamsic' and lethargic in the performance of spiritual *Sadhana*. "We will not do anything, let the Lord do everything for us" - this attitude is quite against the spirit of true resignation. Such spiritually-tamsic people go on, one wonders to note, doing their best to grow more and more wealthy and to rise in the political, social, or economic hierarchy as if God, Who is All-Powerful to give them Salvation, is powerless to bring them such

ordinary worldly things. All this only shows that they do not understand the true meaning of faith in the Lord. A truly faithful person will say : "I can do all things, not through (my) human wisdom or human power, but through God." A simple and obedient child moves about and acts, but all through there is a feeling hidden in the depths of his mind that there is his mother to protect him any time, to show her love to him any moment. Similarly, the *Sadhaka*, who has surrendered himself unto Him, performs the *Sadhana* ; he also fulfills the obligations of the world, he moves about and acts, but depends all through on the love and protection of the Lord. Such a man does everything not by ego but through divine inspiration, or, say, that whatever activities, spiritual or otherwise, are performed by such a *Sadhaka*, they are actually performed by Divine Power. Raised to an exalted spiritual felicity, his whole life is transformed into a practical *Yoga*, in which the world and God are totally reconciled and become essentially one. Consummately God-informed and God-filled, he lives in the Lord, moves in Him, breathes in Him and Him alone. All this is due to perfect surrender which dissolves his individual existence and then unites him with the Divine, both in His essential Being and in His divine universal action.

When you regard nothing as your own, all things, then, love to be possessed by you. When you give up your claim of all power, the unlimited power of the Divine freely flows in you. Make your mind empty of worldly desires and have it filled with the love of God. As soon as the darkness of delusion is dispelled, the perennial light of wisdom dawns upon you. Give yourself unto the Lord and the Lord gives Himself to you. What, then, do you lose by self-surrender ?

The more you resign yourself unto the Lord, the greater and higher will be the degree of action of the divine will and power in you. Inevitably so, for when an individual surrenders himself unto Him, the unlimited power of God works freely in him ; he is transformed and set firmly on the path of spiritual evolution.

Remember, true surrender unto the Divine must make one's life pure, divine and full of dynamic *Ananda*.

Let us learn to resign ourselves unto the Lord, May He help us and draw us closer and closer to Himself !

Perseverance

Spiritual fulfillment usually does not come easily or quickly. A very long span of time, many births or even many eons, may have to elapse in its attainment, although the ultimate spiritual experience may come instantaneously. Experience of God very often does come at first suddenly, and quite unexpectedly: It may come by the direct grace of God Himself, or through the transforming touch of a perfect Yogi, or else through a long and adequate spiritual *Sadhana*. But the experience, which comes at first suddenly, is just a flash which passes away immediately ; it is not complete Realization ; it is not spiritual fulfillment.

God-realization denotes the stabilization of God-experience in the entire being, and Fulfillment denotes a permanent establishment of its Realization: Both the Realization and the Fulfillment require a very strenuous and continuous spiritual effort.

To expect God-experience through the transforming touch of the Guru, or through any adept, without any self-effort, is wishful thinking only. The first thing is that such great Yogis as can impart, solely through their own power, God-experience in the *Sadhaka*, irrespective of the latter's competence, are very, very rare. Secondly, such rare saints keep themselves away from Publicity and do not display, ordinarily, their spiritual powers. As such, to come to find rare Yogis, or to get blessed by their transmuting touch, even if they are sought and found, is not so easy a matter as it seems to be. Spiritual experience is not a thing which can be exchanged for silver or gold. There are teachers of Yoga these days who seem to be out to commercialize God, Yoga and Religion, who claim that they can transform an individual by a touch and make anyone realize God

in a day or even in a minute ; they are in ninety per cent cases, frauds. Let us, therefore, not sit idle and hope that some adept will some day meet us, or even come to us, and will show us the spiritual light without our effort at self-discipline and regular training of spiritual contemplation and meditation. Even for having a temporary vision of God one has to, and one must, strive hard and perform searching Sadhana.

The path of God-realization, it has been said, is like a razor's edge. Spiritual effort can be compared to a tough fight which most certainly needs more arduous discipline, greater skill, courage, patience and unbroken alertness than that required of an ordinary soldier in a battle-field. The spiritual soldier has to be very, very careful, vigilant as well as very active at each and every step. He has to choose out every moment - to choose between the Passing and Everlasting. He has to examine minutely his interest, motive and attitude, time and again, and act very cautiously lest his work should become mechanical or merely a matter of routine ; such mechanical effort is fruitless. A little indolence, slumber or carelessness on his or her part, may prove spiritually dangerous enough and seal the fate of his or her ascent to the Divine. A little shift in your motive, and you fall instantaneously. A bit of worldly interest that creeps in your heart does demote you from the spiritual status which you might have gained. Every worldly gain may not mean a spiritual loss; but desire for every worldly gain does mean a corresponding loss in the zeal for the Eternal. Cherish worldly pleasure... and lose the dynamic godly *Ananda*. A positive response from the *Sadhaka* to the temptations of the flesh reacts negatively in relation to the call from the Divine. Why is it so ? Goodness knows ; but it is a fact. "Die and come to life" is the commanding divine rule.

The *Sadhana* is, however, not at all a smooth sailing all along. For the most part it is full of ups and downs. All along the way-especially in certain neutral conditions and dry intervals, which intervene, and also in most trying and testing

periods, which interrupt at certain turns-steady perseverance is demanded from the *Sadhaka*.

The *Uttama Sadhaka*, the elevated seeker, is always prompted to move on to the Divine, with a firm and uncompromising determination which exactly corresponds to the "do or die" concept. Obstacles do not threaten or exhaust him ; nor can time discourage him."Whether the Experience of God and its Realization takes me a single moment, or whether it may take me innumerable births, I will not stop, whatever may happen, unless I find Him" this is the proper spirit of perseverance and he alone who possesses it can find the Lord.

Perseverance should not, however, be confounded with complacence. It requires one to carry on the spiritual task most resolutely and patiently, despite all difficulties and depressions and dangers of the `journey'.

Om Om Om

Spiritual Contemplation And Meditation

Having briefly discussed the importance of moral and mental requisites for complete spiritual unfoldment, we now come to the main subject - the subject of great significance of spiritual contemplation, the purpose of which is to take us beyond mind to the direct super mental vision of the Divine. The process of perfect contemplation leads us to a strain-less and stress-less relaxation in the Divine Spirit or to an effortless absorption in the seer who shines in its pure light in the deep silence, where the mental activities of thinking, willing, deep knowing and feeling do not exist at all. Pure spiritual experience cannot be achieved except through non-polar spiritual concentration, to wit, through the contraction of the Polar Triangle of experience (that is, the triangle of the knower, knowing and known) into the "Point" which ultimately dissolves in the boundless sea of the ether of consciousness. This state is the highest possible spiritual experience to which only proper contemplation leads. What happens next -a wider and greater opening of Consciousness -is wrought by the Lord (according to His free will) only in the *Sadhaka* who does not rest content with the achievement of non-polar contemplation in the seer, taking it to be the highest or the final attainment, but who keeps himself open and docile, through self-surrender, unto the Supreme Lord. Theory is not practice and words are not the things for which they stand. The word 'God', after all, does not tell us what God is. It is not possible to describe exactly the state of consciousness (the state entailing the establishment of the seer in itself) as hinted before, even though we may try to use the most exact and graphic words for this purpose. Therefore, whatever be the spiritual wideness and felicity of this State-we have it for the reader to experience it himself in his or her soul through proper and prescribed practice.

What does spiritual concentration mean and what is its practical method or technique ? By spiritual concentration is meant the gathering together of all the dispersed powers and capacities of the

being and centralizing them on the Divine for the sole purpose of realizing Him.

All the methods of spiritual concentration may be classified into two groups-the Positive and the Negative. Each of these two methods involves two inner movements-the passive and active-to be followed simultaneously. In terms of the positive method these two movements can be summed up as "Fixing" and "Watching" ; and as regards the negative method, it can be described as "Stopping" or "Rejecting" and "Watching". Or, in other words, in trying both the methods, consciousness has to be divided, as it were, into two parts-the Passive and the Active ; the Active part doing something ; but the Passive element doing nothing but vigilantly observing the work being performed by the Active part. Let these two methods be made clear.

The Negative Method

The Negative method of spiritual concentration is quite simple to understand. All kinds of emotions, moods and ideations that arise from within, or impacts of thoughts and suggestions which come from without, are to be rejected or discarded as soon as they arise or come. And, simultaneously, it is to be keenly observed that this "Stopping" or "Rejection" is going on un-interruptedly and the active part has not become engaged in thinking, willing or feeling something other than mere "Stopping" or "Rejecting".

