

LETTERS AND PRAYERS

Swami Yatiswarananda

**Sharada Sevika Mandali
1969**

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

SRI SHARADA SEVIKA MANDALI is an association founded by Revered Swami Yatiswaranandaji during the Birth Centenary year of Sri Sarada Devi in the year 1953 with a group of 5 girl students. From the time of its inception the Mandali has been working towards the welfare of women and children and runs the following institutions:

1. Sri Sharada Balika Mandali – a cultural and recreational centre for girls.
2. Sri Sharada Kutir – a cultural and residential home for working women.

By the blessings of Revered Swamiji and through the grace of God the Mandali has been able to acquire a building recently on the Ranga Rao Road close to Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama. The Mandali proposes to put up a structural building as a memorial to Sister Nivedita. The Mandali has also plans to build a Library and Reading Room for women and children in memory of Revered Swami Yatiswaranandaji.

'The Way to the Divine' published by the Mandali last year received a very warm welcome at the hands of the readers and reviewers. Sri Sarada Sevika Mandali deems it a privilege to now bring out a second publication by Swami Yatiswaranandaji: 'Letters and Prayers'.

Revered Swamiji had left a file with Dr. Prabhu Shankara. It contains extracts from letters written by the Revered Swamiji to his disciples. They were written by him in the year 1935 while he was at Wiesbaden, Germany, on his Vedantic Mission. The title marked on the cover sheet of the file reads – 'Spiritual Instructions' – Compiled from the letters of Swami Yatiswarananda. Obviously, the compilation was made by the Swami himself choosing such parts of his letters as would be useful to genuine spiritual seekers. The Swami had also expressed his desire that these let-

ters should be published in a book form in due course It is in deference to his wishes that the task is undertaken after a lapse of several years.

Revered Swami Yatiswaranandaji was interested in the whole man. He wanted his disciples to live happily and to realise the highest Truth. He took personal interest in the physical and spiritual welfare of his disciples and was father, mother, friend and guru – all in one. It was his most humane interest in and love for his fellow-beings which impelled him to write long letters to his earnest disciples, explaining the various stages in God realisation and affording solutions to the doubts and difficulties one encounters in this quest.

The words which we find in this book are not merely words, but the fruits of his personal experience which he graciously gave to his disciples with affection in the form of letters.

At the end of the book are collected a few of the prayers which Revered Swamiji used to recite at the commencement and conclusion of his lectures and discourses. Revered Swamiji was very particular that spiritual seekers must be regular in their prayer and meditation. Letters and prayers, which are recorded in this book are full of life and make us feel that Revered Swamiji is with us at the time of our daily prayers and talking to us through of the letters.

The Mandali is grateful to Dr. Prabhu Shankara and Shri N Krishnaswamy for help in bringing out this book. The Karnataka Co-operative Publishing House and its Manager, Shri Hanumanthe Gowda deserves our thanks for early and neat execution of the printing.

May this book be a guide to the disciples of Revered Swamiji and to all spiritual seekers is our earnest prayer.

B. C. INDIRA
Secretary

Bangalore
January 26, 1969

C o n t e n t s

Publishers' Note.....	3
Spiritual Struggles	7
Be Definite.....	12
The Divine Presence – 1	18
The Divine Presence – 2	25
The Divine Presence – 3	33
On Japa.....	46
Intensity Needed.....	52
Direct Your Energy Properly – 1	60
Direct Your Energy Properly – 2.....	65
The Ideal In Practice	67
Verification Of Experience	69
Attain A State Of Balance	75
The Finite And The Infinite.....	80
PRAYERS	85



Swami Yatiswarananda

1

SPIRITUAL STRUGGLES

Our human personality consists of both good and evil. The evil is to be eliminated step by step and the good fostered. In the course of the evolution of the soul, both dormant good and evil come up. The aspirant should face the reality and should try to control lower manifestations and stimulate the higher expressions of life. Let us profit ourselves even by our mistakes and instead of brooding over them too much, let us strengthen ourselves and avoid their recurrence, by all means in our power. Let the slip make us humble, and more and more dependent on the Divine, who is the real source of our strength and support. When we turn to Him, we become conscious of our divine nature and feel purity and sublimity.

When we draw ourselves away from Him, we become more egocentric and fall away from the higher path. Instead of taking our stand on the ego, let us surrender to the Divine, and make Him the centre of our consciousness. And then ethical and spiritual life becomes easy. We should have more of prayer, Japa and meditation, when the lower tendencies come up. It is then that we should be more calm than at other times.

Everyone in the East or in the West has to pass through struggles. In the East the spiritual and ethical culture has been maintained in an unbroken way. This helps some aspirants, no doubt, but there are many who do not profit by it at all.

During the course of the soul's progress, instinctive goodness passes through conscious goodness with struggles and then to natural goodness without any conflict. So conscious struggle is a stage in our evolution and does not necessarily mean a set-back. This however does not justify all forms of backsliding.

Partial success in our moral and spiritual life gives us an incentive towards greater and greater success, but it should never make us think that perfection has been attained. It means that

although we have made some progress in purifying ourselves by controlling our lower nature and tendencies, much of the impurities and evil tendencies are still here and are to be controlled and finally eliminated.

All along the period of our ethical and spiritual practice we must have an abiding faith in our potentialities, in our capacity to move nearer and nearer to our goal. But we should never take the potential to be actual, unless it has been fully realised in life, unless it has brought about a complete transformation in our thoughts and activities.

We should always bear in mind, that with the money we get in dream it is not possible for us to buy food and appease our hunger in the actual empirical world.

The strength of a chain is to be judged by the strength of its weakest link, and so our capacity to stand evil company or association is to be judged by the response we make towards it during our weakest moments. We should therefore be on our guard, trying to protect ourselves, as much as possible, from evil influences, and should also put forth every effort to strengthen the weakest links in our character through right thinking and conduct, through self-analysis, prayer and meditation.

We must also try to intensify our faith in the Divine, who, as Ramakrishna very aptly says, comes towards us ten steps, if we try to move towards Him one step. The mother allows the child busy with its play to go on with the play, but she has to rush towards the child who is tired of play, has begun to cry for the mother and also to crawl towards her. Such is also the case with reference to His devotees who want to approach Him in their weak, human ways.

We sow the wind and have got to reap it as whirlwind. All the suppressed whirlwinds will come up. All the bad pictures lying hidden in the mind will get developed sooner or later. We have got to “face the brute”,¹ see things as they are, and then see the Divine in all things. In Him is all this play of Maya going on, hiding Him altogether from view. We have got to see through

this Maya. Our spiritual practices which include also the performance of duties develop a sort of mental x-ray by virtue of which we are able to see the phenomenal nature of things and also the Reality appearing as the phenomenon.

It is a hard long struggle which appears to be never ending. The more we advance, the subtler and stronger becomes this struggle. And in the course of the merciless self-analysis which we have to pass through, most awful things are revealed—things to which ordinarily we give big, high sounding names. All our so called selfless relationships and human feelings and sentiments are more or less based on self. Even our love for God, devotion for God-men and affection for fellow-devotees are to a great extent based on selfish considerations. But at the root of all these, there is always a Divine element which is mixed up with much of non-divine things. The gold is to be separated from the dross. This is the task of spiritual life.

By noticing the different elements in our sentiments and also the reactions of these sentiments on the mind and the centres of consciousness, we can very often find out their true quality and value. Feelings associated with the higher centres which naturally imply lower thought-planes, may be debased into passion of the worst kind. Hence we must always be on our guard during our association with people. And men and women, as you know, are not always what they seem. The more we study ourselves and others with greater scrutiny, the more do we realize this fact, sometimes to our sorrow.

Really speaking, we have no security on the plane of mere

1. There is an anecdote behind this phrase. One day, as Naren (future Swami Vivekananda) was returning from the temple of Mother Durga in Benaras, he was pursued by a troop of monkeys and fled, fearing that they might harm him. Suddenly he heard the voice of an old *sannyasin* calling out to him, "Stop, always face the brutes!" Naren turned, his fear gone; seeing him defiant the monkeys fled. In a lecture given in New York, years later, he referred to this incident and pointed out the moral of the story in this wise. "So face nature! Face ignorance! Face illusion! Never fly!" — *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, Advaita Ashrama, III Edition 1944.

sentiments however essential they may be for the evolution of our soul. Our feelings must be based on the Divine Consciousness and also connected with it. Then alone do we get real stability and become free from fear. Of course we can attain to this ideal only by proceeding step by step, by passing through many a failure and defeat.

The Lord's grace is on us, though we do not deserve it. We should pray to Him to protect and guide us all in the midst of all our strivings and struggles and take us nearer and nearer to Him.

Simply by giving up this world physically, we cannot become pure in thought, word and deed all of a sudden. First avoid the deed and then the word, though the second is more difficult than the first. The greatest difficulty lies in attaining purity in thought. This is the case so long as we remain on the plane of relative morality—in which both good and evil are realities—in which we try to avoid the evil and bring in the good. Owing to the old tendencies and impressions, the evil wants to slip in and sometimes succeeds in coming in. With an effort of the will we have got to replace it by good thoughts. This tug-of-war is inevitable in every case. Only as we advance, the struggle becomes subtler and subtler, and having risen above the plane of gross or crude forms of good and evil, we have to deal with their subtler forms.

During all these struggles both on the gross and subtler planes, we should try to dwell on the holy thought as much as possible and thus drive away the unholy one. But sometimes the imagination grows morbid and the unholy pictures become very vivid in spite of ourselves. In such a case while repeating the holy word, and trying to think of the holy thought, we should take the position of a "witness", a spectator towards the evil thoughts and detach ourselves from their entanglement. During moments of forgetfulness we may identify ourselves with the evil thoughts and feel affected both mentally and physically, though not actually doing the bad. But as we become more and more watchful and practice non-identification, we can keep them at a distance even when they make their appearance before us.

Under certain circumstances it is not possible to prevent the rising of the thought, but through practice one can look upon it as one would do in the case of a mirage, the unreal nature of which one has already found out. The phenomenon cannot be stopped, but it may be seen just as phenomenon, something having the semblance of reality, but truly unreal in its nature.

