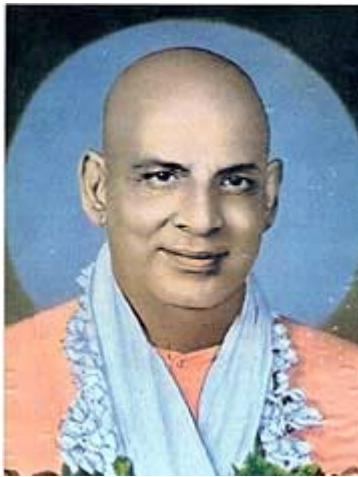


BLISS IS WITHIN

By

Sri Swami Chidananda



**Sri Swami Sivananda
Founder of
The Divine Life Society**



**SERVE, LOVE, GIVE,
PURIFY, MEDITATE,
REALIZE**

**So Says
Sri Swami Sivananda**



Sri Swami Chidananda

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

Sri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj has been giving innumerable talks during his extensive tours both in India and abroad. Only some of them are available to us in the form of recorded cassettes; out of which only a small percentage have been transcribed, edited and printed. Swamiji's lectures are simple, lucid, inspiring, absolutely practical and universal in nature. To ensure that his inspiring and life-transforming talks reach a maximum number of spiritual seekers and that this treasure is not lost to posterity, a systematic effort is needed to get them transcribed, properly edited and printed.

We have great pleasure in bringing out twenty-five lectures by Sri Swami Chidanandaji and releasing the volume "Bliss Is Within" on the eve of his Amrita Mahotsava (75th Birth-Anniversary) which falls on 24th September, 1991.

23rd September, 1991

THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY

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SPIRITUAL LIFE: ITS RELEVANCE IN THE MODERN AGE

What is the necessity and the relevance of spiritual life? This question is often put by sophisticated, educated modern man who considers the concept of spiritual life as being something ancient, something old, something which has lost its relevance now. Once upon a time it might have been a fashion and trend, the order of the day, but now centuries have passed, man has advanced, times have changed and therefore, this seems to be an old concept of some other age of the mythological times of Puranas (scriptures). How can it have any place, how can it hold any meaning in our lives today? So this is the doubt, a sort of an inner thought in this sophisticated and scientific age, when man has conquered time and distance. You sit and dial your telephone, you are able to talk to your daughter or son or brother in New York. So space is as good as not being there. 500 years ago, if we, who were in India, wanted to talk to someone who was in New York, there was no possibility unless perhaps we undertook a hazardous voyage, taking about two months to reach that place. Now it does not take even two minutes. That is our age and what can spirituality have to do with man's life?

My attempt will be to try to focus your attention on the fact that spiritual life has not only a relevance, it is not only necessary, but it is absolutely indispensable and it is the very central meaning of human life. In spite of man having advanced a great deal during recent centuries, having come far, far away from the state of life in which his ancestors and forefathers lived, yet he has left many of the problems that face man in bygone millenniums still unsolved. And so spiritual life is the one and only solution to all mankind's unsolved problems that have accompanied him down millennium.

Other problems man has created for himself but even without having created any problems, certain fundamental problems always existed since the dawn of creation: the problem of old age, disease, death, pain and suffering, the problem of sorrows of human life. It is here today, it was there when man was living in the stone age. His life was in no way different from the lives of common animals. For all animals their life is a struggle for existence, a struggle for survival and for man in bygone, pre-historic times of the stone age, life started with the same problem. It may be ironical that with the sudden turn of time and the discovery of man's ability to harness nature, coming of the age of science, industrial revolution, within the past three or four centuries, man has made amazing strides. He has conquered physical nature, harnessed all the resources and forces of nature to his advantage and provided himself all the comforts and conveniences.

Jungles have been converted into cities and night has been converted into day. We have conquered time, distance and air. We go under the water faster than the fastest submarine animal created by God; we are able to fly in the air faster than any bird created by Brahma. We have outdistanced the fleetest animal upon the surface of the earth and vast knowledge has been accumulated.

There are thousands of libraries with millions of books, universities galore and colleges without number and education has spread all over the world. And in spite of all this advancement it is the most ironical fact that today human society in this world lives in a fear psychosis. The great commercial product making billions for the producers are sedatives and tranquilizers because the modern man is an anxiety-laden creature. The world is filled with problems, complexities, and there

is such a great state of worry, fear and uncertainty that man has become compelled to take recourse to medicine to calm his mind. Alien excitement somehow or other gives him a little bit of stability and he lives in fear. You are fortunate in India that fear has not yet come. It is slowly coming but yet it is not come in its full course. But in the West, both sides of the Atlantic, you cannot imagine, unless you have had occasion to go there and stay for some time. Those of you who have been there know what it is. Their one great fear is the question, 'will we survive'? Has man a future or are we on the brink of global destruction, suicide, because man has accumulated due to advancement in science such unbelievable destructive potential. They say that the stockpile of nuclear weaponry in the arsenal of Russia and America is enough to completely wipe out everything that is on the surface of the earth nine or ten times over. And yet they are not stopping the race of piling up. Naturally when both sides know that the other side has the potential to totally bring about destruction upon us, they live with this question hanging over their heads: Have we a future? Will mankind survive?

The problem that faced our pre-historic stone-age ancestors, the problem of survival, has now come back to confront modern mankind after so much of progress, and accumulation of knowledge. What is the reason for this? Why is not mankind better off than it was before in the real sense of the term? We are better off in certain ways. We have more comforts. We can live life with greater ease, less exertion and if that is interpreted, as a better state of life then we are vastly better off than our ancients. But in spite of so much knowledge, so much of progress which man insists upon calling civilisation, why does the world confront this situation? When mankind is pitted against mankind, everywhere there is hostility and hatred, clash and conflict, restlessness. No one believes or trusts another and there is disharmony. Human beings are rent into separate parties and everywhere there is violence and destruction. Can you call this real civilisation? What is the reason for this? Where has man lost his way? We cannot say that the scientific knowledge, technology, advancement, discoveries and inventions by themselves have brought mankind to the situation that prevails today. We cannot say so because knowledge is only accumulation of information and facts. The forces that man has learnt to harness are amoral. They are neither good nor bad. They are just there. They are neutral because they by themselves do not have the ability to cause any experience to man. They cannot destroy because they are inert things. Therefore, we cannot say that by themselves they constitute the present problem of mankind. It is the way in which they are applied, in which they are used, that decides whether they are a menace to mankind or a boon and a blessing.

If today these discoveries have become a curse to mankind, they threaten his very existence, like the monster created by Frankenstein was about to destroy its own creator, it is because of the way in which man, the conscious entity, has chosen to use them. They become destructive according to whether you are going to use them negatively or positively. And today it seems that in spite of man's knowledge, education and outer refinement; there seems to be some fundamental malaise in man. He is sick. Some great error has been committed that has brought him to make use of these forces and powers to cause widespread pain and destruction.

In this century itself, in the brief space of one generation, less than 25 years, two great global conflicts took place. Never in the history of mankind was so much death and destruction brought down upon human society as in these two great wars. Perhaps if we statistically try to find out, count the heads that rolled in all the wars since recorded history, may be the amount of destruction, of death and havoc that was created during the first world war and the second world war, would far

outbeat the entire total. How do you explain this? If man has been civilised, he has progressed, should he not become better and better? Should he not create a world where there is peace, where there is happiness, where man is able to live without fear, where there is amity between man and man, mutual cooperation, harmony, a feeling of unity and brotherhood? Should not this characterise real civilisation, real progress? Ponder over this phenomenon, which is current history, known to each and every one of you. If you ponder, then the question arises, what was the mistake of man? I shall try to tell you both in a single phrase and also a little descriptively.

In a single phrase, man has totally ignored the nature of the human being, totally ignored the spiritual dimension in his personality and totally neglected to cultivate the spiritual aspect of human life. To put the same thing in a little descriptive way, man brought about a wonderful, amazing marvellous and admirable transformation in his outer environment; but never paid any attention to his own cultivation. So many fields of knowledge were brought about, cultivated and evolved but human culture was totally neglected. The great blunder which man committed was to take a purely materialistic view of the human being. They looked upon man as a physical and psychological creature, just a biological being endowed with thinking, feeling and reasoning faculty and they said if you cater to the needs of the body and mind of man, that is all there is to it, you have done your duty. That is the whole of the cultivation of the human being and therefore this materialistic view of the human individual led people to evolve social theories and political philosophies that were oriented to bring about a state of well-being of the physical man and the psychological man. So the state thought that it is its duty to look after its citizens, provide every facility for the comfortable physical life of man—food, clothing, employment, housing, medical aid, education—everything. They thought this is the complete way of providing for the highest welfare of human society and it is here that they grossly erred.

The vision of the Indian seers and sages had a totally different view of man. They knew by experience that man was endowed with a third and a higher factor which was in fact its true identity. The physical and the psychological aspect of the human individual, they said, is not the real nature of man. It is here, it has to be recognised, it has to be provided for, but not at the neglect of its true Self. In their experience man's personality was a mysterious combination of the three Gunas. At the basic level is man's gross animal nature. Physically and biologically there is absolute identity in all processes that take place either in man's body or in the body of any other animal. At a higher plane we are endowed with an exceptional-faculty which makes us different from animals. We have thinking, feeling and reasoning faculties. We can observe, we can come to conclusions, infer new knowledge, expand in wisdom, we can know, we can reason and we have the faculty of logic and rationality which animals do not possess. The modern mankind, the thinkers, the leaders, committed the gross error of concluding that these two make up the entire man and just because he is endowed with intellect and the power to feel, reason and think, he is superior to animals.

Our law givers, our great sages, had a different view. They said that by virtue of being endowed with a power of thought, feeling and reasoning alone, man is in no way superior to animals. These faculties only make man different from animals, not superior. They clearly said that unless man is endowed with Sadachara (good conduct), virtue and Dharma, this very intellect may become a curse, may be the cause of his downfall, it may degrade him into levels much lower even than animals. Man is turned not only to an animal but even into a demoniacal being, an Asura. And therefore, he becomes a curse to society, instead of a blessing.

Hence, the cultivation of the higher nature of man, bringing about in the mind, in his feelings, in his thoughts, in his intellect, divine qualities, righteous tendency. This was considered to be one of the most essential and indispensable parts of the training of man, and even this is not enough. Beyond this there lies within man the third factor, the divine principle, which is the innermost truth, of the human being. It is the combination of these prime factors, gross, physical, animal, biological nature, a higher, comparatively, relatively subtle thinking, feeling, reasoning human nature and beyond it, within himself, as the very centre of his being, in a radiant divine nature that is dormant. Because man's whole attention is projected outside, towards this gross world of names and forms, his gaze has been turned away from him. Therefore he is not aware of his inner divinity. Deep within himself each human being is potentially divine. He is part of God. There is, as the Quakers in the West say, "that of God in man".

This concept is one of the basic and fundamental concepts in all religions of mankind. In Islam they say there is the Noor (light) of Allah in Admi (man). Christianity says as also Judaism that God created man in His own image and then after creating him He breathed His spirit into him.

Therefore the spirit of God indwells man as the innermost reality in him. And the essence of education is to try to bring about in the psychological man nobility. The essence of living a true life is the awakening of the sleeping and slumbering divinity which is the reality of man and doing all that one can in order to bring about its fullest unfoldment and development and its dynamic expression in human life. This is real life.

God's plan for man was not just endowing man with a comfortable material life. Then we would only be well fed, well clothed, well housed, academically degreed animals capable only of functioning upon the animal level. What is it that distinguishes man? The ability to be compassionate, the ability to feel for the joys and sufferings of others, the ability to wish to ameliorate the sorrows and troubles of others. Animals, instinct-bound, instinct-propelled, are able to live for themselves. Man is the unique creature, a unique animal in God's creation who can think of others, who can try to live for others and therefore they said the greatest Dharma of man is Paropakara (doing good to others). Living for oneself, every bird and beast does. If, while you live for yourself, you also start living for others, wanting to make others happy, then you become human, because this is the essence of humaneness. Understanding that what is unpleasant and painful to you is unpleasant and painful to others also, live in such a way that you do not give such experience to others. Knowing also that these things which give you joy, happiness and satisfaction, must similarly give joy and happiness to others, engage yourself in doing such things that bring about these similar experiences to others.

This constitutes the essence of Dharma and the essence of life. God's plan for us is to bring about the fullest unfoldment and expression of that divinity so that ultimately a stage is reached when man's consciousness becomes totally transformed and he becomes fully aware of himself. The transformation of human consciousness into divine consciousness is God's plan for man on earth and this plan is called evolution. Biologically the Western scientist may say that the human being is now at the very pinnacle of evolution. He has completed and come to the top of evolution but spiritually we have another view. We think the moment a Jivatma (individual soul) attains human status, from that point only, his evolution commences. The process of evolution commences from the moment you reach the human status, because then only you become endowed with the

ability of conscious effort. Until that in all the sub-human levels it is automatic switching on from one stage to a higher stage. There is no conscious effort in them. They cannot live in an intelligent way, choosing goals and purposefully trying to move towards the goal.

According to the spiritual point of view human society is at the lowest rung of the ladder of evolution. Biologically you may be in the highest rung but spiritually you are in the lowest rung and life in the true sense of the term constitutes an ascent towards divinity. And it is when this ascent towards divinity, this conscious and purposeful ascent towards divinity is present in the life of man, he lives. Otherwise it is merely an anomaly of living. There is no life. Your body may be very active and psychologically your mind and intellect may be very active but you are still sleeping. Life has not started. Life is that where spiritually man has begun to become active, spiritually man has developed an awareness that 'I am inside a spiritual being and I must make use of this phenomenon called life in order to bring about the development of my spiritual self'.

This was totally neglected through the materialistic view of the human personality. The entire Western social and political philosophy is geared to providing man the necessities for his physical and psychological personality levels and the spirit has become totally neglected. That is the grave blunder committed and man is paying for it. It is only when thinking men and women become aware that this is the great error, that you can make it a part of your life's mission to try to spread this awareness within your own circles in the widest possible way that you can.

Supposing among you there are school teachers, members of clubs, journalists and writers, you can make use of your ability, your position,—in order to bring about this awareness. The only solution for the present crisis that grips the entire human world in this 20th century is to rectify this error. Try to bring about an active spiritual life in man so that the higher self of man develops. Now man is totally enslaved, he is under the control of the lower propensities and the whole life-style of man everywhere is only to stoke up and excite more and more gross propensities of man. It only makes the problem still worse. He becomes completely enslaved by his lower propensities of passion, anger, greed and sensuality and whatever little education he may have, this modern life-style totally nullifies and makes man an animal in human form. His (outer appearance) may be human but his Prakriti (nature) becomes animal. That is a very serious situation; thinking men and women must try to do all they can to bring a halt to this state of affairs. Club together, come together, form a sort of a strong body, and try to make your voice heard wherever it is necessary.

What is there in the educational system of our country which is completely career-oriented? Just in order to either make man fit for earning his livelihood and make a living, not to live life but to make a living or in order to provide personnel to the great industries and commercial concerns. They are not aware of their own mission in life, their inner spiritual nature and they are not so much concerned about their ultimate welfare. They want to provide for themselves their needs; so education has become a mere farce. There is no cultivation of character, there is no cultivation of human personality. Such education makes man only a self-centred, competitive being, a machine to earn the money, but not a being who can by his life, by his behaviour, raise the level of contemporary social life, enrich the social life stream, its beauty, virtue, and goodness. It is only when this is rectified that man begins to lead a life where spiritual Sadhana is an indispensable part of living. Everyday he begins to dwell upon his own higher nature and begins to try to awaken the inner spiritual consciousness and try to cultivate those qualities which are characteristic of divinity,

love, compassion, kindness, peace, knowledge, harmony, unity. These are all the constituents of the spiritual nature of man.

God is love, God is peace, God is beauty, God is all purity, God is wisdom, God is supreme harmony, God is the very essence of unity. For one common consciousness needs all life on earth to a homogeneous inner oneness, inner unity. And where God consciousness is allowed, man begins to feel: 'I am not separate from anyone else. Everyone is my own self, my own reflection. So I must have the same attitude towards others as I have towards myself. I love myself, I must love all. I want all the best for myself. I must try to bring all the best for others.'

In a way where there is this ability to identify yourself with others, this, therefore, is the vital point, the vital fact that those who are in charge of human societies in any country, in any nation, anywhere in the world, have to recognize that man is essentially a spiritual creature. Even though he may be partaking of a physical nature as well as a psychological nature, but his most important self is his spiritual nature and they should provide for the awakening of the spiritual nature within the frame-work of the training they impart to human beings in their society. Education is, therefore, vitally in need of a complete orientation and a transformation and it should bring into itself, as an indispensable part and parcel of its process, the imparting to the child as it enters into school, the awareness of its higher nature. Then alone education will have some essence. Otherwise, the educative process is completely devoid of any essence. It is so much of filling of information from outside to inside and leaving the spirit completely slumbering and unawakened.

We cannot always depend upon the Government machinery to bring about this for us. And it is not even necessary. We are conscious beings and we are socially aware and awakened and whatever the Government does we accept, and what the Government leaves undone, we will do it ourselves. We will make good the deficiency. In this way there should come about an inner determination in human society and you should form yourself into spiritual associations, philosophical study circles. Each locality should have its own spiritual study circle and you must meet together, once in a day if possible, or at least once in a week and try to spend a period, maybe an hour and a half or two hours, in common collective prayer, collective meditation, collective study, collective spiritual discussion. Call a senior to give a little message. This is the great need of the hour. Sundays and holidays we should use in a spiritually creative and gainful way, a rewarding way. That should mark the day when we re-charge ourselves, spiritually become more awake in the deepest depth of our being. Until and unless man's spiritual higher nature is awakened, the world will not change.

This process of self-culture has to be initiated and it has to be carried on by society, by its own volition and we have to thank our luck, we have to thank Providence that at least here in India there is no dearth, there is no lack of sources of spiritual inspiration. There is no lack of spiritual guidance because this land is a unique land where if you try to analyze and investigate and research in the inner spiritual history of India, you will find that in all its glorious past, there has not been one single generation in which spiritual teachers, sages, seers, Yogis, devotees of God, philosophers, men of spiritual experience have not been present. And that too from Himalayas to Kanyakumari, from Assam to Sindh and Punjab, throughout the length and breadth of this great land there has never been a single Age, a single century, a single generation when God-men have not been present.

You cannot say this of any other country in this world. You cannot say this of any other society in any other nation. No other culture, no other race has brought about this phenomenal appearance in every single generation of people who have attuned themselves with the Universal Soul and were filled with Divine Consciousness. And not only this, to all mankind they gave their message and made it their life's mission to bring about this awareness in their own contemporary society, in their own fellow beings. Will we be oblivious to this blessing, will you completely neglect this wonderful blessing, wonderful gift God has given you, as children of Bharatavarsha? That would be a major tragedy.

This is one thing which distinguishes you from all other nations. Many of them are materially far more advanced than us. We cannot compare with them technologically. Scientifically we lag behind. But in this one respect we are rich, we have something which we can share, we can give and try to bring about a change in the world situation. But we can share and we can give only if we claim our birthright and possess it in all fullness. The life of each and every Indian upon Indian soil, be he a Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Parsee, Hindu, Buddhist or Jain, must be spiritual. There must be a spiritual quality in him. There must be a higher awareness. There must be a divine radiance in your thoughts, in your feelings, in everything that you do, in your domestic life, in your own family. It should shine with spiritual quality and in your professional life, everywhere you go. Even in the profession and trade you must try it as a part of your effort to get into conscious communion with God and in your social life always keep up a certain level of spirituality. If this is done, then only we can call ourselves real Bharatiyas, wherever we are, whatever the manner in which we are living, be based in spiritual Sadhana. This transformation of your individual self can only become possible if you connect yourself with the Divine so that you open up a spiritual channel between you and the Supreme Reality. All the auspicious and blessed qualities of the Supreme Reality can then descend unto you, bring about a transformation in your life, make you shine in the divine, make you an ideal man.

Every day, morning and evening, sit silent, drop the world from your consciousness, be aware of yourself and the universal Divine Being, calm the mind, keep the body straight, breathe naturally and rhythmically and raise your consciousness by the repetition of the solemn Pranava Nada (OM), which is the symbol of the Universal Consciousness, the ancient, timeless, primal Spirit, and thus upon the wings of Pranava enter into an awareness of the Divine and stay in that awareness. There is nothing, there is no time, no space. There is only a vast, limitless ocean of existence, consciousness, bliss absolute (Sat-chit-ananda), and I am a part of that infinite ocean of bliss, peace and luminosity.

In this way connect yourself with the Divine. Raise your consciousness to the Divine level. Feel yourself all perfect, imperishable, ever blissful, ever peaceful, consciousness, bliss, existence, and try to remain in that state of awareness as long as you can. If the mind wanders here and there, ignore its wanderings, bring it back gently, focus it back into the awareness, and be in that awareness, feel yourself bodiless, mindless, without name and form, without birth, without death, timeless, the all full Satchidananda Atman that you are. Experience your Nija Svarupa (real identity).

Make that your Sahaja Avastha (normal state), by practising daily, many times a day, this consciousness, this spiritual consciousness. Take the help of a Name if you want, **Om Om Om** or

Om Tat Sat or ***Ram Ram Ram*** or ***Ek Omkar Satnam***. Whatever Name, whatever religion you belong to, you are a child of God. God is the Universal Spirit. Because you are a child of God, you are a Divine being. Your God is the centre of Divinity and therefore feel your Divinity, feel your spiritual nature and whatever Name your religion has to indicate that Supreme Being, repeat the Name. All Names imply the same thing, total perfection, infinite perfection, eternal life, unfathomable peace, infinite bliss, all purity, all truth, all light; do this practice.

Read the scriptures without fail every day. A study of spiritual scriptures inspire you and fill your heart and mind with life-transforming spiritual ideas. Try to bring about a transformation in your psychological being first, by trying to erase the world awareness from your mind and evoke within it spiritual awareness through daily study and during your secular life keep up a golden thread of God remembrance, God awareness. Let your morning meditation and spiritual awareness and your evening meditation and inner spiritual awareness, be connected by an unbroken stream of spiritual awareness, even while you are functioning in your daily life, in your office. The fact remains that you are an eternal immortal, divine Spirit. This fact is never effaced. It is one reality, therefore, be aware of Reality, live from this standpoint of truth. Base your consciousness upon truth, base your consciousness upon this reality about yourself and then give your hands and feet and your mind as much as it is necessary to the business of this world and then you will become the salt of this earth.

If more and more people generate this spiritual awareness and spiritual light in their own lives then gradually they pool together this spiritual power and spiritual force and you may not be able to bring about a total transformation of the world situation. But you can certainly contribute to bring about a change, in the balance between the forces of light and darkness, in the balance between the forces of love and hate, in the balance between the forces of the negative and positive aspects of human nature and that would be your greatest contribution to peace. That would be your greatest service to humanity. Other services are all right, but this great inner spiritual service, to bring about a transformation in the thoughts and feelings of man is the greatest because all outer conditions are only the result of the human thought and feeling. The outer actions are only the manifestations of what man has, within his mind, within his heart and if a change can be brought there, automatically a change is bound to follow in the outer area of man's life and activities. If, in spite of living in a material world where there is so much of spiritual ignorance and neglect of spiritual values, you still wish to make your life a success and fulfil God's plan for your life and ultimately attain spiritual consciousness and go out of this body as a liberated being, then let there be actual spiritual life in you, let there be spiritual Sadhana, study of spiritual scriptures, daily meditation, repetition of the Divine Name and keeping up the current of God awareness even in the midst of activities, trying to see the presence of God Wherever you go, because He is the all-pervading Reality.

The reality of God's presence is much more than the reality of this changing appearance. Therefore, through regular make your life totally spiritual. Let life become this process of fulfilling God's plan for you. God's plan for you is the ultimate experience of the divine perfection which is your innermost reality, which is your true Self. You will bless your own immediate environment, you will, bless the contemporary society where you are living and ultimately this spirituality which you evoke, it is so powerful that time and distance does not matter. It will have its impact upon the entire ethereal atmosphere of this world, the sky where men's thoughts and feelings are registered,

and if more and more of us who are children of a spiritual nation, inheritors of a spiritual culture, actively bring this spirituality to our life, maybe we will be instrumental in bringing about a turn in the direction of humanity which is going downward towards the brink of annihilation. We may still be able to stop it by our contribution upon the spiritual level and the world may still have a future.

In spite of the foreboding prophecies of sociologists and political observers and scientists, we may still be able, through spiritual life and spiritual , to arrest the onrush towards doom. We may still be able to stop this and bring about the survival of mankind in a better world. Let us hope for it. Let us be optimistic in action, not only in feeling, not only in wishing. Let us contribute towards this possibility of human survival and a better future for mankind by bringing into the life stream of human thought and feeling a spiritual quality through our own dynamic spiritual living.

Therefore, beloved friends in the Spirit, beloved children of the Divine, spiritual life and spiritual practice is the most pressing, urgent and indispensable need of humanity today. It is not old-fashioned, it is not outmoded. On the contrary, it is more relevant and more important today than it ever was in human history because humanity, through neglect of spiritual dimension in man's personality, has come to the brink of global suicide. And therefore the disease of un-spirituality is so great that this spiritual life, spiritual practice, is the one specific and the prime need of mankind today.

DIVINE LIFE

Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj appeared in this 20th Century to proclaim to mankind his sublime message of Divine Life. According to him, such a life is divine that is lived in the awareness that you are essentially an eternal and imperishable divine spirit, you are immortal Atman, you are not this perishable cage of flesh and bones, you are not merely this restless and impure mind filled with selfishness, anger, hatred, passion, greed, cravings, etc. Neither are you this limited and finite intellect, which is many a time prone to error and fails you at the time of need in solving your problems. But beyond body, senses, mind and intellect, you shine resplendent as an Eternal and Immortal Spirit. Satchidananda (Existence Absolute, Consciousness Absolute, Bliss Absolute) is your real nature, because you are an eternal part of that Supreme Universal Spirit whom we refer to as God. He is the Cosmic Being, the eternal source and origin of your very existence and you are inseparably connected with Him in the inner dimension of your real nature, your spiritual nature, which is in fact your true identity.

Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji beheld the state of restlessness in which mankind dwelt in this modern world with its insecurity, with its clash and conflict, discord and disharmony. In spite of having material wealth and opulence, man was not happy, he had no peace, he was ever restless and he was ever unhappy and unsatisfied. Master Swami Sivanandaji was a cosmic friend and benefactor and out of his over-whelming love and compassion for all beings, he decided to show them the path to blessedness in and through the normal life in this world and this path is the path of Divine Life.

The message of Divine Life calls upon mankind to realize that you are only a passing pilgrim here upon this planet earth. This is not your eternal dwelling Place. You come from an abode of Eternal Peace, Joy and sunshine, a divine abode beyond all sorrow, pain and suffering where there is eternal peace and supreme Bliss. Due to Karma, the force of the great Law of Karma, temporarily you have come into this state of physical embodiment. The meaning and purpose of this earth life is that it is a golden opportunity, a rare chance given to you to utilize it in order to once again regain your temporarily lost connection with the Supreme Universal Being, who is of the very nature of Bliss and Peace. It is to make use of this life for this process of regaining your lost contact with the Divine, that all the saints and sages have come and taught us the way to attain God-consciousness and God-experience, by which one passes beyond all sorrow and becomes established in a state of absolute Divine Bliss and is for ever liberated from all pain, suffering, fear and bondage. That state of liberation is called . This is the supreme goal of life. Moksha means *sarva duhkha nivritti, paramananda prapti* and *nitya tripti*, that is, liberation from all pain, sorrow and suffering and attainment of supreme Divine Bliss and eternal satisfaction in that state of liberated consciousness.

To attain this, showed mankind an easy path which can be practised even while one is living in this world, fulfilling all one's obligations to one's dependents and doing one's duties and engaging in activity which is inevitable to this secular existence in this materialistic world. In and through this world and in and through this secular life to attain that supreme God-experience which is the summum bonum of life for the supreme goal of human existence, that is the purpose of Divine Life. Divine Life is a life lived in the awareness that you are essentially divine, that you are not this perishable cage of flesh and bones, but your real identity is something supra-mundane, which is without beginning and without end, which is timeless and eternal, which is without birth and death, which is imperishable, indestructible and immortal. Thou art the Immortal Soul. Thou art the Eternal Imperishable Atman. Lord Krishna declares, '*ajo nityah sasvatoyam purano na hanyate hanyamane sarire*'—Unborn, Eternal, Permanent and Timeless is this dweller within the body and He is not affected by the birth or death of the body. Weapons cannot injure you, fire cannot burn you, water cannot wet you, wind cannot dry you. You are therefore the Eternal, Immortal Atman.

To live in this awareness is the basis of Divine Life. Divine Life is also lived in the awareness that your source and origin is that Eternal Cosmic Being, Infinite Existence, Eternal Bliss and Peace whom we call God. He is the basis of all religions. He is the source and origin of all religions. He is the goal of all religions. Even though called by different names as Brahman or or Jehova or Ahura Mazda or Father in Heaven or Allah, Ek Omkar Satnam, that Supreme Cosmic Reality is One and non-dual. It is that Reality which is worshipped in all places of worship: Hindu temple, Jewish synagogue, Christian church, Islamic mosque and Gurudwara of the Sikhs. It is One Being, glorified in all the scriptures of the world. To attain That Being is the supreme goal and purpose of life.

Divine Life proclaims that the goal of life is God-realization, attaining which one becomes liberated from rebirth and all sorrow, pain and suffering. To lead this Divine Life, you need not renounce your house and family, property and profession, you need not run away into some forests or mountain top and live in a cave. Even living as you are, leading your normal life of domestic set up and your professional life and activities and your social life, you can attain this supreme goal and become forever blessed.

To attain this, the way of Divine Life shown by is first and foremost to purify your heart and rid it of the dross and rubbish and impurity of selfishness by plunging into absolute dedicated selfless service. Be a Maha Paropakari. Ever be intent, ever be eager in order to serve all: to serve the sick, to serve the poor, to serve the suffering and sorrowful, to encourage those who are in despair and feel yourself

to be blessed if you get an opportunity of serving, helping and not only your fellow beings, but all Creatures of God upon this earth. By thus renouncing selfishness and engaging in motiveless, desireless, selfless service, one's heart becomes purified and in such a pure heart, there arises devotion for God and with the devotion, engage yourself in daily worshipping the Supreme who is the very basis of your being, who is the very innermost core of your consciousness and who is the very centre of your existence.

God is not some supra-mundane remote reality, far away from you, but God is here and now. He is the all-pervading Reality, the ever present Divine Spirit pervading this entire Universe and also He is your innermost, He is the Antaryamin. He is closer to you than your very breath. Never forget this and therefore, out of a heart filled with love for Him engage in prayer and worship every day. Thus, try to re-establish a living connection, a living link and relationship of spiritual love with the supreme source of your being in God. And this process of daily worshipping and praying to the Lord has the power to gradually steady the restless mind and overcome its fickle nature. It removes the Vikshepa Sakti of the mind, steadies the mind and gradually brings about the state of restfulness and concentration in the mind.

At this stage you enter into the third practice of Divine Life namely withdrawing the mind and controlling the senses and controlling the thoughts and attaining to a state of concentration and with a concentrated mind, meditating upon the-Supreme Divine Reality or God. Daily meditation.

Selfless service is the foundation of Divine Life. Devotion and worship bring about a progress and an upward and ascent in your life. As devotion and prayerfulness intensifies itself, the mind attains a state of concentration and you enter into a state of regular daily meditation upon the divine object of your quest. Regular daily meditation brings about steadiness and a feeling of abidance in God. You begin to feel the presence of God in your heart. And the power of meditation is such that even when you are engaged in your daily activities, either at home or in your professional field or in society—it creates a steady, unbroken under-current of 'God thought' or 'God awareness'. This is the effect of regular of meditation.

When you begin to feel the presence of God, you become aware of the presence of God at all times, everywhere even in the midst of your activities. You begin to feel that you live, move and have your being in God. This is the power of meditation. It brings about in your life God-awareness and also it brings about in your thoughts, words and activities a new spiritual quality, which uplifts and elevates your life to a new standard of purity, of spirituality, of compassion, of kindness and holiness. Thus, you become a transformed being, a spiritual being with purity of character, with sublime sentiments, with spiritual emotions and lofty thoughts of the Divine. And having entered into this state of God-awareness, your intellect becomes purified and within it, dawns the power of spiritual enquiry, philosophical enquiry and discrimination—discrimination between the Eternal and the non-eternal, the changeless Eternal Reality and the merely passing appearance, and the

Anatman, the Permanent and the passing, the Reality and the appearance, the Eternal and the non-eternal.

This process of discrimination or should be carried on all the waking hours of your every day life. Thus, through constant discrimination, you begin to reject that which is unspiritual and undivine, you begin to reject the passing, changeful appearances of this phenomenal world and you begin to direct your mind towards the Reality, which is behind and beyond all this world play, this show of vanishing names and forms. The mind begins to move towards the Eternal Reality even though physically and mentally you continue to live in this material world, you continue to function in this phenomenal process, yet, deep within you, in your Spirit, you become established in Supreme Divine Reality.

And thus, the four great practices which beloved and Holy Master Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji proclaimed as pillars of Divine Life are selfless service, devotion and worship, daily, unflinching regular meditation and constant spiritual enquiry, discrimination and investigation into the nature of the Reality which is behind and beyond this world of vanishing names and forms. The way of Divine Life which leads to inner spiritual unfoldment and God-experience and grants you supreme bliss, peace and illumination is the way of selflessness and selfless service. It is the way of devotion and daily Worship. It is the way of disciplining the mind and controlling the senses, withdrawing the mind from being scattered amongst the external objects of this world and concentrating the mind and meditation.

It is the way of ceaseless enquiry: 'Who am I? What am I? Whence am I in this universe of these perishable objects? What is my destination and goal in life and what is the nature of this universe of these perishable objects?' It is the way of ceaseless spiritual enquiry into the real nature of this world appearance and your ultimate goal. It is the way of affirming 'I am not this body, I am not this restless mind, I am not this limited, finite intellect. I am that innermost being, the Supreme, nameless and formless, unborn, undecaying, deathless and imperishable, eternal, One and non-dual. I am Satchidananda'. This is the way of Divine Life.

But, if you wish to enter into this spiritual way of Divine Life of selfless service, daily worship, regular meditation and ceaseless enquiry, discrimination and self-realization, you have to observe three principles in your conduct and character, and your day to day, day to day life in the secular world. These three principles form the very foundation and basis of this Divine Life of service, worship, meditation and God-realisation. These three principles are therefore indispensable pre-requisites for the practise of the Sadhana of Divine Life.

The first principle is kindness and compassion towards all creatures. You must be a Cosmic benefactor. Ceaseless love, kindness and compassion must flow out of your life. Never hurt anyone, never hurt even the least of God's creatures either by thought, word or action. Even in dream, you should not think of harming or hurting any creature.

This sublime principle of non-injury, of harmlessness has been given a very great place in the eternal Vedic Way of life, that proclaim '*Ahimsa paramo dharmah*'. Be a centre of help, be a centre of benefit, be a centre of happiness and peace to all. Never injure, never hurt, never harm any living creature.

The second principle is: be rooted in absolute Truthfulness. Even at the cost of life, never utter falsehood, never practise deceit, never be dishonest in any of your dealings with anyone in this world. Be a man of integrity and verity. Become a man established in truthfulness in thought, word and deed. Truth is God. One who practises truthfulness rigidly will attain God and become established in God even without much rigorous Yogic Sadhana and techniques, for God is present in this human world as the sublime principle of truthfulness.

Thirdly, and most importantly, purity of conduct and character, of self-control, chastity, a chaste look, purity of vision, purity of feeling towards all beings, Brahmacharya and overall control over the base carnal passions that exist in the lower physical aspect of your being. Thus self-control and purity of thought, word and deed, a sublime purity of character and conduct, ethical living, absolute truthfulness in all dealings and above all kindness and compassion towards all creatures—these three form the basis and foundation of such Divine Life. Ever keep in mind, the great Goal, remember God constantly with love in your heart and have absolute faith in your inseparable relationship with the Supreme Divine Being. Cultivate constant remembrance of God by seeing His invisible presence in, and through all things in this universe around you. The Lord is present as an immanent principle in all creation.

In the Eleventh Chapter of Srimad Bhagavad Gita, in the wondrous and marvellous manner God gives the supreme experience to Arjuna through His Visvarupa Darsana Yoga and through that supreme vision He has granted to us a rare and priceless treasure of this truth that God is present, immanent in this Universe and fills every speck of space and every atom of matter in this world. Thus, be constantly in a state of awareness, do all your actions as a worship offered to this ever-present Divine Presence. Dedicate all your activities to God by saying '*Brahmarpanam; Krishnarpanam*'—O Lord, all the activities of my entire life, I offer up unto Your feet as my perennial prayer of ceaseless worship. Thus, living your Divine Life, work becomes worship, to act becomes to adore. The very living of your life becomes a prayer. Come! Arise! Move towards this great experience. Lead Divine Life in daily life and attain supreme blessedness. Even as I talk to you and you listen, you are Existence, Consciousness, Bliss Absolute, you are the ever-perfect Atman, you are Satchidananda, you are a part of God. That is your true consciousness. Living in this awareness is Divine Life.

VEDIC CULTURE

When Swami Vivekananda returned to India after attending the Parliament of Religions a journalist asked him: “Swamiji, you have seen the Occident, travelled for two years in different countries of the Western world, and seen their scientific progress, their technological advancement and all the wonderful progress that they have made. Now after this experience, after all that you have seen, what is your opinion of India? What do you think about our country?” Drawing himself up to his full height and looking straight into the eyes of the reporter, his voice trembling with emotion, it is said, Vivekananda said: “My friend, when I left the shores of India for the West, I loved my country, I loved India. But after my visit, after having seen the society and life there, now I know that the very soil of this country is fit to be worshipped. My mother country is a country to be adored, worshipped.”

Ponder on this incident which the writer reported in his biography of Swamiji. What was it that made Swami Vivekananda who was a rationalist, not an emotionalist, make this statement? He had patriotism in abundance but predominantly and primarily he was a man with a giant intellect and very great critical faculty. There was a time when he questioned everything about his religion. There was a period in his youth when he even turned agnostic, became sceptical of the ancient truths and even doubted the very authenticity of visions and experiences of the Saint of Dakshineswar whom later on he accepted as his Worshipful Master and Guru. He was a person with a forthright nature. If he felt something, he never concealed it. So, we have to pause and ponder, what was it that made him express himself so fervently and so strongly. That was his experience of the difference in the quality of the vision, the view of life and the way of life he saw of the people practising in the occidental society and the basic idealism that filled the life of a citizen of Bharatavarsha.

He saw how by our very culture, the entire set up of our life was divinely oriented, our very approach to life was that it was not an end in itself but the means for the attainment of certain higher ends and these higher ends were idealistic.

Gurudev Swami Sivananda used to say that India is the only country in the world where God-realisation is the goal of human life. No other human society lives life in this way. Our primary purpose in life is to attain transcendental divine experience, to know the Unknown, to know That which is beyond the reach of the senses, mind and intellect. That is the supreme goal. Goals there are many, but the highest goal and purpose of human existence is the realisation of the Absolute. This human life is considered so precious because it throws open the door for that attainment and spiritual idealism in our life. It is in this connection that our ancient sages left for us, for generations to come, certain principles to live by, certain ideals to pursue and emulate; and in this connection this evening as my joyful sharing and serving with you in the name of beloved and worshipful Holy Master Guru Maharaj Sri Swami Sivanandaji, I exercise this privilege given to me at this spiritual gathering, this fellowship here this evening, to put before you certain important aspects of our culture.

First and foremost they gave for our adoption in our life four values to strive after and as it is in the peculiar tradition of Sanskrit language they termed them as *Purushartha*. *Purushartha* means exertion. *Purushartha* is right exertion and the values for which you must exert they indicated by the same term, exertion, instead of using some other term implying the goal of such exertion. They

have given us the concept of Purusharthic Chatushtaya, which has come down to us from ancient times. We all know that when we take birth in this world we have a situation where we find ourselves in link with two universes. One is the invisible inner universe of the Spirit from which you have come into a material physical universe, assuming a gross material physical body to function in this universe. But prior to your advent into your gross physical material universe, you did not have this material body, you were not part of this phenomenal material universe. You were in a different state, in a different dimension, subtle, invisible, unmanifest, and naturally, therefore, you are related to it. Your present state of being conditioned by a name and a form, this body-bound state, is only for a little while, some years only. There is no definite guarantee of its duration. It varies from individual to individual and any moment there can be an abrupt conclusion of this present state and therefore, soon after this episode once again you will find yourself in that same unmanifest dimension.

Therefore, our relationship to the invisible inner universe of the Spirit seems to be of a greater importance, more essential and vital than this temporary relationship with this outer material universe. This comes and goes. This has a beginning and an end. Yet, as long as we are in this embodied condition, we are related to this universe and to everything in it. It is a constant continuous involvement with this outer universe. That is within our knowledge. We are more aware of 'This' than of 'That'.

Our ancients brought home the fact that you are only a passing Pilgrim here, Your permanent abode is not This but That—whence you have come and whither you are bound and therefore, for the inner life also there are these twin-relationships. The relationship with this outer universe, whether you wish it or not, is there. It is inevitable. You have to face it and do whatever it demands. This is divided into two of the values. One is you have to attend to the stern necessities of our physical life—hunger, thirst, heat, cold and other inclemencies of the weather. So you have to have, as they say, food, clothing, shelter—*Roti, Kapada, Makan*—and for this you have to exert in order to earn and provide yourself with the necessities. In this economy-oriented life on earth, money is necessary. You have to exert and earn money, whatever the ways and means may be. So exertion to earn money is allowed. This is conceded as an inevitable value and is called Artha.

At the same time, unlike other creatures, man is not satisfied merely by fulfilling the needs of his physical nature. You provide the beasts with food, water and a place they can sleep in and all their life they will be contented to live in that condition. Man has a psychological dimension to his nature wherein he has desires, ambitions, plans and schemes. He has a vital personality within which he is a thinking, feeling and reasoning being. Therefore, the sages conceded this other dimension as of secondary value. We have desires, because they are part of the psychological nature which longs for many things, and has many desires in various directions. The ancients said that you must exert to fulfil them also but then, they said, that your ultimate goal is to once again go back to the very source of your being from whence you came. They experienced this during the greatest heights of their transcendental experience that all life streams forth from one cosmic source of eternal existence. That is the source, that is the root, that is the fountainhead, the origin of all that Is and what all that Is, is something beyond our comprehension. Those who realised its magnitude, its infinity, were aghast. They said: "*Anantakoti Brahmanda Nayaka*. That Being is the Supreme Lord of infinite crores of universes." This universe is a grain of sand. Our planet earth, our solar system, our lunar system, our stellar system, the galaxies, all that man knows as space and the

celestial objects that fill our space, is but a grain of sand. There are infinite crores of such universes in this incomprehensible magnitude of the infinitude of that Reality, and therefore, the source of all that exists, that is your original abode, that is your home. From That all beings have come into being and in That only all beings exist. It is the invisible support of your very existence. If it did not exist, you could not exist. It is That which supports you and unto That all beings are moving, unto That all beings are going forth.” This transcendental experience is what the sages perceived. They said: “You all have come from That, you exist in That and towards That you are moving. That is your be-all and end-all.”

This process of coming into this earth existence is a journey back home to your eternal abode. So make your life a conscious effort of this glorious journey back into the Divine. In that experience, in that attainment, you will be liberated from all limitations and imperfections that are inevitable to this conditioned, finite, earth-life. Because of its very nature this world is imperfect and is bounded by life and death and in between these two inevitable terminals of an entry into this existence and exit, life is chaotic. Life does not give real contentment because it is finite, it is conditioned and is subject to change. Therefore, this imperfect life cannot give Santosha (contentment), Tripti (eternal satisfaction) and Ananda (bliss). You can be liberated from these imperfect experiences once and for all and get eternal satisfaction. These vexing, binding limitations, these shackles will not be needed anymore once you attain that experience. Therefore, they call it liberation; liberation from all that the earth-life means to you now, body-bound condition of imprisonment.

This is the goal which is to be attained. Life is a means to its attainment. Why not make it a conscious process because evolution is the law of life, evolution through divine perfection? That supreme goal, Moksha-prapti (attainment of liberation), therefore, is ever to be kept in view and you must move towards it. Earning money and satisfying or fulfilling your desires is a mundane aspect of your psychological nature. If this process takes on a contrary quality or a contrary characteristic so that the very process of attending to these two aspects of your life pull you into an opposite direction, then life itself will become a great obstacle to the attainment of perfection which is your divine destiny. It will slow down your progress towards that great goal. You must, therefore, take care that your life here, if it cannot become actually a supplement and a complement, a supportive process, at least let it not stand as an obstacle to the attainment of your divine destiny. Let it not become an obstacle, let it not become a hampering factor.

How is one to achieve this? The sages said that the only way of achievement is by bringing into every detail of your life, into these two mundane aspects—earning of wealth and the fulfilment of human desires—bringing into this process a quality which harmonises with the Divinity. God is Truth, let your life be pervaded by Truth. God is Love, let your life be pervaded by Love. God is Compassion and Grace, let your life be pervaded by Compassion. God is Purity, let your life and actions be pervaded by Purity. Thus bring into your life Truth, Purity, Compassion, Love and Goodness, everything that is auspicious, everything that is blessed, everything that is in harmony with the divine goal which you are trying to attain by this pattern of living. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness for theirs shall be the Kingdom of God.

Righteousness (Dharma) is your culture, Bharatiya Sanskriti, your great heritage. Therefore conceive of Dharma as the greatest friend of the Jivatma when he is in this human world, as a human

being. There is no greater wealth than Dharma. Dharma is your greatest friend. Why? It is that which will guarantee and assure that your secular life will not stand in the way of the attainment of liberation. That Will assure that the quality of your outer life, the secular life, will be such that it will become part of your steady onward progress, part of Your Sadhana for Moksha, part of your Sadhana for Bhagavat-sakshatkara (God-realisation). This is a life of Dharma, Compassion, Kindness, Purity, Truth, Love, Wisdom and Forgiveness. This is all that we expect from God. Allah is all merciful and ever forgiving.

What is God? He is the sum totality of man's concept of forgiveness, of love, of compassion and therefore what you expect from God towards your own imperfect individual being, that you project to fellow beings and all the creatures. That is why the sages gave us this value as the basic or the fundamental value of mundane life. They said: Base your entire life upon Dharma and do as you wish. Ply a trade, do a business, be a farmer, be a doctor, it will not come in your way, provided you do not desert Dharma. Adhere to Dharma. If all that you do in this secular world to make a living is in accordance with Dharma, then you have nothing to fear. *Svalpamapyasya dharmasya trayate mahato bhayat.*—Even a little bit of Dharma will save you from great fear. This earth-life will not become an obstacle, it will not become a bondage. On the contrary it will become a support, a supplement to your inner aspirations, your inner ascent towards this coveted goal of Mokshaprapiti or liberation. *Dharmo rakshati rakshitah*—Dharma protects him who protects it.

Be helpful to your brothers and sisters. Desire to serve your own neighbour. Desire to serve the society, nation, all creatures, even plants and insects. Desire to be serviceful to all. With this vision the sages gave us the great Sutra that the very body has been given to us in order to benefit others—*Paropakartham idam sariram*. What a grand view about the body and what a great contrast is this view to that which prevails normally in the unenlightened and uncultured societies! They think that the body is an instrument for enjoyment.

Our culture raised the great warning: O man, beware. Senses are your enemies. They were not given to be avenues of enjoyment. They were given as windows of perception, to see the world into which God has sent you, so that by seeing the world you gain knowledge about it. We have perverted all these senses, these faculties which God endowed us with, and converted them merely into avenues of biological pleasurable sensations and animal excitement.

There is also a note of warning. They said: O man, beware. Species perish even due to being endowed by just one sense; the fish gets impelled upon the fisherman's hook through its tongue. Because of the sense of touch an elephant is caught and has to work like a slave for a whole lifetime. Because of the sense of vision insects are attracted towards fire and are burnt to death. Because of the sense of hearing the deer is ensnared by the hunter. Because of the sense of smell the bee is caught up in the flower. Just one sense of these various creatures takes them to their doom. What to say of man who is endowed with all these five senses? Therefore, be aware of the fact that if these senses are not properly kept at their place and made to function as they ought to function, they can become your destroyers. They can take you to your downfall. Therefore, O man, be aware of this fact and exercise restraint and let your actions be Dharmic, let your actions not go contrary to Dharma because of this urge towards sense indulgence. These senses were not given for indulgence. Knowing this, if you determine to walk the path of Dharma, then your outer life in this universe will not stand in the way of your attaining the supreme state of liberation.

Of these four-fold values, Dharma is the basic fundamental value. Live your life according to Dharma and base all your activities upon it. All desires that come in the course of your fulfilling your duties, provided they are not contrary to Dharma, are legitimate desires. Fulfill these desires. But if a desire becomes a lower desire and degenerates into mere sense indulgence a man may lose his humanness and act as an animal, a devil.

