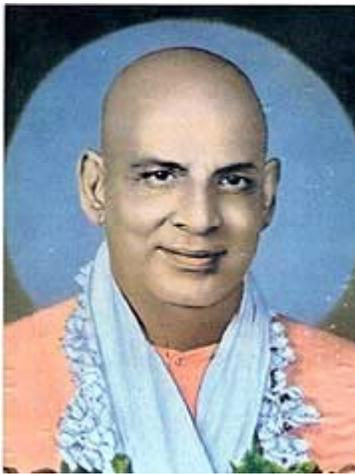


LIGHT ON THE YOGA WAY OF LIFE

By

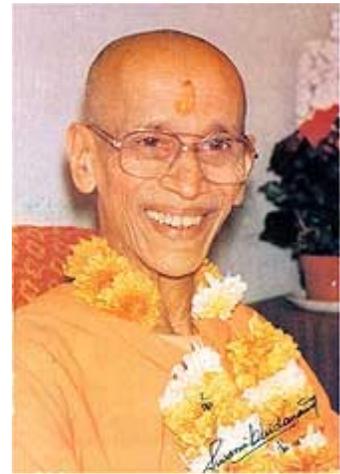
Sri Swami Chidananda



Sri Swami Sivananda
Founder of
The Divine Life Society



**SERVE, LOVE, GIVE,
PURIFY, MEDITATE,
REALIZE**
So Says
Sri Swami Sivananda



Sri Swami Chidananda

The stillness, the SILENCE is there, ever present, the reality, the substratum, the truth. Live this truth. Base your life on the truth of your being, the fact that you are *satchidananda* ever, ever and ever.

Swami Chidananda

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

This book, *'Light on the Yoga Way of Life'*, is a collection of questions put by various people from all walks of life from time to time, and answers given to them by Sri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj.

The questions and answers in the pages that follow deal with some of the commonest, but most vital, doubts raised by spiritual aspirants as well as ordinary men of the world.

Swamiji's clarity of thought, simplicity of expression and breadth of knowledge will be of immense benefit to all levels of seekers. Swamiji's attitude to the Guru, towards the scriptures, towards selfless service, towards everything about the spiritual life sets an ideal example for all those who would like to draw closer to God.

We do hope that everyone will benefit considerably from a careful perusal of the pages that follow and derive rare guidance and inspiration in their struggle for perfection.

May the divine blessings of God and Gurudev be upon all.

—THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY

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WHAT SHOULD BE OUR GOAL?

Question: Should our aim be to strive for Self-realisation and attaining Nirvana, or to take birth again and serve humanity?

Answer: One should try for Self-realisation and Nirvana alone. We should constantly strive to ensure that we do not take birth in this Samsara again.

But, since we have taken birth, we should serve all selflessly. If we take birth again, we should continue to do selfless service. But this does not mean that we should pray for rebirth. Self-realisation should be our goal.

The yearning to realise the Self should not be regarded as selfishness. No. When, standing on the peak of Self-realisation, you perceive Unity and see nothing but the Self, there is no room for selfishness at all.

But it is true that some great saints have said: “I do not want Nirvana; I wish to be born again and again to sing Kirtan. I do not want to attain union with the Self; I shall take birth again and again in order to serve the humanity.” Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj also says like that sometimes. We should accept the utterances of great Mahatmas, after examining them! There is a time-honoured method called *Arthavada*, which great ones have resorted to in order to inspire people. They often emphasise some aspect of Sadhana as superior to all else, in order to draw the attention of the aspirant to its importance.

Whole-souled devotion is necessary if we wish to achieve anything. Half-hearted efforts will bear no fruits. We should not desire anything other than the ideal we wish to reach. For instance, in the Prema-Marga, the distinguishing mark is “Love for love’s sake”. So long as we feel that Prem is a means for Mukti we will not get that complete self-surrender that is essential in the Prema-Marga. In order to bring about that complete self-surrender, saints place before the devotees this ideal and make them feel “We want only Bhakti; we do not want to have anything else, even Mukti”. The highest of the four Purusharthas is Mukti. The saints say that Prem is greater than even Moksha in order to make the devotee realise that Prem is that highest thing to be sought after—for only then will he have perfect Nishtha on cultivating the highest Prem, or Para Bhakti. Once that Prem is attained, Moksha also is automatically attained!

ARE THE PURANAS REAL?

Question: So many stories occur in the Mahabharata and the Puranas which are often incredible. Did they actually happen or are they only myths?

Answer: Different views are held by great men on this question. The orthodox Bhakta feels that they are all true.

There is no reason why they should not all be true. The world is such a mystery. If we only go into the depths of ocean, we will see things that we do not now think can exist. The submarine creatures that live in the great oceans of the world, and their way of life, would astound us.

Even the facts concerning little insects are unbelievable. We think that only man can live a community-life with a proper system of Government, division of labour, etc. Those who have dedicated their life to the study of insect-life have given us valuable information, and their stories are more incredible than even the Puranic stories. Some of these people have taken upon themselves the task of studying one single insect and its life, and they have spent their whole life in that study. They have written beautiful accounts based on their findings. We may believe in the Puranas but it is hard to believe in these accounts!

I have myself watched ants build their “houses”. The mason-ants are busy with construction-work. Some “sturdy” ants merely stand-by and watch. To the onlooker it appears they are lazy. Try to disturb the construction-work in the least; place a small piece of straw in the way of the mason-ants. Then at once these police-ants (for that is what these ‘lazy’ ants are) spring into intense activity. They attack the straw with great ferocity.

There are Goshalas (cow-sheds) in the ant-colony. There are special insects which yield milk. There are ants who know how to milk them. There is a perfect red-cross system among ants. The injured ant understands the purpose for which the red-cross ants have come. I have observed it myself: when the stretcher-bearers arrive on the spot, the struggling injured ant at once assumes a passive posture so that it will be easy for the stretcher-bearers to carry it off. We find incredible intelligence among the ants. Their organisation, division of labour, P.W.D., police—the ants have a world all of their own, as important, more intricate and perhaps more perfect than the human world.

When we ponder over this, we realise that there is no reason at all why the Puranic stories should not be true.

But there is a school of thought that feels that the purpose with which the sages have written down the Puranas is to bring before the mind of the ordinary men and women the great truths which lie hidden in the Upanishads and are beyond the reach of all but a handful of highly intellectual seekers. The people who belong to this school of thought say that all the Puranas are symbolic, though, they admit that the main framework of the Puranas is based on historic fact. They accept the Ramayana and the Mahabharata to be true, though they think there might have been interpolations in both.

CAN I CHANGE MY GURU?

Question: I have read that a person, after receiving initiation from one Guru, can, if he finds a better person, become the latter's disciple, and that though he has ceased to be the former's disciple, he should have respect for him also. What is your view?