And in order to realize the unreality of the phenomenon of names and forms, we must try to see the Divine, to think of the Divine lying at its back, at least. As we succeed in recognizing the divine Principle at the back of all physical forms, we are able to remain really unaffected by them. If in the course of the struggle we cannot help feeling more or less affected by them, we should not brood over the lapse, but try to think of the Divine as much as possible. Even if one is defeated, one should say with Swami Vivekananda:

*"..... unending battle –
That verily is His sacred worship;
Constant defeat, let that not unnerve thee;
Shattered be little self, hope, name and fame;
Set up a pyre of them, and make thy heart
A burning ground.*

And let the Mother (Shyama – Kali) dance there."

I am glad you are realizing more and more the immensity of the spiritual struggle. Simply by remaining in a nice mood for some time we do not solve our spiritual problem. It is like having a pleasant dream. It is very good to have such an elevating dream. But through it we must realize the superconscious state that transcends the waking, the dream and the dreamless sleep. Let us always remember Sri Ramakrishna's parable of the "Wood-cutter and the holy man,"² and move onward and onward, till we reach the ultimate Goal.



2

BE DEFINITE

Both good and evil belong to the relative plane. There is a difference between good and bad, but both belong to the relative plane, the plane of phenomena.

The thin cloud reflects the light. The dark one also does, but very little. And when the thick cloud becomes thin, then it reflects the light all the more. The real substance is not the cloud, neither the thin nor the thick one, but the light. Both the thin and the thick clouds only limit the light, i.e. the cloud is the limitation that must be got rid of.

Even when we speak of God and the soul, this is a limitation, but the highest form of limitation. Since we are still on the staircase and not on the terrace, we should always think of the higher parts and the lower parts, stressing the steps very much now, but always remembering that our goal is beyond all steps, beyond the whole staircase.

So long as we worship, so long as there is the worshipper and the object of worship, even in the subtlest form, it is dualism. Monism is a state, an actual experience, but all these steps take us slowly to the final realization. It is a graduated course.

So, now, we need not worry about the One without a second, about getting merged into the One, but we should see that

2. The story of the wood cutter and the holy man: A wood-cutter once went to a forest to gather wood. A *bramhachari* said to him, 'Go forward!' He obeyed the injunction and discovered some sandalwood trees. After a few days he reflected, 'The holy man asked me to go forward. He didn't tell me to stop here.' So he went forward and found a silver mine. After a few days he went still further and discovered a gold mine, and next, mines of diamonds and precious stones. . With these he became immensely rich. Through selfless work, love of God grows in the heart, then through His grace, one realizes Him in course of time. God can be seen. One can talk to Him as I am talking to you. — "The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna", Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras.

we bring the One into many. You need not be afraid of getting merged as this will take millions and millions of years. So there is no imminent danger of your losing yourself and getting merged into the One.

In the path of devotion the aspirant always has something to support him, and all need an amount of personal support, a holy Personality to some extent.

If you feel that you are drowned in an infinite ocean of Consciousness, you feel that your personality is something subtle that has become gross.

Think that both the vast mass of Light, your Object of worship, and the small particle of light are drowned in a vast infinite ocean of Light. First we think more or less of the body only, and there is only an indefinite idea of the Principle of Life standing at the back of ourselves, of everything, then we begin to stress the Principle of Life more than the body and try to see the Divine spark living in all bodies giving life to all bodies.

It is possible for a devotee to love the Formless as much as God with form. This is only a question of temperament. In this, there are three steps:

- (1) With form and with attributes.
- (2) Without form and with attributes.
- (3) Without form and without attributes.

In the greatest Incarnations and prophets you see a manifestation of the purity, knowledge, love, etc., that are God's. And as the nucleus of our small personalities there is this same purity, knowledge, love etc., but all covered with ignorance. Our personality is a combination of the true self and the false self. The spark of light forgets its light-nature and identifies itself with the cloud-nature, and then all the troubles and miseries of life would arise.

The body may be the centre of our consciousness. The mind may be the centre of our consciousness. The little soul may be the centre of our consciousness. The Infinite may be the cen-

tre of our consciousness. And our whole attitude, all our actions and thoughts depend upon what centre of consciousness we have chosen, and where we have our centre of gravity.

All our thoughts and ideas and imagination must be clear-cut, definite, not hazy and vague. Very often the church-goer goes to church and tries to pray there to something hazy, indefinite, vague, feeling himself to be nothing. But when he comes out again he stresses his personality all the more in his everyday actions and thoughts and does not believe himself to be nothing. Our prayers, our worship, etc., must be directed towards something definite, be it in the form of a human personality or in some other non-human form.

So long as we take our personality to be real, we must also take other forms to be real and have a holy Personality to centre our thoughts and feelings upon. This may be a Christ, a Buddha, a Ramakrishna, etc.

Dreaming forms part of our spiritual culture, but we cannot go on living on dreams eternally. There must come a time for every aspirant when he must be wide awake.

We have got two forms of consciousness. We make the soul the centre of our consciousness and feel the Infinite in that, or we make the Infinite the centre of our consciousness and feel the soul as a manifestation of this Infinite. Making our soul the centre of our consciousness, we feel this Infinite in the soul. Making the Infinite the centre of our consciousness, we feel that the soul is its manifestation. We come to feel the infinite ocean of Life, joining, combining every point of the circle.

At the beginning, this may be an imagination, but ultimately it becomes an experience.

As regards our spiritual practice, we must be very definite, do away with all hazy thoughts and feelings. If you are able to catch the Formless, do it by all means; if not, take hold of the form and realize the formless in the form, next realize the Formless in yourself, then the Formless in all.

There are some devotees who, in a certain mood, would have the form and the attributes, and in another mood the formless with attributes. At every step we must be in touch with the Divine, whatever be our mood.

Sri Ramakrishna was very fond of a Sanskrit passage:

“When I think of myself as identified with the body, I am Thy servant, and Thou art my Master, my will is controlled by Thy will.

When I think of myself as a *jiva* (individualized soul) as distinct from the body, I am the part and Thou art the Whole.

When I recognise the spiritual Principle in me as distinct from body and mind and *jiva*, I realize that I am one with the Divine.”

During all our practices we must take a definite standpoint from where to proceed.

A dualist with experience is infinitely better than a monist without experience.

There are some aspirants who are not satisfied with having only one form of meditation. They think of the infinite Ocean in which there is the worshipper and the worshipped. The devotee thinks more of the Divine than of himself. Then he tries to think of the Principle in the object of worship and in himself. The next step will be that both these are getting merged, that the bubble and the wave are getting merged into the infinite Ocean.

So long as there is even the slightest clinging to personality, one passes through all these births. When this clinging stops, then the water-particle becomes one with the ocean. But, now, we need not worry about getting merged.

Before we die, we must get at least some glimpses, and then move on. If in this life, we do not succeed, begin again and again, move on life after life, till you reach the goal.

If some day we are going to realize the Self, why not try to

do it now? So the ideal of Vedanta is to realize Truth while we are alive.

“Until you fall asleep, until you die, busy yourself with the Vedantic thoughts.”

The human soul is creative and bound to create something. And if you do not consciously direct this creativeness along the proper channel leading to higher forms of creation, it will be creative on a lower plane. The best way to control the harmful activity and creativeness of the ordinary person would be to give his energy a higher turn. There is physical creation, mental creation, spiritual creation. Why not go in for the higher and the highest forms?

The Westerner is a fighter, so let him not only fight on the physical plane, but also on the ethical and the spiritual plane. Instead of fighting one's enemies outside oneself, let one fight the enemies inside oneself.

In the West there is so much of inventive genius on the physical plane, why cannot something be had on the ethical and spiritual plane too? The Westerner wants dynamism, but let him have dynamism on a higher plane. Let him create something higher.

Very often without doing the compulsory figures, we want to become fine free-skaters. But this most troublesome figure-skating is to be done first; otherwise we shall never become excellent free-skaters. But this is what we are always trying to do in spiritual life.

Just as this physical world is real, the thought-world is real; even more real than the other. The more important thing is the thought, but so long as the mind is outgoing, we do not grasp this fact. First comes the thought, then the physical world.

Unless the thought rises, there is no physical action. The thought plays a greater part than the body, but we think that the body plays a greater part than the thought. Really speaking this whole physical world of ours is only a small part of the thought-

world.

First there is the sense of existence; then comes the thought and then action.

It is only when we rise to the plane of consciousness that we give anything the right place. So consciousness is a reality of the first order, thought of the second order, action, physical action, of the third order. We must never lose sight of this fact.

First I am, and then I think, and then I act. But ordinarily, our way of thinking is just the opposite. I can exist without thought, I can think without action, but I can never act without being and thinking.



3

THE DIVINE PRESENCE – 1

I am very glad to learn that you are finding joy and peace in your spiritual practices. Please be always regular in your meditations and readings, as also in the fulfilment of the duties of life. You will find greater and greater illumination and happiness in consciously living for the higher ideal and being more and more wide awake in a spiritual sense.

It is a rare privilege to have yearnings for Divine realization, and particularly to get the opportunity to follow the path in a clear and definite way. We all should feel thankful to the Divine for this blessing, and pray to and meditate on Him in the very depth of our being.

Please set apart some time for the study of the holy literature every day. Clearer and deep thinking on what you read will help you not only intellectually, but also spiritually.

It is not possible for us to have always ready-made good mental atmosphere. So we should try to create a nice atmosphere about ourselves through right thinking, right feeling and right activity. And then wherever we go, we carry that atmosphere with us, and remain greatly uninfluenced by the evil influences of the world.

During Japa along with repetition of the holy name, the devotee should also think of the form of the Ishtam or of the formless form, associated with the sound symbol. The centre of consciousness is part of an Infinite Consciousness that pervades our entire being, nay, the whole universe and exists even beyond it without any limitations. First, the sound and thought go together and then sound gets merged in the Divine idea and consciousness. As you go on with your practice, you will realize more and more what it means.