The body was given for doing good to others. What a sublime concept of the human body which is a temple of God! God is in our heart. This is not true only about yourself but also about all beings. All beings are visible and moving temples of a living God. Therefore, have the desire to serve God through all living creatures. *Paropakartham idam sariram* (This body is for the benefit of others) is the great sublime concept that our sages gave us. Therefore let your life be filled with this ideal of doing good to others. Do not take this body merely as an avenue for sense satisfaction, gross sense gratification and sense indulgence. Be a man; assert and affirm the dignity of your status as a human being. You are not merely a beast, you are a rational faculty. Think and be a self-possessed being, a self-possessed creature. Manage yourself. Lead a dignified life of moderation and self-control. Moderation is the keynote of the Gita, too. All of Yoga ultimately means a discipline to control the mind and conquer the senses.

Buddha once put a question, “Who is the greater conqueror? One who takes vast armies behind him and invades territories and subdues another kingdom and conquers it, or one who conquers one’s own senses, mind and desires?” and answered it himself: “I declare to you, O Bhikkus, he is a greater conqueror who has subdued himself, who has conquered his passions, who has controlled his senses.” This is our ideal. From the beginning of life, right from the student days, be a Samyami, be a self-controlled one, have self-mastery. Of the first four values which the human individual must strive after Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha—Artha and Kama relate to this mundane World, earning your livelihood and fulfilling your desires. Moksha is the supreme spiritual value which is the true goal of life. But if it is to be attained in and through our normal life, it is possible only if our normal life is characterised and pervaded by the ideal of Dharma, that is, the ideal of truth, purity, kindness, compassion and self-restraint. Thus, Dharma became the fundamental as well as the foundational value. This is the first force which your great tradition, your great culture has given to you as your heritage.

Of the four-fold values to strive for, the highest is the spiritual value. The inevitable values are the economical as well as the vital values such as fulfilment of desire and earning of money, but they are not to turn you away from the highest value. The governing factor in all your secular life should be Dharma. While adhering to Dharma, if you lead your secular life, then Paramartha can be attained through Prapancha. Therefore, Dharma is the most important value. Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha were given, therefore, as the four-fold Purusharthas for attainment of the supreme purpose of human existence—Divine experience and liberation through Divine perfection. To achieve this in a spontaneous and a natural manner there are another set of four values. The sages said that at the very beginning of your life cultivate all things that are necessary to become established in Dharma.

The human life is divided into four stages. The first quarter is the Vidyarthi Jivana (student life). The second is the householders’ family life, Grihasthasrama. The third is the retired man’s life, Vanaprasthasrama and the fourth, the life of total dedication to Brahma Jnana—Sannyasasrama.

Just as Dharma is the foundational value, the first Asrama is the foundation stage. If in this very Asrama you equip yourself with all that is necessary in order to live the three-quarters of your life in an ideal manner, then you have nothing to fear. Therefore, as a student, acquire all that is necessary to lead an ideal life. This part of life is conceived of as being lived in an atmosphere most conducive to attaining self-control, character, virtue, right thinking and right aspirations.

Go away from the foul atmosphere where there are temptations, attractions that excite the mind and make it chanchal (oscillating). Go into a serene atmosphere and live with a person who is himself leading that ideal life, a Rishi, a Jnani or a Guru. Go to him and under his guidance lead a life of self-control. Get up early in the morning, take a cold bath, do Asanas and exercises that help to control your senses and then lead a life of self-control, moderation, moral character and conduct. Sit at your Guru's feet and learn. He will teach you all that is necessary to lead your life the ideal way. He will also give you the secular knowledge of art, craft or profession. Many Vidyas have been enumerated by our scriptures. He will teach you to ply a profession but at the same time he will also tell you what is the way of leading a righteous life. He will expound to you the secret of Dharma and then, at the same time, give you the knowledge of the supreme goal. He will teach you Vedanta. He will give you the rudiments of spiritual knowledge.

The ancient mode of education was an integrated course of instruction, where the young man, as he began to grow, got the basic knowledge of Dharma, spiritual knowledge and secular behaviour. While he was acquiring this three-fold knowledge, he was also training himself in self-control and moderation, conquest of mind, restraint of senses, desires—Samyama, Sama, Dama, etc. The first 25 years of human life should be dedicated to acquire good health, perfect character, self-control and all that is necessary to know in order to live life righteously, to be financially independent via some trade or profession and at the same time be aware of the goal that one is ultimately going to attain.

Equipped with this knowledge, the Brahmachari—the student entered into the second stage of life after he had already put a firm and ideal foundation. He was not in danger of becoming a slave of his senses; he was a self-restrained youth with character and self-control. Thus he entered into the Grihastarama (householder's life), took for himself a partner in life and was explained why he should enter into the Grihastarama: because the family lineage has to be continued for the sake of progeny. He took for himself a partner, for the sake of fulfilling Dharma, for the sake of practising Sadhana, devotion and worship. When he entered into the second stage of life, that is, the Grihastarama, he knew that he was not merely entering into a physical partnership with another physical creature, he was not entering into a social partnership with another family; he was entering into a spiritual partnership with a soul like him that had come into this world of embodied beings, in order to fulfil its divine destiny, each one working out one's own Karma Bhoga. So the relationship between a husband and a wife in the second Asrama was not merely an earthly partnership, not merely physical, or even social, but essentially a spiritual partnership between two souls who were both on the upper path of spiritual evolution, ultimately culminating in divine perfection. This is how the view of life wherein 'Dampatya Sambandha is sacred' was brought home to us.

The wife was called Sahadharmini. While living a life of Dharma, she was to be your companion. If you see the ancient concept of the wife, she was to man, everything—companion, friend, consoler, helper and partner in this great spiritual adventure of coming face to face with the

great Reality. Such was the ideal and total concept of this relationship. Therefore, home became for them not only for the living of a normal worldly existence where the wife was the mother of his children, a hostess to receive his guests and a housewife looking after all these duties of the household, she also became a Sahadharmini and a partner in devotion and Upasana.

So the first duty of the householder was Isvara Upasana, Aradhana, and this they enabled by bringing about this wonderful tradition that prevails in our country of a Kula-devata (worship of a family deity). For generations each family has a certain family deity and the home is a place of worship of this deity, and the worship of this deity was the first thing that the husband and wife did as soon as they got up in the morning.

The second important Dharma of the Grihasthrama was Paropakara—to donate to charity, to help those in need—and Atithi Satkara (honouring of the guests). Atithi is not an invited guest, mind you. He is a chance visitor who happens to be at your door at the time of your food. Atithya was one of the great Dharmas of the householder and his wife.

The third aspect of Grihastha Dharma was to evolve between themselves reciprocally a certain ideal behaviour of mutual love, honouring each other's individual freedom. This ideal relationship brought about in the house an atmosphere of harmony and cordiality. This third important duty also became a pattern of conduct for the children when they came into their family. The family, thus, became an ideal ground for nurturing a new generation. They find that between their parents exists a beautiful relationship of harmony, love, mutual respect and tolerance, which creates an ideal atmosphere for their growth. Through their personal relationship the parents place before the children an exemplary way of conducting themselves which becomes the first educational process of the children.

What moulds the character of the growing infant is the example placed by the mother and father to which they are exposed all the time. These examples become the atmosphere of the home, depending entirely upon the way in which the husband and wife behave with each other. This becomes the first educative process of the child. Home is, therefore, the nursery of the nation, nursery of the world. Providing an ideal setting and an ideal atmosphere for the generation of tomorrow becomes the third important duty of the married couple. Isvaropasana is the first duty, Paropakara and Samaja Seva is the second duty and providing an ideal environment for the coming generation through their own personal example is the third duty.

Now, we move on to the third Asrama. Having fulfilled the duties of rearing children, making them adults capable of standing on their own feet, Grihasthrama is not to continue till the end of one's life. Up-till now you were entirely preoccupied with your family and your profession, providing for your parents, wife, children and other dependents. To a certain extent, it was a self-centred life, though within the scope of that self-centredness, the Grihastha, that is, the mother and father practised selflessness for the sake of the children. They sacrificed their personal comforts and conveniences for their children, their family and their parents. There was, within this apparently self-centred living, an exercise of unselfishness of a certain kind. When that phase is over one must give way to the new generation. There is a significant saying: When the son attains the age of 16, the father must treat him as a friend. The psychological advice given to the father is to gradually give the children responsibility, let them be self-reliant.

The husband and wife now move into a third dimension of social living where they retire. Having retired, they have little more leisure on their hands and at the same time the 25 to 30 years of professional living has given them vast experience and expertise in their line of work that now has to be placed at the disposal of the society. This third stage of life is the most valuable asset to the Indian society because during this period the Grihasthas become altruists and philanthropists. They are now the real selfless servants of the society. These middle-aged people still have good health, they have more time, they have experience and expertise which they must selflessly place at the disposal of the young generation as well as the society. They have earned, they have saved by careful living, so they are now servants of the society. This stage of life ought to be the most important stage. While keeping their knowledge and experience at the disposal of the society, they should, at the same time, give more emphasis to their inner life, go on a pilgrimage, go to Ashrams, do Satsang, read the scriptures and become more contemplative. Both husband and wife should, together, enter more into the inner life, study, meditation, prayer, Satsang, pilgrimage and at the same time place themselves at the disposal of the society. We must realise that a time comes when we have to say 'good-bye'. We have to prepare for that last journey. We arrive at, to humorously put it, at the railway platform of our life when the train will come and we must cheerfully say good-bye.

At this time the sages conceived of the fourth Asrama where the only duty is to gather together his mind and place it upon Brahman, on the Supreme Being. That is the fourth-quarter of life, the sun-set period of one's life when all your relationships and connections are now coming to a close, to an end. Till that time your entire Lakshya, your entire mind, should be fixed upon the Eternal, no more on the passing world. You have fulfilled all your duties and now you have to depart. The river is reaching the ocean and a time will come when it has to merge into the ocean.

Thus was conceived the four-fold Asrama Dharma—Brahmacharya Ashrama (student life), Grihasthasrama (professional life), Vanaprasthasrama (selfless service and turning into the spiritual aspect) and ultimately the Sannyasasrama (total dedication to Brahman),

Now, you may say that times have changed, and that I am talking about some very old, ancient times. Yes, times have changed and we cannot duplicate these things as they were once upon a time. But my plea is that there is a great need to keep the spirit of this Asrama Dharma alive. Keep the spirit intact, live this ideal but bring about a little adjustment and modification in the time period. So far as the Brahmacharya Asrama is concerned, by and large it has not changed. If you want to become a technically qualified person, an engineer or a doctor, by the time you finish your studies, you are 25 years old, anyhow. But in the other Ashramas you may bring about a necessary modification. But do not discard the Asrama Dharma as something that has no relevance to our time. It has as much relevance and as much significance today as it had then because it is connected with human life. The spirit of these four Asramas must be kept intact.

The third set of 'fours' which have been given to us to follow are the four spiritual qualifications that we must acquire in order to enter into a pursuit of that Supreme existence and realisation. It is called the Sadhana Chatushtaya—1. Viveka (discrimination), 2. Vairagya (dispassion), 3. Shat-sampat (the six-fold virtues), viz., Sama (tranquillity), Dama (restraint), Uparati (satiety or renunciation), Titiksha (endurance), Sraddha (faith) and Samadhana (concentration), and 4. Mumukshutva (strong yearning for liberation).

What is it that makes us superior to animals? The ability to think and reason. We exercise intelligence for our own earthly living. We try to be clever and succeed in our normal life; but that is not enough. Intelligence has been given for higher things also. Therefore exercise Viveka—‘what is conducive to my highest welfare?’ There is a great necessity to exercise Viveka. Dharma-adharma Viveka (discrimination between righteousness and unrighteousness), Nitya-anitya Viveka (discrimination between permanent and temporary), Sad-asad Viveka (discrimination between truth and untruth), Atma-anatma Viveka (discrimination between the Self and the non-Self) should be exercised.

The second qualification that you must develop is a disgust of, and a turning away from, all that is ignoble, gross and unworthy by developing a great love for that which is worthy and noble. This is called dispassion or Vairagya. Raga means attachment and Asakti. To have attachment towards things that are unworthy and ignoble, gross and low, is not becoming of our human status. Centre your attachment upon God, centre it upon noble idealism, upon worthy pursuits. Have dispassion for all that is petty, unworthy and ignoble.

After Viveka and Vairagya, the third of this set of four is a peculiar combination, a set of six virtues. The six equipments are taken as one because they are calculated to bring about mental control and discipline. Concentration and meditation can never be possible without mental control and mental discipline. First virtue is equanimity of mind. If you are filled with too much of cravings and desires, every moment your mind is in a state of agitation and excitement as you live among attractive things of this illusory world. Knowing that your goal is elsewhere I must live not only to fulfil these petty desires but also for the attainment of some higher ideal, higher goal—you reduce your desires, keep them under check; then the mind attains a certain state of equanimity. It does not become prey to excitement and agitation. Serenity is the topmost virtue in the group of Shat-sampat.

Then restraint of the senses (Dama). The mind will come under control very easily if Dama also is practised. By the practice of Dama you do not allow either the senses or the mind to come in contact with the objects. In the practice of Sama and Dama the five Jnana-Indriyas (organs of knowledge), viz., ears, skin, eyes, tongue (taste) and nose (smell) are controlled, besides the five Karma-Indriyas (organs of action), viz., speech, hands, feet, genitals and anus. The Indriyas should not be allowed to run riot into sensual grooves. They should not be allowed to throw us ruthlessly into the deep pit of worldliness just as the turbulent horse carries away the rider wherever it likes.

Now we come to the practice of Uparati. Uparati is self-withdrawal. Uparati is extreme abstinence. The mind of the student who is established in Uparati will never be agitated even a bit when he comes in contact with external objects. This state of mind automatically comes when one has practised Viveka, Vairagya, Sama and Dama. When one perceives the worthlessness of all lower things and is convinced in the true worth of a higher thing, then one turns away from the former and gets absorbed in the latter. This state of mind is verily Uparati.

Titiksha is the power of endurance. A Titikshu is able to bear pain, insult, heat and cold. He does not lament on this score. He is free from anxiety. “He who has the power of endurance, who is balanced in pleasure and pain, steadfast, is fit for immortality” (Gita II-15). Adjust yourself to the

temperaments and mentalities of others with whom you mix. This is the secret of happiness. Do not be afraid of insult, disrespect, dishonour, abuse or harsh words. This is real Titiksha.

Sraddha is unshakable faith in the existence of Brahman, in the teachings of the Guru and the scriptures. It also means faith in oneself. This is not blind faith. It is based on accurate reasoning, evidence and experience. Men with no assets but tremendous faith in themselves have accomplished wonders. Know that everything is lost when faith is lost. Faith is power. Faith is strength. Faith is abundant energy. Faith is the soul of religion. It creates new hopes and awakens immortality.

The last of the six-fold virtues is Samadhana. It is mental balance. It is equipoise and calm. There is perfect concentration now. This is the fruit of the practices of Sama, Dama, Uparati, Titiksha and Sraddha. It is self-settledness.

Lastly we come to the fourth of the main qualifications, Mumukshutva or burning desire for liberation. If one is equipped with Viveka, Vairagya and Shat-sampat, Mumukshutva will come by itself. The mind moves towards the Source of its own accord, because it has lost its hold now on external objects.

This brief message is of interest, to all of us because it holds the key to our happiness and it is based upon experience. In different individuals experiences can differ of the same thing, same situation, same perception, same event, but the ultimate experience of anyone and everyone of any time or any clime is uniform. It tallies. It does not differ either from person to person, or place to place. or time to time because the cosmic experience, the ultimate experience is identical for all, the simple reason being that the Reality is one. It is indivisible, it is non-dual. Therefore the ultimate experience of all illumined seers, sages has always been one and this Truth about which I am going to tell you is based upon this ultimate experience which is Absolute. It does not depend upon any other factor and it is invariable. It is based upon the experience of not one but many, through millennium down centuries and generations so that it has been authenticated and proven again and again. It is another important point which you cannot afford to ignore, that this ultimate experience is an experience of pure, unalloyed, perfect and supreme happiness and peace.

Now I might have said it is pure unalloyed happiness, or I might have said it is pure and perfect peace, peace that understanding. Why should I have said, instead, happiness and peace? I have said so because these two, i.e., peace and happiness, are inseparable. Peace is invariably accompanied by unutterable happiness and happiness is always absent where peace is absent. So where there is peace there is happiness. The great musician-saint Tyagaraja says in Telugu: **‘Santamu leka saukhyamu ledu’**—without peace there is no happiness. Those who want happiness must try to learn the technique of attaining peace. Simultaneously they will also have to find out what are the causes of its opposites, restlessness, agitation, excitement. These three contribute to the absence of peace. Those who want to have a perfect and radiant state of health and experience the joy of living, strength, perfect digestion, good sleep, good appetite, also have to learn the causes of ill-health so that they can avoid it. This is a dual process of avoiding that which is negative and cultivating that which is positive.

This is a vast subject in itself but we can condense it into a nutshell. If you want happiness, you must know how to generate peace from within and it is only when more and more individuals in society generate peace in their own heart, they are at peace with themselves, peace with people around them; such people alone will gradually spread the vibrations of peace, which may gradually widen in its area and bring about peace in wider fields and areas of human living. Ultimately, it can even lead to national and international peace. First and foremost the individual must be at peace with himself, otherwise the collection of restless individuals will bring about more restlessness.

If you go into a monastery where 40-50 monks dwell, all under vow of perpetual silence, each moving about serenely doing his own duty, performing prayer and his allotted work, what will your initial reaction be? The moment you go there you will become thrilled with a sense of peace. The monastery is a great contrast from the outside world, from the hectic world that you are coming from. Instantaneously you are at peace. Why? Because the whole atmosphere is saturated and permeated with the vibrations of peace, because it is a place where a set of people are living in absolute peace. There is no discord, no disharmony, no clash or conflict. All are at peace with themselves, all are at peace among themselves and the moment you go there you too partake of that peace which has been generated, which is vibrating in that atmosphere.

On the other hand if you go into a factory or a Stock Exchange where there is a lot of tension, there is a certain restlessness. There is no peace. In a University Campus there is no peace because of confrontations and oppositions and conflicts and clashes.

What is the way to establish peace within oneself? What is the way to try to move in the world with peace? Meditate upon peace. Daily we must meditate upon the concept of peace and a great desirability of peace, the countless advantages accruing from cultivating peace, living in peace, being at peace, how much good comes out of it, how much benefit results out of it, what a great deal of good accrues from peace. You must also meditate upon all the disadvantages of restlessness, excitement and agitation. You must contemplate on some ideal personality, the embodiment of peace, some serene being, who is a personification of absolute peace, like the great Buddha or Jesus of Nazareth, or any other great being who is full of peace, who had such abundance of peace that anyone who approached him immediately felt the great peace, The great sage Ramana Maharshi of Ramanashram, Tiruvannamalai, Arunachala and our own Holy Master Swami Sivananda. He was peace within himself, peace with the whole world. He radiated peace. The moment you drew near to him, all your agitations vanished, all the turmoils simmering in your mind subsided and you felt peace, like a person coming in from the hot summer sun into an air-conditioned, cool, silent room of peace.

Meditate upon the peaceful figure and then meditate upon yourself as already having attained that state of absolute peace. Already visualise your self-image as being filled with peace, already having attained the state of absolute peace. So meditation on peace is one of the important keys to gradually developing peace within yourself, growing into a state of peace because what you constantly hold in your mind, that you gradually begin to experience. What you constantly think of, that you become. That is the great law of the inner realm, the realm of the mind, of thought, sentiment and emotion. This is one important key to peace.

Secondly, simplicity of life leads to peace. The more desires you develop the more restless is the mind. Desires are enemies of peace, specially miscellaneous unnecessary desires. Certain basic desires no one can avoid. They are necessary for the very living of our life, for surviving and existing. Try to keep your desires minimal. The more you multiply the desires and wants, the more you create restlessness in your mind and where there is restlessness there is no peace, there is no happiness. Desire is the enemy of peace. If the desire is countered, it leads to anger, anger leads to attachment and hatred.

Forgiving and forgetting is another way to peace. Ignore insult and injury, don't take it upon yourselves, don't start brooding over them. Never hold a grudge in your mind. Don't constantly think of returning tit for tat, paying back in the same coin. You will lose your peace of mind. Let go, let go. The more your egoism, the greater the restlessness of your mind. The simpler your heart, the greater your peace. The more you want recognition, status, power, authority, the more you are restless. If you want to attain peace, simplify your life, reduce your wants and minimise your desires. Do not keep grudges, forgive and forget, do not seek recognition. You will have peace.

Thirdly, there is a great cosmic source of infinite immeasurable peace. To break away from it, to separate yourself from it, is to enter into a state of restlessness and agitation. If you inwardly try to connect yourself with it, with that great source, gradually peace will come into your own being. Link up with that supreme peace and blessedness which we call God. Call it God, call it anything. It is the ultimate Reality. It is perfect peace, it is absolute peace, it is unalloyed peace, boundless and limitless, infinite and unfathomable, immeasurable, eternal peace. Link yourself with that and then gradually peace will come unto you and simultaneously you will attain bliss.

Forget the past. Don't brood over it. Don't plan too much for the future. Try to move through the present serenely, unaffectedly. Then you will experience the peace that is ever present; not for one split second is it absent. Peace is always there. We superimpose upon it our own restlessness. There is no lack of peace in this universe. Peace floods this universe in abundance, everywhere, at all times. It is we who superimpose our restlessness upon that ever present perfect peace. If you can, harmonise with that peace. Be one with it. If possible generate peace and add to it.

While we are trying to be at peace with ourselves and invoke peace from within by the methods that have been suggested, we may counter a different problem. We may be at peace with ourselves, but when we move among other people we come into contact with people who are not at peace and their restlessness sometimes is infectious. This infection is transferred to us. In the presence of any angry man you also become excited. In the presence of a serene man your anger subsides. So it is infectious. When we constantly move amidst people who are always in a state of agitation, restlessness, fighting, quarreling, excited and irritable, it becomes very difficult to keep our peace. So how can you deal with this? I will tell you one or two wise little hints which Masters of Wisdom have given us. No matter how dark the night around you, if you have a little lamp, you can find your way. You can reach your destination. So be a light unto yourself. Carry your own Peace. Abide in it. The darkness around you cannot bother you. If you are firmly established, you will be able to pass through this universe, full of restlessness, yet, manage to maintain your peace.

Every day on your way to work you have to pass through a very unsavoury locality which is always stinking with rotten garbage. It is revolting, but what can you do? You cannot purchase tons

of eau-de-cologne and other scents and try to sprinkle it over all the garbage. But you can have some nice scent on the tip of your handkerchief and the lapel of your dress and keep it near your nose when you pass through that area and thus you would have conquered the situation. You have to walk across a jungle, full of sharp flinty stones and thorny bushes. What do you do? You make for yourself a pair of very serviceable strong leather shoes and you can cover miles and miles of forest, no matter how flinty the rocks and how sharp the thorns. So far as you are concerned they are as good as not being there. So, we cannot change the world, we cannot alter the nature of all people. May be, within your own home, your place of work and in the bus in which you commute, there are all sorts of people. You cannot carry a magic wand and try to change them. There is a limit to your ability to change people and things around you. But you are a master of yourself. You can bring about a change in yourself.

A great, wise master once said: “Towards those who are lesser than you, inferior to you, in any way, may be in age, education, culture, in wealth, status, authority, talent, or may be in natural endowment, have an attitude of kindness. Do not be annoyed and upset with them. Be kind and compassionate towards those who are lesser than you. Feel a sense of friendliness towards your equals and rejoice in their success and good fortune. Replace jealousy, envy and a sense of competition with genuine friendliness of the heart. One always tends to become agitated, jittery and nervous in the presence of superiors—those who are superior in any way, in status, strength, power, wealth, or learning—and loses one’s peace of mind. Towards such people, consciously cultivate an attitude of serenity. Always be serene and unruffled. You will go through this agitated world, enjoying your peace, and when you are at peace, you will have happiness also.

This is with regard to the outer world of people. What about this outer world of things, happenings and events? Sometimes we have certain desires that are fulfilled and sometimes they are not fulfilled. If fulfilment gives you elation and disappointment gives you depression, it is no good. You will always be at the mercy of these events. So be contented under all circumstances. Be cheerful, no matter what happens. Rejoice if something turns up just as you want it, feel happy if something turns up to the contrary, feel happy even if something turns up in a third way; rejoice in the Lord’s Will and feel happy. It is His world. It is His dispensation. If it is shining, are you not glad? If it is raining, are you not glad? This philosophy of life where you accept everything as ultimately for the good will bring you peace.

Always rejoice in everything and at all times, because there is a valid reason why a thing is what it is and why it is not what it is not. Nothing happens without a reason. The All Wise being is working out a plan according to His own dispensation. You may not be able to see the reason immediately but you will realise it later on. Everything turns out for the good. Therefore, you should take all events with this attitude of acceptance and rejoicing, knowing that the wisdom of God is behind it. There must be some reason, therefore accept everything; you stand to gain in every way if you keep contented and cheerful and by the same law you stand to lose if you allow yourself to become elated and depressed by everything. Therefore, in your own interest, come what may, rejoice, be serene, be happy and do not allow anything to touch and spoil your inner happiness.

Develop this philosophy of life, this outlook, and your peace will be maintained, and where there is peace there is happiness. Rejoice in the happiness of others. Trust in God and be serene. Above all things, do not allow anything to affect your inner peace. Then only are you wise. Then

only do you have the key to happiness, and who does not want happiness? The key to happiness is peace, and that key to peace I have tried to put before you, in some way. By no means have I covered the whole subject, but even these little things if you put into practice, I promise that you will begin to have greater peace progressively in spite of the restlessness around you and through peace you will also find happiness. Peace and happiness go together. You cannot separate them. Wisdom lies in evolving peace within ourselves and finding it in our dealings with the world. Happiness will follow as a matter of course.

INTRODUCTION TO THE GITA

I do not wish you to merely listen to my sharing as so many human individuals, but to listen, receive and absorb as souls upon your onward march for the attainment of your divine destiny which is nothing short of God awareness, nothing short of Self-realisation and nothing short of an inner illumination. As souls on this upward ascending path of spiritual evolution unto divine perfection, I would like you to listen, receive, absorb and assimilate with that higher consciousness. It is from this ground that I try to do my sharing, not as a human individual talking to a group of individuals, not merely as a Swami discoursing to some aspirants or students but as a humble channel of the eternal call of the Infinite, to all the individual rays that have emanated out of that but have apparently gone out from the centre for some time and which will one day go back. Therefore, there is a constant call of the Eternal, of the Infinite, of the Universal to the individual to come back home and to claim the heritage which is his birthright.

Why do you wander in this wilderness of phenomenal existence? Why do you wander far away from your home which is the abode of your eternal sunshine, immeasurable peace and infinite bliss? Why do you wander, groping and stumbling, weeping and wailing, thinking yourself to be the creator of birth and death, of joy and sorrow? All this is avoidable and unnecessary. You need not prolong your bondage. If you arise and awake and become aware of what you are, what you are meant to attain, then you will know that life is not meant to be something merely mundane, but an ascent on the scaling of a pinnacle and a flight unto the Infinite. It is with this awareness that you should approach life and live it unto illumination, unto liberation, unto perfection, unto wholeness, unto the fullest measure of Self-realisation and awareness.

In this world where individual souls take their incarnations as part of this human family, numerous sections of this human family have made their residence in different parts of the world. They have evolved different ways of living, different ways of conducting themselves, different ways of behaving, relating with others and different ways of communicating, with their own language, customs, manners, traditions and sense of values. We are all human beings and everyone of us says "I". Everyone feels 'I exist', 'I am' and yet each one's concept of that 'I am' and each one's expression of that 'I am' is so totally different from the other that to interpret it and come to some understanding of it seems to be a never ending task.

This is so because there are many diversions and so much of variety and difference in the way each of us understands life, approaches and lives it. This is also because of the difference in their language, their culture, their sense of values, the principles by which they live, their

understanding, eating, their social customs and traditions. Some people bury their dead, some burn them. Some expose them to vultures and others keep them as they are, embalm them and entomb them. Some people rub noses when they meet, some people shake their hands and some people fold their hands. Why they are so different, we do not know.

In all these different trends of living, eating, dressing and thinking, there is one factor which is the most fascinating of all. That factor is their heritage of wisdom that they have received in the form of knowledge from their ancestors. Their forefathers evolved the knowledge of what they saw in this universe, how they understood this universe, knowledge of man, what they knew about themselves, what they thought about themselves and knowledge of the cosmic source out of which man and this universe has emerged. What is the beginning of this universe which we see, in which we live? What is the origin of people who live in this universe? What were their findings? What were their discoveries? What research did they conduct and at what conclusions did they arrive?

These are the fascinating lines of enquiry and search. These are the fascinating areas of human study and each race, each civilisation, each culture held within itself this inner core of knowledge that had been inherited from the past, that was handed down from generation to generation and that was further added on to be enriched, expanded and made more progressive. So it is a living stream of knowledge. It is not merely dead facts, but a living stream of knowledge, wisdom, in depth understanding of man, universe, life of man in this universe and the ultimate background, the source from which both these come into being.

It is this heritage of wisdom that forms one of the most crucial and important factors that ultimately decided how these people lived their lives, how they conducted themselves, what goals they set for themselves and what was the quality of their life. It is this heritage of wisdom that gave them certain ideals, that put before them certain principles to live up to, or live by, keeping in their view the ultimate welfare of the people to whom this wisdom was given.

This knowledge became the governing principle, the guiding factor in each section of mankind without which life would become chaotic, lacking a sense of striving, a sense of achievement, and a sense of proper direction. Therein lies the importance of this particular aspect in the inheritance of mankind in the different parts of the world and among different sections of humanity. From ancient times this knowledge was thus evolved and placed before each generation for their guidance and benefit. This gradually became embodied as the main scriptures of each section of mankind, their law books—not this legalistic law of the present times, but the ancient law of human conduct which gave certain norms of behaviour and laid down certain rules of living.

The Tora and the Talmud in the Judaic tradition and the work of many thinkers or moralists or theologians in the Christian tradition, Confucius of the Chinese tradition, the Dharma Sastras in the Hindu tradition which are known as Smritis—Manu Smriti, Yajnavalkya Smriti, Parasara Smriti, Viduraneeti—expounded the correct way of living. We have the Zend Avesta and the other Gathas of the Zoroastrians; the Buddhistic and Jain traditions have their philosophical works as well as their other scriptures that lay down the law of human life and conduct, the Dharma Granthas. It is these that ultimately make the human race what it is. People do not live so much by instinct but by certain values, certain ideas, thanks to these scriptures that gradually evolved and came into being over the millennium as a result of our ancestors' deep thought, and higher realisations.

And then added on to this, a richer factor which enriched this wisdom heritage, for, ultimately, it also reached and attained a higher dimension of human life and quest in that it tried to unravel the mystery of man in this universe and discover what is beyond this universe. Beyond it, both in time and space, what was there before the universe was created, what was there even beyond this time, this universal time, the present time, when there was nothing and nothing had come into being, what was there, in that timeless state? What is there beyond all the farthest reach of space, in all things, in all manifestation? If somewhere someone were to go beyond, what would he come face to face with? This is the way people thought. People tried to probe the Reality beyond time and space. They did meditation and then rose into a state of transcendental experience from where they went beyond the range of senses, beyond the range of thought, beyond the range of even intelligence and rose into a supernal state of direct spiritual illumined perception.

This experience also became part of the wisdom heritage that was handed down from the ancient past. Not only knowledge, not only wisdom, but the highest experience which went beyond knowledge and even beyond wisdom. The highest experience gained through a faculty which was not part of the human personality or human potential, which is bound in time and space, name and form, which was experience gained through a spiritual principle within you which is neither physical nor psychological, which is neither body nor mind nor intellect. A principle within you which is eternal, purely spiritual, of the nature of consciousness, awareness, in that luminous level of your being where you know yourself as pure, unqualified, that awareness when directed towards a higher, still higher level, that awareness comes into the awareness of something that is even beyond it where this individual awareness gives place to an untrammelled, boundless, universal awareness.

This experience also became part of the wisdom heritage and it is this wisdom heritage which the scriptures contain. This heritage gives a greater meaning to all that human society has evolved from ancient times to the present day in different parts of the world and different sections of mankind. Otherwise, whatever might have been evolved, whatever might have been handed down as different methods of eating, drinking and dressing and talking and carrying on human affairs, human relationships, ultimately would have no meaning or validity because one day it all has to end in death and dissolution and destruction, no matter how you live, what you do, what you drink, what you eat, how you dress yourself. Everything ends in death and dissolution. It comes to nothing. Then, what does it matter whether you dressed yourself this way or that way or a third way? It all seems so meaningless.

The higher experience shows to you the presence in man of a dimension that is not perishable, that is not destructible, that does not end and there is no extinction of it, something eternal, something imperishable, something indestructible, something forever. Had it not been for this discovery, all these things would ultimately look worthless, valueless, in the ultimate analysis. But, there comes to our rescue this great discovery that there is, in each man, something that is eternal, permanent. It is this aspect of the wisdom heritage, the metaphysical aspect, the spiritual aspect, that is, therefore, the most precious and the most valuable of the entire range of human inheritance from the ancient past. Whatever man can do, assumes a meaning, has a value, precisely because of the presence of this factor in it, the highest transcendental experience, the reality of man.

In the Indian Hindu tradition, this supreme experience is expounded through Vedanta. Our wisdom heritage is the Vedic wisdom and in the Vedic wisdom the highest point is the spiritual experience attained by the Vedic seers and the sages, and that occupies the later portion of the Vedas. They are also to be found in the Upanishads and this aspiring exposition of your higher nature, your inner reality is the main theme of the Upanishads and the Vedanta. This is the greatest treasure of all, the entire inheritance. So that this great discovery, the inspiring truth may be easily accessible to human beings who are heirs to eternal blessedness, so that this important treasure may be easily accessible, the quintessence of the Upanishadic wisdom, the spiritual experience embodied in the Upanishads has been given to us in a compact form, in the form of a conversation between the great World Teacher and a human student, in the form of a dialogue, in the form of questions and answers. This compact scripture which thus gives the essence of the Upanishadic message and the revelation is the Bhagavad Gita.

The Bhagavad Gita is an epitome of the Indian philosophy, the cultural and spiritual experience and brings to us the highest transcendental wisdom of the Absolute, the Supreme. It brings to us the practical methods of ultimately rising to a state of wisdom, transcending the limitations. It also brings us wise admonitions about the way we have to conduct ourselves in life. Therefore, it is called the Upanishad. Upanishad is something that brings you close to Reality. What is it which brings you close to Reality? A life of righteousness, Dharma, and so it also contains an exposition of Dharma. How does one eradicate negative qualities? How does one cultivate virtuous qualities, divine qualities? In what way does one bring about a gradual transformation of life and conduct from the impurity of Tamas into the luminous purity of Sattva?

This is the key to righteousness, to the life of Sattva, the life of virtue and of divine qualities and therefore, within the covers of this little book you will find wisdom of the Absolute being expounded. You will find practical methods being suggested and the practice for its realisation being outlined and explained. Also being elaborated is the path of righteousness that brings human beings close to God, that path of righteousness, purity of conduct and self-control. All this has been delineated in a very simple and direct manner.

The Bhagavad Gita is the essence of the wisdom heritage inherited by this nation, and the Hindu people of this nation from their past, from the radiant wisdom-filled past inherited by them which contains within itself different aspects of human life, a culture, conduct, morality, ethics and the higher experience that they are capable of attaining if they fulfil the conditions. The spiritual illumination, the spiritual experience and the spiritual and psychical practices and methods to attain that experience and the moral and ethical life, the moral and ethical way of conducting yourself, behaviour and conduct which is the basis of these practices and the ultimate attainment—all find a place in this epitome of Indian Hindu spiritual wisdom.

As I told you, every culture has this wisdom heritage. It is embodied in the scriptures and they have also certain portions of the scriptures which are given great importance and Gita stands unique within the context of the Indian Hindu heritage as a compact little volume which contains the quintessence of the entire heritage that has been inherited by the Hindu race, that is dwelling upon the sub-continent of India, this land of religion and realisation. This little book, Gita, also occupies a unique place in the context of global human life and in the context of the universal wisdom heritage that mankind, as a family, has received from the past.

It is a scripture par excellence for the Hindus, but at the same time it is an important part of the common heritage of mankind, of all human beings, because it tells you about man, tells you about the universe. It does not tell you about any section of the human family but it tells you about the entire human family, about man in this phenomenal universe, about the goal of man's life and as such it is the answer to the quest of mankind for some light upon the path of life. It has universal elements in it because it was given by God to man and therefore, a study of it would be found gainful for persons of any cultural and religious background. There are elements in it that are found useful for everyone, no matter what religion or faith or belief one is following. It is a book that holds something valuable for all levels of your life; your outer life, your social life, your personal life, your moral life, your ethical life and your higher spiritual life which you share with all human beings. Ultimately, the spiritual goal of all humanity is the same attainment of God-consciousness, attainment of spiritual unfoldment, attainment of total Divine perfection.

THOUGHTS FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA

In the Bhagavad Gita the Lord says, "My devotee who engages in doing good to others will never come to any harm", (*Na hi kalyanakrit kaschit durgatim tata gachhati*). One who engages in doing good, one who harms no one, such a one will never come to harm. This is the Lord's assurance. It is His law. What you gave that comes to you. If you engage in doing good, never shall any harm come to you. We see people who engage in doing good, have a lot of misfortune, lot of troubles, lot of sufferings. That is also a law. Because the good you are engaged in now, will secure you from all harm in the time to come, in the days ahead. It guarantees you a glorious future. But if you have contradicted this great law in the past, the law demands the settlement of your accounts. If debts are accumulated, you have to pay them.

If someone is suffering even while doing good to others, it means that he is getting rid of old debt. They are so much liberating themselves from their burden. In this light it has to be understood that it has no reference to the good that the person is doing at present, but it may have some reference to a little negative past which is being cleared and finished. So one must welcome even hardships.

One should not get confused and think, "Lord promised good and here a contrary thing is happening." Beneath the surface there is no contradiction. If you look only upon the surface you see the apparent contradiction. Sometimes even in the ordinary field of Vyavahara, if you have taken something poisonous the physician gives you something so that the poison may come out. Even so, bad Karmas should be got rid of. They are the impediments to the attainment of peace, bliss and perfection. But even in the course of getting rid of these impediments, little sorrows may have to be suffered. What is this little suffering? This is nothing when compared to the sufferings of the devotees of bygone years. See what suffering the great Mirabai, the princess of Chitorgarh, had to undergo. See how much suffering Prahlada had to undergo. But did they lose faith? Did they waver even one hair's breadth in their absolute trust in the Divine? They knew that the Lord's assurances will never go wrong.

Again the Lord says in the Gita, “*Kaunteya pratijaneehi na me bhaktah pranasyati*—O Arjuna, know this well that My devotee never perishes. He will never come to harm. Why? Because I have given this assurance that I am always at his back.”

Pin-pricks and little bit of unpleasant experiences may be there. They fare part and parcel of this Dvandva Jagat, the world of duality. The world is made up of pairs of opposites, Dvandvas. So if one wants one particular thing he gets the other kind also a little bit together with it. Therefore one philosopher shrewdly said, “What is the cause of pain? Pleasure is the cause of pain.” It is true. Because pleasure is always accompanied by pain. So the devotee does not care. Because he knows the Lord’s firm assurance that even though he may have some passing set-backs and failures, ultimately he will not come to harm. God is at the devotee’s back. He is the devotee’s armour and shield. So nothing can happen to him. So have trust in the Lord and launch your craft into the ocean of Samsara. Never mind the little waves and winds. Go on. Sail to the far off shore. Because that is why we have come here. It is the direct injunction of the Purna Parabrahmavata of Lord Krishna “*Anityam asukham lokam imam prapya bhajasva mam*—having come into this temporary world of transitory things, which is full of pain and suffering, do always contemplate Me, always worship Me, always be rooted in Me. Then you will cross this ocean of transmigratory existence and attain great blessedness.” Having said this, the Lord gives all facilities.

Once you know the purpose behind the Vibhuti Yoga, once you know its true implication, then your whole life will be transformed, your whole vision gets transformed. Even one little aspect of His Vibhuti if you take, your life will never be the same. It will be permeated by spirituality. For example, the Lord says, “Of the heavenly bodies I am the sun.” We have to live and work in the sun from morning to evening. So when sunlight is showering from a clear blue sky, if you remember the Vibhuti Yoga, you will find that Lord Krishna Himself is showering upon you. Narayana Himself is showering upon you. It is not without reason, it is said, that the sun is Suryanarayana Bhagavan. Narayana is the presiding deity of the sun in our solar system which is the great source of life, light and energy. Therefore, we have the Suryanamaskara: *Om Bhanave Namah, Om Mitraya Namah, Om Ravaye Namah*, etc. They say, “Meditate upon that glorious Narayana in that orb of the sun, seated in lotus pose, divinely appavelled, full of beautiful ornaments and holding Sankha, Chakra, Gada and Padma. Like molten gold He shines.” You may think, “All right, during the daytime we try to remember the Lord under the grace of the rays of the sun. But what about night? The Lord says, “In the night I am the moon among the starry multitudes.” Thus the Lord goes on describing His Vibhutis. He says, “Among the collections of waters I am the ocean; among the immobile objects I am the Himalayas etc., etc.” He not only identifies Himself with all nice things in the world, but He also says, “Among those who gamble I am the cunningness.” The pickpocket, the man who enters the house stealthily and carries away your radio and television, he is also identified by the Lord Himself.

In the great hymn of the Yajurveda called Rudri which runs as “*Taskaranam pataye namah*—prostrations to the chief of thieves,” the Lord is the chief of even thieves. Thus the Lord is present in each and every item of this creation. Therefore they call this universe a juggler’s trick (Indrajala). The divine essence of the Lord is present in this universe in multifarious facets. By giving this Vibhuti Yoga to us the Lord makes it possible for us to be ever in the awareness of Him, no matter where we are, because He permeates every corner of this universe. Having said everything in the Vibhuti Yoga, in short, the Lord says to Arjuna, “O Arjuna, why dilate upon the

details of My Vibhūtis, let Me tell you, having completely pervaded this universe with a little part of My being, I remain supremely transcendent. The whole of the universe has been created thus, with countless manifestations, with only a fraction of My being. And I am what I am. So with a fraction of My being I pervade this entire universe of countless manifestations.” Arjuna’s request in the Ninth Chapter was fulfilled by the Lord in the Tenth Chapter of the Gita.

Now Arjuna says, “O Lord, You have described Your Vibhūtis. But can You actually make me see them?” In response to this request of Arjuna the Lord grants him actual vision of His Transcendental Being where He stunned Arjuna to the core. No matter where Arjuna turns his head, he sees the Lord in all directions. He became frightened. He saw the Lord in all things, not only in beautiful flower or butterfly, but even in thunder, in life and death. He said, “O Lord, I am frightened. Please assume Your usual form. I cannot take it any more.” Then the Lord withdraws that vision from him. This is the blessed knowledge which the Lord has given to the world, taking Arjuna only as a medium, as a token of His great love for all the Jivas.

The great message is “*Imam prapya bhajasva mam*”—having attained this world of vanishing names and forms, adore Me and worship Me; centre your love upon Me and worship Me. This is the way you can easily attain Me. My true glory, My true nature cannot be seen through penance, meditation and difficult Yoga practices. It is not attained through self-denial and self-control. But it is attained through pure devotion and sincere love for Me. Through worship and adoration with devotion I can be cognised, I can be experienced. The devotee can enter into Me.

More than all paths, I tell you the secret, devotion is the easiest way. Specially in this age where there are so many distractions, where pressures of life are so much that fifty per cent of people have nervous weakness, how can the truths of Vedanta be revealed? Impossible. It is only wild imagination and self-deception. For that very great and subtle Sukshma Buddhi, like, razor-sharpness, is necessary. Then only you can pierce the veil of Maya. With what disciplines the ancient seekers prepared themselves to receive Jnanopadesa. What severe discipline they underwent to establish themselves in Viveka, Vairagya, Sama, Dama, Titiksha, Uparati, Sraddha, Samadhana and Mumukshutva. So it takes a lifetime to equip ourselves with the pre-qualifications to listen to the Upanishadic Jnana. If you manage to qualify yourself by such discipline, one in a thousand, if you grasp the implications, then you are blessed. It is not a joke. You have to reflect again and again.

If you think that you will catch the Reality through your intellect, then it may be a wild path. Once upon a time it was the main path; but not now: it is not possible. We don’t have that calibre. The exercise of the heart is spontaneous. It is present in all. So it can easily be exercised. And, therefore, Bhakti Yoga combined with Nishkama Karma Yoga is the path, supported by Raja Yoga and also helped on with what little Jnana Yoga you possess—Viveka, Vichara, little bit of Upanishadic reading, little bit of discriminating between the real and the unreal. All these are necessary. Because it is not for nothing that God has endowed you with a little bit of intellect also. We should not allow that intellect to go our head and think, “I can become a philosopher like Sankara or Kant or Hegel or Schopenhauer.” It is not given to all to become so great.

In this world of history of humanity how many Kants have come, how many Sankaras and how many Hegels? You can count them on fingers’ ends. They are exceptions. There is only one

Mount Everest. So these personalities are towering peaks of master intellects. And, therefore, recognise realities and take to the path of devotion. Exercise your intellect in the right direction, in discrimination, analysis, enquiry by all means. But make selfless service unto all beings and devotion, adoration and love for the Lord, and prayer and worship as your mainstay. This is the path. It will lead to meditation.

When through intense love grace showers upon you and you attain illumination, highest knowledge comes to you unsought. Because the fruit of devotion is Jnana. “*Buddhi yogam dadami*—I give to them the highest Knowledge”, the Lord says. “*Sraddhavan labhate jnanam*—he attains wisdom who is full of faith.” So these things will come by themselves. You have only to exercise, more than anything else, the pure and divine emotion of divine Bhakti. Through it you have to try to attain God. That is the special path for Kali Yuga—Nishkama Karma and Bhagavad Bhakti, supported by discrimination, a little discipline of the mind, control of thoughts, introspection and also analysis. We should carefully avoid reading such things which say, “Be unconditioned, let go, never think of anything, be free, keep your mind without any preconditioned notions.” This is very flattering to the ego because it thinks, “Oh, I am also intellectual enough to grasp this man’s teaching, and swallow it and have indigestion.” Ultimately that is what they get, a severe spiritual colic. For a Bhakta it is not wisdom to read such teachings which pamper his ego. If at all he tries to reflect upon such teachings, then it becomes a reflection upon his lack of wisdom. It is a lack of wisdom to make such teachings available for common consumption.

Bhagavan Ramakrishna Paramahansa never spoke Advaita Vedanta to any of his disciples. His disciples were not ordinary people. When he found one or two gems who were fit for this kind of teaching, he made sure that no one else was there within hearing when he called them and opened the Vedantic texts and spoke to them. When he was teaching, if some Bhakta came, he immediately closed the book and put it away. And if the Bhaktas asked, “What is it that you closed”, Ramakrishna used to say, “No, no, no. It is nothing. It is something between ourselves.” So he spoke to those Bhaktas regarding devotion, Divine Name, prayer and all that, and never Vedanta. Was Ramakrishna a fool? Never. He was the forerunner of the modern renaissance, the revival of Vedic religion.

He did not give such Vedic teaching to all Tom, Dick and Harry. And, therefore, in our Svadhyaya we must confine ourselves to that alone which will be of greatest help in the path we have chosen. There is no meaning in trying to bring unnecessary things and cluttering our minds and causing trouble to ourselves and getting our faith shaken up and losing what little ground we have covered. The devotee must go like an arrow shot from a bow towards the target, never deviating this side or that side. That must be the method of your proceeding towards the Supreme Being.

Down the ages countless sages bear testimony to the efficacy of devotion to the Lord, worshipful prayer to the Lord, practice of the Divine Name. Therefore, such being the case, one should not think that it is something secondary, something minor. Devotion still reigns supreme as the paramount path for the attainment of God-consciousness. If we want to remove some sharp thing like a thorn that has gone into our feet, we use a sharper thing like a needle and take it out. So, if you say, “What a foolish thing you are doing? A sharp thing has pricked you already. Why are you again using another sharp thing?” What answer can be given. It is necessary. So if devotion, prayer

and worship is conditioning the mind, this conditioning is necessary to take us out, throw out from us, the other conditioning we have been brought up in, viz., the conditioning which made us think that we belong to so and so, we are this person's relative, that person's son, that person's daughter etc.

In order to destroy this wrong conditioning, false conditioning, we have to condition ourselves to this new consciousness, "I am the child of the Lord; I am the servant of the Lord; I am the beloved of the Lord." Know yourself only in relation to the Divine, not in relation to anything here. When this new identity begins to take hold of you, the other false identity gradually disappears. So a more positive spiritual conditioning is necessary to decondition ourselves from the wrong, unspiritual, gross, earthly conditioning in which we are caught.

This is your prison-house. In order to liberate ourselves from this prison-house we have to evoke within us a new consciousness, a new condition, a new identity. And that identity is, "I belong to the Lord; I am Thine, O Lord; All is Thine; I am Thy child; I am Thy nearest and dearest; Thou art my refuge." It is only this spiritual identity, awareness of ourselves as someone in relation to the Divine, the Eternal Being, that liberates us from the bondage of earth identity which has cropped up by earthly relationships. Take to the path of devotion. Lavish the love of your heart upon your Beloved, upon Him who is your very own and exercise your devotion in prayerfulness, worship and continuous loving remembrance of the Lord, practising the Divine Name and meditating upon Him. See the Lord in all and continuously engage yourself in selfless service unto all.

