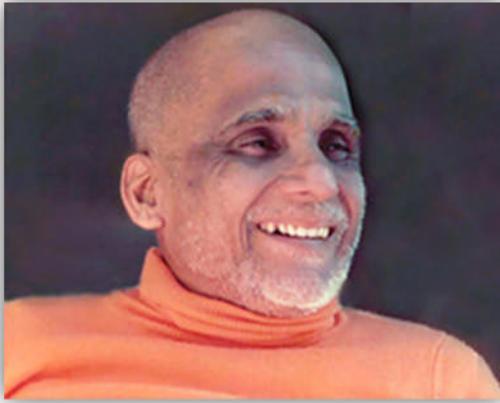


RELIGION AND SOCIAL VALUES



by

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

Though this eBook edition is designed primarily for digital readers and computers, it works well for print too. Page size dimensions are 5.5" x 8.5", or half a regular size sheet, and can be printed for personal, non-commercial use: two pages to one side of a sheet by adjusting your printer settings.

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Publisher's Note

This book contains a series of five discourses given by Swami Krishnananda in 1981 during the Ashram's annual Sadhana Week. Here Swamiji describes the problems faced by every human being due to their own nature and also due to the world in which they live, and why people fail in their pursuits. Swamiji explains why *moksha*, or liberation, is actually the goal of everyone whether they recognise it or not, and why nothing else can be regarded as a lasting solution to their problems, or give true satisfaction.

Swami Krishnananda talks about different aspects of spiritual life, and removes certain misconceptions that many people have about it. Swamiji explains why religion and social life are not opposites, but are rather two aspects of a single duty which is the attainment of God, or *moksha*, in which all desires are fulfilled.

Many people think that if they attain God they will lose the world, or that they have to renounce the world in order to attain God. Swamiji explains how the terms 'God', '*moksha*', 'liberation', 'spirituality' all refer to that state which is all-inclusive universal Totality. One can be in the world and be in that highest state at the same time. Swamiji gives techniques which take the seeker to a higher level of understanding, and these techniques can be practised along with one's regular day-to-day activities.

The Appendix consists of a discourse that was given on the Aradhana day of Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. Swamiji talks about the circumstances into which Sri Gurudev and others of his calibre were born, their purpose on Earth, and what they achieved.

May the blessings of Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj be upon us all.

Chapter 1

THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH WE LIVE IN THE WORLD

During this period of Sadhana Week, it is obviously your intention to gather a new strength into your own selves and return home as a rejuvenated personality, and not as a person who has attended a festival, a *mela* or a rejoicing—after which, generally, your energies are depleted. You go as a weakened person after a dramatic performance or a presentation which stimulates your vitals, stirs up your emotions, and agitates the cells of your body. Sadhana Week is not a dramatic performance. It is not an enactment by performers on a stage, and it is not your function to witness the presentations as if they are performances in a theatre.

You have come with a different purpose, with personal difficulties which are eagerly waiting to come to the surface of your consciousness when the door opens and when you are left to your own selves. The din and bustle of life—the activities, the responsibilities, and the types of relationships you maintain in human society—manage to keep you out of yourself. They so dexterously operate that you feel you are leading a normal life.

That which is normal does not present any difficulties before us. Anything that pinches us, like a nail in the bottom of the shoe—that which irks us and keeps us out of alignment, whether outwardly in our social relationships or inwardly within our own selves—these symptoms which keep us restless in any measure, and anxious to some extent, may be considered as symptoms of certain behaviours and operations within our own selves which cannot be regarded as normal.

The normalcy of the physical body, which we call health, is also a state where we are buoyant with a new type of freedom. The greatest freedom is health, in which condition of freedom from every shackle we feel buoyant and often forget our own selves. The healthier we are, the less we think

of ourselves. When an illness of any kind enters our body, we become conscious that we are. We begin to be aware of each limb of the body. An eye, an ear, a tooth, a finger, a toe, or any blessed part of our body attracts our attention when it is set out of tune with the normal function of the body.

So is the illness of man in general. The continuous consciousness of ourselves and people around us, with a consciousness attending upon it as an awareness of our peculiar adjustable relationship with people which keeps us perpetually aware of our personal relationship with others, keeps us also in a state of anxiety of an indescribable character. No one knows definitely what would happen to oneself the next moment, and there is an apprehension that something untoward may happen.

While anxiety about the future may be permitted if nothing unpleasant is going to be expected in the future, it becomes intolerable when we always expect something which may be to the detriment of our well-being. This anxiety, this apprehension, arises from our own selves. It does not come from outside; it does not drop from the trees. There is a wholesale maladjustment of ourselves right from the outer skin down to the deepest of whatever we can be, and so whatever we speak is an artificial expression of our conduct. We do not and cannot reveal the whole of ourselves in our expressions. When we think, we are guardedly thinking about circumstances, lest repercussions may impinge upon us. We are always at daggers drawn, under a pressure of a feeling that we are not in our own homes. There is a necessity felt by every one of us to be vigilant, as if we are on a battlefield.

Go down deep into your own mind and think for yourself. Who has peace in this world? That tentative comfort that you may be enjoying in life—either due to your placement in society, your financial status or your physical condition—is, again, a matter of apprehension. Who can be always healthy? Who can be always wealthy? And who can be always secure

in this world? Hence, who can always have peace? This medical analysis of the mental states of people will reveal not happy conclusions. But unhappiness is loathsome. Illness is what we detest, and comfort is the aim of our social and physical existence. While inwardly we are secretly made to be conscious of something which is at sixes and sevens with the world, outwardly we are pressurised, due to another circumstance, to comfort ourselves that everything is all right.

There is a very peculiar attitude that we develop towards our own selves which can be very safely defined by a single word: duplicity. We do not maintain a true relationship with our own selves. At the very outset, we manage to be untrue to our own selves in order that we may live in an untrue relationship with people. It is sometimes felt that in order to justify one falsehood, another falsehood may have to be heaped over it. A single falsehood does not stand on its own legs. We are acutely aware of something peculiar in our own selves which cannot stand the logic of nature or, perhaps, the will of God; and with this circumstance, we have to live in this world.

We have been forced to accept that we somehow have to live in this world. We do not ask people, "Is it necessary for me to live in this world?" The question is already answered by our own selves: It is necessary. That it is necessary to live in this world is not learned by us from books. It is not a sermon that we have received from our Gurus or Masters. We have come to a conclusion definitely, by our own selves, for reasons we alone know: It is necessary to exist in this world. A hypothesis is already taken for granted. And this necessity to exist is—very, very unfortunately for us—involved in a network of complicated adjustments that we are required to make every moment of time, so that every minute that we pass seems to be an artificial existence. We are perpetually aware as to what is around us, as a field marshal may be looking around in the battlefield to see what

is moving and operating in all ten directions. What rest can we have here? But rest we must have. We have already concluded that it must be there; and we have to move Earth and heaven to gain this acquisition.

The inward suspicion with regard to one's own capabilities in the understanding of the nature of this world, and the powers that one can wield in this world, go hand in hand with the suspicion that we develop with everyone else in the world. We cannot trust anybody wholly, because we cannot trust ourselves wholly. This is because the trust, or the distrust, as the case may be, is only a description of an attitude that we generally develop in regard to anything—firstly, in regard to our own selves, and secondly, in regard to others. The distrust in regard to ourselves—in regard to the knowledge that we have and the powers that we wield—naturally has to condition the feelings that we have in regard to other people in the world, so that we cannot wholly trust our own brother. We have to be guarded even with him, for a secret reason which each one knows and no one can publicise. What a pitiable state of affairs that we have a secret attitude which conditions our public attitude in respect of the whole world—a secret which cannot be publicised, yet which conditions our public behaviour.

This very difficult-to-understand situation of our own mental operations is perhaps the background of very bitter analyses which were ruthlessly conducted by psychoanalysis about the nature of man in this world. Medical examination is not always a pleasant thing to undergo. Very unpleasant it is, for various reasons. And even to find time to go deep into our own mental makeup is not a happy thing. When we go into the corners of the citadel in which we are living, we will not scent fragrance, and perhaps we will not find even a clean floor to sit upon. Within ourselves is a world of dustbins, cobwebs, and undiscovered, uninhabited abysmal niches which refuse to come to the surface, or into the daylight of

understanding. There are corners in our own selves which we do not want to see.

Are there not corners in your own room which you hide from visitors because they are not clean? There is a basket where you have thrown torn pieces of paper. There is an old cloth which you have been using for wiping your floor. There is a kitchen which is all pell-mell. You have only a drawing room with a beautiful sofa to receive VVIPs. Such a drawing room we have within our own selves; but the unwanted corners, unfortunately for us, are a majority in their number. The drawing room within ourselves is very small in extent, and very few VVIPs can go inside. But we manage to behave very well with these VIPs, and shake hands with them knowing very well what we have inside our hearts: quarrels, disharmonies, court cases, daily skirmishes and a doubt as to whether it is good to die or live with such peculiar, suspicious surroundings within our own precincts. Nevertheless, we manage to shake hands with people and sit in parlance.

This sad state of affairs cannot go on for a long time. Every dog has his day, and we have our day. But that day cannot be every day. This is the beginning of a right pursuit in the direction of the true values of life. As we know very well, by common sense, that no enterprise can be embarked upon in life without perfect health of the body, the basic prerequisite of any adventure is physical health, first and foremost. Likewise, in your noble pursuits with whose sublime notions you have come to this Sadhana Week, the fulfilment of these purposes requires a basic presupposition and requirement: mental health.

Everyone here is mentally healthy; it is perfectly clear. But the mental health that we are considering and referring to under the circumstances of the nature of the aspiration with which you have come here is something different from the normalcy of the mental operations of man. And if you like to call it so, you may say there is a

supernormal condition of mental functions. It is this that can be the means of the fulfilment of your noble aspirations in the field of religion or spirituality, or on the path of God-realisation. An unhealthy mind is like a sick body, which will retard any progress in any direction—because sickness attracts attention immediately, and it will not permit the diverting of the mind in any other way.

The sickness of the mind from a purely philosophical, religious or spiritual point of view is not that particular sickness which is treated in facilities for the psychopathological. This is a different thing altogether, which requires a different set of instruments to gauge the performances of each one's own mind.

The other difficulty with us is that another person cannot easily help us in this matter, because very few can go into our own mind. Though there are ways and means of studying another's mind, these are not easy ways. They require deep training and a highly impersonal conduct of the mind to appreciate the exact conditions in which another's mind operates. But we are the best judge of our own self.

The personal and social conditions of life take much of our time. Do you not believe that the large part of the day is taken up by your social engagements and personal needs? Are you not convinced that you have very little time to devote to what you call religion, or the path of the spirit? Do you not have a perpetual complaint that you cannot afford to find time for religious pursuits or to live a spiritual life, inasmuch as you have other engagements—the calls of life which are pressing in their nature? Do you not also believe that these pressing circumstances which pull your attention in their direction are very important for you? Be very, very honest and dispassionate in this analysis. Do not misguide yourself that you are a lover of God. There is no need to placate oneself in matters which are very serious.

Now, the time that you have to devote to secular pursuits, as they are usually called, is large in extent. These pursuits

are very pressing, with great commitments and impossible obligations in life, due to which you have to run and catch the fastest vehicle that can take you to your destination. Let each one ponder over one's own obligations and aspirations in their collaborative relationship. How is it that you have persuaded yourself to believe that the larger part of the day has to go to that which presses very heavily upon your head? This persuasion comes because of the reality you associate to these obligations. They are very real, very necessary, and their reality is of such an intensive nature that any neglect on your side will catch you by the throat. You know it very well.

What a reality is enshrined in these secular calls of life! How can you ignore them in the name of God, in the name of religion, in the name of Guru, in the name of the Divine Name? If you say, "God is a greater reality. Guru is more important than any other wealth or occupation that I have. Religion is my pursuit," have you been able to instil the religious spirit or the spiritual outlook into your daily occupations? Or, are you still regarding them as two different departments of activity?

Here again, there is a jumble in our thinking. We are not very clear in our thoughts. Often, we think that religion is different from secular life. To be an executive engineer is not leading a spiritual life; the engineer is convinced about it. He is convinced, at the same time, that he has to devote the larger part of his time to his executive engineer's work. Again, the consequent persuasion follows. Somehow, sneakingly, the feeling enters that the larger part of the day—which is to be devoted to his job—is a larger, greater, more intensive reality than the call of religion or spirituality. Here the cat is out of the bag, as they say; the truth comes out.

There is a very difficult knot that you have tied within your own selves, and that inside core of this psychological knot is utter darkness. No light can penetrate it, so you cannot know that you are in this circumstance. You cannot be

aware what the trouble is. Sometimes, you feel that there is no trouble at all. Especially when you are physically healthy and financially wealthy—social status is there and everybody smiles at your face—it may appear that nothing is wrong in this world. But you cannot expect such rewards from life always.

Sometimes, you may be warned that this is not the true state of affairs. You get warnings from various sides—from your office, from your social relationships, from your own body also—that things are not exactly as you think. There is something different from what you are imagining in your mind. Now, this is a point which is not visible outside to the naked eye because it is only inside, not outside. But the urges of your mind, which channelise themselves through the avenues of the senses, pull you out of yourself in the direction of your activities in office and factory, etc. so forcefully and impetuously that you have no consciousness that there is a dark patch within your own self, which even an X-ray cannot discover. This dark patch obstructs the movement of light from within you. And, just as a dark spot in a moving film may be projected on the screen and you will see the black spot on the screen, although actually it is not on the screen—it is in the film that is moving through the projector, which is seen outside—likewise, you will project this black spot onto other people. You will see all people in this world as evil: “There is no good man anywhere. Everyone is wretched, stupid and idiotic.” This difficulty, which is sociological, may be a consequence of a psychological lacuna, as you can understand from the illustration of how a defect in the film can make the screen outside appear defective inasmuch as nobody looks at the film but everyone sees only the screen outside.

There is much to say about our own selves; but we cannot become objects of our own study. Since all our studies are laboratory investigations and observations through telescopes, microscopes, etc., we cannot study our own

selves. This little lacuna, this knot, this confusion, this dark spot, this rubbish within cannot be seen by ourselves because there is no instrument that we can apply against us. It is not an object; it is a subject, to put it more precisely. As we are subjects, we cannot become objects. We cannot become other than what we are; hence, we cannot study our own selves. The syllabuses of our educational institutions do not prescribe the study of one's own self. It is all a study of somebody else, as if somebody else is the most important thing in the world, and one has nothing to say about one's own self. The truth is the other way around.