There are more approaches than one to the Divine. We too

accept Christ, but as you know, having read the Life of Rama-krishna, we regard Him as one of the manifestations of the divine. The whole universe including ourselves are manifestations—ordinary, imperfect manifestations. The Christs, Buddhas, Ramakrishna—we regard as perfect, special manifestation of the Eternal—Logos, the Eternal word of the Vedas and the Bible. This idea is common to both the Easterners and Westerners. And the perfect manifestations are meant for showing the Light and Truth to the imperfect manifestations. The Logos or Word is one impersonal fact. In its grosser manifestations it becomes personal or human. These manifestations may be many, but that which manifests itself is one. We may accept all the greatest manifestations, or some one or more of them. But all of us must be true to the One and Eternal that incarnates itself from time to time for the good of the world.

If a Holy Personality as distinct from the Principle behind the personality appeals to you, you may worship and meditate on Him—but this should be a stepping stone leading to the realization of the Principle.

In due course the Absolute—the Impersonal Being you are trying to meditate on, will reveal to you that He again is manifest as the personality—that He, the Transcendent is also the Immanent. And He is to be recognized in the perfect manifestations as also in all imperfect manifestations. In this matter there is no question of Eastern or Western as the Divine transcends all limitations.

It is very difficult to get the company of spiritually-minded people. So we should try to keep the company of the Holy Personality, when the sense of personality is strong in us and the Impersonal is beyond our reach. Can you learn how to talk to your Ishtam? You will find it a great help. We are all general manifestations while the Divine Personality is a special manifestation. We may love and talk to the Divine Personality, and even to the Personal Impersonal that manifests itself as the Holy Personality and also as our small personalities.

Please draw up a regular routine noting time for meditation, studies, writing work and household duties and also for rest.

When we think of the Holy Personality—first comes the form, then His noble feelings and ideas and finally His spiritual consciousness. In Him we first see the link between the individual and universal consciousness, and then we realize the same link in ourselves, though in a less striking way. Again, at the beginning, we stress the individual and recognize the Universal which permeates it. Later on, we put greater stress on the Universal and regard the individual as the manifestation of the Universal. Finally both the Universal and the individual get merged into the Transcendental which is spoken of as the One without a second.

After some time, contact with the Divine—the Impersonal who manifests Himself as the Personal is to be made your central thought. We have to feel the touch of the Divine within our soul, and also to try to see Him—or rather feel His Presence in all beings, without, however, creating any moral confusion. We should value the good since it manifests the Divine more, and should avoid the evil, as it hides the face of the Truth.

During Japa you should try to think also on the Divine, having at the same time the feeling that the holy vibrations and thoughts are making your body and mind pure and calm, thereby enabling you to feel the presence of the Divine in you and outside you more and more definitely.

Meditation on pure Consciousness is the best, next to it is meditation on divine attributes, and next to it is meditation on the holy form, of course, calling up the holy attributes also.

By trying to look at the body from inside and thinking of the spirit animating it, our sense of personality is positively minimized in case both thought and feeling go together.

Again, try to apply this process of looking from within, in the case of the forms which appear in the mind and create troubles. The outward form of ours as well as of others—is associated with desires and passions which seem to disappear the moment we come to have the inward view. Face plays a great part in our

body-consciousness. We may look at the face also from within. It becomes easier for us to see the Divine in each form by approaching it in a spirit of veneration.

First, we have got to develop the personality and then we must dissolve it, as it were, into the impersonal. Out of this impersonal will then arise a pure personality, always conscious of and dependent on its origin. It is this that becomes a true instrument of the Divine.

Changes of Mood

It is always a source of great joy to come in touch with the Divine in us, our true Self and Being. Having come back to one's real home in the Divine, the devotee is at first unable to contain the joy. But for further growth and higher experiences it is essential to control even the feelings of joy and blessedness to a great extent, to surrender oneself heart and soul to the Divine and to feel the Divine contact both within and outside. Of course, the centre of one's consciousness and being is within oneself, but there comes a time when the barrier between inside and outside seems to be disappearing and we feel a Divine Presence, in which all the things, including our personality, have their existence and being.

Now, you have got to make your new experiences normal and natural. And this can be done by controlling the noblest feelings to a great extent and making the Divine Presence and joy permeate your whole life and personality.

Please see that you perform the duties of your life with scrupulous care and nothing is neglected even for the sake of enjoying the inner bliss. You should by no means develop abnormal religious psychology. It is our ideal to make even superconsciousness natural to us, to be wide awake, calm, controlled and active in a higher sense.

There are rises and falls even in the movement of spiritual growth and consciousness and we must be prepared for both and should remain unaffected as much as possible by both ela-

tion and depression. What I mean is that we should have a lift of inner balance and harmony, always remaining on a higher plane of consciousness. When our soul is in tune with the infinite, we find even a greater joy in controlling our joy.

Please have infinite faith in the Divine—our true self— the Self of all.

Through the blessings of the Lord, you have known the way and have also got the glimpse. Without wavering, now please follow the path and realize the Truth fully, proceeding step by step, slowly and steadily. There are many difficulties and pitfalls on the way. Without worrying about small slips and falls, the aspirant should march onwards, making the Divine the centre of one's being. To such devoted souls failures are pillars of success. They pass through many a trial and come out of it victoriously in the end.

You may feel depressed at times. This is unavoidable. On such occasions please try to establish the inner contact with the Divine and the mood of depression will be replaced by the higher mood.

You should always try your best to maintain the inner contact with the Divine. There may be natural rise and fall in the mood, but if we try to remain in tune with the infinite, something of the higher mood always remains with us. At times it even appears to disappear. Do not feel upset. Calmly and quietly raise yourself, to the higher plane of consciousness and re-establish the contact and then everything will be all right.

Sometimes owing to our past impressions coming up to the conscious plane from the domain of the subconscious or unconscious where they lie hidden, there may be mental and even physiological disturbance. This is very troublesome and annoying. But we should not get unbalanced. We must take things as they come, having the attitude of the witness, try to see the Divine in them — realize the Eternal Medium in which all sensations, all vibrations, all thoughts have their play. And then the Divine becomes real in the primary sense and the forms appear

to be shadows and lose their attraction and charm. When this is done, mental and physiological harmony will be regained. If you find that the brain gets clouded, pray to the Divine and meditate on Him, try to feel that the real soul in us is like a Divine spark that is a part of the infinite Ocean of Light and then the higher mood will again return.

Every one of us has got to pass through ups and downs, rises and falls. Let these changes bring home to us the necessity of rising higher and higher until we reach that state when we go beyond the “gunas” and attain to the Transcendental.

Having got the glimpses of the Light, let us think of it even when we pass through darkness. The memory of the Light does not leave us, when we do not see all its reflection. This is a great help to the aspirant who has got even just a little glimpse.

We have all to pass through ups and downs, rises and falls and should try to hold on to the Divine under all circumstances. Japa is a great help during the mood of depression. One finds great relief in repeating the holy name audibly to oneself. You may hum it to yourself and also try to think of the Divine when you feel an inner void and restlessness. When the bliss of realization is not available we have to be satisfied with the joy of thinking of Him—the Beloved—the *Soul of our soul*.

When we are in a personal mood and long for coming in contact with human personalities, the Divine Personality gives us a great support. The bubble finds a great support from the wave, when the Ocean, which is more real than both, appears to be more or less an abstraction. Through the touch of the wave it again becomes conscious of its connection with the ocean.

You should not under any account be sorry or depressed for the change of mood. It is natural. Now through steady practice you have to make the experience your own. We have to bring the Superconsciousness into our conscious state, to realize the One in the many, to manifest divine knowledge, purity and unity, on the mental and physical planes. This is a question of time, if we follow the spiritual path steadily.

Please try to be regular in your spiritual practices, as well as in your readings and duties and gradually a remarkable transformation will come over you.



4

THE DIVINE PRESENCE – 2**Different Counsels**

Please take some regular physical exercise every day. If you can go out for regular walks, well and good. Otherwise you may have some indoor exercise, suited to you. Swami Brahmananda told me many a time that physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual development must proceed all together. We have found this instruction very helpful. So long as we have a body and have to make use of it as an instrument, we must know how to take care of it.

Through practice, one may be able to continue something of the meditation mood and maintain something of an expansive consciousness even during walks, being at the same time wide awake and alert, so as not to meet with any accident on the way. We should not be like the astronomer who was walking looking at the sky and fell into a well.

It is not a pleasure to mix with all kinds of people. But at times it cannot be helped. So we need a new balance of mind and the maintenance of the higher mood in the midst of the manifold activities of life. During spiritual practices we may be able to realize a higher form of consciousness, but unless we succeed in continuing it, at least something of it, at other times also, our case is like the man who got plenty of money in dream, but could not buy any food with it in the waking state.

Bad atmosphere affects us naturally. We cannot help it always. But we should try to remain unaffected as much as possible. We should so attempt to strengthen ourselves that we may stand on our own strength. This becomes possible to the extent we try to be on a high plane of consciousness and remain in touch with the Infinite, of which we are parts and from which we are inseparable.

The dividing line between light and darkness on the phenomenal plane is very thin. In our mind there is, as it were, a switch; when turned to the right it gives light, when turned to the left, it makes everything dark. So the devotee should take particular care in turning the switch in the right way, even in a bad atmosphere where the mind automatically tries to turn it in the opposite direction.

We should have a certain feeling for the Impersonal. But we also should have feelings for individuals through the Divine, as everything reflects His glory. Behind our human connections there is the Divine connection, behind all human relationship there is the Divine relationship. So our feeling for all should not be allowed to die, it should be transmuted. It is the Divine glory that shines through all human feelings and sentiments then. This is expressed in the Upanishads grandly:

“It is not for the sake of the husband that the husband is loved, but for the sake of the Self that the husband is loved.

It is not for the sake of the wife that the wife is loved, but for the sake of the Self that the wife is loved.

It is not for the sake of the sons that the sons are loved, but for the sake of the Self that sons are loved.

It is not for the sake of everything that everything is loved, but for the sake of the Self that everything is loved.”

During the period of transition and transformation one may pass through a little indifference for the time being. But if one holds the ideal clearly before oneself and scrupulously follows the duties that are to be fulfilled, one gets back the essentials of the old feelings in a transmuted form, in which only attachment is eliminated, and the love for the Divine and love for the others through the Divine are retained and made stronger.