Slowly and gradually, when this practice progresses, the 'attacks' from within or without begin to get milder and, ultimately, they are reduced to nil. In the final step, even this notion of discarding and rejecting is also to be cast off. Thus, a point of unforced concentration is reached where all the activities of mind are annihilated, all its modifications stopped and only awareness remains in its pristine purity. The seer, then, is said to be established in itself - there being no inner or

outer object left before it, not even the blankness of mind. This is a state of peace and nothing but peace there is no feeling of pain or pleasure, but tranquility reigns supreme. The Self or *Atman* is experienced in this state in its pure nature - it is external, existing in its own right, not depending upon mind for awareness ; free from all pairs of opposites, because they are no longer there, inactive ; because all activity has ceased which made the Pursha to be identified with it ; it is relation less, the unmoved and the immovable *Atman*. This experience, it may be told here in passing, is not the only experience, nor even the highest, in the realm of spiritual experiences.

The Positive Method

As for the positive method of concentration, in which the "Fixing" is to be practiced, it may be asked : "On what object should the mind be fixed ? How can we fix our mind on the Divine whom we have not seen yet or whom we do not know?"

Yes, some divine symbols or images are necessary to be resorted to according to this method in order to lend a support to the mind. For concentration everyone has to make the use of some image, one way or the other. The practice of "Fixing" is not possible without it. These symbols or images can possibly be placed under three categories of form, name and idea (including feelings).

This positive method of "Fixation" is comparatively easier than the negative method of "Rejecting" or "Stopping". The import of this statement can be understood from the analogy of a spider. The spider who comes down by means of a thread, that it has projected out of itself, goes up to its place through that very thread and then absorbs the thread within itself.

Similarly, the individual, who from the state of its essential peace and poise is externalized through idea, name and form,

can most easily return to its essential state with the help of these very things. This apart, the mind of man is, in its day-to-day affairs, always occupied with the world of name, form and ideas, and it is not all at once possible or practicable to have the mind ridden of these things. The proper way is to practice fixing the mind on one form, one name or one idea, which in the final plunge of contemplation drops away by itself, revealing that of which it is the symbol.

Divine Form As Support

In this method of concentration on form, an object with a form, such as the Sun, the Moon, fire, the sky, etc., or the divine form of some personal deity (*Ishtam*), a saint, prophet or incarnation of God, is chosen as a support for mind. for contemplation. For one who is of a devotional temperament, the concentration on the form of his or her '*Ishtam*' is easier to achieve ; it brings fruitful results, because the *Ishta* Himself helps the devotee's work in that case and looks after him. Others who do not have sufficient faith and devotion, may choose the Sun, the Moon or any other object, preferably a luminous one, as a support for mind. Thus, the chosen object is imaginatively seen within, and the practice is made to hold the mind steadily on that object for longer and longer periods. The proper centre or place within the body, where image has to be imaginatively seen and held, is the point in the middle of eye-brows - the centre of command or technically called the *Agya Chakra* in Yogic terminology.

Divine Name As The Support

The second type of support, which can be given to the mind for concentration, is that of "Name" or of "Word". Let us consider this now. This support may be in the form of one name or in the form of any *mantra*. The *mantra* is a phrase or formula bearing a certain meaning which affirms the existence of God, embodies a certain idea or feeling in relation to God - such as surrender unto the Lord, feeling of Divine Presence, or it may excite devotion with a certain

prayer raised unto the Lord. Some name of God or some *mantra* or phrase is selected according to one's faith and conviction. It is to be mentally or vocally chanted; it is to be repeated gently and calmly. Gradually, consciousness is centralized on the hearing of this name or *mantra*. This practice is called "*japa*". Science may not prove it today, logic may also fail to do so, but experience has proved that such intonation and repetition of God's name has a marvelous effect in tuning the mind with Self - the Spirit that is All and beyond all.

There is tremendous power in the name of the Lord. Lord's Grace does descend through His name on one who faithfully and whole-heartedly repeats it. This is a fact confirmed and reconfirmed by the saints of all religions.

The proper place for concentration on Lord's name or on *mantra* is the "Heart-Centre" which corresponds to cardiac Centre (as known in physiology) and is called the "*Anahat Chakra*" in Yogic parlance. Let it be pointed out here that the shorter the *mantra* or the Word, the better it is because it becomes easier to concentrate on it.

The '*japa*' of any name of God or of any *mantra* can also be practiced by connecting that Name or that *mantra* with the rhythmic incoming and outgoing of breath and by chanting it mentally. But in this practice the attention of the mind should be focused (in the process of chanting the word or *mantra*) on the Navel-Centre or the "*manipura*", as it is termed technically. Through this practice the vital being gets highly developed, which makes possible a severe agitation in (or a sudden explosion of) the *Pranic* force. If the discriminating power in the *Sadhaka* is not sufficiently developed, if he has not got complete mastery over his senses and mind and if, above all, he is not single-mindedly devoted to the ideal of God-realization, the violent awakening in him of the *Pranic* force may lead him astray in his *Sadhana* and, consequently, throw him in the abyss of sin and sorrow. Unless the Centre of Command (*Agya Chakra*) and the Heart-Centre of the aspirant have been purified adequately, and, unless they have assumed full control over the Navel-Centre, it is not proper for a man or a woman to practice *japa* with the incoming and

outgoing of breath, by fixing the mind on the Navel-Centre. This practice should not be performed by everyone.

The practice of *japa* can lead, even if performed with the exclusion of all the other methods of concentration, to the highest spiritual experience. In fact, the "*japa*" itself turns, in its advanced stage, into a deep and dynamic spiritual concentration. As such (by becoming a dynamic concentration), it brings about an extraordinary transformation in the external life of that *Sadhaka* who practices it regularly and sincerely. This is the real reason why (as verified by religious history) even many bad characters who took to *japa*, got transmuted into great saints. The *japa* or the chanting of Lord's name is an exercise divine and spiritually paying, indeed. There have been many saints who devoted themselves to this method of spiritual concentration alone and to none other, and realized the Lord.

An idea as the support

The third kind of support or "*Avilambana*" that can be given to the mind for concentration in order to realize God, can also be in the form of some single idea or of some single feeling. This idea or this feeling must, in one way or the other, be related to God. Some selected ideas or feelings, from which only one at a time may be beneficially used for spiritual contemplation, are laid down as under :

- (a) God is the only Existence or the only Power, and all else is naught.
- (b) I am the Spirit beyond body, senses and mind, untouched by them-the Ever-lasting, the Ever pure, the Ever-free.
- (c) The whole world is a manifestation of God and it is sustained by Him.
- (d) I take refuge unto Him, the Lord Supreme.

- (e) My profound thanks I offer thousand times unto Him who is the Lord, Omniscient, All-powerful, and a living embodiment of unlimited compassion.

The Divine is a boundless Sea of Peace, in which I am sinking. Peace on my left, peace on my right ; Peace ahead and Peace behind ; Peace below and Peace above. In the Divine I am all Peace.

Of the above-mentioned ideas and feelings, or among such others, one feeling or one idea, which accords most with one's religious or spiritual faith and conviction, is taken and used for 'Fixation'. This chosen idea or feeling is upheld, to the exclusion of all the rest, in the mind and entertained unbrokenly. If this idea is devotional, the proper place for concentration is "*Anahat Chakra*" ; but if it is predominantly intellectual or metaphysical, the proper place for concentration is '*Ajna Chakra*'.

A Third Method

Apart from the above-mentioned methods -the Positive and the Negative- there is also a third one in which neither 'Fixing' nor 'Rejecting' is to be practiced, but one has to step aside from all thoughts, taking them to be a part of Nature and not of Self, and thus, one has simply to watch them, as a witness only. The thoughts, thus, arise and subside unheeded and unidentified by the *Pursha* who observes them, as it were, from above-as if a person standing at a mountain-top is looking disinterestedly and neutrally (and remaining unaffected by them) at things below. In this method of 'Watching', the mind goes on thinking mechanically for some period, but having lost its conscious centre of support, ultimately becomes silent and passive though it is quite vigilant at the same time. Thus, a state of alert-passivity is reached. It is in this state of deep silence that the true nature of *Pursha* is revealed, or, say, the Lord manifests Himself.

All these three methods are the most efficient ones which can still the mind and lead one to super mental and spiritual vision. Of course, they are difficult, for an extrovert: especially, and need a long and sincere striving for sure success. This practice should be performed not coldly or indifferently, as if to fulfill an obligation, but with a burning sense of respect and love- *satkara sevate*, as it is put in the Yoga Sutra.

