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Goal of life

There are perhaps only a few among the masses who have ever given any serious consideration to the problem of life. Generally, they take a very narrow view of it. The only problem before them is to secure a decent living, well provided with the desired comforts. In other words, to them the object of life is only to achieve the greatest possible comfort and prominence in the world. If they are able to achieve it, they think their life to be a success, otherwise not. They may, however, pass on as great men, philosophers, scientists or politicians and acquire world-wide fame and riches, but their problem of life still remains unsolved. It does not really end with death, for it is only a change of form. Our next life, whatever it may be, begins after death. Just as prior to our present life we have had numerous other lives in different forms, similarly even after our death we may have numerous other lives. The cycle of birth and death continues indefinitely. The problem before us is not to find out a solution of our present life but for all lives that we may henceforth have. In the wider sense, it covers the entire existence of soul in various forms, gross or subtle, at different times till the time of Mahapralaya (Final extinction). There may be difference of opinion over the question of births and deaths, among the followers of different creeds, but it is certain that mere theoretical knowledge of the scriptures will not solve the question. Practical experience in the spiritual field is necessary for the purpose. The question ends when one acquires 'Anubhava Shakti' (Intuitive Capacity) of the finest type and can himself realize the true state of life hereafter. The mystery is, however, explained by the people in various ways, but almost all agree on the point that the object of life is to achieve eternal bliss after death. For this they insist on a life of virtue, sacrifice and devotion, which will bring to them the eternal joy of the paradise or salvation or peace. But that is not the end of the problem. It goes on much beyond. Now in order to trace out the solution of the problem we must look back to the point wherfrom our existence has started. Our existence in the present grossest form is neither sudden nor accidental but it is the result of a slow process of evolution. The existence of soul can be traced out as far back as to the time of creation when the soul existed in its naked form as a separate

entity. From that primary state of existence of the soul in its most subtle form we marched on to grosser and grosser forms of existence. These may be expressed as coverings round the soul. The earliest coverings were of the finest nature and with them we existed in our homeland, the Realm of God. The additions of more and more coverings of ego continued and subsequently Manas (psyche), Chit (consciousness), Buddhi (intellect) and Ahankar (ego) in cruder forms began to contribute to our grossness. In due course, Samskaras (impressions) began to be formed which brought about their resultant effects. Virtue and vice made their appearances. Slowly our existence assumed the densest form. The effect of Samskaras is the commencement of feelings of comforts, miseries, joys and sorrows. Our likings for joys and comforts and our disliking's for sorrows and miseries have created further complications. We generally find ourselves surrounded with pain and misery and we think that deliverance from them is our main goal. This is a very narrow view of the problem.

The aims and objects of life conceived in terms of worldly ends are almost meaningless. We forget that pains and miseries are only the symptoms of a disease but the disease lies elsewhere. To practise devotion to please God in order to secure worldly comforts or gains is but a mockery. The problem before us is not mere deliverance from pain and misery but freedom from bondage, which is the ultimate cause of pain and misery. Freedom from bondage is liberation. It is different from salvation which is not the end of the process of rebirth. Salvation is only a temporary pause in the rotation. It is the suspension of the process of birth and death only for a certain fixed period after which we again assume the material form. The endless circle of rebirth ends only when we have secured liberation. It is the end of our pains and miseries. Anything short of liberation cannot be taken as the goal of life although there remains still a lot beyond it. We find but a few persons who have even liberation as the final goal of their life, which represents the lowest rung in the spiritual flight. The problem of life remains totally unsolved if we are below this level. There are persons who may say that they do not want Mukti (liberation). They only want to come again and again into this world and practise Bhakti (devotion). Their goal of life is undetermined

and indefinite. Bhakti and nothing beyond as they say is their goal. Really they are attracted by the charming effect of the condition of a Bhakta (devotee) and like to remain entangled in it for ever. They do it only to please themselves. Freedom from eternal bondage is not possible so long as we are within entanglements. The natural yearning of soul is to be free from bondage. If there is one who does not like to free himself from the entanglements there is no solution for him. Bhakti is the means of achieving the goal and not the goal itself. The fact as I have stated above is that they are allured by the charming effect of the primary condition and do not want to get away from it at any time. The narrow view that they have taken, bars their approach to a broader vision and anything beyond is out of their sight. Another fallacious argument advanced in support of the above view is that devotion, if practised with any particular object in view, is far from being 'Nishkam' (desireless). The theory of 'Nishkam Upasana' (desireless devotion) as laid down in the Gita emphasises upon us to practise devotion without keeping in view any specific purpose. It really means that we should practise devotion without our eyes being fixed upon any worldly object or without caring for the satisfaction of our desires. It does not stop us from fixing our mind upon the goal of life which is absolutely essential for those on the march. The goal of life means nothing but the point we have finally to arrive at. It is in other words, the reminiscence of our homeland or the primeval state of our present solid existence, which we have finally to return to. It is only the idea of destination which we keep alive in our minds and for that we practise devotion only as duty. Duty for duty's sake is without doubt 'Nishkam Karma' (selfless action) and to realize our goal of life is our bounden duty.

Now I come to the point what the real goal of life should be. It is generally admitted that the goal must be the highest, otherwise progress up to the final limit is doubtful. For this, it is necessary to have a clear idea of the highest possible limit of human approach. We have before us examples of Rama and Krishna, the two incarnations of the Divinity. We worship them with faith and devotion and want to secure union with them. Automatically that becomes our goal of life and we can at the utmost secure approach up to their level. Now Rama and Krishna,

as incarnations, were special personalities vested with supernatural powers to work as medium for the accomplishment of the work which nature demanded and for which they had come. They had full command over various powers of nature and could utilize them at any time in a way they thought proper. The scope of their activity was limited in accordance with the nature of the work they had to accomplish. They descended from the sphere of Mahamaya (), which is a state of Godly energy in the subtle form hence the most powerful. It is due to this fact that we find excellent results coming into effect through their agency in their life-time. The highest possible point of human approach is much beyond the sphere of Mahamaya; hence a good deal above that level. It may be surprising to most of the readers but it is a fact beyond doubt. The final point of approach is where every kind of force, power, activity or even stimulus disappears and a man enters a state of complete negation; Nothingness or Zero. That is the highest point of approach or the final goal of life. I have tried to express it by the diagram. The concentric circles drawn round the centre 'C', roughly denote the different spiritual spheres we come across during our progress. Beginning our march from the outermost circle, we proceed towards the centre crossing each circle to acquire the next stage. It is a very vast expanse. If I speak of liberation, people will think it to be a very far-off thing which can be achieved by persistent efforts for a number of lives. In the diagram, the state of liberation lies between the 2nd and the 3rd circles. The various conditions we have to pass through in order to secure liberation are all acquired within about a circle and a half. This may help the reader to form a rough idea of what still remains to be achieved after we have reached the point of liberation which really, as commonly believed, is not an ordinary achievement. After achieving this state we go on further crossing other circles till we cross the fifth one. This is the stage of Awyakti Gati (undifferentiated state). At this stage a man is totally free from the bounds of Maya. Very few of the sages of the past could reach up to this position. Raja Janak was one of those who could secure his approach to this state. His achievements were considered to be so great that even the prominent Rishis (sages) of the time used to send their sons and disciples to him for training. The region of Heart as described in my book 'Efficacy of Raja Yoga' is now

crossed and now we enter the mind region, after crossing the fifth circle. The eleven circles after this depict the various stages of egoism. The condition there is more subtle and grows finer still as we march on through the region. By the time we reach the 16th circle we are almost free from egoism. The condition at the stage is almost inconceivable and has rarely been attained by even the greatest of the sages. As far as my vision goes I find among the ancient sages none except Kabir, who could have secured his approach up to this stage (i.e., the 16th circle). What remains when we have crossed this circle is a mere identity which is still in a gross form. We now enter the Central Region. There, too, you will find seven rings of something. I may call it light for the sake of expression, which we cross during our march onwards. The form of dense identity as I have called it, grows finer and subtler to the last possible limit. We have now secured a position which is near most to the Centre, and it is the highest possible approach of man. There we are in close harmony with the very Real condition. Complete merging with the Centre is, however, not possible, so as to maintain a nominal difference between God and soul. Such is the extent of human achievement which a man should fix his eyes upon from the very beginning, if he wants to make the greatest progress on the path of realization. Very few among the saints and yogis of the world had ever had any conception of it. Their farthest approach in most cases had been up to the 2nd or the 3rd circle at the utmost, and it is unfortunate that even at this preliminary stage they sometimes considered their achievements to be very great. I have given all this only to enable people to judge those so-called great Doctors of Divinity who are said to have attained perfection and are generally accepted as such by the ignorant masses who judge their worth only by their outward form or elegance.

Religion

The quest of mankind, ever since its birth has been to worship God, to unravel the mysteries behind the outward appearances and to grasp the fundamental truth. This is the genesis of religion. The worshipper has before his eyes the eternal bliss of the paradise or some similar view which he aims at as his final approach. There have thus arisen religions in the world with their prescribed forms and rituals, based upon the personal practical experiences of their great founders. But after the lapse of thousands of years, when the entire surroundings have changed and life has undergone a radical transformation, the same old forms and principles are being adhered to. The outer form alone now remains intact while the inner spirit is lost. The result is that the vehicle of religion has become hackneyed and it will not be wrong to say that the present-day religion has become only a relic of the past or the bones of the dead. We have really buried true religion in the grave. Only, we clap hands in the name of religion and do nothing else. The real spirit is lost and only formalities remain in its place. Outward forms and rituals are only things that remain open to view, which are followed with extreme orthodoxy and tenacity without even the least touch of reality. Our faith in reality has thus diminished to the point of extinction. It is rather twisted into forms and rituals alone. Gradually it degenerates into bigotry or prejudice which has unfortunately become the permanent feature of the present-day religion. Our blind faith in formalities keeps us in the dark regarding the reality and unconsciously we develop within us a feeling of hatred against those who believe in other forms and rituals. There are consequently jealousies and quarrels among the followers of different religions.

India has achieved political freedom but self-independence or the freedom of soul is still wanting. The main obstacle is the want of capacity for a broader vision and free thinking. The whole atmosphere is surcharged with prejudice and rivalry. The entire structure of society and culture rests on the same foundation. Sectional jealousies are the main cause of the downfall of our

civilisation. There are, at present, no less than 3000 castes in India, each forming a distinct unit. These castes were originally the different guilds of workers and artisans organised in order to solve the question of division of labour. But today each guild tries to cut itself off from the rest of the community forming a separate independent unit, harbouring feelings of hatred and jealousies towards the other. The whole society is thus proceeding towards disintegration. The time is now at hand when this evil shall soon cease to exist. Nature is at work to put an end to this evil. The scythe of the time is unsparing. Let this serve as a warning to the ardent supporters and advocates of the caste prejudice. They cannot escape the consequences unless they mend in time. The will of God must have its course. Prejudice is the greatest evil, rather the deadliest poison to spiritual life. It keeps one confined to himself, losing all access to a broader vision. It creates narrow-mindedness and all prospects of development and progress are lost to those who pin their souls to it. Prejudice breeds hatred towards others and it is nothing but a feeling of false self-superiority in a disguised form. If you nurture this evil, you thereby add one more link to the existing chain of egoism. Consequently you remain farther away from reality. The realization of the Limitless thus becomes an impossibility. Universal love, the very fundamental basis of religion having disappeared altogether, the religion which was generally considered to be a link between man and God, has now become a barrier instead. If we keep ourselves bound fast to a particular form or practice without a clear idea of its real significance and final approach, we are probably committing the greatest blunder. God is not to be found within the fold of a particular religion or sect. He is not confined within certain forms or rituals, nor is He to be traced out from within the scriptures. Him we have to seek for in the innermost core of our heart.

There are various conceptions of God. People look upon Him differently according to their capacity and understanding. The most commonly accepted conception of God is Eternal Power. But the philosophic view goes much beyond and includes the idea of Nirguna Brahma or Indeterminate Absolute which is above all multiplicity and distinctions. It is the ultimate cause and substratum of existence, the supra-active Centre of the entire

manifestation or the Absolute Base. It is beyond quality, activity, or consciousness. It is also known as Para Brahma. Next comes the idea of God as Supreme existence. We see the universe with all its diversities and differentiations and we are led to believe in its creator and controller. We call him Ishwar or Saguna Brahma (Determinate Absolute). We think of Him as a formless Eternal Existence which is Omnipotent and Omniscient and possesses all the finest attributes. He is the efficient cause of the world and He is also its preserver and destroyer. It is only when viewed from this lower standpoint that God (as the God of religion) becomes an object of worship. This is the final approach of almost all the religions. So far, God is conceived of as Nirakar or formless, but possessing certain attributes. This is in itself a difficult idea for the common folk to grasp. They therefore, try to secure an easier approach by taking up to a more tangible form. Some, therefore, think of Him as seated on the highest Heaven, administering justice and benevolence to all. Others think of Him as an all-pervading power controlling the Universe. Thus by degrees we are in a way gradually drifting away from the Nirakar or formless aspect to some tangible form or Sakar. Much has been said in the religious books about the two conceptions, the Nirakar and the Sakar, but really both the conceptions, as generally understood, are greatly misleading. Really God is neither Nirakar nor Sakar but beyond both. Those who treat him as Sakar limit the Limitless within bounds of form and shape. The result is that they cultivate narrow-mindedness and remain forever within bounds. If we take Him as Nirakar the very idea brings to our mind the limitation of attributes as creator, controller and destroyer. Even the idea of God as Power or Energy is still a limited conception. We go on ahead to the idea of non-entity or zero, still we are in a way somewhat away from Reality. What then? Expression now fails. Sufficient be it to say that if we are really away from both the conceptions, we may think ourselves to be in the right direction. So long as we remain confined within the bounds of religion, the God of religion remains in our view and we remain entangled within one or the other view. The highest spiritual attainment is only possible when we go beyond. In fact spirituality begins, where religion ends. Religion is only a preliminary stage for preparing a man for his march on the path of freedom. When he has set his

foot on the path, he is then beyond the limits of religion. The end of religion is the beginning of spirituality; the end of spirituality is the beginning of Reality and the end of Reality is the real Bliss. When that too is gone, we have reached the destination. That is the highest mark which is almost inexpressible in words.

Worship of gods and deities in various forms is a crude development of the same Sakar theory. Worship of every power of nature and even of mountains, rivers and trees is a further degradation of the same view. What a pity! Instead of worshipping the Master, we are worshipping the servants, ignoring the Master entirely and we are not prepared to hear even a word against our set prejudices. The result is that today we find so many sects and creeds, each worshipping its own god or goddess in its own particular way. Evidently the goal before their eye is not even liberation but in most cases deliverance from some particular form of misery or some material gain. People are driven to such forms of worship either by the force of circumstances or through the faulty guidance of those who are themselves quite in dark in the matters of Self-realization. Lord Krishna has made it clear in the Gita that worship of gods may lead you at the most to their sphere only, which is a limited one and far below the point of liberation. They themselves have no capacity to go beyond. The approach of their devotees beyond this point is, therefore, out of question. Thus it is evident that these gods and deities are of no avail to us if we really aim at Reality. I have illustrated the point more clearly in my book 'Efficacy of Raja Yoga'.

Mechanical form of worship, commonly adopted by those hankering after gods and goddesses to serve their worldly ends is also another absurdity. It is no worship at all. They only play the part of a labourer, so to say, and at the close they get their day's wages for the physical labour done. The solid material form of God entertained by them in the mind and worshipped with faith and devotion leads to internal grossness and if the practice continues for a long time they become more and more solid, barring their approach to Reality. The result in such cases is evident to almost every eye. Ancient sages finding worship of the Immortal Absolute, a difficult task for the masses to start with, had devised certain convenient means for their uplift. They made a start by

taking up something apparent in the solid form which the masses could easily grasp or understand. Now the things which could be easily grasped or understood were different for different people. For the people of the lowest standard they adopted something in the apparently solid form. For others, more elevated, some abstract form, e.g., splendour, light or any godly attribute was introduced to start with. For highly cultured minds a subtle idea of God was enough. Thus it was only for the people of the lowest standard that they had adopted the solid form such as picture or image and that too only as a temporary measure. When they attained some progress they gave it up and embarked upon the next stage, taking up a finer form. It is just like teaching writing to a baby making her move her pen along the prints of letters. After a little practice the process is given up and the baby is able to write independently without the help of the prints. Thus the solid form or the image was to be adopted by beginners for a time only, after which, they came to the next stage. Besides, the image set up for the purpose was fully charged with the spiritual force so that those sitting by, in devotion and worship, gained some of it through constant radiation. Now persons of calibre, having the power to infuse into the image the spiritual force, are rare, although the process of Pran Pratishta () still continues as a matter of mere formality. The result is that the places and images thus charged thousands of years ago, have by this time, almost lost all their effect and consequently no practical gain is derived by those going there for devotion and worship. It is, however, beyond doubt that the process was introduced only for the people of the lowest standard with little brain who could not otherwise devote themselves to the Lord in any way. It is but certain that the practice, if tenaciously followed to the last, defeats its very purpose and does not provide any spiritual advantage. Saint Kabir has nicely expressed the idea in the following lines:-

"If by worshipping stone one can reach God I shall be ready to worship a mountain. But for this purpose the grinding-stone which grinds the corn to feed the world may be better."

To my view those who stick to this sort of worship throughout their life, are wading deep through the mire of ungodliness. It is extremely difficult to extricate them out of it. In course of time after constant practice they become so firmly rooted to it that they cannot even think of getting away from it at any stage. They remain at a standstill. They do not want to get rid of the ideas they have already imbibed. Further they apply their power or thought and make them stronger and more solid. Everything casts a reflection in a form similar to its own. If the thing is subtle its reflection will also be subtle in character and if it is gross the reflection will likewise be gross. If we concentrate on a solid thing we are sure to become ourselves inwardly solid. Great havoc has been wrought by teachers, who have presented to the ignorant masses everything they had learnt from the holy books in hard and solid form. It destroys the reflexive power of mind. If one develops such a horrible state he is gone for ever. He loses his approach to a broader vision and the capacity for further progress becomes extinct. Such person may be compared to frogs in the well, with a little field of activity which they consider all and enough. They remain whirling round in a closed sphere, hemmed in on all sides. They are hammering on the same thing all their life. Stories and illustrations of gods are all and enough for them. When the practice continues for long the cells of the brain are affected and they become saturated with the thoughts which grow stronger day by day. Finally the whole nervous system is affected. The external opacity gradually creeps inwards and completes the work. They are now completely impervious, both within and without, to the passage for the Divine Light. Their approach to inner self is completely barred. I shall prefer to call them living stones. The hardened crust, which they thus developed, keeps them aloof from slightest association with anything higher or finer. They are almost spell-bound by its effects which they consider to be a spiritual stage although in fact they are far away from it. My personal experience in the spiritual field has revealed to me that it is a pretty hard and tedious task to shatter the hard crust, created by such forms of practice, from the hearts of those coming to me for spiritual pursuit. If one wants to free himself from these bondages of soul he must necessarily clear off the layer of grossness and

solidity settled over his mind as a result of these stultifying practices.