Answer: The vast majority of the people do not enjoy the good fortune of coming into contact with a God-realised saint. What happens in their case is this. Traditionally, each family has a Guru-Parampara. Each sect has its own sectional Guru. The aspirant born in that family has, by that mere fact, to accept this person as his Guru. This Guru is by no means fit to be called so, according to the standards set by our Shastras. He is not a *spiritual* personality, but a religious person. He does not possess Adhyatmik realisation, but is appointed a religious leader in order not to keep this traditional post vacant. The aspirant takes him as his Guru and receives initiation from him. He practises Sadhana according to his Guru's teachings and upto a certain point he can certainly progress. Upto this point only that Guru himself has gone! To go beyond that stage, that Guru cannot guide the aspirant, because he is not a God-realised sage. At that stage, if the Sadhaka happens to meet a Guru of higher achievements, he can certainly become his disciple. In fact, if his first Guru is sincere, he will himself direct the disciple to the feet of another Guru of higher achievements.

Namdev was one of the greatest of the Maharashtra saints. But he had only Sakara-realisation. He had not attained Brahma-Jnana. Gora, the potter-saint, taps his head and says: 'This is half-baked!' Therefore, the Guru directs him to a Brahma-Nishtha Guru of Advaitic realisation, Vishoba. From Vishoba he receives the highest initiation.

But in our case, on account of our previous merit and our great good fortune, we have attained a Guru who has reached the highest state and is established in that highest stage. If this question of changing the Guru arises in an aspirant, who has already received initiation from such a Guru, the defect is in the aspirant, not in the Guru. And, even if the aspirant goes to another Guru, this "want" cannot be fulfilled. He must correct the defect in himself and stick to his Guru; he must banish the desire to change his Guru.

Scriptures tell us that if we have once accepted a Brahma-Nishtha as our Guru we should not change our allegiance to another Guru. The spiritual connection or link is eternal. If an aspirant tries to break it and runs after all kinds of Siddhas and Jnanis, he cannot progress even an inch on the path. The ideal is beautifully stated in the Upanishadic Mantra: *Yasya Deve Para Bhaktihi Yathaa Deve Tathaa Gurau; Tasyaite Kathitaahyarthaah Prakaashante Mahaatmanah* (He who has supreme devotion to God and as much devotion to his Guru as he has to God, to him the truths of the Upanishads shall be revealed). If devotion to God cannot be changed, devotion to Guru can also not be changed.

It may be asked, "Suppose the Guru has fallen down from the ideal. Can we, then, change the Guru?" I will cite a parallel. A lady has accepted a man as her lord and husband. The man has fallen from his status in all respects; but the lady cannot forsake the husband. Her duty does not depend upon what state the husband is in, but upon her attitude as his wife. We should similarly forget the human personality in the Guru and absolutely deify him. The Bengali Vaishnava cult's

ideal in this respect is worth emulating: there is a saying in Bengali, “Even if my Guru loses all character and drinks wine, he is Nityananda Roy—the greatest soul upon earth.” If this Bhavana is maintained by the disciple, he will certainly reach the highest stage.

Do not forget the glorious example of Ekalavya. He did not even have a sight of the Guru; but yet his devotion was so great that he took a mere image to be his living Guru and his Bhavana was so intense that this mud-Guru taught him the great secrets of archery. Here, it is the Bhavana that really counts.

Upa-Gurus, however, can be countless: this is what the life of the Avadhuta that is narrated in the Bhagavata teaches us. We should respect all saints. I will explain this by an illustration. A girl is married and goes to the father-in-law’s place. She respects everyone in her father-in-law’s house—her parents-in-law, her sister-in-law, etc. But the highest veneration she has to her husband is shown only towards him and to no one else; he alone is her lord, her God, though she has respect and regard for all others. Similarly the disciple regards his Guru as God-on-earth; but has very great respect and regard for all saints.

Another important factor which, we should not fail to bear in mind, is that the spiritual Guru sows the spiritual seed in us. It is our business to water it, to make it grow in us, so that it might in time yield the delicious fruit of Self-realisation. It is, therefore, clear that even if the Guru gets a downfall, it need not affect our spiritual progress in the least. We may not, in such a case, take his guidance any more; but we should still respect and revere him, as he and no one else is our Guru.

Question: Can a disciple worship the Guru’s physical form?

Answer: Yes.

ARE WE RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR SINS?

Question: When God is the prompter of all our actions, as He is our Antaryamin, how is man responsible for his evil actions?

Answer: That Power which is within us, without which the body would be mere inert matter, lifeless and useless, is Paramatman. Taking the analogy of a motor-car, we can say that petrol occupies this status in the car—without petrol the motor-car would be immobile and useless. The movement of the car is dependent upon petrol. But, if there is some mistake in the machinery, in the car’s engine, the car may not move though there is petrol. You cannot blame the petrol for this immobility of the car. It is the evil propensity in man that prompts him to do evil actions. How is God responsible for this?

Similarly, the Consciousness that animates all names and forms is within us; in its light we can either do good or evil.

The electric power is available to us; with it we can either electrocute a person or do some good work. As long as the Jiva does not attain union with God-Consciousness, it feels that it is a separate individual. In this ignorant state, the responsibility for all actions is the Jiva's. After attaining union with God, whatever actions are performed by the body do not bind the Jiva. God assumes the responsibility. The Jiva carries out His Will. The actions then do not bring about any reactions.

HOW GODS COMMUNICATE WITH MEN?

Question: It is mentioned in our Puranas that in days of yore Akashvani was frequently heard by our ancestors who were forewarned of coming events by it. Is it credible? Or, was it only the voice of their own inner intuition?

Answer: There is some order in the four Yugas. The consciousness of man grows grosser and grosser, as time rolls by. In the previous Yugas man's consciousness was subtler than it is in this Yuga.

In the Satya Yuga, Bhagavan used to move amidst mankind. Human consciousness was no far removed from divine consciousness. In Treta Yuga, man's consciousness grew grosser. Though God was not constantly moving amidst human beings, there were frequent Avatars of the Lord. In Dwapara Yuga, man's consciousness grew grosser still and only the Immortal Brahma-Rishis like Narada, Viswamitra, etc., used to move amongst men, and also Akashvanis used to warn people of coming events.

Now we feel that Akashvani is a very rare and miraculous thing; in previous Yugas it was not so. Devas themselves used to move amongst men. And, Akashvani used to regularly forewarn the people. Just as we have our Government, the celestials also have their own Government. Whenever they wish to communicate with mankind, they used to do through Akashvani.

Nowadays the Deity communicates with people mainly through dreams and visions. That is practically the only form of communication with human beings that the Devas have retained in this Yuga.

SUPRAMENTAL RACE

Question: Sri Aurobindo mentions in his books a "supramental race"; what did he mean by it?

Answer: You have to make a thorough study of his books in order to understand what he meant by it; or, alternatively, you have to obtain clarification from his disciples who had moved closely with him and clearly grasped his teachings.

I believe what he meant was this: When man reaches the last stage of evolution, you know it will be immediately followed by a resurgence. After Kali Yuga, Satya Yuga has to come. You know Satya Yuga represents the highest state of consciousness. In order to usher in the Satya Yuga, a race of people must spring up towards the close of this Yuga itself—people of a very high state of consciousness. It may be that Sri Aurobindo referred to this class of people.