One should steer clear between two dangers. One is to love with human love and falsely call it the Divine. And the other is to be too indifferent to even the right feelings and be negligent of

one's duties. Both are harmful to spiritual growth.

We should always avoid living on mere abstractions. The money we get in dreams is of no use for buying food in the waking state. Thoughts, however grand they may be by themselves, unless they can be related to life, have no special value. We must have something definite to hold.

It is impossible to satisfy all people. If some disagree with us, many will be with us. Anyway, we have to do what we think to be right, considering all points. Sometimes I go so far as to say that if we can please everybody, then there must be something wrong with us.

In order to be of service to others—the Divine in manifold forms—let us try to reflect the glory of the Divine by our life. Then silence becomes more eloquent than eloquence itself, and if speaking be necessary, it too will prove effective and helpful.

I have realized more than ever, that the first thing we should do is not talking, but trying to live the life and make a passage in the world of thought for the flow of the spiritual current that manifested itself through Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples. They fertilized the mental soil of India with their intensive spiritual thoughts which were already there to some extent. The mental soil of America was also prepared, though on a small scale, by Swami Vivekananda and his brother disciples. What the great ones did on a big scale elsewhere, we small ones must do in our own limited way (in Europe). This is the immediate task before me and you all—the devotees of the Lord. Side by side with this, we should, of course, begin a little work also, as we are doing—at least trying to do.

Self-surrender

We have to be of service to others. Further, we have to practise self-surrender to the Divine in us and outside us. At present our personality is a combination of the lower or false self and the higher and true self. As we grow spiritually, the lower self is more and more eliminated, and the higher one more and more mani-

fest. That which is real in us can never be lost. Through the loss of the lower self, we gain the higher self more and more.

Let us wish strongly for spiritual progress and Divine realization in a general way, but leave details to the Divine. As we do not always see things clearly, we cannot but think in certain ways and even make plans. But all these are to be ultimately left to the Divine. We should gradually learn to be in tune with the Divine and to follow the divine will. There comes a time when we wish only what is in accord with the Divine and act accordingly.

We hear the inner voice truly to the extent we are able to be in tune with the Divine in us, to merge our will into the divine will. To the extent the infinite is stressed more and more, and our finite self is realized as a manifestation of the infinite, the divine will asserts itself and we hear the voice. But there is the great danger to take our own voice to be the Divine voice. So whatever we feel to be the Divine voice should be put to the test carefully, and verified not merely through reason, but also by repeatedly hearing it. The inner voice does not contradict reason, but transcends it. One having a pure passionless life alone can hear the voice correctly. In these days it has become a fashion to hear the inner voice, and most of these cases are of a questionable nature.

Everything is the play of the Divine. He comes to us in different forms. It is He who comes as the teacher in order to give instruction, and he again comes as the pupil with a view to receive instruction. Let us try to be in tune with the Divine and witness the Divine play, and even become His playmate. All this becomes possible only if we are able to establish our union with Him in the very depths of our being. May the inner Teacher—the Divine in us—the Teacher of all teachers, ever inspire us and guide us all.

We are feeling a greater inner freedom through the spirit of renunciation. It is the right attitude, which should accompany the outside act that unburdens the soul. And in this, non-attachment to the things of the world is the most important factor.

One who is poor should not wish for more than what is nec-

essary. One who is rich should supplant the sense of possession by that of trusteeship, and make the best use of what the Divine keeps under one's charge. This is true of material, as of intellectual and spiritual resources. One should however, exercise great discrimination even in making gifts, whatever their nature may be. One should clearly know to whom to give, how much to give, and also when to give. The devotee of the Lord gets the right direction at the right time.

The three states of Spiritual Consciousness

The progress of the soul is always through ups and downs, through light and shade, through rises and falls in the higher mood. When we pass through the lower mood, we have to continue our spiritual practices and studies with an effort of will, even if we feel dry at heart. When holy company is not available, we have to keep the company of the Lord, trying to maintain the contact by means of Japa. Meditation on a holy personality like Buddha, Christ or Ramakrishna, and thinking of the form, attributes or spiritual consciousness associated with that person proves to be a great help when one passes through dull days. As the mind is not able to maintain the Divine contact on the plane of the impersonal, it is to be kept in touch with the Divine through the personal and even through the holy form. When we pass through the dark days, we come to stress our form and personality more than at other times. And so we should hold on to the holy form and holy personality, in which we can see the Divinity more manifest than in ourselves.

Whenever the physical world becomes more real than the spiritual world, our body has already become more real than our soul in our consciousness. As a matter of fact, there is first of all a fall in our consciousness, and then we become more conscious of the physical body and then of the material world.

With an effort of will we should try to rise to the higher centre of consciousness. Thinking of the holy luminous form in that centre and dwelling on the attributes along with Japa is a great help at this hour of need. Even if we do not succeed in awaking the

higher consciousness, we stand midway between the higher and lower forms of consciousness, entertaining the strong desire to rise. And this itself is a great gain. We have got to keep on doing this, although it means a great tension, and then the old higher consciousness comes back to us. We do not even feel the tension very much, if we are regular in our spiritual practices.

The aspirant should always try to be in touch with the Divine in some form or other. When we identify ourselves with the body, we should think of the holy form of the Divine personality and look upon the Divine as Master or Father or Mother or Teacher. When we consider ourselves as individual souls, we have to look upon ourselves as parts of the Divine who is the Whole. If at some blessed moments we are able to think of ourselves as Spiritual Consciousness as such, we rise above all sense of body and personality and get lost in Divine Consciousness, like the salt doll of Sri Ramakrishna's parable, which wanted to fathom the depth of the ocean, but got itself lost completely in it.

The holy name, particularly the mystic symbol OM, is a great manifestation of God—the all-pervading Being. Taking hold of this manifestation through Japa, the aspirant comes in touch with Him.

The entire phenomenon including the plane of thought, the plane of sound and also the plane of gross matter is a manifestation of the Divine. As we advance, we develop the capacity to recognize the Divine Presence in all forms of expression. Taking any of these, as you find so strikingly in Ramakrishna, the aspirant can come to the Divine, in case he passes from one link to another from the gross manifestation to the subtle and so on, until the ultimate Reality is reached.

Sometimes without trying to untie the “Gordian Knot”, please cut it boldly. If the higher mood and consciousness awake you will find that the knot which seems to be real from a lower form of consciousness is only an appearance and truly speaking there is no knot to be cut even. But again when the lower consciousness returns, the knot is there too—the knot is real and its cutting also

is real. In one state of consciousness it seems to be real, in another it ceases to be, yet in a third, it is recognized just as an appearance without a substance and we need not take it seriously. After having known the illusory nature of the mirage, one is not tempted by it, even when one sees it.

One knows the Maya to be Maya. May the Divine Mother not delude us with Her Maya. We should try to remain in one of these three spiritual moods:

- (1) Dwelling on the Unity merging the individuality in it.
- (2) Try identifying oneself with the Infinite and then feeling the personality only as its manifestation.
- (3) Thinking of oneself as an individual and then feeling the Presence of the immanent, all-pervading Principle, the Soul of our soul,, on whom the soul is fully dependent.

So long as the ego persists, let us be connected with the Infinite Divine as in 2 and 3. Let it never be allowed to be more real than the infinite Self.

“O Lord, while I identify myself with the body, I am Thy servant. When I consider myself as an individual soul, I am part of Thee. And when I look upon myself as the Spirit, I am one with Thee.”

In order to strengthen the sense of unity, you may repeat some of the monistic meditations. Usually please try to soar step by step: From 1, the holy Form with the noblest attributes pass on to 2, the Formless with the attributes. From that move to 3, the pure Being, without form and without attributes.

And when you come back, do so in the reverse order and you will find that the soul always gets the Divine support and connection even when the body-consciousness becomes strong.

There are two kinds of reasoning – analytic and synthetic. In the analytic reasoning we follow the process of involution – in which we move from the effect to the cause. In synthetic reasoning we proceed from the cause to the effect.

In analytic reasoning we proceed saying “not this, not this”. We follow the process of elimination or negation of the phenomenal until the absolute is reached. As Ramakrishna puts it: The Absolute is not soul (not the finite individual soul). Again it is not the world either. The Absolute is the only Reality, all else is unreal. This is the monistic stand point.

In synthetic reasoning the attitude is one of all-inclusiveness, of affirmation. Brahman manifests Itself as souls and the world, which as it were, forms Its body. And hence all the three are to be taken into consideration. “We see that the kernel belongs to the same substance as that to which the shell and the seeds belong.” This is the central idea of what is called “qualified non-dualism”.

Sri Ramakrishna’s experience is this: Truth as such is beyond all reasoning, beyond both dualism and non-dualism. Having attained to the terrace, he knows that the terrace is different from the staircase and other approaches, all ultimately leading to the terrace.



5

THE DIVINE PRESENCE – 3**Our True Self**

The secret of successful ethical and spiritual culture is to look upon one's self as a spiritual being, pure by nature and self-luminous in its essence. Through meditations we have to drive this idea into the very depth of our consciousness, and then the pure and self-luminous nature of the Self is manifest even in body and mind, as we find in a Ramakrishna to a wonderful extent.

Let those who want to weep over their sins do it by all means. Let us, on the other hand, think of the Divine, the ever Pure, the Atman, the Brahman, the eternal Self and assert Its glory within us. Let us always try to remember, even when the mind is clouded, and inclined towards evil, these wonderful words of Swami Vivekananda:

“The soul is infinite, omnipotent and omniscient. Stand up, assert yourself, proclaim the God within you....Teach yourself, teach everyone his real nature. Call upon the sleeping soul to see how it awakes. Power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come and everything that is excellent will come, when the sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity.”

Brahman who is immanent, is also transcendent. Think of Him as the living Presence in you and everyone. He is the infinite Existence and Consciousness of which all individualized existence and consciousness are but manifestations. These manifestations do not exhaust Him—the Infinite. He remains infinite in spite of the manifestations.

We are inseparable from this Infinite. He is the origin of all our finite consciousness. He is the Soul of our soul. If the higher consciousness becomes a little awakened in us, we can love Him even more intensely and intimately than we can love a person

and even ourselves. Retaining our individuality—regaining our pure individualized consciousness—let us come in touch with Him in the depth of our being, awaken that inner intuition—that pure, Self-conscious love which makes the worshippers lose themselves in the Worshipped.