So Seva and Bhakti supported by Jnana will give you the highest Knowledge. This is the assurance of Sri Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj and the great sages. This is also the experience of bygone seekers after Truth. Let us hearken to the great Adesa or Upadesa of Jagadguru Bhagavan Sri Krishna, "*Anityam asukham lokam imam prapya bhajasva mam.*" When the Lord says here, "Worship Me", He means the worship of the Eternal Being, the Absolute, the Supreme Universal Being. It is about this consciousness the Lord speaks of. If you thus make yourselves His devotees, you will obtain Jnana. No harm can come to you and you will never perish. What more do you want? The Lord Himself has asked you to do something. He assures that if you do this then you are dear to Him and that no harm shall ever come to you. The Lord will be your armour and shield. You will attain the Supreme. More than anything else, the devotee is always united with the Lord through divine love. The greatness of this divine love for the Lord is emphasised throughout this great scripture. God bless you all!

TRUE HAPPINESS

Desire and want which arise from the prime delusion, destroy all peace of mind. In a mind devoid of peace how can there be happiness? Happiness depends upon peace of mind. It is in a calm, tranquil state of mind alone that happiness arises, for essential true happiness is your inward spiritual state. Fortunately, or unfortunately, the only media through which, it can be expressed are the intellect and the mind. If these two media are thrown into such a state of agitation that they cannot serve as proper channels for the welling up of this inner happiness, then their condition becomes unfit and unfavourable. It is only when there is peace and serenity in the mind and intellect that inner happiness makes itself felt. The robber of your peace and serenity is the sense of want and desire which arise out of your prime error that happiness depends upon objects. That is the error in which you start your life. In childhood one is taught that to have a good time means going to places, or doing things, or getting objects and so children grow up in this delusion. The adult that is produced is at the mercy of things which are outside of himself. The grain of proper understanding of this world, as it really is, instilled into young people would grant a rich harvest in terms of happiness and joy.

Try to evaluate objects as they really are. To lead a proper life here on earth, one has to assign a limited value to objects. Certain objects are indispensable for the maintenance of life. For that purpose and to that end they should be utilised, but let them not assume an undue prominence in your life. For, instead, of serving as the proper sustenance, they may become the veritable tyrants sapping life of all true contentment and satisfaction. Your happiness may become mortgaged to these objects. No longer of limited utility, they seem to be of utmost importance. Therefore, they come to have a stranglehold upon you and tend to dominate and enslave you. A proper understanding and a right evaluation of objects as they are and for what they are worth, is of prime concern for the human individual. “Thus far and no further”—you must say, when they try to invade the interior kingdom of your life.

Simplicity of life is the true secret of happiness. Unhampered experience of joy which lies within comes out of simplicity. Your life should never be complicated with too many things. Due to too many things, due to too many desires, modern man unfortunately has missed this. The religious man always sings. He always dances. He is comparatively care-free and filled with the happiness of simplicity and contentment. We envy and even try to imitate him, at least for the time being, by leaving all distractions. It is unwillingly that modern man allows his life to become so complicated. He knows that simplicity is the secret of happiness. “But I can’t help it” saying thus, he weeps. He takes tranquillisers. He goes into a saloon or a bar. He does something—*anything*—to make him forget the total inadequacy of his present condition. Man has the key to happiness in simplicity.

Have contentment. Have the capacity to derive joy out of whatever situation you may find yourself in. Assert: “The situation has not the power to alter my experience. My experience is alterable only to the degree to which I allow it to be altered. If I say ‘no’, then I can have the same peace and happiness within, no matter how the situation changes. It can change every hour, yet I can be changeless.” So much blessedness will come if you have simplicity and contentment. You will find, of all things, that you are free from debts. This nightmare of instalments (of credit plans), that comes month after month, year after year, will be gone. Some people do not have any freedom. They just slave away for those various companies to which they owe instalments. Right to the end

of their lives they go on paying instalments on the house, on the car, on the radio, on the TV, on the refrigerator, on the washing machine, and so on; heaven knows how many gadgets have been invented!

A simple and contented life depends more upon God-made things than upon man-made objects. There are hundreds of things that can fill you with happiness if you only have the eyes to see. When you get up in the morning, you can step out of your room and look at the dawn and be happy. When the sun rises, still more happiness. When you hear the birds warbling, even more happiness. When you feel the cool breeze blowing, again happiness. Well, there is no end to happiness. Know the technique for deriving happiness from these simple things—from the dawn, the sunrise, the birds, the laughter of children, the beautiful blue sky, the white clouds slowly sailing like majestic ships, little dancing flowers. They can inspire you if you only know how to derive joy. If you discover this secret there will be no end to your happiness.

Learn to experience joy from the happiness of others. Instead of envy, become filled with joy whenever you see others in happiness. Feel happy by beholding the happiness of others. Train yourself to derive happiness out of bringing happiness into the lives of others. Learn the technique of joy by making others joyful. Your happiness will become a thousandfold. At the present moment it is circumscribed by the experiences undergone by yourself alone. But if you begin to get joy from all others, then perpetually you will be happy. Everyone's happiness will become a part of your happiness and will go to multiply and add to it.

Try to derive joy out of the beauty of all things, not only from those things which you possess. In this way you will develop an impersonal capacity for happiness. Without touching a cent in your pocket you will realise an illimitable treasury of happiness which lies strewn all around you and everywhere about you. When we realise the things that God has given for which we have reason to be happy, the whole day will not be long enough for us to be thanking Him. Untold treasure He has given. Just consider your own body, your own self. You have two sound eyes. Supposing someone says; "All right, give me one of your eyes and I will give you twenty thousand dollars." Which person in a sane condition of mind would comply with such a request? Supposing you are offered one hundred thousand dollars for your tongue; would you give it? So, that means that you have things that are worth millions and millions of dollars! And yet there is moping and fretting for a few things which we don't have, not realising the untold worth of the precious things which we already have. There are some people unfortunately deprived of these things. If you simply reflect how much God has given, then your whole vision of life will become changed. Know these little secrets. They are little but they are very important. They can mean the whole difference between darkness and light.

Learn to accept the experiences that come through life. There is no use fretting and fuming and making yourself miserable over them. You, perhaps, may just add more misery to the misery which these experiences already bring. Have calm and wise resignation. There is one Supreme Intelligence that is guiding the lives of men here and these experiences that come from that Source, learn to accept like human beings. Endure the little troubles that come through life. If there is a little sorrow, endure it and learn to take away its sting. Thus you may enrich your life out of those very experiences which you find painful and unpleasant.

Be friendly to all. Towards your superiors, have an attitude of complaisance. Do not be full of fear and timidity and nervousness in their presence. That can also rob you of your joy. Be serene. With your own equals, be friendly. Feel oneness with all. With those who are inferior to you in status, in health, in strength, in beauty, have an attitude of kindness, love and compassion. To those who are troublesome, wicked, unpleasant and nasty, be indifferent. Do not work yourself up into a state of irritation or annoyance or unfriendliness or hatred. Just ignore them. These four attitudes will provide you with a means of not being put out of your happiness—complacency towards superiors, friendliness and brotherhood towards your equals, kindness and compassion towards those who are inferior to you and a perfect indifference towards all those who are inimical to you, who are troublesome, nasty, evil or wicked. All these four categories are bound to be present.

Above all, do not give way to anger. Anger, more than any other single factor in this world, destroys happiness. It can totally wreck the entire happiness of a home. If one member of the household has a temper and gives vent to his anger, he can destroy the happiness of all members of the home; even the neighbours may be affected.

Maintain a rational restraint over the senses. The urge towards carnal enjoyment is the natural part of the human being, but it pertains to the mental and physical part of your nature only. We have to recognise this as such. However, it is the prerogative of every individual, being endowed with a high intelligence, to hold a reign over the senses. By that way they cannot destroy happiness. If they are allowed to hold a sway over you, then while you are thus unrestrained, you cannot have any happiness. This is the Law of the Universe.

Base your life upon virtue, upon Truth and upon purity. If purity is always your guiding rule, guilt complexes and neuroses will go and psychiatrists would be unnecessary for you. Happiness fills those who base their lives upon virtue. Virtue is a direct emanation from the Divine, just as happiness is the quality of the Divine. Although it may be difficult in the beginning, yet how many headaches would you save yourself if you would base your life upon virtue and Truth! If you tell a lie, to support it you have to tell a chain of lies. Sticking to the Truth takes away from you all anxiety and a thousand pin-pricks. A life of Truth and purity is a life devoid of many of the factors that contribute to the misery and unhappiness of the modern world.

Even more important, keep close to the Great Inner Source of all happiness, all joy, all bliss! Call It by whatever name you choose—I do not want to give It a name. Make That the centre of your being. That is the Eternal Thing that supports your life, which is your alpha and omega, your all in all, your supporting substratum and your destination and goal. Keep close to It by developing love. Love the Supreme. Always remember the Supreme. Great Ones who have immersed their lives and become absorbed forever in the supreme blessed state of happiness and bliss have told us one great secret which provides us with an unfailing method of attaining happiness. That secret is the Divine Name. They said: “Practise the Divine Name. The Name of the Supreme and the Supreme are not two but they are one. If you have the Divine Name within you, you have the Supreme within you.” This is a .great spiritual Truth. This is a great fact. If you remember this fact and try to make the Divine Name your own, if you are always repeating the Divine Name, always invoking the Divine Name, always filling yourself constantly with the current of the Divine Name; then happiness and blessedness will be present with you always.

Happiness, in the truest sense of the term, is that changeless experience right within you. It is that awareness which being present enables you to derive sweetness out of all other things, and which being absent, deprives you of all the sweetness from anything. That is the most important fact.

It works like the figure '1' in mathematics. If '1' is there, you may add to it any number of zeros and each zero progressively increases the value of the number enormously and the zeros have tremendous significance. If this '1' is not there, all the zeros are just ciphers without any value of their own whatsoever. Similarly, all things gain the capacity for giving happiness only in the presence of this One Being. Make Him the centre of your life. Make Him the most important and paramount Thing in your life. Then you will never be taken away from your happiness even for a single second. No one will be able to take you away from it, for you are yourself that happiness. When a fish is taken out of a little bowl and released into the ocean, it swims about anywhere and always remains in the vast ocean. So, out of the tiny bowl of deluded life where we have paid this undue attention to external objects, let us lift ourselves out and enter into that vast Truth.

In God lies happiness and within me He is and He and I are One.

Within lies the perennial fount of eternal happiness. May you live your life in this Truth. Then I assure you that your life will become a stream of happiness. May your life thus flow forth not as a vale of tears but as a perennial stream of infinite happiness. This is my prayer. May God give you the strength and the inspiration to blossom out into that simplicity and contentment, that shining and radiant virtue, that serene state of detachment, that friendliness with all beings, out of which this great gift that is waiting to be bestowed upon us will become our own. May your life become radiant with joy and happiness. Supernal Happiness—may That be yours.

NISHKAMA KARMA—THE PHILOSOPHY OF EXCELLENCE IN WORK

Salutations to that Great Reality which is One and identical in spite of being addressed in various names and terms. He is That Reality who is glorified in all scriptures, Vedas, Zend Avesta, Old Testament, Bible, Quran, Granth Sahib and all the scriptures of the world and He is a Being who is adored and praised in temple, synagogue, fire temple, church, mosque, Gurudwara and all places of worship. Salutations and adorations to That One Great Reality, the One God beyond all religions, who existed when no religion existed, no humanity had been created, no prophet or messiah had appeared. That Eternal Being, the source of all religions, the sustainer of all faiths, the ultimate goal of all believers and seekers, that Being is the goal of your life. That Supreme Reality is your cosmic origin, is your eternal abode. He is the root of your existence. He is the source from which you have emanated and for a temporary period you have descended into this Earth Plane and assumed this momentary body-bound state of living and moving.

This is not your natural state. This is not your permanent condition. You are beyond name and form. You are beyond the body, mind, intellect and ego. You are eternal, ever perfect, ever free, ever pure, imperishable and indestructible, beginningless and endless. Weapons cannot injure you,

fire cannot burn you, water cannot wet you, wind cannot dry you. Unborn, eternal, permanent, indestructible, you are shining parts of that great Whole whom you call Paramatma or the Cosmic Soul or the Universal Being. He is the Whole and we are all parts, even as billions and billions of waves are part and parcel of the vast ocean, inseparable from it, even though appearing as ever so many different variegated waves and wavelets, yet comprised by the very ocean waters, of the very essence of the ocean itself, not apart from it but a part of it. Even so each one of us is a part of the Great Cosmic Reality, the Great Ocean of Eternal Existence, Consciousness, Bliss, Satchidananda. Our goal is to realise that Reality from which we have emanated in our essential nature, not in our physical nature, not in our psychological nature, but in our innermost deepest essential, spiritual nature, our real nature, our unchanging eternal nature.

To go back into that original, vast, limitless ocean of eternal existence, that is the ultimate logical consummation of human life on earth. It is a fulfilment of your being, by which alone life becomes really and truly successful. To point out to us this great goal, from time to time the spiritual genius of our Motherland has been sending messengers, illumined souls, filled with divine wisdom and consciousness, unfailingly and recurrently, generation after generation, in all the corners of India, that is the uniqueness of our glorious Motherland. The uniqueness is that if you make a research of the spiritual history of our country, if you go deep and investigate into this inner India, spiritual India, you will find to your astonishment, that there has not been one single generation in the millennium of history of this great country, when there have not been divinely illumined sages and seers of God-realisation in this land. That is why it is called Punyabhumi, the sanctified land.

In our own generation, great luminaries like Ramana Maharshi, Aurobindo Ghosh, Swami Ramdas and many others have shed their light upon this great land. My beloved and revered Master, Guru Maharaj Swami Sivanandaji was one such great luminary and he came to give to this confused, restless 20th Century, the modern mankind, the same ancient message of man's essential divinity and the realisation of this divinity, recapturing the experience of that essential immortal divine nature as the ultimate goal of our life. He came to proclaim this message and it is in this context that I come to the subject of today: "Service of Man" in proclaiming this great goal of life, God-realisation, Atma-sakshatkara, Self-realisation and attainment of Divine Consciousness.

My Master Swami Sivananda, outlined for the modern seekers, the very general name, universal name of Divine Life, living in a divine manner, living with the awareness of your divine nature, living for the attainment of the divine destiny and goal, divine consciousness and living in such a way that you make life itself a process of consciously expressing and manifesting your divine nature through thought, word and deed. So he called it Divine Life. And this Sadhana of the Divine Life is a synthesis, an integration and synthesis of the four great paths of Nishkama Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Dhyana Yoga and Jnana Yoga. The proclamation of this Sadhana to modern mankind was his basic spiritual teaching. When in 1936, he established this institution or spiritual organisation called the Divine Life Society in order to propagate more effectively upon a vast global scale this message of divine life, he made as the very seal of this Divine Life Society the four words: **Serve, Love, Meditate, Realise.**

As the very first basic fundamental spiritual Sadhana to attain the ultimate goal of God-realisation, our Holy Master laid down Seva, Paropakara, selfless service unto all creatures, all beings. Serve the sick, serve the poor, serve your elders, serve your parents, serve your neighbours,

serve the destitutes, serve society, serve the country, serve all humanity, serve all creatures. This was his message, again and again. He was never tired of reiterating in his teachings that the salt of life is selfless service; that which makes life worth living, that which gives a real taste to life, is selfless service. He said that without selfless service your life will be dry, essenceless, insipid.

Service before self is the Rotarian Motto and therefore, you who are dedicated to service do not need to be told about service. My humble service to you this evening through the sharing with you of these thoughts and ideas would be not so much in sermonising to you about service, with which you are all too familiar, but rather giving to you a glimpse of a new dimension of this very concept of service, which is the key concept of the Rotarian's Ideal. This new dimension is yours by your birthright. Because I am not merely addressing Rotarians, I am addressing a unique section of the Rotary world and I am addressing Bharatiya (Indian) Rotarians, Rotarians who have behind them a very specific culture, a definite idealism, certain great values, which have been formulated, evolved, and lived over millennium, by great personalities, towering personalities, through centuries and generations in this great land of ours. Time-tested principles and sublime values and certain ideals, all these you have received spontaneously as a matter of course because of having been born in this great country. All this has come to you without any effort on your part as your cultural heritage. These treasures you have inherited from your great sublime sacred task and therefore, I bring to you what belongs to you, which perhaps has not been recognised.

This new dimension of this new concept of service stems from the very basic vision of your great land and its holy culture. The way of life, belief, faith, worship in this country is known as the Vedic Dharma. They also call it Sanatana Dharma because its origins are untraceable, because it does not arise out of any single personality as prophetic religions do. Therefore, there is no one single personality whom we can say is the originator of this way of life, this faith and belief and worship. This was based upon ancient wisdom, timeless wisdom, whose origin and source is shrouded in the dim past beyond known history and as such they also call it Sanatana Dharma.

Vedic Dharma is the name based upon the original term Veda. Veda means knowledge. Vedic is the adjectival form of this word Veda, which denotes knowledge and time was when it was not in the form of any written tome, books or volumes. No, they existed only in the memory of man. Generations after generations they were handed over by word of mouth, but it is only some thousands of years ago a great Sage, perhaps seeing that a time will come when this method will not work, due to the very degeneracy in the health of man, in short-lived life tenure, and therefore to ensure that it may not be lost he put it down in writing, before he got the title Veda Vyasa. From his time we know the Vedas as Books, the four great Vedas, the Rig Veda, Yajur-Veda, Sama Veda, Atharva Veda.

Before the time of Veda Vyasa this Vedic wisdom did not exist in the form of written books and therefore this wisdom-based way of life, way of faith, belief, worship, had at its root a great vision of the sages, Anubhuti, Aparoksha Anubhuti, and it is upon this vision, that the whole structure of our religion was built. This vision was that the entire universe is pervaded by the Universal Spirit, the One Great Cosmic Spirit, envelopes, interpenetrates and pervades this entire universe of names and forms. It fills every speck of space, it fills and indwells and enlivens the atom of matter. The whole world is filled with consciousness. This is the way to vision and a logical development of their experience. Generation after, generation, intrepid pioneers in the spiritual

quest, spiritual exploration, there came many illumined souls, again and again, reconfirming the experience and findings of their predecessors. So this experience became time tested and was given to us as the great fact, as the Cosmic Truth, as a great Tattva (essence) and out of this awareness and experience, the pervasive presence of the Divine animates this created universe of names and forms. They discovered the presence of this essence and principle in each and every creature, in each and every living being.

He is, therefore, the common consciousness that melts all existence into one homogeneous Whole. They thus experienced and discovered and proclaimed to us this, the unity of all life and out of which emerged two very, very important and significant facts which are very meaningful to you as Rotarians. One is that when you engage in service of human society, you are in actual fact adoring this Divine Being that is the living Reality present in all beings. We have to open our eyes to this vision. Service is more than a mere social process. It is not just a social activity confined to this earth plane or to this material world. It has significance and meaning upon a higher dimension of the Spirit. When you serve man you actually serve the God hidden in man, Divinity immanent in all creation.

So Manava Seva (service of man) is Isvara Aradhana (worship of God). It is a spiritual process. Therefore, lived in this manner and engaged in with this awareness and in this spirit, as I serve my fellow beings and creatures, I adore God, present in the heart of all beings. This is adoration to me, this is a spiritual Sadhana to me. If, while engaged in this outer service, you have this awareness within and do it with this feeling, then you become richly blessed within the dimension of your spiritual life also. Such service gradually leads to spiritual awareness, which will lead to a new vision to the awareness of the pervading presence of God. You begin to grow in the awareness that God is not merely confined either to the temple or the mosque or the church or the synagogue or the Gurudwara but He is before me wherever I turn. From all the ten directions of the compass, God is looking at me. He is coming to me to be served and therefore, it is my privilege to worship this God who comes in human form to accept my service. I offer service with humility, with reverence, no longer with the idea that I am doing something wonderful, something exceptional, something which is not being done by others. On the contrary, I become humble, I thank the one who comes to me to be of service. I say I have the privilege of worshipping God through this being who is before me and is accepting my service. So you engage in service with a spirit of reverence, with humility, with a feeling of thankfulness and gratitude: for the being who is giving you this golden chance of evolving spiritually by thus engaging in this worshipful service, as the spiritual Sadhana, Nishkama Karma Yoga. That is one important meaning that comes into this very process of your serving beings, because you do it with the awareness of the presence of God.

The second important dimension of this act of service is something much more metaphysical, much more philosophical. What is it that stands between you and God, who is the goal of your life, in whom alone you ultimately find rest, find peace, attaining whom alone you ultimately succeed in attaining that which you are striving to attain but cannot attain? All human beings all over the world are striving from birth to death to avoid all sorrow, pain, suffering and unpleasant experiences of any kind and they are striving eagerly to attain happiness, joy, things that are pleasant. No man born of a human mother and father ever succeeded in the quest. This world is a mixture of happiness and sorrow, pain and pleasure; joy and sorrow are intermingled. It is a world of Dvandvas (dualities). So when you run after happiness you are bound to have sorrow also in its

way. Therefore, this quest of unalloyed absolute happiness, unaccompanied by any reaction, without any sorrow, is a myth, which can never be attained. It is like a horizon which you can never reach—Sarva Duhkha Nivritti (cessation of all sorrow), Paramananda Prapti (attainment of Eternal Bliss), Nitya Tripti (Eternal Satisfaction)—is to be attained not in any created conditioned thing, limited by time and space, which has a beginning and an end, which is changeful, perishable by its nature, therefore, imperfect.

This experience for which all human beings are striving and seeking, the total cessation of all sorrow, pain and suffering and the entering into an absolute bliss, total, unalloyed, inexhaustible happiness, joy, perfect joy, as St. Francis of Assisi put it, that is to be experienced in God-experience. It is that state of perfect joy, '*anandam brahmeti*', that is the discovery of your forefathers. That is the actual deepest personal experience of the sages and seers from whom we trace our lineage, our tradition, and therefore, they found that upon attaining God, immediately the individual soul transcends all pain and sorrow and suffering, attains an experience of indescribable bliss, becomes filled with the eternal satisfaction, attains freedom and fearlessness. That is the state which is the goal of life. They call it Moksha and in the attainment of this goal, the greatest barrier is our identification with this little temporary personality. We are identified with this cage of flesh and bones which is one day to perish, abode of so much pain, suffering, old age, disease, decay, imperfections. Every little part of it is subject to decay and a dozen different types of pain.

This body, a perishable cage of flesh and bones, we are identified with it, we cling to it, we love it, we are attached to it. We are also identified with this little thinking machine, this little psychological self. Due to our intense identification with these two factors, our body and our mind, our physical, corporal and psyche, we are so completely attached to it that we make that the very centre of our life, live only to serve this, we live only to gather together things in order to satisfy its desires, satisfy its cravings, satisfy its appetites and our entire life becomes a little petty thing confined to this body, little personality, self-centred, self-seeking, selfish. This ego is the product of ignorance, product of identification with that which is not your essential self, that is only an added passing factor, an adjunct. This ego and the selfishness arising out of this ego is the main barrier between man and God. This is the stone, iron, granite wall between you and eternal bliss, between you and infinite peace, between you and perfect existence, deathless existence, and to break down this wall is your main task. Vedanta says that identifying yourself with this perishable body is the greatest sin.

At the innermost depth of the spirit all are identical. It is the same spirit that is the indwelling consciousness in all beings. Mistaking this perishable body for the real self and becoming attached to it and developing selfishness and separating yourself from all other beings who are in fact identical with you is the greatest sin. Forgetting the essential self, identifying with the non-essential self, temporary body, we become self-centred, selfish. This is the greatest blemish of human personality and this is the greatest curse on human society. It is the root cause of all clash, conflict and hatred. This selfishness is the pain of human life and out of it arises all sorrow, all misery, all the problems of the human society within the confines of a single family, within the four walls of a single household. Due to this selfishness, how much disharmony, how much discord, how much clash, how much conflict, how much tension is created between four brothers of one family? If there is selfishness between husband and wife, the whole life becomes a continuous conflict and

problematic affair. Therefore, this selfishness is the real human problem, individually as well as collectively.

Selfishness is a great human problem and there is only one way of breaking down this wall between God and man, breaking down this wall between man and man, and overcoming this problem. That way is a dynamic unselfishness with a vengeance, consciously and purposefully adopted as your way of life. Vedanta says, as long as you do not discard this selfishness, unless you cease to think about yourself and begin to think in terms of the welfare of others, you cannot liberate yourself from the stranglehold of selfishness. As the old man of the island upon the shoulders of Sindbad the Sailor, selfishness is dominating us. And the only way, therefore, is dynamic selflessness. Dynamic selflessness is the very stuff of true service and therefore right from our ancient times it has been proclaimed: O man, refuse to bow down to this curse of selfishness. Know that God has given you this body in order to benefit life around you, benefit all the creatures, all living beings.

The entire concept of ethics and morality is summed up in two words—*Paropakaraya punyaya papaya parapidanam*—anything that goes to benefit others is meritorious and good; anything that harms others is sin, that is undesirable, that will stand in the way of your attaining the goal of life. Therefore this great value of Paropakara (doing good to others) was placed before us as a shining ideal and all those who have lived and died for this concept of Paropakara have become immortalised in our memory, enshrined in our memory.

At the moment of his departure from earth, entering into Pari-nirvana, the great Buddha, the compassionate Buddha, gathers together all his Bhikkus and says: ‘Now the time has come. You must attain Nirvana’. And he commends to you this last message: ‘Walk the highways and the byways of this great land of Bharata for the happiness of the many and for the welfare of the many (*bahujana hitayacha bahujana sukhayacha*), this I commend unto you as the last parting message’. *Seva, Paropakara* it is the heart of the Bharatiya Samskriti. It is the very life breath of your culture, this land’s genius and this concept has come down to us from ancient times. Service of parents, service of elders, service of your Guru, has been a timeless concept which has come down to your life. In the Gita Lord Krishna says: ‘If you want to attain illumination, if you want to attain divine wisdom, O Arjuna, attain that, know that Great Reality, by going to great ones, serving them, pleasing them, questioning them.’ This concept of service later on evolved and took the shape of a distinct path, a spiritual path for attaining God-realisation, and it was the path that is known as Nishkama Karma Yoga.

This concept of service unto all living beings as a spiritual discipline to attain God-realisation elevates this concept of service from the dimension of social service with a higher dimension of a spiritual process. At the basis of it is the vision, even while engaged in service, it is not the human individual that I am serving but it is the divine that is enshrined within the human being. I am present in the heart of all. More specifically Lord Krishna says: ‘O Arjuna, I am the inner Spirit dwelling within the body of all creatures. I am the beginning, the middle and the end, I am the all in all. I am, therefore, present as the indwelling Spirit in all creatures’—He does not say man alone, but all the creatures. And to you all Rotarians engaged in this noble avocation of service of humanity, service of society, I commend to you this inner spiritual vision, inner attitude of worshipfulness to God immanent in man, the presence of God indwelling man, that service be to

you, therefore, something sacred, something spiritual, something that relates you not only to this human world but something that puts you directly into relationship and connection with God Himself, the Cosmic Soul. Therefore, service is not something that merely brings you into living relationship with your fellow beings or this human world, but service when rightly perceived and rightly done with this inner vision and feeling of worshipfulness, is something that links you with the Cosmic Being, the Spiritual Reality which pervades this world and dwells in all creatures. Thus, service becomes a process, a method and a means of linking yourself with God, linking yourself with that Cosmic Divine principle, the Universal Reality and when done in this manner, with this feeling and with this vision, this deeper awareness, then service becomes a process of Yoga.

Anything that puts the human individual into conscious contact with the Universal Soul is Yoga; do it through devotion, do it through deep concentration and meditation, do it through spiritual and metaphysical speculation and investigation, question and discrimination, or do it through service. When physical dynamism becomes the medium of approaching God immanent in man, it becomes the Yoga of Service. When the emotion and sentiment becomes the way of attaining, attaching yourself with God, it becomes the Yoga of Bhakti, When a concentrated mind focused upon that Great Reality in a continuous way, unbroken way, then that becomes a way, a means, a medium, the mental power becomes Raja Yoga or the Yoga of Meditation. When enquiry, discrimination, philosophical investigation become a means of relating yourself with the Cosmic Being, it becomes Jnana Yoga.

Thus, all Rotarians are unconscious Yogis, all Rotarians are actually engaged in a spiritual Sadhana of relating themselves to the Cosmic Spirit through the medium of their physical dynamism, activity. Only thing is, you are not aware of it and it has been my privilege this evening of bringing to you this awareness that what you have been doing as International Rotarians, is actually a spiritual Sadhana that had been handed down to us as our cultural heritage by our effulgent past, great spiritual past. It is Seva Yoga, Seva Dharma, Nishkama Karma Yoga. It is the worship of God immanent in man. It is the adoration of the Divine indwelling all the living beings. Therefore, the great Vivekananda proclaimed the concept of Daridra Narayana—God as the poor, God as the sick and suffering, God as the down-trodden, God as the illiterate, God as the destitute, the forlorn, the forgotten. Therefore he saw God in all these various sections of the less fortunate, human society, sum totality of all living beings, the down-trodden creatures, my own brothers, and this is my worship of God, my serving them with whole-hearted compassion and kindness and thanking God that I get this opportunity of elevating myself, spiritually evolving through serving Him immanent in these beings.

Service, therefore, is a means to attain God-realisation which is the goal of life. Service is a spiritual process of trying to attain God in and through man who is His living temple. Mahatma Gandhi said: 'I am a seeker of Truth; my service to all beings is only my Sadhana in order to attain that Great Reality, God Immanent in man.' Selfless service, therefore, is ultimately Yoga Sadhana. It is new awareness that all Rotarians elevate their service into this higher dimension of the Spirit and thus reap rich benefits while they benefit human society upon the social level, let them benefit upon the inner and higher dimensions upon the spiritual level. Thus society gains through your service. You gain also through your service in an inner and higher spiritual way.

Our service to man is, therefore, one of the most effective means, most effective unfailing Sadhana for ridding ourselves from this great disease of selfishness which stands between us and God-vision, our great divine destiny, the goal of life.

Selfless service, therefore, is no less than adorations of the Cosmic Being, immanent in every creature He has created. Through selfless service done with this vision and this feeling, may we elevate ourselves spiritually and come to attain the spiritual consciousness and fulfil our life by attaining Self-realisation or God-realisation.

MAN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MIND

If you want to make a spiritual success of this life and if you want to move unhampered towards the objective which you have set for yourself, it is absolutely essential that you have a clear-cut idea of how exactly you are related to your mind and what exactly the mind constitutes in the total picture of your personality, in this set-up called your individuality. There is so much of confusion, of lack of clarity, in our approach to this very important and central subject.

What is mind in me? What am I in relation to the mind? And in what way should my dealing with it be? Conflicting things are said on this subject. Someone says that the mind should be mastered, should be controlled. Patanjali says that all its movements and activities should be inhibited. The ancient Buddhistic texts and Zen texts say: "Mind is the slayer of the Atman. Slay this slayer and attain the light". We have the other side which says that the mind should not be inhibited, but should be allowed to express itself freely. According to this view, anything done to inhibit the mind will end you in trouble. You will create knots in yourself and get tied up. You will become neurotic. You will have many complexes and then ultimately you will have to go to someone for help. Many people go to other people for help when they are in this condition. But they little realise that the person who gives help himself stands in need of help many times. They themselves are not clear as to what they are going to do. They play a game.

These conflicting things confuse the modern man, and sometimes he swings between this extreme and that extreme. But no one touches the exact technique at the exact spot. The entire question of bondage and liberation, of human consciousness and divine consciousness, of joy and sorrow—the entire question of success and failure, in life hinges upon this particular crucial point, viz., what is to be your relationship with the mind? What exactly does it constitute in your total personality? Is it your friend or foe? Is it dispensable or indispensable? In the ultimate analysis, your entire life and its struggle—spiritual, psychological and emotional—is in this area only, not in the area of the body or the outer area of your social relationship.

There are various schools of thought and philosophies which prescribe various techniques to tackle this problem. They try to bring about a change from outside to inside, but what they fail to understand is the fact that the outer manifestation itself has its root and cause inside. So, ultimately, it is only a solution which is inside that will have a lasting effect. Otherwise, when you do some sensitivity sessions in the psychiatrist's clinic, you will be temporarily fine, and after that, once again it will come back and create even newer problems in the mind.

What then is the ultimate word on this subject by those masters of wisdom who have themselves completely gone through this thing called the interior life and come out victorious in a state of liberated consciousness? The great teachers give us certain indications. The basic point to be recognised is that there are these factors in your personality—Yourself as an individual human being and yourself in your essential nature. If I ask you, “Who are you?”, you answer, “I am so-and-so”. You take a telephone and dial a number and someone on the other end says, “Who is speaking? I am so-and-so”. Then you immediately utter a name and this name is something associated with a certain relational pattern. You say, “I am the son of so-and-so” and a whole series of lesser identifications arises—age, address, telephone number, etc. You pin yourself to a personality, to an individuality, which is ultimately confined to a little pinpoint, hemmed in by all these little factors that qualify it. And even if one factor is different, then it is not yourself; it is someone else. There may be two John Matthews in Los Angeles. If one John Matthews is upon 470 in La Cienega, apt. 4, and if another John Matthews is upon 470 in La Cienega, apt. 29, then this man is not that, just because apt. 29 differs from apt. 4. Each modifying factor is thus a barrier which separates you from another individual consciousness of the same variety.

In this way, the ultimate individual is one who is completely circumscribed by so many limiting adjuncts or qualifying factors. But, in your real nature, you are what you are, and you were that even when you became qualified by this limiting adjunct which is prepared for you in your mother's womb. And you entered into it in a certain point of time. A moment prior to that entry, you were just what you are. You have no relational consciousness pertaining either to this world or to the rest of humanity. You are by yourself the pristine being, and when this little journey is over, you take off this apparel. You once again reach that self-same consciousness where you have no name and form.

Your essential being is Sat-Chit-Ananda. It is pure consciousness. This state of pure consciousness, disassociated from any other limiting adjunct, is of the nature of bliss. If that is so, what is that mysterious factor that has brought about a change from that pure consciousness to this limited consciousness? Originally, I am existence filled with awareness. I am aware that I am. In that state of pure existence, my experience is one of pure joy. It is only when that state of consciousness is disturbed that existence becomes modified and begins to feel not merely “I am”, but “I am so-and-so”.

Where there is need, freedom is destroyed. Joy is destroyed. Everything is destroyed. Desire springs up. When you have no need, you are just what you are. The moment you move out of the pure idea “I am consciousness” you get into trouble. So, anything that qualifies the original experience of pure awareness immediately destroys that pristine joy. Sri Ramakrishna used to say, “You cannot pass a thread through the eye of a needle, even if a single fibre is sticking sideways”. You will have to see that no fibre is sticking out.

What is it that brings about this modification in pure consciousness? “I am” is okay, but when some other thought comes, how does it come about? It is the mind, this idea that adds on to pure consciousness, this idea which becomes an adjunct to pure consciousness, which limits pure consciousness. This idea immediately destroys the perfection, the wholeness, the pristine originality of consciousness. And this factor, this idea, is the mould of the mind.

Is there any way to understand this mind? In India, in Hindu philosophy, that indescribable, mysterious power of the Divine is designated as Maya. The concept of Maya in pure Indian philosophy is something very, very wonderful. The whole universe is something brought about by Maya. Your bondage is brought about by Maya. She is the mysterious illusion-maker, cosmic deluder; and when her snare is spread, all become completely deluded. But Maya is not only the cosmic deluder; in the ultimate context, she is also the great liberator. For, the pure Hindu philosophy propounds the concept of Maya in a dual aspect—as Vidya Maya and Avidya Maya.

Avidya Maya is the cosmic deluder. Avidya means nescience. Avidya means grossness, without light. By and large, all humanity is helplessly under the grip of Avidya Maya. But, if Maya is gracious, if she casts her glance of grace and smiles upon an individual soul, that soul's bondage immediately comes to an end. Thus, Maya is capable of bestowing liberation also, because she is also Vidya Maya. Under her loving care, you understand this very, very fine point about what makes you lose your pure consciousness. This little individual personality is created by the play of what we call mind. This is the fine point that Maya teaches us. She makes this point clear to us through the process which Maya puts you through every day. When you go to bed she takes you under her spell and ultimately enfolds you in her arms. And then the world disappears. You are not aware of the outer—no consciousness of any problem in the outside. But then, for a little while, Maya mysteriously duplicates the whole world within yourself. She creates in you duplicates of her own form. Wherefrom does she create them? She creates them precisely from that very factor wherewith she creates all the limiting adjuncts, that mysterious factor which is really nothing but which appears to be everything, that factor which you call mind. This is what the mind is—you try to find it, you cannot find it. But you are always plagued by it. You do not know how to deal with it. This mysterious thing, called mind, creates the entire world and you live or act in that world. You are also acted upon.

After some dreams, the switch goes off even inside; and what is there? Only next morning you can say what was there: "I had a good deep, sound sleep. I knew nothing, but in that nothingness was rest. In that nothingness was peace". In that nothingness is a total absence of all those things which make the world so painful to live in—everything that makes this life a great difficult struggle and a stress and a process of so much of effort and strain—no pain, no anxiety, no desire. It is complete. Has anyone felt the need for something in deep sleep? No. It is the only state wherein you are able to say nothing, but enjoy it. It is perfect. If this state does not come for some days together, you may be a millionaire, but you are so upset. You start going to this doctor and that doctor. And everyone seeks it. The beggar seeks it; the emperor also seeks it. You make everything perfect to go into it. Without it, even the emperor is not satisfied. Why? What is it that makes deep sleep so very attractive that day after day everyone wants to enter into that state?

That thing which characterises deep sleep is the absence of yourself. When you wake up after deep sleep, you say, "I did not know anything". Why? Because you were not there. You were there, but you were not there. You were not there because you knew nothing at that time. When you wake up and someone asks, "What did you do there?", you say, "I don't know". So, the person who is answering, Mr. So-and-so, living in that apartment with this name, form, height, age, weight, was not there. But you were there, because you say, "I experienced great peace. I enjoyed sound sleep". Now, who is it that says "I enjoyed sound sleep"? There was someone there, but evidently that someone was not the Mr. So-and-so who wakes up and says, "I knew nothing". In your true self you

were there, but your transitory personality Consciousness was not there. As long as the transitory personality is active and manifest, this fullness, this silence and this peace cannot come. For, in dream consciousness also we have sorrow, we have anxiety, we have fear; we shout, we weep—experiences which we have in the waking consciousness. Every waking experience is capable of being experienced in the dream consciousness too. Why? For the simple reason that the personality-consciousness continues to prevail even in the dream state. It is only in the third state of deep sleep that the personality-consciousness is extinct. How is it extinct? Because the mind factor sinks and subsides in that state of deep sleep. 'I' is eliminated together with the mind. 'I' is the mind, mind is the 'I'.

The being who is enjoying the bliss of sleep—does he say, "I want liberation"? That state of pure being consciousness is your real Self, the Atman within, the Sat-Chit-Ananda within. Who is it that weeps and wails and goes to a Guru and tries to get wisdom? Mr. So-and-so is identical with the mind, is existent with the mind. When the mind is active, this Mr. So-and-so struts upon the stage of this world and goes through the drama of life; and when this mind subsides in deep sleep, when you ask, "Who wants liberation?", At that time there is no one to answer. But I want liberation. Out of this, you draw your own conclusion. Is it your interest to retain the mind or is the mind to be annihilated? What should be your approach to the mind?

In Yoga Vasishtha, the crux of the whole problem of bondage and liberation is explained in a simple way by Vasishtha by saying that *liberation is attained when there is Manonasa*. This means that we are all prey to the tyranny of our inner, latent tendencies. When we are born, we come with a whole bundle of latent tendencies in us, propensities that have been buried into us as in a built-in mechanism, always goading us to definite behaviour patterns, definite types of activity, manifestation of definite traits of our nature, our personality, our character. It comes like a package deal, in a built-in way, with every incarnation. The particular incarnation does not come out of a particular environment as some people are wont to say. Environmental factors are secondary factors, but not the real actual factors.

A real Vedantic analysis and study of this problem will throw you more light. For example, you take six children in the same family, born to the same father and mother and brought up in the same home environment, given the same education, fed with the same food, given equal opportunities, equal love lavished upon everyone. All the six will ultimately grow up into six different kinds of individuals—of very different natures one very extrovert, one very introvert; one very pure, moral, ethical, another completely impure, unethical, depraved; one becomes a genius, another a fool. There has been no difference in any of the environmental factors or the education given. Yet they are different. How? Vedanta explains it through the theory of Vasana and Samskara experiences. Each one comes with his own built-in potential, and the process of growing is only an expression of this potential which is already there as innate tendencies. These innate tendencies are the very essence of the individual's talent and the behaviour pattern expressed later. You are what you have come with already. This is called Vasana. The mind is only a bundle of Vasanas.

When the Vasanas are dormant, the mind is not there. In deep sleep, these Vasanas are all in a state of dormancy, and when they are manifest in the active state, you find that the mind becomes a tyrant. Because, the latent tendencies are now in a state of dynamic manifestation. Mind and latent tendencies are thus identical and it is therefore that Vasishtha has summed up the whole process of

liberation as a process of destruction of Vasanas. Ultimately, the final blow that is given destroys the mind itself. People say, “Oh, if the mind is destroyed, I will be in a state of darkness. I will be gone, and that is a very horrible, fearful prospect. I myself will go away. With what will I think ‘I am’?”. This is limited thinking. This idea is a great delusion, because the best thing that can ever happen in life is for you to be gone. Because, you are the kingpin of the whole problem of bondage. Who wants liberation? I. I think I am in bondage; I want liberation. If I am not there, who wants liberation? Everything is perfect, everything is grand. So, we cling to this delusion, this evil, this little filth of a limited consciousness. This I is the greatest bondage. It is the opposite of light, bliss, peace, perfection, wholeness, truth. It is the grand negation.

In my real nature, I am pure Sat-Chit-Ananda consciousness. Then shall I be free when *I* cease to be. I am the ocean, immeasurable. My depth cannot be fathomed. I am thinking I am this little wave. Merge into the vastness and become the vastness. What a price you pay for being this little wave! All the misery. The wave is never apart from the ocean. Even when it is thinking it is a wave, it is only the ocean. We forget that our very essence is pure being and we want to cling to this outer name-and-form personality. That is our bondage, our great error. And so, the annihilation of the I is the grandest and the greatest good fortune that can ever happen to an individual.

The practice of Yoga results in the gradual thinning out of the Vasanas, which spring out based on this little I-consciousness, and ultimately the mind itself vanishes. Like a cube of ice melting gradually, the innate tendencies are gradually thinned out, and the mind vanishes. Where the mind is annihilated, there is liberation. Liberation is the fact. Perfection is the reality, only there is a dream of this limitation and individuality superimposed upon Perfection, and when that is removed, what is *is*. It is always there. So, there is not someone who attains liberation.

Mind is a myth and the way to deal with it is ultimately a laughable thing; but when it is there, it seems to be everything. It is not so easy to get rid of it. So, we have to have a practical formula. And the practical formula is precisely the wonderful wisdom of the masters of the East and to these masters the world has to be eternally grateful. We are a creature of the mind. We have a hundred wants.

We first try to recognise that these things are the causes of our sorrow and then we try to change the situation. But there does not seem to be any clear way. So, modern teachers bring us to the roots instead, making our minds go into more detail and get confused. They place the problem before us in its essence. Lord Krishna gives us the whole thing in a nutshell. Man, brooding upon the objects of the senses, conceives an attachment to objects. As a man thinketh, so he becometh. So, what do you constantly think about? Have you ever tried to make a study? Through a day, through a week, or through a month, try to make a serious study of the contents of your mind. Find out what thoughts you harbour in your mind during the period chosen.

You have never tried to make a study of yourself. You are the subject who is bound up in this problem, you are the subject who wants a solution; but you have not studied yourself. You do not know your own self and yet you want to know the secret of attaining Self-realisation. Take a typical period, a one-day period or a two-day period. Try. to see the typical inner content of the mind. It has a miscellaneous inner content, but all that content has one common characteristic, and that common characteristic is that they all pertain to the external world. “What shall I eat? What

shall I wear? How shall I be comfortable? How shall I get over things that are pebbles in my shoe?”. All pertaining to your body, your mind, your comfort, your senses. It is all confined to the human personality, objects, enjoyments, sensations. It is all woven round problems pertaining to the external world. This will characterise the entire inner content of the mind.

Lord Krishna says, “If this is your condition, naturally, this is a prolific source of bondage, because you get attached to those things upon which your mind is constantly dwelling. Out of attachment springs desire for those things towards which you are attached. If the desire is not fulfilled, the person’s mood becomes negative and it leads to anger and passion. Where there is anger and passion, the mind is clouded. When the mind is clouded, all the lessons learned from the past experiences are for the time being lost, and due to this loss of memory, delusion is created in the mind. Due to delusion, there is loss of wisdom, and due to loss of wisdom, you come to grief.”

As long as you are attached, you are in a state of bondage. Non-attachment only is the gateway to liberation. And how can you bring about a state, of non-attachment in the mind, whose very nature seems to be to dwell upon objects, to try to become attached to things? Mind means thought. Thought means creation of attachment. If you do not think of anything, you are not attached to anything. If you put a thing out of the mind, you are not attached to it. The moment it comes back and occupies the mind, you are attached to it, attached either in a relationship of love or in a relationship of hate. And as long as the mind has this propensity, this innate propensity of getting attached, the problem remains.

How to solve the problem?

You have to make use of this very propensity of the mind to get attached in order to solve the problem. This is Yoga. I shall explain. Judo makes use of the very strength of the opponent who is coming to attack you to get rid of the opponent and put him down. Yoga is Judo with the mind. The propensity of the mind to attach itself is the root of your bondage to Samsara. And this propensity being the main factor of the mind, take away this propensity to attach itself and the mind is no more mind.

That is the mind of the Jivanmukta. He also has got a mind. If you give him questions, he answers you and if you give him ten dishes and ask what is the best he says, “Here, I like this”. So, the mind in the Jivanmukta is intact, but the tendency to attach to outer things is gone. Mind is there in him, yet it is no mind. They say that the Jivanmukta is like a burnt piece of rope. The whole rope—the shape—is there, but you cannot bind any one with it. The soul of the Jivanmukta has touched the philosopher’s stone and it has become a pure golden soul—24 carat. That soul cannot harm anyone. When attachment is gone, mind is still mind, but it is no more mind, because the propensity of attachment which is the strongest point of the mind is no longer there. Yoga asks you to utilise that very propensity in order to get rid of your bondage. Otherwise, you cannot get rid of the mind. When the propensity of bondage cannot be completely removed from it, the only way, if you do not want the mind to get attached to something, is to fix it upon something else. The mind has to have some thing to rest upon. All right. Fix it upon something else. The curious fact is that the mind can be fixed only upon one thing at a time. So, if you fix it upon something else, it cannot be fixed here in Samsara. It is fixed here because it is interested in it, it is in love with it, it is seriously engaged in it.

Are you all people in love with your income-tax return? No. If you could have your own way, you would put it into the waste-paper basket, but yet you sit up near the light and pore over it and try to fill up every column and answer every question and to see that every figure is accurate. Why do you do it? Because you have to, because there is some reason for it; and so, your intellect, your reasoning power, is keenly engaged in it and the mind is concentrated. You do not want to be distracted. Or, if you have a great desire, any desire, on which you have made up your mind, you say, "I am going to do it through sheer drive of the power of will". You see to it that the mind is fixed upon the job. One wants to make a certain amount of money. He goes out of his way to see that the mind is given to a thing somehow or the other. He wants to pile up so much. So, where there is strong desire and an ambition and a determined will driving it from behind, you are able to fix the mind. Through the power of the will, or through interest in a certain field, the mind is attached to things here.

Now, if you do not want the mind to be attached to this world, to be fixed here, you have to fix it somewhere else. What is that somewhere else, what is that object you can substitute for this world? What is that object which will take you beyond all sorrow, beyond all pain, that object which will give you at once a total liberation from all this bondage of limiting defects, imperfections and weaknesses? It is that object which will fill you with eternal satisfaction, attaining which nothing more will need to be attained. It is that object which gives you the feeling, "I have attained that now. I have no desire. Now I lack nothing. Now I am full". That is Bliss. That is Brahman.

And that supernal bliss which is beyond the senses, even the mind cannot grasp. That object is in every way desirable, in every way wonderful, in every way most beautiful. That object bestows upon you eternal felicity, eternal beatitude, a joy that cannot be described. Wonderful, wonderful, the saints acclaim in ecstasy. They call forth: "Come, come, we have attained". They describe it in so many ways which could make the ordinary man understand.