Another form of worship commonly thought to be more advanced is to sing or recite in chorus, lines in praise of the god or goddess they worship. People assemble together in parties and at late hours in the night, sing in chorus at the top of their voice disturbing the calm atmosphere of the night. They think that they are thereby discharging a pious duty of injecting, as they say, into the ears of as many as they can, the sacred name of God. Not only this, they sometimes even make use of microphone to broadcast the sound. They are totally unmindful of the discomfort or inconvenience it might cause to persons who may possibly be in need of quiet repose after their day's tiring labour or illness. It may at the same time be offering serious disturbance to those who practise meditation in the calm hours of the night. Moreover, the practice, as generally followed today, is of no great utility in our spiritual progress and consequently no substantial gain is derived therefrom. The chantings of the Sankirtanists may be compared more appropriately to the groans of a sick man which only offer him a temporary consolation but do not actually relieve him of the pain. So these chantings are of no avail to them except that they are charmed by the effect of the sweet melody which helps to draw their thoughts for the time being to the ideal in view. Now whatever we think or contemplate, produces vibrations within. When these vibrations multiply, they create power which gushes out with a sound. The vibrations carry with them the effect of thoughts and feelings of individuals. So the pious effect of the pure minds in the company is likely to be spoiled by the evil effect of impious minds. The undesirable element must, therefore, be kept away if full advantage is to be derived from these performances. Such was the practice followed by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu who held Sankirtans (congregational chants) with the party consisting only of those thoroughly known to him for goodness and piety. The performance was, therefore, conducted behind closed doors and no outsider was allowed in. Sankirtan (congregational chant) in fact, does not offer means of preliminary advancement but is rather helpful only to some extent after sufficient advancement. It is most effective only when conducted in a congenial atmosphere overflowing with pious

thoughts. It may also serve as a recreative change after serious mental practices. Moreover unfortunately today the ideal too kept in view during these practices is not the highest. In most cases they remain all along in close touch with the idea of gods in the physical form keeping in view their gross body and activities. The effect of this gross conception is, nothing but internal grossness and opacity, which they inhale all along during the practice. A gross conception will necessarily keep you within bounds and limitations and final approach or absolute freedom can never be possible. This is the reason why in spite of years of practice, they find themselves at the lowest level of attainment. They are, so to say, searching everything in a stagnant pool where even oxygen, necessary for the upkeep of life, is wanting. They have made such a pool their permanent abode. Proper light is needed to make pearls. What we must strive for in order to secure absolute freedom from bondage is to become the lightest and the finest, closely corresponding with the godly attributes and securing complete similarity with Him. The nectar of real life is for him and him alone who brings himself up to the standard required for the purpose.

Ways and Means

Having determined our goal, the next problem before us is to find out means for the realization of the object. Sages and teachers have elaborately dealt with the subject. They have laid down various forms of practices or 'Sadhana', helpful for the attainment of what they put forth as the final goal. But for the realization of God, the Indeterminate Absolute or Para Brahma, we have to adopt means which lead us to the complete negation. Our goal of life, as discussed in the previous chapter is the final stage, where we are nearest to the Superactive Centre or Zero, which is the primeval cause of the entire manifestation and to which everything will ultimately return after Maha Pralaya (complete dissolution). To acquire this state we have ourselves to become zero. No doubt we shall reach that point in natural course at the time of Maha

Pralaya, but what we strive for, is to acquire it as early as possible in order to save ourselves from the miseries of innumerable lives. Just as Maha Pralaya or complete dissolution is essential for the return of everything to the origin, similarly for our return to the point we must bring about our Pralaya (destruction) or acquire a state of complete dissolution of all things of our own making. It means we have to be free from all our belongings and assume the same naked form in which we were at the time of creation. Our belongings are a pile of Samskaras (impressions) with their resultant effects in the form of complexities and the diverse coverings which we have gathered round the soul and which are the results of our thoughts and actions. We possess mental and intellectual faculties which are all active. Our mind determines the actions of the body. We see, hear, feel and understand things. We begin to like or dislike them. Desires gradually begin to creep in and affect our actions. The rings go on multiplying and we exert ourselves for the fulfilment of desires. A desire, when satisfied generally creates another to follow in its place. We are seldom free from them even for a moment. We see most of the things with an idea of having them. These desires mould our physical and mental actions and lead to the formation of Samskaras (impressions), adding thus more and more coverings to the soul. Fresh desires every moment and our efforts to satisfy them lead to continuous additions. Their impressions remain on our causal body so long as they are not wiped off through the process of 'Bhog'. The completion of the Bhog of all the Samskaras, formed every moment cannot ordinarily be possible during the whole life. Thus when our life comes to a close, we still have a lot of Samskaras in store within us. These very Samskaras become the cause of our rebirth, in order to offer us an opportunity to complete their Bhog, but unfortunately, instead of finishing them we add more than those we have exhausted.

Another serious obstruction in our path is caused by our sufferings and miseries. Almost everyone in the world complains of the miseries he is faced with and which he wants to do away with. But he neglects the right means. He thinks fulfillment of desires to be the only way of removing miseries. But that is not the solution. Miseries are commonly considered to be detestable, but

there have been sages who voluntarily courted miseries, thinking them to be a boon and have often prayed to God for them. The mystery of the problem will be clear if we look into the origin of miseries. Soul possesses consciousness as a result of God's will to effect creation. The soul likewise began to form its own tiny creation and gathered round it things of its own creation. Now a stir, a motion (i.e., unrest or disturbance) was the main factor in bringing about the creation. Similarly for the tiny creation of the soul too, unrest or disturbance is indispensable. We also possess the force of will which we apply to impart power to the factors necessary for setting up this creation. They appear before us in the form of joy or sorrow, comfort or misery. The mind, too, being constantly active creates within us liking for the one and dislike for the other, introducing the two extremities of a thing. Thus miseries come into existence. This is all the creation of the human mind, which results from our ignorance of the right relationship of things. Our passions, emotions and impulses too contribute a good deal in aggravating the troubles and at times cause fierce tempest strong enough to threaten a complete wreck. We generally attribute its causes to circumstances. But it is a wrong notion. Mind is the centre of this outer expansion of man in the form of human body and everything which is exhibited through the medium of the body proceeds from the centre, the mind. If our mind comes to a harmonious state, circumstances and environments will have no effect on it and there will be no disturbance within. Peace and tranquility shall reign all through under all circumstances. Passions, excitements and desires will lose their intensity and sorrow, joy or misery will disappear from the view. Our desires are the main cause of miseries. So, the only solution of miseries is the curtailment of desires. Fewer the desires, lesser shall be our miseries. But to become desireless is another problem. Desires form a network which we are entangled in. The more we try to get rid of it, tighter become the fibres of the net. The only way to free ourselves from the entanglements is to divert our attention from them and fix our eyes on the very Real thing. If we cultivate a habit of remaining unmindful of them, they will soon begin to disappear from our view and consequently our miseries will be minimised. Reality alone will remain constantly

before our eyes and everything else will lose its charm or significance.

Total absence of sufferings and miseries in life is, however, impossible and unnatural. In fact, they are rather meant for our betterment. They are just like bitter pills of medicine given to a patient to restore health. The misuse of even the best thing creates trouble. So is the case with miseries. Proper utility of everything at the proper time and in the proper way is sure to bring forth good results in the long run. Miseries are really our best guide which make our path smooth. To a man in ordinary sphere of life, miseries are very helpful for his making. Referring to domestic troubles and miseries of a worldly life my Master used to say, "Our home is the training ground of patience and endurance. To endure calmly the adversities of a household life is for us the greatest penance, which is the noblest of all other forms of penances. What we have, therefore, to do under the circumstances is not to give way to the feeling of anger or grief but to assume an unquestioning attitude, thinking that we ourselves are in the wrong for which we have to forbear with a cool mind. Solitary life in a forest and aloofness from all worldly concerns may be, to some, the means of cultivating patience and forbearance but to us, the taunts and rebukes of our friends and relations is the greatest penance and the surest means of success." In fact, to put up coolly with miseries and troubles contributes much to our betterment, hence they are valuable assets to our progress. It is only by their wrong use that we spoil their effect and thus get deprived of their best advantages.

Renunciation or non-attachment is no doubt an essential stage in realization and we can never be free from the entanglements of Maya unless we cultivate non- attachment. But it does not mean severing our connection with home, the family and all worldly concerns and taking up the life of a religious mendicant. I do not agree with those who hold the view that the only means of cultivating non- attachment is to get away from home and family and retire to a solitary corner discarding all worldly ties. Renunciation effected by such forced means, is seldom found to be genuine, for it is just possible that in spite of their apparent forced detachment from the world, they may still inwardly be clinging to it. No doubt as a householder we have to

look after many things, we have to support our family, we have to provide for the education of our children, we have to look to their wants and necessities, we have to protect them from heat and cold, from trouble and sickness and so on. For these necessities, we earn and possess money and property. The real evil is only our undue attachment with things which we are associated with. This is the main cause of our sufferings. But if we are able to do everything in life thinking it to be our duty, without any feeling of attraction or repulsion we are in a way free from worldly ties and have renounced the world in the true sense, although we possess and make use of many things. Everything we possess shall, then, seem to be a sacred trust from the Supreme Master, for the discharge of the duties entrusted to us. Renunciation truly means non-attachment with worldly objects and not the non-possession of things. Thus a household life, in which possession of things and worldly ties are indispensable, is no impediment in the way of renunciation and consequently of realization, only if one is not unduly attached to the objects he is connected with. There are numerous examples of saints having attained the highest degree of perfection leading a household life all through. Renunciation is in fact a condition or an inner state of mind which brings to our view the transitory and changing character of things and creates a feeling of non-attachment with such objects. His eyes are fixed every moment on Reality which is unchanging and eternal and he is free from feeling of attraction and repulsion. This is Vairagya (renunciation) in the true sense of the term. When we have achieved this state of mind we are free from desires. We feel contented with what is available to us. The end of desires means the stopping of the formation of Samskaras. What remains now is only to undergo the effect (Bhog) of the previously formed Samskaras (impressions), which are to be worked out during the course of our life. Nature too helps us in the work by creating field for Bhog in order to remove the impressions of our thoughts and actions from the causal body. When these coverings melt away, we begin to assume finer forms of existence.

In order to control our thoughts and actions we have to look to the proper working of the mind, which is never at rest even for a moment. I have often heard religious teachers railing at it in

bitterest terms, ascribing all bad names to it and proclaiming it to be our worst enemy. The reason is quite plain. They think it to be the cause of all evil within us, and consequently they advise people to crush it and not to follow its biddings. But generally people find it a hard task to restrain the diverse activities of the mind, or to disregard its biddings. Their theoretical advice and lectures in this respect are, therefore, not of much avail to them and almost none of those attending their lectures has ever been able to achieve the object in a practical way. Besides the present circumstances and the environments too contribute much towards the ever increasing activities of the individual mind. Almost everyone, today, feels his life to be a hard struggle for existence confronting acute problems of poverty, insecurity, distress and rivalry and it is almost impossible to keep himself free from its effects. The result is the constant unrest and disturbance of mind. We breathe in the same thing from the atmosphere and are consequently led away by circumstances and surroundings. Our individual mind has become the weather-cock, turning its face at every blast towards the direction in which the wind blows. The real hero in the struggle is one, who braves them courageously and keeps himself free from their effect.

I, no doubt, agree with those who say that every evil has its origin in the mind and which alone is, therefore, responsible for it, though at the same time I may remind them that it is the very same mind that leads us to virtue and also helps us to realize our highest self. So it is not every evil alone that proceeds from the mind but also every good. Hence those who condemn it in the bitterest terms have no justification for it at all. It is really only due to the defective moulding of the mind, and what is actually required, is not the crushing or the killing of the mind, but merely its proper training. The mind is like the pendulum of a clock. The clock goes all right so long as the movement of the pendulum is regulated. If it is disturbed the clock is out of order. Similarly for this human clock it is necessary that the movement of the mind be well regulated and adjusted. The methods to mould the mind and regulate its activities are also very simple. Really we have spoiled the mind ourselves by allowing it to wander about aimlessly during leisure hours. The practice has continued for

years and it has now become almost its second nature. If we now try to control the mind by putting it under restraint we meet with little success. The more we try to suppress it by force, the more it rebounds and counteracts causing greater disturbance. The proper method to control the activities of the mind is to fix it on one sacred thought just as we do in meditation, and dispel from it everything unwanted or superfluous. In course of time after constant practice, the mind gets disciplined and regulated and much of the inner disturbance is eliminated. The best course to free yourself from unwanted ideas is to treat them as uninvited guests and remain unmindful of them. They will then wither away like unwatered plants and ultimately the same sacred thought will remain predominant. The only way to accomplish it is, therefore, meditation under the guidance of a capable master. By constant practice in meditation the mind will become calm and peaceful and the unwanted ideas will cease to trouble you. I often hear beginners complaining about the wandering of the mind during meditation. From the very first day they expect that during their practice at meditation the mind should remain at a standstill but when they find different ideas and thoughts haunting their mind they feel greatly perturbed. I must clear it to them that it is not the suspended condition of the mind we are striving for in our practice, but only the moulding of its multifarious activities. We do not want to stop its normal working, but only to bring it to a regulated and disciplined state. If the activities of the mind are stopped from the very beginning, we probably do not stand in need of practising meditation at all. Meditation is the only process to achieve that end. Concentration is its natural result in due course. The proper method is to meditate all along remaining quite unmindful of the foreign ideas and thoughts coming to our mind during that time. Mental struggle to keep off the unwanted ideas often proves unsuccessful for it causes a strong reaction, which is often impossible for man of ordinary capabilities to overcome and which is sometimes likely to result in serious mental disturbance or even insanity. It may be possible for those who by leading a life of celibacy have gained sufficient ojas (lustre) to cope successfully with the flow of thoughts and to withstand the effect of their reaction, but for ordinary man it is almost an impossibility. If instead of struggling to keep off ideas we only remain unmindful

of them, very soon they will lose their effect and cease troubling us. They will then be only like dogs barking after a caravan, which goes forward without paying any heed to them. When we are attentive to ideas to check them, concentration is naturally there which breeds power and thus they become stronger.

A most common excuse advanced by certain people today is that they are too busy to devote any time to meditation or similar other practice. But "the busiest man has the greatest leisure" is a well-known saying. I think a man has more time at his disposal than there is work for him to do. Their complaint of the scarcity of time is due only to its wrong adjustment. If we utilize our time to the best advantage we shall never have cause to complain that it is short or scarce. There are others who are a bit frank to admit that it is not for want of time that they remain away from devotional duties but for their habitual negligence and sluggishness which they cannot overcome. To them I would say that they are probably never negligent or sluggish in their trade or profession which they attend to with full zeal in spite of all personal inconvenience and even illness, only because some monetary gain or profit is in view. Their longing for the material gain turns them unmindful of their inconvenience or illness, similarly if our longing (or Lagan) for the realization of the goal is great, our negligent or sluggish habits will not stand in the way of our efforts or progress. If we go through the history of ancient sages we find that they had sacrificed all the comforts of life for the sake of attaining Reality. They led a life of austerity and penance, undergoing every kind of hardship and trouble for the sake of the object so dear to their heart. Intense longing for the goal made them blind to everything else and they remained firm on the path not minding the difficulties and reverses that came across their way. Such an intense longing for the object and an iron will to achieve the goal is absolutely necessary to ensure complete success. I may assure you that you can win laurels in the spiritual field if only you turn your attention towards God and proceed with will, faith and confidence, no matter how adversely you may be placed in, surrounded by all the worries and miseries of a household life. Your busy life will then offer no hindrance in your way. Generally people go hesitatingly towards God, thinking themselves to be too

incapable and weak to achieve the real thing. A powerful will made at the very first step and maintained all through, shall never fail to achieve complete success. Half the distance is crossed if a man enters the field with a firm mind. Difficulties and dejections will melt away at a mere glance and the path of success will be made smooth.

Indecisive attitude leads to half-hearted efforts and generally results in mere partial success or more often in failure. Our firm will enables us, automatically to draw in power from unknown sources, for the accomplishment of the task. A firm will supplemented by an ever-increasing impatience or yearning to achieve the object will enhance the force of our effort and we shall thereby remain in constant touch with the same real thing, catching every hint conducive to our spiritual well-being and progress. Impatience or constant restlessness to reach the goal in the shortest possible time is, thus, by far the most important factor, which contributes to our speedy success. We must not rest even for a while till we have gained the real object, the eternal peace and calmness. Intense longing for an object naturally creates restlessness for it and we have no peace till we achieve the desired object. It is, therefore, a very essential thing and must be cultivated by whatever means possible. Thus for gaining the eternal peace we cultivate within us restlessness and impatience at the preliminary stage. It may look strange at the very face of it, when I ask you to cultivate the very thing we want to do away with, but it is the only way to achieve sure and speedy success. The restlessness thus created is temporary and different in character from the ordinary restless condition of the mind. It is finer and more pleasant. It creates an inlet in our heart for the divine current to flow in and smoothens our passage to the kingdom of God. If you thrust a man down into the water, you find that he makes desperate efforts to free himself from your grip. It is only because his impatience to get out of water at once increases his force of effort and he does not rest till he is out of water. Similarly such desperate efforts caused by extreme impatience to reach the goal at once, will quicken our steps on the path of realization and ensure easy success in the least possible time. That is the easiest and the most efficient means of speedy success.

My associates have often enquired from me the method for creating such type of restlessness within them. I may tell them that intense love for the object will automatically lead them to it. When we are in deep love, we shall naturally feel impatient to secure nearness with the loved object. When we are greatly in love with any of the worldly objects, its idea comes to our mind again and again, and we think of it over and over again. Now in order to develop Divine love in our heart we have only to reverse the process. If we remember God frequently or for the most part of the day, we will automatically develop love for Him, which if continued with earnestness will create impatience in our heart to secure union at the earliest. Another way of developing love with God is to play the part of a lover as if you are enacting a drama. But it is only for those who are almost incapable of finer means. The method though artificial will shortly bring you to reality and feeling of true love and impatience will begin to agitate your heart.

The most important factor in realization is self-confidence in our own capacity and power to achieve success. It is absurd to think, even for a moment, that we are in any way too weak or deficient to acquire the highest state of perfection ever attained so far even by the greatest sages of the past. We must march on the path of realization like a brave soldier with full faith and confidence, not minding the difficulties or reverses. Dejections and disappointments weaken our will and shatter our firmness. We should meet reverses with a brave heart and should never give way to the feeling of despondency, which is the worst drawback and the deadliest poison to spiritual life.

One of the essentials in the making of a man engaged in spiritual pursuit is moderation. It is a very wide term and covers every phase of human activity. It means balance in all senses and faculties, nothing more or less than what is naturally required at the time for any specific purpose without its slightest impression on the mind. Generally, today, we find moderation disturbed in almost all cases. The reason mainly is that we attach undue importance to whatever thing comes to our view and we strengthen it by the force of our thought with the result that it grows stronger over all others. We cultivate this habit and apply it to different things with varying intensity. The result that follows is nothing but

disturbance and mental conflict and it is the root cause of all our troubles and miseries. Realization is not possible unless moderation and balance are restored. It corresponds closely with the very real thing which existed at the time of creation, when everything was in a perfectly balanced state. Now after the lapse of time, degeneration crept in. Our senses and faculties lost the balance and everything went into disorder. What we have to do now is to control our senses and faculties in order to restore moderation in them. To cultivate moderation we have to pay special attention to external ways of life too, e.g., gentle and polite language, courteous dealing, sympathy and love with fellow beings, reverence to elders, unrevengeful nature and so on. These habits are greatly helpful in our making. Moderation is a characteristic of nature. If we gain complete moderation we are in a way in conformity with nature and it is the very essence of spirituality.

Lastly the most important and unfailing means of success is the prayer. It connects our link with God to whom we surrender ourselves with love and devotion. In prayer we stand before Him as an humble suppliant presenting to Him our true state and completely resigning ourselves to His will. This is the true form of prayer and as true devotees we must also feel satisfied with the Will of the Master. It is a folly to pray to God for petty worldly ends, except in most exceptional cases when peace of mind is greatly disturbed for want of bare necessities. We should always pray to the supreme Master, the Omnipotent and the Omniscient alone with a mind totally absorbed in love and submission to Him forgetting even ourselves altogether. This is the proper way of offering prayer which in such a state seldom goes unrewarded. I have dealt with this point more elaborately in my book 'Commentary on Ten Commandments of Sahaj Marg'.