Until one attains to the absolute purity of a Ramakrishna, the phenomenon of evil does not cease to exist. On the higher planes of relative morality, one may forget all about the evil, but it may make its appearance as it gets the opportunity owing to mental dullness and lack of watchfulness which come to one when thrown on the lower plane.

Moral and spiritual evolution always progresses through ups and downs, rises and falls. So at one time we are in wonderfully spiritual moods (*sattva*), and then another time we experience awful restlessness or dullness (*rajas* or *tamas*).

Dullness is to be overcome by healthy activity and the active mood by one of balance, poise and illumination. And this is the way to go beyond “*gunas*”, of which I have spoken in the introduction to the “Divine Life”. Change of mood is quite natural. But it is our ultimate task to conquer this nature and go beyond it. Conquering this second nature we must realize our primary, unchangeable absolute nature—our true Self—the Infinite, Existence, Knowledge, Bliss Absolute.

Our true Self is the Divine, call Him Brahman, Atman, whatever you please. When we forget this true Self and identify ourselves with the body and the mind or in other words with the false self—the personality as distinct from the Principle—we become the plaything of nature called Prakriti or Maya. In such a state of consciousness we take the objective phenomenon to be real as much as we do the subjective phenomenon of our personality, and more constantly swayed by opposite currents of thoughts and feelings. The egocentric individual is really like a play-ball in the hands of a capricious, arbitrary force. But he can rise above this insecure state by being in tune with the Infinite, the Divine—his true self, and striving his utmost. An individual struggle and

effort without the conscious dependence on the Divine may or may not succeed. But all attempts at higher life made by the aspirant by establishing contact with the Divine—his true self—and depending on divine will and grace are crowned with success sooner or later. It is always safe to depend on the divine will and power. A devotee should always go in for “Cosmic-centric” struggle instead of the egocentric one. The true higher self is the friend of oneself, while the false lower self—the ego—is the enemy of oneself.

Preparing the Instrument

In order to do any form of spiritual practice, both the body and the mind must be made fit. If one tries to undergo any spiritual practices in a violent manner without fulfilling these conditions, disastrous reactions cannot be avoided. Even if the right thing is done by the wrong person, and in a wrong manner, troubles are unavoidable.

Take plenty of physical rest, give both body and mind as much relaxation as possible and practice a spirit of self-surrender to the divine will that lies at the back of our individual wills.

Spiritual aspirants should try to perfect their bodies and mind through the performance of the duties of life, with graduated ethical culture and spiritual practice. And it is when the instruments are ready the spiritual practice may be intensified, but not otherwise.

So without thinking too much of the goal, one should rather follow the path. The instrument of God-vision is first to be made and perfected, and then God-vision becomes an accomplished fact as a matter of course. When the telescope is ready, the vision of the distant stars and planets becomes an accomplished fact in no time.

Intellect and feeling and also will can be combined by rising to the plane of the soul and not by taking one’s stand in the intellect or any one of the faculties.

The Right Approach

No spiritual practice is to be done by reading of it from books. One may, of course, read books by way of getting information, but we should know which ideas to take up and which ones to leave to themselves. We may read of various practices, but we should not attempt them without knowing first of all which are good for ourselves. We may know of many approaches and this expands our mental outlook. But we should know which is the right approach for us. During the period of experiments we should proceed slowly, noticing the physical and mental changes that take place in us and adjusting ourselves accordingly.

The right method followed by the wrong person brings about bad results. Hence the aspirant is expected to be properly qualified, but in modern times anyone may get any book, read about some practice, follow it and also come to grief. Instructions always differ with individuals and what is, as we say, nectar to one, may prove to be poison to another. Each one must follow the law of one's being, and adjust oneself securely to one's mental and physical environment. If the superstructure is built on the right foundation, it stands all right. Otherwise it tumbles down.

Inner and Outer Guru

The real Guru, who reveals to us the Truth, is in our own heart, and he is no other than the Divine Himself. His message very often comes through some person, who also is called guru. So the Divine is sometimes called the Guru of gurus. We should not expect much from the outer guru, but should try to be in tune with the inner Guru—the Divine in us—the Soul of our soul and draw knowledge and inspiration from Him. You may look upon your Ishtam (the holy personality) appealing to you most, as the embodiment of the Guru of gurus.

Both the teacher and the pupil should try to be as much impersonal as possible. This becomes possible if the teacher tries to see the Divine in the student, and the student also the Divine in the teacher. One should try to think of the other not as a person, but as the manifestation of the Principle and oneself also

as such. This is the beginning of practical Vedanta and then the ideal compasses everything, and every being, later on.

The Lord comes to me in the form of devotees and I should try to see Him more in them than their personalities. The student also should recognize the divine Principle in him who brings the message and also in oneself who receives it. It is then that the spiritual teaching becomes fruitful, and one is able to realize the same divine Presence in all. You want to practice Jnana Yoga and here is a real step towards the real Jnana.

Divine Principle

Personality, whether of the God-man or of any ordinary individual, has no reality of its own ultimately, though it certainly has empirical reality, since we feel it. We should learn to feel the Principle also and feel it to be more real than the personality. The time has come when you should stress this point, but without, in any way doing violence to yourself. Try to remember it, whenever you find it possible. It does not matter if you forget it at other times. The ideal can be realized only in due course by passing through ups and downs.

In the midst of the changes of life try to think of the Changeless, the ever-present Divine in you. Like the mariner's compass, let the mind always turn towards the North-Pole at all hours and places. In each personality there are two—the individual soul and the universal Spirit.

Try to be in touch with the universal Spirit. Or, if you are in a “personal mood”, take the Divine with you, let your Ishtam accompany you in your journey and keep you company, protect you from all harm and bring peace to your soul, wherever you go.

Qualified Non-dualism

Try to feel that you are a part of the Infinite and be always in touch with It. Try also to recognize the same divine Principle in all personalities—in husband and children, in relatives, friends, and strangers as well. The more you succeed in associating the Infinite, the divine Principle, with your personality and all personali-

ties, the more will your emotions be sublimated and purified and you will be naturally calm, steady and wide awake.

I shall send you books that will give you a correct idea of the various ways of approach to the Divine. To begin with, it is enough if one looks upon the Divine as the Whole, and the individuals as parts. First, we have to grasp the One in the many and then alone will come the question of the One without a second, the central idea of real monism.

Monism

I trust you find your talks to your Ishtam really useful. It is nice, that you are able to repeat with fervour: “He is the one divine Being, hidden in all beings....” If you feel embarrassed to repeat: “I am the light of the Self....” then drop it for the present. Otherwise you may continue to repeat such passages along with the previous ones. It is good to stress unity.

The bubble is not the ocean, not even the wave. It is the substance of the bubble—water, that is one with the ocean, the same as the ocean. We can take the monistic standpoint only when we can think of the spirit as distinct from the form. When we cannot do that, we may think only of the immanent aspect. Meditations on the immanent prepare us for approaching the One without a second.

[These are some thoughts of the devotee on reading the above passages: “Your own will is all that answers prayers,” speaking from the monistic standpoint. The monist, giving up all the limitations of his personality and identifying himself with the Infinite, sees everything and every being as the manifestation of the Self, the “I”, the infinite Consciousness.

It is not the “little you”, but the “big You” that answers prayers. The microcosm and the macrocosm are not different. So God and the devotee are not separate. God in one form is the worshipped, and He again in another form is the devotee. He, as the devotee prays, and again

He as the worshipped responds.

On the relative plane we feel we are different from God. The prayer rises from our little soul, but the response comes from God, from our higher Self, and not from our lower self.

So by the “you” that answers the prayer, is meant not the small you, but the big You. Here is the standpoint of the monist, who holds that the One appears as the many. Our soul is like a point, and God is the infinite circle. The circle appears as points. The circle as a point prays, the circle as circle responds. To give another analogy, the ocean becomes the bubbles without losing its ocean-nature. So the ocean as bubble prays, again the ocean as the ocean responds to the prayer. The Infinite as finite prays, the infinite as the Infinite answers the prayer. And according to monism, our little “I” or “You” is a manifestation of “infinite I” or “You”. So I pray and I again answer my prayer, you pray and you again answer your prayer. This is the idea underlying the pithy sentence.]

You need not give any thoughts to psychic experiences at all. Through the unfoldment of higher consciousness you would have more and more of the experience of the infinite Presence in your soul and then you would feel also the Presence in others as well. To the extent to which we become pure in thought, word and deed, do we come to have this realization.

But so long as we are on the relative plane and are conscious of our limited existence and think of ourselves as personalities, our personality is real to us and as such we should worship and pray to the Divine —our higher Self. Really there is no conflict or contradiction as the standpoints are different.

You should not worry about the monist’s attitude. Yours should be the attitude of the devotee. To you religion is, as Swami Vivekananda in one of his lectures says—“The eternal relation between the eternal soul and the eternal God.” The highest ideal of devotion he speaks of on page 58 of the “Inspired

Talks”: “Day and night think of God and think of nothing else so far as possible. The daily necessary thoughts can all be thought through God.” Again he says on page 177: “Giving up the desire of pleasure and pain, gain or loss, worship God day and night.”

But as I told you and also wrote to you, the aspirant should proceed slowly and steadily. Before one can begin to run, one must learn to walk. Body and mind are to be properly trained through the performance of the duties of one’s life, through moral culture, prayer and meditation at fixed hours. And then only it is possible for the devotee to worship God day and night through all forms of activities, physical and mental.

With our sense of individuality which is real to us now, we should try to pray to the Divine and worship Him as well as we can. And the response comes from the Divine, our higher Self or God, who manifests Himself as Buddha, Christ or Ramakrishna.

Harmony of the paths

Jnana and Bhakti are to be blended, but different individuals may have these in different proportions.

You will have both Jnana and Bhakti combined—a harmony of the paths of knowledge and devotion, as you have both the elements in your nature. Your Bhakti is to be tempered with Jnana.