Meditation

There is difference between contemplation and meditation. In the former, the mind is to be arrested on a single object or idea ; in the latter, the mind is to be concentrated on a train of correlated ideas pointing to a common subject. The former means the riveting of the mind on a particular ,object or idea ; the latter implies the flowing of the mind on a set of thoughts which are interwoven but which work out a single subject. Meditation denotes sequential thinking.

For example, some elevating scene from the life of an Avatar or even in the life of a great saint or that of a prophet or else some other subject, say, the transience of the world-nature, or the immortality of Atman, may be put as the matter of subject before the mind for meditation. A subject thus selected is thought over so absorbingly by the mind that the external world is totally forgotten.

It is clear enough that the process of meditation is easier than that of contemplation. As a matter of fact; meditation is the first stage of concentration and it leads to its second stage which is called contemplation.

A few exercises for concentration

You wish to learn swimming. With that purpose you read books on the subject, listen to lectures on swimming and thus you become capable of knowing and understanding all its

techniques. But would this much of effort only make you a swimmer? Would mere intellectual knowledge of the methods of swimming enable you to swim ? The answer to this will certainly be a blank `no'. In order to learn the art of swimming, you have to get into water and exert your hands and feet. The instructions about, and the knowledge of, any method can help you and can make it easier for you to learn, only when you take exercise and acquire practice. Similar is the case with spiritual concentration for which you must sit and exert your heart and brain to control your tumultuous mind.

Here are a few exercises for spiritual concentration :

1. Make yourself physically clean through a bath or through washing your hands, feet and face. Sit down in a comfortable *Asana* (Posture). Take care to keep the spinal cord, neck and head in a straight position. It would be better if you sit cross-legged on a level but a little raised platform preferably a wooden plank. If for any reason you cannot sit cross-legged, sit in a chair but sit in an erect position, so that the spine and the head do not lean in any direction. Close your eyes and collect your consciousness at the 'Heart-Centre'. Adore and pray gently and softly unto the Lord for about ten minutes. For doing this choose some proper verse (the meaning of the verse must be clear to you) from a revealed scripture, or some devotional song, composed by some inspired saint, which uplifts your mind and makes you humble and - docile enough. Chant this verse gently, mentally, or vocally ; but in a low, sweet, gentle, and rhythmic voice. Try to feel intensely what you utter (A short and simple prayer is given at the end of this book).

After completing the prayer, practice simple *pranayama* - or deep breathing. (For the method of practicing *pranayama* see the section "The aids to concentration" of this book).

After *pranayam*, stop thinking. Try to centralize your consciousness at the Heart-Centre. Watch the blankness of your mind vigilantly, and don't let any idea or image enter it. If any thought enters, throw it out at once before it occupies your mind and makes it wander. Reject all the external impacts and suggestions as well as the inner rising up of thoughts in the form of old, forgotten things as soon as you feel them rising. Often, at first, you lose your watchfulness after a little time and the mind wanders away without this wandering being noticed ; and, then, suddenly you awake to the fact that your mind has been engaged in wandering somewhere, or in thinking something. Here, the secret to be grasped is that you do not experience any such feeling as would make you say : "My mind is wandering". What you actually experience is "My mind *had been wandering*"-which you suddenly come to know at the time when you stop identifying yourself with the mind, and being an alert witness, you observe it keenly. It means that the mind goes away then and then alone when, completely identified with it (your mind), you lose your alertness and cease to be a watching observer. This being so, you should not be disheartened, in the beginning of this practice, if you feel your mind is slipping away. Be more and more watchful and vigilant, and go on `rejecting' and 'stopping'.

Slowly and gradually, as the practice matures, mind turns completely empty and imageless, reflecting nothing but the essential peace and pristine purity of the indwelling pure spirit.

2. Clean yourself, sit in an *Asana* and pray unto the Lord as directed in exercise No. 1. Conduct *pranayama* if it suits you, or do simple deep breathing for five to ten minutes. Close your eyes and collect your consciousness at the spot between the eye-brows, that is, on the "*Agya Chakra*". Hold your mind on an imagined form of your *Ishta* or your personal beloved God (or imagine there some form of `Jyoti' or light to which your mind is most attracted) with the whole attention of the *knower* fixed on it. Don't attend to any other appearance except your *Ishta*, but hold fast to the cherished one. When, after continuous practice, the mind is well trained in staying on one object for a considerable period, there are, then, two

things-the Seer and the Seen-both standing still and face to face with each other and shining quite distinctively. When this stage is reached, the next step would be to identify with the Seer. This will lead to the merger of the object in the Seer which alone remains finally.

In this method of practice, the object of contemplation sometimes disappears, especially when it is about to standstill, leaving behind a flash of light, which is inconstant. Sometimes there are flashes of different colors which come alternately, but these things are not to be entertained. The cherished object of contemplation has to be imagined again and again and retained in the stillness of mind.

3. Sit cross-legged and adoringly pray as above. Choose a name of God or a Mantra (according to your faith) which you like most. It would be much better if you have obtained the 'Name' or 'Mantra' from some God-realized or advanced saint, with the proper rules and regulations of initiation and with instructions, because such a 'Name' or 'Mantra' is then already sufficiently charged and is easier to be perfected. Close your eyes and mentally repeat the Name or the Mantra at the "Heart Centre." Let not this repetition become mechanical, but practice it sweetly in the language of feelings and higher emotions. Let one part of your consciousness be engaged in hearing simultaneously the Name or the Mantra which is being chanted mentally. This will enable you to hear the Mantra and, thus, your mind will not be diverted. When mind wanders, the mental hearing of the Mantra will be stopped and this will awaken you immediately to the fact that your mind has become restless ; and you can at once bring it back and refix it to the cherished object of contemplation. Thus the way of hearing the Name or the Mantra simultaneously while chanting it, helps you sufficiently in the process of concentration. At least one hour must be devoted daily to the practice of 'Japa'.

After sincere and unbroken practice for a few months the power of the Mantra begins to manifest itself and the mind, fascinated by the divine vibrations of the Mantra, is automatically diverted to the

Heart Centre. Then follow the spiritual experiences. The divine power embodied in the Mantra holds you now, as it were, by hand and takes you smoothly and safely, as the practice grows, to the higher planes in the spiritual realm, leading you ultimately to the highest Summit from where there is no path ahead.

4. Be seated in the Asana and pray as above. Close your eyes and cease to think. Stop doing anything whatsoever. Don't fight with your thoughts. Neither invite the thoughts or reject them, nor suppress them. Let them come and pass away ; let them arise and subside. Watch them impersonally, as you look sometimes at the flying birds coming and going away in the sky. Don't participate in the coming and going of thoughts ; just take notice of them and ignore them very lightly and gently. After a regular daily practice of some months the thoughts begin to subside, and, finally, both their appearance and disappearance will stop, and only awareness and tranquility will be experienced.

5. (a) Sit down calmly. Do not think of any outward objects ; only look within so as to know your real interest. Introspect deeply, and observe dispassionately your imperfections that stand between you and the Divine. Make a firm resolve to face these impediments through the power of discrimination and love of God ; or make yourself firmly determined to rise above and remain uninfluenced by the factors which impede your progress. By repeating this performance, time and again, your mind will gradually be purged of the distractions and obstacles, or else it will come to remain unmoved by any distractions, and will ultimately become silent.

(b) Choose some subject which appeals to you most in relation to God-such as Emancipation, the relation between God and the world, or the relation between the world and Jiva, the nature of God, some such subject - and think on it so absorbingly that the outer world is totally forgotten. The meditation on the transience and decay of all worldly things and states is also very useful as a subject for

meditation, because it helps us to wean ourselves from temporal affections.

Prayer and spiritual contemplation are to spiritual health what food and physical exercise are to physical health. One desirous of leading the life of the Spirit must devote some period daily to prayer, Japa and contemplation. How can he, who cannot spare a few hours every day to withdraw his mind from worldly affairs, in order to think exclusively of God, hope to find the Lord ?

A few dangers

It will not be out of place to mention here some dangers which the over-eager aspirant must guard against. The normal course of the mind is to run after the objective world ; but spiritual concentration, as it has already been explained, implies just the reverse movement of the mind. This being so, the beginner tries concentration all at once for a long period, especially on 'Agya Chakra' and feels a strain on his brain. It happens on account of the tension produced by the inward movement of the beginner's mind. This movement is connected with the functioning of the brain. If the practitioner works beyond his capacity and makes violent efforts in fixing the mind in the middle of eye-brows, he then runs the risk of damaging the nerve-cells of his brain. Acute headache and dullness in the brain, prolonged cooling sensation in the middle of eye brows, excessive heating of or intense irritation in, the forehead are the signals of this danger.