In the end I may also bring home to your mind that there are different forms and practices for achieving the end. They might lead you on the path of realization to some distance, but how far, I do not propose to discuss here. I leave it to the judgement and the experience of the readers themselves. But I assure you positively that it is Raja Yoga and the Raja Yoga alone that can lead you on to your ultimate destination or the highest point of human

approach, where you are in perfect harmony with nature, assuming your absolute and pure form. No other form or practice can bring forth such results. It is, therefore, essential to have recourse to this science, if you aim at the highest point. The help and support of a truly worthy guide is of course, the essential factor and at the same time a serious problem of the day too, but a true seeker, I assure you, shall never fail to find him.

Jiva and Brahman

Jiva, the individual soul, becomes cognizant of its being when it assumes individuality and that becomes the basis of its existence. Originally jiva and Brahman were quite akin to each other and it is only the individuality of the jiva which effected a difference between the two. Now, jiva as a soul bound up within ego or individuality, came into existence. The sphere it was in, also began to cast its effects upon it. Various hues one after the other began to settle around it, giving it a new colouring. In a way diversity began to settle in and step by step ego began to develop and grow thicker and denser. Feelings, emotions and desires began contributing their own share to its grossness. Thus jiva like a golden bird got itself completely enclosed within the iron cage of the body. All this resulted from the effects of actions and counter-actions of thoughts, emotions, feelings and desires (in the zone of ego) which went on adding to its opacity. This is in a word the whole history of the jiva. Now happily when it comes into dynamic contact with one who reminds it of its origin, it begins to cast off the coverings one by one. But since jiva possesses motion, it is cognizant of the creator too i.e., of Brahman. Thus the word jiva carries within it the sense of motion and of thinking as well. The two things are parallel in the being of the jiva. Thus the function of both the Brahman and the jiva is almost the same, with the only difference that Brahman covers the entire universe while jiva is confined only to the narrow sphere of ego (self). In this respect Brahman may be said to have its own bondage just as a jiva has, with the difference perhaps that the bondage of jiva is thicker and grosser in comparison to that of Brahman. Limitations they both have. This is about the exact concept of Brahman.

AVATARS

Strictly speaking, it is we who have set up a tiny creation by providing the material which formed its basis. In it the function of God was but nominal except for the primary stroke of Will which stirred up the action (kshobha). The actual root of all things in existence was matter, which existed in essence form, just in the same way as the root of all machinery is the iron ore under the earth. The stroke of Will was full of high velocity which is still there and shall continue till the end. In this respect the beginning and the end of creation are like the two extremities of the same velocity. The middle space comprising the real force was the main instrument for bringing the entire structure of the universe into existence. It possesses immense power and gives out shocks like those of the electric current. The middle portion serves as the centre. A little below, there is the chief activating force which serves as the cause. There is also another point, seemingly only a few millimeters' distance from the central point where something like an animating force exists in proper moderation. I put it as only a few millimeters' distance because of its being observed from a great distance. But if one takes a closer view of it after getting out of his body limitations, the distance would then appear to him as unlimited. The higher we go above the central point the dimmer becomes the force, and this serves to indicate our closer proximity with the Real. The dim force is that which falls to man's lot while the stronger force at the central point falls to the lot of avatars, who are fully charged with the conditions of the point. Lord Krishna as an avatar has come down from the sphere of the central point while Lord Rama has from the other end. For this reason he had more of human synonymity in Him. He presents an ideal of life as one must try to have as a man.

Some are of opinion that avatars do not have an identity. I do not agree with them, since, if they had no identity, they could not have worked bodily for the purpose of accomplishment of the task allotted to them. As for their work, they stand in need of a physical body, which admits of growth and development. The 'identity' is absolutely essential for them as it is for any one else.

The avatars come down for a definite purpose, endowed with all the necessary powers required for the accomplishment of the work, allotted to them. That may, in other words, serve to be their samskaras which brought them down into the world. The power withdraws them after their work is finished.

The difference between an ordinary man and an avatar is that man is covered with numerous sheaths while an avatar is free from most of them. They have the Divine within their perception, while a man is deprived of it. Now though the origin of man and avatar is the same, the avatar is in closer contact with the Divine. Everything he stands in need of, comes to him, from the eternal store. He receives divine commands to guide him in his works which are popularly known as divine inspirations (deva vani). Now since avatars possess activity, the possession of mind or manas is necessary for them also. But theirs is purer and more balanced; and their actions are in accordance with the Divine will. Therefore it is wrong to presume that avatars do not possess mind or manas.

Regarding the present personality at work today, so far as my reading goes, I can say that he comes down from the central point, hence in possession of the highly potential powers though to our outer view, they might appear to be dim or subdued. None of the avatars who so far came down to the earth had ever been bestowed with the power of the Root. I give this out on the basis of my reading of Nature through the kind grace of God who alone is the real knower of things.

MEANS : TARKA, SHRUTI AND ANUBHAVA

Generally, philosophers have attempted to reach the innermost core of things through reason (tarka) and not through vision. Reason in its popular sense may be faulty and may fail us, but if a thing is seen through intuitional insight without the unnecessary medium of reason, it will be visible in its original form without error or defect. We should try to understand things when the knots begin to open by themselves.

Guidance sought from books is not of much avail since it is often misleading and sometimes dangerous too. Methods

prescribed in books are generally confusing, touching the outer aspect only. One can never become a physician by simply reading the names of the medicines and their properties. It is impossible to come to a thorough understanding of the taste of a mango merely by reading the description about it in books. The proof of the pudding lies in the eating of it, is a well-known saying. There seems to be contradiction in Vedas apparently. The six schools of philosophy are the result. Everybody according to his reach says something or the other. The real study is that by which we realise the unchangeable; and that is realised neither by reading nor by believing nor by reasoning, but by super-conscious perception. I may frankly confess that I have studied no books, for, I never thought them worthwhile. I aimed at Reality which I thought to be the only thing worth having and left the study of books for the scholars and 'pandits'. Whatever I say or write is on the basis of my own experience and anubhava on the path of Realisation irrespective of what Shankara or Ramanuja or others might have said about their own. I no doubt do read sometimes now $\frac{3}{4}$ but that only by way of recreation $\frac{3}{4}$ and try to retain as much as I can for the sake of easy expression. I remember one such thing which I had read in Vivekachudamani by Shankaracharya, which means: "Books do not help us in Realisation, and when Realisation is achieved, books are useless."

There is hell for the sinful, paradise for the ignorant, and brahmaloka for the innocent. But, for the wise and the learned, there is the artificial paradise of their own making, and for those who are weak this mortal world. But who may the weak be? They are only those who lack self-reliance and confidence. Shastras go into contradiction of each other but they are of value to us since they offer a chance to think upon and arrive at a solution. They have another merit besides, viz. that they offer means and methods for spiritual advancement for men of every taste, mentality and standard of mind. If I had proceeded along the path of Realisation through books, I could never have come up to that level of Ignorance which is the basic property of the Divine. It is only the practical life that is worth having. We should not only be knowing what Realisation is but should try to attain it as well.

HUMAN and the DIVINE

It is commonly believed that God created man in His own form. All the religions, philosophies and sciences of the world more or less agree on this point. It does not mean that the physical form of God is the same as that of man, the human body made of flesh, bones, skin, etc., possessing arms, legs and other limbs. It really means that man possesses or is composed of all the powers, forces and energy which are present in Nature, in the same order.

The composition of man is exactly the same as that of the universe. Just as behind this solid external universe there are innumerable others of finer and still finer types, so behind this gross physical form of man there are numerous finer and still finer forms of existence. The outermost form is the gross-body (sthula sharir) behind which there exists the astral body (sookshma sharir) and causal body (karana sharir). Besides these three outer forms there are innumerable others which are so fine and subtle that thinkers do not call them bodies but only as fine coverings round the soul. It is really very difficult to assign a name for each one of them which may be countless. With all these innumerable forms, from the finest to the grossest, man is in existence in the material world as a true copy of the universe or the entire manifestation of God. Represented by a complete circle from the outermost circumference to the innermost centre or Zero, man's existence and of God's manifestation are really the same. This is why realisation of God means the same as the realisation of the self and vice versa. The entire universe came into existence from the same point, the Zero, through the process of evolution. Similarly, man's existence too developed from the same point.

We belong to the country where religious spirit has ever been flowing in one or other form. We are bred to have union with the Reality we have emerged from. We have brought with us the very essence of the Infinite. They say that God is within man. Thus our ultimate purpose can be served only when we keep pace with Divinity and link it with our line of humanity. As stated earlier, humanity was akin to Divinity at the source of creation; and assumed grosser form as the result of the jerks caused by actions

and counter-actions in the process of evolution. We have only to bring all the constituents of the human frame of existence again to their original state of poise and tranquillity to keep up its link with Divinity. This is achieved by introducing into them proper moderation; and we do the same in Sahaj Marg. The routine practice of meditation really aims at removing immoderation therefrom by the action of our will so as to keep up the balance. Thus, the humanity in us begins to get transformed into divinity. That is in fact the exact sense conveyed by the term divinisation of man. This having been done, the parallelity disappears and both $\frac{3}{4}$ Divinity and humanity $\frac{3}{4}$ become almost one. Humanity however, can never become totally extinct so long as one has his body with him. Thus by the effect of meditation under the system of Sahaj Marg, we go on reducing the intensity of the force working along the line of humanity. Divinity thus begins to gain ground, and parallelity begins to diminish. In other words humanity begins to get charged with the force of divinity, which in course of time begins to prevail all over. When the conditions get settled fully the parallelity is gone and humanity along with its force of creation is reduced to insignificance. In this way, God being infinite, man at that highest level of approach too, is likewise within the sphere of humanity. When human limitations are gone, the expanse of self becomes unlimited, so much so that the entire universe seems to be contained within self. Anything then that strikes anywhere in the universe, causes an echo in his heart. Everything within Nature is then in his knowledge and perception.

REALISATION and its MEANS

From time immemorial God realisation has been trumpeted to be the goal of human endeavour (purushartha) and existence, specially in India. But just like the concept of God (i.e., Ultimate Reality) the idea of God realisation too has become shrouded in such sheaths of mystery that a sincere man of reason and science begins to feel disgusted at the very mention of the term.

Most of the scholarly saints have defined the state of realisation in numerous odd ways, but to me it appears that so far as it can be defined, it is not realisation. It is really a dumb state

which is beyond expression. Feeling or observing luminosity within or outside is not realisation at all. During the early period of my abhyas, I often felt and witnessed luminosity. But that not being the goal, I proceeded on under the watchful support of my master. Really it is a tasteless state $\frac{3}{4}$ unchanging and constant. There is no charm, no attraction, and no anandam in the popular sense of the word. It can more appropriately be described as 'sang-e-benamak' (i.e., a lump of salt from which saltiness has been taken away). One having attained the state of realisation develops an unfailing will in the spiritual sphere.

Generally, learned men express their opinion about realisation or its conditions on the basis of learning and not on that of their experimental knowledge, which is the real one. For that reason I regret to say that realisation has now become a present-day art. The Reality, in fact, has sunk down deep leaving out its colours according to their mental taste and skill. The result is that people begin to focus their attention on those very paintings and get into them to the extent that is neither spirituality, nor Reality. I believe that one must not have the right to touch the subject of realisation unless he has attained it in the true sense, whereby the divine wisdom has awakened in him. Only the life of practicality is required for the solution of the problem.

Realisation can better be defined as a state of changelessness which is a condition seldom bestowed upon man even in the course of thousands of years. But if one happens to get a master who has attained it in full, and the abhyasi too is keenly interested in and earnest about it, it becomes quite easily attainable. But so long as there exists the feeling of 'is' (existence), it is not complete realisation. It follows therefore that even bliss is a drawback.

People often ask me to let them know first what realisation is, and afterwards they would start worshipping. It is just as one may say, "Let me first understand the thoughts of Shakespeare or Milton, and afterwards I shall try to learn the alphabet." It is the same as an abhyasi saying, "Let me first realise God, and then I shall start worshipping Him." When the very thing you seek comes to you, why should you then worship at all. He alone can climb up a height who has created in himself the recognition of his low-lying state. The spiritual discontent is rightly recognised as the starting

point of philosophic endeavour in the tradition of Indian philosophy.

Realisation has now, today, become very easy because of the presence of the Divine Personality. The thought of people generally does not go beyond the point of liberation, which they take to be the final limit of human approach. But that is a wrong idea. As a matter of fact, liberation is one of the lowest attainments on the divine path, hence it is just like a toy for a child to play with. Beyond that there is yet a lot to be achieved. The infinite ocean lies still ahead, which is but a limitless expanse. Have your eyes fixed upon That and That alone; and go on and on to trace It out.

Nirvikalpa samadhi is also a yogic attainment, but it will not solve the problem. The real state of samadhi is that in which we remain attached with Reality, pure and simple every moment $\frac{3}{4}$ no matter how busy one may be all the time with worldly work and duties. It is known as sahaj samadhi $\frac{3}{4}$ one of the highest achievements, and the very basis of nirvana. Its merits cannot be described in words, but can be realised by one who abides in it. It is not so easy as its name denotes. It was highly spoken of by Saint Kabir, and it is the thing worth gaining.

There are numerous means and practices prescribed for the realisation, out of which we have to choose that which guarantees speedy success. Now what it may be, let every one judge for himself. For a hint, I accept the judicious opinion of Swami Vivekananda on this point, "That it is raja yoga alone that can successfully lead a man up to the highest level of approach; and that none but one having the capacity to apply his own internal powers through pranahuti is fit for being a guide or Master". I may also assure you that hatha yoga has no access beyond ajna chakra. Besides, there is also another serious defect in it. When we start with the bodily exercises of hatha yoga, the consciousness of our physical efforts, with the idea of self in the background also remains all through. Thus the ego instead of getting reduced goes on increasing thereby. But that is not the case with raja yoga, wherein one proceeds with the subtlest means for silencing the ever-active tendencies of the mind. Besides, while practising this, one is always away from the idea of the body since he has fixed his attention on the subtlest.

In order to realise the subtle Being, we must take up means which are equally fine and subtle. The difficulty arises only when intricate methods are applied for the solution of the simple problem. In other words they apply huge cranes for picking up a small sewing needle. God is simple and can be achieved by simple means. So, in order to realise Him, we should adopt such methods through which we may be able to free ourselves from things created by our own will, actions and surroundings. All our thoughts should be regulated and our individual mind should be cleared of the burdens lying on it. We should be as light as cotton so that we may start our flight towards Him with the help of a single push from a capable Master. In our sanstha, Reality is infused at the first stroke of will which serves as the seed in the long run. The process is generally set in by one's Master so that the seed may grow easily, and scorching winds may not burn it up. The disciple waters it by constant remembrance which is the only thing needed on the path of realisation.

Grihasthashram (family life) is not a bar in gaining the real aim of life. I think this is the best ashram in which higher approach is easily possible. I am a grihastha, and my Master was also one. I assure you that a perfect saint may be found in this ashram alone. We perform our duties, and remember Him as Ultimate Reality.

Spiritual Training

Our present moral and religious degradation is due mostly to our environment and to our wrong training. Proper moulding of mind is altogether neglected in all phases of education and training. Every possible effort is made to provide for worldly training of the right type in order to enable a man to secure a decent and comfortable living, but the proper training required for the realization of Self is totally neglected. Least significance, if at all, is attached to this most vital problem of life. Reciting daily a few verses in praise of a god or goddess or observing certain mechanical formalities by way of worship is all that the masses are taught to do. They do it for their whole life but probably without any gain whatsoever. Internal calmness still remains wanting in them. Activities of mind such as desires, temptations and

emotional outbursts remain as they were ever before. The main purpose of training is that a man should begin to imbibe within him as much of godly attributes as possible. If this is not achieved the system of training is defective and consequently of no avail. Proper making of a man must be the natural result of the right type of training. Proper making comprises of the right moulding of mind with due moderation in the exercise of all our senses and faculties. Thus the right type of training under the guidance of a capable master is by far the most important factor in our proper making without which higher attainments in spirituality are never possible. Most of the people have, in some way or the other, a natural inclination towards God, yet those who succeed in realizing God are very rare. The cause is defective guidance and wrong training which leads a man away from the real path with the result that he is lost forever. Now for a man of ordinary capacity, it is a pretty hard task to judge whether his training is rightly directed or not. A man tamely and unquestioningly follows the instructions of one whom he has accepted as his Guru and practises as he is required by him to do. It is very difficult for him to ascertain whether he is being guided along the right path or not. This is a great problem before the people who are themselves quite ignorant in matters concerning realization. You will find numerous teachers of religion who will tell you not to eat garlic, onion or carrot and insist upon you to adopt Sadhanas and practices which have no real significance or a hundred other such trifling's which will never lead you even a step nearer to reality. This is no training. Such teachers are really deceiving themselves as well as those whom they teach. You must be sure that unless internal peace, calmness of mind, simplicity and lightness follow as the natural result of your practices, you are proceeding on the wrong lines and that your training is defective.

Methods of spiritual training, commonly adopted by most of the teachers, today, are based on hard and fast rules which often do not correspond with our worldly life. Hence in most cases they prove to be impracticable for those leading a worldly life. Generally teachers induce people to practise restraint by adopting a particular form of living disconnected with worldly concerns and to practise devotion for hours together. Evidently such a type of

training is not meant for people in general who cannot dissociate themselves from worldly ties or devote so much time to their devotional exercises. It is for this reason that their preaching's do not produce the desired effect and in spite of their best efforts they fail to mould them accordingly. The fact is that they are more theoretical than practical. Is it ever possible for the masses to renounce the world for the sake of liberation? Certainly not. What good then do the common people derive from their teachings? Some of them are even bold enough to proclaim their mistaken notion that higher attainments in spirituality are not possible in a Grihastha Ashram or household life. It really means that they have nothing to impart to the common people except telling them certain superficial things such as frequent bath in the Ganges, feeding the fishes with flour pills or reading the scriptures over and over again. The real problem before us is not to provide means for the spiritual training of a chosen few, who have renounced the world, but of people in general whose duties in the world besides devotional are manifold and which they cannot safely ignore. They in fact fail in their duty if they neglect any of them. To them it is essential that their spiritual as well as worldly life must go side by side equally resplendent and for this we have to discover the right means.

Proper spiritual training, fitting closely with the present worldly life is, therefore, the only thing required for the spiritual growth of the common people and which has so far been unfortunately neglected. For such a type of training we stand in need of help from outside in most of the cases. This help comes from the Guru or the Master, who is the only person able to shape our destiny. When this help comes, the spiritual life is awakened and the higher powers of soul are roused to help our growth.