Due to a total misguiding movement of the mind, an overemphasis is laid on that which is not ourselves, while secretly our love for our own selves is the most intense. There is an altruistic manifestation of a secret selfishness in man, mostly. Thus, the world goes. It is not for nothing that the great master said that the world is *maya*, a tremendous illusion. In what sense it is an illusion, you will have to study for your own self. At least, in one sense, I have mentioned to you what it is like: a projection of a picture which is not the true picture of the world, and an engagement of your whole personality in the witnessing and visualisation of the performance of this untrue picture of the world. Do you not call this *maya*? What else is *maya*, if not this?

Now you should be a little clear as to why you are unhappy in this world. Nobody makes you unhappy—not your boss, not your subordinate, not your husband, not your wife, not anybody. “Something is rotten in the state of Denmark,” as the poet put it. There is something very strange within our own selves in many a sense, not only in one sense. Anatomically and physiologically, we are strange complexes. The more we study the anatomical, physiological and biological structure of man, the greater is the miracle and marvel that we see in our own self. Strange is the bodily performance—the muscular and the nervous operation of man. Strange is the way in which the vital breath blows.

Miraculous is the way in which we are breathing and how the lungs operate. Wonder again is the way in which we digest our food and one substance is chemically converted and transmuted into another substance in the alimentary canal. Wonder again is the way in which we are thinking and apprehending two things at the same time—a very, very unsatisfactory worldly environment around us, and a great hope for perfection on the other side.

There is a still greater marvel within every one of us which is the cause of these marvellous operations in our intellect, our reason, our mind, our breathing, our body, and in our social relationships, also. There is a marvel behind marvels. Every discovery of man, scientifically, artistically or philosophically has been a revelation of a marvel that works in this world. Every scientist discovers a marvel. “Oh, what a wonder!” he cries out in the joy of his discovery. Psychologists discover a marvel. Biologists cry out, “Eureka! What a marvel!”—all this because the secret of life is itself a great marvel.

These words that I have placed before you are in the form of an introductory description of the conditions from which you have to move higher on, upwards to that which you are aspiring for in Ashrams, in institutions, in temples, in religious scriptures, and in Sadhana Weeks.

The first step that you have to take in the practice of *sadhana*, or the learning of the art of spiritual living, is to understand what that first step is. Everyone knows that the first step cannot be the second step; it has to be the first only. But what is the first step? The first step is the very condition in which you are now. If you are studying in the second standard, the first step is the second standard. From there, you move to the third standard. If you are in the tenth standard, the initial step is the tenth standard only; from there, you go to the eleventh standard and onwards. But it has to be finalised as to what is the standard in which you are existing now. Perhaps, none of you are uniformly in a single

standard. None of you are born on the same day and at the same minute. Therefore, from the point of view of the evolutionary law of the universe at least, none of you can be said to be literally on a par with another. You may be all disciples of the same Guru; you may be all reading the same scripture; you may all belong to a single religious faith; you may be living in the same house, in the same Ashram or institution. Nevertheless, you may be different from one another from the point of view of a subtle discovery of the standpoint of your own total makeup, psychophysically.

Many of you cannot know your own level, and will not find it easy to discover the circumstances of your life. It requires a superior investigative faculty. Rarely can people know the truths of their own selves. You can know your strengths and weaknesses to some extent, if you are honest to yourself. But if, as it is the case with most people, you are wrongly convinced that milk and honey are flowing in this world and you are on velvet, that would be an overestimation from which you have to guard yourself. There is no need to underestimate yourself as a sinner and a good-for-nothing fellow in this world. That also may not be a true picture of yourself. Nor may it be true that you are on a high pedestal of living and you are a master of all the arts. So, let there be a true assessment of yourself.

How are you going to make this assessment? Many of you would find it difficult to find a guide. People live in distant places or large cities, and have many difficulties in life. How will you find a suitable guide? Where such a guide is possible, go to that guide and ask that superior: "What do you advise me, sir, at this present moment of time in the condition in which you discover me now?" If this is not possible, sit alone for a few minutes before you go to bed at night—after you finish your dinner, chat with your family members and read the newspaper or whatever you do. When all that is done and you are free to go to bed, do not suddenly lie down. Let the family go to sleep, but do not go to sleep. Sit alone and close

your eyes: "Am I really a great man inside? Have I any importance? Is there any significance in me which is worth reckoning in life? Is there any importance attached to me?"

Importance—significance, value, greatness, whatever it is—is a description of either your social association or relationship with people, your physical condition, your mental structure, or your physical achievement. "Am I great, spiritually?" Put a question to yourself. "Am I a highly achieved person in the religious and spiritual fields? Am I a highly accomplished person in an intellectual and rational field, or in a scientific field?" You will receive a very, very uncomfortable answer to your question. "Am I a perfectly well-built physical stalwart? Am I really a very significant and valued person in human society?" What else is there in life except the value that you have in respect of your relationship with other people, the value that you attach to your own physical strength, the value that you attach to your own educational or artistic and scientific achievements, or your religious and spiritual heights? In what sense are you important in this world? You would be really sorry when you receive the answers from your own self. Perhaps you would not be able to sleep after a thorough investigation of your own self in all these directions. What is there in you, except these things that I have mentioned?

Most of us are only socially related individuals. We have nothing to call our own except that which is bestowed upon us by our social relationships. Family circumstances also come under social relationship; and nothing can be so brittle as social relationship. If that is the stand we are taking to assess ourselves, sorry indeed is our state of affairs.

Let each one take a diary or a notebook in one's hand. Keep it secret. You need not show it to anybody else. "What is my importance? What have I achieved? I am twenty years of age—thirty, forty, fifty, sixty years of age. What are my achievements in the social field, the vital, artistic, intellectual, scientific and spiritual fields?" Each one of you will get an

answer from your own self. That answer is the stand on which you have to take the first step. The first step that you have to take in your ascent towards the perfection that you are aspiring for is the answer that you get to these questions privately received in your bedroom when you are absolutely alone—unseen, unbefriended, and unknown to people.

But you are too busy. You have no time to sit like this. You come tired, exhausted. Who can sit like this? If you are interested in your own welfare, you should not say, “I am tired, fed up, overworked in the factory or office and also in the house. I have come home and will go to bed.” Who will not be interested in one’s own self? If you are really concerned with your welfare, how will you not find time to think of your welfare? How could you be exhausted? You will not be exhausted.

These preliminary remarks may suffice for this day for you all to contemplate as a foundational arrangement that you can make within your own mental field and discover the nature of the pedestal, or the step in the ladder of evolution, on which you are standing, and from which you have to ascend further.

Chapter 2

THE NEED FOR A LARGER OUTLOOK

It is necessary for us to recollect the passage we have traversed in the study of our own life. Very often, if not always, we expect that the world in which we live should be made in the way in which we see it, and in the manner we understand it. This is an attitude of self-confidence which brooks no interference from any other point of view of understanding. Man expects to live in man's world only, as we see obviously demonstrated in our own personal lives. As we are men, we expect only men to be alive—as if no one else can coexist with man, as that would interfere with his outlook of life and way of understanding.

This has been a very staunch behaviour of man throughout his history, and any failure in the fulfilment of his outlook has been attributed to causes other than the real ones. We have not learned to be charitable in our feelings. There has been a very egoistic presentation of even our feelings in regard to things. Do you not believe that true charity is your ability to feel in the way others feel? To compel others to coordinate themselves with your own feelings is the autocrat's attitude. This is not charity.

Charity expects not merely a concession grudgingly given to another's viewpoint, but an acceptance of the presence of other equally valid points of view, so that man is not the sole master of creation. There are others who can call themselves masters in a similar manner. So man's viewpoint, or his philosophy, need not be the final word; but he wants that his word should be final. Here is the great discovery behind the causes of man's failure in life.

Unfortunately for us, the world does not behave the way we expect it to behave. This should awaken our mind to a further concession that perhaps we are not the rulers of the world. Many times it has been proven to us that the world is ruling over us; we are not ruling it. We have been subjected to the operation of the laws of the world in all the facets

through which it manifests itself, and our voices have not been heard. Our prayers have been a cry in the wilderness. The sun has always managed to rise only in the east; it does not rise in any other direction. The day and the night, the seasons, nature's vicissitudes, and all other concomitances of these processes have managed to maintain their position, regardless of what we would like their attitude towards us to be.

But more than all this, topping the list of all our difficulties, there is the unsolved problem of birth and death that clinches the whole matter before us. The final judgement is delivered by the world upon everyone here when it declares that it is not going to listen to our opinion in the matter of this great order which we regard as the phenomenon of dying and being born. We have absolutely no say in this matter. This is the last bolt that the world has struck upon us. "If you talk more, I will deal with you in this matter, in this way." No man has escaped the notice of this operating law called birth and death.

While we may, under a pressure of necessity, accept that there is such a thing called subjection to birth and death, and we also concede that we have no control over this phenomenon, we try to push this event to a future date with the power of our imagination. We want to rule somehow or other, even in hell. The desire to rule is predominant in man and, somehow or other, he wants to make his voice heard and accepted, at least in some measure. So what does man say? "My dear friend, world, law of nature, you are telling me that you are not going to listen to my wish that I would like to be free from this turmoil of birth and death. But let me also be given a little choice, at least in some percentage. I am not going to die just now, though it may be true that one day I have to die." So man cajoles himself, pats himself on the back and convinces himself from the bottom of his heart that his death, the call from the law of nature, is a distant possibility.

Previously, I gave you a faint idea as to how this world is unreal; it is a *maya*. I tried to present this fact before you in a new fashion, and not in the metaphysical way of Acharya Sankara or philosophers whom you have read. In a more intelligent and acceptable commonsense way, I tried to explain how the world is not as real as you are imagining it to be. Another difficulty here is that you are in another illusion, a different facet of this very same *maya*, which compels you to convince yourselves that the great call from the heavens is in the distant future, and not a possibility of this moment.

Who tells you this? Which document has recorded that it is in the distant future? No proof, no evidence comes forth that your conviction is right. Nevertheless, your conviction is your conviction, and everybody has to accept it. "What I say, I say, and it is forever." Here again is man in his true colour. Everywhere man has demonstrated his stupidity. He has never behaved like an intelligent, wise individual; and he has asserted his ego to the utmost extent possible. The defiance of the existing laws, even in the teeth of utter failure, is the predominant conduct of the ego.

Now I come to the point from where I began. The world does not appear to be constituted in the way in which we think it is constituted, and our laws and regulations are not going to operate here. They have to be subjected to the higher law. What is this higher law?

I have taken up for these days' discussion a theme which I have designated as 'Religion and Social Values', which epithet will give you an idea as to the goal so that I may not baffle you with any philosophical disquisition or lofty ideas which go over your heads—things which are usually associated with religion, philosophy, meditation, etc. It is, again, necessary to stand on our own feet and not stand in the air, without any support at the bottom. We have to move onwards and forward, ascend in the direction of the basic urges of the spirit within us under the circumstances which

we have been able to discover with this little psychological and sociological analysis.

Many religions have failed; and seekers and *sadhakas* also have not always succeeded in their pursuits. I do not know if you have come across any person who could confidently say that he has attained full success and complete achievement in his efforts towards leading a spiritual life. A sorry face is cut by everyone finally, notwithstanding the herculean efforts in the path of meditation, *japa*, worship, and religious pursuits.

Is it not essential on our part to discover the causes of our failure? Or, are we to attribute it to God's unkindness and the idiocy of the public around us? Our earlier analysis pointed out to some extent that our suffering is not due to the wickedness of other people, even though there may be untoward persons in the world. It is also unkind to call God unkind. An unkind God would not have planted in us an aspiration for kindness. An evil God who is bereft of the sense of goodness cannot enshrine the sense of goodness in our mind. How could the idea of goodness, rectitude and propriety arise in our mind if such a thing were not to exist in this world? How could a thing that does not exist anywhere in the world operate in our mind?

We have a rock bottom of misunderstanding due to our overwhelming occupation with the surface activities of life. We give excessive importance to the sensations emanating from our personality and the reports we receive in respect of these sensations. We are hungry, and we think that hunger is appeased by taking our daily meal. A daily meal is not a medicine for hunger. Hunger will persist, as if we have eaten nothing yesterday. The irrepressible appetite of the body is proof that breakfast and lunch are not going to satisfy this body; otherwise, it should have kept quiet after having been fed well. It is not going to keep quiet. A voracious, insatiable, infinite asking is the attitude of this body. Any amount of wheat and rice cannot satisfy it. All the granary of the world

will not suffice to satisfy the hunger of the stomach. This is the attitude of this little body. The whole world cannot satisfy it.

Our mind also cannot be satisfied by any amount of entertainment. It is always dissatisfied. It has an impulse to ask for things whose nature it is not able to understand. It asks for peace. Many people say, "We want nothing but peace of mind," without knowing what they mean by 'peace of mind'. "I want only peace of mind." "But what is your idea of peace of mind?" "I do not know. I have come to ask you." Even what they expect and what they need is not clear to their own minds.

Is peace of mind a cessation of noise from the trucks and cars that ply nearby? If no vehicles move and there is no noise, and nobody speaks in your ears, can you say you have peace of mind? That is not peace of mind. If no noise is made anywhere near you, and you hear nothing, you see nothing—that also cannot be called peace of mind. So, what is it that you are asking for? You do not know. Are you not asking for a thing whose characteristic you yourself do not know?

You love beautiful things, artistic arrangements. There is what is called the aesthetic impulse. Why does this impulse arise in you? How is it that you love only beauty and not ugliness? What is wrong with ugly things? You cannot answer this question. Ugly things are ugly things; beautiful things are beautiful things. "I do not like ugly things." Why do you not like ugly things? What defects do you see in that which you call ugly? Why do you give it that name? Who asked you to give that peculiar designation of ugliness to that which you do not like? And why do you not like it? You cannot answer this question. "I like this. I do not like this. That is all." The matter ends.

There is an insatiable hunger of the intellect and the reason to know more and more. Here again, an insatiable appetite operates within you, in the body, in the mind and in the intellect. You pursue your studies, and pursue them

further and further. You go to foreign countries and pursue studies more and more, and they never end. There is something which you cannot understand even afterwards. Finally—I come to the point—there is something which keeps you in terrible insecurity of what will happen to you tomorrow, or even the next moment. “The greatest wonder in the world,” said Yudhishtira, “is that man, while he accepts the eventuality of dying, imagines that he is exempt from this phenomenon.”

You carry dead bodies to the cremation grounds and drop crocodile tears for a few minutes, but never do you feel, “This is the way I have to tread. Even if it be true that this is the way I have to walk, it is not today.” What can be a greater wonder than this? What can be a greater wonder than the fact that you are asking for things which you cannot understand? How is it that you cannot understand anything, and yet you are asking for everything? Here comes the need for a larger outlook and a deeper study of things. The present educational career is inadequate. It is empirical, it is sensory, it is a make-believe; it is a tentative adjustment and a workable arrangement, not an in-depth entry into the facts of things.