MEMORY CULTURE

Question: What is memory? How to improve it?

Answer: In order to understand what is memory, it is necessary to know what the Antahkarana is. The term Antahkarana or the inner instrument covers all the aspects of the mind.

The Chitta is the basic mind-stuff: just as cotton is the basic stuff of which the cloth is made.

When it thinks, this thinking aspect is called Manas.

When it correlates, experiences and discriminates, it is called Buddhi.

When it indulges in individualistic assertion and when the basic thought of 'I' is held in the mind, it is called Ahamkara.

The four together form the Antahkarana. Chitta is the basis of all these.

When the Manas and Ahamkara function together—their combined work is called determination. The ego is there. It thinks a thought with great deliberation and pushes the thought in a particular direction. This is will-power. When the idea is strongly supported by the ego, it is will-power.

When the Manas and Ahamkara together delve into the Chitta in order to bring out some Vritti or thought which is there in the unconscious aspect of the mind, it is called memory. Mind then functions as memory. When the emphasis is greater on the ego and less on the Manas, it is called determination. When the emphasis is greater upon the Manas but less upon the ego, then it is memory.

All the three—Manas, Chitta and Ahamkara—function in memory. Manas is the most active principle. Chitta lays itself out, as a passive actor in this drama. The ego gives the impulse. Then the idea comes up. Sometimes in spite of the greatest effort of the Ahamkara and the Manas, the idea does not come up. It may be a recently submerged fact; and the mind and the ego try their best to bring it up. They fail. There are other cases or happenings of thirty or forty years ago. The thing is submerged. With the least effort, it comes up. How the Chitta gives up the ideas submerged in it, no one really knows. Sometimes you give up trying to remember things, in despair, and it spontaneously comes up!

To improve memory, you have to undergo a process of mental training. Improve your concentration.

Exercise 1: Let your friend take 10 or 20 different things and put them on a tray. Cover it up. Uncover it for just one minute. Look at it for that one minute. Immediately cover it up again. Take a piece of paper and a pencil. Jot down the things you saw. Allow yourself five minutes to recollect all the things. Then check your list with the things in the tray. See how many you have omitted.

Exercise 2: Let your friend arrange those things in some order. As in the previous exercise, uncover the tray and look at it for a minute. Now try to jot down the names of the things in the very order in which they are found in the tray.

Exercise 3: Try to meditate upon a particular thing and the associated ideas in a particular order. For instance, take the subject “A Chair”. Your thoughts would run thus: “This was a big tree. It was in a jungle in the Himalayas. A contractor must have cut the tree. The timber was sold to a merchant. He cut it into planks. A merchant engaged a carpenter. The carpenter has laboured upon it and cut it into various sizes. Then he has taken nails and driven them at the various joints. The chair has assumed the proper shape. The carpenter has then polished it. Then it was placed in a show-room. Now I have purchased it. It is a very comfortable chair.” All the thoughts related to the particular object—chair. Now try once again to repeat the same process in exactly the same sequence. This exercise will enable you to train the mind to go over a particular set of ideas in the same order, by building up a chain of association of ideas. Do it in the reverse order also.

Exercise 4: There is a different form of the same exercise. Here the emphasis is more on association of ideas than on concentration on one object. Take a flower, rose for instance. Your thoughts would run thus: “It is a sweet-smelling flower. Rose-water is extracted from it. Muslim queens used to bathe in rose-water. Muslim ladies wear purdah. Purdah system has been abolished in Turkey. Turkey is a Westernised nation. The influence of Western civilisation has corrupted Indian youth, too”, and so on. Here your mind moves in a wide circle. Now try to go over the same ground in the same order. This is a wonderful exercise for cultivating memory.

Deliberately try to remember faces, names and dates. Great men have had their own way of memorising names and faces. When a new name is mentioned to them and a new person is introduced to them, they will, during the course of their conversation, go on repeating the new name several times. Then the name will stick to the mind for a long time.

Meditation and Pranayama strengthen memory. Aswagandha and Brahmi are herbs that will promote memory. Japa is an excellent aid to memory. If you keep your general health perfect your memory also will be strong.

ESSENTIALS OF A SADHAK'S DAILY ROUTINE

Question: What is the best daily routine for a neophyte in spiritual Sadhana?

Answer: Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj insists that from the very commencement of our Sadhana we should hold before the mind the ideal of integral development,—harmonious development of all the aspects of the personality. Gurudev does not like lop-sided development. Man is not a one-sided being. He has the head, heart and the hand; he has the body, mind and soul; he has the intellect, emotion and will, and Gurudev says that every Sadhaka should realise this truth and strive to develop his entire personality in a harmonious manner. You should have the heart of Buddha, the head of Sankara, and the hand of Janaka. You should cultivate good Bhavana, good Buddhi and possess a good body.

Therefore, the Sadhak's daily routine must contain elements of all the four Yoga-Margas.

The main-stay of the daily routine should be the spiritualisation of the entire life of the Sadhaka. The goal of life should be ever remembered. This goal is the attainment of God-realisation. Whatever be the external form the Sadhak's life, the aim of his life should be God-realisation.

A little Japa, a little Kirtan, should invariably find place in the daily routine. Gurudev has the greatest faith in the Lord's Name. A little bit of Upasana of a Murti also should be there. Have a small altar; light a candle; offer a small flower; do a brief Puja. This is important.

Then come Asanas and Pranayama. A few minutes' practice of Asanas and Pranayama will keep the body healthy. Study of religious books should not be neglected. And, a little bit of Dhyana, too. Dhyana is no doubt an advanced stage of Yoga, but it is never too early to begin Dhyana. However imperfect the Dhyana may be, be regular in the practice.

Another important item of the daily routine is Atma-Shodhana, self-analysis. The Sadhaka should take practical and effective steps to eradicate his vicious qualities and grow in virtue. He should aim at attaining perfection in the Yama-Niyamas. And he should daily search within himself for traces of lurking evil, and eradicate it.

A very big slice of the time of the Sadhaka should be devoted to Nishkamy Karma Yoga. The essential thing in this is the Bhavana. If you can selflessly serve the sick and the poor, it is very good. Or, keep up the Nishkamy Bhavana in all your daily activities. This is the "easy Sadhana" of Gurudev: think your house is a temple; feel the world is Viswa-Brindavana; feel that your office is a shrine of the Lord; do all your actions with the Bhavana that they are the Puja of the Lord; see God in all. This way, you can dedicate yourself to the work completely; you may plunge into the work; and yet you may be doing the highest Sadhana. Start the day with a prayer: "Lord, all this is your worship." God is your Antaryamin: He knows with what Bhava you have commenced your work. During the day, whenever you get a little leisure, say: "Lord, it is all an offering unto You." Keep a few coins in your pocket; give them to the poor and the needy. Never miss an opportunity to serve humanity.