The Upanishads give a very beautiful description so that you can understand what you are from your own level. Take a beautiful youth in his heyday, in his prime, in perfect health. He has a wonderful personality and he is from a very highly aristocratic family, a very wealthy family. He is a multi-billionaire and highly educated. He has taken first grades in all degrees—in B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. He is very popular. Wherever he goes, people simply love him. There is nothing that he is not dexterous at. Everywhere he is popular. He has servants on all sides. He gets the best wife possible, most popular, efficient, loving, perfect, an ideal partner in every way; and she bears him wonderful children. Whatever wishes he may express are fulfilled in no time. He has unlimited popularity everywhere. He has no enemy. Can you imagine his happiness? The happiness of such a perfect being—take it to be one unit. Then, the happiness of a celestial being, a higher being, an angel—is a hundred times more than the happiness of this fellow. The happiness of a dweller of the heavenly region is a hundred times the happiness of an angel. The happiness of Indra, Who is the lord over all the other gods, is a hundred times the happiness of a dweller of the heavenly region. The happiness of Brahma is a hundred times the happiness of Indra. The happiness of Rudra is a hundred times the happiness of Brahma. The happiness of Vishnu is a hundred times the happiness of Rudra. It goes on like this. The happiness of the personal god, the supreme Isvara, he who is creator, preserver and dissolver, is a hundred times the happiness of Vishnu.

Then they say that the happiness of the qualified Brahman, the Brahman without form but with qualification, is a hundred times the happiness of the personal god with name and form and qualities. And the happiness of the Absolute, the non-dual unqualified Brahman, is a million times the happiness of the nameless and formless but qualified Brahman. The Absolute cannot be compared. The happiness of Isvara is like a grain of sand upon the seashore, compared to the supreme absolute state of non-dual consciousness. That is liberation. That is what you will attain if you attain your Self.

“Have intense thirst for the Highest. Have hunger for ‘‘ the Infinite, for the Absolute Being, for Brahman, for the Satchidananda Atman”—thus saying, they make you start wishing, “Oh, I must get that”. So the Upanishads try to present before you the grandeur of that great attainment and create in you an aspiration. That is the beginning of your liberation.

Mind is like a strolling street dog. You are eating out of garbage cans. You who are heir to immortal glory, divine blessedness! Why are you picking up these little droppings and trying to fill yourself? Come, come, discard them. Why go after these filthy things? Thus the Guru inspires and puts before the aspirants the grand state of the great attainment: “Come, come, beloved, attain that. There is the grandeur, the sunshine; verily, the sun itself; and you are going after a little glow-worm!” So, what happens? That spiritual awakening is brought about. Then the mind starts getting attached to the Divine. You say, “I want to get attached to It. How can I get attached to It?” And therein we have Yoga. Get attached to it by any means. At present you are attached to the world. You say, “I am attached to family, property, my own body, through my heart, through my senses”. All right, divert your sentiments, emotions, love, heart, senses and affections to the Divine.

How to attach yourself to the Divine? “I don't know how” you say, “It is strange”. The Divine is not strange. These people around you are strangers. Did you have husband, wife, children—all that before you were born, before you entered this body? You are like a driftwood, floating and just coming together with some other driftwood in midstream, only to separate after a short while. With whom were you before you entered in this body? With whom are you going to be after you leave this body? Why this attachment? Why this delusion? Why this illogical assumption “They are nearer to me, familiar, so I can love them”? As a matter of fact, the only being with whom you are familiar is the one with whom you are eternally connected. The rest are passing strangers, people with whom you had no connection before. You are being irrational. Think straight. They are strangers.

But, God is your own. He is your nearest, nearer than the nearest. One being whom you can call your own is God, Brahman. This understanding is instilled into the mind by the Master who says, “My child! Do not be deluded. Why this delusion, loving people with whom you have no connection? Love that Being. He is your father. He is your mother. He is your real relative. He is your companion. He is the only one that is all and all to you”.

Thus they give you the right thought, the right idea, and they say that to love Him requires no new effort, no strange effort. You can love Him with the same love pattern with which you love any being here. If your love is toward your child, think of Him as your child. If your love is toward your father or mother, think of Him as your father or mother, for He is anything to you, everything

to you. So, you do not have to create some totally new strange pattern of love to relate yourself with the Divine. The same love that now abides in your heart and is the root-cause of your bondage, this same attachment, retain it. You do not have to give it up. Divert it towards the Divine. Develop it, strengthen it, but let it be diverted towards the Divine. This same love which is now the cause of your bondage, make it the cause of your liberation by diverting it and connecting it with the Eternal, with the Divine. This is called Bhakti Yoga. It is the imagination of a thing that is pleasant and not the actual thing. When you possess it, it becomes painful, it is not what you imagined. You become caught in it. It gives a mustard-grain of pleasant sensation, for the moment, but you weep afterwards. By attaining what you go after, you weep afterwards. This is the everyday experience of man.

There was a young man who was serving a master. The master was a minister to a king, but he was an illumined soul. He was working like an ordinary minister. And this young man was very devoted to this master. Once when the master was resting, the enemies invaded. This man, this servant to the minister, put on the armour of the master, got on the steed of the master and drove off the enemies. After he drove them off he came back, but still he did not want to disturb the master in his sleep. When the master himself woke up later on, he found what this young man had done. He was so very pleased with this young man. He took him into his personal service, kept him in his office, ministerial office. And the young man was looking after the minister's personal account books. The first of every month he used to give the accounts of the previous month. Once he missed some pennies and he started to find out where the error was; and he got the error at about 2.45 a.m. and he started to dance saying, "Oh, I got it!" The master was surprised and exclaimed, "Whatever happened to you!" The young man never thought that he was so absorbed in the work and so exhilarated. When the master asked, "What is this?", only then did the young man realise it and shamefacedly he said, "I had lost track of some pennies. I could not balance the accounts and I wanted to give it to you tomorrow". The master said, "If you had diverted even a hundredth part of this keen attention upon God, by this time you would have attained Self-realisation". That admonition became the turning point of this young man's life. From that moment he began to divert that same drive towards God and began to meditate and began to reflect upon God and then he attained Self-realisation. He became one of the greatest Yogis later on.

So, this is the power of the will. If you make up your mind, saying, "My constant thought of earthly things, my constant involvement in names and forms, is the cause of my bondage and root-cause of my sorrow. Hence I am now going to withdraw my mind from these things, I will not allow my mind to get enmeshed in the many and become dizzy with these things"; you begin to withdraw, you begin to discipline your mind and curb the old habits. Constant discrimination results in a course of mind-training, mind-education, you withdraw the mind and try to still its activities and try to make it concentrated upon this great object and you keep on at it, persevering, persisting, never giving up until you are able to overcome completely the outgoing tendency of the mind and still the mind, thought and memory and then completely centralise it and fix it upon the objective.

When you succeed in this process, you enter into a state of intense one-pointed meditation, deep meditation and that gives you superconsciousness. This is Raja Yoga through the mind. Through the will if you try to divert the reasoning and the discriminating aspects of the mind, towards analysis, towards inquiry into this great state which the Upanishad describes with so much

grandeur, and begin to ponder over It, begin to reflect upon It, begin to discriminate between that state and the present state of delusion, and through discrimination you want to eliminate it, "No, I do not want this"; it is called Vedanta. So, through your intellect, through inquiry and analysis, through discrimination, you enter into a constant investigation into the ultimate Reality and an equally constant rejection of that which is not the Reality. This is Vedanta. It is also called Jnana Yoga. When the mysterious faculty which is now holding you in thralldom, which is the root-cause of your brittle personality, is active, this I is active; when that sinks, 'I' also is not there.

So, if you conceive a deep interest in the spiritual quest and begin to conceive a disgust for the worldly type of activity which you have been engaged in all along, it is the beginning of Karma Yoga, it is the beginning of selfless activity. "I shall act, I am interested in acting. I am interested in this world, but I am no more interested in self-seeking. I am no more interested in trying to gain advantage for myself, in trying to gain sensual pleasure. I have an interest in this world, I shall act. But, I shall engage only in altruistic activity, only in selfless activity, activity only in order to serve others, activity only in order to express my love and desire to make other people happy". So saying, you engage in activity not with self-interest, but in the interest of all, for the happiness of all, for the good of all. It is Karma Yoga.

Then there is Bhakti Yoga. In this Yoga of devotion, your interests in the outer world, your affection and attachment towards outer objects and the desire to attain some outer objects, are withdrawn from the outer objects and directed solely towards God. The mind is trained to rest on God instead of on worldly objects. Through any one of these methods Raja Yoga, Vedanta, Karma Yoga or Bhakti—if the mind which is caught up in this world-process is withdrawn and made to get engaged in the eternal ultimate Reality, then the mind becomes the instrument of liberation. Now it is the instrument of bondage, it is the seat of your delusion. Make it the seat of your wisdom and make it the instrument of your liberation by diverting its direction and inducing it to get attached and involved in the Divine Reality. This is Yoga which provides for you a systematic process of mind-diversion, a systematic process of this mind entering into a relationship with the Divine. So, when you cannot take up the sword and straightaway annihilate the mind, then the only way to do it is to make use of the mind itself in order to deliver yourself from delusion. Thus, instead of the mind being your deluder, it becomes your deliverer through the practice of Yoga. Thus Yoga enables you to utilise the mind as an instrument, as a tool, for your liberation. Hari Om Tat Sat.

MAYA

You are a liberated being, beyond the fear of birth and death, beyond all fear, all sorrow. Attain this state now, say the saints and seers. Again and again they admonish: "O man, having obtained this wonderful gift of the human body and human birth, make the necessary effort to attain this wondrous state of 'Kaivalya Samrajya'. This body is a precious instrument given to you—precious instrument of Sadhana." Why is it that, when such is the case, a vast majority of people live in darkness? This state of forgetfulness, this state of ignorance of one's true mission in life cannot be explained. We can safely say that this state is a state of delusion and ignorance. We can only describe it, not explain it. It is an inexplicable condition of deluding oneself into believing

the unreal to be the Real, and forgetting the Reality and taking the appearances for the Reality and believing that these unreal appearances can bring happiness.

A beggar was hungry and on an empty stomach he fell asleep. He dreamt that he was at a banquet and ate and ate courses of dinner. When highly satisfied, he said: “Enough! Enough! No more.” But do you think when he woke up, he could wake up with a full stomach, fully satisfied and no hunger? True happiness, like the beggar’s banquet, cannot be had in this world of mere appearances. It can only delude. This state of being deluded by appearances, forgetting the Reality and missing your goal and becoming submerged in a state of ignorance of the real purpose of life, is described as Maya by the ancients.

What is this state of Maya? Where does it dwell? What is its nature and how does one overcome it? These are important questions. Vedanta throws wondrous light upon these questions. The ancient sages said that man is made up of three layers of consciousness—the gross physical layer of the body consciousness, the inner subtle layer of mental, intellectual and psychological consciousness and the highest ultimate layer of pure divine consciousness or spiritual consciousness. That spiritual consciousness is a state of radiant illumination, wisdom. We can be sure that Maya or ignorance or forgetfulness of Self cannot be at that level, because that is the very nature of absolute awareness, where there is fullest awareness of your Reality. It cannot be in your true self or higher self or the essential spiritual self. The outer physical consciousness too cannot be the plane of Maya because this physical consciousness is an inert thing; its body is only an inert thing. By itself, it has no intelligence. It can neither be deluded nor illumined. Both are impossible as far as the body is concerned. It is just made of five elements and it is like a toy. A wooden toy is animated by the strings, but it has no volition and no intelligence. It has no cognition or comprehension. This body cannot be the seat of Maya for the simple reason that it is inert. So it is just what it is. It cannot be overcome by any knowledge or delusion. So now, if it is neither in the body level nor in the spirit level, then, where can it be? It can only be in the interim level of your psychological self. That is exactly its case.

Maya, or the state of self-forgetfulness, or the state of ignorance, or the state of delusion, is in the interim psychological level of your being. In what state does Maya exist in the psychological being? It exists in this state, in the particular realm, at this level of your being as sleep, forgetfulness and a constant state of involvement in passing outer names and forms. Mind, as Maya, operates upon these three levels. Either it becomes dull and stupefied, or it goes to sleep. Otherwise it is always outgoing. Maya has made the mind completely outgoing. It is never able to inhale its inner scent. It is decentralised and projected outward and is capable of only grasping objects, sights, sound, taste, smell and touch. So it is totally involved in phenomenon, caught and involved in phenomenon, held in phenomenon. Another great fatal defect is that it is unable to remain focussed on any single point for more than a few seconds. It is not only scattered in the multiplicity of the phenomenal appearance, but is constantly, restlessly moving about from one object to another and to a third and then to a fourth etc. So these are the ways in which Maya is operating in your inner centre of your psychological level of your being, as projected outward from the mind, in involvement in multiplicity of objective perceptions and a constant restless flux from one to another. This is Maya. This is how Maya is present in the psychological self.

If you want to overcome Maya, you have to deal with this outward going nature of the mind, this constant objectification of the mind, this constant restlessness and flitting about from one object to another. You have to reverse the process, change the mind. You have to create a new mind. You have to make the Ganga flow towards the Himalayas, not towards the sea. Such is this process of overcoming Maya, which was scientifically outlined for you by all the great masters and teachers. They analysed the inner content, the inner anatomy of this behaviour of the mind. Why does the mind go out? Because it thinks that happiness is outside. Why does it skip from one object to another? Because it is ever craving for new experience. It gets attached to the outer names and forms through the power of the five senses and attracted towards sights, sounds, taste, touch, smell, form, colour and music. It is therefore enslaved by these senses in the objects of this universe, thinking its happiness lies there. Therefore, being attached to outer objects and moved by the outer attraction of names and forms, it lacks discrimination. It does not stop to question: "Will I have my happiness there? What is happiness? Will these objects bring me happiness?" It does not stop to question.

The mind is above the intellectual level, characterised by lack of perception, lack of requisite enquiry. It never enquires into the proper nature of things. It does not analyse or try to enquire into the real nature of things, whether they are really capable of giving happiness. So there is a lack of enquiry, a lack of discrimination and a lack of right understanding. The mind rushes headlong, backed by the senses, hither and thither and gets involved and caught in the net of multifarious objects and experiences. It develops an attachment towards them and wants to possess them and love them. One develops the idea of mine and entertains the idea: "This is mine. I want this, I want that" Thus the creature or the individual soul is caught up in the grip of attachment and out of this it further develops selfishness, it becomes attached to sense-experience, attached to the body and thus gets caught in selfishness, egoism, greed and a sense of possession. All these things, therefore, are the elaborate details of the depth of Maya.

Thus the entire psyche in its aspect as intelligence becomes non-intelligence. Where there should be knowledge there is delusion, lack of understanding, lack of right enquiry, lack of discrimination. The level of sentiment and emotion is completely overcome by the sentiment of attachment to things. In the realm of activity, overcome by selfishness, overcome by attachment, overcome by greed, it is impelled into a continuous round of selfish activity, sensuous activity, desire-propelled activity and thus restlessness upon restlessness for objects never able to satisfy. Desires, when fulfilled, become only more intensified. They do not subside. That is the very nature of desires. The more you satisfy them, the more intense they become. They multiply and go on multiplying.

Thus the individual soul is caught in the grip of 'I' and 'mine' attachment and deluded infatuation and love, caught in the net of non-discrimination. The intellect is clouded, emotions are completely enslaved and caught up and imprisoned. The person becomes a creature of selfish activity and the more he runs in the direction of the vast multiplicity of sense objects, the more scattered his mind becomes. It becomes completely distracted and restless. There is no concentration within. All is distraction and dispersal of the mind.

Having seen this stage of the deluded mind overcome by Maya, seers and sages formulated for us the right methods. They said: "Turn the mind within, withdraw the outgoing mind and try to

fix it upon the inner object. If it has to be objectified, let it think of the inner object, One object with the exclusion of all others. Let it practise again and again, for the innate restlessness of the mind does not allow the practitioner to keep it focussed upon one thing. There is always constant restlessness and running of the mind towards objects. So, do not give up. Bring it in, fix it upon the One and go on fixing it again and again. As many times as the mind moves away, bring it back again, and to make this process a little sweeter and not dry, develop love for God. You are trying to meditate upon Him, understand His glory, understand Its sweetness, see how beautiful It is. It is the Beauty of beauties, It is the most beautiful thing, He is your own, He is the very acme of supreme love. It is sweetness, beauty, love, bliss. That is God for you. Therefore, develop a keen longing for It. If you are, up to now, attached to these passing things, now develop an attachment for That. It is all-perfect. Out of That alone joy comes to you. Attachment for worldly, perishable objects is the cause for your pain and suffering; out of attachment for these comes disappointment, frustration and disillusionment. You are deceived and then you weep. But if the attachment of your heart is directed upon the all-perfect being, you will never be disappointed, you will never be deceived, you will never be disillusioned. It would be all that you expected and more, ten times more, hundred times more. One who knocks at the door of God, never comes to grief because He is the acme of all perfection, He is the baron of all goodness, all virtue and all positive things. Therefore one will never be disappointed. Here you will be disappointed, you will knock from pillar to post, face disappointment after disappointment and in the end nothing will be achieved. When the time comes to leave you will say: ‘Alas! Alas! What a wild goose-chase I went after! If I had only knocked on the right door, sought in the right direction, by this time I would have been blessed’.”

So the ancient sages said, seek *there* and you will find the right direction. Develop love for God. Direct the love of your heart and affection upon That and resolutely withdraw the mind and fix it upon that inner Reality. As many times the mind goes into the old grooves, let the intellect admonish it and tell it that it is empty, it is imaginary, it is perishable, it is only deluding, it is changeful and it cannot give you real happiness. Therefore, turn towards the Eternal. Discriminate. The unreal cannot give you happiness, the perishable cannot give you happiness. So, forever discriminate between the real and unreal, eternal and the non-eternal, the imperishable and the perishable. Let the intellect be full of philosophical acumen, philosophical discernment. Let it discriminate between the appearance and the Reality and let it ever make keen enquiry into the real nature of outer things and reveal the emptiness, uncover the emptiness and seek the Immortal. Let it goad you towards realisation of the Supreme Being. Let it analyse your inner experience. Thus the intellect, emotion, sentiments and thought-power of the mind are unified and made to move in one direction, towards the great Goal, towards the inner Reality which shines in the chambers of your heart.

It is this process of utilising the potential of your sentiment and emotion, the potential of your thought-power, the potential of your awakened and discriminative intelligence, your philosophical acumen in perception, to attain the Reality which is called the Yogic process. In accordance with that faculty which is made the principle and dominant faculty, move towards the Reality. It is characterised either as Yoga of the Intellect, Yoga of the Emotions or Yoga of the Mind or Thought-power. Call it process of meditation or process of philosophical discrimination and enquiry, or call it the process of devotion or divine love. While you are engaged in this inner process, take care to see that your outer activity does not go against this inner direction. Gradually cleanse your outer activity from the blemish or from the impurity of selfishness. You purify your

outer life and activity, dealing with outer objects, material world, and the impurity of selfishness, greed, jealousy, envy, impurity and anger which this selfish activity breeds. Where there is selfishness and greed, all these things are born. Thus the great need of Sadhana of Karma Yoga for purifying your motivations and activities and raising them to a level of ideals and selflessness. By spiritualising your activities, by performing actions with an attitude of worshipfulness and dedicating your activities to the Divine, you convert all activity into a sacrament, into an act of worship.

Therefore try to support your inner Yogic ascent towards the Reality by your unavoidable and inevitable activities of your day to day secular living as well, so that you do not become a house divided against yourself, you do not become your own greatest enemy. See that the outer and the inner worlds are harmonised by the wonderful concept of Karma Yoga. Karma becomes Yoga, activity becomes Yogic activity, activity becomes something to take you towards the Divine, based upon the vision and teaching of Srimad Bhagavad Gita. The seeking soul, the wise Sadhak, tries to bring about a wholistic approach to God where efforts are not fermented and made to war with one another. This is a wholistic approach where the goal of your life and its activity—outer and inner are brought together and given one direction, the Godward direction towards the Ideal, towards the Reality.

Thus the great teachers brought to us these insights and explained to us the nature of Maya. They said ‘mind is the Maya’. Maya prevails in the mind in these forms of its outward projection and its involvement in multiplicity and always moving towards objects. The reversal of this was the way to overcome Maya and it is done through all the different levels and aspects of the inner being: the sentiment and the emotion, the intellect and its discriminating faculty, the power of thought, thought-power, attention, power of concentrated attention.

The entire inner being is rendered into a powerful movement towards God-seeking and the outer being is also taken as a support. The outer life and activity is also harnessed, as an additional support. Otherwise, there will be a pull of outer objects and desires, You will get caught and held at a certain level. So do not obviate this. Let the outer activity of the Sadhak’s daily life also be raised to a new level, heightened by selflessness, idealism, spiritual feeling, worshipfulness and dedication.

This, then, is the luminous teaching of Vedanta and its inevitable offshoot—the science of Yoga, by which our entire life is rendered spiritual, lifted to a higher plane, given a new direction and life becomes a process of liberation. Thus should one live. This is the call of the Bhagavad Gita. Bhagavad Gita is a later message after the Upanishads; it came down to our level of our daily earthly living and gave us the insights how to direct the channels or the stream of our active life towards the supreme attainment described in the great Upanishads.

God bless you all. You have heard, though brief, the essence of some of the most important concepts in Vedanta as well as in Yoga and these ideas are food for thought. You have to reflect over them. You may take these as food for thought. You may also take these as a process of sowing seeds which if nourished by the waters of remembrance and reflection will sprout forth and grow in your mind giving you the food of wisdom, the harvest of peace, inner light, inner understanding, deeper understanding and joy.

As additional food for thought, I would like to read to you an extract from one of the articles of the Holy Master Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. The Holy Master says: “Mind is weak, the senses are strong, the bonds of temptation are stronger still. In the midst of these three, you are tossed up and down. Spiritual Sadhana alone can impart to you the inner strength and inner peace. Therefore, do Japa, meditation, Kirtan, Satsang, study of spiritual books. These will help you and temptations will not assail you any longer. Do not think of the objects of the senses; think of the Lord Absolute. Cessation from worldly enjoyment gradually increases the power of the will. Constant practice to fix the mind on God is Samadhana. Practise Samadhana. Do not allow the mind to externalise. Check the external instruments and sense-organs: sight, sound, taste, touch and smell. When the sense objects attract you, withdraw the mind from the objects by replacing the mind elsewhere. To see Rama or Krishna in sense objects is possible only for well-advanced students but in the beginning you cannot go carelessly towards sense objects saying that God is that also, but that God can sting you. If you go to a scorpion and say God is there, it will sting you. So you have to avoid carefully such forms of God. The diabetic should not see God in an ice-cream and coca-cola. A devotee offers all his actions as a sacrifice to the Lord. He feels he is an instrument in the hands of God. The Lord knows what is best for you. He binds you in a variety of ways. Therefore resign yourself to the Supreme Will and thus prepare yourself for the attainment of the balanced inner state, wherein absence of likes and dislikes can prevail. Do not entertain sensuous thoughts. If you fail in keeping your resolves, do not be disheartened. Make fresh resolves, just as a child falls many times when it tries to learn to walk, without the help of a wall when the mother is absent, just as a new cyclist falls from the cycle a number of times before he learns to sit steadily and balance upon the seat. Even so, the spiritual aspirant will fall a number of times in keeping up resolutions and instructions. Ultimately he will come out victorious. Therefore take shelter in the Lord and keep on struggling inside. His Name will give you the power to overcome. Do not be distracted by anything upon the path; march forward and try to attain the summit of Nirvikalpa Samadhi. Restrain the speech and the senses and practise calm, silent meditation during the hours after dusk in the evening and during the hours before dawn in the morning. These periods are quite congenial for the practice of Yoga. With gradual practice the mind will soon come under your control.”

SADHANA

Sadhana means having a clear-cut goal which you want to achieve. Your Sadhana implies that you have already thought deeply about your life and have fixed a certain goal. And the Lakshya (goal) must be very clear. It is much better to say that I want to attain God-realisation like Dhruva attained, like Prahlada, Ramdas and Ramakrishna Paramahansa attained. That is easier to understand. It is better you have as a goal of life what your mind and intellect can grasp and understand. If there is clarity, the mind can fix and focus itself with greater definiteness. Otherwise the mind cannot focus on something that is unclear and vague. So, Sadhana implies that you have thought over deeply about life’s mystery, about your birth and your goal. It also implies that you have a keen desire to attain that goal. The Bhagavata, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Puranas, Katha Vachaks and Pundits say that saying that you must attain Moksha is not enough. Individually, you must have within yourself a great desire to attain that state, whatever it is, whether it is Bhagavat-sakshatkara, Bhagavat-darshan or Moksha. Whatever that Lakshya is, you must have a

keen desire to attain it, you must feel restless without attaining it. Otherwise, Sadhana will only be luke-warm, when done half-heartedly. Unless there is that great intensity of yearning and intensity of longing, that great hunger of the heart, there will not be that keen edge and intensity in Sadhana. Therefore, they say, again and again, Mumukshutva (burning desire for liberation).

Meera and Ramakrishna Paramahansa had that unbearable agony of separation from the Lord, which is called 'Viraha Vedana' in Bhakti Yoga. How long can I be separated from Him Who is my all in all? Is your heart feeling every moment that He is your all in all? Are you living, breathing and existing only for Him? Is that feeling there in the heart? In Vedanta it is called Tivra Mumukshutva, the feeling that this present state is a state of terrible bondage, unbearable bondage. How keenly a person longs to break the bonds when he is tied? How eager is a caged bird wanting to get free from bondage? So this must be felt by you, not merely heard and understood in an intellectual way. When there is keen hunger, then only will you go in search of food.

Sadhana, therefore, presupposes that you have thought over life. You have felt the need for something more than eating, drinking, sleeping, having some job and then retiring and drawing pension and dying. This is not life. This is no good. To reach a higher goal, Sadhana must be present in your life in the real sense. You must have a fixed higher goal, a keen longing to attain that goal and a clear concept of that goal. Ramakrishna Paramahansa used to give the example of a person immersed under water and held forcibly. The way he will struggle to come out for a gasp of fresh air, the way he will be gasping and struggling, that is the way you should be longing to attain your goal.

For giving some food to Rama, Sabari waited for nearly thirty-five to forty years. She was thinking of Rama, dreaming of Rama, planning to welcome Rama. You must have a Sabari-like longing—planning, thinking and living only for this one purpose, 'Rama must come'. Gurudev used to say that suddenly when a house is on fire, how eager one is to somehow or the other come out of the house and escape death; otherwise, one will surely be choked to death. That urgency, craving and longing must be there. These are the pre-requisites for Sadhana and according to the way in which you have conceived the goal, in accordance with that will be the methods you employ to attain. If it is Nirakara Nirguna Parabrahma Tattva, then you will employ Sadhana with Vichara Malika, Vedanta Sravana, Manana, Nididhyasana, Svadhyaya, having good knowledge of Vyakarana, then also reading something of Tarka Sastra and afterwards studying Brahma Sutra Bhashya, Vivekachudamani, Tattva Bodha, Atma Bodha, Jivanmukta Viveka.

You will study all the scriptures and try various ways to attain your goal. If you are a Bhakta, then you will read the Bhakta-vijayam, you will read the Charitra of the eight Bhaktas, you will read Bhagavata or Ramayana or any other scripture according to your Bhakti-Bhav. You will try to do the Japa of the Divine Name, take recourse to the company of the devotees, go on pilgrimage, have darshan of Mahatmas, darshan of great devotees, and do Sankirtan, and do Upasana of Sakara Saguna Brahman in the form of Puja. You will engage yourself in all those Bhava-pradhana Sadhanas, where the sentiment of love and affection, of friendliness and of respectful devotion is present. This is the way in which you will try to develop Bhakti and move towards the goal of Bhagavat-darshan and Bhagavat-sakshatkara. As long as you have a great clinging and attachment to things of this world and a great eagerness and longing to enjoy objects, accumulate objects and possess objects, it is not easy to do the right type of Sadhana whole-heartedly. Your mind is divided

and there is no Ananyata in your mind. Ananyata is essential either for Vedanta Nishtha or for genuine Bhakti, because you cannot walk in two opposite directions at the same time. Light and darkness cannot exist at the same time. Man cannot worship God and mammon, says Lord Jesus.

Sadhana should be guided into an effective movement towards God, employing all the ingredients—Sankirtan, Japa, Likhit Japa, Dhyana, Upasana and Svadhyaya. It is the very nature of the mind to be Chanchal, Sankalpa-Vikalpa, Vikshepa. Therefore, in addition to the actual Sadhana that has direct relevance with your goal, you must have Prem, Bhakti, Bhajan, Sravana, Manana and Dhyana. These all have a direct relevance with your goal. In addition to these various Prakriyas or Abhyasas or Sadhanas which have a direct connection with your goal, the Sadhaka is advised to engage in other types of Sadhanas like Asana and Pranayama because the body and mind are connected.

They do not have a direct relevance. By Pranayama you may not attain Bhagavat-sakshatkara, by Asana you may not attain Brahma-jnana, but because in all Sadhanas the mind is a vital factor, everything, has to be done only through the mind. Because mind is by nature Chanchala, any other type of discipline that has the effect of controlling the Vikshepa of the mind and making the mind Antar-mukha, also becomes part and parcel of your Sadhana. That is why Guru Maharaj always used to lay great stress on Asana and Pranayama. You must practise all these as they are very important, not only from the point of view of good health but from the point of view of ultimately being able to control the mind and have Vritti-nirodha. These are very valuable Upa-sadhanas in the Yoga-marga, Upa-sadhanas in the Adhyatmic Jivana of the Sadhak. All these you must understand, as Sadhaks, as Mumukshus and Jijnasus. You must be able to understand these in connection with the Adhyatmic Jivana and Sadhana—what they imply and what is necessary for the Sadhana to be effective. You must think over these concepts and understand Sadhana in the correct way with a deeper meaning.

SATSANGA

All things like status, authority, power or wealth can be obtained in this world but there is one thing which cannot be 'obtained'. It is only given by God. You can only receive it, not obtain it. No type of authority or power or status or prestige or money or any force can give this Satsanga. You can purchase the whole world but you cannot purchase Satsanga. It is only given. You can only receive it if God suddenly makes up His mind to be gracious and extends His grace upon you. Therefore if you have been given the great gift of Satsanga then be assured that there is grace present in your life and you are highly blessed. Jagadguru Bhagavadpadacharya Adi Sankaracharya, expounder of the Kevala Advaita Vedanta, who dismissed this whole visible world as Mithya (*Slokardhena pravakshyami yadulaam granthakotibhih, brahma satyam jagan-mithyah jivo-brahmaiva nparah*), yet when he put forward the concept of Vyavaharic Satta he recognised the reality of Satsanga and said that it is powerful enough to ultimately awaken you from this dream of Prapancha and grant you Jivanmukti. As long as you are dreaming, the awakened state is unreal to you, dream only is real. So we may talk of Brahman, but Brahman is only a vague unreality to you. Only money, land, property, house, bank-balance, motor-car, wife, husband, clothes, possessions, these only are realities. So, when you are in this dream-like world due to the sleep of

ignorance, what about the reality of Brahman? It is never remembered, it is never known, it is simply a vague concept. So in this state of ignorance in the dream-like world, the Aneka and the Nama-Rupa are beheld to be real. We give great importance to them and never feel that they are all useless husk. Even Sankaracharya is compelled to concede to the present unawakened state of the bonded soul who alone can be a Jijnasu or Mumukshu or Sadhaka.

Once you have attained your final Goal there is nothing more to be attained. So Upadesa and all that is not necessary for a realised soul. It is of no value. All the scriptures become a shopping-list. After you have purchased all the items, you throw it away; you don't bring the shopping-list back home, since you have ticked off all the items in your shopping-list. Scriptures become superfluous once you have attained the Supreme Reality. So Upadesa-sahasra, Sadhana-panchakam, Vivekachudamani, Atma Bodha, Tattva Bodha—for whom are they necessary? Not for a Jivanmukta, not for a Brahma-jnani. They are for those who are in this state of ignorance, who are dreaming the dream of this world. And so Sankaracharya had to concede a relative reality for this state of ignorance and bondage and provide for it, provide for the awakening factor. In so doing he recognised the Vyavaharika Satta of Satsanga and put it in an aphoristic verse '*satsangatve nissangatvam, nissangatve nirmohatvam, nirmohatve nischala tattvam, nischala tattve jivanmuktih.*'

He connected Satsanga directly with the highest attainment of Jivanmukti. He said something very interesting. How does it bring about the Jivanmukti? Satsanga brings about Jivanmukti in a gradual way. First it creates Nissanga—*satsangatve nissangatvam*. What is this 'Nissanga' and where is its necessity? I am going to make this the subject of my talk, this concept of Nissangatva, because in showing the way of achieving Yoga even in the midst of Vyavahara, even in the midst of all your earthly activities, whether you are a Brahmachari, whether you are a Grihasthi, whether you are a Vanaprasthi, as long as you are in Prapancha, as long as you have not made Sarvasanga-parityaga and gone into pure Nivritti, how do you solve this problem of having to constantly be in the midst of many, the world of names and forms and yet keep the One Reality as the goal? How is it possible? The world of many distracts, disperses the mind, draws it out, brings it out and scatters it; and Yoga requires that the mind should be indrawn. Just now Swamiji said '*antarmukhi bano*' (become indrawn), take the mind towards the Hridaya (heart), where there is the Atma-tattva. How can one bring about this awareness of the inner reality, in the midst of Vyavahara, in the midst of all the activities of Kartavya Karma in the Vyavaharic Jagat? When trying to instruct the Sadhak in the Vyavaharic Kshetra how does one keep up the state of Yoga?

Gitacharya Jagadguru Krishna says something similar to what Sankara Bhagavatpada said in this verse. He speaks about Nissanga. Lord Krishna says '*yogastha kuru karmani*'—Engage in action but within be in a state of constant union with the Divine. He follows it by saying '*sangam tyaktva dhananjaya*'. He says '*Bhagavan se nata jodo*' (attach yourself to the Lord). He says that at the same time you must renounce company. *Bhagavan ke sath sangh jodna aur prapancha ke sath sangh todna* (attach yourself to the Lord and detach yourself from the world). So Satsanga must lead to Nissanga. What is this Nissanga that both Sankaracharya as well as Jagadguru Krishna want us to cultivate? *Satsangatve nissangatvam*—the result of Satsanga should be Nissanga and '*yogastha kuru karmani sangam tyaktva dhananjaya*'.

Sangha Tyaga of what? Naturally not of Vyavahara because He is trying to tell you to be active, to engage in activity, and so upon the most evident level Sangha Tyaga is of all those factors that are contrary and inimical to your inner spiritual state. We are trying to do two contrary things. We can succeed only when we at least renounce our association with those things which are grossly undivine, grossly unspiritual. Bhagavan says two things without any ambiguity, very clearly in the 16th Chapter when He gives us the Yoga of the Daiva-asuri-sampad-vibhaga-yoga. He says that if you keep association, if you have within you Asuri Sampada you cannot attain God, because the very nature of Asuri Sampada is such that it will take you to greater attachment. Very clearly He says Daivi Sampada will give you Moksha, Asuri Sampada will take you into greater bondage.

Therefore you have to study the 16th Chapter of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita and renounce all associations with everything that has been described as Asuri Sampad in that Yoga. This is a must. This is absolute, indispensable, must for Sadhana. And out of His compassion and mercy, Lord Krishna goes one more step to make it a little easier for us. He says, generally, Asuri Sampad takes you to more bondage. We are all in the contrary states. If you want to keep inner contact with God in the midst of Vyavahara you have to resolutely turn away from the following: impure desire, unholy desire, greed, anger, timidity, egoism, 'I-ness' and 'mine-ness'—Abhimana. We have to go along the path of Sattva in Sattva Guna. You must break away from the company of Tamo Guna and Rajo Guna, develop in Sattva, progress in Sattva. There are three obstacles in Sadhana: impurity of mind, the oscillation of the mind, and Ajnana, the wrong notion that I am body, I am name and form. These three have to be overcome. Through Nishkama Karma Yoga Sadhana Mala is removed; through Sakara Saguna Bhakti-yukta Upasana, Vikshepa is overcome and through Dhyana, Deergha Dhyana and Jnana which is always there, Avarana is pierced.

So in order to remove the first obstacle, Mala, Kama-Krodha-Lobha-Moha-Mada-Matsarya, Irshya-Trishna, we have to go into Satsanga. Through Sravana, following the instructions that you receive during Satsanga, Sad-upadesh and through Svadhyaya, gradually the mind and heart become purified. All the impurities of the mind in the form of Kama, Krodha etc., go away. The heart becomes pure, and then one becomes fit to enter into the stage of Sadhana. Ponder over the significant connection between Satsanga and Nissanga, Yogavastha inside necessitating the Sanga Tyaga with all those factors which are unspiritual, undivine, inimical and unfavourable to your progress in Yoga, progress in spiritual life, spiritual Sadhana.

DIVINE NAME

I wish to bring to your attention a great act of grace by Bhagavan. Due to the rule of Kali Purusha in the fourth Yuga, there is the power of darkness. Krita Yuga is Golden Age, Treta Yuga is Silver Age, Dvapara Yuga is Copper Age and Kali Yuga is Iron Age. An iron piece rusts very easily and if it hurts you it becomes septic. In Krita Yuga, Treta Yuga and Dvapara Yuga spiritual activities were easier and they got results because there was dominance of Sattva. After that gradually more and more Rajo Guna came. Bhakti and Bhajan are very difficult in Kali Yuga as there is dominance of more Tamo Guna and everywhere there is darkness, ignorance, Raga-Dvesha and Asuri Sampad. You all know how the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana starts. It starts with the

Prasanga of Narada coming across a mother and son, Bhakti and Vairagya, in a state of great oldness, dilapidated, weak and sick. When he asked them who they were and why they were suffering, the mother answers, “I am Bhakti and he is Vairagya. Kali Yuga has come, therefore, we have no strength. We have become helpless. We have been overcome by weakness.” So, what is the way to revive? Hear the Mahima, the glory of Bhagavan; by listening to the Lila of Bhagavan you will develop Prema, attachment and Bhakti for Bhagavan and then that will become a way of release from the bondage of Kali Yuga. Even Bhakti became helpless and lost her strength. So did Vairagya. There is no Bhakti, no Vairagya in Kali Yuga. There is a lack of Dharma. There is Adharma everywhere and in the name of Dharma, Adharma is done, in the name of spirituality unspiritual things are done. In the name of truth, man will swear, ‘I swear by God that I will speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth’. And when he is swearing also, he knows that he is going to tell lies. So the oath itself is a falsehood before a witness. Without blinking an eyelid people come, take the witness stand and take the oath by God saying that they will speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, knowing full well that they have been told to lie and they have agreed to lie and they are going to lie the next moment. It is a very difficult problem to know who is telling the truth and who is not. The problem is not of who is telling a falsehood, but of who is telling a lesser falsehood.

So that is the effect of Kali Yuga. Everywhere untruth, everywhere dishonesty, everywhere hypocrisy, everywhere showing something outside, being something inside. People maintain three account books, one for oneself, private, one for the business partner and one for the Income-tax Officer. Son deceives the father, father deceives the son, husband deceives the wife, wife deceives the husband, brother deceives brother, leaders deceive the public. Whenever I meet Gulzarilal Nandaji he always says, “Swamiji, what has our nation come to? In the name of Dharma, in the name of religion, people practise deceit, people tell falsehood, people are hypocrites, people dupe the public and therefore all faith has been lost. People have lost belief in temples and religion, even in spirituality and saints, because they have had bitter experiences. All appearances are made for inner deceit and people have lost all faith and belief.” He speaks of bribery, corruption, dishonesty, among all people. He is trying his best since many years to try to find a way to make people honest. He has failed.

In this state of affairs, when instead of truth, nonviolence, chastity, only violence, bad conduct and falsehood is being practised, what is the state of spiritual Sadhakas, really sincere spiritual people, who want to move towards God, who want to progress spiritually? They are caught in this situation where nine out of ten people are totally devoid of any sense of conscience or Dharma-Adharma, good and bad, right and wrong. That is the situation. How can spiritual people pull on in this atmosphere? As a great assurance, great message of hope, Srimad Bhagavata says that in spite of it being Kali Yuga, in spite of the prevalence of Adharma, Atyachara, Asatya, Durachara and all this Andhakara, Kali Yuga contains one redeeming feature, one very great quality. Therefore, some even say that they are very fortunate to be born in Kali Yuga. What is that redeeming feature of Kali Yuga? In Kali Yuga Bhagavan has so laid down, so arranged, that only by the power of the ‘Japa’ of His Divine Name you can attain liberation, you can free yourself from the clutches of Kali and become liberated. In this ocean of evil called Kali Yuga, there is one great good quality. Merely through the chanting of the Divine Name of the Lord, human beings will become liberated from all sin, from all bondage and impurity.

So when that Name is there what is there to fear? Take shelter in the Divine Name. No matter whether you are a Vedantin or a Raja Yogi or a Karma Yogi, don't leave the practice of the Divine Name. Let the practice of the Divine Name—Japa—be an integral part of your Sadhana. Do Japa with faith, with devotion, with deceit-free nature, and feeling the presence of the Divine. 'God is here and now, He is all-pervading, therefore when I call Him, He immediately looks at me with a glance of Grace, showering Grace upon me, because He is not far off. He is close to me.' With this great understanding, take to the practice of the Divine Name. Name is the great liberating force that can help you cross the ocean of Samsara in Kali Yuga.

Hearing the message of hope, you need not despair. We need not think that in this age of darkness, of Kali Yuga, how is it possible to attain liberation. The Lord says, 'Yes, I have made it very, very easy in this Kali yuga, knowing the condition of man, his helplessness and weakness'. He has so made it, that in spite of all the drawbacks of Kali Yuga, He made Bhagavadsakshatkara easy, simple, through a direct method. 'Through the Name itself you can attain God'. Those who have attained God through this method, ultimately discovered the great secret. They said Name and God are one and the same. They are not different. They are identical. Nami and Nama are the same. There is no difference. Appearing in two different forms, they are actually one and the same. A silver Rupee has two sides, but these two sides are of one coin only. In as much as this side is Rupee, that side is also as much the same Rupee. So they are obverse and reverse of the same coin.

I constantly tell people when they take the Mantra: "Mantra is Pragat-svarupa Paramatma. Bhagavan assumes Mantrasvarupa and comes into the life of the Jiva in order to do Uddhara to the Jiva." So Mantra is a form assumed by the Lord Himself as Sabda or Nada. Parabrahma is Sakara Saguna and Nirakara Saguna and Nirakara Nirguna. Sakara Saguna is Rama, Krishna, Vishnu, Sankara and all that. Nirakara Nirguna is Parabrahma Tattva. But Nirakara Saguna is Nama. It has no shape but it is all the Gunas, Santi, Satya, Jnana, Jyoti, Sakti filled with Divine potentiality. Each Name is a powerful centre of Divine potentialities and it can take you to the highest blessedness. God identified Himself with the practice of Nama-Sadhana in Bhagavad Gita. He said, 'Among all the ways of attaining spiritual beatitude, among all the ways of offering yourself unto Me, I am Japa Yajna Yajnanam japayajnosmi.'

Yajna means offering yourself to God. He identifies Himself with the method of offering yourself, your consciousness to the Divine, through the practice of the Divine Name and those who base their Sadhana upon the practice of the Divine Name are very, very safe. Don't think that only the Bhaktas practise the Divine Name. Vedantins are expected to do Pranava Japa or the Mahavakya Japa. They also do Japa. Sannyasins also do Pranava Japa. But they do it with Eka Bhava. Between Bhakta and Bhagavan there is a relationship, either of Dasya or Sakhya or Vatsalya or Madhurya or Santa Bhava—five Bhavas. They do it with this sentiment.

When you are engaged thus in doing Japa Sadhana, there are a few rules that you must adhere to. You must have for yourself some irreducible minimum as your daily quota of your Japa Sadhana; less than that you must never do. You can do more, the more you do, the more will be the benefit. But you should not fail to do less than that prefixed minimum. It is very beneficial if you can do it in the morning itself, so that in case due to any pressure or special work you are not able to finish the required quota, then you can finish it that same night. If you keep it for the night and you don't finish it, saying I will add it to tomorrow's quota then you will have a problem. So you should

not go to bed before you finish that day's quota. That is the safest method. Minimum Japa for the day should be fixed and adhered to, without fail.

Secondly, when you are doing Japa, you must also think of the Lord. Keep a picture of the Lord in front of you, look at it, and go on doing the Japa. Then close your eyes and try to visualise God inside. Thus you must go on doing Bhagavat-chintana and Japa both combined together. Another way of doing it is by writing the same Mantra in a specially kept notebook, every day at a time when you will not be disturbed. Pick up the notebook and with a very beautiful handwriting, paying good attention, without haste, without hurry, with great Bhava and feeling, you must write, with intense concentration, Once you take up that writing, you should not stop until you have finished that one page or half page, whatever you have fixed for yourself. At that time you should neither talk, nor look here and there. You should observe Mouna for the duration of writing. If the telephone rings or someone knocks at the door, someone calls, do not respond. This Niyama should be observed in Likhita-Mantra Japa and it will give you maximum benefit specially if you give it a lot of concentration. It is advisable that you do the Japa at a fixed hour and the same time every day. A certain power is thereby generated in that Asana. The moment you sit for Japa, the mind becomes Antarmukti and Sattvic. There is no Vikshepa, no distraction due to the force of Samskaras and vibrations of the Japa, day after day, at the same time, same place. The Asana also becomes very holy by doing this practice regularly at the same place, on the same Asana.

Even though you may have Dhyana of Sakara Saguna Svarupa of your Ishtadeva, even though you may be doing little Upasana, Mukti Upasana, during your Puja, yet you must understand, your Ishtadeva also has got a Paratpara Svarupa. This Paratpara Svarupa is without name, without form. It is Satchidananda—Sarvavyapi Satchidananda. Whether it is Narayana or Siva or Saravanabhava or Kartikeya or Subramanya or Rama or Krishna or Devi. All these Svarupas of your Ishtadeva have a Paratpara Svarupa in which it is unlimited. It is Pure Consciousness and in that Paratpara Svarupa your Ishtadeva is not confined to that Akriti but all-pervading. In that all-pervading, subtle, spiritual aspect, He is present everywhere. Wherever you are, whatever you are engaged in doing, morning till night, He is present everywhere. He is also present within you as your Antaryamin Bhagavan, thus making your body a holy place, a sacred place, a temple of the living God.

Thus you must realise the sanctity of God, knowing that your Ishtadeva as Paratpara Svarupa is seated in your heart, as your Antaryamin, Satchidananda Svarupa, Jyotirmaya Paramjyoti Svarupa Bhagavan. He is seated in your heart and He is seated in the hearts of all beings. He pervades everywhere. So, no matter what your Karyakshetra, you are doing it in the Sannidhya of Bhagavan. Feel the presence of God, feel the presence of the Divine. This being the truth, that He is Sarvatra, Sarvam Krishnamayam Jagat, Sarvam Vishnumayam Jagat, Sarvam Sivamayam Jagat, Sarvam Saktimayam Jagat, whatever your Ishta, you must regard Jagat as being Ishtamayam Jagat. Develop this vision and this Bhav. Therefore, when your entire life, all your Vyavahara, all your Kartavya Karmas, all your Vyavaharic life is being lived in His presence, it should be lived worshipfully. Whatever you do, do worshipfully and offer it at the feet of the Lord. Even in the midst of your activity have a constant unbroken Bhagavat-smaran. You can repeat your Ishta-naam or Mantra mentally during the Vyavaharic time. The repetition need not be confined only to that time of Japa Sadhana. Repetition can go on even when you are in the midst of activity.

Someone asked me if the Japa can go on in the bathroom or in the lavatory. If you are doing with Nishkamya Bhav, only for the sake of propitiating God, only for His Darshan, only for obtaining Bhagavad-darshan and Moksha, then there are no restrictions on Desa, Kaala or anything else. At all times and anywhere you can do—lavatory, bathroom, urinal—everywhere. Before bath, after bath, before eating, after eating, all time is time for Japa. All time is fit and suitable and sacred because you are doing it in the presence of God. As a matter of fact, it has got the power of transforming impure places into pure places. If you are sitting in the lavatory, if you utter the Name of God, the lavatory becomes a holy place. Where there is God, where there is Nama, that place is a holy place. It is a sacred place. There cannot be any impurity about it. It is an all-purifying agent and has great power, universal power. How can impurity remain there?

When you bring in light, darkness must fly; no matter what darkness it is, it must fly. So that is the power of light. You cannot pollute Ganga-jal. Ganga-jal is always purifying. It is just like Ganga-jal. His Name is to be constantly remembered, constantly uttered, mentally, in the midst of Vyavahara. It is the all-purifying Divine power. There is nothing in this universe to equal that all-purifying Divine power. It is the Power of powers and has been given to us because we are fortunate to be born in Kali Yuga. This has been made the Supreme Path to attain God. Nama itself is enough to sustain us in Kali Yuga. The only thing is that under the cloak of the Name, you should not do wrong things. ‘It is all-purifying, it will free me from all sins; therefore I can commit sin today also and tomorrow I can be purified if I utter the Name.’ This mischievous attitude is not good.

There are ten Nama-aparadhas. One of them is using the Divine Name for negative purposes. Another great Aparadha is swearing by the Divine Name. You should never take the Name for Sakshi; it is a great Aparadha. By bathing in the Ganga all sin is washed away. So, if you are living by the banks of Ganga, you cannot think ‘every day I am taking bath, so every day I can do what I want, every day I will be purified’. This should not be done. This is a Nama-aparadha. You must be very, very careful. You must treat the Nama with sanctity, respect and reverence. Nama, the sacred Name of God, must not be used for any wrong things. Use it only for getting Bhagavat-anugraha, and Kaivalya Samrajya, Kaivalya Moksha. Keep the repetition of the Divine Name secret and sacred. It is between you and God. Any third person is not concerned with it. So we should not utter it in the presence of others. When you are alone you can utter it with full voice; otherwise do Manas Japa, mentally and in silence. If the Guru says, you must repeat at least so many Malas per day without fail, you should not stick to the minimum. The minimum number is prescribed in the beginning of your Sadhana, so that you don’t neglect your Sadhana. It is your duty to see that this minimum is gradually raised as you go on advancing in spiritual Sadhana.