Ramakrishna and Vivekananda

Ramakrishna is the silent cloud and Vivekananda is the thundering cloud. One represents the static aspect and another the dynamic aspect of the same spiritual power. The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna stresses Bhakti too much, but this stress is necessary for most people. You get an idea of the Jnana aspect of Ramakrishna in the second chapter of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Vol. 1.

Law of Growth

Life consists of a series of rises and falls. One should not get too much elated during the rise, nor too much depressed during

the fall. And at all hours one should try to be in touch with the Divine within and outside. In this lies the secret of the balanced state.

Again it is not enough if we have the highest ideal before us. We must know also that as we cannot reach it all of a sudden, we should have ideals that serve as stepping stones leading towards it. This holds good as regards moral, cultural, and spiritual practice. We have to pass through the lower regions if we want to attain to the summit. This is a point we should never lose sight of.

Since spiritual growth is a slow transformation, no great results can be expected until we follow the path patiently for some good time. By trying to do too much in a fit of enthusiasm, we only do harm to ourselves and retard our progress. We should never try to imitate Ramakrishna in this respect. He could afford to have a tremendous yearning and undergo super-human disciplines as his body and mind were exceptionally fit for spiritual strivings.

Conditions for Success in Yoga

The aspirant should always bear in mind these passages of the Bhagavad Gita which Sri Ramakrishna as well would have said: "Success in Yoga (spiritual practice) is not for him who eats too much or too little. To him who is temperate in eating and recreation, in his effort for work, and in sleep and wakefulness, Yoga becomes the destroyer of misery."

Work and Worship

At first there is a difference between work and worship. Later on work too becomes worship, and the whole life one of undivided consecration.

Work and worship must go hand in hand. Both of these effect the purification of our mind and help us in the unfoldment of the higher consciousness in us, and so they are to be looked upon as twofold forms of spiritual practice. At first we should try to make our activity as much selfless as possible, offering the fruits of our work to the Divine. Later on, we learn to work as instruments in the hands of the Divine. Learn to work, maintaining

something of the meditative mood, that inner balance and poise which comes to one after a good meditation.

Inner and Outer Life

There should be a good co-ordination between intellect, feeling and will. Further there should be a balance between the outer life and inner life, between our active life and thought-life. A balance between the inner and outer life is to be attained by everybody, may be in different proportions.

You have to be true to the “kindred points of heaven and home,” without trying to soar too high and without attempting to avoid facing the realities of life, even if they are unpleasant.

Try to be in tune with the indwelling Spirit—the real Guru—and be inspired and directed by Him in this play of life.

It is hard for the rich—for those who think they are rich—to enter the kingdom of Heaven. Those who have wealth may replace the sense of ownership by that of trusteeship. Inner renunciation is more important than mere outer renunciation. As Swami Vivekananda says: “True knowledge (Jnana) teaches that the world should be renounced, but not on that account abandoned. To live in the world and be out of it is the truest renunciation.”

Most people suffer because of the discrepancy between the spiritual aspiration and the grim reality one has to face in the worldly life. This suffering by itself is not an evil. It may be even for one’s good, if it acts as an incentive for finding an inner adjustment by means of which one may gradually feel that one is not really of the world, even if one has to live in the world.

In a certain sense we all get what we deserve. We wish for a thing, we get it, and along with it also the good and evil inseparably follow it. We seek some forms of happiness and then as Swami Vivekananda says: “The happiness comes putting on the crown of misery.” We cannot accept the one without the other.

We wish for the satisfaction of some worldly desire. We may get the object of desire but we get also the trouble associated with it. Our present state is the result of our past worldly desires

and of our present desires. Let us learn to be as desireless as possible, to adjust ourselves to the circumstances that we ourselves have brought about and then rise above them. Let us work out our destiny and learn to depend on the Divine more and more as we work out our Karma. Then the world becomes a training ground. Through it we pass on to the Divine. Even then we may continue to remain in the world outwardly. But really speaking we are no more of it. We are the Lord's wherever we be.

Karma

Certain forms of Karma are to be worked out through suffering. We should feel somewhat relieved for suffering indicates that so much of the burden of the Karma is reduced. Besides, the helplessness brought about by suffering may be utilized spiritually by practising self-surrender to the Divine all the more. In pain and pleasure, in life and death—the Lord is our own. He is the Soul of our soul, the Life of our life.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say that diseases are the taxes we have to pay for living in the body. We have to pay these taxes sometime in good instalments. And then for sometime there may be a respite. The Master was often heard to say during his great illness: "Let the body feel the pain, O my mind, do thou remain in bliss."

Move onwards without trying to run too much. We have to work out the Karma that has begun to bear fruit already. If we try to escape it, we have to pay for it with compound interest. God-realization is certainly the Goal, but this can be reached not merely through spiritual culture, but also through the proper and necessary action or improper and unnecessary action. Hence we should be careful both about the inner ideal and outside action. Proceed slowly and steadily, exhausting your Karma, being in tune with the Divine within and also careful about what you do. We must correct ourselves always both on the thought plane and on the plane of action.

Attitude towards the World

We very often expect too much from others and when we cannot get it, we feel disappointed. What can poor men do? We have a saying in Sanskrit—"Having drunk of the wine of ignorance, the whole world has become mad." So the mad world will and can behave in only a mad way. But it is a greater madness on our part to expect the mad to act in a sane way. Instead of getting angry, we should be sympathetic towards those who do not know what they do and cannot control themselves out of helplessness, even if they know it.

Holy Association

Sometimes in the course of our spiritual progress we are likely to develop a sort of unhealthy introversion. This is to be avoided by going in for holy association among other things; I mean, by coming in close contact with spiritually-minded persons, who are following more or less the same path, and comparing notes with them.

Our individual consciousness is to be brought in touch with the infinite Consciousness. This is the surest way of resolving the whirlpool in our minds. When Divine contact is hard to achieve the company of spiritual souls and talks with them help a good deal. Some day all the devotees in Switzerland should know one another. People with morbid introversion want to avoid others; those with morbid extroversion seek others' company just for gossiping and killing time. The true devotee maintains a balance between inner and outer life, and seeks the company of the spiritually-minded, discusses spiritual matters and strengthens his faith by learning from others. That is why Sri Ramakrishna used to advocate the meeting of devotees, as you find in the "Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna".

If one can be in tune with the Divine always, no holy company may be necessary. Otherwise, association with fellow-aspirants is very, very necessary for spiritual progress.

Holy Personality as Manifestation of the Divine Principle

Try to have contact with the indwelling spirit in you. He is the Soul of our souls and the real Guru. Whenever you feel the need of holy company, please think of the Lord, and also repeat His Name if you so wish. He is the power behind us all, and without Him we are nothing.

When you come to think of anyone in a personal way and feel it to be so, call up the thought of your Ishtam and merge all thoughts about the person into Him, his form also into His form. And in and through Him may you realize the Formless also. We all meet in Him who manifests Himself as the holy personalities.

The universal Principle in His infinite mercy and compassion manifested Himself as different holy personalities. He is drawing us towards Him. Some may be drawn towards one holy personality, while others towards other holy personalities, but all ultimately come to reach and meet in the same Principle—our common Back-ground.

So long as you do not find anyone to talk to about things spiritual, learn to talk with the Lord. It will be a source of great blessing to you, you will see. May He always inspire and guide you. I wish you to come in touch more and more with the personal impersonal aspect of your Ishtam, and be more and more impersonal, looking upon yourself more in terms of the Atman—the Spirit—than in terms of the personality, the body and the mind. You may read every day a few meditations like this: “I am neither mind nor intellect, neither memory nor ego, etc”.

You may pray to the great personality who appeals to you, looking upon the personality as the manifestation of the divine Principle. You may also take His name, if you want to, when you pray for inspiration and guidance. The more you advance, the more will you feel Him to be the indwelling Spirit, the Soul of our souls—the Soul of all that exists. He is as it were the channel through which you approach the divine Principle—the Infinite and the All-pervading.



6

ON JAPA

As in material affairs so also in spiritual-matters we should be perfectly clear and definite in our thought and action.

Very easily the modern man says: "Oh, God is everywhere!" But when we really try to think of this, we find we cannot. All this hazy idea, like those of the so-called worshipper of the formless God who when he comes home from church, simply busies himself with his bodily relations as he cannot think of and have dealings with God Who to him is indefinite, abstract.

When we have got strong body-consciousness, when we take our personality to be the only reality, we need a holy personality for our spiritual practice and growth.

On a lower plane the Absolute becomes abstract, although it is real on a higher plane. And remaining on the lower plane of form and personality as we do, we cannot counteract all bad and unwelcome pictures and thoughts that rise in the mind, by means of abstract ideas. We must be able to raise opposite good and holy pictures and thoughts to counteract them, and here comes in the necessity of a holy personality in whom we find our highest ideas realized. We need a definite holy form, so long as we consider our forms to be real. But at the same time we must find a connecting link between the form and the formless. Form is only a manifestation of the formless. The holy personality is a manifestation of the ' Principle that stands at the back of all.

The holy personality serves as the connecting link between the finite and the Infinite, and understood this way it satisfies the head and the heart. The intellect wants the Infinite, the feelings want the finite, and in the holy personality we find both, if we see it in the right light, i.e.as manifestation of the Principle of which the personality is always conscious.

Visualization plays a great and important part in spiritual life,

especially at the beginning when we are still on a lower plane, the plane of form and pictures, taking them to be real.

The holy forms are always to be looked upon as luminous and living, forming parts of an infinite ocean of Light.

Think of the holy form as rising out of an infinite ocean of Light, and after that, if you want, you may think that it again gets merged into this infinite ocean of Light.

As the mind of the aspirant grows, it comes to have very vivid imagination with reference to everything – good, bad and indifferent things. And the best way to counteract the bad imaginations is to have good imaginations which must be made even more vivid and strong than the others.

The holy personality calls up in us the sense of purity, the sense of divinity, and at the same time connects us with the Infinite, the Formless, the one Principle in which all things have their being.

In calling up this holy form, one may take the help of the sound symbol, and holy name or Om. And this may be used first with reference to the form and then also to the formless.