You stand on unstable ground when you conduct yourselves in this world on the basis of the knowledge that you have acquired through your studies. Your studies are not studies of the truths of things. That is why with all your studies, degrees and qualifications, you are still at a loss, and find yourself in a most unhappy situation, and do not know how to live in this world. This difficulty manifests itself after your studies are over. As long as you are a student, you have no problems because you are with your books; parents, or somebody, take care of you. You have no worry of any kind. But when the studies are over, the world looks at you as it is really: “Now, what do you say about me?”

Just as an unsatisfied wife may keep quiet as long as her husband is in the office but puts forth her grievances the

moment he returns from work, nature seems to be behaving in a similar way. It keeps quiet as long as you are studying in your colleges. "All things are over. Now what do you say about me?"—and it keeps you restless afterwards. This is because you have been following a wrong path even in your studies and educational career; and neither your parents, your government, your society nor your friends have been good enough or intelligent enough to tell you what your problems are going to be when you become an adult. They have managed to keep you in the dark, because they themselves are in the dark.

Here comes the need for a new type of education. You may call it religion. If you have any other name for it, you can bring that name forward. It is a participation in the order of the universe that you are required to extend, and not an interest evinced to utilise nature for your personal purpose. Scientific inventions and political manoeuvres, even sociological pursuits and projects, have been adventures in the direction of grabbing something from nature, controlling it, bending it down, and harnessing it for one's own social purposes. This would not be successful, because the world is not the slave of any man. Oftentimes, man has been proven to be the slave of natural laws. Nature can suddenly burst a bomb on the head of all humanity, which she has been keeping secretly tucked under the arm because the time for it has not come. The whole Earth can shake, and the matter ends there in one second.

A few days back I read in a newspaper that after some months there will be an alignment of seven or eight planets with the Sun, and the Earth can be shaken. A bolt, a jerk, a kick can be given to the Earth by the other planets; and we know very well what we can expect if a kick is given to the whole Earth. We hope that a kick will not be given because such a kick has never been given up to this time, and we always believe that a thing which has never happened will not happen. This is our logic.

There is, therefore, a necessity to undergo a new and true type of education. Here again, we have some problem. We may feel a need, but we may not be able to fulfil that need easily because circumstances in the world are not favourable. People frighten us by saying that Kali Yuga has come and this is not an age to gain an insight into the reality of things. Their gospel is that until Treta Yuga comes, until the Kalki Avatar is over, man has no hope. But the whole world is a mystery still, and this gospel is not the final word. I do not think that the Kali Age which people speak of is confined merely to the time calculations given in our almanacs. It is a perpetual process which can be called by this name of the cyclic movements of Krita, Treta, Dvapara and Kali.

In every moment of time, a circumstance arises in everyone's life when the conditions of the fourfold cycle manifest themselves; and inasmuch as God is timeless, the conditions of time may not always operate, because there is also the timeless element in man. We have the power to summon God, though we also have the weakness of getting subjected to nature's laws. So we are difficult individuals, very hard to understand, and every bit of the secret of the universe is present within ourselves. Every switch of every connection with everything in the world is present within us. Man is the switchboard of the whole cosmos. We can operate all the planes of existence by touching some parts of our body, without moving an inch from where we are sitting. This is the facility that is provided to man—the greatness, rather. But his utter weakness is that he cannot do this operation, for reasons that we have to discover by a further analysis. What is this difficulty?

There are people in this world who belong to two camps. There are those who say that religion has killed man; it has driven him into an imaginary realm of the other world of happiness which he is seeking, and which he cannot find in this world. Inasmuch as religions speak of another world where alone we can expect felicity, and it is always said that

this is a world of sorrow—Mrityu Loka, the world of death—there is nothing that can attract us here. “*Vairagya* is my aspiration,” says the spiritual seeker. “I give up this world. I practice renunciation, self-abnegation. I take to religious practice.”

If this is the attitude of all people, there is nothing that one can do with this world. There is no such thing as a welfare program for human society, or even a love of one’s own neighbour. The question does not arise at all. There is no neighbour for us because the world is not there for us. This is a religious gospel that can be found in the scriptures of all the faiths of the world, and sometimes it is regarded as the interpretation of the teachings of the prophets of religions. Many have taken to this line of approach that the world is Satan’s dominion; it is evil to the core. It is a temptress, it is a network of sensory relations, it is a three-dimensional illusion, and the earlier we get out of its clutches, the better for us. God is in the heavens, and the love of God cannot go hand in hand with the love of the world. Renunciation is the high watermark of religious aspiration. *Vairagya* is the last word of religion.

All fakirs, monks and nuns—seekers of God— left their homes, father and mother, wife, husband, children, property, and went to live in forests and deserts. They have no concern with humanity or with any living being, or with the Earth itself as a whole. This attitude sometimes becomes the last word in religion, and the only word of religion. Man is naturally forced to become callous even to his body. He regards starvation, fasting, vigil, and a drying up of his senses as the essence of religion. He closes his eyes and bolts his ears and paralyzes his senses completely. He gets emaciated physically and socially. Neither does he want anything from the world, nor has he anything to do with the world. Do you not think that this has been the voice of the religions of the world?

It appears that there was some mistake in this gospel, though there may be some truth in what these people say. Because of the extreme step that these gospels took in the history of their growth, a reaction was set up. Whenever there is an extreme of behaviour even in our body, there is a reaction from the organism in the form of an ache, a pain or a high temperature which arises to rectify the extreme step that has been taken by certain attitudes of the body—such as overeating, fatigue, and so on.

No man does anything in this world; nature alone does everything. The whole universe is a single body, and the world or nature as a whole—the universe, if we would like to call it that—behaves in the same way as the body behaves. Just as no limb of the body acts independently, no man can work independently here. We have neither a friend nor an enemy in this world. We cannot love anybody nor hate anybody, just as we cannot have a particular attachment to one part of our body or hate any part of the body.

I will again repeat that the world behaves in the same way as this body behaves. So whenever there is an excessive activity of a particular part of the body, there is a reaction set up by other parts of the body. Every medical person knows this; even common sense knows this. So any step in the direction of an excess, whether it is a secular move or a religious move, is counterbalanced by the total reaction of nature which can take the form of a historical revolution, a financial crisis, an earthquake, a social catastrophe or an epidemic which will wipe out nations; and unthinkable sorrows may descend upon man.

We should not say that some people are acting. People are not acting; nature is acting. As I told you, there are no people here. There is only a widespread movement of the fingers of nature. I am a finger, you are a finger, and every atom is a finger of nature. So neither this nation is doing something, nor is that nation doing anything. Neither are we doing anything, nor is anybody else doing anything. Nature is

doing everything—just as neither are the fingers of our body doing anything, nor is our nose doing anything, nor are our eyes doing anything, but the whole body is doing everything. It is the order of the requisition of the organism of our psychophysical setup that behaves in the form of a headache, a sneeze, a stomach ache, or fatigue of our legs. It is not the legs that ache; the whole body is demanding that ache. Likewise, no nation is behaving in any manner; it is the whole of the universe behaving in one particular required way to set up an extreme step that has been taken either by financiers, capitalists, poor people, selfish persons, religious people, or whatever be the section of people. Any ignored aspect of nature takes up arms, as any ignored limb of the body takes up arms. It wants to be listened to. Even a child who is ignored will cry loudly, at the top of its voice, so that we will hear only its voice and we cannot hear anybody else's.

The cults and the creeds and the movements in society today, whether they are social or political, are reactions set up by nature, not by man. There is no man. Such a thing does not exist anywhere. Nature does not see people around; it sees only its own limbs. It simply shakes its body. As we stretch our legs when we are tired of sitting in one *asana* for a long time, nature will stretch her legs when her leg is aching because of a forced bending of that limb to the needs of certain sections of human beings. This is a larger outlook with which we may behold things, rather than studying things only from a political angle or historical viewpoint, or a merely geological or astronomical way of thinking.

The universe is neither political, sociological, geological, nor astronomical. These are only our complacent ways of studying things. For the whole of the universe, there is no astronomy, geology, politics, sociology, just as for our body there is no anatomy, physiology, medicine, etc. They are only our names, and our way of studying and interpreting. It is what it is. Until we learn the art of thinking in this context of

nature's setup, we are not educated persons. We are only holding a piece of paper with some ink scribbled over it, calling it a certificate or a degree. This piece of paper with a little ink splashed over it is not going to be our support when nature shows her claws and her teeth.

This gospel of religion to which I made reference just now, while it took its stand on certain correct presuppositions in the light of the higher values of life, went wrong in ignoring certain existent values. Man is not merely a religious being; he is also many other things. We may be aspirants after God—and we have to be such aspirants, granted—but we are not only this. You may be a Commissioner or a Collector. Who can say that you are not that? You are that. But if you go on behaving like a Commissioner or a Collector everywhere—in the bathroom, in the marketplace, in the shop, with your wife, with your children, with everybody— you know what will happen to you.

So, that you are a Commissioner is not gainsaid. You are that, and you have to behave like a Collector or a Commissioner when you are required to behave like that. But you are also something else. You are the husband of a wife. You are the father of a child. You are perhaps a sick man requiring medical aid, or you have some frustrated emotions. You have many sorrows in spite of the fact that you are a Cabinet Minister. Now, how can you say that you will simply brush aside all your requirements of the other side and behave only like a Commissioner or a Cabinet Minister? Thus, these religions have made this mistake of catering to only one side of man's needs. They always behave like Presidents or Prime Ministers. They never thought that they are also hungry stomachs, and they have other small needs which cannot be completely set aside in the name of this great designation of a Prime Minister.

This was the mistake of the religions. That is why religions are now tottering with feeble legs in this world, and

people think that perhaps religions will be wiped out completely, even as your post of a Commissioner or a Collector can be wiped out by one jolt from the body which will snatch you away from this world. If your physical condition is ignored, if you do not know that you are a sick man, your Commissionership can be wiped out in one second by that blow of death. Religion can vanish in one second, as is the tendency these days, due to reactions from ideologies, outlooks and philosophies which have something else to say. The philosophy of the stomach is sometimes different from the philosophy of the brain. It is not the same thing. It is the philosophy of the stomach that is speaking nowadays, and the brain is keeping quiet.

Thus, the sorrows of people, which are manysided, are the consequences of reactions set up by the organic structure of the whole of nature. To live a healthy life is, therefore, to live a life of participation in the order of the larger organism to which you belong. You should not imagine that you are only one thing, and not many other things. You are a citizen of a nation. You belong to some country and, therefore, you have some obligations as a citizen of this nation. You cannot say, "I am the Atman and, therefore, I have nothing to say to anybody." You are not the Atman to such an extent, though it is true that you are the Atman. I bring the analogy once again. Do not forget it. You are not only that, though you are also that.

You have a family obligation, and an obligation to your own community, to your body, to your mind, to your moral sense, to your aesthetic callings, to your rational requisitions—and to your spiritual aspirations, finally and lastly. All these things have to be taken into consideration. Therefore, religion, spirituality, which is also called yoga, is a union of yourself with all the phases of life at once. Just as a successful man is not merely a Collector but also everything else that he is at the same time, a simultaneous awareness of

this involvement in the whole setup of life, and not only to behave just from one angle of vision, is the wisdom of life.

“Yoga is union” has often been repeated, again and again, by teachers and masters—but, union with what? You suddenly say, “Union with God; union with the Atman.” This is your glib reply. This reply will not be sufficient unless it is properly interpreted and understood. It is union with Reality. And if you think God is the only reality, the Reality, and yoga is an attempt at union with that Reality, we grant this definition as perfectly valid. But the weakness of man insinuates itself even into this definition of the concept of Reality and God. The weakness of the religions that went to the extremes, about which I mentioned just now, begins to operate even here, and the true concept of God does not enter our heads. We always pray looking up to the skies: “O Lord, have mercy upon us. Free us from these sorrows of life, from this encumbrance, this torture. Take me to Your abode and keep me on Your lap.” This is how we generally pray to God. This is our idea of God.

This is not a correct idea of God. As you call God by a name that is not applicable to Him wholly, He also does not respond to you correctly. Unless the call is complete, the response cannot be complete. If a partial wing of yourself—or rather, an imperfect side of your nature—independently calls out to a God according to its own partial definitions and concepts, a response comes corresponding to this imperfect call, and the imperfectness of that response can have a repercussion on the other aspects of your nature which have not been consulted in your call. That is why you have family problems, troubles in offices, and anxieties everywhere. Whatever the number of *japa* or the rolling of beads that you perform in the calling of God, you have not been able to receive a response because you have always managed to resent a correct understanding of the circumstances of your life and the nature of God Himself. And, as I tried to explain earlier, you have not been able to understand even the first

step that you have to take. You have tried to take the last step, while you are on the lowest pedestal of life.

All religious enthusiasts try to take the last step in religious pursuits and go to the utter extreme, to the ruin of their health and their social associations. Rebirth cannot be avoided if you directly attempt to approach a pedestal of union for which you are not meant when a neglected call pulls you forcefully down to the level of the Earth. The Earth has its gravitation. It will not allow you to fly in the air, and anyone who tries to fly in the air without proper wings will damage his body by falling down on the Earth.

Thus, it is not enough if you regard yourself as devotees, disciples of a Guru, religious seekers and spiritual aspirants. You must have also the wisdom to discover why you have failed in your pursuits. This is another great question which requires further investigation and study.

Chapter 3

THE REASON FOR BIRTH AND DEATH

Moksha is the great goal of life. This is the ringing message of every genius in any field who has gone to the depths of things. This is to say, freedom is the birthright of man. There is a struggle in and out for liberation, freedom, and shaking off every kind of bondage. There is nothing anyone needs in this world except freedom to the largest extent possible, and for the longest duration conceivable—freedom in society, freedom in political relationships, freedom from illness, freedom from ignorance and unknowing of every kind, and freedom from the fear of death.

Some of us may be under the notion that we are enjoying some sort of a freedom in life, such as the freedom of a rich man, the freedom of a powerful man, and the freedom of a healthy man. They are freedoms, no doubt, in some way. But just as a beautiful, rotund fruit looking healthy and delicious from the outside may have a secret worm eating it from inside, an outwardly robust individual may have a vital illness within the core of his system eating him from within gradually, slowly, though outwardly its presence is not even felt.

So, this freedom of a millionaire or an autocrat that we are enjoying is an apparent illusion of freedom. No despot, dictator or tyrannical ruler can imagine that he is really free. He is in danger. No strong, physically built individual can be confirmed in his opinion that he will not fall ill. And we know the fate of the rich man. He is most insecure. Restlessly he passes his nights.