Ultimately, I would like to tell you one other indispensable thing. Even though Name has been declared to be the Supreme Power by which you can be liberated, you can overcome the influence of Kali in this Iron Age, dark Iron Age, if you want to go beyond death. If you take a little bit of , if you take a little bit of nectar or ambrosia you become deathless and immortal. But if someone is prepared to give you Amritam and you go to him and he asks, “What have you brought? Have you brought a little plate or a cup or a container?” and you say, “No, I have not brought anything”, then how can you take it? If you have to take Amritam, you have to bring something to hold it. In the same way to practice the Divine Name, you should have a Patra. Patra has two meanings, vessel and also fitness Patratvam. So there should be something to contain it. What is that

in which the practice of the Divine Name becomes well-contained? Generally, as I told you, that Container is called Dharma. If there is Dharma all our spiritual Sadhana becomes fruitful. It is in the receptacle of Dharma that you can put the seed of spiritual Sadhana and the tree of spiritual life will grow and give you the fruit of Moksha. It is in the frame-work of Dharma that all good works and all Sadhana become successful.

BE YOUR OWN SAVIOUR, SAYS LORD KRISHNA

Radiant Immortal Atman! Blessed and beloved children of the Lord! The Gita contains the quintessence of our scriptures and spiritual lore. You know the Gita thoroughly and if you have studied it with a deeper perception, then there is no need of studying any other scripture, because the practical spiritual wisdom of all the scriptures is put into the Srimad Bhagavad Gita. Scholars are in a habit of saying that every Sloka is all important. Not a single Sloka is there which is not of a specific purpose. And some scholars have studied and made research in such a way that you cannot alter any one verse. If a certain word is used with a certain specific purpose, why has it been used and not another word? Because in Sanskrit sometimes the same meaning can be brought out by half a dozen different words. If you ask why another substitute or another alternative was not used in place of this word, they say there is a specific reason. After thorough study we begin to realise the implication of each word.

Yesterday I centred my talk around the verse “*Anityamasukham lokam imam prapya bhajasva mam*—having come into this temporary world which is full of sorrow, unreal happiness and unreal joy, worship Me”. That is the way of going beyond all sorrow, transcending pain and suffering and entering into the state of true bliss. That is why He stated the nature of life on this earth and simultaneously stated the way out of it and to go beyond. “*Anityam asukham*” describes the nature of the world. “*Imam prapya bhajasva mam*” tells the method to liberate yourself from this imperfect experience of the world.

Today I wish to draw your attention to another such very categorical injunction of the great World Teacher: “*Uddharet atmanatmanam*”. In one context He says to Arjuna: “O Arjuna, this Self should be saved by the Self alone. You have to save yourself. You are your own saviour.” You know our very orthodox Christian brothers, specially German Catholics; they have this as one of their cardinal doctrines that there is only one saviour, that through Jesus Christ only one can be saved, never through anyone else.

So, does this contradict that saying when He says that you have to save yourself by yourself?. It does not contradict. We also know that only the grace of God can liberate a person. They use the word Jesus and we use the word grace of God. Ultimately it is the same. Whole of Ramanuja’s philosophy is built upon this doctrine of Prapatti. Prapatti means the absolute surrender to the Divine by which alone one can be saved. Unless there is an absolute surrender, you cannot be saved. Yet, unless the individual himself makes the necessary effort to accept his sins and determines to turn away from sins, repent for what he has done before and then appeal to Jesus and accept him as his personal saviour, “Come please, I accept you as my personal saviour, come and save me from sins”. Unless he does it, even Jesus does not save him. So repent for your sins. Then

He will call “Come unto Me. Through Me alone you can reach the Father.” The first step has to be on the side of the individual. “I shall repent for the sins I have committed. I shall sin no more.” “You alone can save me. I accept you as my personal saviour.”

This Jesus will not do for him. This is something which the individual has to do. When we accept that the Divine Law, the grace, is the only factor that can save us, yet to qualify for that saving one must accept the Lord as his only Saviour, one must take the step, one must repent for what he has done and one must determine never to lead that type of life again. All these steps, repentance, turning away from old type of living, wanting to be saved and then accepting the Lord as the Saviour, these are the steps which one has to take for oneself.

Supposing there is a drowning person. A shipwreck has happened in an ocean, fifty or hundred people are struggling for life and some other ship comes by and then they throw life-lines. But it is the man struggling in the water who must catch hold of the life-line. Though life-line is there, unless you make the effort to go and catch hold of it, they cannot take you out of the water. Even in this absolute state of helplessness self-help is the ultimate factor that will decide whether you will drown or whether you will survive. So it is this significance that you must understand from this injunction of the Lord: “*Uddharet atmanatmanam*”. This is fully compatible with the doctrine of grace. Grace showers upon that being who craves for grace. Calling for grace means one who is completely averse to and disgusted with the life that he has been leading. Though once upon a time he enjoyed it with full gusto, now an awakening has come, a realisation has come, “What have I been doing? What a great horrible life I have been leading? What a fool I have been all these days. Never shall I repeat this kind of thing again.” So he must have felt this disgust, he must have recognised the wrongness of his ways, he must have felt deep disgust with himself and a desire to become something which we cannot do for him.

If you are hungry your mother can prepare food and put before you. She cannot eat it and appease your hunger. By the doctor taking the medicine the patient will not be cured. The patient has to take the medicine to cure himself. They say that even if the best intensive care is given to a patient in a first rate hospital, if he has lost the desire to live, he cannot be revived. He will not survive; he will die, if he has lost the will to live. So there must be a cooperation on the part of the patient. He must want to live and not die. Then anything is possible. So the Lord says, “*Uddharet atmanatmanam*”—the Self must be saved by the Self itself, which means the lower self which is caught in ignorance, Ajnana, delusion, Maya and, therefore, bound, has to make its own efforts to break through this cage of Ajnana, come out of darkness into light. And one must somehow remove the cobwebs of illusion and start to discriminate and have right perception, right thought, right enquiry, right discrimination. This is what is called Abhyasa. Lord Krishna says that through Abhyasa one can overcome all conditioning. One must, therefore, persist in doing the right type of exertion.

Abhyasa means continuous perseverance, persistent effort, without giving, without accepting defeat. “I may succeed; I can succeed; I will succeed.” Like this, go on making persistent effort. If that is done, there is nothing that cannot be achieved.

There is a very interesting saying in Hindi in Northern India “*Karata karata abhyasake jadamati hota sujan*”; by constantly making effort even a dull person becomes wise. There is also

another example of granite stone. In some of the villages of India there are wells where by the use of granite stone the villagers draw water using coconut-fibre rope. If the well is two or three feet, over that they put granite slab. And the lady puts one of her legs on the slab and then draws water. And so coming and going, this coconut-fibre rope rubs against the granite. And it is a wonder, if you see in old village wells, you will find that all along on all four sides of this granite stone grooves have been cut. You-will make semi-circular grooves. How? What is granite and what is coconut-fibre rope? The sheer persistent rubbing of the rope against the granite gradually wears down the granite particles and brings about a complete groove, as thick as a rope, “*Ardhachandrakara*”, half-moon shaped groove will be there. ‘*Avata javata rasari sila par karat nishan*’, the coming and going of the rope makes it mark upon the granite, by the power of persistent application. So man becomes divine if he persists in his effort without giving up. This is the very essence of Abhyasa. And so the Lord says that one should practise this Abhyasa. The results will come automatically by themselves.

You all know King Bruce of Scotland flung himself down in a lonely mood to think. It is true that he was a king and wore a crown but his heart was beginning to sink! He was about to despair. He had run away after defeat in a battle, took shelter in a forest cave, hiding. He was very, very lonely and dejected, depressed and hopeless. As he was gloomily looking in this state of despair, what happened, a spider fell down from the ceiling. You know what these spiders do while falling. They invisibly bring a thread while falling. We think they are simply falling. But you will find them climbing up. When it was falling already it has let out a strand of its web. So it went up immediately as it came down. This man was fascinated at this scene. When the spider was about to reach the ceiling, it had climbed off the distance it fell down. Now this man became really interested. He forgot his sorrows and dejections. He wanted to know what the spider would do. It went up and fell again. Once it fell, again it went; second time it fell, again it went up; third it fell, again it went up. This went on happening once, twice, thrice, four times, five times, six times, seven times, eight times. This man was all attention. Ultimately that creature went up for the ninth time and joined the roof. This man thought, “What a fool I am. If this creature is so very persistent, am I to despair? No.” From the observation of that spider at once his mood was changed. “I won’t give up”, he said. The spider inspired him. “Try, try and try again, you will succeed”. Then he came out of the cave and went on trying, and then won back his kingdom, King Bruce of Scotland. In this way you should do Abhyasa. One must depend upon oneself. And one must draw inspiration from all things.

Gurudev used to say, “Guru can show you the way. Guru can inspire you. Guru can try to give you a little bit of enthusiasm , some courage. But you will have to keep your feet yourself on every rung of the spiritual ladder. Guru cannot do Sadhana for you. Sadhana is Sadhaka’s business.”

This spiritual life, attainment of supreme Bliss, is a matter of sincere persistent effort, persevering effort. This is the meaning of the verse “*Uddharet atmanatmanam*”. The lower self with its delusion, with its ignorance, with its darkness, attachments and bondage should be lifted up, to the awakened intellect, the Buddhi, i.e., the higher Self. Later on the spiritual consciousness itself becomes the great power that lifts you up. But until that spiritual consciousness is awakened it is the discriminating intellect, intellect that has become inspired by idealism, is the great factor. Always this intellect should be allowed to predominate, that should be allowed to prevail. And this

awakened intellect should be allowed to guide us and it should be inspired by Svadhyaya, going to saints, listening to their inspired instructions and advice. In this way the intellect becomes more and more strengthened in its great desire to become ideal. And so through Svadhyaya, through Satsanga, through Sravana, through inspiring talks, one must draw inspiration and strength. And such an intellect becomes the friend of the Sadhaka. It becomes the purified intellect. We call it Suddha Buddhi, Vivekatmaka Buddhi, the Buddhi that is now qualified by discrimination, spiritual discrimination. And this purified Buddhi becomes the uplifting factor within our own Antahkarana, the lower mind, which is running after sense-objects and the delusion should be lifted up by the higher mind, that is the Buddhi, which has been purified by discrimination and higher spiritual qualities. Thus you have to be your own saviour. This is the clear instruction of Lord Krishna.

Be up and doing, be full of self-confidence, be serene. “With the help of God I can achieve anything.” Self-confidence should not take the form of pride or arrogance “I can achieve anything but with the help of God.” That robust self-confidence only made Lord Hanuman to cross the ocean. But he did not arrogate this success to himself. He said, “With the power of Ram Nam what can I not do?” So his self-confidence as spiritual confidence which was based upon absolute faith and trust in the Divine Name. So one should have this sort of self-confidence, not egoism. So with boldness, self-confidence and absolute trust in the Divine Power one should exert in the right direction. Also the Lord says, “The uncontrolled self of the seeker is his own greatest enemy and the controlled self becomes his own greatest friend.” If you have to raise yourself by your own Self you must have self-control, you must be a Samyami, you must have control over your senses, you must conquer impure desires. Then you will be able to uplift yourself by your own self.

If you are a slave to your senses and completely in the hands of them, a puppet in the hands of desires and cravings of the mind, then this injunction cannot be fulfilled. You cannot lift yourself. On the contrary you will be the person who drags yourself down. One must understand the injunction properly. And one must know what are the necessary things in order that one may become one’s own saviour. If you want to uplift yourself by yourself, then be a Samyami, control your senses and earnestly try to overcome the cravings and desires of the mind. For this you must also practise self-punishment. If you are something, if you have taken up a resolution and if you fail in it, that day someone else is not going to punish you. Because you are going to be your own saviour. Say “I won’t take food tonight because I have failed in my practice.” Four or five times if you do like that, the mind will be careful, because it does not want to miss the food! You must mean business with it. When you do that it will gradually know what its place is and it will learn the lesson. This self-punishment campaign was something which Sri Gurudev liked very much.

Of course, he learnt it from Mahatma Gandhi who used to do self-examination and also self-punishment. So Gurudev has incorporated self-punishment as one of the items in Spiritual Diary. You will find in it, “How many times you failed in keeping up your resolves? How many times you failed in controlling the senses? How many times you gave away to anger? And then with what self-punishment?” Various are the methods of self-punishment. You can stand on one leg in the centre of the garden and do fifty Malas of Japa, that is one way. Not taking food is another way. And more difficult way of self-punishment is not to touch salt for one week. It is terrible to the mind. But it is a real spiritual discipline. Because it is part of this process of uplifting yourself by your own self. These are all the methods that have to be adopted. These all go to give you success in

fulfilling the injunctions and instructions of Lord Sri Krishna, “*Uddharet atmanatmanam*”. Hari Om Tat Sat.

A UNIQUE MESSAGE OF GURUDEV SWAMI SIVANANDA

What has Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj specially done to the world which the great saints and sages like Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Ramatirtha, Sankaracharya, Ramanuja, Vallabha and others did not do? Gurudev has brought the message of all these people. What Jesus said and Buddha said and Mohammed said in the quintessence of these teachings has been given to us by Sri Gurudev. Gurudev has given us the essence of all the messages contained in the Upanishads, the Gita and other holy scriptures.

What is the uniqueness of Sri Gurudev? Has he done something distinctive? Every person is unique. Just because you have been eating rice, Chapati, Dal and vegetables all your life, if today all these things come to you, will you say, “What is this? What is unique in this, I am eating them daily. I don’t want it.” But you will not say that. Because today’s food, even though same as the earlier day’s food, is unique for today. It is the need of the hour. All that you have eaten for so many years will not appease your hunger today. Today’s meal is the unique thing for you. It is not comparable to the food of previous days. You cannot compare it even to the big feast you might have even some days before, or even two days back! That food which you have eaten even yesterday, however dainty, it might have been, cannot satisfy your present hunger.

Similarly, from this angle, in the context of each period and generation, in each century, the work of a saint, a sage or a messenger of God who comes in that particular framework of time, is of most important significance to that particular time. If you go into deeper analysis you will find that it is exactly the prime need of the hour. So from that point of view Gurudev’s teaching was unique. Its value cannot be estimated at all. It is invaluable. In the context of what was going on in India and outside India, in society, Sri Gurudev appeared to once again revive the fast fading loyalty or allegiance of Indian people to their own culture. The people then were under the impact of a flood of alien ideas and ideals. At that time Gurudev put before them the great value and the precious importance of eternal ideal and goal. He proved that the spiritual ideal can never become old. It is ever new. And it will continue to be new even to the future. Because they are all eternal ideas. Gurudev thus showed people the right path and then woke them up to their error. He said, “Don’t commit the error of getting fascinated by the wrong ideals. Don’t commit the error of casting away diamonds for a piece of glass. Diamond is always diamond even for thousands of years. Glass can never take its place.”

Gurudev also put them into the pride of their religion; put into them a desire to propagate it. Dissemination of spiritual knowledge was something very dear to Gurudev. He used to say, “It is no good for you not to know what your religion is. Know your religion. But don’t keep it to yourself. Share it. Share whatever is beneficial to all. See that others also are benefited by your knowledge.” Though other saints have also done this before, Gurudev did it in a very unique way. He said, “Religion is not confined either to the time you visit a temple or the time when you visit your Puja room, morning and evening. It is something which pertains to every breath that you take. It is

something which has intimate connection with and concerned with every moment of your entire life.”

So he refused to make religion a part of people’s life. For him, life itself was religion. What is religion? Man’s attempt to worship God and to move towards Him is religion. Life should be lived as a worship to God life should be lived as an upward ascent into God-experience and Bhagavad Darsana, coming face to face with God. The whole life must be made divine. You must live life as a divine process and not as a material or worldly process. We must open our eyes to this new outlook. Gurudev said, “Here I give to you life that is not going to be in any part of it, either materialistic or worldly or gross. All life is spiritual. All life is divine, connecting you directly to God.

Therefore live life divine. If you are a doctor practising medicine, practise it in a divine way seeing His Presence in your patients, if you are a lawyer, then be a divine lawyer. Practise your law in a divine spiritual way. If you are a businessman, do your business in a divine way. Make it spiritual and not earthly and corrupt. If you are a professor or a teacher or a principal, know that you must be so in a divine way. If you are an engineer, then be a divine engineer.” Because that which you are doing is extraneous to yourself. It is ‘you’ who are doing it. So it does not matter what you are engaged in. ‘You’ must be divine while you are engaged in it. Then you will bring the quality of divinity to whatever you are engaging yourself in. In your engineering activity, in your medical activity and your academic activity, or any activity for the matter of that, bring in the divinity—which is your essential nature that can never be contradicted by anything in this world, no matter what anyone may say about it.

You are essentially a divine being. Your earth personality is like an overcoat which you have taken upon yourself. But it cannot change what you are. Because this overcoat is temporary. It is Asat, unreal. And that which is unchangeable, eternal and beginningless and endless, that is your native state. That the Vedanta calls Sat, the Truth. So all that is extraneous to you is Asat, unreal. That which is the essence of yourself is Sat. The essence of you is the immortal Atman. You are eternal. Spirit, unborn, deathless. And, therefore, in that essence of your being you are divine. Because spirit is divinity. Divinity means all-Love, all-Truth, all-Auspiciousness and Blessedness. Therefore, in being divine, your entire life has to be divine.

Thus Gurudev brought spirituality and realisation right into the very heart’s centre of life and wove it into the very fabric of people’s life. If you accept his vision and ideal, no part of your life can be left out of spiritual life. All parts become part and parcel of your over-all spiritual living of your life. The end will be spiritual illumination through attainment of God. Thus Gurudev’s unique contribution was that he made divinity pervade the entire life of the individual in every aspect and in every detail. He said, “Home life should be divine. Professional life should be divine. The Vyavaharic life and social life also must be divine. One’s whole inner subjective life should be divine. You should have divine virtues. You must be a divine ideal person. Your nature and character should be divine. Nothing petty, nothing impure, nothing earthly, nothing gross should be there. So your character, your conduct in all your dealings in all walks of life should be divine. Let a pervasive divine character qualify your entire life. This is called spiritualising all activity.”

Gurudev said, “You need not take one step to go anywhere in order to practise this way of spiritualising all your activities. You can be where you are and at the same time bring about this transformation. Let all that you do be touched by this philosopher’s stone of the attitude of worship. “I worship my Lord through my life, through every word that I utter, through every deed that I do; through every action I engage in and every thought that I entertain and through every sentiment and emotion—*yad yad karma karomi tat tad akhilam sambho tavaradhanam.*” All activity is worship of God. If you live in the immediate presence of the divine all the time, how can we be petty and unspiritual?

The Lord is seated in all as the Antaryamin. He is everywhere as the Sarvavyapi Bhagavan. The Lord says in the Gita, “*Kshetrajnam chapi mam viddhi sarva kshetreshu bhārata*”—O Arjuna, know Me to be Knower of the field in all fields. This body is the field, and the Being who is seated in this field is called the Knower of the field. Similarly you are to be like that indwelling being, knowing everything about the Kshetra, the body, the mind and all the other instruments of knowledge. Even in unknowing creatures like animals, creatures, reptiles, in all these also the Lord is the Jnanasvarupa Antaryami Bhagavan. In another context the Lord says, “*Ahamatma gudakesa sarvabhuta-sayasthitah*”—Here the Lord identifies Himself as the spiritual reality in all the creatures. The Lord is the beginning, the middle and the end of all creatures. “There is no part of their being and living bereft of My presence, My essence. I pervade everything.” Gurudev emphasised the recognition of this reality.

God is always in the company of all. In His divine company how can you lead your life in any other manner except in a spiritual manner? Except in a manner worthy of His great divine presence? Even if we are in the office of some big official, we behave so very correctly, so that he may not have anything to say criticising our behaviour. God is the Lord of lords, God of gods, Jagadesvara. And so Gurudev said, “Recognise the presence of the Divine within and without. And therefore conduct yourself in a divine manner in His presence”.

The goal of life is to attain Divine Consciousness through divine living. Be up and doing in this task right up from the beginning. This process of attaining the Divine Consciousness is not meant for some particular part of your life. Therefore, the sooner one is put into this path of divinely living in one’s life, the better one is doing one’s duty. Gurudev has written a couple of books for children also, like “Divine Life for Children” etc. He says that children also must become aware that they are divine, and that they have to live in a divine way in order to attain divine bliss and divine illumination, in the end. This is Gurudev’s unique message to mankind. He gave practical spirituality to every man. That is Gurudev’s grace.

WHAT IS YOGA?

I am immensely happy to speak to you on the subject of Yoga which is a household word in the present times, all over the world. In all centuries, Yoga has become a very familiar term and there are hundreds and thousands of people in both the hemispheres in the Orient as well as in the Occident who are practising Hatha Yoga, Raja Yoga and the Yoga of Meditation etc. There are any number of books on this subject of Yoga in different languages of the world in English, French, German, Italian and Dutch. Therefore, it is important to know what exactly Yoga is and what it is not. To have a clear understanding of this all-important subject is of vital importance, if you have to derive the highest and the maximum benefit out of this ancient science of our inner spiritual unfoldment.

Yoga is the attainment of spiritual union with the Divine Source of your being, with the Supreme Universal Spirit, who is your eternal origin, from whom you have your existence and supported by whom you exist here at this moment and by attaining whom your life becomes truly fulfilled and complete. Yoga is God-experience. It is union with the Divine which brings about a severance or a dissociation of man's union with pain, sorrow, suffering and miseries of mundane life. This is a world of pain and death. This is a world of fleeting and temporary names and forms. This is a world of finite and imperfect, gross material objects which are ever changing and, therefore, not reliable. The objects are ever changing and subject to decay and destruction and therefore, quite incapable of giving you any lasting and permanent experience of either pleasure or happiness. Being imperfect and being a mixture of the pairs of opposites, the same object will give you pleasure for a moment and the next moment it can also be to you a source of pain, suffering and a source of sorrow.

If you want happiness, real peace and real satisfaction that is permanent, everlasting and absolute, unmingled with pain or suffering, unalloyed happiness in short, you have to seek it not in the finite, imperfect, perishable and changeable temporary objects, of this universe but in all-perfect, eternal, changeless and imperishable essence or principle. Is there such a source, is there such a principle, which is all-perfect, which is eternal and unchanging and which is of the very nature of bliss, of the very nature of supreme happiness, attaining which all desires or happiness becomes at once totally fulfilled? This is an important question.

Thanks to the supreme experience of our ancient, illumined sages and seers of the great Upanishadic or Vedic era in this sacred land of India, this Punyabhumi Bharatavarsha, the land of Ganga and Himalayas, the land of Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita, thanks to the quest and deep meditation and penance of these ancient sages and seers who wanted to solve the riddle of life, who wanted to solve the mystery of this universe and who wanted to find out if there is an experience which grants at once eternal satisfaction, absolute bliss, unalloyed bliss without a trace of sorrow and suffering and to this quest they dedicated their entire life.

Relentlessly they pursued this quest and the determination was ultimately fruitful in illumination and God-experience. They became Self-realized and that experience gave them an inexpressible joy which they could not describe. Brahmananda, Paramananda, Supreme and ecstatic bliss that filled their entire being and once for all took them forever, beyond all sorrow, pain

and suffering, liberated them from all the imperfect experiences of this earth life and they became established in a state of absolute blissful peace.

These sages being filled with universal love for all beings, being filled with compassion and kindness towards all creatures, did not want to keep this experience to themselves, therefore, they called upon mankind and declared to all, “O ye children of ! We have come face to face with that Resplendent Being, attaining whom one becomes liberated from all sorrow, pain and suffering and enters into a state of illimitable joy and indescribable divine bliss. What we have attained, you too can attain, for it is your birthright.” Thus they declared this great experience and gave a great clarion call to mankind, ‘come, come, come unto this state of blissful Brahmic experience, Atmic experience.’ Though these sages were people of great idealism, they were also pragmatic and practical in their approach to man’s problems on earth. They were realists in the sense that they recognised the problems of individual human beings on earth and therefore they also gave scientific methods and techniques, steps to attain this supreme experience. This is the greatest gift that they bestowed upon mankind. This art and science of practising certain techniques and certain methods of spiritual effort which grant to us this supreme experience of bliss, peace and spiritual illumination, is called the Science of Yoga.

As long as the human individual upon earth has this delusion that he can find happiness in the objects of this world outside, this material world, this phenomenal world around him, so far it is a wild-goose-chase, a futile quest after ever-changing sensual experiences which only give momentary sensation of pleasure but do not give real happiness. Therefore, he is ever dissatisfied, discontented and frustrated in his efforts to attain true happiness, satisfaction and peace. He is disappointed and ultimately a stage comes when he is ultimately disillusioned. The seers wanted to save us, spare man from this futile quest, running after these shadows and so they pointed out to him ‘O man, if you really want happiness and peace, this is the way. You have to attain union with that Supreme Universal Soul who is of the very nature of absolute bliss, peace and perfection.’

They declared that the Supreme Universal Reality is to be known to be, of the nature of absolute bliss—‘*Anandam brahmeti dvijanat*’. You have all heard the inspiring Guru Stotras: ‘*Brahmanandam parama sukhadam kevalam jnana murtim, dvandvatitam, gaganasadrisham tattvamasyadi lakshyam; Ekam nityam vimalam achalam sarvadhi sakshi bhutam, bhavatitam triguna rahitam Sadgurum tam namami.*’ ‘*Anandamananda karam prasannam jnanasvarupam nija bodha yuktam, Yogindranidhyam bhavaroga vaidyam Srimad Gurum nityam aham namami.*’ *Brahmanandam paramasukhadam*, that Supreme Universal Being is of the nature of illimitable absolute bliss. He is of the very nature of supreme happiness.

Lord Krishna gives a hint of this great happiness in the Sixth Chapter of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita when He describes the Yoga of Meditation—*Sukham atyantikam yattad buddhigrhyam atindriyam*—an absolute supreme state, a supreme experience of perfect happiness and joy, the perfect joy as St. Francis of Assisi referred to it, the supreme experience of perfect joy and happiness which is beyond the senses. Senses cannot try to experience that happiness because it is super-sensuous and even-supramental. To attain this happiness is the ultimate objective of Yoga.

Everywhere in this universe, man is vastly different from the outward surface of his life, different countries and different nations, different races, different cultures, different languages,

different ways of living, eating, dressing, etc. He may be completely different in all these respects, but there is one thing which is the same to all human individuals throughout this universe. And it is this factor which ultimately brings about an inner oneness as regards human life and the universal quest of human life on this planet earth. And that common factor is that human individuals all over the world wish to avoid sorrow, pain and suffering and wish to attain joy, happiness and supreme bliss. In this there is no argument, no discussion, no difference of opinion. No one wants sorrow, no one wants pain and suffering.

Everyone wants to put an end to, get rid of the pain, suffering and sorrow and everyone wants to have happiness. But let me ask you a question, beloved seeker. Since the beginning of creation, is there one single individual who has been born into this earth, who can stand up boldly and declare, 'in my life I have never experienced any sorrow, pain and suffering whatsoever; my whole life has been a life of joy, full of happiness, full of bliss alone'? You will find that there is not even one single individual on earth who has not had, at some time or other some type of pain or suffering or grief or sorrow and therefore this universal quest of mankind must have some fulfilment somewhere, otherwise the Creator would not have had put this quest after happiness, put this inner urge for happiness within the human soul. The very fact that there is in each human individual being this innate urge for experiencing happiness which shows that there is also provision made by the Creator for the satisfaction and fulfilment of this innate urge.

You have not come here to weep and wail, to have suffered sorrow, grief, pain and then die after going through a life of misery and grief, Tapatrayas, sorrow and suffering and die. You have not come here to weep and suffer and die. On the contrary your great ancestors, the Upanishadic saints and seers have declared boldly, 'O man, you have come here to attain supreme bliss, supreme blessedness. You have come here not to die, but to attain immortality and the path to attain this supreme experience of absolute bliss and go beyond sorrow, go beyond death itself and become immortal and eternal, that path is the path of Yoga.'

Yoga is, therefore, the ultimate way to succeed in this universal quest of man on earth for liberating oneself from all sorrow, pain and suffering and entering into a state of absolute bliss and blessedness and this can be brought about only by once again restoring our lost relationship, our lost link and connection with that Supreme Universal Source of our being, Brahman or Paramatman, that Supreme Divine Cosmic Reality whom we refer to as God. God-experience alone can grant to you total liberation from all sorrow, pain and suffering and indescribable experience of bliss and peace. And Yoga tells us in a scientific way how to attain that supreme state of joy and peace and where this supreme experience abides. All the great prophets and mystics have revealed a very, very subtle truth about this specific point regarding the attainment of this supreme experience. They have declared to us in their mystical wisdom teachings that this God-experience, this supreme state of bliss and blessedness is not some far off remote, experience which we have to attain through great difficulty or a long journey but they have declared to us the same truth but in different languages, the Kingdom of God is within, the Kingdom of Heaven is within you. Within you is hidden God. Within you is ocean of bliss. Within you is the fountain of joy.

Right at the innermost centre of your being the all-blissful Brahman abides as the very innermost essence of your existence. Therefore, Yoga is an inner spiritual journey and it requires that we try to put an end to constant habitual activity of the mind which is outgoing. The mind of the

normal individual is scattered. It is outgoing and always wants to move towards the outer names and forms of this external physical world under the deluded notion that if it gets these, obtains these objects, if it possesses them, if it experiences them, man will attain happiness. In spite of countless disappointments and disillusionments, man never learns. There is not an iota of happiness in earthly objects. No object is perfect. Earthly objects do not have in them the inherent power or ability to give you happiness or joy because they are finite and imperfect. Otherwise they must be able to give a homogeneous state of happiness and pleasure for all beings, at all times, under all conditions. But what do you actually see? If you like milk and if you take a glassful of sweetened milk, flavoured with spices, the first glass may give you satisfaction. And if pressed upon to take another glass, the second glass may give satisfaction, but that is not the same degree of happiness or pleasure that you derived from the first glass and if your stomach is already filled with two glasses of milk, if you try to take a third glass, it becomes unpleasant. If a fourth glass of milk is forced upon you, it will produce nausea, biliousness and you may throw up. Where, then, is real happiness? If milk had in it the power of giving happiness it must be able to grant you this happiness at all times, under all conditions. It cannot change its nature. Such experiences show that all experiences derived from the contact of senses with their respective sense objects, ultimately are experiences that end in pain.

The great world teacher, Lord Krishna, had this very important insight to impart to us when he said, “O Arjuna, all these experiences, brought about by the contact of one or the other of the five senses with the respective sense object, are the source of pain and sorrow.” There is no real happiness in these sense contacts and sense experiences. They merely give momentary sensations. Afterwards they give you pain. A wise person realising the nature of earthly objects that they are empty of content, that they cannot give you happiness, never stoops to revel in these petty objects of this materialistic world. The great experience of the sages, declares to us in unmistakable and categorical terms—*Yo vai bhuma tat sukham*—the all full, the all perfect, therein lies true happiness, not in petty small objects.

Therefore you have to discipline the mind, you have to train the mind to give up this foolish tendency to always go outside, this extrovert nature of the human individual. Gradually, you must discipline the mind by discrimination, by making the enlightened intellect to speak to the mind and admonish it and say, ‘Why do you search in vain for happiness outside? Come, come happiness resides within. Stop your wanderings amidst this desert of empty earthly objects, amidst this jungle of sensuality and turn your gaze within.’ Make the mind introspective, bring the mind within, direct it towards the inner Atman and concentrate the mind and meditate upon the Reality within.

In the Kathopanishad it is this important point that the great Yama Dharma Raja tells the wonderful, youthful aspirant Nachiketas. Dive within, happiness is within, God is within you. Therefore, Yoga is a process of disciplining the senses, controlling them and not allowing them to drag the mind outward towards this earthly phenomenal carnival circus show, the world play, and gradually train the mind to go within and try to abide in the very centre of your being. The human individual has a three-fold level of personality. The grossest outer personality is the physical biological level. Here there is not much difference between the human being and the other forms of beast and brute life. Hunger, thirst, carnal passion, sleep, fear, desire for survival are shared in common with all the rest of living creatures. But then the uniqueness of man is that he has the power to think, feel and reason. The psychological level of his personality is what distinguishes him from

the animal level and higher than both lies his real nature, the spiritual nature which is a part of the Universal Spirit Divine.

Yoga is a process of controlling the animal nature and eliminating the negative traits in that animal nature and purifying and refining your psychological nature, so that the mind, the thoughts and sentiments are now directed towards the Supreme Divine Reality and ultimately awakening the sleeping divinity within, unfolding it by proper means through: Japa, Kirtan, prayer, worship, through constant remembrance of God, through selfless service and discipline and self-control, through Asana and Pranayama and through daily practice of meditation. Thus unfolding this awakened divinity and trying to enter into an experience of radiant unfolded and awakened consciousness and to become established in this consciousness of perennial bliss, peace and blessedness.

This is Yoga. It is the elimination of the negative traits of the animal nature through purification and refinement, it is giving an upward trend to your psychological nature, to your emotions, sentiments and reasoning processes. Thirdly, Yoga is to awaken the sleeping divinity within, unfold it and make it radiantly manifest in your thought, word and deed and enter into an experience of the all-perfect divine nature and abide in the bliss and peace which it is. Yoga gives you various practices, making use of all these four faculties—your physical faculty, your mental faculty, your intellectual faculty as well as emotional faculty—according-to your temper. Yoga is attaining bliss and blessedness through union with the Supreme Universal Spirit and God-experience.

May God bless you with this supreme attainment and make your life fruitful.

YOGA—ITS IMPLICATIONS, OBJECTIVES AND ITS PLACE IN YOUR LIFE

Homage and adoration to Yogisvara Bhagavan Sankara, the Lord of all Yogins and to Yogeshvara Sri Krishna Bhagavan, the supreme master of the Yoga science. Reverential prostrations unto Sri Ramakrishna Deva, the illumined saint of Dakshinesvar, who was the very living embodiment of all the varied Yoga Sadhanas that lead the human individual to divine perfection and liberation. May the choicest blessings of Lord Siva, Yogi Matsyendranath, Maharshi Patanjali, Devarshi Narada, Sandilya and other perfect Masters be upon all the Sadhakas who tread the path of Yoga.

Yoga is the science of liberation or Moksha Sastra. Yoga is the innermost core and quintessence of the true religion of man. Yoga is the methodology of your inner ascent towards spiritual illumination and God-experience. Yoga is the technique of attaining Divine Perfection and immortality. Yoga is the graduated practices that can lead you from passing unrealities to the Eternal reality, from spiritual darkness into the Light of divine illumination and from death and mortality of your body bound earth-consciousness into the awareness of immortality and everlasting life in the Spirit. Yoga is the art and science of diverting and directing your entire human personality potential, beyond your present state of sorrow, restlessness, isolation and fear into a

higher state of Consciousness characterised by bliss, peace, fullness and fearlessness. Yoga is the Universal inner mystique that is to be found in the hidden inner depths of every living religion on earth.

The genesis of Yoga is shrouded in antiquity. It has come into being as an answer to one of the greatest needs of mankind, namely, its need to free itself from sorrow, pain and suffering and to attain to a state of happiness, peace and lasting satisfaction. Man is a pilgrim, a lone traveller upon this earth-plane. You come alone and you depart alone. Empty handed you come into this world and even so you leave this earth at death empty handed and alone. This is the truth. As such, this world is not your permanent dwelling place. In truth your true abode is a higher dimension of existence other than this material world. Supra-mundane and pristine, it is the real home of the Spirit. This supreme spiritual state of absolute existence, eternal and infinite, is Brahman. It is Brahman or Atman of the Upanishads, the Supreme Tao of the Chinese Taoist philosopher, the supreme Plenum of Plotinus, the Thing-in-itself of Kant. It is the One indivisible non-dual, eternal Reality. It is also the cosmic Soul, the God behind all religions. That Brahman is bliss. It is Infinite bliss and supreme Peace. It is the fulfilment of all desires, wants and wishes ever conceivable by man. It is divine beatitude and supreme felicity. Its attainment confers eternal satisfaction, liberation from all sorrow and pain and absolute fearlessness and freedom. This is the most covetable and desirable of all goals. Also, this is the true goal of real Yoga. Yoga is, therefore, a path that leads up to the state of supreme blessedness and peace. Its practices constitute the techniques for the purification and preparation of the human consciousness for entering into the experience of the supreme Blissful Divine Reality.

The thesis contained in the Vedanta and Yoga Philosophy is that the present state of human experience of the individual in this earth existence is a vitiated state of consciousness. This present state of your entire human personality, gross as well as subtle, comprised by your physical body, mind, emotion as well as intellect, has become totally outgoing (Bahirmukha) in its movement and thus wholly involved and entangled in the ever-changing and perishable names and forms of this outer phenomenal appearance, this gross material world show. This has directly given rise to your human earth-experience of love and hate, joy and sorrow, pain and pleasure, happiness and misery, elation and depression and all the dual throng that make up the fabric of your life's experience from birth to death.

You have forgotten your true identity which is not human but Divine. Your present human identity is only a temporary phenomenon that has been superimposed upon your essential identity (Nijasvarupa), which is divine and has neither birth nor death. You are eternal and imperishable. Your present deplorable state of weeping and wailing, sorrowing and suffering is due to this spiritual non-awareness and self-forget-fulness and due to your becoming caught up in the grip of an erroneous identification with temporary limiting adjuncts (Upadhi) like your gross physical body, with its organs of action (Karma Indriyas), the five aspects of the inner vital life-force (Pancha Pranas), the five inner faculties of perception or knowledge (Jnana Indriyas) and the four-fold inner instruments that constitute your hidden psychological self, namely, mind, intellect, the ego and the subconscious. The human ego principle (Ahamkara) has arisen out of this identification (Adhyasa) brought about by the individualised aspect (Avidya) of the indescribable, incomprehensible cosmic nescience (Maya).

Thus, it must now be quite clear to you that it is your own human faculties, physical and mental, that are the instruments of your bondage to Samsara. These faculties constitute your entire human personality. They are what all you have when you take birth in this world. Hence, you have no alternative but to invoke only their aid and utilise these very Same faculties, internal and external, which are now the cause of your bondage, to free, extricate yourself from its bondage to phenomenal existence (Samsara Bandhana) and made the necessary and suitable self-exertion (Purushartha) to attain to a state of liberation (Kaivalya Moksha). Being limited by Upadhis and conditioned by time and space factors, pure Consciousness assumes modified states like limited ego-consciousness (Ahamkara and Abhimana), the feeling of “mine-ness” with regard to the physical body and intense attachment to it and all things and beings who are pleasing to its senses (Mamata and Asakti). From these two, namely, “I” and “mine”, selfishness and self-seeking manifest in the human nature impelling the individual to become engrossed in self-centered mundane activities propelled by sense-appetites and the desires and cravings of the mind. In their wake follow anger, delusion, avarice, jealousy, hatred and unrighteousness. This is the nature of worldly existence.

Ego, attachment and the resultant selfishness are the bane of human life. They turn the entire field of human earthly activity (Vyavahara) into an arena of warring egos, clashing self-interest, conflicting likes and dislikes, bringing about disharmony and discord that rob you of peace and happiness. The science of Yoga and its superbly conceived techniques and practices serve as a life-line thrown to the human mortal struggling in this ocean of earthly existence buffeted by the pairs of opposites (Dvandvas) and preyed upon by attraction, repulsion, grief, delusion, fear, anxiety, disease, old age, decay and the like. Yoga provides the means of transcending and liberating oneself from the threefold afflictions all creatures are subject to. Its wisely formulated Sadhanas are so conceived as to withdraw the mind and the senses from the non-eternal, passing names and forms of the objective universe and given them a new direction towards God-experience and the direct realisation of the eternal Reality. They impart to your life an upward vertical dimension that takes the form of a progressive ascent into higher levels of consciousness culminating in the supreme state of highest God-consciousness or Aparokshanubhuti. The state of permanent liberation from all sorrow and attainment of perennial bliss is the fruit of the Yoga life and practice.

The intelligent and wise utilisation of these inner faculties and powers of thinking, feeling and reasoning have evolved and taken the form of Dhyana Marga or Raja Yoga, of Prema Marga or Bhakti Yoga, Vichara Marga or Jnana Yoga respectively. The last mentioned ‘is sometimes referred to by the generic term ‘Vedanta’. The imparting of a God-ward direction, to the physical dynamism of your day-to-day activities transforms all activities into Nishkama Karma Yoga by spiritualising their inner content even if their outer form remains unaltered. Thus, your thought-force, emotion and the powers of the intellect become the effective motive force for imparting a new spiritual direction to and for sublimating and elevating your consciousness from its present deluded body-bound gross earthly consciousness, into a sublime and lofty plane of unconditioned divine Consciousness.

The Jnana Yoga achieves this by engaging the keen reasoning powers of the intellect in philosophical enquiry (Vichara), discrimination between temporary appearances and the permanent Reality beyond, between the non-eternal and eternal (Viveka), and analysis of human

experience and perceptions. It investigates into the real nature of all things including the human personality upon all its levels and reflecting and meditating upon these observations and findings. It ever strives to pierce beyond this ever-fluctuating passing show of the phenomenal world and seek the eternal unchanging hidden support and source that makes possible this kaleidoscopic world-show. It advocates the Sadhana of a continuous, firm and determined denial and rejection of your deluded and erroneous identification with non-eternal limiting adjuncts, composing of your false personality and a constant and equally determined affirmation and assertion of your true immortal, ever pure, and ever free spiritual identity, which is one with the universal consciousness. Constant hearing of the spiritual Truths, reflection upon them and sustained deep meditation upon the subtle truths heard and reflected upon, constitute the basic Sadhana of Jnana Yoga.

Bhakti Yoga works to achieve this end of inducing you to withdraw your sentimental and emotional attachments and entanglements from imperfect and perishable things and beings that only bring you disappointment and grief in their train and educates you in the spiritual art of diverting your emotional potential towards the all-perfect imperishable Divine Being, relationship with whom brings endless joy and supreme fulfilment beyond any possibility of disappointment or disillusionment. It destroys all delusion and merges the seeking soul into an ineffable state of illumination and ecstatic bliss.

Bhakti Yoga brings about this sublimation and divinisation of your human sentiment—emotion potential—by setting up an inner relationship of love with God, apparently similar to your love and affection relationship with any dear object of your human love. For example, filial love between parent and child, the intense romantic love between lover and beloved, the deep love between close friends, the love that a devout and loyal servant has towards his master, or the serene and sustained admiration and veneration one has to a higher being whose greatness, grandeur and majesty one has come to know. In order to develop and progress in any one of these inner relationships of purified emotion, Bhakti Yoga lays down the practice of devotion in the form of the following Sadhana; namely, devout listening to the greatness and glories of God, chanting His Divine Name, constantly remembering God in the midst of daily duties and activities, regular daily formal worship of the personal God through a suitable and adequate symbol prescribed in the scriptures, adopting an attitude of humble servitude and offering salutations to the perennial presence of God, who is all-pervading, and ultimately by totally surrendering yourself and offering up of your entire being in an act of supreme dedication and surrender by living your entire life as a servant or a companion of God totally dedicated to Him alone. Other prominent practices of this path, are the taking recourse to the company of God-lovers, pious pilgrimage to holy places associated with your favourite aspect of deity (Ishta Devata) and earnest prayer for His Grace to obtain true one-pointed and whole-souled love to His lotus-feet to the exclusion of all created things. The sincere devotee upon this path of Bhakti Yoga is not concerned much with the subtleties or intricacies of metaphysics and high philosophy. Intense faith and the cultivation of spiritual sentiment and emotion constitute the very heart of Bhakti Yoga.

Love for the world and sentimental attachment to earthly kith and kin therein becomes the cause of bondage of Samsara to the foolish Jiva devoid of discrimination. The very same love and sentimental attachment when diverted and directed towards the Divine, liberates the Jiva from the bondage of Samsara, confers upon the Bhakta the blessed experience of God-vision.

Raja Yoga, also termed Ashtanga Yoga of Dhyana Yoga, is primarily a system of mental discipline wherein the power of the concentrated mind is made the means for entering into a high state of intense meditation by which the practitioner of Yoga goes beyond the mind into a plane of illumined spiritual consciousness transcending earthly awareness and body-consciousness and attaining to a lofty state of illumined super-consciousness (Samadhi). This liberates you for ever from this wheel of birth and death. Raja Yoga deals directly with the mind, which is seen to be the crux of the entire spiritual problem of bondage and liberation. ‘As a man thinketh so he becometh’ is the law upon the inner plane of the human psyche. Discipline of the mind is therefore the real key to Blessedness. Such is the approach taken in Raja Yoga. The prominent Sadhanas of this Yoga are the cultivation of virtues and self-control, the spiritualisation of your daily life through purity, penance, spiritual study and prayerfulness. These are followed by the discipline of acquiring absolute steadiness of the physical body, regulation and controlling the movement of the subtle inner Prana, checking the outgoing thought-current and directing the mind inwards, by withdrawing it again and again from the external sense-objects until the senses themselves gradually abandon their inveterate objectward tendency. The checking of the restless thought activity (Vritti) through unremitting effort and fixing the mind on the inner centre of concentration is the central Sadhana of Raja Yoga. This is borne out by the Yoga teachings of the World Teacher Lord Krishna in His practical instructions to us imparted through His discourses to His Yogi disciple Arjuna in the Sixth Chapter of the Bhagavad-Gita.

Man’s expectation of attaining happiness here on earth is a delusion that results in misery. The philosophy and practice of Yoga removes this delusion, corrects this error and by giving the right direction to your life and the living of it. Yoga sets you upon the path of happiness, peace and freedom. Hence, Yoga is indispensable for success in this universal quest of mankind for happiness and fulfilment. It can well claim a place amongst the top priorities of your life. Truly speaking, Yoga must occupy the central place in human life with all other things oriented towards the effective furtherance of the progress of Yoga towards peace and joy. Yoga and its Sadhanas are not to be treated as just a part of your life. But on the contrary the spirit of Yoga must pervade your life.

Beloved Atman, live your life in such a way that all the movements and activities of your life may assume the nature of and constitute an upward and Godward process culminating in the fullest unfoldment of your Divine Consciousness. The Yoga approach and attitude (Bhava) need to be adopted in each and every sphere of your normal life and activity including the home life, professional life, social life and other aspects of your life as well. Life is for Yoga Sadhana. Life is actually Maha-Yoga, if lived in the manner directed in the Gita, that supreme Yoga Sastra. You have not come here to remain in bondage. You have come here for attaining liberation. You have come here not to die but to realise your immortality. This is the truth. Therefore take up the earnest practice of Yoga right from this very moment. Engage your intellect in spiritual enquiry, discrimination, analysis and reflection. Discard all miscellaneous thinking and focus and fix your entire mind upon the One ever-perfect Divine Reality. Fill your heart with intense love for God. Make Him the one object of your heart’s desire. Aspire to adore Him alone. Remember God constantly. Engage in the selfless service of all beings. Carry on all the activities like, your Nitya Karmas according to your Varnashrama Dharma, your duties and obligations including your professional activities with the inner feeling of worshipfulness. Dedicate all activities to God. Offer them at His feet. In this manner spiritualise your normal activities. In the divine words of the World Teacher Lord Krishna, “Be thou a Yogi” (*Tasmat Yogi Bhava*). This is your foremost duty. This is

your highest Dharma. In this lies your real and lasting welfare. Herein is the guarantee of true happiness and peace even while dwelling in this body upon this earth. Yoga is not for 'knowing' but it is for 'being and doing.' It is moving towards the Eternal, even while living amidst the non-eternal. Yoga is God's gift to mankind for the attainment of man's highest good. It is ever new and shall ever remain so unto all times. For it is the answer to man's eternal quest for happiness. Human body is an instrument of Yoga. Your home is your place for the practice of Yoga. All fields of human activity comprise natural territory of Yoga in daily life. May this truth be recognised and lived. Then you will have peace and happiness here and now. Yoga can certainly do this for you.

May this science of Yoga which is man's movement towards God systematised into a methodical process, confer immense benefit upon all humanity the world over today, as well as in the days to come. May its eminently rational and time-honoured techniques be studied and sincerely practised by ever increasing numbers of people all over the world resulting in their highest welfare and happiness. May God bless all beings upon earth. May peace be unto all. Om Tat Sat.

MEDITATION

The greatest thing in life is meditation upon the Supreme Being. There is no greater treasure, there is no higher wealth and there is no greater blessedness than to engage in this sacred process of meditation. It would not at all be an exaggeration to say that the main purpose of human birth is to prepare ourselves, train ourselves, discipline ourselves and engage in successful meditation. It has been unmistakably declared by all prophets and messengers of God that the goal of human life is to attain supreme liberation. This liberation liberates us from all sorrow and sufferings, confers freedom from death and bondage and bestows eternal bliss and eternal felicity. This state of liberation is attained through illumination. This state of illumination is attainable through meditation and meditation only. Therefore, all spiritual practices have as their ultimate objective, end and aim the preparation and qualification of the practitioner or the seeker to engage in effective and successful meditation. According to each one's religious background and according to each one's different temperament and difference in personality and nature, the specific religious practices or Sadhanas that we engage in may apparently differ in their outer form. But in the ultimate analysis, all these Sadhanas have only one common objective. That is, to purify you and to prepare you to engage in a supreme and ultimate process of inner meditation.