Such impulse is to be sought only from one of our own fellow beings of the highest calibre, who may be within our approach ready to solve our difficulties at any time. The practice of seeking inspiration or guidance from gods and demi-gods or from some departed soul treating it as Guru or Master is in most cases very dangerous. Similar is the case with those also who seek guidance from their inner voice, as they call it. I have come across people who lay great stress upon their inner voice which they think to be the real guide in all controversial matters arising in the mind. We

have concrete examples of people relying on their so-called inner voice who are found to have been misled in the spiritual field. Really what they think to be their inner voice or an impulse from the departed soul is only the play of their indisciplined mind. This undesirable practice, if followed for some time, makes the mind so much unduly powerful and over-active that it begins to question and answer by itself. This the people often misunderstand as a stage of Yogic attainment where one acquires the power to intercommune with departed souls. They are really far away from it. The inner voice or the voice of the real self is no doubt never misleading, but how many there are who are advanced enough to catch it. To most of those who profess to follow the inner voice it is quite inaudible. They are merely befooled by the wonder-working tendencies of the mind which can create anything and everything by itself. It can even present fearful ghosts to their view or make them hear strange voices in trees and stones. This is all due to the activities of the mind in its indisciplined and polluted state. Unless the coverings of Mal, Vikshep and Avaran are removed and the mind is brought to a state of perfect poise and moderation, inspiration or guidance from the inner voice is meaningless. Most of those who pose to follow the inner voice or seek guidance from a departed soul are really following the dictates of their own unregulated and indisciplined mind. It is mere hallucination. If we develop this vicious habit we are lost forever. It leads us to constant mental worry and harassment. I know of a gentleman, prominent among the so-called Bhaktas, who professed that he had secured direct connection with the soul of Tulsidas, the author of the Ramayana, whom he had taken as his Guru. He went on for some time feeling exultant over his supposed achievement. Later on, a discord arose between him and his celestial Guru which soon developed into a bitter quarrel on account of which, as he used to say, he was constantly belaboured and harassed mentally with the result that his mental equilibrium was almost shattered and he felt extremely miserable. It was after two years of hard labour with him that he was cured of this evil. Then he was able to understand that it was all an illusion or self-deception and what he understood to be the inspiration from the soul of Tulsidas, was really the magic play of his own indisciplined mind. Since he has been relieved of that miserable state, he now

feels peace and tranquility restored to him. The inner voice is in fact the voice of the mind in its perfectly pure state. Unless the mind is cleared of all pollutions and defilements and is brought to a state of perfect peace and moderation, it can never reflect the inner voice. In fact for one whose mind is perfectly pure, it is his inner voice alone that always speaks and the impulse from highly developed liberated souls continues to flow to him continuously. The practice is thus evidently, very dangerous and in most cases leads to disastrous results.

The realization of God which has so far been considered to be extremely difficult, requiring hard labour and persistent efforts for many lives, is not really so. God is simple and can be achieved by equally simple means. The hard and fast rules of life and tiring practices prescribed by teachers for realization have really made matters so complicated that people are led to believe it to be beyond their power and capacity. I may assure you very sincerely that realization is not at all a difficult thing, only if you earnestly divert your attention to it. Iron will to achieve the goal together with proper means and guidance is the only thing required for the complete success.

Spiritual training starts with inner cleaning or the purification of 'Chakras' which is the most essential factor in spiritual advancement. Thus the right type of training in spirituality, begins with inner cleaning which, if neglected, will lead to abuse of power acquired through Yogic means. Hatha Yoga lays down mostly physical practices to effect cleaning, some of which are too hard and tedious for all and sundry, while under the system of 'Sahaj Marg' it is accomplished by easy mental practices, aided by the power transmitted by the teacher. Some of the teachers of religion often insist upon the people to devote as many as eight hours a day to practice certain mechanical exercises in order to keep their mind occupied in Divine thoughts. I strongly condemn the type of training which enforces practices that tax the brain or overburden the mind. The natural result of such training is that mind finds no scope for expansion and consequently the power of realization grows dull. It is just like thrashing a boy in order to induce him to concentrate. Strenuous labour with long and tedious physical practices as commonly recommended by

teachers in order to effect the moulding of mind or the cleaning of the Chakras, is consequently not of much avail. For this purpose we utilize our thought power in a proper way, under the guidance of a powerful Master who is capable of removing complexities and entanglements that hinder our progress and who transmits into us the force necessary for the upkeep of our spiritual life. The simplified course of spiritual training has rendered the highest spiritual flight possible for everyone whether man, woman, young or old, Grahastha or Virakta (recluse).

The preliminary step in the right type of training is that the aspirant's tendencies of mind be directed towards God. For this the learned teachers of religion mostly prescribe physical practices of body and mind, picked up from religious books. People often find it a hard task to follow them and thus they remain lingering on indefinitely in the beginning with no further progress. A capable teacher should do this by own effort, exercising the power of transmission in order to create a permanent and deep-rooted effect. When our mind is directed towards God, we naturally begin to feel ourselves in touch with the Supreme Power in all our actions and workings. When this state of mind is permanently established within, every act we do, will then seem to be a part of devotion or Divine offering and we shall thereby be in constant remembrance of God all the while. Inner vibrations in the heart soon begin to be felt by the aspirant. This is the beginning of the spiritual state known as Shabda or Ajapa (). It develops automatically as we proceed along the right path under proper guidance. Certain people who practise Japa outwardly for a long time, sometimes find that even during sleep they go on with Japa as usual. This they misunderstand as Ajapa or Shabda. It is not really so. By constant practice, their heart and tongue become habituated to it and the action continues even when they are in sleep or otherwise unconscious. It, however, stops if they give up the practice for some time. This is only by the force of the habit and is not the actual state of Ajapa. The condition of Ajapa rightly believed to be a high spiritual achievement acquired after years of hard labour, is only a matter of weeks or rather days, through right training by the process of transmission. The vibrations thus created remain for some time located in the heart after which they

gradually develop over to other Chakras and finally to every particle of the body. It is then known as Anhad (). The method to be pursued as recommended in our Mission is meditation under efficient guidance, which is by far the most useful and probably the only means of securing complete success.

Generally people complain of numerous ideas creeping into their mind at the time of meditation. They think that they have failed in their practice unless they bring their mind to a standstill. But it is not so. We are not practising concentration but only meditation. We must go on with meditation unmindful of the foreign ideas that happen to come to our mind at the time. The flow of ideas is due to the activities of our conscious mind which is never at rest. We are still busy in meditation with our subconscious mind, while our conscious mind is roaming about and forming numerous ideas. Thus we are not the loser in any way. In due course, after sufficient practice, the conscious mind too gets moulded and begins to act in harmony with the subconscious mind. The result thus achieved is deep-rooted and lasting, and finally calmness, the characteristic of soul becomes predominant. In certain cases I have observed the teachers exercising their will power to stop the normal functioning of the mind during sittings, creating a temporary state of senselessness or suspension of brain. The condition, no doubt, is most attractive to a beginner, who is ignorant of reality, and he feels greatly impressed by this extraordinary display of power. In my opinion it is only a feat of jugglery practised by those who are eager to attract the largest number of disciples in order to establish their greatness as a Guru. I would call it the greatest misuse of power on the part of a spiritual teacher who has perhaps no other underlying motive than self-predominance. It is a wrong practice and greatly harmful to the spiritual advancement of an aspirant. Ideas thus suppressed or suspended, soon begin to react with greater force, spoiling the entire system. Besides, the practice creates internal heaviness and dullness of mind. One who is subject to such a practice for a long time loses sense of discrimination and his power of realization gets blunt. In course of time he gets completely spoiled and becomes quite unfit for the real spiritual training. If a man does not grow lighter day by day he must conclude that he is receiving wrong type

of spiritual training. Constant growth of lightness of mind and spirit is the surest test of spiritual progress.

Thus the real spiritual training is that which makes our mind disciplined and regulated, restores moderation in senses and faculties and creates lightness of spirit. Then alone internal peace and calmness is ensured and higher approach is possible. For this, the medium of a worthy master of high calibre, having the power of transmission at his command is absolutely essential and to him the aspirant must surrender with full faith and confidence.

Some people think that initiation alone is enough to solve their problem of life. If they are able somehow or other to secure initiation with a Guru, they do not stand in need of any further effort or practice. They think that a push by the Guru will in the end extricate them from the entanglements of Samskaras and Maya and lead them on to liberation. The notion though literally true, may not be very encouraging unless you completely surrender to him and the master too is of a specially high calibre. The thought of the betterment and progress of the disciple is, no doubt, the uppermost in the heart of the master for which he exerts himself as far as possible, but that does not mean that we may remain idle doing nothing ourselves and leave our share of work too upon him. We must, as our duty, try our utmost to save him from unnecessary exertion on our account in as much as we can do ourselves for our advancement and should in no case neglect our part of the duty.

Most of the teachers of religion have adopted artificial methods for developing certain spiritual conditions in an aspirant but it is a very defective process. For example, in order to practise Gyan (Gnosticism) and create within the aspirant the state of Aham Brahmasmi (I am Brahma), they advise him to meditate outwardly, thinking the same thing all the while and repeating the same words every moment. This is a mechanical process and leads to internal grossness. The real state of Aham Brahmasmi is never created by such artificial means. The repetition of the words over and over again helps him to form a habit of tongue and the same words slip out every moment. It is absurd to conclude that thereby he has become Gyani (Gnostic) in the real sense. They may repeat the words a hundred times and force their thoughts every moment

to imagine everything as Brahma but still they may be as far away from it as ever. The practice creates an artificial atmosphere around him which helps him to imagine the same thing outwardly. The condition disappears if he gives up the habit of repeating the words again and again. It is, therefore, quite evident that the state of Aham Brahmasmi thus supposed to be created is not really genuine but only false and imaginary. Besides, even the real state of Aham Brahmasmi, which is commonly supposed to be a very high attainment is not really so. At this stage, a man, though relieved to some extent of the entanglements of Maya, is not actually beyond its final limits. Consciousness of self still exists at this stage which is nothing but grossness, though in a very subtle form. Those who preach it from the platform as the highest form of Gyan beyond which little remains to be achieved are grossly mistaken. It is not our destination, but we only pass by it to embark upon the next stage. Those who stick to it thinking it to be Reality or the final goal are committing a serious blunder. We have finally to arrive at a point where everything ends, including this idea of Aham or 'I'. Such is the state of complete negation which we have finally to attain and where the cry of Aham or 'I' will be quite out of tune. The state of Aham Brahmasmi is originally caused by consciousness (or Chaitanyata) which automatically develops within us as we march along the path under proper guidance. It produces vibrations within, with the result that the mind begins to echo the same vibrations. This state of mind appears at every stage of spiritual progress in their forms: 'I am Brahma', 'All is Brahma' and 'All from Brahma'. The entire state in all its three aspects is in fact unity in diversity in different forms. It appears in a crude form in Pind Desh; in Brahmanda Mandal it becomes finer and more subtle, while in Para Brahma Mandal it becomes extremely subtle. All these conditions end within the first of the sixteen circles as shown by the diagram in chapter II. The right course of training for an aspirant of spirituality, therefore, is to proceed along the path of realization under the guidance of a true and worthy master in the most natural way, with due regard to inner cleanliness or purification of Chakras and complete moderation in the exercise of the senses and other faculties.

Faith

Will, faith and confidence are the elementary factors which contribute to an easy success on the path of realization. Strong will to achieve reality means that we are inwardly awakened to the thought of recognizing Self. We proceed on with the idea and select a path. The very first thing to be looked to, seriously, is that the path we select is the right one, leading directly to our goal. It is, therefore, quite essential to have in our mind a clear and definite conception of the final goal. Now the final goal of different people may be different in many respects, and consequently, means to achieve it may also be different. We have thus to select the right path leading directly to the final goal for which we aspire. Hasty judgement in the matter often leads to disappointing results, for it is just possible that the path you have been persuaded to adopt may not be the right one leading to your destination. Often by adopting a wrong course you lose sight of the real thing and are led into false conceptions and illusions. If you persist on the same course your final approach to reality becomes impossible. This often happens when you unfortunately fall under defective guidance and wrong training. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary at the very outset to try every possible means to judge that the path you have adopted for realization is really the right one. Do not follow a path because it is the oldest, for the oldest one may be most ill-suited to the changed conditions of the world and the society. Do not follow a path because it has been followed by the majority of men, for the majority may not always be right and is more often led by only a chosen few, who, in all possibility might have been misled. We must be thoroughly considerate in judging the merits of a thing, applying all possible means at our disposal. We should never come to a hasty conclusion without due consideration and trial, through the help of reason and experience. When we are, finally convinced of the merits of the thing we may stick to it with faith and constancy. Faith thus reposed shall be genuine and lasting while faith promoted by inducement offered by outwardly attractive features and display of pretty materialistic achievements is no faith at all but may rightly be termed as persuasion. It has no stable foundation to rest upon and disappears under ordinary adverse circumstances.

Gross type of worships of idols in the solid material shapes and rigid adherence to forms, symbols and rituals do not actuate real faith. It is pure and simple materialism which promotes prejudice, and not the true faith in the heart of those who pursue it. They believe blindly in what they are induced to, without applying their reason or judgement and are not in the least inclined even to consider any other course. I find people acknowledging the efficacy of certain other means of direct approach to Reality, but still they are not prepared to follow them because, as they say, they cannot get away from the path they have already adopted. They have in fact, no faith in reality but only faith in forms and symbols, which may rightly be termed as prejudice. It means that their vision has become limited and they do not want to rise high to seek Reality. Their fate is sealed and they remain in the same confined sphere forever. In fact, what keeps us down, checking us from rising higher cannot be termed as faith. It is consequently very essential for everyone to fix his eyes on Absolute Reality with faith and confidence and to adopt ways, helpful and conducive to Self-realization. We then march on up to the final point where we assume the same pure form we had at the time of creation. For that we have to renounce necessarily all our belongings of Samskaras, Maya and egoism, and grow lighter and lighter at every step. Heaviness of mind or internal denseness caused by gross forms of worship is thus a great impediment to our spiritual advancement and should be avoided. If they maintain it with ever-increasing intensity they remain entangled in the thorny bushes of grossness and deception far removed from the realm of perpetual bliss.

The other important factor of a spiritual life is faith in the Master, for as I have already said before, the help of a capable master is indispensable for higher spiritual attainments. He is the only medium through whom the divine impulse comes to an aspirant. It is, therefore, but essential that the guide we select should be one of highest capability and practical attainments. To judge the real worth of the guide we must associate with him for some time trying and testing him by all means in our power. When we are thus convinced of his capabilities through reason and experience, we may accept him as our Master and submit to his

guidance. If we disregard this principle we are likely to be deceived in our judgement. We must never follow any one blindly having been attracted towards him by his outward imposition and display of knowledge. For proper judgement of the true merits of a man we must take into account his practical attainments in the spiritual field. We must seek in him the real thing, we crave for. When we are thus convinced, we naturally begin to feel an inward attraction for him and think him to be the very person who can shape our destiny. The feeling gradually develops into faith and we begin to love him. We submit to his views with due regard to his personality and proceed along the path under his guidance. The experience of achievements gained during the course convinces us further of the extraordinary capacities of the master and we begin to look upon him as a superhuman being.

Our faith now is greatly helpful to us in our spiritual progress. It dispels clouds of doubt and uncertainty and removes difficulties and obstructions from our path. Faith is really the foundation of the entire structure of spirituality. Faith in reality, faith in the right course you have adopted for realization, faith in the worthy Master whom you have submitted to, this is the rock upon which you must build your edifice of spirituality if you really aim at success. You will thereby be possessed of an internal force, strong enough to shatter all the forces of evil that might be surrounding you. It will help you to draw fresh divine impulse whenever you require it.

Some people take a very erroneous view of faith. They believe that faith alone is enough to solve their problem of life no matter what the path they have adopted, or the guide they have submitted to might be. Nothing probably can be more misleading than this absurd belief. Is it ever possible for a man to reach Calcutta by taking up just the opposite direction? Can a man ever become a selfless saint by submitting himself to the guidance of a self-seeking impostor? Can a man ever free himself from the bonds of attachment, prejudice and pride by following a self-conceited hypocrite, inspired with the feeling of attachment with the worldly objects and of self-aggrandizement? We must never be led away by a mere outward glittering aspect of a thing, but should go deep into it to discover reality at the bottom. Inducement based on

outward show of knowledge, eloquence or power, promotes blind faith which in most cases leads to disastrous results. A conscientious man will never allow himself to be led away blindly into delusion by such false impositions which have no real significance in the spiritual field. Blind faith is no doubt greatly advantageous only when the path you have adopted is by accident the right one and the guide you have selected is really the proper person of the highest calibre who is devoid of all feelings of attachment and pride. Your unshakable faith in such a Master shall then lead you to the farthest limit of spiritual attainment, for you shall then associate yourself with Reality.

Faith, in true sense, is a lively link connecting the mortal with the Immortal. It is no doubt effected through the medium of the Master, who is himself connected with the Immortal. The link when once connected cannot be broken under any condition and subsists all along during the course of our march up to final point. It is one of the six Sampattis of the third Sadhana of Yoga. At this stage, faith is real and genuine and is so firmly established that a man cannot even for a moment get away from it. The reasons for this are, however, beyond his understanding. Before this stage, faith is really artificial and is formed, lost or regained many a time for a variety of reasons. A worthy master shall never rely upon it and shall put up with all the emotional outbursts of love and devotion of a disciple, looking forward patiently for the time when he comes up to the final stage of Shraddha (faith), as depicted in the four Sadhanas of Yoga, when the real faith begins to assume the form of self-surrender. True faith is really an unspeakable virtue which is beyond the scope of religion, it is the dauntless courage, which leads us on to success, it is that ubiquitous force which makes our path smooth, it is in fact the only thing that solves our problem of life.

The Guru

Having in view our determined goal and the proper means to achieve it, our next look-out must be to find out the right type of person as our guide, who might successfully take us along the path of realization. In all cases (including those pertaining to worldly

attainments), we stand in need of the help of a capable guide. It may, however, be possible that after acquiring some knowledge, we may proceed further by our self-effort. But even then we have to depend upon the experience of the teachers of the past contained in their books and writings. In spirituality the case is otherwise. The need of a Guru or Master, grows greater and greater as we go on advancing and securing higher stages. Books are of no avail to us in this respect. They may help us to acquire superficial knowledge of things to enable us to deliver eloquent discourses on spiritual topics and to win arguments, but practical approach in spirituality through them alone is impossible. Yogic practices and Sadhanas based on knowledge acquired through books, are mostly misleading and even harmful to our spiritual advancement. It is only the helping support of a capable guide that can take us on up to our destination. It is said of Maulana Rumi, a celebrated Persian poet and the author of eighteen books on spirituality, that once he approached a great saint to receive spiritual training from him. The saint asked him to throw all his books into the river, if he wanted to have practical training from him. As this meant to him the loss of his life-long labour he did not agree to it. Several times he approached the saint with the same request but received the same reply. Finding no other alternative, he at last submitted to his demand, threw away all his writings into the water and became his disciple. Actual realization comes only after training in the realm of practice, and for that, knowledge or erudition proves to be of little assistance.

The help of a Guru or Master is, therefore, essential and indispensable for those engaged in spiritual pursuit. There have been cases, however, where sages have attained perfection by mere self-effort, surrendering themselves direct to God. But such examples are rare. It is really a very difficult course and can be followed only by persons, specially gifted with uncommon genius. Guru is the connecting link between God and man. It is through his medium only that we can reach God.

He is the only power that can extricate us from the intricacies of the Path. During our spiritual march we have to pass through various points, known as Chakras (figuratively called lotuses).

They are the centres of concentrated energy of the Real Power of Divine force inherited by man. They are located in different places within the human frame. The intervening space between the two points is characterised as a network interwoven by numerous intricate fibres. As we proceed along we have to pass through these entanglements of the intervening layers. We have to stay there for a considerable time to complete the Bhog. Bhog does not only mean undergoing the effect of our past actions but it really means passing through the process of unfolding the intricacies of the point which we have already arrived at. Our stay at these points for the purpose of Bhog is often very long and in most cases it is almost impossible to get out of it by mere self-effort. It may, however, be possible at a few preliminary stages but subsequently it becomes quite impracticable. It has been observed that most of the sages of the past who had tried it by self-effort only, remained lingering for whole life on the very first or the second stage and could not cross it. The fact is that at somewhat advanced stages, we have to face what may be expressed as the slippery condition of the place. There we may sometimes go up a little but soon slip down again. The same thing happens again and again with the result that higher ascent becomes arduous and well-nigh impracticable. Under the circumstances it is only a forceful push by the worthy Master that can bring us out of the whirlpool. If the Master is not lacking in power and capacity, he will by his own force, push the disciple up out of the entanglement and place him on the next higher stage. It is, therefore, essential that the guide we select must be one of the highest calibre and worthy of the task of tearing off the intricacies at a glance with the aid of the extraordinary power at his command. It can only be one who has himself attained perfection or complete negation of self. Hence we must connect ourselves with such a great power by feelings of love and attraction. It does not matter much what conception of him we entertain in our mind. We may call him our friend, Master, servant or whatever we might be pleased to choose. But he remains after all our guide or Guru, as he is commonly called.