Let us set aside all these visible difficulties. There is an invisible, secret problem before us: the unaccountability of death, which can snatch and which must snatch everyone. What a pitiable state of affairs in which we are living in this world!

There are two great mysteries before us. No one can say when he will have to leave this world, and no one can say where he will go after he leaves this world. What can be worse for anyone than this ignorance in which a person is thrust into a concentration camp, as it were, in this world? Even a concentration camp is better than a world of this type, where we do not know what will happen to us the next moment or where we will be destined in the future.

This ignorance defeats all complacency that we may have in respect of our achievements of any freedom in this world. It is like the beautiful body of an emperor that has lost its soul no longer has any significance. It is no more a prince, it is no more a king or an emperor; it is nothing whatsoever because its appearance has been deprived of the essence of what it was constituted to be.

Likewise, our formal freedoms, which are what we are after in our elections, in our business and in our general attitude in society, all these attitudes of ours are infected by a secret anguish which gnaws into us—that is, death. Yama taught the great mystery of life to the aspiring student Nachiketas. Yama teaches the mysteries. Death is the best teacher. No one can tell us what the world is made of except the phenomenon of death, because it reveals the inner mystery behind the outward form of the physical and social world. Freedom from this untoward event—death, which goes together with birth, and birth, which goes with death—is alone real freedom. When a person is subjected to such harassment in the form of this imprisonment and punishment in the form of the cycle of transmigration, where comes freedom in this world?

But man aspires for freedom only. He does not bother about birth and death. The fact that we are after a positive attainment of ultimate freedom, infinite and eternal in its nature, irrespective of the impending difficulty of birth and death, demonstrates that we are finally destined for this

freedom. We are bound in a way—perhaps bound in every way here; yet, this is not the final word in the history of man.

In the Mahabharata, towards the end, there is the narrative that Yudhishtira bodily went to the celestial realm, with a dog behind him. He was eager to see his brothers and his queen rejoicing in the glory of paradise. Narada and some other sentinels were with him, slowly directing him. He was eagerly awaiting the vision of this glory of paradise where his brothers and queen were all seated as emperors. He could not see anything. He was being led from darkness to darkness, from lesser darkness to greater darkness, from a comfortably expressible atmosphere of breathing even normal oxygen to a stinking, rotten abyss. After some time he had to close his nose because there was stink from all sides. There was no light. It was all darkness—stink and darkness.

“Where are you taking me?” asked Yudhishtira to the Great Ones.

“We are taking you to the place where your brethren and your queen are.”

“Is this the way to the place where they are staying?”

“This is the way.”

He could not understand. His brain did not function. He felt it was no more tolerable. He was suffocated with the stink of the place, and he was walking on slippery ground, knowing not what was around him. Then only he heard a faint cry.

“Save us! Save us! Wait here for a few minutes. Don’t go.” This was the voice of his brother. It was Bhima’s voice, Arjuna’s voice, Draupati crying.

“What is all this?” cried out Yudhishtira to Narada and the others.

“Well, you wanted to see your relatives. They are here. This is the paradise, this is the heaven in which your brethren are,” said the celestials. “This is what they deserve. But your destination is different. Turn away from this place. This is not your place. You are destined for heaven, and they are destined for this for their own deeds. Return! Why do you stand here? We shall take you to the paradise of Indra, which is and which shall be your glory.”

Yudhishtira said, “What do you mean by asking me to return to paradise when my brothers and my queen are here in this stink? I will stand here as long as they are here.”

There was a lot of argument. “This attitude of yours is not proper. Whatever one deserves, one gets. This is what they deserve, and you deserve another thing. Go from here,” said the celestials.

Yudhishtira would not budge from that place. “No, I am here, and I shall not move from this place. I shall be where my brothers are, where my queen is.”

Suddenly the curtain lifted. It was all blazing light. The resplendence and the fragrance and perfume of the paradise were instantaneously there. He was surprised. “Am I seeing things properly?”

He found his own brothers and his queen seated in the highest glory of paradise. Yudhishtira asked, “What is this? Are you making me mad? What am I seeing? What was I seeing, where was I standing, and where am I now?”

The angels said, “These are things which you are not supposed to understand. You are still in a mortal body. You have come bodily to the heavens, and your affections and your aversions, which are common to human beings, are still with you. You are not thinking like a celestial. You are thinking like a mortal. Take a dip in this river.”

Yudhishtira took a bath, and suddenly he shone with a fire-like body, and he no more thought like Yudhishtira. It

was a new outlook altogether, a new vision, a new understanding, freed from the loves and hatreds which are inseparable from mortal existence.

This is a story which, to some extent, also explains our condition. We are in hell. We may say that we are not in a stinking place. Yudhishtira was not able to breathe. He was in darkness; and it was an awful atmosphere in which he was. But we are not in that condition. We are happy. Here is the blazing sunlight. We have oxygen to breath. We have food to eat. What is wrong with us?

That we are totally ignorant of what has happened to us and what is happening to us, and we are not able to know that we are in this state of ignorance, can be said to be a worse state than the one in which Yudhishtira was. Yudhishtira was in a better state because he knew what was happening and where he was standing. He knew that it was a very undesirable, awful atmosphere. But we think this is paradise.

This is the bondage of man. Man's bondage does not necessarily consist in absence of currency notes or any physical amenities, but in his incapacity to know where he is standing. Ignorance is bondage; knowledge is freedom. It is not gold and silver that can make us free, not authority over people that can make us free, and no accumulation of the different particulars of the world can make us free—because they are, in a way, comparable to a dreamland where we may rule like Ashoka, Alexander the Great or his grandfather, but it amounts to nothing finally. All the glory of the dream world is a dream indeed as long as the dream continues. It is worse than a bubble, because even a bubble has its own reality. We are here in the space-time and material complex of dream, completely under the control of a magic which deludes the whole personality, root and branch. And even our thinking is deluded. Reason operates in dream. And what reason? The dream reason operates. Such is our intellect, our scientific achievement, our rationality, our genius; it is a dream genius,

dream poetry, dream art, dream achievement, dream wealth, and dream emperors. All is wonderful. How wonderful it is to be an emperor in dream! But we know the substance out of which this experience is made.

Such is the experience out of which our world is made. "The world is made of such stuff as dreams are made of," said Shakespeare. A great eternal truth: the world is made of such stuff as dreams are made of. What is the stuff that the world is made of in dream? Can you tell me it is made of wood or brick, iron, gold or silver? What is the substance out of which the world of dream is made? You have to think very deeply to give an answer to this question. Vainglorious, mirage-like, unsubstantial, hollow experience is the substantiality, solidity and permanency of the dream world. What a contradiction! It appears to be a permanent experience. We can rejoice. We have the great joys of life even in dream. We can rule Earth and heaven there. But there is no substance in that experience.

So we can have a substanceless experience also. We can be very comfortable in a world which has no substantiality behind it and, therefore, our comfort may be an unsubstantial comfort. It is like living in a fairyland where, like Aladdin with his magic lamp, we seem to be rubbing a lamp of the wonder of magic with the power of our empirical intellect and associations, and are glorying in the heaven of this world that we ourselves have created in our own minds. This is real bondage; and freedom from subjection to a compulsion to think in this manner is real freedom.

Great masters and adepts who have plumbed the depths of experience have compared this world to a dream world. It is difficult to believe that this world is a dream because it is substantial, tangible, visible, audible, and we can taste it and experience it in a concrete manner. But we can have a concrete, substantial, solid experience even without a concrete atmosphere being around us. The world of psychological experiences under hypnotic conditions,

pressures of strain and mental agony, demonstrate that we are capable of living in a hard reality which has no internal substance.

Thus, freedom which is ultimate, which is called *moksha* or the liberation of the spirit of man, is considered as the goal of life. How do we know that this is the goal of life? We ourselves can know this. We need not go to a scripture to understand this or to any adept to be taught. Our own internal content will reveal what we are aspiring for.

We are, no doubt, in a miserable world and an unfortunate condition, yet we have a great strength within us. This strength is the power embedded in our mind to comprehend that the world is not final; there is a 'beyond' to this world. The finitude of our experiences and the limitations which cramp our movement in any direction point to the presence of an illimitable, boundless possibility beyond ourselves. The asking of man for freedom is actually an asking for infinite possession. It is not the freedom of the servant who serves a master; who too has some sort of freedom to receive his salary every month, a month's leave once in a year, and a few hours of respite for his lunch or dinner or to have a little rest in his house. This is the freedom of a slave, of a servant.

This is not the freedom that we are expecting in this world. The freedom we want is not only to be totally free from every kind of shackle imposed upon us. We want to be free not merely from the presence of other people around, but even from the presence of anything around us. The very presence of anything outside us is a limitation upon us. There is always a need felt by us to adjust ourselves to the presence of something outside us. Thus, we are not entirely and wholly natural in our thinking, in our speech and in our behaviour when we are in the presence of other people. To some extent, we have to make an adjustment and concession, and live a sort of artificial life in the presence of others. While in the presence of others, we cannot think whatever we want to

think, say whatever we want to say and behave in any way we like. This is a limitation.

Beyond this, there is the limitation of space and time which constricts our existence to this little body which is only six foot long and two and a half feet wide, and we cannot go outside this. Such little freedom is given to us. To move within the little ambit of our body is our freedom, and we have no liberty to touch anything outside us. The moment we attempt to interfere with anything that is outside this body, we require a government to control us; and social relationships and rules and regulations of every type begin to be felt as necessities in life on account of the artificiality in which one is compelled to live, in an atmosphere over which man has no control, which does not belong to him, and with which he is not really related.

Hence, while political bondage is bad, social and communal bondage is equally bad, and the compulsions of the instincts and the urges of the body and the mind are also very undesirable, the greatest bondage is the limitation to space and time. It is due to this that we are born and we die. Birth and death are not caused by the presence of other people around us. We are not born and we do not die because of our possession or non-possession of things. The final stroke of a physical annihilation of our personality is not brought about by our connections with our family members or the society of people, but with our connection to space and time.

It is space, time and causal relation which deal a death blow at our personality. The reason behind this phenomenon is, as mentioned earlier, that the universe does not behave in the way we behold it with our eyes or try to understand it with our mind. It is controlled by a law which is supernatural and beyond the comprehension of the logical intellect or the scientific understanding. What we call space and time—or, as people today say, space-time—is a mysterious complex in which we as individuals are involved. It is a network of

relations. The space-time causal complex is a network of relations which surpasses the understanding of man. This network of relations cannot become the object of the understanding of man's mind, because he himself is involved in these relations, just as a thread is involved in the network of a fabric or a piece of cloth. And just as a particular thread in a cloth cannot know the cloth unless it also knows itself simultaneously because of its inseparable relation to the entire structure of the cloth, in the same way, man cannot know that this is the case unless he knows himself and knows everything through himself and himself through everything.

This is the great difficulty before us. Here we seem to be entering into a field of a new type of education altogether, where to know oneself is to know all things and to know all things is to know oneself simultaneously. To know oneself is to know the whole universe, and vice versa. Thus, universal freedom and personal freedom mean one and the same thing because of the peculiar nature of the involvement of individuals in the space-time complex. Space and time are not outside us. We cannot see space, though we appear to be seeing it with our eyes. It is inwardly woven into the very fibre of our personality. There is space inside us also. Space is not outside anything, nor can it be said to be inside everything, because the very conception of a localised existence is impossible without the conception of space. What we call length, breadth and height is nothing but space defined in a particular manner. So when we say "I am occupying space", we are not defining ourselves properly, because we are ourselves a configuration of space. The dimension of our body or personality is a local description of a point in space. And we are not merely in space—we are not only sitting here on this seat, in this hall—but also we are now at such and such time, on this day of the year, and so on. Therefore, we are in a locality of space and a point in time.

Hence, our involvement is not merely as a thread in a fabric or a piece of cloth, which is only to describe part of the mystery; we are also involved in a terrible illusion called the time process. No one can understand what time is. Time is not the movement of a watch or a clock. It is also not the recurrence of day and night. Even if the Sun were not to be there, there would be a time consciousness. Do we not feel there is time even in pitch darkness, when there is no light? So it is not wholly true that time is due to the revolution or the rotation of the Earth or the presence or the absence of light, like the light of the Sun. It is a mysterious way in which our mind itself works.

Time can ultimately be reduced to a state of consciousness of the succession of events in space. As space is involved in time and time is involved in space, we cannot know space unless we know space is now. So we have brought the time factor into our consciousness of space. "I am experiencing space now." We are connecting the spatial extension to the time process in order to be aware that space is. And, we cannot be aware of time without space, because time is known by us as a succession of events which take place in an extension of space.

Thus, we are in a web of unintelligible relations, and being part and parcel of this network of relations, we are unable to know ourselves wholly, and are unable to know anything in this world. Outwardly we are ignorant; inwardly also we are ignoramuses. This is to say something about space and time.

But there is another difficulty of relationship, which ties us to the bondage of life. We are very happy when we see our friends and very grieved when we see our enemies. When a friend dies, we weep; and when an enemy dies, we say a good thing has happened. This is the manifestation of relationship. The whole of the life of man is nothing but an interpretation of relationship. Our possessions, our wealth, our family relations, and whatever we think is ourselves is nothing but a

bundle of relations. Even that is unintelligible. We cannot know in what way a thing is connected with us. We have a piece of land and we say, "I am a landlord." First of all, this land was there even before we were born. This is something we should not forget. So it is difficult to believe how it has become ours. Anyhow, we say, "It has been registered in my name." What do we mean by 'registration'? Nobody can understand what it is that we are thinking in our head when we say it has been registered. Again, some illusion is catching hold of our mind. By registration, we secretly mean that we have the consent of other people also in our imagining that this piece of land is ours. That is all that registration is. It means nothing else. Some person who is supposed to be representing other persons says it is our land. This is called registration in the District Registrar's Office or Sub-registrar's Office. There is nothing else in it.

The point is, the fact of other people accepting our notion that the land belongs to us does not explain the belonging of the land to us. The explanation has to come from the deep root—the grass roots—of the experience itself. In what way are we possessing this land? Is it under our grip? Are we holding it in our palm, carrying it on our head? It is difficult to say how it belongs to us. It belongs only in a peculiar movement of our head. A wave of the mind is concentrating itself on a consciousness of a relationship called possession. So land or no land, the joy of possession is only the consciousness of possession. If the consciousness is absent, the land may be there or may not be there, but it is not going to help us in any manner. We cannot eat this land. It cannot become part of our body. As a matter of fact, we cannot swallow any material which we regard as our possession.