This completely covers the field of the Sadhak's daily routine; some items of the Bhakti-Marga to develop the heart, some items of Nishkamya Karma Yoga to purify the heart and root out selfishness, some items of Raja Yoga, and then some items of Jnana Marga, too, to lead to ultimate Self-realisation. One item must be chosen as the chief Sadhana, in accordance with the temperament of the Sadhaka. It may be Bhakti, Dhyana, Karma Yoga (selfless service), or Hatha Yoga (Pranayama). And other items of other Margas should also be included in the routine.

The Sadhaka should always feel that his real "home" is elsewhere—in God—and this world is a wayside inn, where he is staying for a short period. He should cultivate Vairagya or dispassion. He is always discriminate and chooses the path of the Good in preference to the path of the Pleasant.

HOW TO KNOW OUR PREVIOUS BIRTH?

Question: Can we get knowledge of our previous birth? If so, how?

Answer: Yes: it is possible to acquire a knowledge of our past births. It is done through the awakening of the spiritual consciousness. Through the practice of *Samyama*, we reach a state called *Dhruva-Smriti* or deep and abiding memory. When this state is reached, then the Yogi gets the memory of previous births too.

It is then that the aspirant gets Para-Vairagya or supreme dispassion. He sees at once the entire picture of his earthly life; the shoreless ocean of misery through which he has passed. Then he gets the greatest disgust for worldly life; and this knowledge gives him the greatest impetus to plunge himself into Sadhana and merge himself in the Absolute in Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

Question: Why are we at present denied that knowledge?

Answer: He who is your father in this birth might have been your worst enemy in a previous birth! She who is your wife now might have been your mother last birth! Think of the consequence of a knowledge of past birth! This ignorance is truly bliss; it promotes harmony, peace and happiness.

LIGHT ON THE GHOST-WORLD

Question: Please throw some light on the Ghost-world. Does it exist?

Answer: Yes. It does exist. It is only the interim stage when, after giving up the physical body, the soul has not yet taken the next body. Then, we live in a subtle condition. The Vasanas, Samskaras, all the subtle portions of the mind are there. Therefore that subtle thing has got the same nature, same likes and dislikes, as the person when he was living on earth.

Just as some Karmas are worked out in the physical body, some other Karmas are worked out in the Preta Sareera also. That is what we call the heaven and the hell.

If the person has committed some extremely heinous negative action, then in the Preta-state, he is sometimes caught up. He has to remain in that state for a long time. His nature is so bad that he cannot remain quiet. And so, sometimes he causes trouble to people, always haunts such localities where he had been accustomed to indulge himself while living here. These are the bad Pretas. They are extremely bad spirits who, while living, had committed, say a number of murders and lived a very sinful life; even they can be helped by prayers; and they are speeded up on their journey. For instance, people who commit suicide sometimes get caught up in their subtle bodies. We do charity, we do Japa, or we conduct Bhagavata Saptaha, and thus get them released from their tangle.

There was a Swami in South India. He had a young wife who never agreed to his taking Sannyasa. When he did take Sannyasa, she fell into a well and committed suicide. She became a Preta and was caught up; she could not get into another body. The Swami came to know of her condition. By a Tarpana, he gave her the power of one day's Gayatri Japa. At once she was released from her miserable condition.

Even now there are Pretas wandering about us. There is no necessity to fear Pretas. Those who lead a pure life, who do Gayatri Japa and are devoted to God, cannot be troubled by even the bad Pretas.

Normally the Pretas remain as such for a considerable time. But, when a man has very intense desires in connection with some unfulfilled work, sometimes he is immediately born. But, usually a long period of time elapses, and we have to bear in mind that the computation of time in the Preta-world is not the same as ours—their years are much longer from our point of view.

WHERE IGNORANCE IS BLISS

Question: Why are human beings deprived of the knowledge of their previous birth?

Answer: It is a blessing. Your own father might have been your worst enemy in your past birth! If you knew it, there would be terrible disharmony in the house.

Again, the moment one gets memory of his previous births, he will become a Jnani. Moha or attachment will go away. He will begin to think: "How many fathers, mothers, wives and children have I had! All this is transitory relationship. I should not be attached to these."

DHARANA AND DHYANA DEFINED

Question: What is the difference between Dharana and Dhyana?

Answer: Dharana is fixing the mind on one object; Dhyana is allowing the mind to continuously dwell on it.

The first four stages of Raja Yoga are preparatory. When you have purified yourself, then real Yoga starts with the mind. You find the rays of the mind scattered. Withdraw them; practice Pratyahara. Now, after withdrawing the mind, you have to fix it upon the Lakshya. This is Dharana. It is concentration.

When you try to do Dharana, mind will run away! By constant Abhyasa you make the mind continue to remain fixed. This continued concentration, if it successfully extends to a certain period, is Dhyana or meditation. When it becomes very deep and very intense, it reaches Samadhi-Avastha.

You fix the mind on rose. This is concentration, Dharana. Then you allow the mind to dwell on all thoughts concerning the rose, to the exclusion of all other thoughts. That is meditation. When you meditate on Mahatma Gandhi, for instance, allow the mind to dwell on his work in South Africa, the Khaddar Movement, Satyagraha, his sublime life and teachings, and do not allow any other thought to arise in the mind. Normally, through association of ideas, the mind will wander away; if you have perfect concentration, this will not happen.

The ideal Dhyana is said to be like the flow of oil from one vessel to another (*Tailadhaaravat*) or like the continuous “OM” sound that emanates from a ringing bell (*Ghantanaadavat*).

HINTS FOR CONCENTRATION

Question: When I try to concentrate, the mind wanders; what is the best remedy for this?

Answer: You have got the greatest authority giving the perfect remedy. It is simple; yet it is perfect. It is an old, old question. It is one of the chief obstacles to meditation. It is Vikshepa Shakti, one of the greatest manifestations of Maya. Arjuna himself puts this problem before Krishna: “The mind is very flickering and oscillating; and it is as difficult to fix it on the Lakshya as it is to tie the wind.” And, Krishna does not say: “Oh, no; it is easy.” He admits: “It is very difficult to control the mind.” The method suggested by the Lord: “Yes, it is difficult; but it can be conquered by two things—Vairagya and Abhyasa.”

Why these two things are given is the outcome of a wonderful analysis of why this Vikshepa takes place. Why does mind wander about? Usually the mind goes and fixes itself up wherever there is attachment. Man wants pleasure and happiness; and he thinks he can get this in the external world

of name and form. Therefore various objects keep attracting the mind. Therefore, the mind runs from one object of attachment to another in a continuous succession.

The first thing, therefore, is a wrong conception that there is pleasure in objects. For this Vichara is the cure. Vichara makes the mind slowly learn that pleasure is not outside. He begins to say to the mind: “Do not go to the outside objects. There is infinite bliss within. Turn inward.” Vichara also points out to the mind that the whole world is full of pain. Actually, one anna of pleasure is mixed with fifteen annas of pain; and that pleasure is also Bhranti-Sukha only, like the pleasure derived from scratching the eczema. A dog bites a bone and hurts itself. Blood oozes from its own palate. It imagines that the blood comes from the bone and is happy; is this real happiness? Vichara gives Dosha-Drishti in sensual objects.