Besides, many aspirants are not aware of the turns of the "spiritual track", the turns at which more expedient and hard work is needed. Such *Sadhakas* go too fast in the - beginning and work beyond their capacities. The result is, that they generally get tired and exhausted soon and they give up their *Sadhana* in the mid-way. An example from sports will make this point clear : the " spiritual race" is not to be run too fast, at the highest speed, all the distance ; it is to be run as a Marathon

steadily, with measured steps, so that the runner preserves his stamina till he takes the last step to victory.

To avoid these perils, the aspirant should start the practice of concentration for a few minutes only in the beginning, and, then, he should increase the duration slowly. If the brain gets fatigued and there is headache during contemplation, stop the exercise at that very time and let the mind relax. Repeat calmly the Lord's name or simply entertain in your mind the attribute of Lord's benignity. Start the *Sadhana* again when you regain mental equipoise and physical fitness. The spiritual journey is not a journey of days and months, but of years. Who knows, it may take lives and lives to reach the final destination. Therefore, do not be impatient. Work steadily and calmly. Not a rash, but a regular and steady practice is needed to ensure success. Here it seems necessary to warn the student of Yoga about another important point also. Some students of contemplation keep on changing their method of spiritual concentration. Taking to certain method of concentration, they start the Yogic practice, but, if their mind does not become completely steady and restful through it within a period of few days or months, they abandon that method and take to another method. After practicing the second method also for some period, they feel no improvement ; they give up that too and then try the third method. Then the third method also yields no result. They are prompted to adopt yet another method ; and so on and on. This frequent changing of the method of practice-like changing one's clothes too often - is really a great mistake. Think of a man, trying to dig a well, changing the site :again and again, and, therefore, not being able to find water anywhere. Similarly, by changing the methods of practice for concentration again and again, the " inward flowing" of the mind can never be accomplished, nor can one-pointedness be achieved. Such an aspirant, therefore, fails to gain from any of the methods any substantial spiritual experience, and, thus either turns indifferent to himself, or becomes a skeptic or an infidel towards spirituality.

Generally speaking, the method of *Sadhana* is changed due to some difficulties which come in the way. When the *Sadhana* experiences

difficulties in achieving concentration through one method, he is tempted to think of a second method. He thinks that the new method will entail less arduous work. Captivated with this type of thinking, the student gives up the first method and gets engaged in the practice of the second. No doubt, this new method seems to be simple and easy to practice in the beginning because it is the nature of mind to be attracted by novelties, but after some period, one begins to feel the same difficulty in this method which he felt in the previous one. Then, the allurements of a third method invades the mind, and he abandons the second one and takes to the third. This process goes on. Because of this fickleness of mind success is not achieved, and the student is debarred from achieving inner spiritual concentration. No spiritual benefit comes to him.

It is, therefore, correct to say that sufficiently long practice is required, and difficulties have to be met with, in every method for achieving inner concentration. As such, the *Sadhaka* should not change the way of his practice again and again. He must stick to one method and follow it whole-heartedly. He should know that to turn the mind inward and to assume full control on it is not an easy job. If you read the history of man carefully, you will notice how mind has duped intellectuals, scholars, teachers and even ascetics and made them dance according to its impulses. Many notable warriors, who dominated and ruled big territories, have proved too powerless to conquer their minds. Even the great warrior Arjuna, though he was dutiful and pious, was compelled to remark: "*O, Krishana, the mind is very unsteady, turbulent, tenacious and powerful ; therefore, I consider it as difficult to control as the wind*".

This does not, however, imply that mind cannot be turned inward, made one pointed and controlled. Through 'holy indifference' and practice of contemplation, it can most certainly be brought under perfect control. It is not wise to alter, time and again, one's method of practice of contemplation which one adopts for an inward drive.

Among the methods of spiritual concentration, which have been suggested in the preceding pages, the *Sadhaka* should choose,

according to his or her individuality, or according to the directions given by his or her spiritual master, one method and should follow it with an unabated zeal till success is achieved. The `Japa' should, of course, be necessarily performed, because through it the Grace of the Lord is found to descend sooner and unfailingly.

Main Obstacles and aids to contemplation

There are certain factors which hinder inner concentration and there are others which help and promote it. The most prominent of these are given hereunder, in the hope that their adequate knowledge will help the *Sadhaka* in acquiring contemplation.

Obstacles

(a) Wandering of Mind

Wandering is a common disease of mind. Like a monkey who tirelessly goes on jumping from one branch to the other branch of a tree, or from one tree to the other, the mind of an ordinary man keeps on oscillating and moving. Purposefully or purposelessly, it runs from one idea to the other, from one place to the other place, and from one object to the other object, finding no rest anywhere. Unlike the physical diseases, which either come to or leave the body at a certain stage, this disease of mind happens to come to man from his very birth and accompanies him till he breathes no more. Is there any cure for this disease? - Yes, for every disease there is a cure. This disease, too, is not at all incurable. Though it is hard to stop the restlessness of mind, yet it is not at all impracticable to do so. Have not there been saints and holy men who have proved to the world that mind is not uncontrollable? Don't such self-controlled men, though few in number they may be, still happen to be amongst us?

By a disciplined living, supplemented with detachment and other moral qualities, as also with regular practice of contemplation, mind can certainly be made one-pointed. A sincere effort, rightly guided, does bring success in the long run.

(b) Sleep

The second obstacle that the *Sadhaka* has to face in his path of attaining complete silence, is sleep. Common mind has the experience of only two states. The first is the one in which the mind thinks, wills, feels, imagines or knows the external gross objects and embodied beings. The second is that in which it falls into a swooning sleep. Therefore, as soon as you draw it back from the first state of physical thinking, it has a tendency of going into the second state, the state of slumber.

If we remove the first obstacle, that is, if we succeed in stilling the mind from wandering, we are automatically faced with the second obstacle, that of sleep, which generally presents itself when the wandering of mind is stopped or almost stopped. In the negative method of contemplation, discussed in the preceding pages, this obstacle appears soon after you sit for inner concentration, but it is not so in the positive methods where the mind has to be made passive steadily and not all at once.

There may be some other reasons owing to which mind shows the tendency of falling into sleep during contemplation—such as taking of heavy meals, physical or mental fatigue, caused owing to excessive work done, or certain disease of the body, or an inadequate quantity of sleep given to the body at night, and so on.

The hindrance of sleep in contemplation is harder to overcome than that of the wandering of mind. Nevertheless, through proper food, through breathing exercises and through steady practice of watchfulness and alertness, this obstacle can be removed.

If all these precautions fail, the *Sadhaka* should get up from the *asana* when sleep is over-powering him during contemplation and

walk for a while, conduct active breathing or else wash his face with cold water and then again sit on his *asana*.

Temptations from subtle planes

When the barrier of the physical mind is crossed through the withdrawal of consciousness from gross external objects, and when the *Sadhaka* also gains the faculty of avoiding falling into deep slumber, he generally gets connected with the astral and psychic worlds through the subtle-physical plane. Through this connection he begins to have a multitude of subtle experiences of the aforesaid worlds. None of these experiences is constant ; these are just flashes which repeat themselves, sometimes, very rapidly. Some of them are so seductive that the *Sadhaka* falls into delusion and, becoming complacent, cherishes preoccupation with these experiences for the temporary thrills they provide. Besides these fleeting visions, such extra-ordinary powers as those of clairvoyance flow into the mind of the practitioner, from the higher psychic planes. But these too are not permanent possessions. All these are serious distractions which can make true contemplation only pseudo in character, and can lead the student astray from the path of Self-realization. Those alone, who are very, very sincere and highly discriminating, can save themselves from such obstructing temptations, or else it is the spiritual guide, the adept, who can take the *Sadhaka* across this critical stage of *Sadhana* where many stop and to which many succumb and wherefrom only a few can go ahead.

For the *Sadhakas* who are advanced in devotion, and who perform their *Sadhana* in the spirit of surrender unto the Lord, and who regard the Lord as their refuge and shelter, such obstacles are removed, by the Lord Himself whenever these intervene and begin to distract the devotee.