Meditation is a universal common process which is to be found within the context of all spiritual life. It is a common universal process, no matter what your background. Meditation also unites the entire world fraternity of spiritual seekers. No matter how infinitely varied and different they may appear at the commencement of their spiritual journey, yet as they begin to approach or come near the conclusion of their spiritual journey, you will find that they all meet at the common universal process of meditation. Meditation is, therefore, a common platform where all spiritual seekers have to meet. Meditation is a universal process. Meditation is a unifying process, because it is a spiritual process. And in the innermost essence of all is one and the same thing. Meditation is the application of the controlled and purified mind towards the process of concentration upon the divine reality which is within you. I repeat this very important sentence once again. Meditation is applying your controlled and purified mind for contemplating the divine reality dwelling within

you. It is end and aim of all Yogas and all spiritual practices. It is the supreme unique process which is to be found within the context of all religious systems. You will find it in Hinduism and Buddhism. You will find it in Christianity and Islam. You find it in all religions. You are born here to meditate and realise this great reality. Hatha Yoga, Asana, Pranayama etc. lay the foundation for this ultimate supreme process.

All your life, in all its details, must be so lived that they may all help you in engaging in successful meditation. Any aspect or any activity in your life which is unfavourable and contrary to your spiritual meditation is not good for you, is not helpful to your spiritual progress. Therefore you must carefully leave it out. You should wisely avoid these contrary activities and factors from your life. If you are really sincere in your desire to meditate; if you are really serious and earnest in wanting spiritual progress, then you must carefully make analysis of your activities and frankly see what is favourable and what is unfavourable for your meditative life, and unhesitatingly renounce those factors which are contrary to your spiritual progress. This is the test of your sincerity, the guarantee of your success, and the sign of mature wisdom.

Outwardly meditation appears to be physical process. Your body, your mind and your Prana are all closely interconnected. They affect one another. Naturally, therefore, if you want to still your mind, if you want to make your mind calm and serene, you must bring about a corresponding stillness in your Prana and in your physical body. Therefore, a steady physical pose and a rhythmical outflow and inflow of breathing is necessary. The breath that flows through your nostrils is actually not your Prana. But because it is indirectly and remotely connected with the inner subtle Prana through a regularisation and the harmonisation of the physical breath, you bring about a similar condition in the inner subtle Prana. These two outer processes are, therefore, aids of the ultimate quiescence or the killing of the mind. Please know very, very clearly that the ultimate object of meditation is the Divine Reality.

However, in the process of developing concentration, you may engage in various spiritual exercises, when you give different objects to it for concentration upon. For example, flame of the candle, a symbol, an inner symbol, a bright coloured spot, a flower or any such symbols may be given as objects for concentration and meditation. They are only temporary processes. They are exercises for concentration. But ultimately meditation is always upon the Supreme Eternal Divine Reality.

Meditation is the continuous stream of unbroken thoughts, towards the chosen objects of concentration and meditation. The object may be different in each individual case. It is an attempt of the individual soul to link itself inwardly in the spirit with the universal soul. It is its origin, support and goal which is its source, substratum, goal and ultimate fulfilment in life. Meditation is the attempt of the human being to rise up to the Divine Reality. It is the attempt on the part of the man to once again relink himself with the Reality. It is an attempt of the finite part once again to rise up to the Divine Reality. It is gathering together of all the inner faculties and centering upon the inner Reality within. That Reality is Peace. That Reality is luminous consciousness. That Reality is Infinity. That Reality is stupendous Silence. That Reality is your home and original abode. Now let us divine within and enter into that great silence, wherein deep peace abides.

Meditation is of several varieties. I deliberately use the word variety instead of using the words 'different kinds'. There are no different meditations. All meditations are the same. There is only one meditation. That is gathering up of your mind and focussing it at one point. In pure classical meditation that focal point is always divine and spiritual. As exercise in concentration you can make that focal point on any object. This is an attempt to develop your power of concentration. Therefore this choice of different objects, is allowed. Exercise to develop concentration should not be mistaken with classical, meditation. Classical meditation is always only upon Being who is referred to as God. Or it can be upon your own inner Self. Both mean one and the same thing. For it is that same supreme universal Being who is present within you in the innermost centre of your spiritual being as your essential reality or, as your true Self. Thus meditation upon your inner Self and meditation upon God or the universal Being ultimately mean one and the same thing, though they apparently seem different.

But, as I said, classical and pure meditation is always upon the supreme Reality, the eternal universal Reality. But your concept of the supreme universal Reality may slightly vary according to your approach towards it and your present spiritual state of evolution. You can conceive of that Being as a great divine personality, you may endow it with a name and a form. Then your meditation will be on that personal form, your concentration will be upon that form. And your meditation may be helped and aided by the repetition of the Name. Or also it can be upon the nameless, formless, transcendental Being, associated only with the ideas of infinity and eternity, associated only with the ideas of light, peace and bliss, beauty and sweetness or such divine attributes. This is meditation of the formless type. And thirdly, meditation can be upon your own innermost reality. This could be Advaitic or Vedantic meditation. "I am neither body nor mind; I am unborn, immortal Self. I am Existence-Consciousness-Bliss Absolute. I am a mass of Consciousness. I am ocean of peace and joy". In this way one can meditate upon one's own inner Self.

These are all valid and accepted types of meditation in the ancient tradition of the Vedic way of life. In the area of spiritual India these meditations are not regarded as antagonistic. They are not regarded as conflicting with each other. Neither are they regarded as self-contradictory or incompatible. All are regarded, as valid and leading ultimately to the same experience. Moreover, the same seeker or meditator who was meditating along one particular line at a certain time may after some years of such meditation spontaneously feel inclined and drawn towards another type of meditation. And he would, therefore, switch on to the latter type from the former. This is not regarded as any sort of mistake. On the contrary, it is a part of the process of spiritual evolution. The meditation upon the personal God with form may gradually and naturally give place to meditation on the impersonal Absolute. What type of meditation will suit you, you have to try and find out for yourself. Otherwise you will have to take it from your spiritual teacher. If you are neither able to find out for yourself nor you have a spiritual teacher, then you must sincerely pray to God and He will guide you from within. But, anyway, you must take to meditation and practise it regularly. I shall conclude with one more idea only.

When you try to concentrate and focus your mind, various thoughts will arise in your mind. This is natural and inevitable. As long as the mind exists thoughts will be there. But then, when these thoughts arise during the course of your meditation you should not try to eject them forcibly or try to throw them out. This is a mistake which many seekers and Sadhakas commit. You cannot

forcefully throw out any thought. You cannot suppress it by force. On the contrary, it will grow even more persistent and stronger. Because, if you try to clash with these thoughts and try to force them out, you will be taking a wrong step. Instead of meditating you will be diverting your attention towards these thoughts. So the thoughts would have succeeded in breaking your meditation. You must just ignore them. Let them pass on. Do not identify yourself with those thoughts. Refuse to associate with them. Be only an observer. Or don't be even an observer. You try to take the mind again to the focal point. If you try to forcibly wrestle with the thought there will be unnecessary waste of psychic energy and mind will become tired and thoughts will become stronger and your attention will become diverted. Simply ignore them and let them pass on. Or gently once again bring your mind back to the focal point. Carry on this process in a non-violent manner. Otherwise the mind will become tired and the brain will become heated.

Classically, the authentic pure meditation process is a communion between the individual and universal Being, is an inner spiritual linking of yourself with God, the flow of the human consciousness towards the eternal divine Consciousness. Never forget this. Always make use of the technique of meditation for this higher purpose. But while you are ascending towards this supreme state of God-communion through meditation certain lesser applications of the meditation process is not disallowed and it can be included as a valid part of your over-all self-unfoldment. As such it may be considered as complementary and supplementary to the supreme purpose and objective. Some of these processes are practised at night time. Some of them are practised just at the early morning. There are others which may be practised at other times of the day, as suitable and convenient to you. These techniques in which part of the purpose is to put in certain specific suggestions into your subconsciousness, such processes are best done at night before retiring to sleep. But whereas certain other processes which have a direct relevance and relationship to your dealing with people in this world and your active relationship in social activities, day after day in your life, such meditative processes are best done at the beginning of the day's activities. These processes which do not have either of these two specific references, can be practised at any time of the day.

Meditation for improving and building up your own health, is to be practised at bed time, just before you go to sleep. The preparations for it are all the same, identical. Sit upon your meditation posture. Keep the body erect and straight. Sit steadily without any movement. But always be entirely relaxed. You must feel totally at ease. You must be feeling so restful that you can gradually forget the very presence of the body. The body should not make itself felt by you at all. The posture should be so restful and so relaxed. Then only you will not even feel that you are sitting. Thus you can continue for a long time without any discomfort. Now in this state of quiescence and restfulness take the mind inward and feel strongly the powerful presence in the innermost centre of your being. Feel that it is the Universal Spirit in its indwelling aspect, making itself felt as Divine Presence. The Universal Spirit is all-perfect. It is a source of all-blessedness. It is all health, strength, vigour and power. Visualise mentally the centre and source of all health and of all healing. Feel your unity with that Divine Centre. And now gently assert to yourself: "The source of all health is within me Om Om Om; God is my healer Om Om Om; I am ever united with that Being Om Om Om; I am a mass of radiant energy Om Om Om; I am disease-free Om Om Om; I am in a state of perfect health Om Om Om."

In this way draw up yourselves a suitable list of affirmations which are appropriate and suited to your particular state of health requirement. And inwardly feel the required state is now being created within you. Everything that is wrong is being set right in all parts of the body. Restoration, repair and healing is taking place in every specific part and total state of perfect health is being established within. Have clearly before your mental vision the word health in luminous letters. Visualise 'health' clearly. Visualise the centre of your being as an inexhaustible source of energy and health. Feel the power of health radiating from that inner centre and spreading in all directions throughout your body and bringing about a state of radiant health in every part of the body. Feel your body growing with perfect health from head to toe. Accompany this feeling with quiet affirmation. Keep yourselves in this state for some minutes continuously and conclude with peace chant: Om, Santi, Santih. This kind of meditation may be done within a period of five or six minutes. If you can prolong it longer it is well and good. If your concentration is very good, even four minutes will suffice. But if you have got any specific health problem in any particular part of your body, you may particularly direct the healing Prana towards that part and make the meditation a few minutes longer. And always conclude with the Peace Chant and finish by saying 'Thank you God'. I pray to the Lord that He may bestow upon you inner strength so that you will attain steady success in your daily meditation. Hari Om Tat Sat.

THE PATH OF DEVOTION

All religions, all faiths, all creeds and all saints have but come into this universe with one great objective—to recall to man once again the great need to make the inner spiritual relationship into a dynamic and living fact in one's own life. This is the central purpose of religion and it is the central message of all saints and sages—whether of the East or the West, ancient or modern—and this is the central theme of philosophy, of all the scriptures, to make the individual turn away from this kaleidoscope, this circus of the many, and move towards the inner shrine, wherein dwells blessedness. This is the meaning of religion and all processes of religion, all the practices of Yoga and every technique ever devised by any Master, by any Guru or any adept has for its ultimate objective and purpose, this re-establishment and the development into all its fullness your relationship with that One Being, with the One Principle, that One Reality which alone you can really and truly say: "It is mine. I belong to It."

About no other thing in this universe can you assert this Truth: "It is mine, and I belong to It." Not even with regard to this body which you think is so dear to you, so near to you, is your own self and with which you are in an absolute state of identification. Even the body will one day leave you in the lurch and depart and it will say: "Oh, no, you have no authority over me. I am here under some other law, the law of Karma, and when that is over and done with, you cannot claim me as your own!" Even when you consider the body your own, how much control have you over it? If only you take some wrong thing in your diet which is upsetting and the bowels start purging, can you say: "No, you belong to me. Stop! Shouldn't purge!" It won't listen to you and you will have to run to the toilet ten times. You may have three Ph.D. Degrees, or be President of India or of the United States. but you have very little control over the body. If you obey its natural functions and treat it properly, then it will go along with you but if you contradict some law then you are taught

how much control you have over it. So we have to realise that is only with one Being, with Truth, that we can assert: “Yes, you are mine and I am Thine.” and that one Being is.

How beautiful is this last line—“O God, mine! Thou art my all-in-all. Mother to me Thou art. Father to me Thou art. Thou art my relative and Thou art my companion. Thou art knowledge and wisdom to me. You are all my wealth. You are everything a human being puts any value upon or holds dear and desirable.” God is your own. The Divine is your own. You belong eternally to the Divine and in the Divine you have your all-in-all. The great need, therefore, in life is to ever keep yourself closely related to that which does not perish, that which does not pass, that which does not change, that which can never disappoint you, to that which can never bring about disillusionment into your life. All association with the non-Eternal is ultimately fraught with sorrow. This is the simple truth. Common sense tells you, if you will reflect that all association with the non-Eternal is ultimately fraught with sorrow and the Eternal, alone, can fulfil the longing of the innermost depths of your being. The Eternal alone can satisfy the Spirit and you are Spirit. You are not this physical body, you are not this ever-changing mind, you are not this intellect and this spurious little ‘I’ personality—you are Spirit, and the Eternal alone, can ultimately give satisfaction to your expression. In the Eternal alone can you find true joy, which one should ever keep an intense relationship that is ever growing and ever dynamic.

How can you do it? You can do it with the faculties you possess. They are your working tools. If that Divine Principle were a tangible thing in the nature of an object to you, first you would make use of the physical body to grasp it and hold it and keep it. But it is supra-physical, it is invisible—at least in your present state of consciousness. Now your consciousness is outgoing-oriented thought, objective perception only, so it is the world that is visible to you.

What is it that has brought you to this state of such confused involvement with this universal process, with this world outside, with the objects here? What is it? How is it that you are enmeshed in a variety of things, in a variety of experiences from which you don’t seem able to free yourself? It is your sentiments, your emotional involvements which have managed to bind you and you are attached. They have hooked you—your affections, your likes.

That level of the individual’s nature which is made up of the emotional potential, of the man’s personality, is very much in evidence here. It is very much the reason, the causative factor or the propelling force in this present involvement out of which there is much bondage, much slavery and much losing of oneself in the experience of things in which one is involved and so laying oneself open to the experience of all the impacts that evolve out of this involvement, exposing oneself, therefore, to all the variety of experiences, the result from this involvement—forever the same in joy, in sorrow, in suffering, in anxiety, sometimes in fulfilment, sometimes in disappointment, sometimes gladness and happiness, sometimes sorrow. So you ever react, due to being exposed to the inevitable outcome of this involvement with the outer through your emotional potential, to that dimension of your being made up of the emotional content of your personality.

This is the experience of man, always under the impact of this wide involvement through emotion, through sentiment, through love, through attachment, through preference, through likes, from the merest little involvement such as a little habit like smoking, like Scotch, like coffee, like

tea, whatever it is, right up to the highest states of involvement in human relationships with other beings, with other things—love and hate attachments.

There is a faculty that makes for this involvement which seems well nigh impossible to get out of and that, itself, gives you a power in your hands. If this factor in the personality has the power to get one so closely involved in this outer phenomenon, in this world that one is caught and gripped in and that becomes one's way of life, then can this factor, this force, this inner power not help one (if it could be utilised in the other direction) to get one thoroughly involved with the Being in whom one may seek an inner relationship, to sustain an experience of greater and a more progressive relationship? This is precisely what the ancients pondered. Yes! That is the answer, that is the key!

This potential, which is now completely directed towards the world and its objects, its personalities, if it could be educated, if it could be trained to be diverted and brought to bear upon the Divine, then that would be the commencement of one's release from bondage into freedom, one's release from sorrow into joy, from earth-consciousness into participation in Divine Consciousness.

This method, this process of entering into a relationship through the emotional level of your being with the Divine is the very essence of the Path of Devotion. It is called "Bhakti Yoga". "Bhakti" is a word that denotes love, intense attachment, a deep feeling of affection, of adoration. Love of God is a power that even as a little ripple upon the surface of a lake in the beginning, gradually it can assume the power of a great wave and overcome all the lower attachments and bondages like the seed that grows into a great tree. But it should be tended, it should be cultivated for it does not spontaneously grow by itself. Its appearance in your heart may come spontaneously by the grace of the Master or by the grace of God—by some little incident, the heart is so dry and devoid of the least bit of the Divine love and immediately you become filled with love, but that is only the beginning. Then you have to work upon it with great care and great devotion, setting up a relationship, a link of pure love with the Divine and diligently working to develop this love relationship into a state of perfection and completeness. This is the very essence of Bhakti Yoga.

The relationship which in ordinary human beings is the cause of so much pain, so much sorrow, so much love and hate, so much struggle, so much misunderstanding, so much envy and jealousy, so many tears, that very relationship becomes the sublime method of rising above this ordinary plane, of transcending all these relationships and going into a plane of a blessed experience of Divine Consciousness, God-Consciousness, God-Experience.

You may feel: "God is a strange Being. I have not seen Him before. He is remote from me. How can I love Him? I can easily and naturally love my wife, my husband, my children, my friends, my car, my money, my house or whatever is here because it is tangible, it is real and I can touch it, feel it and experience it as a tangible object, but that is not so with God."

The answer is: "Part of what you say is correct; much of what you say is wrong. God is not remote. He is nearer to you than the nearest object in this universe. He is nearer to you than your life's breath, nearer than your hands and feet. He is the very Self of your being, the very basis of your being. He is your Inner Ruler. He is not remote."

First of all, drop this idea. Unfortunately, some of the spiritual concepts of God which are given to man at a certain level, instead of being outgrown, become crystallised and rigidly established, which they are not meant to do and so we suffer under this conditioning of thinking of God as something beyond the stars, far, remote and who is impossible to contact in this life but who is only possible of being contacted after this life is over, only after death, after the body is gone. This crystallised concept is very harmful and deprives the human being of the greatest and the most beautiful experience for which he has taken birth. God is the nearest thing; He is your own Self. He is not remote; He is not far away. You don't have to lift a finger to point out to Him—you have to look within.

Of course, in a mystical way He is more remote than the remotest star without any contradiction of the fact that He is nearer than the nearest, because He is Infinite. He is everywhere. So, He is right within you and He is right there, even the farthest point of endless space of which you can conceive or think. So, you can say He is very remote but it does not contradict the fact that He is your innermost Self.

Therefore, He is not remote, neither is He strange. Neither is He invisible. He is not to be looked at from this eye, He has to be felt. You have to be aware that 'He is'.

You can't touch air. You can't see air. Normally air is odourless but you know it is there otherwise you wouldn't dare to take a breath. The moment you breathe you know that air is ever-present around you. So a thing does not have to be visible in the physical sense to be tangible in the physical sense. He is there. He is not remote. He is the closest to you and He is changeless.

You may think: "I can love my wife, I can love my husband, my friends and relations, I can even love my little dog because there has already been a certain pattern created, but with God, how can I love Him?" It is difficult and this is a practical question. The path of Devotion provides for it in a simple and a natural way. You should not commit the mistake of thinking that we can relate ourselves to God only in terms of reverence and awe and some sort of mystical worshipfulness and adoration. These factors may be present in your Bhakti or in your devotion, but they should not constitute the whole of your attitude towards Him. If that becomes the pattern then that becomes a barrier. You should not put a distance between Him and yourself. He is to be felt as your very own, very close to you and the Path of Devotion—the Bhakti Yoga of India—overcame this question of a stranger in a very simple and natural way.

They said: "All right, it is strange to you and you don't know how to relate Him to yourself or relate yourself to Him. So, what is the sweetest relationship in your life? Are you a young couple very much in love? Are you the lover and are you deeply in love with your beloved? Is that the love that is sweetest to you? All right, make no variance, don't alter it, but look upon the Lord as your beloved, as your sweetheart, as the most beloved object of your life and pour out all the love of your heart upon the Being that is Divine as you do it now upon the human. Are you an elderly person, and do you adore, your little grandchild? Is it the apple of your eye? Is it the very joy of your heart? All right, if that is your love, then say the Divine is to you as a child. Conceive of Him as a little child, or as your own child, and pour this love which is spontaneous and natural, all full in your heart out to the Lord, to the Divine as the self-same object which now dominates your greatest inner love and

relate yourself, link yourself with the Divine in this very form. Therefore, no strangeness should be present, no change is required—be natural.”

A varied selection of love-relationships was given with the Divine and this is why Bhakti Yoga differs from the path of Vedanta, in that while Vedanta is the movement of the individual towards the Divine in a purely transcendental, nameless, formless, absolute state, Bhakti Yoga, the path of Devotion, is the movement of the individual consciousness towards the Divine in its personal aspect. Bhakti Yoga is, essentially, the movement towards the personal concept of the Deity—God as an ever-perfect Divine personality.

The true devotee of God, the true lover of God is not bothered about what God is doing in relation to the Cosmos—whether He is creating or not. He is only concerned with what He is to him. “To me He is the object of my love and that is all I am concerned with. I am not concerned with His relationship to the Cosmos, to the universe, to this process.” To him it is not the greatness of the power of the splendour of God that is of much account, but the love of God, the graciousness of God, the beauty of God, God as a living, throbbing person, full of graciousness, full of love and compassion, eager to have you come to Him. It is an approach towards the Deity in its personal aspect and therefore, He allows Himself to be approached with any vision, any concept conceived. You may take the Divine object as a child or as your own companion with whom you can at one moment talk with love and affection and at another moment argue and yet at another moment have a little quarrel and then make up again. You can conceive of Him as your companion of the same age as yourself with whom You can take all liberties and with whom there are no more secrets. You are as one grown into one body and in this way it can be varied.

Bhakti Yoga, the Yoga of Devotion, is sweetness all around—in the beginning, in the middle and at the end. All through it is sweetness, all through it is joy, all through it is beauty. Therefore, it is said, with this emotion which is the thing that has enmeshed you in this jungle of Samsara, this life, you are not asked to turn around on it and trample it and destroy it, because that way you trample upon yourself, since that emotion has become a part of your very nature. You should cultivate it, develop it, increase it but train it and channelise it. Let it grow systematically and exercise it in a systematic way. So it is the key-note. It contains love, affection, attachment, intimacy, nearness, absolute humility, closeness and also adoration and an element of worshipfulness.

ATTAINMENT OF DIVINE PERFECTION

Beloved Immortal Atman, children of the Divine, you who are travellers upon this earth plane in this present state of physical embodiment! Due to the operation of the law of cause and effect, you, who are pilgrims working out your Karmic pattern of life according to your separate Prarabdha and who have scope for Purushartha, even while undergoing the Prarabdha Karma Bhoga, to you I have this great privilege of bringing the message this evening of the path that can take you beyond sorrow.

The essence of life is not so much what happens to you, not the various experiences of positive and negative, pleasant and unpleasant that keep occurring as inevitable part of this earth life. The essence of life is not the experiences that you undergo either physically or mentally. The substance of life, the greater value of what constitutes life is what you engage yourself in doing while you are here and while life brings its inevitable experiences to you day after day, hour after hour. Experiences, pleasant and unpleasant are the common lot of all living creatures. It is nothing special or unique to the human creature alone. All birds, beasts, animals, even the minutest insects, all undergo experiences. They experience heat, cold, hunger, thirst, pain and comforts. The inevitable vicissitudes of physical existence on earth have an impact upon all forms of life, not only on living creatures, even on plant life. They also have to bear the inclemencies of weather, torrid heat of summer, biting cold of winter and dashing rain, but they do not have in them the ability for conscious exertion towards a self-determined goal along purposefully chosen directions.

This privilege has been reserved for that unique creature, which you are, the human species, man in the image of God, the crowning glory of God's creation. To you is reserved this unique privilege of looking at life, observing things and coming to conclusions. Upon these observances and in the light of these conclusions and in the light of the knowledge you gain from observing life, you will determine what will be your goal, what will be the direction in which you will propel life and what will be the kind of action that you will engage in. So, you can live your life with a higher knowledge and deeper understanding, whereas the life of all other forms of life, all other forms of existence, is generally governed by instinct, the impelling force of the stern necessities of life. Man has the unique ability of determining the direction of his life and choosing his goal. It is in the context of this uniqueness of man that the following question becomes relevant: Will you choose the path of sorrow, pain and suffering? By ignoring the experiences of life, refusing to learn the lessons from life and being foolish, will you choose the path which appears pleasant for a while and ultimately leads to pain and suffering? Or, will you be wise and learn from every experience of life and let wisdom guide your life towards real peace and lasting happiness?

It is here that I wish to bring to your attention the great good fortune that is your lot in having been born in this land of the Himalayas and Ganga, the land of the Vedas and the Upanishads, Srimad Bhagavad Gita, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Due to this fact you have become inheritors of a culture that has something sublime, that has a message unique not only for you, but also for all mankind. Your country's culture is well-known to be a culture that is oriented towards righteousness and ultimate spiritual experience. The way of life of the fortunate children of this land is a way of life based upon wisdom, guided by wisdom and governed by wisdom. The source of our faith and belief, the source of our understanding of ourselves, this universe, and of life, are the Vedas. The Vedas imply timeless wisdom and the Vedic wisdom is the primal root and origin of our

view of life, our way of life, our faith and belief, our understanding of ourselves, this universe and the reality beyond. Therefore, the religion of India is known as the Vaidic Dharma, Sanatana Vaidic Dharma. The distinctive features that characterise this way of life is its spiritual conception of life. Its ideal of Dharma is a way of life that holds before man the supreme ideal of righteousness in life as the highest value, the most desirable end and aim to strive for. It is said that even to lose one's life in upholding Dharma is not a loss, but a gain. So much so that Dharma is held to be greater than life itself. Do not swerve from Dharma, even if it means losing your life, for then you will attain eternal blessedness. That was the injunction of the Vedas.

These two concepts, the concept that life is spiritual and its central purpose and ultimate goal is spiritual illumination, and the concept that Dharma is the one supreme factor that ensures that your life will move in the direction of the ultimate spiritual attainment are the distinctive features that have characterised Sanatana Dharma or Vaidic Dharma and make for its uniqueness. Devoid of Dharma, spiritual attainment, illumination and divine perfection is impossible. The prerequisite for the attainment of supreme blessedness is life based upon righteousness and virtue. You are the inheritors of this Dharma and this cultural heritage is the most important feature and the most valuable part of whatever our glorious past has given us as a gift. In the context of the Sanatana Vaidic Dharma they are given to the human individual, amongst other things, lesser goals—four important values to be kept before one's vision and for the attainment of which you may strive. These values indicate to us where ultimately you may transcend the inevitable pains, sufferings and sorrows of this earth plane and attain to a state of blessedness and bliss.

The four values propounded by Sanatana Dharma are Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. The last one is called Parama Purushartha and it is a transcendental value, spiritual value which imparts meaning to this life here, without which life would be entirely meaningless. It will only be a process of coming into birth, existing in time, undergoing various experiences and changes and ultimately leaving this body in death, and nothing to be attained beyond. But it was discovered that there is a higher state of blessedness to be attained, that there is a supreme goal for the attainment of which this life is a means, it is not an end in itself, but a means to that end. That vision, that experience, which was attained, the great Reality which was of the nature of supreme blessedness and bliss and having experienced that with the authority of their own personal experience, these great illumined seers, called upon mankind and gave the clarion call: 'O man, O mortals, striving and struggling upon this earth plane, weeping and wailing, buffeted by the vicissitudes of life here: we have come upon a great discovery. There is something beyond these appearances, these vanishing names and forms, that make up this universe. There is something beyond, which forms the very source, the very basis and support, the substratum, and ultimate goal of all things and that great Reality beyond appearances is of the nature of bliss absolute. It is Brahman and Ananda is its eternal, unchanging nature. From this great Brahman, all beings have come into being; supported by this great reality all things exist and unto this great reality are things verily moving. That is the ultimate destination of all beings, the divine experience of Brahman, which is Absolute Bliss.

They had discovered the Supreme Reality, attaining which one goes beyond all relative experiences, all duality, and enters into a blessed state of Bliss Absolute, and to attain that is the birthright of each and every individual soul. We have come into this world of pain and death, of old age, disease, decay, full of painful experiences, experiences brought about by elemental forces beyond our control, epidemics, floods, famines, earth-quakes, tidal waves, cyclones, fire—they call

it Adhidaiva (pertaining to gods). Experiences of various kinds of pains and sufferings inflicted by different forms of life, insects, reptiles, animals, germs, bacteria, microbes, was called Adhibhuta (pertaining to the elements). There are various factors from within, that do not let us rest, that do not give us peace, that cause constant agitation, constant vigil. They are self-created and come up within our own psychological self—love and hate, anger and passion, multitude of desires that cause oscillation and restlessness in the mind. They are Adhyatmika, coming out of our own self—fear, worry, tension, jealousy, envy, anxiety, greed, unfulfilled desire, frustration, disappointment, disillusionment, the sorrow of separation, bereavement. These three kinds of afflictions characterise life upon this earth plane.

Afflictions caused by other forms of life, other creatures, animals, reptiles, insects, minutest forms of life and then as though these were not enough, what comes from inside and creates one's own sorrow, from one's own endless desires—greed, craving for possession, for enjoyment of things, perishable things, for accumulation of things, for domination over others, ego, selfishness, and unending desires and cravings, love and hate and the concomitant accompaniments that follow. Where there is desire there is anger, there is enmity, hostility and therefore restlessness, lack of peace and there is also fear, worry and anxiety. These experiences are the common lot of all creatures and man, the psychological being, is subject to this third affliction coming from his own inner being. In this state the human individual soul has to go through life, constantly subject to these afflictions. Therefore it looks as though the fate of man is always sorrow, pain and suffering, from birth till death.

What is it that brings about an awakening, an opening of eyes in Prince Siddhartha so that he begins, for the first time, to understand what life is, how much pain, how much misery and suffering there is in life? When he comes out he comes face to face firstly with old age, the phenomenon of old age, the miseries that accompany old age, the helplessness, the unenviable lot of the person who is absolutely helpless in old age. That becomes a first shock of realisation for him, that my youthful body, my beauty, my strength, is not everlasting. It will inevitably, inexorably change and give place to other conditions of the body. Then he comes face to face with the phenomenon of disease, suffering that is inflicted upon the body, and then he sees the phenomenon of death, mourners carrying a dead body to the cremation ground and the person on the bier not responding to their piteous mourning. He says what is this? Is this the way all beings have to go? Simultaneously he sees a fourth phenomenon, a person who has renounced desire, given up craving, longing for the lustful enjoyment of life, sitting with a beaming face, serene, peace reflected in every line of his features and seemingly untouched by the sorrows of the world around him. It is this that brings to him the first inkling that there is sorrow and pain in this life, in this world, and there seems to be a way out of this sorrow through detachment.

Sankaracharya says, understand this great law; You have come with a certain Karmic pattern. What is due to you is already fixed in this Karmic pattern. Therefore do not fall prey to endless craving and desire. What is to come will come to you. Be contented. Enjoy what comes to you by the force of the operation of your own previous Karma. Do not fall prey to craving and desire and this will obviate sorrow and suffering for you. And this was similarly the observation of the young Prince, that one who has given up craving and desire, one who has renounced craving and desire, one who has generated detachment from within seems to have conquered all sorrow. There is peace beaming on his face. There seems to be joy reflected in his gaze and this set the young

Prince reflecting deeply and out of it came the great renunciation and the quest for that state of being in which one will become impervious to all pain, suffering and sorrow. There is a state, says the Gita, in which even the heaviest sorrow is powerless to shake one. One remains unaffected, unshakable even by heavy sorrow. That state which is to be attained and which gives us this power for all outer experiences, is a state which comes by recognising that this world in which you live two factors have to be clearly recognised. One is that which is a momentary phenomenon, that soon changes and passes. The whole world is filled with innumerable sense-objects, objects of sight, sound, taste, touch, smell, but each of these objects are temporary in time and space. They are limited and conditioned. They are subject to decay and destruction. All objects in this universe, whatever you see, whatever you perceive through your senses, have a beginning and an end.

The great vision and the great experience of your ancestors, the illumined seers and sages of the Upanishads, their vision and their experience declare that the entire range of these temporary things, changeful and perishable things, these finite conditions are petty (Alpa). They are petty and having experienced both this and gone beyond its experience into a transcendental experience of the Absolute, they were able, they were in a position to see the difference between this and that and they have declared for us in clarion tones in the Upanishads: happiness lies not in these petty objects of the senses which are passing, momentary, but in that all-full, eternal, absolute Being, the Reality that is Nitya Paripurna. In the Paripurna alone is the sure guarantee, the absolute certainty of true happiness, real joy, not even happiness but bliss. They called it bliss. They did not give it the word Sukha (comfort) or Harsha (happiness). They said Ananda (bliss).

Therefore having come into this world of changeful and petty perishable objects of the senses, seek the eternal, aspire to rise into an experience of the great timeless Reality, the Absolute Reality. Then alone is the sure Certainty of your transcending all the sorrows, pains and sufferings of this earth existence, this little physical life and attaining to a supernal state of absolute bliss and absolute blessedness. This state of going beyond sorrow and becoming established in a state of absolute joy, supreme peace that passeth understanding was given to you as your real goal in life, as the highest value to be attained. Moksha or liberation constitutes liberation from sorrow, pain,, suffering and misery. It is a liberation from all that is unpleasant, all that is painful, all that you are ever seeking to avoid and to free yourself from. Analyse the essence of all human activity throughout this universe, the world over, since the dawn of creation. Try to find out at the grass-roots, what is it that all creatures are striving for? .What is man engaged in doing from morning till night, from birth till death? They are engaged in doing something, they are all active. What is the essence of this activity? What is that which is common to all individuals, no matter how different they may be in their way of life due to differences of race, nationality, creed, caste, etc. Yet this one phenomenon is common to all; it binds them with a global unity. All of them are seeking to attain a certain goal and they are striving desperately after it throughout their life. If analysed, it will be discovered that all living beings, all human beings are engaged only in striving to avoid that which is unpleasant and painful. Trying to avoid that which is sorrow and trying to attain that which gives them joy, that which gives them happiness.

The whole world, all humanity, is engaged ceaselessly, day after day, from cradle to the grave, only in trying to avoid painful experiences and trying to attain that which is pleasant, that which is happiness, that which is desirable and if you put a question to all humanity saying: Is there a single human individual on earth who can stand up boldly and say yes, in this universal quest of

mankind throughout the world I have come out successfully. I do not know what pain is, I do not know what sorrow is, suffering has never touched me and I have attained that state which is unalloyed absolute happiness, joy, joy, joy. You will not find a single person.

This world is a world of pain and sorrow and that is because in this universe there are these two things: one, all the objects, everything in this universe is impermanent, transitory, momentary, subject to decay and destruction; and there is another factor, Avinashi, that which is imperishable, indestructible, that which is eternal and permanent, that is untouched by time and that imperishable principle is the spiritual Reality beyond all phenomenal appearances of names and forms. The names and forms which go to make up this universe are only appearances. Beyond this appearance there is an Adhishthana, a basis, that is Atma-tattva (soul-principle). That Atma-tattva, is of the nature of pure bliss, spiritual bliss and the quest of man, if it is to succeed, if man has to go beyond sorrow and find true happiness, absolute unalloyed bliss, then while you live in this universe of ever-changing names and forms, and being endowed with a physical body and a psychological self, you have to go through life in this world, in this phenomenon.

While living in the midst of these passing, perishable, physical objects of this material universe, simultaneously you could generate in yourself a purposeful inner self towards the great Reality and make this quest a part of your life so that there are twin currents flowing in your life. One is the outer life where you are concerned with the phenomenal nature and objects, and the other is the inner life where you are trying to pierce beyond the range, where you are ardently aspiring and eagerly yearning to know the Reality hidden behind this curtain of appearances. Ultimately a day will come, when in and through this life of perishable objects and vanishing names and forms you will suddenly realise Reality. This is the ancient quest that ends in bliss and blessedness, that had been handed down to you as the most essential part of your cultural heritage by the sublime past.

Asato ma sadgamaya, tamaso ma jyotirgamaya, mrityor ma amritamgamaya—(From untruth lead me to truth, from darkness lead me to light and from death lead me to immortality)—this prayer which has echoed and re-echoed down the corridors of centuries, millennia, this ancient prayer that has been handed down to you generation after generation by the unbroken line of teachers and guides of humanity, this is the prayer that characterises your inner being. While going through the inevitable experiences of Karma-bhoga in the form of Sukha and Duhkha, within you, you must be awake, you must know that you are but a traveller upon this earth plane, and that this is not your real abode. You come from a plane beyond, where there is eternal sunshine. Due to the operation of the law of Karma, somehow or the other you find yourself now in this condition, bound by a body, endowed with a mind and controlled by it. But your real abode is that beyond and so make your earth life a pilgrimage to that eternal abode of everlasting sunshine, the Atmic realm, that level of existence where there is that absolute Being. Therefore let your life not be totally a complete involvement in phenomenal things only, but while you are living your life, try to attain the inevitable secular objective of existence. As long as you have a body you have to work for your livelihood. You have to struggle hard, earn money, provide yourself with the necessities of physical existence, food, clothing, shelter, medical aid. You also have your own little individual longings, desires, your little plans and schemes, your heart's yearnings. All right, try to fulfil these inevitable expressions of your human nature. Animal existence does not have this complication of a vital aspect which has longings, which has yearnings and so many desires.

The wise made a provision—strive to provide yourself for your physical existence, strive also, to fulfil the desires that are inevitable to your human nature. They are a spontaneous part of your nature. But take care to see that in this striving for the fulfilment of these two secular values of your life in this material world, you do not contradict the ideal of righteousness. If you contradict the ideal of righteousness in your struggle for providing yourself life's necessities, or in your struggle to fulfil your desires, then your direction will be lost. Falling away from Dharma, your life will not move towards the ultimate supreme goal of life—God-experience, , Atma-sakshatkara—by which alone you will be able to transcend all the sufferings of this earth existence, go beyond sorrow, and liberate yourself once and for all from this wheel of death and rebirth. Therefore, making righteousness, goodness, good conduct, noble character, virtue, the very foundation of your life, making Dharma the very basis of your secular life and its living, carry on your normal way of living. Earn your livelihood, ply a trade, have a profession, do your business and till your field. It will not come in the way of your attaining the supreme blessedness for which alone you have come. You have not come here to weep and wail and merely suffer. These are the passing secondary aspects of your life. You have come here fundamentally in order to attain supreme bliss and blessedness and that is your divine destiny.

Life is not an end in itself. Your goal is not confined to this material world in which your body is living. Your goal goes beyond this world of appearances. Your goal is the attainment of Divine Perfection. Your goal is the attainment of Godliness and Divine Consciousness, which is of the nature of absolute peace and joy, which is of the nature of Paramananda (Supreme Bliss). That is the goal of each and every human individual, for this divine perfection is your real nature. You are eternally, divinely perfect. No sorrow can touch that real identity of yours, your essential being, which the Upanishads declare to be your Nija Svarupa (true nature). You are not this perishable cage of flesh and bones. You are not this little restless phenomenon of thoughts and imaginations, of memories, desires and cravings. These two constitute only a temporary added factor to your being. Your real being is distinct and beyond both these, physical self as well as the psychological self. Your real self is part of that infinite and eternal cosmic spirit. It is a ray of that eternal Light of lights which is known as Brahman, or the transcendental Reality.

You are a wave of Ananda upon that ocean of Paramananda that is your real identity and that is now hidden because there is a shift in consciousness. You have identified yourself with these passing limiting adjuncts that have been given to you to live your phenomenal life in this world. You think of yourself as a physical creature, as a psychological being and all the experience in the conditions of this physical body and the psychological being is superimposed upon yourself. You weep and wail. What does the great world-teacher Lord Krishna, who gave the Gita Jnana, say about you? He says: You are that Being whom neither weapons can injure, nor fire can burn, nor water can wet, nor wind can dry; Unborn, Eternal, Permanent, Timeless, you are untouched when the body perishes. This is your real nature, Unborn and Timeless Atman you are, and this real identity of yours is of the nature of Pure Bliss, just as honey is of the nature of pure sweetness, sandal is of the nature of pure fragrance.

You are of the nature of Pure Bliss for you are a fragment, a ray, a wave upon that infinite ocean of Brahman, infinite Ocean of Bliss that is Brahman. *Brahmanandam parama sukhadam kevalam jnanamurtim*, in these words the sages experienced that great Absolute Reality. It is a source that is invisible, and is the substratum and support. It is the ultimate goal. It is always there. It

is never absent for a single moment. This is the only truth, this is the only reality and this is the eternally present factor in this universe. Sorrow, miseries and all that are only temporary passing variations upon the surface only. Below it there is absolute bliss. There is supreme Ananda in the midst of all the diverse classes and conflicts in the surface existing in this phenomenal world. There is absolute bliss just as at the depth of the ocean there is absolute stillness. Even when a storm is rising upon the surface, waves are breaking, yet deep below at the depth of the ocean there is always calmness, always serenity. In the same way in the immeasurable depth of the great reality that is Brahman, which is the support of this surface phenomenal, universal appearance, there is always Ananda and that Ananda is the centre of your being. That Ananda is verily your own being. Your essential self never varies. That is the only truth about you.

When the consciousness goes back to that centre, here and now all sorrows will cease. You will experience Bliss. You will experience Peace, for it is ever there like the underground sources of plentiful water even in the midst of an arid waste land. They have only to tap it, they have only to bore it, they have only to go deep down. Now you are in a state of consciousness where you have turned away from the reality of your true self and you have identified yourself with the Upadhis: I am so and so; I am so many centimetres tall; I am so many years old. You, who are of the nature of absolute Satchidananda, you are discarding that heritage, you are yourself of your own accord ignoring that. You are turning away from that Reality and you are identifying yourself with the unreality of your being. Where was this body before your mother gave birth to you and how long is it going to appear? Those who have sensed the timelessness of eternity, characterise this human body as a bubble, a bubble on the surface of the water—not there a moment before, appearing for a moment, bursting and vanishing and disappearing the next moment. This is earth life. You have identified yourself with this temporary appearance.

The original sin of man is to forget the reality of his true identity and to identify himself with the body which is only a temporary clothing. The Lord characterised this body as clothing which you have worn, an apparel. Just as when the apparel is worn out and useless, man discards it and puts on a new apparel, the Jivatma leaves this body when it is useless and journeys forth and puts on a new body. So there is need to have constant Vichara and Viveka between these two factors that are present in this Universe: the unreal passing appearances, the temporary, the transitory and the reality that is eternal, changeless, permanent, beneath these passing transitory periods. There should be, therefore, a keen philosophical enquiry: What is this I see? What is the real nature of all these objects that I perceive that go to make up the world? What is the nature of this appearance of my own physical body and mental personality? Enquire philosophically and you will begin to find that all things that appear as objects of senses are temporary in time. They are perishable. Therefore discriminate and separate the eternal from the non-eternal. Viveka should characterise each Bharatiya because we are the children and descendents of the illumined sages of the Upanishads. Wisdom is our natural birthright. Wisdom is our heritage, the most auspicious aspect of our heritage. From wisdom this ray of light has emerged, for Vedas constitute that wisdom. Ultimately the highest absolute wisdom, divine illumination, divine wisdom is our goal.

Therefore, you, who are inheritors of a wisdom-oriented culture and a wisdom-oriented view of life, your life also should be characterised, not by folly and ignorance but by wisdom, discrimination and philosophical enquiry. Thus, discriminating between the real and the unreal, the eternal and the non-eternal, the permanent and the passing, you must be able, through a process of

detachment, to break away your infatuation, your attachment or clinging to that which is passing, that which is momentary, and seek the eternal and permanent.

Thus, in life understand the distinction of values. All things in this life have no ultimate value. They have temporary value only. Therefore, by all means, as long as you have to inevitably live amidst them, make use of them but do not become enslaved by them, through craving and infatuated delusion, attachment and desire. Do not become like puppets in the hands of these sense-objects. Go through life making use of these things, but not attached to them, unattached through inner detachment, utilising them but not being enslaved by them and ever seeking the eternal Reality. Make your life a continuous and ceaseless quest after the eternal Reality which is beyond appearances. Call it God-principle, call it Paramatma, call it Brahman. The name or label that you give does not matter. There is an unchanging eternal Reality behind and beyond all these changing names and forms that form the world of appearances and while we live and move amidst these changing names and forms, we shall be only questing after the Eternal. If you have set your goal on that eternal Being, then, as you move through life, the very way of your living will become a gradual process of liberation.

Where there is attachment there is misery. Where there is forgetfulness of the Eternal reality there is death and where there is keen aspiration for the Reality, liberation already starts. Life becomes a progressive process of freeing yourself from the clutches of desires and the clutches of attraction for these temporary things. Therefore, let your life be a life of triumph, a life that is at every step a conquest over desire and craving, a life that is at every step a victory over the little attractions of passing objects. Assert your mastery as the child of the Divine, a part of the God-principle, assert your mastery and say I shall ever seek to regain my inseparable relationship with the Infinite Reality. From Him I have come into this temporary state of embodiment and back to that Great Being will be my life's direction, like the waters of the ocean being absorbed by the sun's rays, rising into the sky and forming clouds, being blown upon the land by winds and falling down as rain, start flowing once again, they form streams, rivulets, then rivers and their quest is not complete until and unless they once again regain the ocean from which they emerge. In that, let your life be a purposeful moment towards the Eternal Reality which is your origin and source from where you came into this life, this earth plane. If you make your life a constant conscious endeavour, a determined movement forward, God-ward, towards the Great Reality, then sorrow cannot touch you, for within your heart there is attachment only for that Eternal Reality. Where there is attachment for God, attachment for that Supreme Reality, there petty objects cannot come and enslave you. This is the great central call of the Upanishads. Make your life a process of standing, declaring your supremacy, declaring your Atmic nature and be alert and awake.

Let your life be to you a purposeful movement towards God-experience. Let there be keen hankering after that God-experience. Endow yourself with an alert and active philosophical enquiry into the real nature of things. Know that the objects are hollow. Their attraction and appearance is only on the surface. Inside they have no substance. They are only a temporary appearance for a little while and therefore knowing that they are ultimately essenceless, set your heart upon the one Sara Vastu, the Essence of all things, that is Brahman, that is God, that is your own Eternal Abode. Let constant, active, philosophical enquiry and discrimination be your greatest friends. They will enable you to rise beyond the attractions and attachments to the passing things and keep going steadily in the direction of the great goal Moksha. The nature of Moksha is the cessation of all

sorrow, the attainment of Supreme Bliss, by which attainment you are filled with eternal satisfaction. And while you are in this plane, psychologically, try to be wise. The greater your desires for which there is no end, the more will be your misery. Therefore, try to simplify your life. Do not approach life with the idea 'let me see with how much I can live', but with the maxim of 'let me see with how little I can live'. So simplify your life and try to have contentment that there may not be too much craving. Craving is a fire; desires can never be satisfied. The more you satisfy them, the greater will their intensity be and when you are in the clutches of desires, misery is the only result.

Never compare and contrast your lot with other people's lot. This is unwise because each one comes with his own Prarabdha. Look to yourself. Do not say how much another man has got and then unnecessarily make yourself the victim of envy, jealousy and discontentment. Where you compare and contrast there is always misery. Look at your life and be content with it. Where God has placed you, thank God for what He has given you. If you want to compare yourself, then compare yourself with less fortunate people and then you will have only thanks for God. As far as possible try to be moderate in all things. Keep the senses under control. In the presence of those who have more than you or who are superior to you, be serene and fearless. Have an attitude of friendliness towards all beings who are your equals and towards those who are inferior to you, who have lesser than you, have kindness and compassion. Try to have an attitude of unperturbed indifference towards the inevitable wicked people. Then you will be happy.

You must feel yourself essentially to be a Sadhaka. What am I? I am a Sadhaka engaged in Sadhana to attain the Supreme reality in this very body, in this very life. So far as I am concerned I am a Sadhaka. Whatever the world may see in me, what am I to myself? I am the devotee seeking the Beloved. I am a Sadhaka taking this life as my Sadhana in order to attain the Supreme Reality. So let your feeling of yourself, let your knowledge of yourself, consciousness of yourself and your individuality be as that of a spiritual Sadhaka, striving to attain the Supreme Reality. Thus guide this ship of your life through the difficult shoals and rocks of the various experiences here towards that great goal. The more you move towards the goal, all sorrow will cease. Even if there is sorrow, you will become impervious to it. It will not touch you. There will be an inner strength created within you where even sorrow will not have any meaning for you. You will smile even at misfortune and sorrow. This was the secret of the perennial joy which all these great saints had. They are somehow or the other established in inner contact with God who is the source of all joy and having established that inner contact, they went through all the vicissitudes of life, smiling even in the face of sorrow, pain, dishonour, misery, all sorts of oppositions of life. This is the secret.