As a result of Vichara, the mind is made to flow inward. A sort of dispassion arises towards the objects. Fixing it inside become easier. Vairagya is dispassion for all objects of this world and the other world.

Once the turning away is there, the mind must be habituated to get itself fixed upon any particular Lakshya chosen by a person. Therefore, Abhyasa is necessary. The old tendency of the mind is there. Bahirmukha Vritti is part and parcel of the mind. It must be counter-acted and it can be done only by the positive practice. In the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, Abhyasa is defined as continuous, unbroken practice, carried on over a long period of time. Vairagya is the negative portion; Abhyasa is the positive portion. If you go on with your practice, it is absolutely certain that one day the accumulated result of this method will keep the mind absolutely fixed upon the Lakshya. Poorna-Dhyana will come and it will lead you to Atma-Sakshatkara.

Pranayama is also a great help.

It is important that we should not be discouraged. If the mind used to run a hundred times previously and it runs only ninety-nine times now, it is an advance. If you make the mind move in smaller circles instead of bigger circles, it is definite progress.

Another important point is: develop an intense love for the Lakshya.

ON MEMORY

Question: What actually is memory? How to develop it?

Answer: Memory is a state in which one portion of the mind is able to get out facts from the unconscious mind. It is Smriti Shakti. There are various physiological and psychological reasons why memory fails.

When one is young, whatever thoughts a person thinks are divine, and care-free. After a certain stage, he is subjected to family worries and sense-distractions. This is one great factor why memory is impaired.

Then, again, the tempo of modern life is so hurried, that man's mind gets no leisure and there is quick exhaustion of the nervous and mental resources. This, too, impairs memory.

Lack of Brahmacharya in the modern age is another contributory factor.

The foremost thing in the cultivation of good memory is to take a deep interest in things which you wish to remember. A case in point is that of Katha-Vachaks. They are able to remember the chapter and verse of several texts, like the Ramayana, Srimad Bhagavata and Mahabharata even in their old age. This is because they have taken a deep interest in this line.

Asanas are a great help, especially Sirshasan and Sarvangasan, because they enable more blood to flow towards the brain.

Question: Is there no substitute for Sirshasan? I am not able to do Sirshasan.

Answer: Yes, you can do Ardha-Sirshasan. You can practise the "rabbit-pose." Sit in Vajrasana. Lean forward and place the palms on the ground before you. Raise the buttocks from the heels, bend forward and touch the ground with the crown of your head. This is the oldman's Sirshasan. Even simpler than this: lying on bed, reach out to the edge of the bed and let the head "drop out" of the cot; retain this posture for a minute or two. Everyone, however advanced in age, can do this.

Question: How many minutes can I do Sirshasan?

Answer: It depends upon your age, vitality and practice.

There are people of sixty who are able to do it for one hour at a stretch. You will be surprised to hear that one of the members of the Tehri royal family used to do it for an hour a day; and he got cured of his heart-disease! But, generally, people with blood-pressure should not do Sirshasan. Do not get unduly alarmed on this account. Sirshasan does not pump blood into the brain as you do in irrigation! There is only a slightly freer flow of blood into the brain. If blood vessels can burst when a person who has high blood-pressure does Sirshasan, why do not the blood vessels in the lower extremities burst when he is standing on his feet? Even people with high blood-pressure can go on with a mild practice of Sirshasan, if they are already in the habit of doing Sirshasan. If you have a weak heart, it is not good to *start* the practice, as this involves much strain.

Question: Is there any herbal treatment for lack of memory?

Answer: Yes. Brahmi is very good for developing good memory. It can be taken as a drink in the morning, along with almonds, etc. Also Aswagandha is a very good brain tonic.

Question: Are there any special Mantras for developing memory?

Answer: Yes. Dakshinamurti Mantra and Aditya Hridaya are good. The Gayatri Mantra which every Hindu is asked to repeat during the Sandhyavandana morning, noon and evening, is the best, as it is specially a prayer for the bestowal of good intellect and wisdom.

ON THE CONTROL OF ANGER

Question: You say: “Don’t be angry”. But, when I see an injustice before my eyes, how can I keep quiet?

Answer: Correcting the wrong is your main purpose—not getting angry. Try to achieve your object without getting angry.

Anger by itself is an unrighteous passion; it can never be justified under any circumstance, by any person for any purpose. It is an Asuric quality. There are many methods of achieving an end—peaceful methods and harmonious methods. Anger creates vibrations of violence and disharmony in the atmosphere.

We should always get things done by righteous means.

Question: Why was Arjuna ordered by Krishna to slay the Kauravas?

Answer: He was asked to slay the enemy not with anger, but with Poorna-Jnana. He was made to realise that it was not he who was the creator, preserver or destroyer. It is the inner controller who is doing all these things. So, Arjuna says in the end: “*Nashto Mohah Smritir Labdhaa.*” He was asked by the Lord to do his duty, without anger, without passion, without any deluded idea that he was the doer, completely unattached, without the idea of agency and without expectation of any fruit.

Gita does not say: “Kill”. It is completely a wrong notion that Gita justifies killing. What Gita actually says is: “Do the duty which confronts you.” Arjuna’s particular duty at that particular moment was, as a Kshatriya, to wage a war. It was only a coincidence that his duty lay in slaying his opponents. “Do your duty and do it dispassionately, without Raga-Dwesa, hatred, anger, delusion and without any selfish desire for any gain for yourself. After that, offer it to Me”—that was Krishna’s Upadesha.

Question: Is it possible in an establishment or institution to control the subordinates without getting angry?

Answer: Yes, it is possible. If you develop the positive virtuous qualities like love, tolerance, compassion, understanding sympathy, fellow-feeling, you acquire a certain personality. That personality acts as a positive force upon those who come into immediate contact with you. Acquiring this personality makes it easier to command obedience.

In all this problem of virtue and vice, the utmost that the Creator would expect a man to do is to see that the evil qualities or undesirable traits are kept to the minimum possible.

So, let us try to be as impersonal as possible in the anger.

As for the person who has got to control a large number of people, it is well if he can somehow try to develop the idea in the people that he is a very strict and firm person. One can be

very strict and firm without getting angry. Create an atmosphere of strictness and discipline. Make the people feel “This man is a great disciplinarian. It is better not to disobey him”.

Get into social contact with your subordinates. Let them know what you are really at heart. This makes the other man understand you and obedience becomes voluntary.

Question: All this is “long-term plan”!

Answer: To get a child takes nine months; and to get a grain of paddy takes a season. There is no short-cut to perfection. To control anger is very difficult; you have to develop so many virtues in the meantime. Patient, persevering effort alone will bestow success on you.

BRAHMACHARYA

The Western and the Eastern Views

Question: Western psychology says that unless the sex-cycle is completed by wedlock, harm and not benefit results. What is the purpose behind Brahmacharya, then?