Every time when your mind threatens to be out of balance, repeat the sound and try to think of the holy form in the centre of your consciousness. The sound is a symbol of divinity; the form also is a symbol of divinity. We take the help of both the symbols to call up the divine consciousness. With the help of the holy personality, we try to realize the Principle, manifesting itself as name and form, and we begin to feel that we too are a manifestation of that Principle.

After getting a glimpse of the immanent in the holy personality, we get a glimpse of the Divine in ourselves and also in others. We have to learn to see the Divine in all forms, good and bad, without, of course, losing the distinctions between good and bad. Then the bad ones cannot affect us at all. And we should try to see the Divine not only in the forms that lie in the physical world, but also in those that rise in the mind.

For those who do not like to dwell on the form, the only way is to recognize the Divine in oneself, and also in others. The body is a temple in which dwells the soul, and God is the Soul of the soul.

One point is always to be borne in mind: We should stress the soul more than the body and God more than the soul. The body is the dwelling-house of the soul, and God is the Soul of the soul. If you do not stress this, it becomes idolatry. Even idol-worship with reference to a holy personality is far better than worship of our body.

The immanent aspect of the Divine is to be stressed very much, and without realizing the immanent aspect it is not possible to realize the transcendent.

Visualization plays a very important part in the spiritual life of the beginner. And in all this visualization a luminous and living form is to be called up. The infinite ocean of Light takes shape as the holy personality.

In Tantrika Sadhana there is a way of thinking: The aspirant, after taking his seat, tries to fix his mind at the centre of his consciousness; thinks of it as luminous, thinks that this luminosity forms part of an infinite ocean of Luminosity into which he merges his gross body as well as all physical forms, then his subtle body as well as all subtle forms, and finally his causal body as well as all causal forms, and tries to think of that one undivided ocean of Luminosity that is living, being the Source of all life, that is conscious, being the Source of all consciousness. Then he tries to get merged into that. And if one could do this really, if one could really dwell on that, not as a mere imagination, then one gets Samadhi, a high spiritual consciousness. But most people have to be satisfied only with the thought of the unity. Even that is helpful. Next, you think that out of this infinite ocean of luminosity rise your own form and also the form of the holy personality you have chosen as the object of your worship.

Think of your body as a luminous body, i.e., make the old body perish, and come to have a new body, fashioning it out of

this luminosity. This is one of the steps in higher Tantrika Sadhanas with unity at the background. Being forgetful of one's own form, one should worship the divine personality.

One may dwell on this form along with the repetition of some holy sound symbol, and when one is not in a meditative mood, one may go on with Japa, repeat the holy name or symbol a thousand or two thousand times without any break. It does not matter even if it is a little mechanical. Practising this way, one may later on find meditation easier. Meditation is the extension of Japa. Japa is meditation with breaks and in a way meditation is Japa without breaks and of course, a more intensive process. In Japa we have sound and thought with breaks, in meditation thought alone without breaks. If we want to have meditation, we must go on with Japa. There cannot be any jump.

Hold on to the sound and think of the meaning. If we are able to do this for some time, great steadiness would come. Then our muddled brain would become somewhat clearer, our thinking and feeling would become more definite. Japa removes many an obstacle and prepares the aspirant for meditation.

Whether you feel inclined or not, do it, go on with it. Why should you stop it, merely because your mind does not feel inclined to do it? Why own defeat? Why be deceived by your own mind? Go on repeating the holy name or sound symbol and thinking of the ideal it represents, and never allow yourself to be defeated. Go on repeating it, so that your ear may hear the sound, and your mind may dwell on its meaning.

The holy sound gives a sort of support to the mind. When there is any great trouble, one should try to be a little calm and introspective, and should pray to the Divine from the very bottom of one's heart. Why allow yourself to be swept off your feet when any trouble arises? The moment you let go the chain, you are lost.

When there is absolutely no help, the Divine is the only help, and by the Divine we mean That, which is in us, the Soul of our soul, the Soul of all.

In our stage, Japa is one of the most important practices. And it takes us nearer and nearer to the Soul of our soul.

Sri Ramakrishna says:

“Each Japa is like a link of the chain, and holding this chain, you reach the very end of the chain, that, to which it is fixed.”

So it is proceeding step by step, as it were, holding on to the chain and never letting it go, and then in course of time, we reach our goal. The sound calls up the thought, the thought brings us in touch with the Divine.

And if Japa does not appeal, then you may have some prayer, constantly repeating this prayer, making the sound audible, audible only to your ears. And also think of the Divine. Your prayer should not be aimless; it should be directed towards the Divine.

Even when we seem to be swept away, let us try our best to hold on to the chain. Very often we magnify the danger that threatens us. Afterwards we find that we have been enlarging it too much with our vivid imagination. The situation may be bad but usually it is not so awful as we suppose. Very often it does not take such an awful turn as we imagine. And even if matters are really awful, why give up the struggle and allow yourself to be defeated without any resistance? Always go on with your Japa, your prayer in such cases and try to meet the situation as well as you can. Even if you are defeated, your defeat will prove to be a stepping stone to success.

When the storm is raging, we should hold on to the chain, Japa and prayer. If you do not you cut yourself away from the higher forces and allow yourself to be defeated by the lower ones. And then you have to suffer.

When you try to be in tune with the higher forces, you may find the discrepancy between higher forces and the lower forces, no doubt, but then you do not feel any discrepancy between the higher forces and yourself. On the other hand, if you identify

yourselves with the lower forces, you find the discrepancy not only between the higher forces and the lower ones, but also between the higher forces and yourself. So you come to have a double discrepancy. The discrepancy between the higher forces and the lower ones cannot be avoided, but there need not be any discrepancy between the higher forces and yourself. We lose sight of the Divine and the higher path completely if we stop all struggles and are fully overpowered by the lower forces. The whole thing comes to this. You need a ladder, but the ladder that is to take you up, you kick off the moment you need it most, and then you can never get up. And Japa, prayer and meditation are the ladder that should never be given up.

In our case Japa is the only thing we can really do, and it is out of courtesy that we sometimes give it the name of meditation. There can be no question of doing anything higher like real meditation, unless we prepare ourselves first through ethical culture, performance of duty, Japa, prayers, regular readings from the holy books, trying to dwell on their meanings as much as possible. These preliminary practices help us in withdrawing the mind from the manifold distractions, and then in making us dwell on holy thoughts, naturally with breaks at beginning. Later on through persistent practice we are able to continue the thought-current in an unbroken way.

As we become more and more pure in body and mind, in thought, word and deed, we are able to have greater and greater concentration, better and better meditation. And then, in course of time, we come in touch with the Divine in both his personal and impersonal aspects. Then within our own selves we feel the contact between the finite and the infinite, between the soul and God—the Soul of our soul—the World-Soul. Meditation thus attains its goal, the highest state of super-consciousness—in which the soul comes in direct touch with divine Reality—its true Self—and attains its natural perfection and freedom, peace and blessedness.



7

INTENSITY NEEDED

There must be great intensity in our thinking, feeling, willing and action. If a person can hate intensely, he can also love intensely. But intensity there must be. Our intensity gives the impulse to our thinking, feeling and willing, and this intensity can best be brought about by stimulating the soul.

Feeling can be cultured, will can be strengthened, intellect can be developed, all singly, but if we are able to stimulate the soul, all can be strengthened at the same time.

There are people who are moral out of cowardice. There are people who are good out of weakness and lack of intensity, and such people are lower than the bad person, the immoral person, because they have not yet reached even that state. Swamiji (Vivekananda) hated such people.

Through general ethical culture, the strict performance of duties, regular readings, regular studies, intense and clear thinking we should try to develop more and more, all the faculties simultaneously. And through our prayer, our Japa, our meditation, our studies we try to rise to a higher plane and there stimulate our whole being. All our faculties, the faculty of feeling, the intellect, the will must be stimulated and then given the right turn. Practice plays a very great part in spiritual life as in everything. There must be a certain amount of routine work, a fixed daily routine, if we want to grow.

If we take the name of Ramakrishna, we must try to reflect his glory at least to some extent. Lip-worship won't do.

First of all try to make the teaching practical in your own life, and then speak of him. No use speaking of him before that.

Ethics and spirituality are inseparable. They always go together, and ethics is concerned mostly with our conduct, and this conduct is guided by our thought, by the attitude we have towards

ourselves and others. Activity and thought are always interconnected. So to the extent our whole attitude changes, our code of conduct also would change, would be modified. If our ideas change for the better, our code of conduct also would improve. If there be a change for the worse, our conduct also changes accordingly. In order to evolve we have to follow a certain code of conduct and, at the same time, to bring about a change for the better through our spiritual culture and disciplines. And spiritual growth always means outgrowing our present state, so far as our thought-life is concerned, and also so far as our activity and dealings with others are concerned.

Suppose we look upon ourselves as the body, then bodily enjoyment becomes the goal of our life. And then suppose that we come to think that the soul persists after death, and that our future life will wholly depend on our present activity, physical as well as mental, what would be our attitude then? Then we must act in a different way, because everything is not going to be over with our death. So our attitude makes a good deal of difference as far as our daily conduct and our thinking is concerned.

Patanjali says in his Yoga Sutras :

“To obstruct thoughts which are inimical to yoga, contrary thoughts should be brought.”

So we always have to raise the opposite thought. Replace all bad thoughts that rise in your mind, by the contrary thought. This is not the solution but this is all that we can do at present. We try to take the help of the good thought and brush aside the bad thought, but at the same time, we must see that we grow spiritually, and then there comes a time when the bad thought has no longer any hold on us.

Sometimes we see a child that is most awfully jealous for its doll. But then, when the child grows, it comes to lose all interest in dolls, whether they be his dolls or others' dolls. So it is in the case of the spiritual child.

We, as it were, want some breathing time and take the help of a good friend. But simply by brushing aside our bad thoughts,

our bad tendencies, the problem is not solved. There must come a time when we go and face the enemy. There must come a time when the enemy ceases to be enemy.

There should be conscious attempts at outgrowing our present state. Then as we advance, conflict would cease on this plane, but there would be conflict on a higher plane.

When we come to give all phenomena a reality of the second or third order, if the world of phenomena appears to be unreal, then we remain unaffected by the phenomenal world, but not before that time.