In fact, possession is a concept; it is not a material occurrence. We cannot materially possess money, we cannot possess our wife and husband, we cannot possess children, we cannot possess anything. We can have no such connection except in a conceptual operation of our mind in a peculiar

manner—whose essence we ourselves cannot understand. Here again we are in illusion, like the space-time complex.

The concept of relation is the essence of philosophical discussion. All philosophy of the East or the West is only a study of relationships—how one thing is related to another thing. The relationship of 'A' to 'B' is a distinction that is drawn between 'A' and 'B' together with a conception of the connection between 'A' and 'B'. See how mysterious relationship is! If 'A' is connected to 'B', there should be a non-distinguishable connection between 'A' and 'B'. If they are non-distinguishable, they become identical. If they are identical, there cannot be a relationship; and if they are really different, there cannot be a relationship. There is an illusion in the form of relationship. It does not exist, finally. But, it exists in the mind. Therefore, the mind is the maker of man, and the great gospel of the scriptures that the world is made up of mind, finally, has some sense.

Freedom from involvement in this space-time complex relationship is not possible. And why do we get into the clutches of birth and death? Now we come to the point. The world is evolving. The universe is in a state of process, and it is not stable on any permanent ground. It is moving, because the world is a name that we give to the externalisation of experience in space and time. And nature or God or anything that we regard as real is not an externalised something. It is a compact, integrated substance. It is Being—Pure Satta, as Sanskrit philosophers tell us—and division within this Pure Being is not conceivable.

The Ultimate Reality is indivisible; and the world is made up of divisible particles. Time is divided into minute bits of process, and space is again divided into minute bits of extension—and, therefore, the whole of the universe, constituted of its contents, is the opposite of Reality. The indivisible character of Reality is completely defeated in this divisible character of the world. The universe struggles to get back to this indivisibility of being. This effort of the universe

to turn away from the divisibility in which it is caught, towards the indivisibility of its essentiality, is the process of evolution. As we are included in this process of movement, we are pushed onward with the world, together with its urge of movement, in the direction of the experience of indivisibility; and transformation takes place.

As we ascend further and further, move onward and onward, we have to put on newer and newer garments for the purpose of a newer and newer type of experience. Just as, if we want to see distant objects we use binoculars, if we want to see far-off things we use telescopes, and if we want to see very minute things we use a microscope, likewise, if we want to have an experience of a larger expanse of the indivisibility of things, we have to put on a new instrument of experience—which is a new body that we put on. With this body, we cannot have an insight into the inner structure of things—just as we cannot see the minute essentiality of things by looking at them with naked eyes. This is a gross instrument. This body, this mind, this intellect and any apparatus with which we are endowed at present are not subtle enough to gain entry into the inner structure of things. Therefore, the urge of the necessity to go inward towards the indivisibility of Reality compels us to cast off this instrument, as when we want to see a deeper reality we discard the old microscope and use a more powerful one.

Therefore, death is not a curse; it is a necessity under the circumstances. Death is comparable to the throwing off of this body. And birth is nothing but a consequence that follows the throwing off of the old microscope because it is not useful for the further adventure upon which we are embarking. The utilisation of a new instrument for the purpose on hand is the rebirth that we are taking.

Hence, death and birth of this body—or the process of metempsychosis, transmigration—is a continuous effort on the part of our inner core to cast off old instruments which are not useful for a higher purpose, and to utilise new

instruments for gaining greater and greater insight into the higher realms of existence. No one can free oneself from these difficulties we call birth and death as long as one is finite. Birth and death are processes compelled upon the finitude of individuals, and this cycle ceases only when we cease to be finite. The urge of the finite towards the infinite is the reason behind the transformations we undergo through the processes called birth and death.

Thus, it is a cosmic need, a necessity under the circumstance in which the universe is working. No one can be free from this phenomenon because we are in the phenomenon of finitude. As long as there is something outside us, as long as there is space, as long as there is time, as long as we are one person related to other things outside us, as long as there is space-time causal relations, birth and death cannot be avoided.

But our struggle is towards the Infinite: to unite ourselves, in the state of yoga, to that Being of all beings, *satya se satyam*, where the finitude of our experience enters the infinitude of being, like rivers entering the ocean. Then, space-time relationship ceases. All our daily activities are also contributory factors to this great aim. What is the connection that seems to be there between this great, noble and sublime aspiration of the universe towards *moksha* and our little, tiny, brittle activities of day-to-day life? They are all groping in the dark in search of the exit from this world for a higher freedom. All our daily enterprises and works that we perform— whether we are a motorcar mechanic or a seller of vegetables and milk, a scooter driver or a clerk, whatever our occupation be—the sweat that we are shedding, the toil that we are undergoing, the work that we are doing, the suffering that we are passing through, the experiences of our life in any way are all little contributions that we unknowingly make to this great effort and purpose of the universe to achieve ultimate perfection.

Thus, there is nothing that we need in this world. We are asking for a thing of which we have no knowledge. Ignorantly we ask for that which is knowingly to be experienced. We are in a state of bondage because we are unconscious of the fact that we are unconscious of what is actually happening to us. The little joys and sorrows of life, the history of mankind, and the whole process of the cosmos are a great epic drama of the aspiration of the whole of creation for God-realisation.

As mentioned earlier, there is a great difficulty before us. All this is a grand aspiration, a great ideal before us, and we are throbbing and thrilled even to listen to these great possibilities which seem to be ahead of us. But we have little difficulties, little problems, little pulls which the Earth exerts upon us, to which I made reference yesterday. If you can succeed in reconciling this noble aspiration for the liberation of the spirit in God with the little duties of your life, you are a free man even here.

This is another subject, which is tantamount to a study of what usually goes as the practice of yoga. This has to be learned. Perhaps I have something to tell you about this technique that you have to employ from moment to moment in your daily life, by which you blend world and God together, and man and the Absolute walk together on the road as if they are friends going for a walk in the evening. This is a possibility. We shall have the opportunity to bestow contemplation on this noble subject.

Chapter 4

TRUE RENUNCIATION IS ENLIGHTENMENT

Spiritual life is a movement in the direction of God, which means a movement in every direction. It is not moving in any particular direction, such as east or west, because God's comprehensiveness is a directionless existence. Therefore, in our search for God, we are searching for a way in all the directions of the world.

The spiritual movement towards God is not a linear movement. It is a multi-faced approach in respect of all things which may be considered as the faces of God. This is one aspect of spiritual life. The other aspect is that the movement towards God is, in some sense, like going from one country to another country.

What do we have to do when we leave one country and go to another country? We have to apply for a passport. But the passport will not be issued so easily, because our obligations to our country have to be cleared before the Passport Officer concedes to our request. He will ask us to produce the Tax Clearance Certificate, because the country would not wish that we skip over our dues to it in our aspiration to move to another country. We would also make some provisions and arrangements for our family and see that everything is stable in the environment of our house before we take a passport or a visa to the other country. Sometimes the Passport Officers even insist on what is called a Police Clearance; and any other dues which we owe to our nation are cleared first before we are free to go.

In a manifold manner are we connected to this country of ours; and anyone is so connected to his or her own country. At a moment's thought we will not be able to make a list of all our relationships to our country, to our society. They will all come up one by one, as the occasion arises. Similarly, we cannot know how many desires we have in our mind. At the present moment here, seated in a hall, it may look like we have no desires at all; we are completely free. But this is not a

fact, because this is not the occasion for the desires to manifest themselves. Just as a seed sprouts only under suitable conditions—when the earth is soft, and the rain falls, and the climate is favourable—in the same way desires, which are equally intelligent, will not manifest themselves when they know that their asking will not receive a response.

Likewise is our understanding of our relationships to things. Sometimes we may believe that we are totally free. People sometimes say, “I have no encumbrances. I am collecting my pension. I am a retired man, and I have no obligations.” This is a straightforward statement of an intelligible mind, because a clear insight has not been gained into the inward subconscious or even unconscious tentacles with which we are connected with the nether regions—not only of our psychic world, but also of the social and physical world outside.

The ancient masters, in India especially, have conducted a threadbare analysis of the conditions to be fulfilled by a seeker of Truth. It is not a sudden wrenching of ourselves from relations when we move towards God; rather, it is a fulfilment of relations. The idea of abandonment, which many a time obsesses our mind, is a partial truth of the matter. Often there is a dual urge that operates in us when we are fired up with a spirit of renunciation. A feeling of the reality of the sorrows and sufferings of life and a simultaneous feeling of the need to free ourselves from these sorrows and sufferings is a mistake we commit with these peculiar attitudes of ours. If the sorrows and sufferings are unreal and they have no substance—they are really not there—our anxiety to free ourselves from them is understandable. But if they are really there as meaningful connections which we have established with our atmosphere, a severing of our connections with them is, again, very unthinkable. The spirit of *vairagya* is a difficult atmosphere of the human psyche.

We have been told, right from our childhood, that the love of God is in some measure a dislike for the world. Though the word 'dislike' has a connotation of its own and people interpret the spirit of *vairagya* in a nobler environment, the dislike aspect does not completely leave us. Religious instruction, at least to the extent we have been able to understand it, has been a double-edged sword which operates in two ways: in the direction of the world, from which we have to free ourselves, and in the direction of God, in relation to which we have to connect ourselves.

It was mentioned earlier that a thread in a cloth is connected to the cloth in a very peculiar manner. This analogy was brought forth to explain our relationship to things. When a thread wishes to free itself from the cloth into which it has been woven, it is actually attempting a freedom from an all-round relationship that it has established with the entire fabric. Our connection to the world cannot be fully explained by this analogy. We are not merely like a thread in a cloth, because the connection of the thread to the cloth is purely mechanical; there is no living relationship of one thread with another thread. But there is a very forceful, soulful and living connection of ourselves to every soul of this cosmos.

So when we free ourselves from the world in our attempt at the practice of renunciation, or *vairagya*, for the purpose of God-realisation, we are wrenching ourselves from the whole body of relations, which are a living connection wholly spread out through space and time, and we are not moving to God like a single individual. Many times we may be forced into the feeling that we individually move towards God, leaving all people here with whom we no longer have any connection: neither are we connected to our family, nor to the world; we are related to God in the heavens, so we move like a rocket—independently, individually, unrelated in any way to anyone and anything in the world at any time.

This idea is not true. Such a movement to God is not possible, because the world is woven into our personality and, vice versa, we are woven into the very structure of the world. When we lift ourselves from this world, the whole world will come with us, so that there is no such thing as individual salvation. This is a statement which has to be understood in its proper meaning. Neither is there anything called social salvation of all people together, nor is there anything called individual salvation. What we call *moksha*, or liberation, is neither social nor individual. It is a mystery by itself. Man is not given to understanding what it means.

Another analogy may give you a little insight into this difficulty. When you wake up from dream, what is it that comes with you into waking life? "I have woken up from dream. I have come out of the world of dream into waking existence." What about your friends and relations, and the world, and your office work, and all your obligations and commitments in the dream world? You have brought them all together with you. It is not that you have left your office and your friends in the dream world and have individually come up to the waking life. You do not say, "My friends are still there inside, and I have got uncompleted and unattended work in the dream world." When you have woken, the whole dream has woken. All your relationships, likes and dislikes, obligations, duties to be discharged, debts payable—all things are together with you, as your legs go wherever you go. You cannot leave your legs behind and go to some other place.

This illustration of the total world moving with you when you wake up from dream into this present consciousness will, to some extent, explain how you move towards God. It is not one Mr. so and so moving to God. Such a thing does not exist, because your relations are not artificial relations, but vital connections. Outwardly, empirically, from the spatio-temporal point of view, your relationships may look artificial,

a make-believe. Therefore, it is called *maya*. But inwardly you are connected to things in a more significant manner.

There is a dual relationship of ours, again, with the world around us—a tentative relationship and a real relationship. Teachers of the art of yoga and adepts in spiritual life tell us that our relationship to things is twofold. A father has a relationship to his son, a husband has a relationship to his wife, etc. This is a very difficult thing to understand. A son is an independent individual by himself, yet he appears to be somehow connected to his father, and the father seems to be connected to his son by a bond of emotion and feeling. The father sees in the son something which he cannot see in other people—though other people are, for all practical purposes, physically speaking, exactly like his son. The wife cannot see in other people in the world what she can see in her own husband, though her husband is not in any way superior or inferior, or different in any manner from other people in the world.

Here we have a double relationship with things. In Sanskrit, this is called the distinction drawn between Jiva Srishti and Ishvara Srishti. The son as such or the father as such is Ishvara Srishti, God's creation. The son has not created the father, and the individuality of the son is a status by itself which cannot be absorbed into the individuality of the father. The son is not a satellite of the father. He has an independent existence of his own. Yet there is a peculiar emotional bondage. This feeling in respect of things with which we seem to be emotionally connected or instinctively related is called Jiva Srishti, or the individual's reaction to the structure of things in their social, instinctive connections.

But things are also as they are. Trees are trees, wherever we go. Wherever we go, whether to Kashmir or the United States, we see trees, but a tree in our own garden is different from a tree in the wilderness. A plant that we have tended with affection is different from the wild growth in the forest. Our relationship, too, is different. This relationship of ours to

our own tree, our own plant, our own garden and our own property is Jiva Srishti—an individual, psychological connection—which can be regarded as an artificial connection because it will not stand always. When our mind undergoes a transformation, our feeling in respect of things will also change. But the plant is a plant, the tree is a tree, even if we have no connection with it. That is Ishvara Srishti.

God has created the world, and the world is called the kingdom of ends. A kingdom of ends is a kingdom of independent status maintained by each individual, each atom, each molecule in the world. Everyone is independent. Nobody is a servant of another. There is no subservience of any particular thing to any other thing in the world. Nobody can be exploited by another, because one does not belong to another as a property. So each one is a status by himself, herself, itself. This is the kingdom of ends. Each is a self by itself. Even an ant is a self by itself. An atom is a self by itself. It works as if it is an independent thing. A solar system is an independent structure. You are an independent structure. We assert ourselves, and we do not wish to abolish our individuality or our personality in the interest of another—because a self cannot become a not-self.

This is the truth of things. That we really do not belong to another and anything cannot belong to us is the truth of the matter. But we somehow appear to be related to another, and things are possessed by us and connected with us in an artificial arrangement in society, emotionally required and instinctively demanded. This is the distinction that obtains between Ishvara Srishti and Jiva Srishti—God’s creation, or metaphysical existence, and psychological relation.