While you are in contact with the outer universe, put yourself into a living contact with the Divine Reality and through that contact, joy and peace will fill your heart, for God is a source of all joy, all peace and all blessedness. One of the sure means of bringing about this inner contact is to take to the practice of the Divine Name, any Name that appeals to you, for there is a mystical fact in this, mystical secret in this. The Divine Name is identical with the Divine Reality. This is a mystical truth experienced by those mystics who followed this path in attaining God. Naam (the Divine Name) is the visible form of God. God Himself has manifested as Name and therefore Vedanta also supports this view by having within its framework the concept of the Sabda Brahman or Nada Brahman. The first evolute of the absolute when it became relative manifestation, was in the form of a mystical cosmical sound. That cosmical sound was Pranava 'OM' and all the Divine Names are

only variations of Pranava. OM contains within itself all possible sounds because it is the ultimate Truth sound, cosmical sound, resource of all manifestation. Therefore, it contains within itself in an unmanifest way all possible sound variations and therefore all Naam, all Mantras, are only the variations of Pranava which is the manifestation of Para Brahman in the form of sound (Nada Brahman). Therefore Naam is none other than Nada Brahman and Naam and Nami are one. If you begin to take up the practice of the Divine Name, already you are putting yourself directly into relationship with God. So through the constant practice of the Divine Name you will be able to awaken your own spiritual consciousness. By awakening your own spiritual consciousness this identity which you have brought about through self-forgetfulness or loss of awareness, this identity which you have brought about with the perishable body and changeful mind, this identity will gradually be transcended. Then you will begin to identify yourself with your essential nature (Nija Svarupa). You will know that sorrow is not in my being, sorrow is only my imagination. What there is within me is bliss and bliss alone, for I am part of the Supreme Infinite Bliss which is Brahman. Arise, awake and attain that divine wisdom that I am in reality an Eternal Divine Principle which is of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss Absolute (Satchidananda).

TRANSFORMING SPIRIT OF SAINTS AND MYSTICS

Where people gather together with devotion, faith, love for God in their hearts, there is, not the Iron Age, not Kaliyuga, but the Golden Age, Satya Yuga. There it is no more the earth-plane. Earth-plane may be there outside physically, but it is, in truth, Vaikuntha, Bhuvaiikuntha or Heaven on earth. It is also referred to as the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven. It is potentially present where hearts filled with devotion, hearts filled with faith, and the spirit of adoration, are united together in one common spiritual wish to think of God, to hear of God and chant His Names. This is the common wish that connects all of you in a wonderful spiritual unity and harmony. This moment of oneness in the Spirit is a blessed moment, sanctifying moment. This moment of oneness in the Spirit is a great manifestation of His love and His Grace, where our thoughts and feelings and aspirations are common.

So we come together in God, as it were, when we are in Satsanga. Because it is that central magnet that has drawn us. Dwelling though we do in different physical bodies, yet this common magnet has touched deep within us something which is the same in all. It is not different from person to person. And this innermost essence knits all existence into a mystical spiritual homogeneity, a oneness. All differences are transcended and dissolved. It is when you are activated in that depth of your being, that you get the blessing of this oneness. You come into a spiritual fellowship in devotion and in faith.

This spiritual fellowship goes beyond the barriers of creed or dogma, or theology, of any sect or cult, or any religion. It goes beyond this outer barrier of formality. It is the deepest innermost essence of each individual spirit upon its journey to the Infinite. Those who have felt this deep innermost stirring within the centre of their being, they constitute a global fraternity. For them different geographical divisions upon this earth, different ethnic divisions in society, mean nothing.

It is this inner stirring within the heart of the individual, that is the eternal religion, that is the one great power that pervades the whole world which immediately makes one kin with all that exists. It does not have to be a human being with a human being. It makes a human being kin with even a blade of grass or a flower, or a little beetle or a bee, even with the wild beast in the jungle. You feel kinship with all nature through this power, and it is the Power of God's love. And the Power of God stirs, not in the human brain or the human intellect, but in the human heart. It is the power that makes one give up one's life for the life of another, do anything for the benefit of another. No sacrifice is too great, no sacrifice is even looked upon as a sacrifice. "I lose nothing. I gain if my brother is gainer, because my brother is my own self."

It is this great Power that powerfully stirred in the mystics and from time to time manifested Itself in different places on earth, no matter in what country, in what society. Somehow or the other these universal souls come. They are the real cosmopolitans. They proclaim this great oneness and brotherhood of all living beings. And in the course of human religious history, many a time this is stifled and is overcome by mere intellectualism, dry philosophy and systems of theoretical rationalisation.

Yet, in spite of that, it never dies. It is like the grass that is covered over with snow in winter, each long winter. You think it is not there, but come spring and the thaw sets in, and the sun shines again and the snow clears, God knows. Sometimes even from within a layer of snow this thing thrusts itself and is seen. How amazing is this vitality. It never dies. From time to time during the course of the religious history of humanity, always these mystical moments kept cropping up.

This power is not absent in India. It has been a continuous phenomenon. Sankara, Buddha, they all come, all giant intellects. Through their rationality they cast away all superstition, and say, 'don't accept anything'. First of all, reason, ask, analyse, investigate. Don't take anything merely because it is sacred. First of all, try to understand it.

It is all right, but how many can follow them? How many can follow J. Krishnamurti. It is all right for those who have had the blessings of education, literacy, who have gone into universities. How many of Jesus's twelve disciples were highly intellectual university people? One of them was a lawyer or a university man, I think. Out of the four, one Gospel writer was a scholar, Greek scholar.

There has been so much of progress in society over the past three or four hundred years, specially after Caxton. Printing technology came in to the world, books started to be printed. Libraries sprang up, educational institutes sprang up. And there has been a knowledge explosion during the past three or four hundred years, as never before. And so, the spread of literacy, compulsory education of children up to a certain level.

But yet, do you know the percentage of illiteracy in the world in the masses? Take, for instance, the African continent. How many people are really literate, in the sense that they know how to read and write, gain knowledge on their own through books? Only twenty per cent of the total population of India are literate. The average villager in India has to put his thumb impression. He doesn't know how to sign his name. This is so in 1983. Then what do you think would have been

the condition some seven hundred years back? In the Orient, for example, when the New World had not been discovered, the masses were illiterate.

And so, if Sankara or any great philosopher wrote the Critique of Pure Reason, or some other philosophical work, how many had access to it? How many would be in a position to read and understand and assimilate, and try to make it his or her personal philosophy or approach to the Reality? You can count them on your fingers.

That being the case, what is the scope for the vast majority of human beings to have some feelings of the Infinite of the Cosmic Being? How could they relate themselves to It? There was, therefore, the absolute indispensable necessity of a path that goes to the heart of the feeling.

It is not without reason, therefore, that, in spite of this sudden upsurge of philosophical systems, great and wide has been the need of simultaneous approach—a simple approach of those who are not lettered, who cannot go off into high flights of subtle metaphysics. And to this end, therefore, God has given, sending from time to time, great souls who simplified this approach to God and made it available to the ordinary human individual, so that he could feel God, maybe in an even deeper way than a philosopher could conceive, rise to a clear concept of the Infinite or the Eternal.

Therefore, when there is an advent of pure philosophical genius and reformer, it has its place, it has its need. Buddha, Sankaracharya, and others came and went. They fulfilled a certain function. Maybe they purified the society of its superstition and blind following, and shook it out of its complacency. But then, they touched only the few, the intellectuals, scholars. But they came and went and left no mark upon the illiterate villagers, simple men—the breakers of stone, the drawers of water, the hewers of wood, the tillers of the soil, the weavers at the loom.

Therefore, this type of intellectual phenomenon was always followed. And we have to thank God that it was so. It was followed by the advent of some great lover of God, who proclaimed boldly that God did not want any intellectual university degrees, or knowledge of Sanskrit or Vedanta. God wants your love, devotion and faith. More than anything else, He wants in your heart a need for Him. Where there is need, He is ready to give Himself. “Ask and it shall be given.”

And so, as though to prove it beyond the least shadow of a doubt, the great personal God, Isvara, came down as a little cowherd boy in Vrindavana. He played His pranks with illiterate cowherds—the Gopis and the Gopalas—and endeared Himself to everyone. He never went to school. He did not ask you what is your educational qualification. It was not like applying for a job. You ask the highest job, that of the mystic and the lover of God, to revel in His indescribable bliss and freedom.

Lord Krishna played His pranks with these simple people and endeared Himself and gave Himself freely to all those who, in their heart, conceived a deep longing for Him, deep love for Him. He even stole butter and distributed it among His companions. And they say, He kept a share even for monkeys. In that way, the Lord came and dwelt among humble folks, illiterate people. And, you know, gave Himself to all these people who had no special qualification, no intellectual degrees or scholarship.

There was a period, in South India, when the devastating impact of Sankara's absolute monism, pure Advaita Philosophy, had its day. He went all over India, debated with all people, defeated all his opponents of other religions—Jains, Buddhists, and all that—and established the supremacy of his absolute monistic philosophy, Advaita Vedanta. Then, when this phenomenon had passed over, it left many people gaping; many a smile, of course. But it passed over the heads of the masses.

When after that had gone, there arose in South India, among the Brahmin community, an extraordinary personality, Ramanuja, who was as much 'all heart' as Sankaracharya was 'all head', 'all intellect'.

Not that this man was illiterate. Very few Brahmins were illiterate. The Brahmins were the intellectual class and it was their business to learn and to teach. The main function of that particular class in society in India was to learn and to teach. He kept unbroken this stream of learning and knowledge, down the centuries, generation after generation.

And so, Ramanuja was a hundred per cent literate. But nevertheless, right from his childhood, God endowed him with a universality of outlook. Because he went to the heart of life. He said: "All life is one. Differences are only superficial. They are only in the outer; they are only in body. But one great common Consciousness dwells as the Reality within all names and forms, within all creatures, not only all human beings, in all creatures." That makes the whole of life one cosmic family, one global family, one fraternity. There is no distinction, no high or low, no speciality. And in the eyes of the Supreme Being, all are His own children. All are equally important as anyone else.

That was the vision he was endowed with, right from a young age. Right from the beginning he was a non-conformist. He was an orthodox Brahmin. Orthodox Brahmins had many restrictions in their way of living and conducting themselves. But he said, "Everyone is God's own. He is easy of approach to everyone. Everyone has a right to access to God, because they belong to Him. He belongs to them." So about all these barriers—someone claiming special priority or a monopoly to God—he said: "Doesn't hold any water with me. Away with all these things!"

At that time the Brahmins also had tried to monopolise religion. They created so much of ritualism and ceremonial formalities. They said: "Only in this way you can attain God by doing all these sacrifices, doing all these different Samskaras. Unless you do all these things, you cannot approach God." So, they had created many barriers. They said all these rituals are necessary, these sacraments only will take you to God. And so everyone had to come to them. They alone knew the sacraments and all these ceremonies. Other people did not know them. So, they held a key: "Unless you come to us and pass through all these clutches of Samsara, you will be bound." Thus, it was a way of building influence over the rest of society, illiterate society. Ramanuja did not tolerate this extreme formalism, deliberately created, set up and kept up by these contemporaries of his. He said: "You are doing it for your own selfish purpose. You want to have your ego dominating over others."

So, early in his life he did an extraordinary thing. He disturbed even his own Guru. He was a very diligent student, very well behaved and served his Guru very faithfully. His Guru was very

pleased and one day he called him and told him: “Ramanuja, come here, I will give a great secret. It is a very, very great secret. You should not divulge it to anyone. And through its practice you can attain the highest being, highest state.”

And so he imparted to him the supreme Mantra of Lord Narayana, or Vishnu. He said: “If you follow this practice diligently, you will attain the highest state of Supreme illumination, God-vision and blessedness. Nothing can afterwards hold you. Hell cannot come near you. All sins will be burned, all sorrows will vanish, all bondage will be destroyed. You will become purified, and you will attain God. This is the path to liberation. No ill can befall you. All your Karmas will be burned, up.”

When he said that, Ramanuja listened very intently. “So here is Guru imparting to me this secret of highest blessedness. The supreme state of joy and peace, and illumination and freedom. What a great thing?” Having given it, the Guru said: “Practise it, go, but don’t divulge it to anyone.”

Ramanuja could not wait to proclaim the Mantra to everyone. But the problem arose of speaking and spreading the message. In those days they didn’t have this device. He wanted himself to be heard by as many people as possible. You have heard the expression, ‘proclaiming it from the housetops’. Of course, they also said, “Proclaiming it to the beat of the drum.” Beat of the drum means you attract people’s attention, make a big noise. People will keep quiet. There will be silence and they will listen. Then you say whatever you want to say. But there is a better method. You do something stunning. Supposing you balance yourself upon a rope drawn across the Jackdaw Hotel or Empire State building, and another building. Then everyone will come. Something is happening. You do something extraordinary.

So, right where the Guru had given him the Mantra, there was a temple. In South India, the central point of any town or city is its temple and all these temples have a huge tower-like structure. Immediately after he got the Mantra, this young man said: “Yes Guruji, very secret, all very secret.” And immediately he went to the temple, climbed up this very big temple tower, and shouted to everyone: “Listen, listen, listen! I am going to tell you something extraordinary. I will reveal to you the greatest secret by which all of you will be liberated from sorrow. All of you will attain blessedness. It is a simple way. Everyone can do it. No special qualification or education or special scholarship is necessary. Immediately you can start practising it. It is so easy, so simple. And yet most effective.”

And quickly people gathered in large numbers below the Gopuram, below this big tower. And he said: “This is the way. This is the way and this is the great Mantra.” And he gave out the Mantra which just then his Guru had imparted to him *in secret*.

And then, in the crowd, some of his own other brother disciples of that same Guru were there, and they said: “What is it?” “Oh, it is Ramanuja. He has gone up. And what is he doing? Oh God.” They heard him reveal this great secret of secrets which the Guru had given him. They went straight to the Guru and told him: “This is what this boy is doing. He has gone up and, what you asked him not to reveal, so secret, he is proclaiming to the ten directions of the compass. A big gathering of all sorts of people has collected. All sinners and wretched people, good, bad, indifferent—and everyone is there. And he is giving it to everyone.”

And, for a moment, the Guru was taken aback, because Ramanuja had disobeyed. And, the next moment, he was also a little amused, tickled. “What is this mad chap doing? I told him so much, and this crack-brain has gone and immediately given it to everyone.” And the next moment, the third reaction was, when he thought a little about it, it suddenly dawned upon him: “My God, what a great heart! What a great heart! He did not even fear my anger. Anything can happen to him. And sheerly and purely due to his great desire to benefit or share with everyone this priceless treasure that he had received from me, he has braved my wrath and cast all caution to the winds and gone and done this wonderful thing. Oh, admirable! Admirable!”

So, the disciples who had taken the report were watching the Guru. One moment his brow darkened, second moment he laughed a little. Third moment a great love shone in his face, and great admiration. He said. “Take me to the place where this is happening.”

They were astonished; they didn’t know what to make of it. Anyhow, they took him there. And there he found a big gathering, and they were all chanting the Mantra which he had just now given to Ramanuja, clapping their hands and chanting the Mantras. And his heart was filled with wonderful admiration and great affection for this...He called Ramanuja: “Come, come, come. Beloved disciple, come.”

And now he obeyed. He had done his work. Meekly he obeyed, and descended, and fell at the feet of the Guru. The Guru was so pleased. So happy, so pleased, he couldn’t contain himself. He lifted up the prostrate figure of his disciple and hugged him to his heart. And he said: “Now, all my austerities, all my penances, all my devotion, all my prayers I have been sending to God have now borne fruit. Dhanya, indeed, blessed are you who have made my ministry come to its fullest fruition through your large-heartedness, through your wonderful charity, wonderful love for all. I bless you.” So he praised him and blessed him. He said: “Thrice blessed are you among my disciples.”

Ramanuja began to thrive under him, under his discipleship. He told him all the secrets of his special vision and his teachings, the path of devotion, path of surrender, path of grace. Specially, it is called the path of *grace*. He said: “Yes, you are also one with the supreme Divine Being. We are not different from the supreme Divine Being, we are one. But we are not identical. There is duality. We are one, of the same nature, but with a qualification. He is infinite and grand; we are little, we are individual. Now we are in a state of bondage. He can liberate us. We are related to Him as a spark is related to a great blaze of fire. We are related to Him as a ray of the sun is related to the sun. We are related to Him as a drop is related to the ocean. The drop and the ocean are not essentially different, they are one and the same.”

Yet, you cannot sail a ship in a drop of water. Whereas you can sail a thousand million ships in the ocean if you want. Nothing will happen. So, While they are in nature the same, there is a certain difference. But then if you attain Him, if the drop falls back into the ocean, then it becomes the same as the ocean in its depth and magnitude and grandeur, in its power. He says. “It is true. But until that, a drop is a drop.”

So it was a monism, yet it was not an unqualified absolute monism. It was a qualified monism. He qualified it with this distinction between the individual soul and the Supreme. There

may not be any difference but there is certainly a distinction between the individual soul and the Supreme, until we attain the Supreme.

Therefore, there is need for you to surrender yourself to the Supreme. It is only when His Grace comes upon you that everything that is impossible becomes possible. Everything is achieved instantaneously. So he proclaimed the doctrine of Grace, the indispensable, necessity of Divine Grace.

And he said: This Divine Grace is yours by right. Because you belong to Him, you are a child of the Divine, therefore this Grace belongs to you and you have got a claim on it. Only thing is, you must ask for it. Even if something is yours by right, unless you go and ask for it, no one is going to give it to you. So you must ask. You must call upon Him: "O shower Thy Grace upon me, O Thou the all-gracious One. Ocean of Grace. And I am suppliant unto Thee. Whatever I might have done, whatever error I might have committed, now I know that it is an error. It has kept me away from you, deprived me of the bliss and the joy of being one with you. And therefore I shall no more err."

This is the philosophy and the doctrine of qualified monism and the doctrine of Grace, and the story of the prodigal son. The Father is always gracious. No matter what a stinker you have been, what depths of degradation you have fallen in, you may have eaten with the swine, doesn't matter. All that is nothing in the eyes of the Father. It is cancelled, nullified.

Such is the love, the spontaneous love the Father has for society. The only thing is, when you willfully went away the Father was sorry, he was sad. He was pining for the son more than the son knew. When you came back, there were open arms. Always a welcome is waiting for you there, and the best robe. (I don't want to use the fatted calf, because we don't like any violence, any killing.) "Best robe, choicest robe. Go, put my choicest robe upon my son. He has come. Let everyone rejoice, let a feast be..."

Yes, there is no parable that brings out the relationship of every man and all-perfect God more appropriately and wonderfully than the parable of the prodigal son.

How precious each soul is to God, is brought out through the parable of the lost sheep. Even if the man has hundred sheep, out of a hundred, one day in the pasture one sheep fails to return home. Notwithstanding the fact that he has got ninety-nine sheep safely and securely put into the pen, this man will take a lantern and go out looking for the lost sheep in the darkness of the night, and howling wind and inclement weather.

No, even though ninety-nine are there what does it matter? He will go after the one that is more precious to him than the ninety-nine he has got, the one lost sheep. So, hill and dale, up mountain, crag and heights, he will climb and endanger himself, risk his life in order to find the sheep and bring it back.

Such is the love of God, the Divine Love. And so, this one lost sheep is as precious to Him as the ninety-nine other sheep which He has already got; prodigal son. So Ramanuja said: "Yes, this is the relationship between God and man, the Cosmic Universal Being and the individual soul. That is infinite love. And no barrier can stand between Him. Only, you must start moving towards Him.

There is no barrier but this must come from you. You must ask of this Grace and immediately you shall have it in abundance. And in His sight all are precious.”

Whether a Brahmin, or a Kshatriya, Vaishya, Sudra, or saint or sinner, literate or illiterate. All are the same to Him. His love and Grace spontaneously are ready to shower forth upon everyone, every creature on earth. Even on a subhuman creature on earth. Even if a dog or a goat, or an animal were to look up to God and suddenly become conscious of God and call to Him, He will come. He says this is the Universal Spirit; it is Grace, Grace infinite, love infinite.

So he propounds Prapatti Marga, as he has called it. Prapatti means surrender. If you surrender, then Grace showers upon you. And in his concept, grace was represented or symbolised by the Goddess Lakshmi. And the Supreme Being, the universal Soul, is symbolised by Lord Vishnu or Narayana. So they called his followers the Vaishnavites. He, the Supreme Being, conceived of as Narayana or Vishnu, and His grace—just as in the Trinity of Christian theology you conceive of the grace as the Dove. That dove is the grace of God, symbol of Divine Grace that alighted upon the head of Jesus when He was being baptised in Jordan. So, it is the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit in the form of grace and light. In Christian theology it is so.

But in Hindu theology, specially in Ramanuja, that grace, that Holy Power of God, redeeming love and grace, are symbolised by Lakshmi. So he said first of all you must worship Lakshmi, please her, and She will lead you to Her consort. Mother takes you to the father. The father may be a little displeased or angry with you, but you catch hold of the mother, then father cannot be angry with you. He has to put away his anger because he cannot displease his wife. So, in the cosmic hierarchy, Ramanuja conceives the Supreme Being, the universal Soul, as Vishnu, and His love and grace as Lakshmi. And he gave equal importance to Lakshmi. And the way, he says, is surrender, Prapatti, and devotion and the Divine Name. And anyone can have entry into the highest supreme state. No one is barred. In God’s way, everyone is the same.

This had, at once, a tremendous popular appeal. People in hundreds and thousands flocked to Ramanuja. And Ramanuja gave his Mantra to everyone—washerman, cobbler, everyone. And, therefore, here the doors of heaven fly wide open as it were, for everyone. As Jesus proclaimed: “Come unto Me all that are weary and heavy-laden, I will give shelter.”

So Ramanuja’s work was very significant, very wonderful. Incomparable in its value for people who were thirsty for a way. Everyone could not go after Sankara’s philosophy. Sankara’s philosophy could be admired by philosophers like Kant and Schopenhauer, and Max Muller and Paul Deussen, and other people. But what about Tom, Dick and Harry? Even less than Tom, Dick and Harry, poor people, illiterate people, who were non-persons? Who were not even recognised, forgotten people. As they say, the faceless masses. To them, Ramanuja came as a Godsend.

He said: “Come, come. The gates of heaven are flung open. Enter. Enter. You have only to come.” And this wonderful man had thousands of disciples, too, and he said: “Go. Proclaim this glad tidings to everyone.”

One wandering North Indian mendicant—a saint, and venerable seeker—had come from North India upon a pilgrimage to the South. At that time Ramanuja’s movement, the revival of the

Bhakti cult, was in its heyday. Immediately he found the whole of South India in a great foment, in a great excitement. Everyone was having Ramanuja on his lips. The name of Ramanuja was everywhere. And everyone was taking the name of Narayana, and practising this religion.

He said: "What is this? There is a sudden wave of devotion sweeping over the subcontinent or South Indian peninsula. What is this?" So he became attracted and he sought audience with Ramanuja, had his Darshan, had his Satsanga. And he became completely overwhelmed by Ramanuja's personality. He said: "Please take me also as your student and disciple. I shall stop my wanderings and learn, sit at your feet and learn."

So he deeply drank of the philosophy of Ramanuja's Bhakti Marga and imbibed it thoroughly. And Ramanuja blessed him and told him: "Go and proclaim this in Northern India."

Ramanuja did not know the North Indian language. He knew only the classical Sanskrit and his own South Indian language. So he could not go and preach to the masses in North India. He could go and proclaim his philosophy to the scholars because Sanskrit was the link-language. Everywhere from the southernmost tip of India right up to the northern Himalayan peaks, west and east, Sanskrit was the link-language. If you knew Sanskrit, in all scholarly circles you could make yourself understood and you could understand them. It is like Latin. But the vernacular, he did not know.

So he sent this man. This man was called Swami Ramananda. He was a monk, a monastic. And he said: "I will be your messenger to the North."

You must understand that in those days North India was under the influence, sometimes even aggressive influence, of Islam. Because, the emperors who were ruling in Delhi were all Moguls and they were all Mohammedans. Of course, some of them were very very broad-hearted and tolerant. They admired the best in Hinduism and other religions, and did not want to destroy it. One of the great emperors was Akbar. He saw a rich philosophy, a rich mysticism in Hinduism. It is a shame, greatest blunder, to attack it and destroy it. On the other hand, a fusion could enrich Islam. Of course, because he was the emperor, people kept quiet. Otherwise they would have killed him. But he was an emperor, very learned scholar, broad-hearted man.

So he kept in his court ministers, Moslems as well as non-Moslems. There were Hindu ministers, Hindu advisors to him. He even went out of his way to marry a Rajput Hindu princess and created in matrimony an alliance with a Hindu royal family of Rajasthan. He called all the Brahmin scholars and Pundits, all the Mullas of Islam, and other scholars of other denominations also. He tried to formulate a common religion which would be acceptable to Moslems and Hindus, Jains and Buddhists, and all others. We must even try to make a Bible, common Bible, he said. He wanted to create a universal religion. He entrusted this task to scholars. But somehow, it had a brief appeal, then the die-hards soon brought it to an end. He called it Dheen-Illahi, religion of the world.

There were some emperors who were like rabid mad dogs, fanatical, dogmatic. Anyone who did not agree with Islam was put to the sword. They broke all temples, razed them to the ground and built mosques there. They were such fanatics.

One of the most fanatical among them was Aurangzeb. But he was a wonderful Moslem, very austere, very simple. He was an emperor ruling the court, ruling the whole of the Moslem part, but he said: “No. I will eat only what I earn by the sweat of my brow.”

So even when he was emperor, it is said of him, that he used to prepare caps for the Moslems. He was a cap-maker, just like the mystic Paul was a tent-maker. He was a cap-maker, and he used to sell the caps. Whatever income he got out of cap sales, he had his food only with that amount of money, they say. He was a very austere man. But a terrible man, although his personal life he is a good man.

Then, there was so much impact of Islam in Northern India that, when Ramanuja went, he said: “I will have to give my message in such a way that it will not become controversial, it will not create a confrontation, and conflict and clash in the prevailing society.”

There, the money of the Moslems had the upper hand. And, therefore, he went and settled down in Benares, and gave his teachings in a very universal way. He said: “Ultimately, God is only One. You may call Him Allah, you may call Him Brahman. You may call Him Rama, Rahim, Krishna, Karim. He is only One. And, therefore, the approach to Him is through devotion. You direct your devotion calling Him Allah or calling Him Brahman. He accepts this, He knows He is only One.” So the devotion of all beings, whether they are Hindu or Moslem, or Jain or Buddhist goes to Him. And I believe there was some little influence of Christianity also there.

So, it is said, there was always controversy between the Brahmins and the Mullahs. In Benares also there is stronghold of Islam. In Aurangzeb’s time they even tried to destroy the temple in Benares and build a mosque. Even today the mosque exists side by side with the sacred temple in Kashi. And they tried to destroy it.

But then, in controversy, it was a ding-dong battle where no one was really the winner—matches were always drawn. The philosophy of Sankara was not an ordinary philosophy, you couldn’t controvert it easily. But the Mullahs held on to their views.

Gradually, from Persia Sufis began to come. And Sufis were universalists. They were Moslems by birth, but they did not like the dogmatism and the fanaticism of Moslems. They said there is but one Father of all mankind. He is the Being who created the sun, the moon, the stars, and all that. They believed also in the oneness of Godhead. And they also believed, as Ramanuja proclaimed, that they believed in the approach of the heart. They said religion is the religion of the heart.

You can only approach the Supreme Being through love. God is Love. If you have devotion to Him, all other things, considerations, are swept aside. He doesn’t care. He only sees what your heart is. If the heart is pure and in that heart there is genuine devotion, compassion for all creatures—you are a friend of His creation, friend of all creatures; you never harm anyone, you want to do good to all. And if there is deep love for Him, you hunger for Him, you thirst for Him; then He will come. He *will* come. He only wants this great hunger for Him, this purity of heart and this love and compassion towards all creatures. That is the sum and substance of all religions, sum and substance of the spiritual path. That is the way, proclaimed the Sufis.

So, the teachings of these wonderful Sufis, great Persian poets, began to spread throughout the Indian Hindu society. Why? Because of the simple fact that the Moslems being the ruling class of the emperors, the official language in North India was Arabic and Persian—more Persian than Arabic. So everyone had to learn. Two or three generations ago, they all learned only Persian in North India, including all the Hindus. They did not know much English, and they did not even know Sanskrit or Hindi. They had to learn everything through Persian. They started in their kindergarten with Persian, and they learned their history, geography, everything, in Persian. There are even now many old people in India who don't know Hindi; they only know Persian.

These great Sufi mystics were also poets and their mysticism was declared through their wonderful poetry, and it was all in Persian. Naturally, it came to North India. Persian was compulsory; everyone had to read Persian. It was not only the court language, but also the language in schools and colleges. And, so, Persian being widespread in the North, among Indian society, Moslem as well as Hindu, the impact of the Sufi mystic poets and their teachings, and their great outpourings of love, became well-known in North Indian Hindu society.

The doctrine of Ramanuja brought to North India by Ramananda appealed to the Sufis among the Moslems; because many Moslems were converted into Sufis. They shied away from the dogmatism and the fanaticism of the Mullahs and the orthodox Moslem theologians, and orthodox Moslems. They said: "No. We will have no truck with these people. They were also a breakaway cult, as it were. They were not looked upon as favoured by the orthodox Moslem people; they were branded as heretics. They were even persecuted, because some of them attained high spiritual experience, when they had monistic experience like what Sankara proclaimed.

So they went and boldly declared, "I am Brahman." Of course, they did not say "I am Brahman" in Sanskrit, Aham Brahmasmi. They said "Anal Huk", "I am God" in Persian language. And Mullahs became outraged. "You fellow, blaspheming. You are claiming equality with God. Kill this fellow."

So they even put them to the sword. They tortured them, and killed them. Some of the Moslem Sufis were dealt with in a very terrible manner. Those days there was barbarous punishment. They were either put upon the stake or impaled upon a spear. One of them, it is said, was flayed alive. Even when he was living, he had the skin of his back taken away. His name was Shams Tabriez. He was a great mystic and he said "Anal Huk". That means "I am God". And it was terrible for them, outrageous.

Many of these Sufis began to come to the discourses of Ramananda. Ramananda gave his teachings in public. So his disciples were there, other Hindus were there, many Sufis came, and he put an end to all controversies. He brought about a great harmony. At the same time, being an orthodox Brahmin teacher, he had to be careful about public opinion also. He did not openly take Moslem disciples, but secretly taught them. He was not averse to them, he did not bar his meeting to these people. He said: "You can come, you can listen, I don't mind."

One of the greatest disciples that he had, who later on became a great mystic and a poet on his own merits, was the famous mystic poet and illumined being called Kabir Das. A well-learned man, he was illiterate. He was a weaver's son, and they say, was born to Hindu parents. He was

brought up by Moslem parents. He might have been born, he might have been adopted by them or he might have been an orphan they adopted, God knows. But it ended up by his bringing up in a Moslem family, father and mother who brought him up as a Moslem. And curiously enough, it was in the sacred city of Benares, Kashi, the holiest of holy places, the Mecca of India, you can say. He was brought up there.

And he was born with this inner hunger for God. That is, he must have been a Yogi in his previous birth. Already he must have been on this path, the mystical path, long before. So when he was born in this particular incarnation as Kabir, from his young age, right from his boyhood, he had this great urge for God, great hunger for God.

And so he was seeking and seeking, and he was drawn by the teachings of Ramananda. He dare not approach him to give him initiation because he was an orthodox Hindu leader, teacher. So one day he said: "How can I get initiation from Ramananda?"

He hit upon a device. He knew of a habit of Ramananda. Early in the morning he used to go and have a dip in the sacred river Ganga. It was semi-dark always, very early in the morning, half past four or five o'clock. One day, he followed him silently when he went down to take his bath in the river. And directly in his path of return, Kabir lay himself flat upon one of the steps. There is a series of stone steps, granite steps, leading to the water's edge; so this young boy went and laid himself flat.

And in the semi-darkness, after bath and prayer, when Ramananda was coming up, without knowing, he inadvertently stepped upon Kabir's body. Suddenly he realised, "My God, I have stepped upon someone." And, so, in spite of himself, spontaneously the name of God came to his lips. Just as you say "Oh my God", "Allah", as they say. He said "Rama Ram, Rama Ram, Rama Ram."

So that was enough for Kabir. He said: "Guruji, thank you very much for your grace in imparting to me this Mantra." It was done. So, then Kabir went away, repeating "Rama Rama Rama Rama", and proclaiming himself as a disciple of Ramananda. He said: "I am the disciple of Ramananda. Ramananda has given me a Mantra."

Neither the Mullah could agree with this, nor the orthodox Brahmins could agree with this. Ramananda kept silent. And when the question was directly put to him: "Is Kabir your disciple?" he said: "Mm." He did not dither, he said "Yes." So, Kabir became an official disciple of Ramananda and he progressed wonderfully.

Yet, he was very unique in one way. In mysticism. That uniqueness of his is a matter of great hope to all people of the present age, 20th century. He lived six or seven hundred years back, but his uniqueness has a message of hope to all of us today, in this 20th century.

I have brought two books. Five minutes I will read out from one of Master's books: "Om Om, Om. Gird up your armour, fight the battle of life. 'Put on the armour of self-denial and take up the shield of discrimination. And fight the battle of life and kill the demon ..."

What is the demon? Your own mind. It is not outside, this demon is inside; that complicates this battle. You have to go into yourself. "...Kill the demon, mind. And come out victorious with the laurel of Self-realisation and eternal bliss. Understand life. Man is more complex in impulses and desires than any other creature created by God. Man is what he thinks, also man is what he eats. The food also has got its distinctive quality. The mind is made up of the subtlest element of food..."

And it is interesting that this has come up, because one who has made the greatest study and expounded this particular aspect of food is Ramanuja, the great Ramanuja about whom I have been telling, whose monism was called qualified monism. Sankara's was unqualified, absolute monism. Ramanuja says: "Yes. You are essentially one with God, but with a great deal of distinction. There may not be difference, but there is distinction." So, monism is there, but qualified monism. It is called in Sanskrit Visishta Advaita philosophy. Advaita is the same word. Advaita is monism or non-dualism. But, that is called Kevala Advaita of Sankara, absolute monism of Sankara, whereas Ramanuja's is Visishta Advaita. Visishta means with qualification.

And it is Ramanuja who specially laid great importance, stress, upon the purity of food. And he explains how it is. When you eat food, each food has got its own quality, Yogic quality, its own vibration, quite apart from its quality, due to its composition, which may be predominantly a protein food, or predominantly a starchy food, or predominantly a fatty food, being rich in amino acids or devoid of amino acids, devitalised, whatever it is. So its quality is through this approach; they divide food into different categories starch, protein, fat; and rich and devitalised and all that, purely from the point of view of its nutrition.

Ramanuja studied food from its vibration, its deeper quality, essential quality. Whether it is Tamasic, very gross, or whether it is Rajasic, very exciting, or whether it is Sattvic, purifying and uplifting, or the nature of harmony, spiritually very favourable and beneficial. He tried to make this study Yogic.

He said that food has a gross aspect. I mean, its material physical aspect, then its next subtler aspect, and the subtlest aspect. So, the gross part of the food, the body cannot take. So, after digestion it is eliminated as faecal matter, excreta. It is thrown out. It is the grossest part of food which is of no use to the body. The next subtle part of the food, the nutritional essence, is absorbed by the body and goes to make up blood, bones, flesh, muscles, skin, etc. of the physical body. But it has got that subtle vibration, its essential quality, which is the subtlest of the three parts. That goes to make up your mind, that rises up. Even the gross body cannot assimilate it and make it into bone and flesh and blood. It is too subtle. That goes to make up the nature of your thoughts, your sentiments, your emotions, your feelings, your attitudes. So the psychological person in you is nourished by this subtlest aspect of the food. So, he stresses the importance of food. "*Ahara shuddhau, sattva shuddhah,*" man is what he eats. "*Jaisa an, vaisa man,*" to put it in Hindi.

"...Life is a network of social relationships. We are dependent upon one another. No man can exist in absolute isolation. The five senses of knowledge form the basis of ordinary life. You cannot think of anything you have not seen or heard. Through introspection, cogitation, meditation, you can alter the course of life. In the ultimate analysis, your true life is beyond time and space, your true life is an infinity and an eternity. Believe in what you do, and do what you believe in. The inner

make up of the human nature invariably finds expression in the outward actions. You cannot be a saint within and a rogue outside, nor vice versa. Ideals must materialise in your practical life...”

Mahatma Gandhi used to have one hour of prayer in the morning and one hour of prayer in the evening, in spite of his heaviest routine and busiest life. He gradually compiled a book of Bhajans over the years, from his Ashram prayers. As new songs began to be sung he said: “Give it to me, write it to me.” One of the songs in that book was: “This is not the way of loving God, that God is standing ever wakeful and you are slumbering. O man, O pilgrim, rise up, wake up. It is already dawn, night has gone. This is no time to slumber and sleep, and snore. Wake up.”

One of the favourite songs of Gandhiji was: “...In separation from God is man’s greatest misery. In the illusion of this separation is the seed of desire. Be in the company of saints and holy people. Serve the preceptor, hear of the great deeds of the Lord through the Scriptures. Sing the glories of the Lord. Then you will attain devotion. And through devotion, God-realisation. Repeat that sacred Divine Name with full faith. Practise self-control. Walk the path of good conduct. Observe, respect, and serve elders and saints. You will have the vision of God.”

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Blessed children of the Lord, beloved seekers and devotees! We are very fortunate and blessed today to have this wonderful spiritual festival the dedication of the St. Francis Chapel. Since early morning today you have all been living in an atmosphere of piety, devotion, and dedication to God. You have also been living in the wonderful remembrance of the great Saint Francis of Assisi and therefore there is no doubt that we are under special grace today in which this rich gift of God has been given to us. I feel a special sense of joy and a special sense of spiritual privilege to be a part of this spiritual day. I feel very, very happy to be sharing this great blessedness and spiritual fellowship with you all. Such spiritual fellowship is regarded in India as one of the effective means of coming closer to God. It is considered as a very purifying process. The scriptures refer to such spiritual fellowship as a bark to cross this ocean of existence. In the scriptures there are declarations where the Divine says, “I am not somewhere in the heaven nor in a cave nor in a Yogi’s heart. I am there where My devotees gather together and chant My Name.” And you will know that the Divine Master Jesus Christ has also said that “where two or three are gathered together in My Name, I am also with you.” Now we are gathered together here in the Lord’s Name, but many times more than two or three. Do you doubt, therefore, that the Lord is very much with us? He is very much with us, but we do not perceive Him. It is not the fault of the Lord, but there is still something lacking in us.

What is it that we are lacking? What prevents us from feeling the presence of the Divine? Why should we ask these questions? What if we don’t feel the presence of God? We have got TV and everything, so what does it matter if we don’t have the Lord? When we have all this, do we not have everything?

Well, these are questions which you yourselves can and must answer in your hearts. If we think that by having all these things we have all that is necessary, then maybe there is no need for

trying to feel God's presence. But the trouble is that even though we have all these things, we still do not find the satisfaction of having obtained everything. For one thing, in spite of having so many things, we still are bothered by many more desires. Full satisfaction and contentment are not there. In spite of having many things which the modern world considers to be wonderful, man does not seem to be really happy. Modern man is not at peace within his own heart. There is still a sense of want and a sense of non-fulfilment. Therefore it is, that we have sayings such as, "What if man has the whole world but not his own self?" Even if one possessed the whole world, but had no love for God, that man would be poor. Where there is desire there is no fullness. Therefore the question before us is, "What is that which will give total and complete satisfaction over all desires and wants of the human individual?" What is there in this life which will give us total and absolute satisfaction and contentment, with true unending happiness?

It is to answer these questions that all the world's scriptures exist. It is to answer these questions that the saints and messengers of God have come from time to time on earth to give their messages and teachings. And it is precisely this answering of these questions in the human heart and the showing of the true way to joy, peace and blessedness that the life and teachings and personality of Saint Francis of Assisi does for us.

There is a little scripture in India which contains the essence of the teachings of the Vedas, even though these teachings are voluminous and vast, and beyond the reach of the ordinary individual. This tiny scripture brings to us the very essence and heart of the Vedic message, of the teachings which came directly from God, even as the Gospels of the New Testament have come directly from the Son of God. This small scripture is the Bhagavad Gita, which means "The Lord's Song". It is called so because it came directly from Lord Krishna and in the form of poetry. It contains 700 verses, divided into 18 chapters. In the 12th chapter, the Divine Teacher reveals a very important teaching. In it the Lord tries to tell us what are the characteristics of a true lover of God, how a devotee of God conducts himself and lives. There is a given description of what in his opinion is the nature of the true devotee of the Lord who is very, very dear to the Lord.

You all know that St. Francis is well known all over the world as one unique saint whose life resembled most closely the life of Jesus Christ Himself. He is well known at that sublime being who tried to live literally his life in imitation of the Divine Master Jesus. He tried to make his life a close fulfilment of the instructions given by Jesus Christ, in His own divine words. In doing this, St. Francis fulfilled the will of God, as expressed in and through Jesus. By thus fulfilling the will of God, he endeared himself to God and became the beloved of the Lord.

In this connection there is a very interesting and deeply significant event. With the news of Lord Jesus's healing work and curing diseases and other miraculous acts of relieving people of distress, people started coming to Him from all directions. As long as He confined Himself only to teaching and calling people to the spiritual way there were not so many crowds around Jesus nor so much popularity. But once He went beyond this and started to minister to the earthly needs of people's bodies and minds, He became very much in demand. Afterwards, He had no rest either by day or by night. Therefore He was sometimes compelled to go away into some unknown place to be alone and to take rest. One day He was, as usual, surrounded by large crowds of people and it was difficult even to go near to Him. A man was being brought to Jesus by his relatives and friends. The man was too ill to move so he had to be lifted and brought on a cot. But they could not bring him

near to Jesus because there were too many people surrounding Him seeking relief. But they were so eager to have this man healed that they somehow managed to take him onto a rooftop, remove the tiles and lower his entire cot down to where Jesus was sitting. Of course, Jesus, out of His compassion and love, healed the man. In such a condition, it so happened that Jesus Christ's family came to see him. They came because they had heard disturbing reports in connection with Jesus. They had heard that due to His great popularity and fame the priests and pharisees were not at all pleased. They resented the great crowds following Jesus. There was envy in their hearts and the fear the Jesus would become more important than them in the future. They saw in the personality of Jesus a threat to their own importance, authority and power. They wanted to put a stop to it, so they sent a distorted version to the Roman authorities, suggesting that this man Jesus may become so popular a figure that He would create problems for Herod. When this news reached Mary, Joseph and James, it caused them anxiety for Jesus. They wanted to see Him and to pray to Him not to overdo these things, to warn Him to be careful. But the crowds were too great for them to approach Jesus. From the outskirts of the crowd word was sent to Jesus that His parents had come. When Jesus received the message His response was very extraordinary. He said, "Who is my relative? Who is my brother? I have no family. He who carries out the Will of the Lord, he is my family." So saying, He ignored the message and carried on with His work. Possibly His family returned disappointed, unable to see Him. The ultimate outcome is not important, what He said is important.

"He is dear to me who carries, out the Will of My Father. They only are My own who live to carry out the Will of My Father." One who pursues and carries out the Will of God and lives in obedience with God's Laws, such a one, indeed, is a blessed and fortunate being, for by such a life one obtains the Lord Himself. And in obtaining the Lord, verily you obtain everything. Nothing more remains to be obtained and life becomes full and rich. Life becomes glorified and such a one becomes a man in the highest sense of the word. The peace and happiness which man seeks in vain in this imperfect world of perishable things is fully obtained forever by obtaining the Lord. The greatest gain, therefore, is the attainment of God in this very life. The value of the life of beings like St. Francis lies in their lives and teachings. They show the direct way to God-attainment.

Here we come again to the first question: What is it that we are lacking? What is standing in the way of our attainment of God? In the Bible there is a simple saying, not to be ignored: "One man cannot serve two masters." Especially if they are contradictory to one another. Therefore it is said you cannot worship God and Mammon (standing for all that is material, gross and earthly).

This, therefore, is the problem of modern man. He is too much in love with things which the world of modern technology has made possible for him to possess and enjoy. He is so much engrossed in the pursuit of these things that he has no time to question whether these things give him real happiness, whether they can liberate him from sorrow, grief, worry, anxiety and fear. He has no time to reflect on these questions. He is engrossed in the pursuit of these things and yet is seized by sorrow and suffering. He does not stop to seek the answer and the cure.

Both the answer and the cure of these universal problems have been obtained through the lives of saints. St. Francis raised his voice of warning to mankind. His message is even ten times more relevant today than it was in his own time. He declared that man had made his life too complicated and cluttered up with so many material things that there was no room for God. He advised man to stop his folly and to simplify his life and to be content. He advised man to try to

make his life more and more simple in every way and to understand the meaning and value of true poverty. The more man possesses things, the more things possess man, and he will lose his real freedom. The more you free yourself from the possession of things, the freer and richer you will be. Through simplicity and poverty, you liberate yourself from the tyranny of things. So liberate yourself from this bondage to things and relate yourself to the Supreme Reality. Link yourself to God through His constant remembrance and through prayer. Simplicity, poverty, prayer and God-thought, these are the great truths discovered, experimented and experienced by our beloved St. Francis. If you desire the love of God and His compassion, then express this same compassion to all His creation.

This way of life, of attaining victory over the power of things and of entering into a constant, conscious link with God is the solution for modern man's complex problems and the sorrows he creates for himself. To me, it seems that this is not merely a solution to the problems of modern man, but it seems to hold the solution to international global relationships. In the ultimate analysis, the grave situation between nations and races is due to the desire to accumulate and to dominate. This dangerous situation is because man has cultivated only his intellect and his ego and neglected the cultivation of his heart. If compassion and love were to prevail in human society, there would not be the present hatred and violence in the world. Even now, it is not too late to mend the situation. If only the 20th Century world would listen to the message of St. Francis there could still be hope for human survival and for unity, brotherhood and harmony. Let us hope and pray to the Lord that in this year of grace, which marks the anniversary of this great Saint of Assisi, through his benediction there may be a change of heart in global humanity. Let man stop complicating his life with too many things and desires, and link up his life with God. Even as the way to God is by the fulfilling of His commandments, the way to our highest welfare is in fulfilling the teachings of this great saint. If we sincerely try to fulfil the teachings of St. Francis even to one tenth of a measure, we can be assured that a great blessing will come upon us. In this 800th anniversary of St. Francis' birthday, let the world take for its guidance this simple prayer, which will come as a soothing balm to the pains which world humanity is now suffering:

“Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace; where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console; to be understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love; for it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning, we are pardoned; it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.”

May the world awaken and recognise the importance and significance of St. Francis for its own present as well as its future welfare. Let the world see the importance of the ideal of his teaching as the solution to the world's present problems. By turning to him and his luminous life may man come out of darkness and emerge into the Light. May man liberate himself from anxiety and fear into faith and trust through the sublime way of St. Francis of Assisi. Let man come from violence to non-violence. Let man negate himself from hatred and come into love and understanding.

Let us fill our hearts with praise and thanksgiving to God that He has sent to us such a unique and ideal man as St. Francis, for as long as we keep these great personalities enshrined in our hearts

and thoughts, there is hope for mankind. St. Francis is a unique saint and his teachings are necessary and indispensable today in each and every country of the world.

This is all that this servant to God has to say today. This sharing has become a wonderful, privilege and a great joy. God bless you all. Let Him be enshrined in your hearts and may you serve Him by bringing Him to more and more people in this way.

ESSENCE OF RELIGION

It is very necessary to first understand the meaning and purpose of life. Then alone can man live meaningfully, understanding the significance of his existence and presence here on earth and thus be able to proceed in the right direction and attain success and fulfilment in life. The main object end purpose of all religions that exists in this human world, is to grant to mankind this right understanding of one's life. Religion exists to bring to us the right knowledge and understanding of why we are here, what is the meaning and significance of our presence upon earth and what is the goal that we have to attain in and through this life. *In their innermost essential teachings all religions are identical.*

There are differences in the outer form and the mode of the practice of religions. This is inevitable because these religions have developed in different parts of the globe, in different periods of human history and, therefore, due to historical factors and geographical conditions the outer ceremonial and ritualistic aspects of religion are naturally different from one another. Because of these differences in geographical occasion and the historic time period, these religions first emerged through the teachings of some great prophets. But when one tries to go beyond the outer formalism of religion the mere external, ritualistic and ceremonial aspects of religion, one finds that the inner essence of all religions bring them close to each other and there is a similarity which is not apparent on the surface. The essence of all religions is almost identical because all the great prophets were messengers of God and their message was the declaring of the Will of God for man on earth. God's divine plan for man on earth and this Will of God for man's life and conduct and man's mission on earth is and always has been, love, harmony, brotherhood, service and truthfulness—*Prema, Santi, Samarasya, Seva, Satya*. These have been the most important teachings of all religions because it is God's Will that man becomes a creature of love even as He Himself is, that man becomes a creature of verity, integrity, truthfulness, purity, and that man becomes a creature of kindness and compassion. This is what we expect from God for ourselves forgiveness of our sins, kindness and compassion, tolerance of our little weaknesses and our shortcomings and our human foibles.

In our own life we must practise these fundamental divine virtues as part of the practice of religion. Religion is not merely ritual and ceremony. Religion goes beyond it. Religion is the movement of the deepest depth of our being where we are not merely physical and earth creatures, but sparks of divinity, we are waves upon the ocean of eternal divine existence. It is in this innermost depth of our being wherein we are spiritual in nature. In this depth, we make a determined attempt, a continuous effort to link ourselves once again with the divine source of our being. This is the very essence of religion, Religions exist and function in order to bring man back

into a state of living relationship with God. The essence of religion is re-establishing our forgotten connection with the Supreme Universal Soul.