The Extremist's Attitude

There are obstacles that intervene or present themselves without the will of the *Sadhaka* and there are obstacles which the aspirant himself creates sometimes in the way of his contemplation. The cause of self-created obstacles is the lack of experience and the shortness of vision, because of which the *Sadhaka* gives undue importance to certain practices which seem to him proper, even though they actually hinder the work of inner concentration, and, consequently, he follows them obstinately. The extreme external practices such as prolonged fasting, decreasing the period of sleep during night beyond proper limit, standing on one leg without sitting any time, remaining quite naked in cold in winter, sitting on the hot bed of earth under the scorching heat of the Sun, and such other transgressions (though they are sometimes regarded as penance) actually hinder inwardness instead of helping it. Some *sadhakas*, on the pretext of inculcating in themselves the virtue of forbearance, or merely for displaying their power of forbearance in order to win praise from people, follow such practices. They fail to have inner peace. By becoming subjected to such dissipating influences, you seem to think that God can be tempted in this or that way to come to you. That is not true. What is true is, that through indulging in extremities you only invite obstacles in the path of contemplation. Why dissipate energy (energy which can be more usefully spent in fixing the mind on the Divine) in combating self created "Intruders" ? For practicing forbearance, many opportunities are offered to the aspirant. He has to be only careful and eager to use them, in his or her daily activities in combating the manifold imperfections of his nature.

The simple rule, to be strictly followed by the student of spiritual contemplation, is to seek nothing which interrupts or dissipates his energy. He should bear quietly and courageously all that comes unsought to him or is sent to him by God.

Aids

(a) Diet

The progress of the *Sadhaka* depends to a significant degree upon the food he takes. Food is essential for the sustenance of the physical body; it also influences one's mind. "A pure diet produces a pure mind", say the Upanishadas.

Exceptions apart, feed a man on right food, and you can make him virtuous and efficient ; feed him wrongly, and he turns into an idiot, a pessimist, a criminal or an invalid. Proper diet verily helps a man to be a Man, and a Man to be a Superman; wrong diet may, on the other hand, make man a devastating brute.

What diet, then, should an aspirant take to gain physical and moral strength, which are indispensable for contemplation ? There is no inflexible rule. You must discover carefully what type of food keeps your body fit and your mind clean and calm. The diet that gives constipation, or that which makes you restless, must be avoided under all circumstances.

Apart from this, the food taken by the aspirant, should be pure as far as possible. Pure food would be that type of food which is honestly earned, and cooked and served with love and devotion. The food should be such as to promote longevity, intelligence, strength, health, happiness ; it should be sweet, nourishing and agreeable.

As a general rule, edibles and drinks like ghee, green vegetables, milk, curds, butter, coarse wheat-flour and fresh fruits are mostly conducive to *Sadhana*. Meat, eggs, excessive spices, on the other hand, are positively harmful for a spiritual seeker.

One thing that may be specially mentioned in regard to diet is that the use of all narcotic things, like opium, charas, bhang, tobacco, is strictly prohibited for the student of Yoga. Some people take these

and say that the taking of narcotic things helps them in concentration, and, on this pretext, they use them freely. May be these help a man in other matters, but, as far as the achievement of spiritual concentration is concerned, such things definitely prove pernicious in the long run. Similar is the case with alcoholic liquors ; these must also be shunned totally. These intoxicants weaken and poison the finer cells of the brain ; they disable the student of contemplation for the finer and higher spiritual experiences. Sometimes these intoxicants, when used in excess, prove very harmful and bring about brain disorders and insanity.

(b) Pranayama or Conscious Breathing

The literal meaning of `Pranayama' is control of *Prana*.. `Prana' is actually not breath, as it is usually mistakenly understood. It is the life force - one of the powers of the soul which makes the body move through the movement of nervous and physiological systems.

Breath, *Prana* and mind are deeply interconnected. Control over breath leads one to assume control over *Prana* ; and, through the control over *Prana* the activities of mind are completely controlled. In the system of `Hatha Yoga', *Pranayama* is given the highest place in *Sadhana* and is to be mastered primarily. But in the Yoga of Contemplation, it is practiced only as a secondary measure in bringing about a rhythmic and regular movement of breath, which aids inner concentration. *Pranayama* also cleanses the nerves and keeps the body fit.

There are many techniques of practicing *Pranayama* but, without going into details, a simple method, which can be practiced by one and all without any danger, is given as under :

(i) Sit cross-legged (if you cannot sit cross-legged, sit in a chair) keeping the body in such a position that the spinal cord

remains erect. Close the right nostril by the middle finger of the left hand, and inhale through the left nostril very slowly and fill to your capacity, taking the breath up to "Muladhara"- the centre located at the lower end of the spinal cord. Without retaining the breath within, open the right nostril and exhale through it gradually by keeping the left nostril closed with the thumb of the left hand-until all the air is completely breathed out This is one half of a complete cycle of one *Pranayama*.

Now, without taking a pause inhale again through the right nostril very slowly filling the breath to your capacity, as before, up to the *Muladhara*. Then breathe out slowly through the left nostril. This completes the other half of the cycle of *Pranayama*.

Thus all these four processes-two of inhaling and two of exhaling-make one complete cycle of one *Pranayama*.

During all these four processes, the generative organ as well as the anus are to be kept contracted inward. While filling the breath inside, the belly should not come out ; it has also to be kept contracted. *Pranayama* is forbidden to be practiced with a full stomach.

A beginner will take about seventy to eighty seconds to complete one cycle of *Pranayama*. He may start the practice by doing five such cycles before he takes to contemplation, as already explained.

(ii) Conscious Breathing

Sit erect (as already suggested) and breathe deeply. Simultaneously watch the incoming and outgoing of breath. After a certain period of practice this will make the breath quite light, rhythmic and regular.

It is a very simple practice which every one-young or old-can do. It can be practiced for about fifteen minutes before starting contemplation.

Conscious Breathing is very conducive for strengthening will-power and for making mind calm and composed. It is recommended to be practiced by every *Sadhaka* many times a day when he gets free from work. It also removes physical and mental fatigue.

(c) Proper place and time

The *Sadhaka* is required to feel the presence of the Lord all through his day-to-day activities at all places and at all times; but, for one-pointed contemplation, which requires the whole attention to be exclusively fixed upon the Divine, he must retreat to a proper, clean and quiet place which is free from all disturbances.

Those who have passed the age of sixty and have retired from active life may settle themselves in a quiet corner of some town or village with a moderate climate, preferably situated at the bank of a river in some holy place, provided they have the means and money to do so. It will certainly make it easier for them to draw within and meditate. Those who have still to work and run house-hold affairs and have to live a busy life in a town or city, should have a small, separate room for prayer and contemplation if they have got sufficient accommodation. If not, they should reserve a corner of a room for this purpose. Such a reserved place, where only prayer and meditation are conducted regularly, becomes charged with spiritual vibrations and is helpful to the *Sadhaka* in spiritual contemplation. What a pity that people today choose to flow along the wild current of materialism and do everything to have commodious drawing rooms for their guests, but, for God they do not even think of sparing a small room. Sleeping at the place, or in the room, reserved for contemplation, should be avoided because it creates an atmosphere of dullness and laziness which hinders concentration. That is the reason why in old times every Indian would keep in his home a small, separate room, known as "Thakar Dwara", for offering daily prayer and for practicing contemplation. This tradition still continues in certain families. Such small reserved rooms ought to be decorated with the pictures of great saints and sages because the contact with

these symbols (or, say, their `Darshan') helps in arousing the latent divine tendencies in us.

The proper time for one-pointed contemplation is "Braham Muhurat"-the period beginning about three hours before the sunrise. The body as well as the mind are quite fresh at that time, and it is easier to sit in one posture for a greater time and with a steady mind. Besides this, this time suits almost all except the lethargic and the lazy for whom spiritual achievement is a factitious affair. Early rising is an important and healthy habit for the spiritual aspirant. So in "Braham Muhurat" one or two, hours can be easily spared for prayer and meditation. Those whom this time does not suit for any reason, may fix some other time for offering prayers and practicing contemplation.

This apart, before going to sleep at night some time must be devoted to prayers and Japa. Going to sleep with the remembrance of the Divine, does much good because, by doing so, the subconscious mind keeps on performing Japa automatically during sleep. Thus, sleep can also be utilized for a nobler purpose.

During day time also one can relax in one's chair in the office, or even in the workshop or home for three to four minutes, and reflect, for a while, on the true purpose of human life ; and lowering one's eye-lids one can very humbly and silently whisper in the heart : "I am thine Lord ! pray, take me into Thy fold." This may be repeated after every three, four hours during the day-a very simple thing to do, but it is very efficacious. It keeps you recollected, even in the turmoil of worldly affairs, in relation to your Supreme Master. And, after all, what does it cost you to do so ? - only a sincere will and deep aspiration onto the divine.