We have to understand both these things correctly in our approach to God—and, therefore, God’s being escapes the grasp of our understanding. Inasmuch as it eludes our grasp, we find it difficult to tread the spiritual path. We have often been very emotional, over-enthusiastic, fired up by instincts and sentiments; and often we are also unconsciously

impelled to shirk our duties in the garb of a renunciation to attachments to the world, because renunciation is always applauded and attachment is condemned. So it is very easy for people to go with the garb of renunciation, though secretly it is a shirking of duty and a feeling of irresponsibility in regard to all those things which give pain in this world. Hence, our fear of pain may look like the spirit of renunciation.

Here we have to be judges of our own selves. The spirit of renunciation is not the spirit of the fear of sorrow. We do not renounce the world because it is giving sorrow and pain to us. That is not the reason. The reason is that we have fulfilled—not merely cut off—our connections with the world.

Spiritual life is a growth of our spiritual personality, and not an amputation of our spiritual limbs. And so, renunciation is not a cutting off of certain limbs of our psychic world, but a complete healthy growth of our connections—which have to be transmuted from the form which they have taken as Jiva Srishti into Ishvara Srishti. We have to be able to look at things as God sees, instead of as a father sees, mother sees, son sees, daughter sees, husband sees, or wife sees.

How would God see? You have not seen God, and you cannot even imagine how He could see things. But by an inference and a logical deduction of consequences which follow from a dispassionate study of things, you can place yourself in the context of an impartial visualisation of things. The vision of God, or God's vision of things, is a totally dispassionate and impartial universal outlook where one thing does not hang on another thing, one thing does not depend on another thing, and one thing does not belong to another thing. Such a state of affairs is difficult to conceive for ordinary people. Therefore, spiritual life is so hard.

Now I am coming to a very important aspect of the problems of spiritual living—namely, our misconception of

the very structure of spiritual life. Again, to reiterate, we have been brainwashed into the feeling that God is not in this world. God is above the world; God is the creator, and the creator is always outside the created object, like the carpenter is outside the table that he has made or the potter is not inside the pot. How could the manufacturer be inside the object that he has manufactured? This is our way of looking at things; and God is, thus, outside the world. Hence, we conclude that a forceful rejection of the world by asceticism is the requirement of spiritual living. We throw off our garb, cut off our connections, and live in a geographical corner of the Earth, not knowing that we are still on Earth only—just as an ostrich hiding its head in the sand is under the impression that nobody sees it because it does not see anybody. This psychological difficulty may pursue us wherever we go. Therefore, our movement in the religious field may turn out to be a movement from one sorrow to another, rather than a movement from one joy to another joy.

Spiritual living is not a painful, agonising process but a delightful and joyful experience. In the movement on the path of the spirit, or religion, you move from one state of joy to another state of joy. If you are happy now, the next moment you are happier—not less happy. You should not feel you have lost something when you have relieved yourself from the responsibilities of the world. Yet, your mind may be thinking of the condition of your daughter in the house of her in-laws, though you may be a hermit in the Himalayas. You may always be remembering your son in the United States who is an engineer: “His letter has come to me. He has requested me to see him. It is many years since he has left the country.” These ideas will persist in your mind though you are a hermit, because psychic relationships cannot be easily cut off. The emotional bondage is the real bondage, and physical disassociation from apparent connections will not be a real disassociation from emotional connections. The movement towards God, as I pointed out, is

a wholesome, or rather a wholesale movement of the whole world—to which you belong, in which you are situated, and with which you are connected.

Now, what is the world in which you are connected or situated? It is a double world of emotional connections and metaphysical relations. You are in Ishvara Srishti; you are also in Jiva Srishti. The first step is to dissociate yourself or, rather, sublimate your relations in the emotional world. You have come to an Ashram; you are in a holy temple. Perhaps you have embraced the order of Sannyasa. What about your emotional reactions to things? Do you like something? Does it mean that a Sannyasin has no likes and dislikes? Are there no emotional, instinctive reactions to the world outside? Is he dead to all events?

It is not that you are to be dead to things. But you are to be aware of the nature of the true causative factors behind the operations of things— namely, the Ishvara Srishti behind the Jiva Srishti has to be visualised. The first step in spiritual life is an understanding of the various forms which the Jiva Srishti takes—which means to say, the forms in which you are connected to things emotionally, instinctively, personally, and socially. After you free yourself from these relationships, you enter into the real arena of spiritual living. You enter into the true world, the geographical world. The world in which you are living now is not the geographical world. It is a family world, social world, political world, emotional world, instinctive world. The geographical world is underlying it. Though you are walking physically, geographically, on this ground which is the substance of the Earth, you are actually affected not by the physical condition of the Earth, but by your emotional relationship to it. “This is India, my land, my country. I am a patriot of this nation. And now I tread on a foreign land.” Though you are treading on the same Earth, you have the feeling that you are treading on native land, foreign land, etc., though such distinctions do not operate with the Earth itself taken as a whole.

We feel we are in our house and not in somebody else's house, and we are putting on our own clothes and not somebody else's clothes. We eat our own meal, not somebody else's food. These are very subtle operations of our mind. There is no such thing as 'our own'. But it is hard to get out of this idea. It is like peeling one's own skin, which is an impossible affair. To peel out of our psychic personality the emotional relationships with which we are connected to things is like tearing our flesh. No one can easily do that, because our flesh is not merely a physical substance. It is the mental stuff with which we are connected to our relations of love and hatred.

Loves and hatreds, likes and dislikes, are the stuff of our world. It is not atoms or molecules that constitute the world of our existence. The joys and sorrows of life are not born out of molecules, atoms, brick and mortar of the things around us. Our joys and sorrows arise from the mental connections, the psychic operations, the emotional flow from ourselves in the direction of that which we like and dislike. Hence, *vairagya*, renunciation, taking to religion, practising spirituality, is all a consequence of our freedom from, and not a rejection of, our emotional contacts.

When this is achieved, we will find that the world is our family, and we will not be able to recognise only a group of people as belonging to us. Then true renunciation springs up automatically; and then it is not to be defined by the word 'renunciation' but, more properly, to be called 'enlightenment'. We have not renounced the wealth of our dream world when we have woken into the substance of our present life. We may have been a millionaire in dream. Now, have we renounced that wealth when we have woken up? The question of renunciation or relinquishment does not arise, because we have been enlightened into a new order of things.

In this new order of enlightenment called waking life, our likes and dislikes of the dream world convey no meaning at

all. Hence, detachment from them, or even attachment to them, is a meaningless statement. So would be our delight and upsurge of satisfaction when we enter into the world of the creation of God. We may say, "I am even now in the creation of God." But it is not true. We are in our own psychic world. We are not living in the creation of God, though it may appear that we are treading on the Earth, on which everyone is also treading—which we have not created and, therefore, is to be treated as created by God. We are living a mental world, not a physical life.

This treading of our path in the direction of the spirit is, therefore, the treading of the different stages of our connection with the densities of relationship in which we are involved. The psychic involvement is the hardest thing to understand. No one ever believes that he or she can be in the wrong. How could you persuade yourself that you are in the wrong? It is always taken for granted that we are harassed by people outside, people around us are idiotic, and our position is always justified. This is a persuasion within ourselves which we cannot escape because we think that we are always truthful, while others are mostly untruthful. This is a psychological malaise which can pursue us wherever we go on account of our not being able to assess ourselves in the light of Ishvara Srishti, or God's creation. The trouble does not arise from trees and mountains, the sun and the moon and the stars. The trouble arises from our emotional, instinctive and psychological involvement with things.

This is the first step in religious or spiritual life—to free oneself from these psychological, emotional and instinctive involvements, not by severing them with a sword but by fulfilling their requirements, as when we are sick we do not kill our body so that we may be free from the illness, but we fulfil the needs of the body by taking medicines. There are two ways of killing the disease. We kill the body itself; then the disease is also killed. But this is not what we are attempting to do. We are trying to rejuvenate our personality

and fulfil the needs of the personality in the attempt at regaining health, rather than severing ourselves from the body which is ill. When we cut off our connections with a sick body, we are no more sick, so why not abolish our physical individuality and life by dealing a single stroke to our body because we are sick?

Such a stroke should not be dealt at our psychological existence, which is a mistake many seekers commit under the impulse of a spirit of renunciation or a Godly urge. We are in a double difficulty because of the pull of the instincts from one side and the urge towards God on the other side. We are religious and irreligious at the same time. This is why many a time we have a new type of hardship before us. Why do we say that we require a Guru? It is because we cannot know our own involvements. Why do we go for a medical examination under an expert physician? Why don't we study a *Materia Medica*, purchase some medicines from a chemist shop, swallow some pills and be relieved of our illness? This is not done because the diagnosis is very important. And only a Guru can diagnose the illness of our psychophysical individuality. We cannot study ourselves, just as a patient cannot treat himself. Therefore, a Guru is necessary. This Guru is a person who has trodden the path, who has gone above us and beyond us and knows the pitfalls, and who has studied all the points that are to be considered in one's movement towards God.

Now I come back to the point from where I began. The movement towards God is a movement in every direction. Who can move in every direction? Which person can do that? How can we think all things at the same time? When we are seated in a bus, can we think of the four sides of the bus, the top and the bottom, and the movement of the bus all at the same time? This is an illustration of what scientists sometimes call a four-dimensional way of thinking. We can think of the movement of the bus in only one direction, not in

all four directions at the same time, and the people around, and all things connected with it.

An all-round fulfilment is what is required of us in our spiritual aspirations and religious calls. All religion, all forms of spirituality, are stages of fulfilment and not rejection. Life is full, and full with everything, even with obligations. So the life of religion and spirituality is a positive living and not a negative wrenching. It is not an abandoning, but an acquisition. It is a growing into a higher dimension and not a losing of what we had earlier.

When you advance on the spiritual path or in your practice of religion, you are not losing the lower things in the interest of the higher things— just as when you are promoted to a higher grade in your office you have not lost your lower cadre. You don't cry, "Oh, my lower salary has gone because the higher salary has come!" The lower is included in the higher. So in the abandonment or the renunciation that religions require of you, you are not renouncing the values of life or the worthwhile things in existence, but are sublimating them, fulfilling them in a higher acquisition and, therefore, it is a movement from a lesser joy to a greater joy, not from sorrow to sorrow. "Oh, what a difficult thing is this life! How difficult it is to sit in *asana*, how difficult to concentrate, how difficult to study the Bhagavadgita! Everything is difficult. There is nothing pleasant in spiritual life." This is a very sorry state of affairs, and it is because the conditions of spiritual living have not been properly understood, the obligations to the world have not been properly discharged, and there has been unnecessary enthusiasm of emotion rather than a true devotion to God.

So, my dear friends, it is better to go slowly and take a firm step, even if you take only one step in one year. There is no necessity to take a hundred steps and then retrace your steps because you have taken a wrong step. It is quality that is required of you, and not the quantity of your

achievements. It is not that a thousand *malas* of beads are to be rolled; one bead is sufficient if the whole of your mind, the whole of your spirit, your entire soul is associated with the single bead. Even if you chanted only one mantra for a moment only, it is sufficient provided your whole soul has welled up in its direction rather than counting one thousand beads with a distracted mind, with sorrows, agonies, unfulfilled and frustrated ambitions, and so on.

Thus, again I come to the point. You require a guide. Unaided, without a support, you should not attempt at standing on your own legs, at least at the present moment. Maybe a day will come when you are absolutely competent to stand on your own legs, God willing; but just now it is not possible.

So a great vigilance is necessary, and a series of graduated steps has to be taken—no sudden jumps. And again, remember that religion, spirituality, is a fulfilment of your obligations in all the realms of being, and not a shirking of duties or a rejection of values or a denial of your obligations in any existence. Spirituality, or religion, is wholly positive in every stage of its performance. This is very important to remember.

Chapter 5

THE YOGA OF LIFE

At the close of the Sadhana Week, when your mind is gradually gravitating towards your homes, what are the thoughts, the ideas, the conclusions that you would be able to carry with you? What has happened to you after all, having come from a long distance, spending some money from your pocket, taking leave with some difficulty from your offices, staying here for some days, struggling in the small rooms of this Ashram? What has happened to you, finally, is a point on which you may bestow thought.

Most of us are accustomed to activities in the world. Everything that we do is only an activity. Whether we worship God, undertake a journey to Tirupati or visit the holy shrines of Badrinath and Kedarnath, all these programs come under the category of activity. Man knows nothing but activity. If we sit, it is an activity. If we stand, it is an activity. If we do something, it is an activity; if we do not do anything, it is also some sort of a negative activity. If we think of God, it is an activity; if we don't think of God, it is also an activity.

Now, most of us, human beings as we are and capable of thinking only in human terms, cannot escape the difficulty of assessing everything in terms of human values. When we turn to religion, when we take to spirituality, mostly we have a business attitude. What will it bring to us? Commercial thinking is so impetuous and insatiable that we cannot exercise our mind except in terms of a give-and-take bargain.

Why should we go to God unless we are to gain something by this adventure? So, again, we are commercial. Why should we offer prayers to God, do *japa*, study scriptures? Why go to Mahatmas? Why do anything if something is not to come to us as a recompense, as a salary for the work we have done? Every action has to produce a result which is pleasant, conducive, beneficial, and to the growth of our satisfaction. If this is not assured, man will not budge an inch.

Are we going to conclude that this is the state of affairs, finally? When we grow old and our legs begin to totter, are we going to dispatch ourselves from this world with this prosaic way of thinking into which we have been shackled right from our childhood? And is our religion, our prayer and our holiness of attitude a commerce, after all? Have we only opened another shop in the name of religion and spirituality, where someone sells spirituality, and another purchases it at some cost of what he calls austerity and discipline? Is our austerity, discipline, and prayerful conduct in religion and spirituality the price we pay for a commodity that we purchase from the shop of spirituality? Or has it any other significance?

Is it because of the fact that some security will accrue to us that we take to religion? Possibly so. We are insecure in this world. We are afraid of events that may devolve upon us as an avalanche of uncertain and uncomfortable experiences. We feel that God will protect us against all odds of life, bless us with a lengthy duration of existence in this world, and keep our family intact; and we shall be protected from adversities which tell upon our longings—again, longings which are calculated upon our material, social, personal existence. If these are our conclusions finally, it is unfortunate.

God is not a human being with whom we can speak as if we talk to a boss. And with all our maturity of age, white hair, grey beard and learning, a susceptible weakness in us will persist, irrespective of our studies and hearing that God is a father who is in heaven to take care of us, as a parent does, in our material living. This difficulty cannot escape us, whatever be our learning. When we pray to God, we are praying to a God of a creative capability that oversteps the limits of the Earth. There is a peculiar kink in the mind of the human being—a twist, a contortion, due to which the assigning of transcendence to God in our love of religion and practice of spirituality is not easily avoided.