Answer: Western psychologists are concerned with this physical world; they have a materialistic conception of things; and they adopt materialistic methods. That is not our approach at all. Ours is a spiritual conception and we adopt spiritual methods. Spiritual methods try to undo what the materialistic methods do. We try to transcend the material life and progress upon a different plane altogether where these material laws do not hold good at all. Brahmacharya is the *sine qua non* of spiritual life.

THE BENEFITS OF MANTRA-WRITING

Question: What is the benefit of Mantra-writing?

Answer: In brief, there is more concentration in Mantra-writing than in the ordinary Japa with Maala.

The mind is a creature of habit. In ordinary Japa, the obstacle always is our own Rajas and Tamas. Tamas is laziness. Rajas is restlessness: “let me get up and go; I can continue Manasic Japa.” In Mantra-writing you are tied down to the place; the eyes are fixed on the note-book and the repetition of the Mantra goes on in the mind. Rajas is controlled in a greater degree. A sort of Dhyana comes automatically in Mantra-writing. Some people, in their Japa Sadhana, visualise the Mantra in shining letters before their eyes, upon which they concentrate. In Ordinary Japa and Dhyana, this is not automatically got. But when you write the Mantra, you go on doing Trataka (gazing) upon the Mantra in its letter-form, as it is, and therefore, naturally Dhyana also comes in.

Rajas and Tamas are controlled. The Japa is done vigorously and therefore there is no room for laziness. From all sides there is greater centralisation upon the Lakshya.

ARE SPIRITUAL INSTITUTIONS NECESSARY?

Question: Our need today is the betterment of the conditions of living; we should exert pressure on the government and the public to provide free education for all, free medical relief, employment for all and old age pension. When these things are wanting, and when the country is in distress, any amount of your preaching is no good!

Answer: You enter a printing press. One man is composing, one man is reading the proofs, one man is at the printing plant, another man is in the binding department. You go to the compositor and say: "What is the use of composing, composing, and composing? Why don't you read the proofs or work at the printing plant?"

It is an integral work. Similarly in the case of the work of the world. It is an integral one. And, there is division of work. Without that it is impossible for anyone to mind all the work of the whole world. Nor can you say that the whole thing can be centralised. The world is so vast and humanity is so big and the problems of life fall into so many departments that unless there are so many sections, each of them attending to its own work, nothing can be done. Each department is as important as the other.

There are hundreds of thousands of people engaged in conducting research in the medical field; there are many institutions engaged in famine relief, flood relief. Government has got its own educational and other departments. There are people thinking day and night of these problems of mankind.

But man is not only an external creature. He has got an ethical, a moral aspect. He has got the most important spiritual aspect. His mental aspect has got to be refined through education. His ethical aspect should be cultured through moral and spiritual instruction. And for his physical aspect, food, clothing, protection, medicine—all these are necessary.

If we give him food, clothing and good houses to live in, and neglect the moral aspect, then man will be a perfectly comfortable happy beast! You give radio to the poor man; you educate him; you provide him with all the good things of life. Supposing there is no one to tell him: "This is Dharma. This is Adharma. Lead a virtuous pure life," what will happen to his bestial qualities? Man has got bestial qualities and also impulses of a higher nature. If the higher qualities are not developed and the undesirable qualities controlled, the result will be: there will be a perfect condition externally but the root will become poisonous. Mankind will have to pay very heavily later on.

Therefore, in the interests of an ideal harmonious integral development, it is essential that there should be many people engaged in the propagation of the spiritual ideals, to remind man of his

divine nature and to lead him along the path of divine life to the pinnacle of the realisation of his own real divine nature.

In conclusion I would only remind you all of the famous Sloka: “*Srutir Vibhinna Smritayo-api Bhinnah Tathaa Muneenaam Matavo-api Bhinnah; Dharmasya Tattwam Nihitam Guhaayaam, Mahaa-jano yena gatah sa panthaah.*” The scriptures are varied in their views; as also the conclusions of the Sages. Hidden away are the truths of righteousness; the Path trodden by the great Self-realised saints is our only sure guide.

THE ROLE OF SPIRITUAL INSTITUTIONS

Questions: There is a lot of suffering in this country; lack of food, clothing, shelter and education. Can you suggest some way to lessen the suffering of our countrymen? When the stomach is empty and there is so much suffering, how can people absorb spiritual ideas? I think all institutions like the Divine Life Society should concentrate on bringing pressure to bear upon the Government to do something to relieve the suffering of our people.

Answer: You say there is a lot of suffering in our country. But there is suffering in the whole world! Every nation is thinking “We are suffering more than anyone else in the world.” Suffering and enjoyment come in cycles. Sometimes there is great peace and prosperity. At other times there is great disharmony and depression. That seems to have been the plan of the universe.

Is not the work that the saints and sages and all thinking men are doing with a compassionate heart intended to allay the suffering of humanity? This world is a relative plane. There will always be suffering here. We can only try to minimise suffering and try to increase happiness. Saints suggest a remedy for the suffering. But, people must have faith in this remedy. Only then will they take it. To find that real Shraddha is very difficult.

Even though from time immemorial, sages and saints say that selfishness, greed and passion, lead only to suffering and that peace can be had only in love, brotherhood and selflessness, how many people have real faith in this? Those who have are happy. Other people do not listen to it because they think their happiness lies in acquiring, in grabbing, in getting the better of the other man. They think that in trying to acquire, they can do whatever they like. Their faith has been misplaced. As long as their faith is misplaced, no amount of positive idealism, no amount of preaching, will be of any avail.

But, on that account, we should not relax our efforts. Our Dharma is to try as far as possible to put the thing about life before the people. And, it is certain that more and more people will slowly take away the faith misplaced in wrong ideals and will accept the value of right ideals.

ROTARIANS' DOUBTS DISPELLED

Question: Why do children born of the same parents and brought up in exactly similar manner turn out to be totally different from each other? Given the identical training, surroundings, opportunities and facilities we find frequently one turning out a wise man and the other a fool. How is this?

Answer: This phenomenon results from the operation of several factors. They may be classified into three types of factors. The first of them is the fundamental physical and mental capacity of the individual himself. Even though the external factors of training, of surroundings, of opportunities, environment and other facilities are identical, yet it is the individual's inborn talent, brain power and physical health condition that lays down the limit of the extent to which the growing individual can draw upon these factors, receive them and respond to them in the shape of growth and development. Each mind in this universe differs from the other. The brain capacity varies from individual to individual. Health and strength also differ. Hence despite all external, social and domestic factors being identical, different individuals develop differently.

The second cause of factors is more psychological and hereditary. Herein you have to understand a little of the law-governing conception of the individual as also of prenatal parental behaviour. The ancient Hindus were adepts in this science and have laid down an elaborate system of rules and regulations, do's and don'ts, for the parents-to-be and also for the expectant mother during the period of her pregnancy. The child that is born is definitely affected by the physical health, the condition of the nervous system and the mood and emotional and psychological state of mother and father at the time of their marital relationship. This neuro-psychic background may differ from child to child. Also the nature and later development of the child is powerfully influenced by the food, the environment, the occupation and the thoughts, emotions and aspirations of the mother during the entire pregnancy period. According to these does the child turn out to be.