(d) Regularity

If you want sure and quick spiritual progress, be sincere and regular always in the practice of contemplation. Through the break of a few days, even of a day or two, in contemplation you lose much of what you have gained during months of steady practice. It is only

through a long and very regular practice of contemplation that one is able to reach the unforced spontaneity of spiritual concentration.

Don't miss a day even to sit in prayer and meditation at the time fixed for that purpose. The pause of even one day will do much in upsetting your *Sadhana*, because the break of one day will pave the way for the subsequent breaks of many days ; but then some people say : "In these days of complex living we cannot be sure of time because it is heavily taxed, and unforeseen appointments cannot be rejected". But have you not already made an appointment with God? Is it good manners to make a new appointment with some one at a certain time, when you have already given that particular time to some one else ? Should you keep him on the waiting list ? If such behavior is taken to be unreasonable with ordinary mortals, how shamefully absurd would it be to behave like this towards God, whom you take to be the object of the highest reverence and adoration ? Is it, then, wise at all for a *Sadhaka* to be too serious for things and persons that are, after all, only the creations of God.

(e) Spiritual Guide

The need of a guide is recommended in every walk of life, but in spiritual matters it is much too patent to be disregarded. The work of a spiritual guide is not only to initiate the neophyte, but to lead him throughout the spiritual journey. Spiritual guide or Guru is to the disciple a spiritual "pick-me-up", as it were, for all the seasons of his life. While performing contemplation the *Sadhaka* may, at certain critical turns, involve himself in dangerous distractions-the distractions from which it is next to impossible, if not totally impossible, to come out spiritually safe - if the Guru's help and guidance do not intervene. The Guru is a most compassionate friend, who awakens you from within towards the life everlasting. Pulling out the disciple from the mere beliefs and convictions about God, he - the Guru - enables him to enter into the realm of spiritual experience.

Moreover, it is the Blessed Guru who uplifts the disciple from time to time when he (i.e. the Guru) perceives laxity creeping in the disciple's *Sadhana*, or when his faith in the Lord wavers and his perseverance loses strength and steadiness. The living influence of a real Guru is irresistible for the disciple ; he finds himself enveloped by his selfless, love, he sees the light of his, Master leading him, along the difficult path.

Much untruth grows in the name of truth. It is regrettable that an infection of false *Gurudom* is spreading at present like an epidemic. It is a thing which must be discouraged and rooted out.

(f) Swadhiaya and Satsang

It is not helpful to decry the eternal truths of revealed scriptures. Devote some time daily for reading them. Through this process you indirectly come in contact with their holy authors. Read properly with a deep faith. Thorough understanding of the scriptures inspires us and fills us with wisdom and helps us in making the mind restive. Don't recite merely parrot-like: Better, read less, but read with a keen will and sharp understanding. Then you may reap some benefit.

Periodic satsang (contact with holy persons and Yogins) must also be conducted by the student of contemplation. Many knots get opened; many doubts get removed through listening to the discourses of the enlightened souls. You should not approach holy men to discuss God with them as parliamentarians discuss affairs of the state or as academicians discuss scholastic- matters. There is not to be a war of words or a show of wit ; there is not to be a rhetorical hurling of hollow arguments. There is to be, on the other hand, transmission- of experience - silent exchange of such ideas as may be only, felt and not, expressed. Remember that God Himself speaks through his devotees and saints. Listen to them carefully, and try to mould your life according to, their directions. It will give you peace here and hereafter.

(g) Balanced Living

Many Sadhakas, in the hope of a quick spiritual "take off", ignorantly refuse to dive "deep within", because they indulge in extremities: That moderation of temperance is the most conducive condition for contemplation has been acknowledged and professed by all the adepts. Even a man like Gautama had to abandon his extreme austerities and follow the course of the "Middle Way" to achieve the Buddhahood. It will be useful to narrate here an anecdote of his life which, caused a notable shift in the direction of his spiritual effort.

Gautama, the Buddha, practiced so many methods and ways of discipline before realizing his Ideal. At the outset, he sought Truth through metaphysical discussions, but soon gave up this approach. He then took to Tapa and performed most severe physical penance for a long time, but this did not give him peace, nor did it reveal the Truth he sought, but it gave him extraordinary powers. In a state of great restlessness and being extremely eager to find out the essential Peace of Nirvana, he sat once in a steady posture, and made a firm resolve to keep on sitting there unmoved, till he found Enlightenment. Thus, renouncing all the worldly desires, sleep, rest and even food and drink, he sat in that posture. He said, "In this very posture let my body whither away ; let the skin, the flesh and the bones perish also. Enlightenment is difficult to be achieved in many eons. Without desire this body does not go on (living)." With such a motiveless motive he kept sitting there. Who has ever known the ways of Divine Providence ? One day a girl-dancer, with some of her friends, happened to pass by that way. She was singing a song, a couplet from which contained the meaning : "Tighten not too much the strings of a Sitar, lest they break ; nor should you loosen them to the point that the Sitar gets out of tune and the sweet music ceases to flow from it."

Gautama was moved by this import of the song. He pondered it deeply and, after all, realized his error. It dawned clearly on him

that it was not correct to take recourse to extreme outer mortification. He relaxed his posture. Soon after he renounced the extremely austere course of penance, adopted the "Middle Way" and within a period of two years won his Cherished Ideal.

Lack of water dries up a crop but so also does the excess of water spoil it. Similar is the case with Yoga-Sadhana. Extreme outer activity decidedly hinders inner concentration, but so also does indiscriminating extreme renunciation of action and things harm it. There is the temptation to indulge in temporalities. There is also the determination to avoid these completely. A wise *Sadhaka* strikes the middle course ; he maintains an equipoise in all activities such as, sleeping, walking, working and eating. Mark what the Gita says: ***"Yoga, which rids one of woe, is accomplished only by him who is regulated in diet and recreation, regulated in performing actions, and regulated in -sleeping and waking."... "Also, Arjuna, this Yoga is not for him who eats too much, nor for him who does not eat at all, nor for him who is given to much sleep, nor for him who is ceaselessly awake"***. It would be worthwhile to ,quote the words of a speaker. At a Janam ashtami congregation he spoke beautifully developing the idea. He said, ***"Lord Krishna was born in Bhadra, the season striking the middle of the year. He was born at midnight ,or, say, at the middle hour of night and day. The time of His birth symbolizes the principle of moderation."***

To sum up, moderation in eating, sleeping and walking and in other activities ensures progress in Yoga. It is not through violent effort but through proper technique, wisdom and unsleeping awareness that spiritual concentration can be realized. In proper balancing of activity and inactivity, of love and detachment, of service, devotion and knowledge lies the secret of spiritual success.

Om Om Om

A few inner experiences

A mind which plunges within its inner recesses must have a number of inner visions and experiences which cannot be felt by an ordinary person engaged in the pursuit of the world. These visions and experiences come to different *Sadhakas* in different manners and they may vary, in quality from one *Sadhaka* to another, depending upon their stages, modes of *Sadhana*, inclinations and, physical constitutions.

This statement about the variation of the inner experiences excites the question : "Are these experiences not merely hallucinations of the minds of the *Sadhakas* ?" No, these are not hallucinations. An example should make the point clear. Suppose you send a few men separately to the same bazaar to have a view of the things displayed there. Every one reveals his likes, dislikes and in every description we notice omissions. That is natural because individual temperaments are different That is the reason why descriptions differ in their mode. One individual is attracted by some things to which another individual is indifferent-that is due to difference in taste and *Samskaras*. That is true of inner spiritual experience also.

Moreover, in spite of this variation, there are certain prominent things or spots which arrest the attention of everyone, may be for a very short period. Similarly, even though the inner experiences of different *Sadhakas* do vary, there are certain common experiences which are prominent. Only some of them may be given as under :

1. In the preliminary stage of inwardness certain, sounds as that of drum-beating at a low pitch, sound produced by flowing water, sound of thunder of clouds, or humming of bees, are heard in the head through the right ear. Certain colors also appear on the spot between the eye-brows. These sounds and

colors, which are inconstant, and which come and go alternately, are those of the five subtle elements, that is, of earth, water, fire, air and ether.

On hearing these sounds and seeing these colors during concentration some *Sadhakas* imagine that they have advanced far in contemplation. This shows their lack of knowledge of spiritual matters. There is nothing spiritual in seeing these colors or in hearing these sounds; these are reflected in consciousness only because of the contact of the mind with subtle physical plane.

These sounds and colors actually disintegrate consciousness and hamper one-pointedness. As such, they should not be given importance. An adept calls them "empty colors" and "useless sounds".