We have heard it said again and again, and it has been dinned into our ears by adepts and scriptures, that God is only a name that we have given to the reality of things. The word 'God' unfortunately has an association which is anthropomorphic, though grammatically this need not be the meaning of the term 'God'. By normal practice, a magnified human form gets associated with the concept of God; and our littleness, our incapacity and our mortality get counterbalanced by this magnitude of the Almighty, Whom we have placed as a counterpart of everything that we lack in this world. God is regarded by us as the place of fulfilment of everything that we lack here, so that perhaps we are running after God for the acquisition of all those things which we have not been given and are denied in this world. If death overtakes us here, we shall not be overtaken by death in God, so this is a joy. "Let me go to God. I shall not die there, because death is a fear. I am poverty-stricken, unwanted, and cowed down by society as a nobody here. This shall not be my fate in God; I shall be hallowed. The flag of my greatness will be hoisted up by the angels in heaven, and all my desires will be fulfilled." There is again a totally human, physical, social, empirical, anthropomorphic reading of the meaning of God in our religious practice and spiritual outlook.

This is a defect which we are required to get over by our contact with mighty masters. As we are not human beings essentially, it is not necessary for us to transfer human characteristics to God. We have been convinced that we are only human beings and nothing more, nothing less. We are associating ourselves with a false definition. Why go to the extent of the problem of considering oneself as a human being? We cannot even forget that we are men or women. This idea of one's being a male or a female persists to the grave, and it may perhaps pursue us beyond the grave. We are limited to a concept, which again is limited to a minor concept, which again is limited to further details, so that we are bundles of limitations, involvements, complexities, and a mess of everything.

The decentralisation of our personality, which has been locked up in these three knots of the heart referred to by the great masters as *avidya-kama-karma*—ignorance, desire and action—is the principle function of religion and spirituality.

It is not possible for us to discuss all these details within a few minutes, or even a few days. Discipline in spirituality and religion is a long-term process under a great master for years together— and, as our scriptures proclaim, sometimes it can extend even up to twelve years. Often it is a lifelong process of discipline because the limitations of our mind, which are physical, biological and social, are capable of entering our very blood and veins with such intensity that a little discourse or a few minutes of *japa* or instruction from a Guru for a few minutes may not suffice for us to free ourselves from this malady. We are involved in a problem which is not merely skin-deep, but it has gone into our marrow. We are totally a heap of limitations.

Since this is the last day of your participation in this course called Sadhana Week, there is neither the time nor the circumstance to go into a description of all the points involved in your spiritual practice. I shall place before you only a few important items which you can remember with benefit, setting aside the other difficulty that you have always—that you have no time to devote for deeper and higher thinking, as you have pressing calls of the life in which you are placed at present—which is a matter for each one of you to consider independently.

The way in which you pass your day is the way in which you can assess yourself, to some extent. The way in which you conduct yourself with other people, the opinion that you have in regard to the atmosphere around, the thoughts that persist in your mind repeatedly throughout the day, the agonies and the anguishes and the anxieties that keep you alert throughout the day are points to be perpetually recorded in your diary.

There is often an urgency felt by us the moment we wake up in the morning. We wake up with a sudden jerk and a shock of immediacy of action. The business of life is adjourned due to the pressures of bodily fatigue to get hours of sleep. If this pressure of fatigue were not to tell upon us, we would not sleep but would work even in the night. But the body has its own say. It does not permit us to work twenty-four hours of the day. And the moment we are awake, we are pursued forcefully by the ideas of commitments with which we have gone to sleep. We are, as it were, in the midst of an ocean where waves are dashing upon one another and we have no moment's respite to take a dip or a bath in it. But we have to take a bath in the ocean even when the waves continue to move, because if we wait for the waves to subside, we will never take our bath.

So the pressures of existence, the commitments of our life, are not going to cease, even till death. It is a chronic disease that we have been born into. In the midst of these pressures of life, we have to take a few minutes off in the interest of our own future welfare. Don't you, when you are in service, try to save a little money for your future, for the days after your retirement? Or do you spend everything that very day and become a pauper, waiting for your next salary due on the first of the month? Every wise person lays aside something for the future, as he knows that a day will come when he needs these amenities.

Don't you think that this should be the logic that you have to apply to the whole of your life? When you retire from this life, what will sustain you? While you have some sort of an idea as to when you will retire from this official career of yours—after sixty-five, after completing thirty years of service, and so on—there is no such saying in the matter of your retirement from life itself. This is a greater difficulty before you than the difficulty that you have in your official career. You may be given an order of retirement from the Central Authorities without any previous notice.

The wisdom of life, partially at least, consists in preparing oneself for retirement at any moment of time. To be unprepared is not wisdom. You should never say, "I was unprepared. I was taken unawares. I was scared by an event for which I was not ready." There should be nothing for which you are not ready in this world. Every moment of time you have to be prepared for everything which you can think of or conceive in your mind. If the Earth gives way under your feet, you should not be under the impression that it is something unexpected. If the Sun drops on your head, you should not say "I never thought this could happen." There is nothing which cannot happen in this world. Such a precarious relationship obtains between ourselves and the natural forces of things.

One of the aspects of wise living is to be ready for action at any moment of time for any eventuality that can overtake you without your knowledge. But how will you be prepared? What are the appurtenances with which you can equip yourself? Nothing will follow you. No pension will be given to you when you retire from life. But the pension that perhaps may follow you is your participation in the natural laws of the universe. The charitable feelings that you have expressed in your life, the goodness that has emanated from you and the unselfishness that has characterised your personality—or, in other words, what you have given—will follow you. What you have taken will not follow you, but will act as a great chain of bondage even in the future life.

It is absolutely essential—very, very essential for every one of us to keep in mind always—that we do not exploit society, exploit the world, exploit anyone, in the sense that we do not enjoy life at the expense of anybody else. In other words, your life should not show a debit side even by one inch of width when the day closes for you. Let alone life closing—even when the day closes, you must be able to retire with a satisfaction, and not with a grief: "After all, I have wasted my day today. I have done nothing."

A few minutes of qualitative adjustment of your mind with the great reality of things is the asset that will follow you. Can you not find a few minutes when you wake up in the morning? Instead of rushing to your bathroom or to the table for tea, can you not cease from suddenly rising from your bed and opening the door to call out to your servants or engaging yourself in an urgent work? Wake up a few minutes earlier, if possible, and contemplate your position in this life. All that will accrue to you and follow you, all that you can expect in this world is dependent upon the relation that obtains between you and things outside—the people around, and the world in total.

Contemplate for a few minutes on the origin of all things—with which everyone is connected, and you are also connected. Contemplate for a few minutes that this world, this whole life, is like a vast tree, as the Bhagavadgita explains. We are all the leaves, the flowers, the fruits. One leaf does not touch another leaf. Each leaf is independent. One is 'X', another is 'Y', a third is 'Z'. What connection have we among ourselves? We work for our own gain, our own welfare, our own good—everything our own, my own, for myself, and nothing else.

But in this tree of life, we are the leaves with the twigs and the flowers and the fruits—unrelated, as it were—yet, we are connected to the twigs and the branches, to the central root of this tree of the universe, which is again based on the seed from which it has sprouted. Contemplate the multitude of things as a widespread ramification of this vast tree of the cosmos of which you are also one. And you are not only a witness of this tree. You are not standing outside the tree and looking at it. You are one of the twigs, one of the leaves, one of the ramifications of this vast tree. When you look at the tree of which you are a part, you cannot see it. You cannot see a thing of which you are a part.

How do you see the world, then? What is it that you are looking at? This is a misconception. That you are able to open

your eyes and look at the world as if it is an object of your senses shows the inadequacy of the education you have undergone and the knowledge that you possess. Once again, go deep into your own logical way of thinking. "How would I envisage this world, how would I look at people, how would I speak, how would I think, how would I feel, and how would I act when I am not a witness of this large tree of the universe but am one of these ramifications themselves?" You would find that thinking is not possible. How would a tree think about itself? That would be the way in which you would be thinking about life as a whole. You cannot imagine how a tree would think about itself, because you have always been looking at the tree as if you own it as a property in your garden. You have never had the time to imagine how one can think one's own self as unrelated, because no such relation is possible, all relations getting involved in the very concept of relation itself. This is the stretch of imagination which you have to extend to yourself for a few minutes. You will find that the mind is thrilled. Your imaginations rise up from the mire in which they are clogged. When you are able to contemplate in this manner, you are in a true state of meditation.

Have you not heard it said again and again that meditation is communion with the object of meditation? It is not thinking the object. It is establishing a vital connection with the object, becoming *en rapport* with the object, establishing relationship with that which is inseparable from the object. And, finally, the intention is to enter into the object, to think as the object thinks—to think as the tree thinks, to think as the world thinks, to think as another man thinks. You have not been taught this art. How can you think as another man thinks? How can you think as a brick thinks, or a stone thinks, or a tree thinks? Meditation is this.

Once you succeed in this adjustment of your mind in the way I suggested, the whole of yoga is known by you. All the yogas, all the scriptures, all the admonitions, all that is

religion and spirituality is summed up in this single, simple technique of your capacity to see things as things see themselves—wherein comes the possibility of your entering into the ecstatic possession of yourself in a larger consciousness, called *samadhi* in yoga parlance. Samadhi is the condition where you are united with that which you are thinking in your mind. What are you thinking in your mind? There are many people sitting around you, and a large world around you astronomically expanded in space and time—unthinkable, astounding, miraculous and fearsome. This is the object which is ahead of you, in front of you.

If you can think in terms of the very same thing which you regard as an object, you will walk on this world as a tiger cub walks on its own mother, and it will not terrify you. You cannot go near a lion or a ferocious Bengal tiger, but its own child walks over it, bites its ears, sniffs its nose, scratches it. The little cub is not afraid of its mother or its father. Why are you afraid? It is because the intimacy of the mother to the child and the child to the mother is greater than the intimacy that seems to be among ourselves, even as family members, friends, relations, etc. The whole of yoga is summed up in this great art of your capability to unite yourself with things which are now the objects of your thought. Let a few minutes be spent in this manner when you get up in the morning, and make this a daily practice.

All this is hard thinking. You will find it is not so easy. So take up a scripture, a book, a text which will enable you to rouse thoughts of this kind if you yourself are unable to dig them up from the deeper layers of your mind. In the early morning, chant the name of God, reciting the mantra in a loud tone so that the distractions pulling the mind in different directions may cease, to some extent, in the divine vibration produced by the recitation of the mantra.

There is no need to be too anxious over things and excessively busy, as if the world is sitting on your head and you are the owner of things. Nothing is going to happen to

the world even if you die. It has been there, and it will be there. Too much enthusiasm over it is a foolishness and a foolhardy attitude. You are always thinking that you are carrying the world on your shoulders and if you are not there, the world will perish. It shall not. Therefore, too much anxiety over the world is not called for. A little bit of time for thinking in this right manner is essential for your own good, to accumulate assets to prepare for your future journey into a realm where altogether new laws operate, and the present laws will not work. You will be taken by surprise to find yourself in a kingdom where these rules and regulations do not work. Somebody else catches hold of you and accosts you in a language which you may not be able to understand.

A little *japa*, a little meditation of this type, and a little study—these three should form the essential features of your daily *sadhana* in the early morning. The first thing in the morning would be a little meditation, as I suggested; then a little bit *japa* of your mantra; and then, thirdly, study of the scripture because these sublime thoughts will not always come to the mind of their own accord. They have to be forced, to some extent, by a habituation of oneself to study the Bhagavadgita or scriptures of this character which are filled with such invigorating feelings and thoughts.

In the evening, again follow the same program when you return from your office or finish your dinner—only, in the reverse order. Instead of meditation first, *japa* afterwards and study third, let the study be first, the *japa* second and meditation the last item, so that when you go to bed, you wind up all your problems and involvements and your dues to things. Do not go to bed with unpaid dues. Struggle hard to pay all your debts before you go to bed because today may be the last day, and it is not proper that you wake up with a pending list of undone works, or dues to be paid, or commitments not attended to, etc. Every day is a clean day. Go to bed with a clean mind—a slate which is perfectly washed of all its impressions of the earlier day.

There should be meditation, *japa* and study in the early morning, and study, *japa* and meditation in the evening. And a habit should be formed that throughout the day, at least for one or two minutes in the midst of your work, you recall to memory your duty, the purpose for which you were born, and that which God expects from you, the universe expects from you, people expect from you—not what you expect from people. Do not bring that into the forefront. Do not always be contemplating what you expect from people, from the world and from God. Why should you expect anything? Let others expect something from you. It is better to be humble than to be important.

Thus, in the midst of your office duties or your itinerary, obligations—you may be a railway official moving in a train, or an executive engineer in the Public Works Department having to go here and there and never finding time to sit in one place; or even if you are seated in a particular office, you are overwhelmed with papers and files and problems and difficulties to such an extent that you have difficulty in finding even a moment's rest, but put down your pen for a minute. The world will not go to the dogs just because you have put down your pen for one minute. Withdraw your mind, and contemplate in the way in which you have practised in the morning and evening. Let the day pass with intervals of a minute at least, periodically, with deeper convictions and satisfactions of a superphysical nature.

Remember, God will love you to the extent you love Him. To the extent we want Him, to that extent He also wants us. Often it is said that He wants us wholly, though we want Him only partially. This also is a great truth. But His wanting us wholly is partially manifest and reflected through our narrow individuality. This is why it appears as if He wants us only to the extent we want Him. As sunlight is not restricted to anybody—sunlight shines on everybody, and no one can say the Sun is stingy or miserly in shedding its light on them—still, it may look as if it is stingy and miserly and

giving us only a little of it. This is because in our rooms there is only a little slit through which the light can pass, since we have closed the windows and doors and put a curtain all around.

God is all compassionate, and the whole of Him is ready to be at our advantage every moment of time. God is not helping us partially, a little bit, like a stingy man; yet, it may appear that the whole of the grace is not working with us because of the difficulty of our opening ourselves before the influx of these rays of grace.

So open your hearts and repent! You may find it difficult to weep before others on account of the shyness and the difficulty of presenting yourself before the public, so sometimes you may have to weep within yourself due to your contrition and the melting of your heart for the sins you have committed in the earlier days. The faults, the selfishness, the errors, the blunders and the wrongs that you have done to people, even to God Himself, may have to be repented for, wept for, and a vow has to be taken that this shall not be in the future. There is no greater medicine than repentance. All sins shall be destroyed by the melting of the mind in respect of all the errors of the past. Knowledge of God, love of God and surrender of oneself to God is a panacea for all the errors and even the wickedness through which you might have passed in your early life. Nothing in this world can stand before the light of the sun of God.