Now we come to the most essential and the fundamental factor at the bottom of this phenomenon. It is the Hindu who is fully awake to the significance of this factor. This is called Vasana or Samskara. It is the impressions of the past experiences that gets stored up in the conscience of the individual. Actions done in the past incarnations, experiences undergone in the previous births—all get embedded as subtle impressions called Poorva-vasanas in the Chitta of man. They form the seeds of his nature. The individual carries them all from one incarnation to the next. They are dormant in the infant and the little child. But they slowly commence to manifest themselves as the individual begins to grow. Eventually these basic qualities tend to manifest themselves fully notwithstanding whatever environment, training and opportunities the individual may be put into. Ultimately this is the deciding factor which gives the direction to the personality and the development of the individual to whomsoever he be born, wheresoever he be placed and howsoever he be trained.

Question: If man is bound by the laws of Karma predestination, etc., why should you blame him for his actions?

Answer: The truth is that man is bound and yet at the same time he is free in a restricted sense of the term. It is in this way: Take the example of a prisoner locked within his cell in the jail. Now

this man has no freedom; yet upon further thought, you find that within his cell there still remains a certain extent of a certain type of freedom to the imprisoned man. For he may choose either to lie down inside the cell or keep standing. He may be sitting or he may walk about. He may keep his eyes closed or open. Or again he may talk and sing or remain silent. He may eat his food or reject it. Thus you see that within the confines of his bondage and strict imprisonment, he still exercises the freedom to choose between certain things. Similar is the case of the man in this universe. Doubtless he is a bound being, subject to the operation of certain inexorable cosmic laws. Yet within their confines, the creator has endowed man with the faculty of selective discrimination and the ability to choose between Dharma and Adharma, between good and bad, between right and wrong, etc. This may be called "Datta-Swatantrya", "granted-freedom", allowed by the creator to man upon this earth-plane. Hence man becomes answerable for his actions.

Question: Why does the mind wander during the practice of meditation? How to concentrate successfully?

Answer: To put it in a general way, the answer is that the mind wanders during meditation because it is the very nature of the mind to do so. The Prakriti of the mind is itself to flit about from one object to another. Vikshepa Shakti is inherent in the mind. Then there are external factors. You may be exhausted through too much exertion. Or you might have become emotionally upset during the course of that day's Vyavahara. Or again you might have occupied yourself with too much miscellaneous activity of an extremely distracting type. Even indigestion upsets the mind and makes concentration impossible. But when you take up this question for specific consideration, you will find the following explanation:

Now, what exactly is this wandering? It is flitting from one object to another. It is thinking of sense-objects. It is thinking of past experiences. It dwells upon them one after another. Now, you have to take note of one psychological point in this connection, that is your mind tends to think of those objects *which it likes*. It tends to roam amidst those objects which it has tasted previously, to which it is attached, in which it finds pleasure. If you analyse these mind-wanderings carefully, you will find that they are impelled almost entirely by strong attachment and passion. For instance, you will note that a strict vegetarian's mind does not wander away to thoughts of non-vegetarian dishes. Similarly, if a young school boy tries to concentrate, his mind will not wander amidst thoughts of women. Whereas a passionate youth or an elderly man will find his wanderings characterised by these thoughts mostly. Thus you find that the main cause of mind-wandering is the lack of Vairagya or dispassion towards sense-objects and sense-experience of this world.

The constant exercise of Viveka and Vichara, the development of dispassion or Vairagya and the subdual of Raga-dwesh are the means for removing mind-wandering and attaining success in concentration. Other factors like Sattvic diet, avoidance of miscellaneous talk, novel and newspaper reading, etc., and a certain extent of seclusion are also important in their own way and have their place in the practice of concentration and meditation. But the main requisite is intense aspiration and extreme dispassion. On the positive side you must develop intense love for the object of worship or your ideal.

Question: If the world is a great bondage, why do saints and seers desire to come back and help the world? Is it not foolishly risking the danger of becoming caught again?

Answer: The most effective way of understanding this question is carefully to reflect over the following analogy: There is the Government penitentiary with its high and formidable walls topped with iron spikes completely surrounding it. Its huge gates, are shut and barred and closely guarded by armed sentries. Woe to the men who are put into it to serve their sentence in terrible bondage. Gloom and dejection mark the countenance of these beings who are condemned to dwell within it. Now here appears a surprising personality. You all know that Welfare Associations and Social Uplift Societies have within their curriculum of activities the visiting of hospitals, visits to prisons, etc., to talk and comfort and, if possible, convert and cheer up the inmates therein. Perhaps many a Rotarian himself engages occasionally in this humanitarian activity.

Now this person out of his own choice freely enters the Jail and, what is more, gets into the very cells behind its iron bars and moves amidst the prisoners. He is neither gloomy nor dejected. Even while inside the prison he moves about with the full conscience of his freedom; and when he has done his work, he once again steps out into freedom without anyone to question him. Thus is the case with the Great Souls who have realised their Ever-free, Perfect, Atmic Nature. Even if he comes back into the world, he does not come as a prisoner entering the Jail but rather like the welfare worker who has no fear of being handcuffed and clapped into a cell. He is always centred in the full awareness of his ever-free spiritual nature and moves about in the world as a master of the situation, coming and going at his will. Such a perfected one alone may aspire to come back into this Mrityuloka to help the world. To lesser ones it would be foolish to entertain such an ambition through their own egoistic thoughts. But they too can certainly play this role if by earnest and intense Sadhana they perfect themselves first, attain freedom and acquire the fitness to do Lokasangraha.

Question: Is non-vegetarianism, right or wrong? What harm is there in eating meat?

Answer: There are two distinct angles from which the question of the nature of a particular act is taken up for consideration. They are the consideration of the act in the light of its objective results or outcome and a consideration in the light of its subjective repercussions upon the doer. This will be clear if you take some concrete instance. Let us take for example a boy about to take a heavy rifle and let off a shot at random in a busy locality. Now this act may be regarded as dangerous and undesirable for two distinct reasons as stated. One is because it may result in the shot accidentally striking some object or person and causing damage or injury. Or, again, this same act may be considered dangerous and undesirable because the heavy rifle when discharged may 'kick' back and fracture the shoulder-bone of the boy. This may cripple him.

Similarly, the matter of non-vegetarianism may be objected to by some because it entails the slaughtering of innocent creatures and the giving of great pain and torture to fish, fowl and animals. Then, again, it may be objected to due to baneful effects of flesh-eating upon the growth and development of the eater's personality. In as much as self-culture and the attainment of perfection in life is of vital interest to man, we shall consider this question with special reference to the latter aspects.