2. A little more inwardness takes one into the Astral Plane where a number of things are seen and experienced. Very often, one hears voices whispered in the ears. Sometimes we hear messages which are quite clear, but few of them are genuine and many of them are again false and misleading. Here the *Sadhaka* must be on guard and should not follow blindly any message or voice or suggestion. Besides this, a multitude of visions come to be seen during contemplation at this stage. At the lower levels of the Astral Plane some frightful scenes appear while at its higher levels many kinds of fascinating scenes are seen. Most of them are the symbolic representations of things, states, forces and beings of the Astral Plane, while some represent actual happenings in that plane. It is not correct to get entangled into such visions and voices, which only come and pass away. Overlooking them, one must move ahead inwards and try to achieve one-pointedness. In fact, the fervent and sincere *Sadhakas* do not stay on in this stage for long but pass it over quickly and safely.

3. (a) After leaving the Astral plane, one-pointed concentration gains momentum and soon ripens. One begins to have the elevating and blissful experience of the higher planes. Saints of higher order, living or gone, often appear during contemplation. They come to

bless and help the *Sadhaka*. They should be saluted and adored. Sometimes they talk on spiritual matters and guide the *Sadhaka*.

(b) Visions of gods and goddesses also occur at this stage. The personal *Ishta* of the *Sadhaka* appears many a time during contemplation. Not only this, he gives "Darshana" even when one is sitting or lying in a relaxed mental state, with eyes open. Such experiences give much 'Ananda' and uplift the mind. Soothing and sweet influence of such visions lasts for many days.

(c) On some occasions during contemplation, events happening in remote places or the events which are to happen in future, are reflected in consciousness in full detail. The power of mind-reading is also felt frequently at this stage. The *Sadhaka* can develop, if he so wishes, the powers of clairvoyance, clairaudience and telepathy very easily, but such preoccupation hinders his further spiritual progress. The adepts, therefore, always warn the aspirant not to employ himself in developing these temporal powers or "Vibhuties" as they are termed in Yogic parlance.

(d) Flashes of Light (of a more dynamic character) are seen frequently. An effulgent golden light sometimes appears before your open eyes when you are sitting calmly, and all the things dissolve in it. It lasts only for few minutes. Such flashes are indications of some coming spiritual realization.

(e) One hears a peculiar thrilling sound, issuing from the Heart Centre (in the middle of the chest), which instantaneously permeates the whole body, like an electric current. It renders the *Sadhaka* completely oblivious of the external world. After a period of about fifteen minutes, this sound is centralized in the 'Agya Chakra' and turns into a dazzling light. This is a very blissful experience.

Some words appear as if written by lightening on the forehead during contemplation. Sometimes they are very, very clear and can be properly read word by word.

The above-mentioned experiences generally come to those who practice Mantra Japa for long periods daily.

4. When consciousness sufficiently deepens, these passing visions and flashes cease and one begins to feel an inner spiritual ecstasy which goes on increasing progressively. This inner ecstasy pulls you within irresistibly. All the temptations and lures of the world cannot charm the *Sadhaka* when he has attained this stage, and, he feels himself drawn again and again to solitary places to sit alone and enjoy this Inner Delight.

Here the *Sadhana* takes a new turn and becomes more and more spontaneous. The sense of personal effort begins to fade away, but its pace accelerates vigorously.

5. This spiritual ecstasy is merged into ineffable, deep peace as the aspirant advances on his path. The outer and the inner world is completely obliterated and consciousness, is plunged in its static repose. Here bondage and freedom, pain and pleasure, with all other pairs of opposites, cease to exist. *Tamoguna*, sleep and laziness being absolutely absent, simple awareness-silent, attribute less and immutable-alone abides. This is, according to 'New Vedantins' the state of merger with the 'Brahm'. To this very state the Buddhists give the name of 'Nirvana' - the extinction of the world of name and form. "Nirvana", "Shunya" or "Void" are the terms which denote, according to Orthodox Buddhism, not "nothingness"-as wrongly conceived by some people-but the pure 'Isness' bereft of the world of name and form. This direct experience of immutable, pure and relationless self gives one perfect release from the - mutations of the "Gunas". On coming a little down from this experience-When the mind emerges again-the world seems to be a mere shadow, with no 'substance' in it an unreal, vain and useless play of unreal elements.

Let one more thing be pointed out here. To call this world "Mithya" or unreal on the ground of logic or of intellectualism, or in obedience to some system of philosophy, is one thing and to feel and experience immediately the world as such, is quite another. The perpetual experience of the unreality of the world

in name and form comes to those alone who are blessed with the direct perception of the pure, passive, inactive and silent self. This experience is rare. But anyone may, on the other hand, conceive or declare the world as unreal by establishing intellectually trivial nature of the world or by means of logic. The experience of silent self and its concomitant purview of the world as shallow, unreal, useless and purposeless appearance, though a very high experience in the spiritual field, is, let it be known, not the ultimate or perfect spiritual experience.

6. Further on consciousness ever remaining established in its immovable poise again looks, as it were, outside and begins to assimilate the "All" in itself and gradually realizes its essential oneness in and with the "All".

In order to reach the ultimate spiritual experience one has to pass through two more intermediary experiences, but these are not being given here. In the fulfillment of the perfect spiritual experience, the gulf between Nirguna and Saguna, between the Impersonal and Personal, between Nature and God, and between Active Self and Passive Self, is completely bridged; or say, all these powers, forms, principles are the aspects of one existence, which are conceived by the being standing at the level of mental consciousness, that is, by the individual soul of man, as different from each other or even mutually contradictory. They enter into an harmonious oneness in the spiritual absolute.

Om Om Om

Prayer

Prayer, in its truest sense, is a humble and creative act of the will through which one pours out one's heart unto the Lord. Through prayer we may ask something for ourselves or for others, or without asking anything, only reverently adore the Lord, who is conceived by us as the Supreme Being worthy of all adoration, reverence and love.

There are three factors required in advance for every prayer, whatever be its form :

1. A firm conviction or belief in the existence of God who is Merciful as also All-Powerful.
2. An intense feeling of love and reverence unto the Lord, or the feeling of some material, mental or spiritual necessity and need.
3. To a certain extent the concentration of the will and the humbleness of the heart.

Any vocal prayer which lacks all these factors is bound to be hollow.

All legitimate prayers that arise from a pure and sincere heart—rather than those that are merely uttered orally, parrot-like, without intensity of feeling—are positively heard and granted. This cannot be denied, because life proves it at every step. Fact is always a fact whether man can know or explain it scientifically and logically or not. Sincere prayer has tremendous power in it, and it works miracles. An aspirant of the Divine Life cannot do without prayer. He or she must pray at every step of his or her spiritual movement. A prayer which

is the most passive is the most effective, because the less the ego, the more the Grace comes to us, and consequently, the closer we get to the Divine.

What should one pray for and how should one adore the Lord ? The answer to this question would depend upon the legitimate needs and the moral and spiritual stations of different individuals.

However, a brief prayer, which may suit almost all. types of aspirants and which must be performed by all the *Sadhakas* before starting daily contemplations, is given here-under :

*Swasti Astu Vishvasya Khala Prasaditam
Dhyayantu Bhutani Shivam Mithodhiya
Manashcha Bhadram Bhajtat Adhokshjey
Aveshytam No Matirapi Ahaituki*

O Lord, the Refuge of the refuge less and the Supreme master of this universe, May good be to the whole world ;
May the wretched ones turn into kind people ;
May all the living beings wish happiness to one another ; May their hearts be motivated by, mutual love and welfare ;
And may our hearts turn effortlessly and motivelessly to thy holy feet ;

O Lord Supreme ! before Thee, who art Perfect Purity, who art the embodiment of Infinite Power, who art the Infinite Source of Boundless Knowledge, Unlimited Bliss, unabating Light and Love, I prostrate in deep love and reverence a thousand, thousand times.

O Lord ! who art at once immanent and transcendent, and One without a second, I come to Thy shelter ; pray, make me Thine ; draw me closer and closer to Thee ; give me full protection under Thy Benign Hand. My Lord ! I am Thine, I am Thine, I am Thine.

Whatsoever I am, I am Thine. Whatsoever I am, I take refuge in Thee.

O Life of all life ! Through Thy Grace may my body remain healthy ; May my heart become pure and clean ; May my understanding be clear and penetrating ; May my mind be steady and peaceful. My Lord ! Through Thy Grace May my whole life, having become clean and developed, be spent incessantly in Thy remembrance, in Thy service and in Thy contemplation.

O Merciful. One ! give me strength that I may seek Thee and see Thee ; give me the strength that I may seek myself and see myself ; give me the strength that I may see the Truth and live the Truth.