Let us have this faith. Faith works miracles. Faith is the greatest treasure in this world. It is faith in God that we need today—not learning, not much work, and not running here and there. It is a deeply felt conviction that God is within us and around us. This conviction will draw into ourselves the grace of the Almighty in all the abundance of the light of the Sun, which is radiating through the vast space.

Never harm other people. Never even think harm to others. “Let that man die!” Do not think like this. “Cursed be that man!” Do not say such words. Do not utter harsh words.

Do not call someone a dog, etc., even when you are in an angry mood. After all, anger is a passion. It is an unnatural condition of yours. In sober moods, such words will not occur from you. Regard others as you regard your own self. The whole of ethics and morality is centred in this little admonition that others are exactly as you are. What you think, others also can think; what you do, others also can do; and how you behave, others also can behave. Hence, any unwarranted attitudes in respect of people and things in general have to be overcome, with great difficulty, by severe self-discipline.

Occasionally, you have to find time to sit before a great master because no book, no meditation that you practise will be of such advantage and benefit to you as a few minutes of seatedness before a radiating personality of a God-centred person. Again, these are difficult things in this world. But God is not dead, and righteousness is still alive. Dharma cannot perish, and goodness is still active, and the problems of life shall not persist always, just as one cannot always be in a state of fever or high temperature. These are temporary phases through which we pass. The world is not going to be destroyed. We are not heading towards doom, as astrologers may predict or astronomers sometimes tell us. Doom is not the end of the world. Perfection is the end of the world, as God is the centrality of the universe.

As the evolution of the universe is towards the realisation of God, we are moving from lesser perfection to larger perfection. The goal ahead of us that we can expect in the long run is largeness, abundance, plenty, perfection, and finally, deathlessness—and not the opposite of it. We are not descending into hell, but are ascending, which is the urge of the universe. The world is not going down and down; it is going up and up. Even in the apparent descent of the world process through history, etc., it is actually trying to ascend—even as when we are physically ill, we are not going down in our health; it is only a temporary descent for the sake of

regaining health under the existing conditions of an onslaught of toxic matter, etc., in the physical body.

The turmoils of life, the difficulties and problems, are the temporary phases through which the world passes in confronting untoward atmospheres around it, finally aiming at the health of the universe. The world is positive and not negative. And we are bound to succeed. We are not going to be defeated, finally. Victory is not only the birthright of everyone, but of the whole world. *Satyam evam jayate*: What ultimately will succeed is the truth of things. *Nanritam*: Untruth will not succeed. So you should not be afraid that untruth may succeed one day. Though it sometimes appears that it does succeed, it will not. All undivine forces appear to succeed in the beginning. In the earlier stages they appear to be stronger than God, but this is only a drama that is played by the will of God Himself.

Therefore, undaunted and hearing nothing, with deep conviction in ourselves that truth shall succeed and nothing can be a greater truth than God's existence, our duty in this world is a bringing together of our love of God with our relationship to mankind. This is the coming together of *jnana* and *karma*, as they say. The duty that we owe to people outside has to go hand in hand with the devotion that we have to evince to God Almighty.

Thus, religion and practical life are not opposites. They are two aspects, two faces of a single duty which is the yoga of life. What is the yoga of life? It is the movement of the spirit of man towards the Godhead of the universe. In this movement, which is not merely personal, social or individual but a larger universal movement, we take with us not only our relationship to little things like family but our larger relationship to the whole world, until we go to the Super-Relative Being where all relationships find their ultimate form, their true being, and fulfilment becomes the final career of things—a complete satisfaction of all sides of our nature.

Every desire is fulfilled in its true form in God. Nothing is abandoned, nothing is lost. You are not a loser at any time. You are always a gainer, so that in God you find the greatest gain wherein the whole world is involved. All your family members also will be seen there, all your wealth, all your position, all that you wanted here is found in its true form—not in the reflected, distorted form in which it is realised here.

These thoughts may, with benefit, be carried by you when you leave this hall, when you leave the Ashram. Train yourself, and do not forget to keep these noble ideas in your pocket as your treasures, as your *vade mecum*, as that which will bring you all that you need and protect you at every moment— here, as well as hereafter.

Appendix

THE ROLE OF SUPERMEN IN THE RESUSCITATION OF HUMAN CULTURE

In offering the *purnavati* to our worship at the feet of Sri Gurudev, we once again supplicate before his compassionate presence to bless us all with his unbounded grace, perennial succour and perpetual care in our humble attempts to walk in his footsteps in this world of turmoil, in this world of many a vicissitude, sorrow and suffering, in this world of births and deaths.

Human effort is only a symbol, a tool, an instrument which the divine power wields, as it were, in the enactment of its great drama in the form of this vast arena of activity—this world, these processes of coming and going, evolution and involution. And after eighteen years of his physical disappearance, we remember him with a greater intensity of fervour, since the more distant we move from that which we endearingly enshrine in our minds, the more do we feel its absence. That which we loved most appears to become dearer and dearer as time passes, and we recall to our memories this dear something whose presence was not fully comprehended when we were in his physical proximity, but whose absence we feel with anguish as lost children.

We are totally handicapped people in this world, and cannot see one step ahead with a clear mind. The human mind is narrow in its vision. Our eyes are dim, beclouded with the limitations to which our bodies and minds are subject. With this imperfect instrument of a *tamasic* body and a *rajasic* mind, what insight can we gain either into the mysteries of the spiritual path, the way of religion, or the great goal of *moksha*? The little understanding, the little aspiration and the small efforts that we seem to be putting forth in the form of our *sadhana* is itself grace operating.

When children playfully spin toys in their hands, if the toys had consciousness and a feeling of their own being, they could as well appropriate this revolution to their own effort,

completely oblivious of the fact that they are being backed by another power, of which they have no knowledge.

Similar to the way God Himself works in this world, the great *siddhas*, incarnations, *avatars*, *mahapurushas*, and Gurus work here as ambassadors of God Himself. Sri Gurudev stands before us as an unparalleled example of human perfection which exhibited in its own daily life the glory of God's mercy, compassion and saving grace. There were instances galore, which were gathered from the memories of disciples and devotees who lived with him, that demonstrated superhuman features in his apparently human personality.

Goodness is not an easy thing for man to handle and wield in his daily life. It is with difficulty that we become good. Great effort is necessary to manifest goodness. Normally, we are selfish. We grind our own axe, even with a label of sacrifice and altruism. We always have an eye on our family and our own personal career, official or otherwise, which is always kept in view before we take any step in the direction of any service or extending what may be called true goodness. But supermen like Sri Gurudev seem to have descended upon this Earth as men with a mission, unlike many of us who seem to have an individual vision of personal *sadhana* and are struggling to move in the direction of what we consider as our goal of life.

Most of us, perhaps all of us, have only an individual mission. We have not come with a cosmic mission because we are still treading the path at the very initial stage, and we do not feel competent to shoulder the responsibility of world uplift—or any kind of uplift except our own. But these *adhikara purushas*, as they are usually called, do not come with any particular individual mission of their own. They have no mission of their own, but rather a larger mission which concerns the people around them. Some of the prophets of religions had a mission which was confined to the country in which they were born and the language of the

area in which they incarnated themselves. Their gospel was essential for remedying the defects and the grosser forms of the life of those people in that area, and their mission ended with that performance.

Sometimes there may be a more limited form of mission in the case of certain *mahapurushas*; and with a single lift that they give to even one individual, they may perform a larger miracle through that instrumentality. The great master may have only one disciple, and that one disciple would be enough for him. Through that single instrument, he could work the great mission of his incarnation. There are others, like Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, who came with a particular mission which, as I mentioned, cannot be compared with the missions with which other prophets came to the world—namely, working for the waking up of people from the sleep into which they have sunk due to certain historical reasons or psychological causes.

Every one of you has some idea as to the background of human history towards the beginning of the twentieth century. It was a time when humanity required a shaking up of the very outlook of life, and great masters were born in the world, not merely in India. They did not come to teach any particular scripture such as the Upanishad, the Brahma Sutra or the Bhagavadgita, or to become a pundit in a school or a college. Their mission was not scriptural or linguistic. It was not an academic or a scholar's work for which they came into this world. Their mission was a different thing altogether. It was a very essential work that had to be done at the beginning of this era, when materialism appeared to have become rampant in the world. Materialism does not necessarily mean belief in the ultimate reality of matter. This is a metaphysical definition of materialism. Commonly and generally speaking, materialism is the way in which most people live in the world.

A little prayer to God and a bowing down of one's head before a shrine need not prevent a person from being a

materialist in his day-to-day movement and behaviour, because one can be religious in the temple but a materialist in daily behaviour. In fact, what we call materialism is the confirmed belief that we cannot exist without depending on things outside. The reality of things outside is so much taken for granted that they are not merely as real as our own bodies and ourselves, but perhaps they are more real. We may be real. This body of ours is a very great reality indeed. Who can deny its reality? But in our daily behaviour, a greater reality is sometimes afforded to the rations that we have to collect from the shop, the money that we have to earn in our offices, and sometimes even a psychological type of materialism of asking for authority, power, status, name, fame, and so on. These are all very subtle and immediate forms of a material outlook.

But much worse was the condition when Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was born. The great sages in India who were his contemporaries were working in a similar direction for a reorientation of the outlook of the whole of India—and through India, of the whole world. We know very well the evaluation of values during the Victorian Age. Those who have read history, anthropology, geography and commercial philosophy, of the beginning of this century especially, would know to some extent how people in India lived.

Setting aside for the time being the impact of Swami Sivananda on the world as a whole, it goes without saying that in India he brought about a tremendous revolution in the very thinking process of mankind. Again I bring your mind back to the condition in which people were at the beginning of this century. There was a craze for new discoveries, much to the discomfiture and sorrow of Indians themselves, leaving a feeling that India had nothing to give to Indians. India had to import its importance from foreign countries. All things foreign were worshipped as divinities. Even a pencil made in a foreign country was valued more than a pencil made in India. The rulers who ruled over India

then were strong, and confirmed the belief in the minds of Indians that strength is not in India, that it lay outside India, that there was practically nothing in India—neither economic security, nor intellectual acumen, nor the capacity to administer the country, nor even religion worth the name.

It was a sorry state of affairs when he who was once upon a time proclaimed to be a child of the Immortal sank back in fear of the very same Immortal, with shame and a shuddering attitude, and became an accomplice by effecting a compromise with the glamour of Western civilisation which was identified with material gain, though Western civilisation does not necessarily mean material gain. These epochs to which I refer were of a trend which gave excessive importance to an industrial revolution of the nations of the world and a working for an enhanced form of economic security—and a scientific outlook, over and above all things.

This scientific outlook, which came like a bogey and hit minds across the width of India with a tremendous force, had the disastrous effect of converting budding Indians into helpless tools of a foreign power who successfully managed to drive into the minds of our people that they are a total defeat in every field of life. India knew no success. It had gained nothing. There was nothing that could be counted even with one finger as being of any significance within the country called India. Indians were ashamed to utter the name 'India'. They would not hear the words 'Veda' or 'Upanishads'. They were bureaucrats, aristocrats, British in outlook, English in thinking, economic in their daily behaviour, and scientific in their aspirations. It appeared as if doom was to descend upon mankind. And when nature recognises that her forces are directing themselves to an extreme of behaviour, she works for a balancing of her inner structure.

You might have seen the flood of great geniuses that inundated the cultural history of India during the period I am referring to in this twentieth century, right from Sri

Ramakrishna Paramahansa with his disciple Swami Vivekananda, the great cultural revolutionist Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshav Chandra Sen, and the founders of the Brahmo Samaj. There was Rabindranath Tagore and his followers; then we have the great names of Aurobindo Ghosh, Ramana Maharsi and Ramdas. Even Mahatma Gandhi has to be included as a religious prophet if his inner life is to be studied, divesting it from merely its political associations.

Swami Sivananda came, perhaps at the end of the trail, carrying this light to crown the entire efforts of these masters who moved Earth and heaven to demonstrate to the world at large that there is a secret greatness in Bharatvarsha, India. It was a sleeping lion. It was an elephant which was asleep. It had an emperor's wealth within itself, but this emperor was in a state of slumber. He had to be awakened. There was nothing that India lacked either culturally, scientifically, aesthetically, economically, religiously, spiritually, or even politically.

There was sometimes a setback felt by the children of Mother India in their historical career, for which they had to pay through the nose. And where we have our weaknesses, we have to accept our weaknesses. But weakness itself is not our be-all and end-all. We have also to pronounce that we have something within us other than the little weakness that subjected us to a retrogression in our historical moments.

Do you believe, and can you convince yourself of, the respect that India commands today in the various vocations of life compared to the slavish subjection in which it was involved in the beginning of this century? What a revolution has come about! Indians were considered a heap of sheep who were worth nothing; and today we know where our country stands in every field, not merely in one or two. To what do we attribute this success?

God's miraculous operative hands, of course, are behind all success. It is to be taken for granted first and foremost that God is first, as Gurudev never tired of saying. But His

messengers also worked very hard. His ambassadors were untiringly engaged in holding aloft the banner of the glorious culture of Bharatvarsha—which was not merely of this world, and not merely of the other world, but of all life in its total comprehensiveness. India lacked and lagged behind nothing. Today, after the advent of these great masters, we are in a secure position to a large extent. Today we can sit in a little comfort in our homes and enjoy some sort of freedom with our family members, convinced that we are also something, and we are not just nothing.

This awakening has been effected by these predecessors of the present youth generation, and in the context of the present occasion of our worship to Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, we have to lay special stress on the crowning effect that his work produced on mankind as a whole. Here came a man; we may also call him a son of man, in the language of the Bible, because he was the son of the call of humanity. It was the summoning of mankind at a period of total unrest and sorrow that invoked the manifestation of these masters. Our obeisance to them is the way in which we repay our debt.

As I mentioned earlier, these masters constitute a fraternity of their own. Whether it is Sri Aurobindo, Swami Sivananda, Ramana Maharshi or Sri Ramakrishna, they are not isolated individuals; they are a brotherhood by themselves. They worked for a common purpose through different media and various languages, emphasising different conditions of life according to the needs of the Earth in the historical process of the nations of the world.

Thus, Gurudev Swami Sivananda was a historical figure, a history-maker whose name I believe will be recorded in the history of the world as one who worked indefatigably for the resuscitation of human culture, not merely India's culture. He brought the dead God once again into the lives of people, and made God the living, guiding, vital principle in the workaday existence of mankind. That which was most neglected and

almost forgotten—the divine principle—was brought to the forefront as the only important factor. It was not an easy thing to do. Only a superman can work this miracle; and it was done for the benefit of everyone, to our satisfaction. He did singly what thousands could not do with their little brains or small bodies. These are the characteristics of supermen.

Such a superman has been with us and is with us, to whom we offer obeisance.