Unfortunately, today, the selection of the proper guide is much neglected, although every religious-minded Hindu believes that it is incumbent upon him to have a Guru in order to satisfy

his craving for spiritual benefit. Generally people select any one for the purpose without any regard to his capabilities or worth. They are induced to do so mostly by persuasion or by miracles displayed by those so-called Gurus to attract the ignorant masses. The disciple-hunters are not wanting. They are as numerous as the leaves of a tree, for to most of them Gurudom is a very profitable job, which can secure enormous income which they cannot otherwise earn. Besides they command highest respect and personal service from their disciples. The ignorant masses thus fall a ready prey to these self-seeking professionals. A petty miracle or an ordinary display of something charming or attractive, is enough to attract hundreds of these silly sheep to their fold of Gurudom. A simple threat to pronounce curse upon one, who happens to displease them, may bring thousands into their abject submission. Not only this but in order to ensure monopoly of their profession they declare that none but one belonging to the privileged class has the right of being a Guru, whether he may be a Sannyasin or a householder. They claim to be world teachers of religion by birth, irrespective of their capability and worth. Sannyasins, too, you will find these days in multitude posing as Mahatmas and professing to be Jagat Gurus (world teachers). Is it not a pity to find such professional imposters, who are a shame to the nation and the religion, roaming about with complete impunity to cheat and defraud the ignorant people, in order to serve their own selfish ends?

It is high time for the masses to open their eyes and see what havoc has been wrought by them. Gurudom as a monopoly of a privileged class is only an absurdity, introduced by the professional Gurus to safeguard their personal interests. The popularly believed principle that a disciple can never break off the sacred connection with his Guru under any circumstances, is also a cunning device adopted by those false Gurus to make their position safe and secure and is nothing but a fraud. The practice of initiating a disciple (though really based on sound principle) has been much abused by most of the modern professionals, who do not understand its real significance. Their only function as a Guru is to breathe a few mystical words into the ear of the disciple at the

time of initiation and tell him to follow certain ceremonial practices by way of worship. Their duty to the disciple ends with it and nothing remains for them to do for the betterment of the disciple except to give him their Darshan every year and get their annual tribute from him.

Really a disciple should formally be initiated only when true faith exists in him and Divine love takes prime root in his heart. Initiation signifies that the disciple's link has been connected with the Supreme Power. In that case the spiritual force begins to flow to the disciple automatically according to the absorbing capacity he develops in himself. It depends much upon the power and capability of the Master to establish a sound connection for which high calibre is needed. A sound connection once established shall continue as long as the disciple does not secure liberation, which in such cases is not a far off matter to be attained after numerous lives. In fact if a disciple is initiated in the right sense as mentioned above by a Guru of high calibre the question of breaking off from him can never arise. But, for the professional Gurus who perform mock initiations to serve their purpose, it is a matter of constant anxiety. Therefore, in order to keep a disciple permanently in their grip, they proclaim it as a Divine dictate that he shall be courting all the miseries of the hell if he ever thought of breaking off from them at any time. The ignorant masses accept it as the gospel truth, trembling at the very idea of doing anything which might displease their Guru. So they always try to put up with all their atrocities in passive submission. I am sure, there is not the slightest suggestion to this effect found in our Shastras. It is only an ingenuity on the part of these teachers of religion. I hold it to be the birth right of every man to break off from his Guru at any time if he finds that he had made a wrong selection or had misjudged the Guru's capacity or worth. He is also free to seek another Guru if at any stage he finds that his Guru has not the capacity to take him beyond what he has already acquired. On the other hand a conscientious Guru must himself, under the circumstances, direct his disciple to seek another, more advanced and better qualified, so that the disciple may not in any way suffer progress. This is the sacred duty of a true and selfless Guru. If, however, permission to break off, sought for by the disciple, is

denied by the Guru on account of his selfish motives, the disciple is at liberty to break off from him at once and seek another. No moral or religious law ever forbids him from doing so.

A little advanced among the class of Gurus are considered to be those who teach and preach on the basis of their knowledge of the Shastras and other holy books. They have established orders and Ashrams where they enjoy a kingly position among their followers. They go out and address large audiences telling them what to do and what not to do and explaining to them problems concerning Maya, Jiva and Brahma. People flock to them in thousands to hear their sermons admiring their high ideas and extensive knowledge and regard them as great Mahatmas or saints. They ask them numerous intricate questions and if they are able to answer them out of their stock of the knowledge of Shastras their greatness as Mahatma is established in their minds and they are induced to accept them as Gurus. But really they have, thus, put to test their learning and not the real worth. It must well be borne in mind that it is not learning or knowledge that makes a man perfect but it is only realization in the right sense that makes a true Yogi or saint. It is just possible that the man who has thus impressed you with his outward form, learning or eloquence, may be at the lowest level as regards practical attainments. Knowledge, therefore, is no criterion of a true Mahatma or Yogi. Similarly the real test of a Mahatma or Guru is not his miracles or his extraordinary ways and manners but only his practical attainments on the path of realization. The popular meaning of a Mahatma as a great individuality does not seem appealing to me. I would define a Mahatma as the most insignificant being or rather a neglected figure, beyond all feelings of greatness, pride or egoism, dwelling permanently in a state of complete self- negation. There are some who hold the view that knowledge being the preliminary stage of realization is essential and indispensable.

I do not agree with them on the ground that knowledge is only an achievement of brain whereas realization is the awakening of soul and hence far beyond its scope. In books on spiritual science we read much about the conditions of mind at various spiritual stages and get acquainted with them, but as regards practical

attainments we are far away from them. We can talk to people about those conditions, advance arguments for and against them and establish our superiority in learning but inwardly we are quite ignorant of them. We attend lectures and hear sermons on Gita, we recite portions from Gita regularly every day, we read commentaries on it written by great men of learning but what practical effect is thereby produced upon us? Has any one of us been ever able to acquire practically any one of the conditions depicted in it? They may, however, repeat the words "World is Maya, Man is Brahma" and so on, but inwardly they are quite unconscious of what they speak in words. None has ever been able to develop the conditions, discussed therein, just as Arjuna did when he heard it from Lord

Krishna. Gita as we have it today is really a commentary on what Lord Krishna spoke to Arjuna on the eve of the battle of Mahabharat. Lord Krishna had actually transmitted the very conditions, explained by words of mouth into the heart of Arjuna with the result that Arjuna was literally feeling the same condition prevailing all over, both within and without. Thus it was, that every word which he heard descended right into his heart producing a permanent effect. The cause of failure of modern teachers and preachers of Gita to produce the desired effect upon the mind of the hearers is their lack of power to transmit those conditions. The various conditions of mind discussed in the Gita are really the different stages which a man comes across during his march on the path of spirituality. They develop automatically from within. Formal means, adopted to acquire a particular state of mind at a premature stage, increases internal grossness which is detrimental to our progress.

A real teacher is not one who can explain to us the soundness of the religious dogmas or who can prescribe to us do's and don'ts. Almost every one of us knows enough of it. What we stand in need of, from a Guru is the true impulse to effect the awakening of the soul and his direct support in the course of our further march on the path of realization. Such a man we have to seek for, if we aim at success. It is, therefore, evident that while judging a man for our spiritual guide we must take into account not his learning or miracles but his practical achievements in the field of realization.

A man who is himself free can free you from eternal bondage. If your Guru is not free from the bondages of Samskaras, Maya or Ahankar, it is not possible for him to free you from those bondages. Suppose you are bound to one pole and your Guru to another, how is it possible for your Guru to free you from the bondage? Only a man who is himself free can release you from the bondage. People have, in most cases, gone astray for this very reason as they have submitted themselves to the guidance of such unworthy teachers, whose primary motive is perhaps mere self-aggrandisement or some personal gain. With this view in mind they are generally found to be eager to maintain their position and prestige by false impositions. To them it is probably the greatest shock to their pride of power and position, to acknowledge the superiority of anyone more advanced or better accomplished. This is nothing but Ahankar in the crudest form. If you submit yourself to such a Guru, you are sure to inherit the same feeling of pride which is the worst type of grossness and is sure to hamper your spiritual advancement. Liberation is never possible so long as this evil exists. Spirituality is in fact such a superfine state of mind that every other thing will seem to be heavier or grosser in comparison to it. The delicate feeling caused on the senses by the sweet smell of a rose is far heavier. I may express it as a state of perfect tranquillity and moderation, in complete harmony with nature. In this state of mind all senses and faculties are so to say, in a sleeping (or dormant) state. Their working becomes automatic, bearing no impression upon the mind. Perfect peace is one of its high stages, although the real thing is still onwards, when even the consciousness of peace fails. For the consciousness of peace, too, causes some weight upon the mind, though it is very insignificant. When we are really quite unconscious of the very presence of peace, we are in a true sense free from the impression or the weight of the feeling. The condition at this stage is peculiar. It is really neither Anandam (Bliss) nor otherwise. Words fail to express the real condition of this stage. Such is the condition we have finally to achieve for, which he and he alone can be capable Guru, who is permanently abiding in the condition described above, and has the power and capacity to transmit by his will force the spiritual state into the heart of the Abhyasi and to remove complexities and

obstructions therefrom. None below this level is fit to impart spiritual training to others.

It is a matter of greatest regret and pity that this age-old process of Yogic transmission originated and widely practised by our ancient sages has now gone into complete oblivion in the very land of its origin, where today, only but a few might feel inclined to believe it even. Some people try to ridicule it by misinterpreting it as nothing but mesmerism or hypnotism. I have explained this point in my book 'Efficacy of Raja Yoga'. Here I may assure you that spiritual training for the attainment of higher stages is only possible by the process of Yogic transmission and by no other means. Frequent reference to this process, in the present society of educated persons, has led certain religious teachers, today, to defend their inefficiency in this respect by explaining to the people that there is nothing peculiar about transmission. It generally happens, when you are in the company of a Mahatma or a saint, that you are to some extent relieved of your disturbing thoughts and feel comparatively calm for a while. This they claim to be due to the effect of transmission by the Mahatma. Those who offer this explanation, mean only to deceive the public with a view to whitewash their incapacity. What they interpret as transmission is really the automatic radiation of the pious Paramanus (fine particles) from the Mahatma. It affects all those assembled there with the result that calmness prevails to some extent so long as they are there. It is only a natural process and has nothing to do with transmission. It is not only from a Mahatma or saint that such Paramanus (fine particles) radiate but also from everyone whether pious or wicked, saintly or devilish. If you are for some time with an impious or morally degraded person you find similar impious Paramanus radiating from him and affecting you, with the result that you find your thoughts flowing in the same channel for the time being. The effect of such radiation remains only for a little while and disappears when you are away from it. This is the reason why often religious teachers are found to be making complaints of the indifference of the people to follow what they preach to them. They say that people, when they go back after hearing their Upadesh (sermons) cast off all they have heard then and there retaining nothing of it in their mind. I think it is not the people but

the teacher or the Upadeshak (Preacher) who is really to be blamed for it, for he has not the capacity or power to transmit what he means to preach from the platform. Similar views are expressed in connection with Sankirtan performances. The peaceful atmosphere created on such occasions is claimed to be due to the effect of transmission. It is really the result of vibrations produced by the sound of singing in a chorus. We experience the same thing at all music parties which we attend. On such occasions our mind is mostly focussed on one and the same thing which is in our view, and we are, for the time being, unmindful of other things. In Sankirtan, as our thoughts are located on some pious ideal, we begin to feel the same thing in our heart automatically. It has nothing to do with transmission. Power of transmission is a Yogic attainment of a very high order by which a Yogi can infuse by his own will force, the Yogic energy or Godly effulgence within any one and remove anything unwanted in him or detrimental to his spiritual progress. He can exercise this power not only on those assembled around him but on those, too, who are away from him. The power can be utilized in any way at any time. One who has got command over this power can, at a glance, create temporarily or permanently, a condition of the mind which is far ahead of the existing condition of the mind of an Abhyasi and which otherwise will require a life time to be achieved. It is not only a vain assertion but a bare fact and may at any time be practically verified by anyone who pleases to do so. Sages have often, through power of transmission changed the entire nature of a man at a mere glance. The wonderful examples of the great sages like my Master, Samartha Guru Shri Ram Chandraji Maharaj of Fatehgarh, Swami Vivekananda and others offer ample proof of it.

The solution of the problem as to what sort of man should be selected as a guide or Guru is not difficult to seek. When our eyes are fixed on the final goal, we can never be satisfied with anyone who appears to be short of mark. Every saint or Yogi has got his own level of attainment and of self-elevation. If we attach ourselves with any one of them with faith and devotion and secure merging with his highest condition, we will ourselves attain corresponding elevation. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary to select one, of the highest attainments as our Guru. If unfortunately we are

somehow or other induced to select one of inferior attainments we will correspondingly be lagging behind in our final approach. Ordinarily a spiritual teacher should never consider himself fit for training others, unless he has secured his approach up to Brahmand Mandal at least (also known as Virat Desh), where everything appears in the subtle form, before it actually takes place in this material world. When a teacher has connected himself with that plane or sphere, he is constantly in touch with the inexhaustible storehouse of power. On the other hand, if a man takes up the job of training others in spirituality before acquiring this stage, he not only begins to lose his own power but is contaminated with the Samskaras and grossness of those under his training, with the result that very soon he himself gets spoiled. In our mission, permission to impart training is not generally granted at this stage even. Really a man is fit for the work of training only when he does not entertain in his heart the slightest impression of being a teacher or Guru. I believe that if the idea of being a Guru crosses his mind even once in life he becomes unworthy of being a Guru for all his life. The very presence of this idea shows that he cherishes in his heart a feeling of self-importance or greatness. The consciousness of being a Master, if maintained, soon develops into pride, the crudest form of Ahankar, and consequently into its resultant defects, which are the worst drawbacks in a Guru. It is, therefore, essential for a man to get rid of these evils before he comes out into the field as a Guru. God is the real Guru or Master and we get Light from Him alone. But as it is extremely difficult for a man of ordinary talents to draw inspiration from God direct, we seek the help of one of our fellow beings who has established his connection with the Almighty. It is thus quite evident that if a man comes out as a Guru or Master he has usurped the position really due to God and as such it is nothing but mere blasphemy. He must, therefore, treat himself as the humblest servant of God, serving humanity in the name of the great Master. There will thus be no room for Ahankar and for its resultant evils which are unfortunately too common nowadays. Reality is totally absent where these evils prevail. A Guru or teacher must, therefore, banish from his heart even the slightest feeling of greatness and superiority and consider himself as the humblest associate or a servant of humanity. My Master of revered

memory was an example. All through his life he treated his associates as brethren. The idea that they were his disciples never once crossed his mind. He was ever ready to offer personal services even to his disciples and very often he did it without letting it come to their knowledge. I think and feel it as an essential thing for a Guru to give up his masterly position and feel himself an ordinary servant of humanity. His claim for personal service from the disciples has no justification except in cases of dire necessity and that too only to an extent to which he himself is prepared to render to his disciples. Most of the so-called Gurus nowadays encourage the practice, because it offers them personal comfort and feeds their vanity. They say that by touching the feet of Guru, or by massaging his limbs the magnetic currents pass on from the Guru to the disciple, which helps the disciple to form pious Samskaras. Thus by this practice the disciple draws in much of purity and piety from his master. It may be true, but let me question them for a while whether the same thing is not possible if the Guru renders the same service to his disciple. I think none can dare deny it. Evidently then the motive at the back is nothing but personal comfort and ease. In my humble opinion the process should now be reversed in accordance with the need of the time and the Guru should himself render such services to his disciples. Really the position of Guru is very strange. If he feels himself as a Master and hence far above his associates, it will be an Ahankar of the worst type in a Guru. It is really the look-out of the disciple to devote himself to the service of his Guru with love and devotion and not the right or privilege of the Guru to demand it. I am reminded of an instance. A simpleton once approached one of such prevalent type of Gurus and offered to become his disciple. The Guru, delighted at the prospect of one more addition to his fold of Gurudom, began to teach him the duties of a disciple. "You should," he said, "be in complete submission to your Guru, attending all the time to his personal needs and services. You should prostrate before him every morning and evening and go to bed after the Guru is asleep and get up before he wakes." The poor fellow finding himself incapable of doing all this, innocently questioned: "What will be the result if I failed to act in strict accordance?" "You will be turned out and doomed" was the firm reply. "Then, Sir," he added politely, "It shall be very kind of you, if

you accept me as a Guru." We often come across instances of jealousies and frictions between a Guru and his disciple. What is all this due to? It is only on account of selfish interest or personal gain. A Guru must, therefore, necessarily be quite devoid of any personal motive or selfish interest. He must be totally free from all feelings of pride or greatness. He must be a selfless man and a true servant of humanity at large, teaching people out of pure love without any ulterior selfish motive of name, fame or money. He must have his access up to the farthest possible limit and must have the power of Yogic transmission. Such a man we must seek for, as our guide if we want complete success. It is better to remain without a Guru all the life than to submit to the guidance of an unworthy Guru.

Master and His Function

Realisation cannot be achieved by mere abhyas, for the reason that at higher stages the conditions are such that even if one ascends a little by self-effort he quickly slips down because of the strong push from above. Hence, so far as our entry into the higher regions is concerned the help of Master is indispensable. For the practical aspect of sadhana too, it is essential for everyone to take up the practical course of spiritual training for which we have to seek proper guidance. There have been cases, however, where sages have attained perfection by mere self-effort by surrendering themselves direct to God. But such examples are rare. It is really a very difficult course and can be followed only by persons especially gifted with uncommon genius. Guru is the connecting link between God and man. It is through his medium only that we can reach God. He is the only power that can extricate us from the intricacies of the path.

It is also necessary that the guide we select must be one of the highest calibre and worthy of the task of tearing off the intricacies at a glance with the aid of the extraordinary power at his command. It can only be one who has himself attained perfection or complete negation of self. We must connect ourselves with such a great power by feelings of love and attraction. It does not matter much what conception of him we entertain in our mind.

We may call him our friend, Master, servant or whatever we may be pleased to choose. But he remains after all the guide or guru as he is commonly called. The conception of a guru as mother is in my opinion by far the most appropriate and advantageous to a disciple. A mother is the very embodiment of love and affection. Only a mother's heart can bear with patience all troubles and miseries caused to her by her son, thinking all the while of trying to provide for her son's comfort and happiness. The same is the position of the real Master or Guru who is the spiritual mother of the disciple. As such the guru is always on the look out for the spiritual welfare of the child, the disciple. It is due to the affectionate attachment of the guru with his disciple that the attention of the great Father with whom his spiritual mother (the guru) is so closely connected, is directed towards him, the disciple. The function of a mother and of a true guru are closely similar. The mother retains a child within her womb for a certain duration. The guru too retains the spiritual child within his mental sphere for a certain duration. During this period the disciple, like the baby in the womb, sucks energy and gets nourishment from the spiritual waves of the guru's thoughts. When the time matures he is born in a brighter world and thence his own spiritual life begins. If the disciple enters the mental sphere of the guru surrendering all belongings to him, it takes only seven months to deliver him into the brighter world. But the process is generally delayed for a considerable time because while living in the guru's mental sphere the disciple retains the consciousness of his own thoughts and feeling. Thus we find that the position of a guru is much the same as that of a mother. The conception of guru as a spiritual mother promotes in us feelings of love, reverence and surrender which are the main factors of spiritual life.