O perfect Lord ! Turn my imperfections into perfection, my infirmities into wholeness. Merging me, in Thyself, My Lord ! make me perfect.

My thousand; thousand salutations unto Thee !

Om Om Om

Begin here and now

Some years ago, a person - a well-to-do person with sound health and plenty of wealth-said to me :

"I have seen much of this life, I am now going to devote the whole of my attention and capacity to prayer and meditations four months hence". He was at that time preoccupied with some "urgent domestic affair" which he hoped to settle within a period of four months, and then he was to give himself to God-remembrance. After one and a half months, as I came to know afterwards, the gentleman expired after only a brief illness. Who knows what ideas and longings did he take with him when he breathed his last !

Another gentleman was to set out whole-heartedly for the quest of the Infinite after the education, marriage and settlement of his dear and only son. His son has finished his educational career, has been married and is well-settled. This happened long ago; but the son's father-the spiritually unfortunate fellow-is now playing with his grand-children in the home, and now he is engaged in devising the schemes for the worldly welfare of his grand-children as also for the would-be great-grand-children. See the play of Maya!

These two gentlemen are not exceptions, but their example can be applied to mankind in general. We hear people say : "Let our this or that business be over ; let our such and such duties be fulfilled and then single-mindedly shall we turn to God and would lead the life of spiritual contemplation." But most commonly, if not in cent per cent cases, it is found that neither their jobs are completed, nor are their duties discharged, till they breathe their last; they go on postponing the spiritual task, thereby failing to do what they have been sent into this world for by their Creator. They are like the bullock in the oil-mill who never reaches the wisp of hay tied in front of him ; he only grinds the oil. To such men the world plays the will-o'-the-wisp.

To prefer the world to its Maker and to defer good deeds (more particularly, the prayers and spiritual contemplation) to the "non-existent" future, is a very wrong attitude based on ignorance and inertia. It obstructs the flow of the Inner Light. Beware! it is the Satan playing you the fool, robbing you of your wits and precious time - trying to divorce you or keeping you divorced from your Lord.

Who has seen tomorrow ? Who knows when suddenly the call from the unknown world may come-a call to which no one can ever say "wait a little, please !" By forgetting death, death does not cease to come; by ignoring Shiva, one cannot elude His Hands. Time is short, the way is long and the life's evening is approaching fast.

Why waste away the precious moments, making money, and in serving the false vulnerable ego and calling it 'National Service'. The safest and soundest course is to begin here and now The past is dead, the future is unknown.

The present alone is real ; the present alone is living. Can anyone live yesterday or live tomorrow ? Even to think of the past and future you have inevitably to make them present. The present only is life, and this life is not ours -we are simply its custodians; it is God's and unto God it must be consecrated.

Should every one then renounce one's home and hearth and run to the jungle to find Him ? Not necessarily so ; and that is also not the point.

The point is the aspirant must adjust himself in his environment in such a manner that, instead of indulging in day-dreaming about devoting himself to *Bhajna* at some later stage of his life, he should start now and sit daily for regular meditations and prayer, making the best use of the present.

"But in the complex circumstances of to - day it is impossible to live in this world, and at the same time to follow sincerely the path of God or climb up to the life of "Purity and Spiritual Consummation," the skeptics may say. But this is exaggerating the difficulty. it is found that even in adverse and unfavorable circumstances, some

people do sit regularly in spiritual concentration and they do rise very high to the Divine Felicity, whereas, on the other side, there are those who have sufficient facilities of life, sufficient means and measures to rise up spiritually (if only they have the will) but they do not at all sit for prayers and are quite bankrupt spiritually. In reality, the plea of unfavorable circumstances for not taking to divine path, is, in most cases, another pretence put forward by the lower ego, because it always hates and shirks the possession by the Higher Self. There are certain conditions quite inadequate for spiritual unfoldment- I do admit. But is it not true that the morale of a soldier in a battle field counts more than the equipment he has ? "Where there is a will, there is a way" as the old saying goes. The crux of problem is the hypnotization of men by the `Gunas', because of which the world comes to be too much with them. There must be keen aspiration and a sincere will and the rest follows. The Lord chooses us only if he is chosen by us also. He does help us, provided we choose to be helped by Him.

What harm is done to the Lord if we do not remember Him ? What to Him if we do not pray ? It is really we who lose Him, the most Compassionate eternal companion of soul ; we give Him up in favor of the perishable and uncertain things and selfish persons who must disown us.

Friend ! this human body, in spite of its perishing nature, is a most valuable possession from the view-point of spiritual *Sadhana*. To despise it totally, or else to take it as a means of self-gratification, is a wrong attitude. It shows complete misunderstanding of things. Do not fritter it away in vain talking and trifles. It gives you a rare opportunity of returning from your period of exile in the world of Time to your Real Home, which is the Lord Eternal. Let not this golden chance be wasted. Be wise and alert. Pray and live. Make it a point to begin here and now. Practice the Lord's name ceaselessly and drink the Nectar. Meditate on thy real self and be free ! What is it which can drive

you (who art the divine child) away from God, who is the real Father. Give up all weakness. Why should you succumb to the vagaries of the world ? Why not obey the voice of Truth within ? Why postpone the approach to the Supreme Deliverer to a distant future, while He is ever-present within you and while you need to be delivered in the present ? All nature is working laboriously to be delivered from vanity of Time. Will you alone lie in slumber ? "Arise ! for the day is passing". Awake and march on and on to the Spiritual Heights within, and to the Divine Fullness without, and stop not till the Goal is reached.

May peace be to all !

Om Om Om

Glossary

<i>Agya Chakra</i>	The centre of Command
<i>Ajna Chakra</i>	The sixth centre between the eye brows
<i>Anahat Chakra</i>	The Heart Centre within the chest
<i>Ananda</i>	Bliss
<i>Asana</i>	Posture
<i>Atma</i>	Self
<i>Avilambana</i>	Support
<i>Bhajana</i>	Prayers, worship and contemplation
<i>Bhang</i>	A kind of narcotic

<i>Braham</i>	Godhead
<i>Braham Muhurata</i>	A time beginning three hours before sun-rise
<i>Charas</i>	A narcotic
<i>Chit</i>	Consciousness
<i>Darshana</i>	Vision
<i>Gunas</i>	The three modes of nature:the principles of inertia,activity and light
<i>Hatha Yoga</i>	Physical discipline for attaining concentration of mind
<i>Ishta</i>	Personal deity
<i>Ishtam</i>	Personal deity

<i>Japa</i>	Repetition of Lord's Name
<i>Guru</i>	Teacher ; preceptor
<i>Jiva</i>	Soul
<i>Maharishi</i>	The Great Seer
<i>Mantra</i>	A religious phrase, embodying divine power
<i>Maya</i>	The power which delimits ; delusion
<i>Muladhara</i>	The centre at the lower end of Spinal Cord
<i>Nirguna</i>	Without qualities
<i>Nirguna sithiti</i>	The spiritual status implying the establishment in the Silent, Passive or Inactive Self.
<i>Nirvana</i>	Salvation
<i>Patanjali</i>	The exponent of Yoga Darshana- a School of Hindu philosophy

<i>Prakriti</i>	Nature
<i>Pranayama</i>	A peculiar type of breathing exercise for maintaining control over breath
<i>Purna</i>	perfect ; complete
<i>Pursha</i>	Self
<i>Raja yoga</i>	Psycho-physical discipline for Self-Realization
<i>Ramdas</i>	A well-known Saint of Kerala
<i>Rishi</i>	inspired saint ; seer
<i>Sadhaka</i>	Spiritual aspirant
<i>Sadhana</i>	Spiritual effort
<i>Saguna</i>	With qualities
<i>Samakaras</i>	Innate tendencies inherited from previous births
<i>Sat</i>	Existence
<i>Sat-sang</i>	Holy associations

<i>Shiva</i>	God of Death. One of the Trinity of Hindu Pantheon : Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva-Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer
<i>Swadhiaya</i>	Reading of religious and holy books
<i>Thakar-dwara</i>	Room reserved for prayers & contemplation
<i>Upanishads</i>	Ancient Hindu philosophical treatises, appended to the Vedas and regarded as equally authoritative as the Vedas
<i>Vedas</i>	Most ancient Hindu scriptures, composed of various hymns to various deities
<i>Vedanta</i>	The sixth school of Hindu philosophy
<i>Vedantin</i>	The follower of Vedanta
<i>Vairagya</i>	Dispassion

Vaivahara

External behavior

Yoga

Hindu System of contemplation
for effecting union of the human
soul with the Supreme Being

Yogin

One who practices Yoga