Religions exist to bring the human back into close contact with the Divine, to bring the individual once again into a living union with the Universal Soul. Such re-establishment of this gross connection, of forgotten relationship, this inner spiritual union with the Universal Soul is possible only if we earnestly strive to purify our entire nature and rid it of all that is gross, all that is undivine and unspiritual. If we have to draw near to God, we have to establish a living relationship with Him, enter into a spiritual communion with Him and thus attain God experience and abide in God. For that we have to grow in His likeness. We have to develop within us those very sublime qualities which are indicative of God-nature. For that man must eradicate from his personality and character all low and petty tendencies like craving, carnal passion, impurity, greed, selfishness, anger, jealousy, envy, haughtiness.

If you ponder the great teachings given by Lord Krishna in the 16th Chapter of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita you will understand this process of cleansing ourselves of the dross of undivine and unspiritual qualities and trends in our nature and thus purifying our life and raising the standard of its living to a higher sublime level. It is precisely here that religion comes as a great help. Religions exist to ennoble human nature, to refine human thought, word and actions, and to make sublime human character and conduct. So, the more you grow into purity, the more you grow into goodness, the more you grow into sanctity and holiness and you begin to approach the supreme experience of union with God, the supreme experience of entering into a state of conscious and living relationship with God. This is the heart of the religion of man, bringing man back into a conscious living relationship with God and thus 'divinising' his nature and making him a great boon to human society itself. Such people illumine with God-experience, become centres of love, harmony, goodwill, centres of all that is holy auspicious and blessed, centres of purity and goodness. They become the salt of life; they become the precious gems in the human treasure, as it were. They become the real wealth of mankind. To enable human beings to thus grow into this divine nature and to make them the centres of divinity, religions show the way.

The heart of religion is to make us realise our kinship with the Universal Being, the Divine Universal Soul, God. All the rituals and ceremonials have a place at a certain period of your practice of religion, but later on they must give way to this inner transformation of human nature from grossness to sublimity and subtlety, from passion to purity, from selfishness to selflessness and to a dedicated life of love and service. This is the essence of religion. This is the essence of the teachings of all the great prophets. O man, thou art divine, thou art the child of God. Thou art divine in nature, therefore divinely live your life. May your thoughts and feelings be divine. May your attitudes and approach be divine. May your reactions to outer occurrences be divine and may your relationship with the rest of human kind also be divine because to live divinely is the most natural thing for you because you are a divine, being a child of God. This is the central call, this is the very essence of all the existing world religions.

Here is what the beloved and holy Master, Swami Sivananda, has to say about the essentials of all religions: "There is a God or a Supreme Being. In Him alone you will find supreme peace, Parama Santi, eternal bliss, freedom, perfection and immortality. Never hurt the feelings of others. Speak the truth. Do not kill any sentient beings. Cultivate divine virtues such as humility, courage,

forgiveness, tolerance and compassion. Love all, be kind to all. Be good, do good. Be charitable. Purify the heart. Serve humanity. Share what you have with others. Love thy neighbour as thy own self. Cultivate universal brotherhood. Destroy all barriers that separate man from man. These, indeed, constitute the essentials of all religions. In this all religions are one. There is no clash or conflict or disharmony between religions in the innermost depth of their true nature, in their innermost essential original teachings.”

Religion, therefore, if rightly understood and properly practised, will ennoble human nature, will rid human nature of all that is negative, all that stands between the self and one’s fellow beings, all that stands between man and God. The removal of these obstacles, the experiencing of brotherhood, coming out from your little narrow shell of selfish living and embracing the whole humanity as your own family, will be brought about if religion is properly understood and practised. Therefore, do not unnecessarily fight and quarrel regarding the external ritualistic and ceremonial aspects of religion. They have an important place, but are bound to differ because individuals differ in the external expression of their lives. Go to the heart of the teachings of each prophet. No prophet, no messenger, no scripture even calls man an earth creature. No scripture, no prophet ever says, ‘utter lies and be harsh, be angry, hate your neighbour’. On the contrary, all the religions and scriptures proclaim the sublimity and the necessity of love, compassion, tolerance, forgiveness, purity of character and conduct, unity, harmony and brotherhood. These are the very innermost teachings, the very core and essence of all religions.

Beloved friends, let us open our eyes now and come out of our narrow begotten stand regarding religions. Let us be open-minded and tolerant. Let us destroy this artificially created barrier between different religions and sects, different Sampradayas (schools of thought). The external hairsplitting arguments of Vedantins, leave it to the Pandits, the scholars and the philosophers. Be a man of true religion. Bring God into your life. Know that He is your constant companion and try to live as a true child of God. This is the very essence of all the scriptures. It is the essence of the teachings of all the great saints and sages, prophets and messengers of God. This is the essence of all religions. It teaches purity, truthfulness, goodness, harmony, love, unselfishness, the spirit of service, forgiveness. Therefore, beloved children of the Divine, do not be misled and misguided by people who for their own selfish interest speak from platforms of different religions and try to separate man from man. Religion exists in the world not to bring about discord, differences and war. On the contrary, religion exists in order to harmonise, to bring together, to unite and to make man conscious of the brotherhood of man. It shows to us the sanctity of all life and declares to us that non-injury, compassion or kindness is the highest of all laws—*Ahimsa paramo dharmah*.

The Saint Ramalinga, Jyoti Ramalinga Swami declared before his disappearance that “compassion to all creatures is the key to heaven and the key to blessedness.” The great Saint Francis of Assisi prayed in a simple prayer, “O Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace. Where there is hatred, let me bring love; where there is anger, let me bring pardon; where there is despair, let me bring hope; where there is doubt, let me bring faith; where there is darkness, let me bring light; where there is sadness, let me bring joy. O Divine Master, I do not seek so much to be understood by others, but rather to understand others. I do not seek so much to be loved by others, but rather to love others. I do not seek so much to be consoled, but rather to console others. For it is

in giving that one receives, for it is in pardoning of others that one is pardoned, for it is in dying to this little self, this little petty egoistic 'I', that one attains to everlasting life."

Beloved brothers, is this not really the heart and essence of all religions? For great-hearted people the whole world is their family. The essential teachings, the heart and core of religion, is love, goodness, purity, truthfulness, kindness, compassion, ceaseless remembrance of God and intense love and the desire to attain Him, the intense urge to serve mankind because you see brotherhood amongst all mankind and try to live life in order to benefit all life around you. Thus, Paropakara and Isvara-sakshatkara, doing good unto others and trying to attain God-experience constitute the heart and essence of all the religions of the world. And this is the truth. This should be understood and if all take to the practice of this real religion, there is no doubt that all fights and quarrels will disappear. All clash and conflict in the name of religion will become a thing of the past and religion will become a great unifying force in human society to bring about harmony, friendship and brotherhood amongst all mankind.

This is my firm conviction and therefore, I urge upon you all not to be misled and misguided by people with vested interests into believing that religions differ. On the contrary, try to contemplate on this innermost aspect of the essence of religion and live a life of love, brotherhood, unity, harmony and selfless service unto all beings. This is my message today when I share these few thoughts upon the essence of all religions. Religion is not the outer structure of organised religions. The church is not Christianity, the mosque is not Islam, the Mandir is not the real Vedic religion. They are only the outer social structures to keep together the followers of the different faiths by bringing them together from time to time for collective worship and also for observing periodically certain common festivities, certain common days of fasting, praying and feasting etc. These are methods created to keep closely together the community of people who follow different faiths. This aspect, the outer structure of religions, may be necessary, but it does not constitute its real lesson. Those who fail to understand it, those who don't grasp this inner truth, take the outer structure to be the real religion and fail to give religion its innermost spiritual essence. This is a grave error, a grave blunder.

Swami Vivekananda once said, "it is good to be born into a church, but it is bad to die in the church", which meant that while we are born into a religion, we have no choice about it. As we grow up and expand in wisdom we should become tolerant and our love and sympathy and understanding should go beyond the borders of our own religion and a certain universality of vision should be adopted, a universalism of our feelings towards others should come into our life and into our dealings With others and this universalism is all the more indispensable today when in many parts of the world religion is being made the main bone of contention, religion is being made the basis of intense hatred, clash and conflict, as it is in Belfast in Ireland, in the Middle East and even in our own country.

Religions, instead of becoming a force of peace and harmony, goodwill and love and brotherhood, have now become a force of conflicts, separation, mutual hatred and warfare. This is a great pity. It is deplorable indeed that such a sublime institution as religion which has its objective and purpose the divinising of the human nature and the purifying of human conduct and spiritualising of all human life, instead of this, does the very contrary. This blunder is due to our having rejected the teachings of the scriptures, of our not properly understanding and following the

teachings of the saints and sages. We merely give our adorations to the saints and sages, but we very safely ignore their teachings. This is the unfortunate attitude of man towards scriptures, towards saints. Saints have come into this earth to show us the sublime way of living life in an ideal manner. We should keep the shining example of these saints and sages before us as an Adarsa, or as an ideal and try to live up to that great ideal.

I shall try to place before you the essence of religions which Beloved and Worshipful Holy Master Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji put in the form of a prayer. Though it is in the form of prayer, this prayer is actually a blueprint for ideal religious living and it is also a prayer that has within its contents the essence of all religions:

O Adorable Lord of Mercy and Love!
Salutations and prostrations unto Thee.
Thou art Existence-Consciousness-Bliss Absolute.
Thou art Omnipresent, Omnipotent and Omniscient.
Thou art the Indweller of all beings.

Grant us an understanding heart,
Equal vision, balanced mind,
Faith, devotion and wisdom.
Grant us inner spiritual strength
To resist temptations and to control the mind.
Free us from egoism, lust, anger, greed, hatred and jealousy.
Fill our hearts with divine virtues.

Let us behold Thee in all these names and forms.
Let us Serve Thee in all these names and forms.
Let us ever remember Thee.
Let us ever sing Thy glories.
Let Thy Name be ever on our lips.
Let us abide in Thee for ever and ever.

UNDERLYING UNITY OF RELIGIONS

Almighty Lord, Father of Mankind, Blessed Lord! Grant us the grace of feeling Your presence at this moment in this Vigyan Bhavan Hall where you pervade as the invisible, the unmanifest Spirit Universal ever present within and without. Grant us also the grace of feeling our inner spiritual oneness in You, for though outwardly different in names and forms, in body and mind, yet in the Spirit we all find our oneness in You spiritually. May all Thy children therefore be filled with this feeling of spiritual oneness in You who are the One God. Let our hearts and minds be lifted to Thee, at this moment. Thou art the One God, when no universe existed, when no humanity had been created, when no religion or religions existed. Thou art the One, the non-dual, the infinite, the eternal Reality, *Ekameva'dvitiyam Brahma*.

Our obeisance to Thee who art One and non-dual but addressed in varying terms by Thy children. Thou art indeed the Brahman or the Bhagavan of the Vedic religion. Thou art the Ahura Mazda of the followers of Zoroaster. Thou art that ineffable state of Nirvana of the followers of the Great Sakhya Muni Gautama Buddha. Thou art the Supreme Tao of the Taoist and the Satori of the Zen followers of the Taoist philosophies. Thou art the Siddha, the Aryanthana, the Aryana of the followers of the ancient Jain faith. Thou art *Ek Omkar Satnaam* of the followers of the Sikh brothers. Thou art Allah of those who follow Islam. Thou art Yahave or Jehovah of the brothers of the Judaic faith and Thou art verily the Almighty Father in Heaven who art addressed and prayed to in all the Christian world. Thou art the One Supreme Reality glorified and hymned in all the great scriptures of humanity. Thou art adored and worshipped alike, in Buddhist Vihara, in Hindu Mandir, in Parsee Fire Temple, in Synagogue, Church, Mosque, Gurudwara—Thou art One. All worship Thee alone and it is this fact that makes the institution of human religion.

It is this one fact, the oneness of the Universal Reality, that makes the institution of human religion the most likely and effective basis of unity. Unity based upon any other factor cannot be really effective and lasting because the factors are themselves changeful and temporary. But this factor which we call Religion is the aspiration of the human individual soul to attain its Divine Origin, its Divine Source, in which it is ever rooted spiritually. *Religion is the hunger of man for God, yearning of the finite for the Infinite, the attempt of the individual to once again find its wholeness in the Universal of which it is an inseparable part.* This phenomenon is a universal phenomenon. It is as old as creation and it is the heart-throb of every human being in human society. This phenomenon of the human being's aspiration to know the greater Reality which is the source and origin not only of himself or herself but of the universe as well, pervades the entire globe. Going to any nation, any section of humanity, the phenomenon of religion is to be found to be one of the all pervasive facts of human society. The emphasis on external non-essentials of religion which vary is due to the systems of faith, worship, prayer, etc., which have had their origin in different historical time and geographical set up. Geographical conditions vary, human environment varies and therefore suited to each environmental situation the external modes and forms of worshipping that One Universal Reality naturally takes diverse forms.

The Hindu insists upon a bath before going into his sanctum for worship. It would be impossible in a country like Arabia, where it is difficult to get even drinking water. Insisting upon bath is therefore not to be found in Islam because its origin was in a land which was a desert, where water was scarce. It was a precious commodity. I am just giving you one example how the external forms, which are the non-essentials of religion, vary, but the heart of religion, the essence of this religion or that religion remains the same. The religion of man, the human yearning to find his wholeness, his oneness with the universal source of its being, this essence of religion is the common, fundamental unifying factor to be found in all great faiths. So, go back into the origin of all the prophetic religions and seek to find the very heart and life-breath of religion in the living teachings of these great prophets. What did they preach? What did they ask their followers to do? They asked them to ever be united in the Spirit with the Universal Being, God, ceaselessly pray, have devotion for Allah, for Jehovah, for Almighty Father in Heaven. Humble yourself before Him. He is your Father, Mother, Friend, Relative. He is your all in all. He is your nearest and dearest, your only wealth and treasure; therefore do not forget Him. Do not neglect to cultivate a living relationship within, through faith and devotion, through love for Him, through constant

remembrance of Him. So, live in God, be united with the Universal Soul, in the Spirit, whatever you are doing, wherever you are placed, no matter What shape or pattern your external life takes.

If we go to the actual teachings of the prophets, we find that they asked man never to forget God, ever be united with the Universal Soul for therein lies the promise of the betterment of the human individual. Therein lies the promise of evolution of man, getting better day by day, improving in his thoughts, words and action, for it is through this connection that we begin to get the inflow of the grace of God. The descent of all His divine qualities is love, compassion, purity, truth, wisdom, harmony and peace—branches of a tree spread in all directions. What is the secret of the life, the vitality and growth of this tree? What is its unbroken connection with some hidden source of nourishment invisible to you but nevertheless present under the surface of the earth? It is because it has driven its roots deep down into the ground on which it stands, that it is able to grow, to develop, to bring forth branches, leaves, flowers and fruits. Even so is man. We, too, will develop and grow if we are rooted in the source of our being, that source of spiritual nourishment, that source of strength, peace and wisdom, God, call It by whatever name you like. By glorifying, by having love for Him, by praying to Him, by meditating daily on that One Reality, our life also will partake of that divine quality. Loving, being friendly, manifesting peace, expressing harmony in unity, will become spontaneous and natural to man if he is filled with the God-essence, and that is the Reality of man. There is the Noor of Allah in each man. God created man in His image and breathed His Spirit into him. The breath of God is in man.

My beloved brothers of this human family, I urge you that this is the vision that we want. We must see man not as man different from us but as a child of God, as a moving temple of the Divine. He who sees the presence of that Spirit, the presence of God, he indeed seeth; we verily have to adopt this vision. He indeed sees the presence of the Divine in equal measure present, in all beings, in all creatures, imperishable, within the perishable human body. You must leave narrowness and see all human beings, all creatures, as the moving temples of the living Spirit and therefore relate yourselves with love, in reverence, in harmony. We should have reverence for all life. If we see the presence of God, the presence of the Divine Spirit in all beings, it will become natural to us. It will not only contribute to religion, but also to this innermost central root concept of religion, that God dwells in man. Man's body is a moving, living temple of the living Spirit. It is this central concept of all religion, the heart of all religion that He is the lasting and effective basis, not only of national solidarity, but of human solidarity in this globe and that is the crying need of today in the light of the prevailing global situation.

It is a great privilege to assemble, to consider how we may join together and jointly initiate some action in order to stop this impending calamity that threatens all humanity all over the globe. Therefore may this day, may this gathering, not be merely a meeting and a listening but may this be a point in time when each one of you who are occupying seats in this hall, may each one of you leave this hall with a firm resolution that from this day onwards my life will include each and every day some practical effort, some constructive and creative effort on my part to bring together all people of India—this land of Ganga, Sarasvati, Godavari, Narmada, Sindhu, Kaveri, this land of the Himalayas, the Vindhya, this land of the equality of religions and this land which has given shelter to all religions, where tolerance is the hallmark of all religions—under one banner of a spiritual view of man and a spiritual view of life.

I am very much privileged that today I am able to share these thoughts with you under the auspices of the Venerable Saint and Holy Personality as Worshipful and Beloved Sri Sitaramdas Omkarnath. May his blessings be upon you. Even so the blessings of our Revered Father Mathais, Bishop Mathais, be upon each and every one of you. May the benedictions of all the saintly holy people who are seated here—Lama Lopsung, our Worshipful and Beloved Muni Sushilkumar Jain, our Beloved Hazarat Inayat Peer, Inayat Vilayat Khan, Gopal Singhji and Amin Nizami of the Orya Darga Nizamuddin be upon you all. May their blessings give you health and long life, peace and prosperity, success in your undertakings. May their blessings arouse in your heart a burning desire to do something practical in your life to bring about national solidarity in this land of the Himalayas and go beyond that and work for human solidarity in order to establish peace on earth and goodwill amongst all mankind.

WORLD PEACE

At this juncture in human history when not only is peace of mankind being threatened by doctrines of hatred, violence and warfare but the very existence of mankind, the very existence of different kinds of life forms in this world is being threatened by the likelihood of a catastrophic third war which will be a nuclear war, a holocaust, at this moment the thoughts of all human beings all over the world in all countries are directed towards peace. All pray that peace may prevail and it is with this devoted prayerfulness of attitude that we invoke the blessings and grace of God that he may grant to man the right insight and grant to man the right resolution, Satsankalpa to work for peace and to allow peace to prevail upon earth. With this prayerful attitude I share with you thoughts on the theme of 'World Peace'.

Peace is your birthright. For, in reality, your essential nature, your innermost real nature, Nija-svarupa, is peace profound. The great Universal Reality whom we refer to as God in immeasurable peace—profound, unfathomable and limitless peace—*Santo ayam Atma*. This Universal Spirit verily is of the very nature of profound peace. Peace, therefore, is the eternal, unchanging reality. Peace alone exists—timeless, transcending time, without beginning and without end. Peace is the eternal reality. God Himself is peace. But the restlessness, the clash and conflict, the violence and warfare we see upon the surface of this planet earth today, is the outcome of man's intransigence. It is the outcome of man's deliberate rejection of the sublime message of peace that God has been sending to this human world from time to time through His great messengers, through His divine messengers, the prophets, the saints, the messiahs, who have come to declare to man that he should walk the path of goodwill, harmony and friendship. He must recognise the oneness of the Supreme Universal Reality and as a consequence should recognise the brotherhood of all mankind under the Fatherhood of the Supreme Universal Reality which is one and non-dual. We are all children of the Divine. Therefore, humanity is a single family and brotherhood, is a relationship between man and man.

Each human being is really a spiritual brother of all the rest of human kind upon earth and if this fact is recognised then you start to dwell on the awareness of this fact that spiritually you are at one with all existence and the fatherhood of the universal parents God, Ahura Mazda, Jehova, Almighty Father, Allah, Ek Omkar Satnam, give it whatever name you wish. That Great Universal

Reality which is the source and origin of all existence is the common meeting ground of all beings and under His universal, spiritual fatherhood all humanity is a single family related in terms of brotherhood. The recognition of this fact is the key to establishing and bringing about peace in this world. But unfortunately what do we see upon the surface of this earth at this present moment?

There is tremendous advancement of knowledge, great progress in different fields of human life and development of science and scientific technology and innumerable inventions. Man has taken amazing and marvellous strides towards progress and achieved great control of external nature. Unfortunately, despite this apparent progress, civilisation and advancement, man has brought about two great global wars within a period of less than twenty-five years in the recent past, causing unlimited destruction, death, damage and sorrow. Many young wives were widowed, many children orphaned, many parents deprived of their offspring and many cities destroyed. If this is a criterion by which to evaluate the actual worth of so-called progress, advancement and civilisation of mankind, we have to come to this very sad conclusion that somewhere mankind has erred. Man has committed some blunder on this path of the advancement of science, development of technology and material progress. It is said that a tree is known by its fruit thereof and if all this advancement and progress and development of science and technology over the past two or three centuries has given to humanity the bitter fruit of hatred, conflict, war and violence, unlimited destruction and suffering, then there is something fundamentally wrong in man's way of thinking and feeling and the living of his life.

God's peace is perennial and permanent but man superimposed upon it hatred and violence, insecurity and restlessness, warfare and conflict. There is no harmony. Discord has become the order of the day. If we contemplate this truth of the present situation we are confronted with a serious question—what is the cause for this losing of the way? Why is it that in spite of education, knowledge, refinement and so-called civilisation and etiquette, there has been something wrong somewhere? We have to admit that we have come a long way from the stone-age period of our historic ancestors, the cave-dwellers. Nevertheless, having come this far in refinement and civilisation in a certain part of our life, we still seem to have been unable to eradicate from our inner nature the brutal and bestial tendencies of violent reaction to things. Instead of trying to decide issues by love and understanding, mutual give and take, harmony and peace, in a friendly manner, we take recourse to violence. What is pitiable and deplorable is that mankind has failed to learn the lessons of these catastrophic conflicts and the calamitous wars. Man seems to be blind to the lessons and is ever preparing for fresher conflicts.

Manufacturing of armaments has become a very big industry in so many countries. Not only are the arms manufactured for defence, for one's own safety and protection, but they are manufactured for aggression and offence, which countries are intent upon selling to other nations thus inducing them also towards violence, conflict and warfare. Arms sale has become big business and yet these very nations seem to be constantly declaring that they have peaceful intentions, they desire peace. Their very conduct, the actions they engage in, deny this statement and therefore mankind has become hypocritical. Who really wants peace? In truth what man wants is comfortable living. Whatever be the conditions between nations, Whatever be the conditions in the government, the ordinary citizen wants .to have a good job, a steady income and the fulfilment of his little desires and accumulation of things he is after—petty, perishable, material things—and whatever policy the government adopts, if it is able to provide for him these things—comfortable living, good job,

steady income and a salary and the good things of life—he does not care whether the government is engaged in peace or in warfare.

One of the arguments given by governments is that the colossal manufacture of destructive weaponry is an industrial enterprise which creates employment for thousands and thousands of people and brings about steady national income. It brings about economic stability and if there were to be peace and if the manufacture of armament were to be stopped, then there will be widespread unemployment. Therefore, leaders at the top do not want this to happen and people who are employed in these industries do not want these industries to close down, because it is the main source of their income and their material prosperity. If you go deep into this question, no one really wants peace, though they give it lip loyalty or lip support to peace. They are interested whether there is peace or not, so long as they get what they want.

Under these conditions if we would still like to bring about a climate for peace, we have to re-educate the human individual into right thinking. People think in a haphazard way. There is no positive thought, there is no thought in the right direction and all this has resulted due to two or three very important factors. First and foremost, God who is an infinite ocean of absolute divine peace and blessedness, has tried to give to man this awakening message that peace is your birthright. You are of the very nature of peace.. Deep within you there is an innermost centre which is purely spiritual and that inner spiritual centre of yours is a part of the Universal being. Therefore, by its very nature it is absolute peace. There abides peace in your heart.

To enter within to a life of introspection and meditation and to experience that peace within and thus become established in inner individual peace, is the first step towards world peace. When individuals are established in inner divine peace, each one of them will become dynamic centres for the radiation of this vital living peace vibrant within them and through their life and through their activities they will begin to radiate this peace in their own environment, and into their own particular circle of beings with whom they have to live and move. Thus, everywhere there is an inner awareness that man's real nature is spiritual and that real nature is of the very nature of absolute peace, Santi, Shalom. If this awareness is sought to be brought about, then gradually it will pave the way for peace in greater and greater areas of human life and activity and world peace will not be an Utopia but an achievable factor.

Due to unfortunate recent materialistic tendencies and the appearance of philosophies rejecting the very concept of God, atheistic ideologies and Godless philosophies, social philosophies and schools of thought, we have rejected the great teachings of our scriptures, the great teachings of world teachers of mankind who declared to man the necessity of walking the path of peace to experience real happiness because peace is the indispensable condition prerequisite to true happiness. Happiness is the outcome of peace. *Santamu leka saukhyamu ledu* (Without peace there is no happiness)—thus sang the great saint-poet Tyagaraja. Therefore, if you want happiness you must first of all establish peace in yourself. You must be able to give up the hard adamant ego-sense and selfishness. The ego-sense and selfishness of the individual nature is one of the greatest obstacles to harmony, unity, brotherhood, love and peace. Selfishness is the greatest dire disease and bane of human nature. Unfortunately in the modern educational system prevailing all over the world the children are taught subjects pertaining to this material world, different fields of knowledge, pertaining to this gross physical universe. But in the schools, in the syllabus, in the

curriculum there is no provision for teaching children love and brotherhood, peace and harmony, goodwill and friendship, which is the most essential part of the education.

Education is meant to draw out from within the human individual all that is sublime, all that is good and auspicious and blessed. It is not merely putting into the human brain a great deal of facts and figures and information. It is not like feeding statistical data into a computer; on the contrary, the process of education is a reverse process. It is a positive, creative process of bringing out from within the human individual these great hidden qualities of love, unity, harmony, brotherhood and peace. It is only when our entire educational system becomes reoriented in this manner that the future humanity will grow in an atmosphere of goodwill and brotherhood, love and harmony, of peace and tolerance, and then alone will world peace become a fact.

Prayer is a great power. It can bring peace, for it can link our inner self to the universal being who is of the nature of profound peace. Therefore, right education through unfailing daily prayer, individual as well as collective, and by giving up our selfish nature, hard-hearted egoistic and selfish nature, we can work towards the establishment of peace, first within the individual heart and then within this immediate environment and thus onward into ever widening circles. Peace can be brought about in this whole world among nations, races and all humanity. Peace be unto you. *Om , Santi, Santi, Santih.*

BLISS IS WITHIN

All of you who are assembled together here, devotees of the Lord, seekers upon the path of liberation and divine realisation, pilgrim souls travelling on this highway of life towards your ultimate destination, who, according to the Sanskriti or culture of this great land, according to the vision of your ancestors—those great Rishis, the illumined sages and seers, who have left for us the wisdom treasures of their experiences in the form of the Vedic Jnana, the Upanishads—are destined to attain divine perfection. You all are, in their vision, not merely earth creatures, not merely limited human individuals but behind and beyond humanity, your outer human personality, deep within you, you are immortal spirits, sparks of divinity for whom the great World Teacher, Lord Krishna, assumed the role of the awakener of humanity, a teacher of all mankind for all times. Assuming that role, He gave His immortal Jnana Upadesh through that great scripture, the Bhagavad Gita, and in giving that immortal teaching, referred to you as *ajo nityah sasvatoyam purano na hanyate hanyamane sarire*—unborn, eternal, permanent, ancient, beyond time, immortal imperishable and indestructible. Therefore, untouched, unaffected even when this body is embodied or when the body perishes. Thou art That. It is, therefore, unaffected by the changing conditions of the body. Birth, old age, disease, decay and death only affect the outer structure. This is but a passing Upadhi (limiting adjunct) just taken over by you temporarily, to function upon this phenomenal plane of material existence, physical existence. This body does not constitute your real identity; it is only an Upadhi, just as one wears a shirt, a coat, an overcoat. Even so in their vision they saw in you an immortal spark of the divine and they said that you are part of an universal essence, an eternal cosmic reality, that is beginningless and endless, that is eternal and permanent, and the realisation of this true identity, realisation of your immortality, your essential divinity, that may be held to be your divine destiny. You have not come here merely to live, grow, eat, drink, enjoy some little sense

enjoyment, laugh a little, weep a little and then one day pass away without leaving any sign of yourself. This is merely physical existence.

While you pass through this process of physically existing through time in this earth plane, you have a great mission to fulfil and to that attainment you must strive. The mission you have to fulfil is the attainment of Self-realisation, experience of your eternal, immortal, divine nature. By attaining it, the individual becomes forever liberated from all the limitations, the imperfections that qualify this temporary earth existence, a body-bound state of existence, limited to time and space and subject to various imperfections and infirmities, inevitable to a material body and the changes in the psychological self. They are governed by the pairs of opposites, now high, now low, elation and depression, happiness and misery, joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain. This entire earth is a play of opposites and your mind, intellect, emotions are also subject to this swinging between these pairs of opposites. But you are the absolute reality, beyond phenomena, beyond birth and death. Entering into a state of direct perception and experience of your eternal imperishable divine identity, you become liberated forever from all these limitations and imperfections that pertain to your present temporary state of individuality, where you think of yourself as a limited human individual, a being subject to birth and death, change, old age, various moods, and mental states. You become liberated from all the pains of Samsara, as it were, and become established or enter into a state of indescribable felicity, happiness, supreme joy, and become liberated from the necessity of once again coming into this embodied state; no more birth into this phenomenal world. In that state of freedom, liberated from birth and death, sorrow, pain and suffering, you enter into a state of absolute bliss. Your entire being is filled with supreme, eternal satisfaction. That is the use, that is the result of attaining God-experience or Self-realisation. It fills you with supreme bliss.

This state of liberation is described in terms of personal experience of our ancient saints and sages. They have recorded their experiences thus. The state of liberation is *sarva duhkha nivritti*, *paramananda prapti*, *nitya tripti*—the state of total cessation of all sorrow, pain, and suffering and the experience or attainment of supreme bliss by which one attains supreme satisfaction. The values that they have put forward for our attainment for which each human individual should try and the values which they have put as the ultimate supreme values, these values are referred to in the context of Indian philosophy as the Purusharthas. They speak of the four Purusharthas—Purushartha Chatushtaya. Purushartha has also the meaning of exertion. So you have to exert and endeavour to attain bliss. Therefore any endeavour, any exertion is also called Purushartha. And here the objective with which you make, put forth Purushartha is also referred to by the same term. So Purushartha Chatushtaya, the four values for the attainment of which you must put forth right endeavour and exert, are called the four Purusharthas. The highest of all Purusharthas, the ultimate Purushartha, is Atma-Sakshatkara or liberation through the attainment of God-experience and this is called Moksha. They also call it Mukti, Kaivalya. This is the great goal of all mankind.

This great ideal of highest spiritual attainment was proclaimed as the goal of all human individuals born in this world. It was not directed at any particular section of mankind, not for the people populated in this Indian subcontinent only, not for Hindus or any section of the Hindus. It was for the entire mankind. “O man, striving and struggling to find happiness in this world, O human being, toiling in this earth plane of phenomenal existence! Here we proclaim to you a great discovery. We have attained an experience which has liberated us from all sorrow, pain and

suffering and it has filled us with supreme bliss and we rejoice in that bliss. We wish that you also share this wonderful experience that has been granted to us. Therefore, come and listen, we proclaim to you your highest welfare.” Saying thus, they proclaimed to all mankind that what they had attained all mankind could also attain. They had come face to face with that shining Being, radiant Cosmic being, beholding whom, experiencing whom, the mortal becomes immortal.

They proclaimed in the Upanishads the supreme goal of all humanity, all mankind: It was not something given to any particular section of humanity. It is a supreme goal to be striven after whether you are a Hindu, a Christian, a Muslim, a Parsee, a Jew, a Sikh, a Jain, a Buddhist or a follower of any other religion—attaining the experience of Allah or Ahura Mazda or Almighty Father in Heaven, come face to face with the Almighty Father in Heaven. If you delve into the underlying essence of all scriptures with an impartial eye, what do they say? If you try to find out the inner teachings of all the prophets, whether it is Mohammed Nabi or Guru Nanak or Buddha or Mahavira or Jesus or Zoroaster, you will find that all of them wanted their followers to attain the Supreme Being, the One Being who is without beginning and end, whereas all things here, all things created are subject to decay and destruction. They are temporary in time, limited in space. They have a beginning, they have an end and therefore one day all must pass. But the Being that endures without beginning, without end, is the Supreme reality. Out of the abundance of their boundless love for all humanity with whom they had become identified, they called out to all mankind to strive for this attainment which they had attained and become blessed. They said this is the way to Supreme Bliss and Blessedness May all beings in this universe attain happiness.

The great Buddha, having attained illumination, and becoming filled with bliss and joy and peace in Buddha Gaya, under the Bodhi tree, for a moment hesitated: ‘Should I do anything at all, should I go forth and proclaim the Supreme Truth, this great Reality? There would be very few who would yield to my teaching.’ He thought that there would be no takers and he would remain silent. And then God persuades him that even though the vast majority may not listen to his message, there may be a few in whom there is a spark ready to be stepped into; for the sake of those few, do not keep silent, do not withhold your illumination, go forth. And so all his life he goes forth and proclaims this key to blessedness, the way out of sorrow, the attainment of the great peace through his noble eight-fold path. At the time of his departure he calls all his disciples, followers, Bhikshus and tells, them that now the Tat-arhata will enter into Pari-nirvana and this is his last teaching unto us all. His last saying: “O Bhikshus, do not neglect your own highest welfare, do not neglect your own highest good and in your life be a lamp unto yourself and be a lamp unto the feet of others. Go forth and traverse the highways and byways of this great land for the welfare of the many and the happiness of the many.” This is what he commands them—for the *happiness and welfare of all*. This has been, therefore, the feeling in the hearts of all illumined beings, the perfected beings: the happiness of all. Let no one have sorrow or misery, no one suffer pain or suffering. Let them all have happiness.

The greatest urge in the heart of all these illumined souls, sages and seers was that happiness should be experienced by all. All should be free from sorrow, pain and suffering. That was the reason they gave this supreme value, spiritual value, for in attaining it lay the one sure unfailing guarantee of permanent happiness, supreme bliss. If you want permanent happiness, if you want supreme bliss which is absolute and which stays for ever, then you have to attain realisation of that great Reality. In that Reality is great blessedness. In that Reality is freedom from sorrow, pain and

suffering. That is the happiness to be attained. Why is it that only that experience can give us supreme bliss and blessedness? This beautiful world, this beautiful universe created by God, with ever so many things, if we possess all these things can we not be happy? Will that not give happiness? We believe that happiness comes from possessing things, obtaining things and keeping and enjoying things which are the sources of pleasure. They are pleasant to possess, they are desirable and obtaining them they can attain happiness. This is the general idea in the minds of human beings. Therefore, all people wish to attain wealth which is a symbol of success and power. If I have money I can purchase whatever I want. I can purchase anything and everything which human beings hold dear and I shall be happy. That is the normal way in which the human mind thinks. Is this the correct way to think? Or is it to be modified?

Yes, there is something that requires modification. Wherein lies happiness? Do you want an answer to that question? Who doesn't want an answer to this question because this is the quest, of all humanity, all over the world. In spite of a hundred differences, the one common thing that unites all human beings is that all of them, throughout the universe, do not wish to have any type of pain or suffering or sorrow and they all wish to have happiness. This is the basic urge of all individuals, of all human beings, the central urge in the hearts of all humanity. This is something that knits all humanity into a single homogeneous unit.

All seek happiness and if you go to every individual in every country all over the world and ask them this question: Have you succeeded in obtaining what you wish for, that is, absolute sorrow-free, suffering-free and happiness-filled life? You will not find one single human individual throughout the length and breadth of the entire world who can say Yes, in this quest for absolute happiness, in this quest for total freedom from all pain and suffering, I have succeeded one hundred percent; I have experienced absolute happiness. You won't find a single individual who can make this claim, because by its very nature this world is filled with innumerable pains and sufferings and sorrows. Right from birth until the moment the last breath leaves your body and you depart, human life is filled with ever so many discomforts, inconveniences, miseries, old age and disease. Therefore, this quest seems to be a wild-goose-chase, an impossible ideal.

On the surface of it one is driven to this conclusion inevitably. But contrary was the experience of the great discoverers, the great spiritual pioneers, explorers of the great land, who made the inner realm of the spirit their area of research and discovery. They discovered that human individual is heir to infinite bliss. You have come here ultimately for the attainment of the indescribable, infinite bliss, which goes beyond all the pleasures of the world together. Even if you put all the pleasures of the entire world together in one great heap, they say that the ultimate bliss that each individual soul is destined to attain, even one little fraction of that bliss far outweighs the total pleasure that this world is capable of giving. In one Upanishad it is strongly emphasised how even one fraction of that Brahmic Bliss is far greater than all the pleasures of this entire universe put together. Those who have attained it say that it is indescribable and wonderful and you are born for that.

We cannot make a charge against the Creator: Why did you send us, knowing that this is an imperfect world full of pain, sorrow and misery? Is it a warped sense of humour that you send us only to suffer, only to weep, only to wail? He will say, No. I never sent you for this. It is inevitable; it is part of creation. The perfect and the imperfect, both are mixed together. If you want joy, you will

have to have sorrow also. My divine plan, my will for you, is attainment of divine bliss, supreme bliss. But you have neglected that. You have gone in a different direction. You are trying to seek for that bliss in small, petty things, imperfect, temporary, transitory, changeful things, perishable, subject to decay and destruction. How can you find it? You cannot find it in created objects, because by their very nature created objects are imperfect, limited in time and space. One moment a thing may be a pleasant experience, another moment it can give you an unpleasant experience. So there is no stability. You cannot rely upon earthly objects because they are changeful. Moreover, your entire connection to all objects is through your body, and if the condition of the body changes, what was pleasant one moment becomes unpleasant another moment. When you are healthy all eatables taste very delicious. But when you are having high fever, everything tastes bitter; you cannot bear the sight of food. Things created by man, material things, have a limited utilitarian value. They can give you some conveniences. They can provide you with certain comforts, and that too is relative, not absolute. Nothing in this universe, therefore, has by itself an absolute ability to give you happiness. All things have only a certain utilitarian value. They are useful but they cannot give you happiness.

What is it, then, that can give you happiness, is the question. Because we start after happiness without first of all defining happiness, without making sure where it is to be found, in what things it is to be found, in which direction we have to seek it, and therefore we muddle through life. We seek here and there and go in for a lot of disillusionment, disappointment and frustration, thinking that we will find happiness in this and that, but do not find it. Long ago our ancients solved this problem. They did not leave us in any doubt. Only we don't care to accept our own heritage and don't allow ourselves to be guided by those wise directions. We don't want to walk in the light. We still want to walk in the darkness of our own ignorance, our own wrong notions and mistaken ideas and therefore we go on weeping and wailing. Long ago, the one who created this universe, He himself said that this universe is an abode of sorrow. Take the Gita. All wisdom, all knowledge, all that we have to know about this universe is there. We can also find it in the Upanishads and the Vedas. Vedas are the storehouse of wisdom, Secular as well as ethical and spiritual. And the essence of wisdom is found in the later portion of the Vedas, towards the end; it is called Vedanta. This essence of knowledge given to us by the Upanishads was condensed and given to us in a very concise form in the dialogue, in the discourse, Srimad Bhagavad Gita.

The Bhagavad Gita is the quintessence of the Upanishadic wisdom and the Upanishads are the essence of the Vedic wisdom, and the Vedas form the eternal source of all wisdom necessary to evolve our life in an effective and successful manner, in a victorious and triumphant manner. The Bhagavad Gita, which is a great Teacher, very clearly states that this world is characterised by an absence of real happiness. You cannot find happiness here. It can only give you comfort and convenience, but not happiness. And the same scripture in another place defines the world as an abode of all things impermanent and an abode of sorrow. Sri Sankaracharya says that this world is an ocean of sorrow, therefore you cannot find happiness. Yet contradictory to this is the supreme declaration that you have been born to attain the highest bliss because the Supreme Being is the highest bliss. Humanity has come out of that bliss. Humanity exists, supported by that bliss. All humanity is moving towards bliss. That is the Upanishadic declaration about human beings on earth. Bliss is the ultimate goal of life. Bliss is your birthright. Bliss is your divine destiny—*Ananda Ananda Paramananda*—bliss, bliss, eternal bliss. How can one reconcile these two?

There was a great sage, a man of wisdom, who freely taught his wisdom to all beings and potential seekers showered gifts upon him. He was one of the towering seers of the Upanishadic era, Sage Yajnavalkya, who was a Maharshi as well as a Grihasti and had two wives. He had much material prosperity but when he became old he said, no, enough of teaching, enough of sharing my wisdom. Now, according to our cultural idealism, as I have become old I must take Sannyasa, I must now lead a life of seclusion and contemplation, meditate upon the Supreme Atman, gain illumination and then I depart. He called both his wives and said look here, I have plenty of riches that have been showered lavishly upon me due to my teaching. You divide these riches between yourselves, which will make you live in comfort for ever. The younger wife wanted half of all his worldly assets but the elder one, Maitreyi, wondered aloud: He accepted all these gifts and enjoyed all of them. That means at one time he put some value upon them. Now suddenly he wants to give away everything and go away to the forest and meditate upon something. What could that other thing be? My husband is not a fool. He is a wise man. When questioned by his wife, Maitreyi, the Maharshi replied: "That which can give happiness is all full happiness, divine Reality, that which is eternal, abiding and knowing that one becomes filled with bliss, knowing that the mortal becomes immortal, one becomes liberated and to that end I take Sannyasa and I renounce and go to do meditation." Then wise Maitreyi said: "O Lord, pray do not have these things divided. Let my co-wife have the entire possessions you have accumulated. Let her be the mistress of all the property. Pray, take me along with you and give me also initiation into that way of meditating upon the Supreme and attaining the Supreme Atman." This is Yajnavalkya-Maitreyi Samvada in one of the great Upanishads, the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.

The ancients at the very beginning of civilisation taught us that happiness is to be found in the Self within. Happiness is to be found in your own innermost Divine identity, in your essential nature because happiness is a vital living experience and all things in this universe are ultimately inert dead things. They have no consciousness, they have no life. They are not living things. That is, they are Jada Vastu (inert matter). According to Upanishadic or Indian philosophical terminology, this material universe is made up of Jada Tattva (inert principle), whereas happiness is a living experience. So, inert things, inert matter, cannot give a living experience. Living experience is something that will come from the inner living principle within you. Secondly, anything that is finite, anything that is changeful and perishable, anything that is limited, cannot give you real happiness. The eternal alone can give you real happiness. Thirdly, any experience that depends upon something else cannot succeed in giving you true happiness. Paratantra (dependence) is Duhkha (pain). That is their discovery. Svatantra (independence) alone is Sukha (happiness). That which depends, do not depend upon it for happiness, it cannot give you happiness, for many reasons. Firstly, the thing upon which you depend is itself imperfect. It is limited to various imperfections. Any imperfect thing cannot give you perfect happiness. Secondly, all things are temporary. So a temporary thing cannot give you lasting experience. It can only give you a temporary experience. And lastly, the medium through which you experience all such experiences, by contacting external objects, is your body, and your body itself is perishable. It is subject to various changing conditions; therefore it cannot continuously give you the same kind of happiness, uniform happiness. There is no uniformity in the experience which you get through your body and your senses. If a little nerve in your mechanism gets out of order, that experience is cut off. If the optical nerve goes out of order, all things that are seen, that world vanishes. So, it's all a play of nerves. All experiences that you get from outside, from things, are only a play of nerves. They are only upon the level of this gross biological physical level. So they do not constitute real happiness

and therefore, the experiences that are dependent upon the contact between one of the senses with another object are finite in time and space, temporary, because the body changes and so the experience changes.

One day your contact with all these has to come to an end. It is inevitable. And with the end of our connections, all our experiences depending upon these connections also come to an end. Ultimately we weep and wail. The Gita has this to say that all experiences born out of contact of a sense with its corresponding sense object are the sources of sorrow only. There is no happiness, on the contrary they are the sources of ultimate sorrow. The wise person does not revel in this sort of experience because they have a beginning and an end, they don't last. Therefore, it is through the quest of something that is devoid of these limitations and imperfections that guarantee or assurance of true happiness can be had. And what is that something? It is totally devoid of these limitations and imperfections pertaining to all objects here, characterises all objects here, that is the Eternal, that Eternal reality which is permanent, beginningless and endless, upon which you can absolutely depend. Call it Allah, call it Ahura Mazda, call it God, call it Omkar, call it Sat Nam, call it Nirvana, call it Siddhi, or as the Jains call it, the Avastha of the Siddha, perfection. No matter what you call it, it is that Eternal Reality alone that can give you true happiness and that Eternal Reality is not only a supracosmic remote transcendental principle or essence but also it is the essence of your being, it is the innermost centre of your being. You are That because you are Part of that Eternal Reality, that Cosmic Principle, that Brahman and therefore, deep within you lies this bliss, this Ananda, as your own Self; from which you are never parted. Because you are That, you are identical with That and that is Supreme Bliss and Blessedness. You cannot know it through the senses because senses are outgoing. You cannot know it through the intellect. You have to be silent and instantly you will know I am Bliss. So it is not a bliss that has to be obtained but something which has to be experienced through awareness. You have only to become aware that never for a moment is that Bliss apart from you, never for a moment is that Bliss absent. It is the ever present truth of your being. It is the one great fact of your being and the one great reality of your inner Self.

It is a wrong notion that I do not have happiness and I have to seek and find happiness. This notion has to be abandoned and you have to go to the side of peace. Be quiet, stop thinking of this wrong notion and just be aware. If a part of honey were to become endowed with awareness, what would be the character of that awareness? Supposing in a big golden pot there is pure honey brought from the forest and filled to the brim. Supposing this thing called honey, would suddenly become endowed with consciousness, awareness of its own being, what would be the character of that awareness? That is the awareness which is in the centre of your being. The character of that awareness of that honey would be sweetness, sweetness and sweetness. Once that awareness comes, honey will not go in search of sweetness. Honey will not go and try to make effort to attain sweetness. It will simply be where it is and then become filled with awareness that I am sweetness. The Upanishads make this quite clear. The great ones who have attained this bliss have been bright youngsters, that is the great good fortune of the new children of Bharatavarsha, that is the great good fortune of you who are the descendents of ancient seers and sages, the heirs of those great ones, that is this Jnana (knowledge) has come to you as your own heritage. You have attained this as something that belongs to you and this great Bharatavarsha throughout its glorious history right up to this point in time, this country has never lacked spiritual examples of this wonderful blissful experience. In your own generation there has been Aurobindo, Ramana Maharshi, ever filled in that state of self bliss, there has been Swami Ramdas, there has been Anandamayi Ma, there has been

Swami Sivananda, Swami Muktananda, ever so many beings, filled in that state of Brahmic bliss, living examples of that state, possessing nothing, wanting nothing, desiring nothing, feeling ever full, with that state of self experience. Self experience is a distilled sense of pure unalloyed bliss. And here you are going about with that bliss, pot of nectar, placed within you, and searching for happiness in petty things, in a little television knob.

So, your great forefathers, ancients want to tell you: Awake, Arise, don't be in this darkness of ignorance! You are immortal bliss, bliss is right within you. Therefore, seek within you and know that you are bliss. It is not a question of finding bliss. It is becoming aware that you are yourself the bliss, which you are seeking. Now think and recognise. Deeply ponder the words that have come to you, through the Will of God, through the Grace of Guru Maharaj, through the Seva offered to you by this servant, ponder these words that have come to you. Bliss is within you. Bliss is your own self. You are yourself Ananda-svarupa Atman. You don't have to lift a little finger, take a single step to attain bliss. Be silent and take your mind within, know that you are bliss.

Within the Atman is what you are seeking. And seeking for it outside, you cannot find it. If only that exertion that you make in trying to find happiness outside, one-tenth of it, you would direct in the quest within, you would be filled with supreme bliss and blessedness. That is the great rousing message of the Upanishads. This is your own treasure. Knowledge is the great treasure we have inherited from the past and in knowledge lies supreme joy, supreme liberation, and your own highest welfare and blessedness.

Great is my happiness, great is my joy, that this evening I have been given this wonderful opportunity of sitting amidst you all for a little while and bringing to you that which belongs to you. Happiness is within you. Happiness is your own self. Happiness is your nature, inseparable from you, for it is your own self. You are yourself Ananda-svarupa Santimaya Atman. Know thyself and be free. Know it through worship, selfless service, purification of the heart, Japa, meditation, remembrance of the Supreme reality, concentration, meditation and more than ever, through enquiry, discrimination, analysis, investigation. Do it through Seva, Bhakti, Dhyana and Jnana, through Vedantic Bhakti, through Raja Yoga—Yoga and Abhyasa. This is the supreme task before you. So, in spite of all other duties and obligations, carry on your outer life, but simultaneously let there be this rich inner life, actively lived, seeking, meditating, finding, so that in this very life, in this very body, before the moment of departure comes, already you are in a state of bliss and blessedness and go forth from this body, rejoicing. That is my prayer to the Lord. May your life become enriched by a dynamic, progressive, inner spiritual life of Sadhana, of Bhajan, Dhyana, and may you crown your life with Atma-jnana and Supreme Ananda.