Now, food sustains life. The man grows through the food he consumes. Food is matter. Three Gunas, Sattva, Rajas and Tamas conducting to purity, disharmony and inertia respectively, prevail in varying ratio in all matter. Our ancients have made a very deep and a very minute

analytical study of this question, and have carefully classed out types of matter according to these qualities. As mentioned already, man grows through food. Whatever is the quality of the food it works itself into the nature of the consumer. Even the mind of man (and therefore his thoughts and feelings) is fashioned out of the subtle portion of the food which he consumes. Now, animals are creatures in a very low stage of evolution. Their inherent quality is beastliness. The entire material which goes to make up their gross fleshy body is pervaded by this bestial quality. Every atom of physical matter and each minute cell in that body has this quality of grossness and beastliness. The effect of consuming this type of fleshy food is therefore quite clear. The inward culture and evolution of the individual depends upon the extent to which he is able to shed his grossness and is able to free himself from Rajas and Tamas and attain to Sattva. Therefore, food that tends to render his nature gross and sub-human is an enemy to his real growth. It retards his progress towards perfection. It is a bar to the most important attainment in human life. Hence it is undesirable and deserves to be avoided.

Question: There is so much service one could do in this world; yet there is so much that is devilish in this world that one hesitates to plunge into the field. How can one move about and work in the midst of so much evil and devilry and yet safeguard oneself from them?

Answer: For this you have to learn the technique from the medico or doctor or nurse in a hospital ward. Only observe the surgeons and nurses who constantly move in the midst of dangerous infections, contagious cases and every type of sickness. They have to handle germ-ridden limbs, dress septic wounds and perform similar tasks. They do it and yet keep themselves free from the affliction by *immunising themselves*, and protecting themselves through disinfections and germicides. Even so, if you aspire to live and move amidst the Asuric elements of this world and yet be safe from them and have similar protection and immunisation, *perfect inward detachment* is one of the chief factors for you in this process. Constant active Viveka and Vichara are powerful germicides, as it were, to counteract the germs of worldliness and sensuality. Daivee-Bhava is the note treated with the powerful disinfectant of concentrated Vairagya, wearing which you can move about freely in this world of nescience without being affected by it.

Question: Nowadays by Ahimsa people mean harmlessness and non-injury to any human being. I think this is very inadequate. Should not Ahimsa apply to all the lower creatures as well?

Answer: Ahimsa implies perfect abstinence from harm to any creature upon earth, from the highest man to the tiniest ant. The great spiritual sages of ancient India have shown how Ahimsa is to be practised in its highest form. Lord Buddha readily offered himself to be sacrificed in place of a goat. The sage Jadabharata scrupulously sought to avoid even accidentally stepping upon ants or worms on the roadway.

The modern tendency to confine its denotation to the human species alone can only be taken as a shameless confession of man's lack of self-control. For one thing, the practice of meat-eating seems to have become so universally prevalent amongst mankind that man is a slave to this deplorable habit. He is terrified at the prospect of giving up meat. Hence people fight shy of extending the scope and implication of Ahimsa to all living creatures as it should rightly be done.

And secondly, all thinking men have found to their sorrow that, despite the so-called civilisation of the world and apparent progress and advancement of humanity, the animal elements of credulity, barbarity and savagery almost approaching cannibalism are still present (though somewhat suppressed) in most men of today. Men are too ready to fly at each other's throat. Men butcher brother-men upon the flimsiest of excuse or pretext. The promoters of Ahimsa must have thought that as a first step let man at least refrain from violence towards his own species. When this is achieved, later on, perhaps, this vow may be universalised, but however, for all this explanation, Ahimsa in reality does and ought to include all creatures on earth.

Question: The doctrine of renunciation or Tyaga is mainly responsible for the degeneracy of the nation. It has brought about deplorable weakness and inefficiency in the race which we see everywhere today. What do you say to this?

Answer: On the contrary, it is attachment and indulgence that is the real cause for all degeneracy and weakness. Indulgence in earthly objects creates attachment and makes man thoroughly selfish. However active such a man may be and however busily he might engage himself in the work of the world, it becomes merely selfish alone. The average selfish individual does not care a pin for the betterment of any one except himself. His strength and his work is to no purpose for anyone's benefit.

The ideal of Tyaga, or highest renunciation and detachment, is the one factor that has kept intact the virility of Bharatavarsha as a nation and race. Take any period in history; you will find that it is the great personalities who have risen above all selfishness and ruthlessly renounced all petty attachments that have achieved the greatest good of the country and turned the course of history. Lacking in the spirit of renunciation, people have turned selfish. You see the baneful results of this selfishness everywhere in the form of greed, cruelty, corruption, cut-throat competition, jealousy, enmity and, upon a large scale, warfare. In the absence of Tyaga, the vision of the individual is obscured by the cloud of self-seeking and self-interest. He has not the courage of his conviction. He fails to follow his convictions with corresponding action, because other considerations sway him. The selfish individual lacks moral courage. When the call to a noble act of self-denial or sacrifice comes, the man imbued with the spirit of renunciation boldly responds to it. Whereas, where there is no Tyaga, the individual wavers and steps back, for he begins to think how such an act will affect his interest or the welfare of his family, etc. Such attachment makes him backboneless. There can be no real service, there can be no real social work, there can be no real philanthropy, there can be no real patriotism, without the spirit of Tyaga or renunciation. Renunciation is real strength. Hence it is the central ideal of the Hindu Race.

Question: Can not a man be good without being religious or faithful? Is it not possible to live a virtuous life unless a man believes in some doctrine or faith?

Answer: Yes. Certainly man can be good without being particularly religious or subscribing to any set faith or creed. As a matter of fact there have been extremely good and virtuous people who were, as far as their belief went, more or less agnostics. Real goodness has nothing to do with any particular Church, sect or denomination. But, then, it is not so simple a matter as one would think. Man is surrounded by so much that is evil and satanic in this iron age that it is in his interest to have his goodness established upon some firm basis. The religious urge provides this foundation for

the goodness of man to support itself upon. The elements of faith, aspiration, and prayer serve the individual in times of temptation, when his goodness becomes assailed by contrary forces. Hence the association of goodness with godliness.

Question: Is not hunger and want the main cause of all war and blood-shed?

Answer: In an age of economics, to economics-steeped minds of this economics-bound world, it seems to be very much so. But in truth, hunger and want are two of the several causes that tend to bring on war. They are neither the main cause nor the only cause. It is in reality the basic evil of the lower self of the man, his animalistic aspect, that is at the root of wars and conflicts. It was neither hunger nor want that brought on the conflict between Rama and Ravana. Similarly, in the heyday of Greek history, neither hunger nor want (in the economic sense of the term) had anything to do with the bitter warfare that centred round the beautiful Helen of Troy. Wars have been fought for the paltriest of reasons. The fancy of a queen or the whim of a dictator precipitated war. It is human jealousy, ambition, hatred, egoism, that are the real factors behind war and bloodshed. Anger and passion which are innate in man are the real fuel that feed the conflagration that is war. As long as these factors are rampant in man's nature, no amount of food and the satisfaction of his physical wants can eliminate war. This is the Truth.