The selection of a worthy guru is no doubt a very difficult job. On the basis of my personal experience I may give you an easy method of judging. When you happen to come into contact with one, try to understand whether his association promotes in you a feeling of peace and calmness and silence for the time being at least, the restless tendencies of mind without causing any weight or effect upon it. If it is so you should conclude that he can be a fit man to lead you on the path. There is another difficulty as well. It

is that even if such a Master is available and accessible, he is not trusted unless he plays some striking miracle. A raja yogi endowed with the power of transmission can no doubt display miracles but he never likes to do so since that will be derogatory to his real conditions. We have the example of Christ who displayed miracles all his life. But in spite of all that, he got only twelve disciples amongst whom there was even that one who subsequently brought about his crucifixion. That shows that his miracles were of no avail in promoting faith among people. It was, in fact, his noble teachings alone that afterwards secured for him such a large following. It is, therefore, in our best interest, to have our eyes fixed upon Reality rather than upon miracles which are undoubtedly very petty affairs and can be displayed by a person of comparatively inferior attainments and talents. Miracles are no criterion for a saint or a yogi. It is on the other hand, a deliberate fraud played by dexterous gurus upon weak and credulous people to entrap them in the fold of their gurudom. Before deciding about the final selection, one must be fully convinced of a man's capabilities and merits with regard to his practical attainments on the path. For this he must have continued association with him to judge things through perception and experience in a practical way. When he is thus convinced, he must then trust him in good faith and rely upon him firmly. This is very essential for a successful pursuit.

I have a heart ever ready to help anyone who might be in need of it. I take the task only as a humble servant of humanity. There are and have been masterly gurus who work and have worked as masters in their time, but I prefer to be a servant instead and to work as a servant for the good of the people in general. Please do what you are told and inform me of your day-to-day progress and also of the difficulties if any. I may assure you that you can achieve the goal very easily if you go on persistently with constant remembrance.

Learned teachers of religion generally induce people to worship gods and deities. He alone who has travelled the path up to the final point, can guide successfully. Learned teachers are more like roadside signposts which tell you where the road leads to. This is all the purpose they can serve. It is no doubt very strange

that one aiming at freedom from materiality should fall upon material forms and grosser conceptions.

The word mahatma has been defined in several ways, not perhaps without some reasonable basis. But my definition of it as a "Non-being Being", though somewhat peculiar, is meaningful. It may also be interpreted so as to relate to one who has been away from spirituality. But that may not be acceptable to those who aspire for spirituality. But if we go deeper to explain its real significance I fear it will not be understandable so it is better that I hold over the topic. We know that it is not royal robes alone that make a real king. Similarly it is not the form or dress that makes a real saint or a yogi. Outward physical features are not the sure indications of the heart within. Gurus of today might conveniently be classified under the following heads:

Quacks: Those who go about advising and conducting the worship of trees, animals, insects, diseases, ghosts and spirits.

Book-Moths: Those who prescribe practices and methods which they have picked up from books.

Practical teachers: Those who prescribe to others that which they do or have done, not taking into account the merits or demerits thereof.

Inspired teachers: Those who guide people on the basis of their inner inspirations.

Inspired experienced teachers: Those who guide people on the basis of their practical experience supported by higher inspiration.

In the same way disciples may also be classified as follows:

Self-seekers: Those who take up the pursuit for the fulfilment of the yearnings of their senses (needs).

Time passers: Those who take it up as a pastime (kalakshepaka).

Followers: Those who try to follow the guru's directions.

Earnest Disciples: Those who try to follow in the steps of the guru and try to copy him.

Devout Disciples: Those who become the focus of Master's attention. Unfortunately, today, the selection of the proper guide is much neglected, although every religious-minded Hindu believes that it is incumbent upon him to have a guru in order to satisfy his craving for spiritual benefit. Generally people select anyone for the purpose without any regard to his capabilities or worth. They are induced to do so mostly by persuasion or by miracles displayed by those so-called gurus to attract the ignorant masses. Disciple-hunters are not wanting. They are as numerous as the leaves of a tree. For most of them, gurudom is a very profitable job which can secure enormous income which they cannot otherwise earn. Besides, they command highest respect and personal service from their disciples. The ignorant masses thus fall a ready prey to these self-seeking professionals. A petty miracle or an ordinary display of something charming is enough to attract hundreds of these silly sheep to the fold of their gurudom. A simple threat of a curse upon one who happens to displease them, may bring thousands to abject submission. Not only this, but in order to ensure monopoly of their profession they declare that none but one belonging to the privileged class has the right of being a guru, whether he may be a sannyasin or a householder. They claim to be world-teachers of religion by right of birth irrespective of their capabilities and worth. Sannyasins too, you will find these days in multitudes, posing as mahatmas and professing to be jagat gurus - teachers of world. Is it not a pity to find such professional imposters, who are a shame to the nation and religion, roaming about with complete impunity to cheat and defraud ignorant people, in order to serve their own selfish ends?

It is high time for the masses to open their eyes and see what havoc has been wrought by such persons. Gurudom as the monopoly of a privileged class is an absurdity, propagated by the professional gurus to safeguard their personal interests. The popularly believed principle that a disciple can never break off the sacred connection with his guru under any circumstances, is also a cunning device adopted by those false gurus to make their position safe and secure, and is nothing but a fraud. The practice of 'initiating' a disciple has been much abused by most of the modern professionals, who do not understand its real significance.

Their only function as a guru is to breathe a few 'mystical' words into the ears of the disciple at the time of 'initiation' and tell him to follow certain ceremonial practices by way of worship. Their duty to the disciple ends there and nothing more is done by them for the betterment of the disciple except giving him their darshan every year and realising their annual toll and tribute from him. Really a disciple should formally be 'initiated' only when true faith exists in him and Divine love takes prime root in his heart. Initiation signifies that the disciple's link has been connected with the Supreme Power. In that case spiritual force begins to flow to the disciple automatically according to the absorbing capacity he develops in himself. It depends upon the power and capability of the Master to establish a sound connection for which high calibre is needed. A sound connection once established shall continue until the disciple secures liberation which in such cases is not a far off matter to be attained after numerous lives. In fact, if a disciple is initiated in the right sense as mentioned above by a guru of high calibre the question of breaking off can never arise. But, for the professional gurus who perform mock initiations to serve their purpose, it is a matter of constant anxiety. Therefore, in order to keep a disciple permanently in their grip, they proclaim it as a divine dictate that he shall be courting all the miseries of hell if he ever thought of breaking off from them at any time. The ignorant masses accept it as gospel truth, trembling at the very idea of doing anything which might displease their guru. So, they always try to put up with all their atrocities in passive submission. I am sure that there is not the slightest suggestion to this effect found in our Shastras. It is only ingenuity on the part of these teachers of religion. I hold it to be the birth-right of every man to break off from his guru at any time if he finds that he has made a wrong selection or has misjudged the guru's capacity or worth. He is free to seek another guru if at any stage he finds that his guru has not the capacity to take him beyond what he has already acquired. On the other hand, a conscientious guru must himself, under the circumstances, direct his disciple to seek another more advanced and better qualified guru, so that the disciple's progress may not in any way suffer. This is the sacred duty of a true, selfless guru. If, however, permission to break off sought for by the disciple, is denied by the guru on account of his selfish motives, the disciple

is at liberty to break off from him at once and seek another. No moral or religious law ever forbids him from doing so.

A little advanced among the class of gurus are considered to be those who teach and preach on the basis of their knowledge of the Shastras and other holy books. They have established orders and ashrams, where they enjoy a kingly position among their followers. They go out and address large audiences telling them what to do and what not to do, explaining to them problems concerning maya, jiva and Brahman. People flock to them in thousands to hear their sermons, admiring their high ideas and extensive knowledge, and regard them as great mahatmas or saints. They ask them numerous intricate questions, and if they are able to answer them out of their stock of the knowledge of the Shastras, their greatness as a mahatma is established in their minds; and they are induced to accept them as gurus. But really, they have thus put to test their learning and not the real worth. It must well be borne in mind that it is not the learning or knowledge that makes a man perfect but it is only realisation in the right sense that makes a true yogi or saint. It is just possible that the man who has thus impressed you, with outward form, learning or eloquence, may be at the lowest level as regards practical attainments. Knowledge, therefore, is no criterion of a true mahatma or yogi. Similarly the real test of a mahatma or guru is not his miracles but experience on the path of realisation. The popular meaning of a mahatma as a great individual does not appeal to me. I would define a mahatma as the most insignificant being or rather a neglected figure, beyond all feelings of greatness, pride or egoism, dwelling permanently in a state of complete self-negation.

There are some who hold the view that knowledge being the preliminary stage of realisation is essential and indispensable. I do not agree with them on the ground that knowledge is only an achievement of the brain, whereas realisation is the awakening of the soul; and hence, far beyond its scope. Therefore a real teacher is not one who can explain to us the soundness of the religious dogmas or who can prescribe to us do's and don'ts. What we stand in need from a guru is the true impulse to effect the awakening of the soul, and his direct support in the course of our further march

on the path of realisation. Such a man we have to seek for, if we aim at success. Now it is evident that while judging a man to be our spiritual guide, we must take into account not his learning or miracles but his practical achievements in the field of realisation. A man who is himself free can free you from eternal bondage. If your guru is not free from the bondage of samskaras, maya or ahankar, it is not possible for him to free you from those bondages.

Method Practice RAJA YOGA

RAJ YOGA is the old system or science followed by the great rishis and saints to help them in realising Self or God. It was prevalent in India long before the time of Ramayana. It was first introduced by a great rishi who lived seventy- two generations prior to Raja Dashrath of the Suryavamsh (Surya dynasty). He devoted much of his time pondering a good deal to find out the real method of achieving freedom by which problems of life could easily be solved. He was swimming in the Central Region (as described in the book), being mostly attached to the Centre itself. His state was akin to that of the present Personality now working for the Change, as required by nature. After pondering long over the subject, the great sage at last discovered the method which ultimately developed into what is known as Raj Yoga. When he was in close touch with the Centre, he discovered the reality of the world with its cause or force in existence. He found out that the motion or stir of some power from beneath the Centre brought the present world into existence. That stirring thought is in other words called Upadan Karan (Hindi) or Kshobh (Hindi). At last he arrived at the conclusion that it is the outcome of the power which is similar to or identical with the thought power of man*. Naturally he deduced that thought could bring out such results and that its power is unlimited. He then took work from the thought power which fell to our lot, and with it he started training. That is the basis of Raj Yoga or the King of yogas. The kingly thing in us is thought which ultimately develops, steering us to our goal.

*The theory relating to the origin the human mind, as expounded in this book, stands on quite rational grounds. The primary Stir, brought into action by the dormant will of God, led to the cause of existence. The stir set into motion the latent powers and the process of creation and animation started. The same root- force appearing as Stir or Stimulus descended in every being in the form of the chief active force. In man it came to be known as the Mind, at the root of which there is the same dormant will just as it was in the stir. Thus the human mind is closely identical with the root-force or the original Stir of which it is a part. As such the functions of both are also closely similar. Sages after sages have improved and developed it as their practical experience increased. Thought ultimately takes the form of reality, and appears in naked form, so to say. This can all be verified by the persons having clairvoyant vision of a high merit. There may be different methods of teaching through this science, but the governing principle remains the same. With this power or force we establish a link with God. Improvements have, at times, been made by great sages to develop it according to the needs of the time. Commentaries have been written on the subject, discussing elaborately the philosophy of yoga. But the underlying thought is the state of vision, which a man must develop. Things appear in their true perspective, and their mystery is revealed to him who rows farther in his slender dugout and improves to the utmost. Generally the philosophers have attempted to reach the innermost core of things through reason, and not through vision. Reason, in its popular sense, may be faulty and may fail us, but if a thing is seen through the intuitional insight without the unnecessary medium of reason, it will be visible in its original form without error or defect. Things have undergone such a change that it is very difficult to describe them at their particular steps. The world is in existence from time immemorial, and the correct date is not to be traced out although certain persons have attempted to fix down the Srishti-era. Rotations and revolutions are going on; their actions are multiplying. We must always attempt to find out things after rising above everything. That is the key-point for the philosophers to note in order to reach the accuracy of things. Generally the philosophers have attempted things before actually going into the life of practice, as is commonly the case with the

western philosophers, I may say that it is not certain that a philosopher, being a philosopher, cannot be corrupt or degraded. But there is no possibility of corruption or degradation if he has studied things by leading a practical life. Sages in India, generally, have attempted philosophy* by first going into the life of practicality, never mind if they have not improved to the level depicted in it or required by the philosophy. They have attempted to open up the secrets of the existing things as far as they could do at their level of advancement. The outcome is the six schools of philosophy in their different hues and colours. We should always attempt the expression of things, only when our practice or abhyas is over. In short we should try to understand things when the knots begin to open by themselves and it is the vision of the Central Region I have talked about later on. Everything that comes to our judgment from that place shall be correct without the least chance of error.

* Philosophy is a subject not based on reason but based on intuition. It starts not from 'doubt', as most of the western philosophers hold, but from 'wonder. A life of practicality, undergoing all the experiences depicted therein, is therefore essential to arrive at the reality of things

SAHAJ MĀRG

I am opening today the greatest wonder of our system of Raj Yoga in the light of SAHAJ MĀRG. Very few people could realise the efficacy of this system. We think of one thing and one alone—the Super-human nature. We call It either Guru(Master) or the object of concentration.* We have but one thought and that of a certain personality super-human in form; and very soon we find ourselves attached to the form so much that other things begin to look secondary.

*The process of taking the Master as an object of concentration is no doubt very efficacious, but only when the master is really one of the highest calibre, merged in the Infinite or transformed as Nature personified. If it is otherwise the effect

produced upon the abhyasi will be the reverse and highly detrimental to his ultimate purpose.

We attach importance to one and the same thing. If we pump out water straight into a channel it will flow by its own force to some extent and at the same time with the help of the machinery attached at the end of the butt. Similarly we proceed in the channel of Almighty with the thread of thought, attaching our will-force at its butt end, i.e., from the starting point. The will-force comes from the individual mind which makes our way clear. We keep the idea of pumping out a certain thing from its proper place called the individual mind. The force increases day by day; and our individual mind too, having the idea of going above, becomes stronger and thus begins to lose the effect of bad training. It serves a double purpose. It cleans the individual mind and also brings the goal of human life within reach.

When you reach this stage, you find yourself soon jumping into the ocean of eternal peace and sublimity, and when your thought becomes so strong that it begins to dwell permanently in the midst of the waves of the ocean, every other thing downward then seems to be fading away. You have no other thought but that which you have made already. The result is that the things you see down below look like objects in a deep valley when observed from a high peak. When you do not see the things below, you feel no attachment with them. In the long run the goal becomes quite vivid to the eye, and there remains nothing but the object you have really and correctly made. Now you are free from worldly attachments, I mean to say you see things, but attach no weight to them. This thing continues for some time as long as you have the idea of the same nature. As time goes on you feel yourself to be as free and forgetful as a sleeping person who satisfies his itching sensation in a perfectly unconscious state during sleep. A man, far away from the place where a band of music is being played, does not hear its sound, while another man standing nearby feels it, but little if he is deeply absorbed in his own thought. He does not find himself with music but feels himself dwelling in his own pious thought. How does he acquire this state of mind? The reply, as already said above, is that he finds himself absorbed in some thing of the most important nature. Then naturally the unimportant

things will have no effect on him. This is the condition of Vairagya* or renunciation. The inattention that he feels towards worldly objects does not allow his heart to be impressed by things other than those of important nature—the pious thought of realisation he now has. For an abhyasi the only important thing is to seek his goal within his own self. Many people are striving hard for vairagya or renunciation. How easily it is gained ! He has no idea but of his own goal and due to that he has lost all that is not worth having.

*Vairagya as it is commonly understood today is only an outward show of asceticism, detachment from all world-relations and the total disregard of the duties of life. Really speaking it is neither the forced physical detachment nor aversion to, or hatred for, worldly objects required in life, nor any other thing of kind. It is simply an inner feeling which turns our heart away from all that is superfluous for our normal living. Thus even an ordinary man, leading a Worldly life looking to all worldly affairs and possessing and claiming things for his requirements, can well acquire the state of vairagya in his ordinary worldly life.

You have gained vairagya or renunciation by elementary practice of Raj Yoga. Your individual mind is, in a way, now connected with the plane of everlasting peace and happiness. In other words you have made the way from your individual mind towards that high region. The gentle waves of the calm in the region of Almighty begin to flow direct to it (i.e. individual mind) and so in the long run you become one with it.

We thought of one thing and one alone, attaching ourselves to the thing far above our conception. The idea of greatness is now in our heart. Naturally we feel ourselves as its part, or a trifling thing in comparison to that. We do it over and over again. Now we have made the passage by connecting our thought with that high region for realization. As we practise this, clouds of darkness begin to disperse and vacuum is created by the force of the will. The power then begins to rush in, in higher degree, with the result that individuality goes away and mind remains. When mind separates itself from Godly Mind, it begins to call itself as an individual one. Why do we feel it separated? It is because, the functions of the Big Mind on it cease to exist on account of our doings, and our going on the wrong path. It gets saturated with

these things so much that we feel nothing of reality, but feel only the impressions which these things have already made.

The impressions grow so powerful that they begin to over-rule our senses. The surroundings, no doubt, leave impressions on it. Now, when we give place to that important idea-the pious one on the mind of ours-the impressions we had made begin to lose their density and in course of time we are free from these things. The effect of what is prevailing in that Big Mind is felt as well. If you go on practicing you will feel the same thing in your individual mind as there is above it. When you feel these things permanently in your individual mind, think that you have lost its individuality. When the time of creation came, the latent motion beneath the Centre grew stronger, causing a stirring movement which later led to the formation of the universe. That may be called the First, or Super-Mind of the Almighty. We owe our origin to that mind which we call the First Mind. On the back side of the First Mind there is Centre or the state of Tam (Hindi) which is clearly explained in my book "Commentary on the Ten Commandments of SAHAJ MĀRG". If you have brought your individual mind to the level of First Mind, then you have only to jump above the First Mind whereto there is Centre or Almighty. When you realize yourself to become one with that state, you have realised the true Reality. There you swim and swim. Nobody knows its end. When this thing comes to you, you feel everywhere plain-ness, simplicity and calmness. When you begin to live in that state without break even these three things seem to be lost. That means you have no impression of even these things in you. One-ness is reigning now. This is the thing we gain by our elementary practice. See the efficacy of the system and put yourself to work.

We generally lay stress upon meditation, apparently on human form. The critics may perhaps consider it suicidal to the spiritual feelings. The case is not so, provided the person meditated upon is one of special calibre, who has come down from the Immortal Absolute for spiritual training, or has attained the spiritual standard of evolution required for the purpose by supreme self-exertion.

We take the example of our master, Samarth Guru Mahatma Shri Ram Chandraji Maharaj of Fatehgarh, U.P. The thing will soon

come to light, and the world will remember him ever after. He was one with Nature. If we meditate upon such a big soul, the substance we are seeking for will come by itself. Mathematically, if A is equal to B and C gets equal to A, then ultimately C becomes equal to B. If you have selected such a Master as your guide, the problem of life will be easily solved. I quote an example. "Those who worship you and those who worship the Absolute, of these, which are the greater yogis ?" Arjuna asked Shri Krishna. Lord Krishna answered, "Those who worship me with the highest faith and constancy are the greatest yogis. Those who worship and devote themselves to the unmanifested Absolute, the Omnipresent, the Omniscient and the Omnipotent, their difficulty is greater in the struggle, for in fact this path is trodden with great difficulty by an embodied soul by self effort." When we begin to love such a soul, which becomes the object of our concentration, Nature's power then begins to run through us, for the great soul is endowed with such powers. Our emotions and feelings, made worse by our wrong-doings, begin now to come to their original form and attain the highest excellence. By original form I mean that condition in which they were at the time when they took the human form for the first time. Our functions and work being unregulated, and the mind undisciplined, we seek the shelter of such a great soul or the Master.

HISTORY of SAHAJ MĀRG

Great men are not accidentally born. They are born when world waits for them in eager expectation. Such is the phenomenon of Nature. India, the home of spirituality, was groping in darkness and had totally forgotten the age-old system of yoga. Solid materialism had taken the place of fine spiritualism. Dark clouds of ignorance were hovering all over. Yogic transmission had become quite foreign to the Hindus. At this stage, when spirituality was tottering helplessly, some great personality was urgently needed to set things right, for the upliftment of mankind.

It was the auspicious day of Basant Panchami, February 2, 1873, on which the power of Nature descended to earth in the human form of Samarth Guru Mahatma Shri Ram Chandraji

Maharaj at Fatehgarh in district Farrukhabad (U.P.). The happy day so beautifully coordinated with the most pleasant season of the year, breathed into every heart the blooming freshness of the spring. The blissful time ushered in by his advent introduced a new era of spiritual awakening which promises a practical solution of the human problem of existence. We are struck with a reverend joyful awe when we recall to our mind the grand renaissance brought about by him in the spiritual field. He offers an easy solution of the problem of existence which has ever been confounding even the greatest of sages.

This Divine personality was born in a respectable Kayastha family. His childhood was influenced by his mother, a noble minded simple lady, who spent most of her time in devotion and worship. It was due to her influence, that he received inspiration at a very early age. The incident goes, that one day while he was playing with his mates, some Divine force aroused in him the feeling that he had not come for the purpose he was engaged in. He had to realise himself and to equip himself for the greater task ahead. The soul was awakened and he set to it in right earnest. He attained perfection only in seven months $\frac{3}{4}$ really an unparalleled example. Since then he devoted the whole of his life for the cause of spirituality. He is the Adi Guru of our Mission.

He was an embodiment of moderation, toleration and devotion. With him dawned the new era of yogic training through transmission, of which he was the master. He showed a way to bring a man to perfection in one life only, and even leading a family life in the grihastha ashram. He used to say that troubles and miseries of grihastha life are penances and sacrifices for spiritual attainments.

He had simplified the method of spiritual training to a great extent and adjusted it to suit the requirements of our time. With a high calibre and spiritual dignity, our great Master, the Divine Light, devoted every moment of his life to the upliftment of humanity. He was in fact the Nature's prodigy and his work in the spiritual field is beyond common conception. His wonderful researches in this science have made human approach up to the highest limit, in the least possible time, quite possible and practicable. He introduced an improved system of raja yoga which

later came to be known as 'Sahaj Mārg. After serving the masses for about 36 years this spiritual genius left his material form at the age of 58 on the 14th of August 1931. The work he did during his life time, is beyond conception. Posterity will know his merits in due course.

Shri Ram Chandra Mission was established at Shahjahanpur (U.P.) on 31st March 1945 after the name of this great personality, by me as his successor, through his grace; and slowly it is attracting the seekers of the Real from everywhere. I am happy that Master's grace is working in this respect and people are attracted to benefit from his grace.

The system of 'Sahaj Mārg Sadhana' now followed in the Mission presents an easy and natural path for the attainment of the Ultimate. Sahaj Mārg does not advise those cruder methods which are hardly practicable in the routine life of man. Under the Sahaj Mārg system of spiritual training the action of the senses is regulated in a natural way so as to bring them to their original state, i.e. just as it was when it assumed the human form for the first time. Not only this, but the lower vrittis (modifications) which are working independently are subjected to the control of super-consciousness. Hence their perverse action is stopped. The higher centres come under the charge of Divine Centres, and in this way the whole system begins to get divinised.

Special Features of Sahaj Mārg

Whatever I say or write is on the basis of my own experience and anubhava irrespective of what Shankar, Ramanuja or others might have said about their own. Every one in this world wants peace. That means that realisation is not his object. In that case he will get only peace and not realisation. But if realisation is the object, peace will automatically come on its wake. We should not be only after knowing what realisation is but also try to attain it as well.

Generally people think that it is difficult $\frac{3}{4}$ nay, quite impossible, to attain liberation in this very life. This, however, is a mistaken idea. Who knows perhaps this very life of ours might be

the last one, taking us towards liberation. Our Master's declaration is that a sadhak can reach such a state not only in one and the same birth (lifetime) but even within a shorter period, if he is a diligent worker and has got a real guide. This he proved also, but the proof is impossible to be given in words. Our experience alone can show it.

The popular belief that God can be sought for only in the midst of the forest, as if He is but a forest-dweller, is vain and absurd. I believe He can better be sought for in the midst of one's own heart. But, for that purpose, the spirit of the Spartans is necessary.

There is not the least justification for anyone to flee away from home in utter disregard of his worldly duties and wander about without any definite aim or purpose. As a matter of fact even in that state of vairagya, one is seldom free from feelings of worldliness. The most important feature of this system of sadhana is that it goes on in conjunction with the normal worldly living of the common man, with due regard to his duties and responsibilities of life, so that both the facets of life $\frac{3}{4}$ the worldly and the Divine $\frac{1}{4}$ may develop equally bright. We do not mean merely to preach or propagate these ideas, but also to bring them into practice and apply them in daily life.

The Mission aims at the promulgation of the ideology set forth by the great Master through this newly introduced system of Sahaj Mārg, and to awaken the sleeping masses to Divine consciousness, so as to set them right on the path of progress. For this purpose, it is but essential that the old mechanical methods involving forced austerity and penances, most ill-fitted to the environments of the present day life, must necessarily be set aside and replaced by simple and natural means.

As far as the attainment of liberation or complete freedom is concerned, almost all the great sages of the past and the present agree on the point that raja yoga alone is the path that ensures success up to the final limit of human approach; and everyone destined to complete freedom, i.e. realisation, must sooner or later come up to it. Sahaj Marg runs closely along the lines of raja yoga;

but of course, with certain amendments and modifications to purge out superfluity from that system.

Under Sahaj Mārg, the Master's support being a very special feature of sadhana, it becomes incumbent upon the abhyasi to seek a worthy guide to lead him on, helping him by his power transmitted through the yogic process of pranahuti. The Master by the application of his inner powers, awakens and accelerates the dormant forces in the abhyasi to action and directs the flow of Divine current towards his heart, through the process of pranahuti. As a result, the abhyasi begins to advance spiritually experiencing more and more of bliss. The abhyasi has only to prepare himself to receive it or in other words to make himself capable and deserving of it. In this way all that which previously required persistent labour and hardships, can now be achieved very easily in a much shorter time with least labour. But it is all practical and cannot in any way be put into words. Only practical experience can reveal its merits.

Many a man must have had a taste of the condition of peace. In fact the actual state of real peace is beyond comprehension. It admits no contradiction. It is literally neither peace nor restlessness, neither union nor separation, neither bliss nor otherwise. It is, after all, that for which we had developed pain. May you all have a taste of that pain. It is not however difficult to cultivate. Only a firm will and an undivided attention towards it, is all that is required for the purpose. Then that you seek for, will be found quite close to you, rather with you $\frac{3}{4}$ nay, you might yourself be that which you seek for. For that there must be a burning in the heart, which might burn down the weeds and bushes on the path. I do not mean to advocate, in any way, the orthodox idea of gurudom. In our sanstha we take it in the sense of common brotherhood, in a spirit of service and sacrifice, helping each other as needed and required. The Sahaj Mārg system of spiritual practice and training is open to every one without any distinction of creed, caste, sex or colour. Seekers of Truth may come to experience and practise and derive the greatest benefit from the grace of my Master, who has turned a new leaf in the tradition of Indian philosophy. May the benign supervision of the Master

Supreme, guide all to the Realisation of the Ultimate Goal, and fulfilment of human purpose.

PRAYER

O, MASTER!

Thou art the real goal of human life.

We are yet but slaves of wishes, Putting bar to our advancement.

Thou art the only God and Power To bring us up to that Stage.

PRAYER

One thing more by way of practice is to offer daily the brief prayer (O, Master,.....) at bed time in the most suppliant mood with a heart overflowing with divine love. Repeat the prayer in your mind once or twice and begin to meditate over it for a few moments. The prayer must be offered in a way as if some most miserable man is laying down his miseries with a deeply afflicted heart before the Supreme Master imploring for his mercy and grace, with tearful eyes. Then alone can he become a deserving aspirant. There are many methods of loving God and many 'bhavas' are resorted to, e.g., paternal sentiment (pitr bhava), friendly sentiment (sakhya bhava), etc. In my opinion there can be no relation better than that of the lover and the beloved. If an abhyasi thinks himself to be lover and takes God to be beloved and proceeds with the same sentiment the result will be that God himself will become the lover and the abhyasi the beloved in the long run. But if one thinks that one has realised the goal at this stage it will be a serious blunder. What remains further cannot be stated, for it is related to practice only.

Prayer remains the most important and unfailing means of success. Through it we have established our link with the Holy Divine. The reason why prayer should be offered with a heart full

of love and devotion, is that one should create within oneself a state of vacuity so that the flow of Divine grace may be diverted towards him. When the world emerged into the present form, the central point was already rooted deep in all the beings. This central point rooted in us being a part of the Supreme, turns our attention towards the source. In prayer we try to reach up to the same central point. This is possible only when we create a similar state within. This requires practice. It can be attained by resigning ourselves to the Divine Will, which is absolutely simple and tranquil. Apparently it seems to be very difficult, but in fact it is not so, though only for those who aspire for it. When a man creates in him a strong craving for the Absolute, he is indeed in a state of prayer, and it is for every one to strive for. Whenever a man enters into that state even for a moment, his prayer is granted. But it requires continued practise to accomplish it. People should be exhorted to offer such a type of prayer. If one achieves and settles down in it, what else remains for him to do except remembrance; and that too in a way that it never comes into consciousness even.

PRELIMINARIES TO MEDITATION

When the thought of going back to the original was stirred up in man, it became essential for him to bring activity, which had sprung up in him, into a latent state as far as it was possible. He began to seek out means for it. At last it came to his understanding that just as the latent motion was grosser in comparison to the Absolute with which it was connected, even so he must take up something grosser for the purpose, to enable him to attain the desired ideal of Reality. This led him to the conclusion that he must create in him a form of contraction or withdrawal similar to that at the time of pralaya. Now Self is all pervading in man just as it is in the whole universe, $\frac{3}{4}$ taking the universe in a collective sense. The state of pralaya comes in when contraction begins to take place. Similar contraction in man leads to his individual pralaya. That means that he begins to proceed from his state of grossness to the real state. The contraction always starts from below and proceeds gradually upwards because of its upward tendency. Therefore, in order to go upwards he must start contracting from below. The

form of contraction could be only to bring his legs and allied parts to one pose and to keep them steady. In whatever way it might be done, the form will finally be that of the asan. It is essential because it paves our way to the Ultimate. This posture must always be the same. The reason is that in this way he gets himself associated with the great power, the very thing he takes up in the beginning for the attainment of his particular objective. Thus the form which is associated with Reality helps him a good deal in his primary initiation.

The upright position of the back-bone, neck and head in an erect straight line during meditation has been thought to be most advantageous from very ancient times, because the flow of Divine grace is believed to descend straight upon the abhyasi in that posture. In our way of practice, however, this is not insisted upon. I advise the abhyasis generally to sit in a natural easy posture. Moreover, even those who assume a tight straight pose, are found to give way automatically to a suppliant, slightly forward drooping posture, as the state of blissful absorbancy sets in. As such, it may be considered to be more natural even for the purpose of an ascent into higher states of consciousness. In fact a controversy over a point of comparatively lesser significance seems irrelevant.

It is better to sit in the grey of the morning for meditation, or when that is not possible, at any fixed hour convenient to the abhyasi. Do not feel disturbed with the outer things but remain engaged with your own work thinking that they are in a way helping you to feel the necessity for greater absorption in your practice.

MEDITATION

Under Sahaj Mārg system of training we start from dhyan, the seventh step of Patanjali yoga, fixing our mind on one point in order to practise meditation. The previous steps are not taken up separately but they automatically come into practice as we proceed on with meditation. Thus much of our time and labour are saved. In certain sansthas the usual routine followed for practice is often

kept confidential. It is released and revealed only to those who undertake to join them formally. What their purpose at the bottom may be, is not quite understandable. Nature has no secrets and I think that one professing to follow the divine path must also have none.

The practice followed in our Mission is meditation on the heart. The same method has been recommended by Patanjali. There is a great philosophy underlying it. We find ourselves all the time busy with worldly things. If we are not doing anything, our thoughts seem to have wings in the leisure hours. We are always in tumult and disorder. Our individual mind has become used to such a characteristic activity, and thus we have made every thing topsy-turvy. Our actions and thoughts count much in our wrong doing. When we remain in contact with ideas and thoughts of different kinds, they leave impressions upon our emotive feelings and senses. All the senses are spoiled and adopt a wrong course. The marks we thus make upon the senses and indriyas turn them solid like rock, having no bodh or wisdom. Soul is, no doubt, not acted upon, but we create such obstacles and coverings as to keep it enwrapped all round like a cocoon. We cannot even peep into the soul, let alone realising it. By the effect of our vicious thoughts and actions we spoil our sense of discrimination and right cognition. Those who have reached this state of solidity do not like to come under the training course of raja yoga. This is why people turn a deaf ear to what we say. No practice of hatha yoga can bring out true realisation as it fails after the ajna chakra and there still remain very many states still to pass after it. Therefore raja yoga is the only thing that can lead to the end. There is no other means of approaching the Centre. We have got within us the same central force, though marred by our wrong doings. We take work from the same force during meditation. This is how we proceed naturally with nature's force, so to say. When we meditate, the central power we have, remains in force. It disperses the overwhelming clouds which are greatly fried up by its force. It cannot be expressed in words, only an abhyasi can feel it. This can only be known practically. You will soon find yourself swimming in everlasting peace and happiness. Everything ends here. There remains no attachment with the world. The mind is disciplined, it is regulated

automatically. Senses begin to come under control and you gain mastery over them. To master yourself means to master Nature. When the passage becomes clear you find Nature's work within your bounds and limits: rather you begin to work yourself.

In our system the abhyasi is advised to meditate on the heart thinking of the divine light there. But he is directed not to view light in any form or shape like that of an electric bulb or a candle, etc. In that case the light appearing therein will not be real, but one projected by his own creative speculation. An abhyasi is advised to proceed with a mere supposition of light with the thought of Divinity at the bottom. What happens then is that we meditate upon the subtlest which is to be attained.

The method of meditation on the heart is to think of Godly light within it. When you begin meditating in this way please think only that Godly light within is attracting you. Do not mind if extraneous ideas haunt you during meditation. Let them come but go on with your own work. Treat your thoughts and ideas as uninvited guests. If even then they trouble you think they are Master's, not yours. This process of meditation is very effective, and can never fail in bringing about the desired result. Sit in an easy posture for an hour in the morning in quite a natural way. You should only meditate. You should not struggle with your ideas which generally come during meditation. Concentration is the automatic and natural result of meditation. Those who insist on concentration in place of meditation, and force their mind to it, generally meet with failure.

In the evening again sit in the same posture, at least for half an hour and think that the complexities, the network of your previous thoughts and grossness or solidity in your constitution are all melting away, or evaporating in the form of smoke, from your back. It will help you in purging your mind and will make you receptive of the efficacious influence of our great Master. As soon as I find that you are free from foreign matter I will either change it in some other way or ask you to stop, as the case may be. In this way, we soar up high by awakening and cleaning the chakras and the sub-points thereof, taking up kundalini at the end, with which the abhyasi has nothing to do himself. It is exclusively the outlook of the Master. But it must be remembered that while practising

these methods one should not force his mind too much but only sit in a normal way. This process of cleaning is to be repeated for about five minutes before meditational practice in the morning as well. Other ways of cleaning may also be advised according to the needs of individual abhyasis, and need not be mentioned here in detail. Suffice it to say, that the process of cleaning uses the original power of thought in the form of human will for the refinement of the individual soul to enable it to ascend the steep and slippery path of realisation of the subtlest Essence of Identity.

Every saint has used the word 'light' and I too cannot avoid it because that is the best expression for Reality. But that creates some complications, because, when we talk of light the idea of luminosity becomes prominent and we begin to take it as glittering. The real light carries with it no such idea. Under our system, the abhyasi, no doubt, sometimes sees light. But the glittering light appears only in the beginning, when matter comes into contact with energy. In other words it is only a clue that energy has begun to work. The real light has the dawn colour or a faint reflection of colourlessness. Although light is not the exact translation of the thing (because light is really far more heavy a thing than what that actually is) it has been expressed so merely for the sake of understanding. If the abhyasi begins to feel himself lighter and lighter, it means he is progressing, because in that case he is going into the state that God is in. Light means the loss of the weight of one's own thoughts. Thus the real Light refers only to the real substance, or more appropriately, substanceless substance.

All artificiality and misdirected emphasis guided by the abhyasi's own desires and preconceived notions prove injurious $\frac{3}{4}$ very often irrevocably. As such the visions of light, etc., are not to be artificially created or insisted upon. These may only be noted, when they do arise, without any feeling of personal attachment to any of them. The only object of personal attachment should be the Ultimate goal, viz., realisation, which is to be firmly held in view throughout; and this is to constitute the most reliable guarantee against any and every irrelevant diversion. One example of harmful misdirected emphasis, as already pointed out, is the insistence on concentration of consciousness, expected anxiously during every session of meditational practice by most raja yogic abhyasis. This

has played havoc in the history of yogic sadhana in India and elsewhere. Methods of ascetic austerities, penances and physical mortification usually applied for keeping the mind under control, do not relieve it of its misdirected trends. On the other hand, they only serve to keep the evil subdued within and it might at any time burst forth, when, by chance, the control is somehow relaxed. The real solution of the problem lies, not in controlling the mind artificially by suppression, restraint or mortification, but in its gradual moulding which is to relieve it of its misdirected trends. In this, and every other matter therefore, having the attitude of a sincere student, grasping and allowing everything to work and develop in a natural way, is to ensure the most speedy progress.

Generally I advise meditation on the heart at the point where you feel its beats. Meditation on other points can also be undertaken such as fixing the attention on the point of the nose or between the eye-brows, etc., but in my opinion, meditation on the heart is the easiest and most beneficial. There is a great philosophy underlying meditation on the heart. The heart is the pumping station of blood. It sends out purified blood to all parts of the body and to the smallest cells. Now we have taken the heart as the centre for meditation. The blood that runs through our system is affected. The solidity due to our own thoughts and actions begins to melt away. This is the first thing that we begin to gain from the first day by this method of meditation on the heart. It is the nucleus and creates the vibrant motion, wherever it is directed. This is the field for the mind to work and this is the instrument by which we develop the discriminating faculty. The subtle force works in this place for the descent of divine energy. If somehow our thinking conjoins with it, or we train it so that it may percolate the right thing and direct it towards Reality, the problem is solved. People may ask why it is necessary to proceed with meditation. The answer is quite plain and simple, that by meditation we gather ourselves at one point so that our individual mind may leave its habit of wandering about, which it has formed. By this practice we set our individual mind on the right path because it is now metamorphosing its habits. When this is done, our thoughts naturally do not go astray. The heart is the only point at which the connecting link between the animate and the inanimate is most

clearly felt. This is the reason why meditation on the heart is very useful. Further, heart is the field for the action of mind. Mind is always as it is. It is the heart which, as the field of action of the mind, is to be set right. Hence the most appropriate point for meditation can be only that wherefrom the current flows on, either upwards or downwards. It can only be the heart and nothing else. Trikuti (centre of the eye- brows) can also be taken for the purpose but that is not an easy job for common people as it requires more labour from the abhyasi. It may also give birth to many complications in due course if the meditation is not properly practised by the abhyasi. Meditation on the navel point has no spiritual value except that it causes a tickling sensation which finally makes the mind and passions all the more powerful.

At a certain stage of the development of faith in an abhyasi, we generally lay stress upon meditation apparently on human form. Critics may perhaps consider it suicidal to spiritual advancement. The case is not so, provided the man meditated upon is one of special calibre, who has come down from the Immortal Absolute for spiritual training, or has attained the spiritual standard of evolution required for the purpose by supreme self-exertion.

TRANSMISSION

By the grace of my Master I shall try to reveal a great secret or mystery which the people in general do not know. It is a great wonder when a great personality like Lord Krishna, Swami Vivekananda or my Master changes the entire course of a man's life. It is absolutely necessary for us to find out such a guide who can lift us higher and higher by his power. This mystery is known as pranahuti - the power of transmission. This is power working through the channels of pure mind. Pranahuti is effected through the power of will which is always effective. If a trainer in spirituality exerts his will to mould the mind of the trainee, it will be effective and yield excellent results. Many swamijis who start the profession of gurudom as soon as they put on the ochre coloured uniform, complain that although their disciples listen to them with interest yet they remain as crooked as the tail of the dog afterwards. The

reason is obvious. Either the swamiji does not exert his will or he has got no power. They prescribe many laborious and brain-taxing practices and leave their disciples to their own fates. Neither the teacher knows the result of the practices nor does the disciple care to use his discrimination. The result is grossness and dullness of intellect on the part of the disciple, and corruption, degradation and moral turpitude on the part of the gurus who are only conscious of their right to teach and quite unmindful of their duties and responsibilities.

Some sceptics may say that it is after all due to the person, who wanted to change himself, and the master or guru was the cause merely for name's sake. If Lord Krishna had such power why did he not change the heart of Duryodhana instead of bringing about the battle of Kurukshetra? They may also quote many stories wherein somebody taking a worthless person or even a lifeless object as a guide has become a great saint. But this does not hinder us in trying to find out Reality because God's ways are mysterious. Some are deluded by their own thinking and some are illumined by the Divine Grace.

The worthy trainer by the power of yogic transmission weakens the lower tendencies in the mind of the trainee and sows the seed of divine light in the innermost core of his heart. In this process the trainer uses his will-force which has Divine Infinite at his back. In a way he is conscious of That; and he just focusses it through the lens of his goodwill upon the heart of the trainee. The trainee may not feel anything in the beginning. The reason is that he is accustomed to feel only through the senses. After sometime, however, he may feel the results of such transmission, which also are in the form of subtle changes of the working of his vital parts and tendencies of his mind.

It is a matter of great regret and pity that this age-old process of yogic transmission originated and widely practised by our ancient sages has now gone into complete oblivion in the very land of its origin, where, today, only a few might feel inclined even to believe it. Some people try to ridicule it by misinterpreting it as nothing but mesmerism or hypnotism. The results of mesmerism or hypnotism are contrary to those of pranahuti. In these baser arts the hypnotiser uses his will-force with the backing of material

power. The will of the hypnotised person is weakened, and he finds himself dull and heavy-hearted, after he wakes up from the hypnotic trance. A disease may be cured or a particular tendency of minor nature may be suppressed to some extent depending upon the power of the hypnotiser and the submission of the hypnotised. But the effect does not last long. The hypnotic power is developed by some intense mental and physical practices using material things or mental images as objects of concentration. These practices often lead one to mental deformity or insanity and sometimes even physical deformities will be the result. A successful practice may, however, result at the most in the gain of some material power, which is limited and useful only for the gratification of some kinds of desires as long as it lasts.

Here I may assure you, that spiritual training for the attainment of higher stages is only possible by the process of yogic transmission and by no other means. Frequent references to this process in the present society of educated persons have led certain religious teachers to defend their inefficiency in this respect by explaining to the people that there is nothing peculiar about transmission. It generally happens that when you are in the company of a mahatma or a saint, you are to some extent relieved of your disturbing thoughts and feel comparatively calm for a while. This they claim to be due to the effect of transmission by the mahatma. Those who offer this explanation, mean only to deceive the public with a view to white-washing their incapacity. What they interpret as transmission is really the automatic radiation of the pious paramanus (fine particles) from the mahatma. It affects all those assembled there with the result that calmness prevails to some extent, so long as they are there. It is only a natural process and has nothing to do with transmission. It is not only from a mahatma or saint that such paramanus (fine particles) radiate, but also from everyone whether pious or wicked, saintly or devilish. If you are for some time with an impious or morally degraded person, you find impious paramanus radiating from him and affecting you, with the result that you find your thoughts flowing in the same channel for the time being. The effect of such radiation remains only for a little while and disappears when you are away from it. This is the reason why often religious teachers

are found to be making complaints of the indifference of the people to follow what they preach to them. They say that people, when they go back after hearing their upadesh (sermon) cast off then and there all they have heard, retaining nothing of it in their mind. I think it is not the people but the teacher or the upadeshak (preacher) who is really to be blamed for it, for he has not the capacity or power to transmit what he means to preach from the platform. But the power of transmission is a yogic attainment of a very high order by which a yogi can infuse by his will-force the yogic energy or Godly effulgence within any one, and remove anything unwanted in him or detrimental to his spiritual progress. He can exercise this power not only on those assembled around him, but on those too, who are away from him. The power can be utilised in any way or at any time. One who has got command over this power can, at a glance, create temporarily or permanently, a condition of mind which is far ahead of the existing condition of the mind of the abhyasi, and which, otherwise, will require a lifetime to be achieved. It is not a vain assertion but a bare fact and may at any time be practically verified by any one who pleases to do so. Sages have often, through power of transmission, changed the entire nature of a man at a mere glance. The wonderful example of the great sages like my Master Samarth Guru Mahatma Ram Chandraji Maharaj of Fatehgarh, Swami Vivekananda and others offer ample proof of it.

I have met the heads of many sansthas, and to my increasing surprise, I have found transmission sadly missing everywhere, so much so that to most of them it was quite foreign. Swami Vivekananda had, no doubt, that capacity but such personalities are always rare. Personalities like my revered Master are not accidentally born.

As a matter of fact, all of us are like beggars at the Master's door, having a begging bowl in hand, which the Master readily fills. But when the bowl is already full with things other than spirituality, the question of getting anything from Him does not arise at all, for, if anything is poured into it, it will flow out at once. The primary thing for us is therefore to make ourselves empty so that the bowl may be filled up with the Master's Grace.

DEVOTION

Constant remembrance, in fact, is a natural development of meditational practice and it acquires efficiency when the abhyasi has become devoted to the object of meditation or constant remembrance. It then ceases to be dry abhyas and becomes a luscious all-absorbing engagement. The fire of love and devotion alone burns down trivial trash, and wins the gold from the dross. The burning of love may, however, have three stages. The first is the suppressed smouldering giving out thick smoke. The second has occasional sparks in it; and the last one gives the bright burning flame, capable of reducing everything to ashes in a moment's time. The first two states are subject to their exposure to the combustible matter in the air. When the solidity which hampers combustion is removed by the effect of inner heating, the final action starts with full force. But then there is the electric fire as well, which bypasses the first two stages, and appears only in the final state, free from smoke and vapour. If you can light up such a fire within you, your progress shall be by leaps and bounds.

Devotion and love, of course, remain so easy and yet so difficult of achievement at once. Real devotion has no tinge of affection in it and goes hand in glove with enlightenment. In the initial stages the devotee may be conscious of his feeling towards the object of his love; but at higher stages the foam and fury is dimmed to the extent of an almost total loss of its awareness at the Ultimate stage. The superfine level of devotion may be spoken of as total self- surrender, from which the awareness of surrender has entirely been withdrawn by the grace of the Supreme Master Himself.

The problem of practising devotion, surrender, etc., in a natural way is there. For this purpose it is said that one can love another person of his own species best. So the guru is taken into account as the personification of the Supreme. In my case my Master was the only object of my love. I was not a lover of freedom or peace or perfection or any thing, but only of Him and Him alone. My Master was no doubt worthy of it, being the fittest man to be meditated upon and be devoted to. He was altogether free from egoistic feelings, desires and worldly entanglements, and devoted

wholly to his 'own self'. This phrase refers to a spiritual state of a high order not commonly bestowed upon man. That was the reason why I loved him as best as I could. I tried heart and soul to get myself merged in him in toto, and this had been the life pursuit for me. It was because I got a Master who was unparalleled and matchless. For the results achieved therefrom, I have no words to express. In a word He is the infinite ocean of Grace in which we have all to merge. May it be accessible to all earnest seekers!

SURRENDER

The easiest and surest means to achieve the goal is to surrender yourself to the great Master and become a 'living dead' yourself. This feeling of surrender, if cultivated by forced or mechanical means, seldom proves to be genuine. It must develop automatically within you without least strain or pressure upon the mind. If the knowledge of self is retained, even then it is not true surrender. What remains to be done when you have surrendered yourself in the true sense? Nothing. I believe that in this state an abhyasi will be in close touch with Reality all the time and the current of divine effulgence will continue its flow to him without any break. In this way you can solve your problem of life in the easiest and most efficacious way in the shortest possible time. Therefore, if one can give away his heart, i.e., make a gift of it to the Divine Master, hardly anything more remains to be done. This shall naturally bring him to the state of absorption in Absolute Reality. The adoption of this simple and easy technique makes the very beginning to be the end of it. What except a tiny heart can be the fittest offering for the achievement of the dearest object of life?

One thing more. To effect the surrender of heart in the easiest way, only an act of will is required. Besides, the lighter and finer the will, the more effective shall be its working. The adoption of this method is sure to bring in an attitude of renunciation from the very first day. A courageous start is all that is needed for the purpose.

Self-surrender is nothing but a state of complete resignation to the will of the Master, with total disregard of self. A permanent

stay in this condition leads to the beginning of the state of negation. When we surrender ourselves to the great Master we begin to attract a constant flow of highest divine force from Him. In this state a man thinks or does only that which his Master's will ordains. He feels nothing in the world to be his belonging, but everything as a sacred trust from the Master and he does everything thinking it to be his Master's bidding. His will becomes completely subservient to the will of the Master. Surrender is not an ordinary thing to be achieved easily. It begins after complete negation of all senses and faculties for which we proceed by elementary rules of devotion. We submit to our Master, thinking him to be a super-human being. We love him with devotion and faith and reverence trying by all means to attract his attention and favour.

Sages have classified disciples under two main heads: the manmat and the gurumat. The former are those who approach the guru with some particular worldly end in view such as relief from misery, desire for wealth, etc. They submit to him only so long as they are hopeful of satisfaction of their desires. When they meet disappointment in this respect they are off. For such disciples the question of obedience or submission does not arise, what to say of surrender. Gurumat disciples are those who obey the commands of the Master in all matters and try to submit to his will in all possible ways. Submission begins with obedience. When we are deeply impressed by the great powers of a Master of higher attainments in spirituality we feel inwardly inclined to follow his biddings.

A beautiful example of surrender is presented to us by Bharat, the son of Dasharath when he went to the forest along with the people of Ayodhya to induce his brother Ram to return. In reply to the entreaties of the people Ram gravely replied that he would be quite willing to return to the capital provided Bharat asked him to do so. All eyes were turned towards Bharat, who was himself there to induce him to return. But he calmly replied, "It is not for me to command but only to follow". Therefore self-surrender has great importance for an abhyasi in his pursuit.

CONSTANT REMEMBRANCE

Constant remembrance of God is of course, a special feature in spirituality. The method for cultivating constant remembrance is to think with firm conviction during your leisure hours whether in office or at home, in the street or in the market that God is pervading all over and everywhere and you are thinking of Him. Try to remain in the same thought as long as you can.

The minds of people are absorbed every moment in thinking about the various problems of their material life and their attention is seldom diverted towards God except when they are in deep distress and misery. The reason is that they attach primary importance to their worldly interests alone which constantly remain in their view. Thus they remain entangled within maya without ever thinking of getting out of it at any stage.

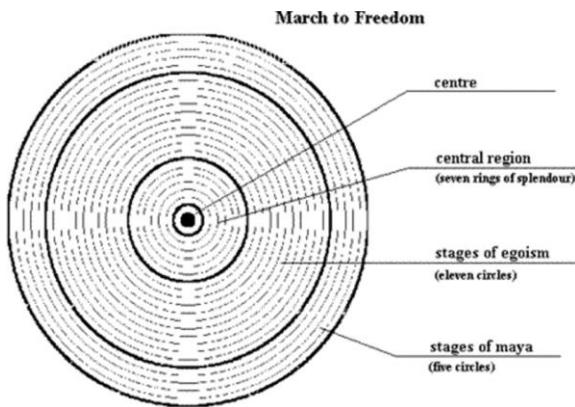
Frequent remembrance of God, though greatly helpful, is not all that we need for our final success in realisation. We generally begin an important thing in the name of God and it is customary almost in every religion to do so. But that is only a matter of formality and has no significance. We never dedicate the thing to God in the real sense and at heart we are in fact quite away from the idea of God. Remembrance of God thus is of no avail. The real significance of the custom is that we must remain in touch with the idea of God in all phases of our mental and physical activities. We must feel ourselves connected with the Supreme Power every moment with an unbroken chain of thought during all our activities. It can be easily accomplished if we treat all our actions and work to be a part of divine duty, entrusted to us by the Great Master whom we are to serve as best as we can. Some people think that constant remembrance or even frequent remembrance of God is not practicable when a man in life is surrounded by numerous worries and anxieties caused by worldly attachments and responsibilities. But practice and experience will prove to them that it is a very easy process and can be followed by any and every one in spite of all worries and engagements only if they learn to divert their attention towards God in the real sense.

The idea of guru as the Supreme Divine force is very helpful in spiritual pursuit, if the guru himself happens to be merged in

the Ultimate State of realisation. You depend upon his guidance thinking him to be a super-human being. If you go on with your busy routine of life dedicating everything to your Master, imagine what good will it bring to you in the long run. While doing a thing think that you are not doing it for yourself but for your Master, rather think that Master himself is doing it for himself. While at the breakfast table, you must think that your master is breaking his fast. When you go to the office, think that your Master is doing it all. While returning from the office, suppose you see an attractive dance on the way. Your eyes are caught by the charming appearance of the dancer. Then also think that your Master, and not you, is seeing the dance. You will at once lose curiosity for it because your Master's power will begin to flow in to relieve you of the temptation. When you come back from office, your children rejoice to see you after so many hours. You too enjoy the merriment and it is but natural. Your attention for a while is diverted towards them, and you feel a bit away from the sacred thought. What you are to do then is to think that your Master within is himself enjoying and you shall be in touch with the same sacred thought again. If you are chatting with your friend, think that your Master, not you, is talking to him. While walking, think that your Master himself is walking. Even during your meditation, if you entertain the idea that not you but your Master himself is meditating on his own form, it shall bring about excellent results. Similarly you can adjust yourself in all your routine of work. If you cultivate this feeling and maintain the outlook that your Master is doing every thing in your place, you shall not only be in constant remembrance all the while, but your actions will cause no impression whatsoever, and so you will cease making further samskaras.

STAGES ON THE PATH OF REALISATION

The highest point of approach or the final goal of life is a state of complete negation, nothingness or zero. I have tried to indicate this in the diagram.



The concentric circles drawn round the centre roughly denote the different spiritual spheres we come across during our progress. Beginning our march from the outermost circle, we proceed towards the Centre, crossing each circle to acquire the next stage. It is an immensely vast expanse. We take up the heart $\frac{3}{4}$ which is the nucleus $\frac{3}{4}$ for meditation, and go on with it till the goal is attained. There are five points or sub-centres in this heart region which we pass through in the course of our journey. At each point, the following four conditions are felt, in this order:

1 A peculiar state all over, awakening within the mind a consciousness of the Divine Force pervading all over.

2 A Divine State prevailing everywhere, absorbed with its remembrance.

3 Neither the feeling of the divine force nor that of remembrance, but only a feeling of negation.

4 Everything gone. No impression upon the heart, not even that of existence.

These four conditions are experienced in every region and at every point. Under the Sahaj Mārgsystem of spiritual training, everyone passes through them; though perhaps only the more sensitive ones are able to feel all the conditions in their minutest details. These conditions go on getting more and more rarefied as we proceed through the various sub-centres from the lowest to the

highest. When we cross the fifth point, our passage towards ajna chakra (cavernous plexus) becomes straight. The condition at this point is peculiar. From this point, the energy which we consume is diverted towards the lower regions. During our journey to this point, the major condition which one experiences is a feeling of something like shadowy darkness. This is only a clue to show that we have finally to go beyond light. Its real nature pertains neither to light nor darkness but to a dawn-like colour.

After crossing the fifth circle of the heart region one enters the mind region. The eleven circles of this region depict the various stages of egoism. The condition gets subtler and finer as one progresses through them. There are innumerable points and knots in each of these circles. In the ordinary course, it would require a whole life-time for going from one point to the next but for the wonderful yogic process of pranahuti.

By the time we reach the sixteenth circle we are almost free from egoism. The condition here has rarely been attained even by the greatest sages. As far as my vision goes, I find none except Kabir who could have secured approach up to this stage (16th circle) apart from my great Master who had attained stages far beyond the limits of human approach. After this circle, what remains in one is a mere identity, still in gross form.

Before reaching this point we pass through the virat region of the sahasra dal-kamal (the lotus of thousand petals.) It is from this region that virat roop was brought to Arjuna's vision at the time of the battle of Mahabharat. It is the macrocosm. Here we begin to experience to some extent a changeless condition which we may call Brahmagati or state of the Divine. In the course of this march, we pass through and cross various centres having their own particular conditions.

After crossing the seven rings of light of the central region, one enters the vast and limitless expanse, the Infinite, and starts swimming in it. Here the guru's assistance is still needed, since even the subtlest force of the swimmer in the act of his heavy swimming sets up waves of energy that erect a barrier against progress. Only the experienced, capable and watchful guru helps in settling the waves and teaching the swimmer the art of light

swimming which is almost akin to floating but still is not floating which type of swimming does not set up opposing waves. The guru also helps to keep the swimmer from slipping into enjoyment of the state of light-swimming which will impede further progress, and takes him on the further journey.

Now we reach the sphere of the dormant Centre which also seems to be enclosed by something like a ring, which is the last. For the sake of expression and experiment, I once made an attempt to enter into it; but a sudden, strong and forceful push threw me back, though I was able to get a moment's peep into it. This has made me conclude that this is perhaps the last possible limit of human approach. I wish every one to have access up to it, and beyond it if at all possible. The form of gross (dense) identity $\frac{3}{4}$ as I called it $\frac{3}{4}$ has all the time been getting finer and subtler up to the last possible limit. We have now secured a position which is near-most to the Centre and it is the highest possible approach of man. Here we are in close harmony with the very Real condition.

When one gets in close touch with Bhuma, the Ultimate, or God in the Absolute State, what or where he is, is beyond his understanding. Complete merging into the Centre or the Almighty is however not possible since it is essential to maintain a nominal difference between God and soul.

Such is the extent of the possibility of human achievement which one should fix his eyes upon from the very beginning if he wishes to make the greatest progress on the path of realisation. Very few among the saints or yogis ever had any conception of it. In most cases, the farthest approach was up to the second or third circle. It is unfortunate that even at this very early stage they sometimes considered their achievement to be very great. I have given all this only to enable people to judge the so called great Doctors of Divinity who are said to have attained perfection and are generally accepted as such by the ignorant masses who judge their worth only by their outward appearance or elegance.