We may identify ourselves with the body. Then we are men and women and everything else follows as a matter of course. But suppose we come to identify ourselves with the soul? Really what is essential in spiritual life is this: to bring about a change in our outlook, in our whole attitude towards ourselves and others.

Long ago I read a very simple story. A widow had a son and she appointed a young man as his tutor. After some time she fell in love with him, and he himself nearly succumbed to the temptation as he too had fallen in love with her. Then, one day, her name under one of her letters reminded him of his mother's name. And this changed his whole attitude towards her. The charm was broken, and he left the place without succumbing to the temptation. This is a very simple story after all but it just shows what a world of difference our attitude towards ourselves and others may mean.

If we are able to think of ourselves and also of all others in terms of the spirit, our whole conduct would change. This may take years and years. But that does not matter. Go on striving and struggling, then, one day you will see the light, at least catch a glimpse of it.

If we are able to have a new association of ideas, a great change takes place. At the thought of the young man's mother, great strength came, purity came, the temptation was broken.

At first comes the new attitude towards ourselves and then

towards others. When we are able to dissociate the principle from the personality in the holy personality, we begin to get a glimpse of the Principle in ourselves also however low we may be.

To the extent we dissociate ourselves from the false personality and identify ourselves with the Principle, we get strength, we get purity, we acquire clear thinking and clear action. To the extent we identify ourselves with the Divine in us, we become saintly. When a person is outgoing, he becomes a sinner. When he becomes indrawn, he becomes saintly.

The Principle that is in the greatest holy personality is in us too, but all covered up with a mass of dirt and filth. And all this dirt and filth has to be removed.

We are constantly thinking, "I am a man", "I am a woman" and then we go and act accordingly. But if we are able to change our attitude, to overhaul our thought-world, our whole code of conduct would change too. So what really matters in spiritual life, is this change of outlook.

First we try to give these injections during the time of meditation, and then, through practice, we shall be able to have this idea at other times too and then there will be a changed activity.

The outward activity always influences thought and thought-activity again influences all our actions. Suppose the thought that you have in meditation clings to you at other times.

In meditation *e.g.*, I imagine myself to be a skeleton. I try to feel this very vividly. Then, if I have really succeeded in creating an impression, I will see my body and others' bodies as skeletons. So and so many skeletons sitting round this table. Or *e.g.*, I feel myself as a spark during meditation, and this so vividly that a real impression has been created. Then I shall feel myself to be a spark and all the others sitting round this table as sparks too. I am a luminous point and all the others are so many luminous points sitting here. I am a point of consciousness; all the others are points of consciousness, etc., etc. We must make our imagination vivid and healthy. We are continually having morbid imaginations. So bring in healthy ones and counteract them. In order

to obstruct a bad thought, a good thought is to be brought in.

If we are able to bring about good subjective changes, the whole outlook changes, and with that our whole activity too.

We see the body, but we value the mind more. We feel the soul and we value it more than the mind. We get a glimpse of the Infinite and we value it more than the soul.

At the beginning of our spiritual life there is no realization, but we have to take the help of imagination. Imagination must be made vivid and stimulated, but imagination of the right kind, not imagination of something that is not, but imagination of something that is. We should always see that the imagination does not take a wrong path. We should try to imagine the Principle that lies at the back of both good and bad. This is the only solution. There is no other solution. Unless we are prepared to face some day even the evil and see the Divine even in that, our problem is not solved. We should learn to put greater stress on the substance than on the form, greater stress on the Principle than on good and evil. We go on busying ourselves with good and evil without caring for the Principle which is beyond both good and evil. We should say: "Forms are not important to me. I care more for the substance".

There are some worshippers of Shiva who associate the whole womanhood with the Goddess, and all men with Shiva, the great God and then finally God and Goddess merge into the Principle out of which they came. Thus these worshippers solve many problems. What a difference it makes, if a person looks upon all women as the Goddess and all men as the great God!

There are some other devotees who associate all men with Ramakrishna's form, and all women with the Holy Mother's form and then finally transcending them reach the Principle which stands at the back of both. Only thus can our problems really be solved. Now, at our present stage, the evil thought, the evil form may be brushed aside, but this can never be the solution. There must come a time when we see the one at the back of both good and evil. And then good and evil will cease to affect us.

In one form Mother comes with blessings, in another form She comes with curses, but always She is the Mother.

All good and evil, all limitation etc., is on the relative plane only. Both good and evil imply limitation. Whenever we speak of personality, it means limitation, even in the highest personalities, in the greatest of holy personalities, it means this. When we are not able to rise above limitation, let us at least eliminate the bad limitation and have good limitation remembering always that both are limitations and will have to be transcended some day.

We have to be burnt in the fire of the world, and thereby some baser metal would be oxidized and then go. There is no other way. Some follow a violent method, some a slower one, in eliminating this baser metal. It is a question of capacity, of evolution.

The child grows without even being fully conscious of it, and then, one day, it finds that all attraction of the dolls is gone.

There is always a period of transition in the life of the aspirant. During that period you have no fixed centre of consciousness. It is a most troublesome time for everybody, but then never stop your spiritual practices, your Japa, your prayer, your studies and your meditations. After that period of unsettlement, there comes settlement, but during that period we must hold on to the chain and go on with our daily routine.

And to begin spiritual life, one must be always true to oneself. The real child need not be ashamed of his or her childhood. Only, we should always see that we outgrow the previous state.

Through limitations the soul thinks of itself as limited and acts accordingly. Remember the story of the rich man who was kidnapped by the robbers:

Once a rich man was passing through a forest, when three robbers surrounded him and robbed him of all his wealth. After snatching all his possessions from him, one of the robbers said, "What's the good of keeping the man alive? Kill him!" Saying this he was about to strike

their victim with his sword when the second robber interrupted and said, "There is no use of killing him. Let us bind him fast and leave him here. Then he won't be able to tell the police". Accordingly the robbers tied him with a rope, left him and went away.

After a while the, third robber returned to the rich man and said: "Ah! You are badly hurt, aren't you? Come, I am going to release you." The third robber set the man free and led him out of the forest. When they came near the highway, the robber said, "Follow this road and you will reach home easily". "But you must come with me too", said the man. "You have done so much for me. We shall all be happy to see you at our home". "No" said the robber, "It is not possible for me to go there. The police will arrest me". So saying he left the rich man after pointing the way.

Now the first robber who said: 'What's the good of keeping him alive? Kill him.' is Tamas. It destroys. The second robber is Rajas, which binds a man to the world and entangles him in a variety of activities. Rajas makes him forget God. Sattwa alone shows the way to God. One cannot attain the knowledge of Brahman unless one transcends the three Gunas.— *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Publisher: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras

"Being caught in the net of the five elements, even Brahman has to cry."

Embodiment is an awful limitation. It is something that is terrible, but we should try to think more and more in terms of the unlimited, so that we may be able to express this in all forms of consciousness, in dream, in the waking state, etc.

If you just counteract a bad thought by bringing in a good one to obstruct it, the problem is not solved. You have brushed the bad thought aside for the time being, but its seed is still there and may sprout again any day the moment it is nicely watered and manured. Until the seed is burnt, it will go on sprouting, but

when the highest knowledge burns it, it can never sprout again. This is the state when there is no bondage.

Now, even if we know that the seed may sprout again, that all bad thoughts and tendencies are still there in seed-form before having attained the higher realization, this should not make us hopeless in any way. We must only know the immensity of our task. We must say "So difficult is the task, that I must have greater and greater determination, greater and greater one-pointedness". We must try all possible means in proceeding along the path and reaching our goal. No use minimizing the danger. No use exaggerating it. All these difficulties should strengthen our determination. We must overcome the difficulties and reach the goal.

Swami Vivekananda says in one of the poems:

*"Unending battle —
That verily is His sacred worship;
Constant defeat, let that not unnerve thee;
Shattered be little self, hope, name and fame;
Set up a pyre of them, and make thy heart
A burning ground,
And let Shyama (Mother—Kali) dance there."*

When all the little desires are burnt to ashes, then alone the Divine would appear. Kali's seat is the cremation ground and the real cremation ground is in ourselves, is our heart. The very slightest clinging to the self is bad, is an evil, a sin. And so long as there is any clinging to our little personalities, our little likes and dislikes, there is no place for the Divine. And this clinging must not only be taken in a gross sense, but in a very subtle sense.



8

DIRECT YOUR ENERGY PROPERLY – 1

It is not enough just to control one's energy but one must know how to give it a higher direction. Otherwise the energy goes round and round, and becomes more and more of a whirlpool, or it may even very easily take a lower course and find its expression through one of the lower centres. So much of energy has been stored up without finding any expression at all. Many persons become dull when the whole flow of energy is stopped, *i.e.* they no longer give it any expression through the lower centres, but, at the same time, do not give it a higher turn, so that it begins to stagnate and create troubles. Many persons are unable to use it on a higher plane and can only use it through lower centres. They just become dull or whirlpools when the flow of energy through the lower centres is stopped. That is why we must be very careful when giving instructions to other people if they belong to this lower type.

Sometimes one feels the urge of the cosmic Energy which cannot be stopped. But we can give it a higher turn or a lower turn when it comes. So many different moods and impulses come to us, and we must learn to cultivate and culture certain moods and to do away with others.

Mostly some subconscious process is going on in ourselves without our even knowing it, and then we only feel its effects. So we must be able to create a certain amount of resistance.

There is the influence of the stars and planets, the influence of environment and the whole outer atmosphere, the influence of our inner atmosphere, but all this is no reason to feel affected. Work against them or remain unaffected, remain insulated, as it were. Then you won't feel affected and will not be swept off your feet when any undesirable impulse or an onrush of energy comes. And through practice we become automatically insulated.

We cannot have control over the outside events – at least

not perfect control—but we can have as much control as possible over ourselves.

If you are open and come in touch with bad people, you feel awfully affected. And in such cases if you are not guarded, and the wrong type of person comes, he will drag you down. And this downward direction may be due to outward influence only or even due to our own negligence and lack of discrimination. The inner adjustment is the most troublesome affair in spiritual life and without that there can never be any poise or any peace.

In all this, strict ethical culture helps us to a great extent. Sometimes with a great effort of the will, the balance is to be maintained. But even this becomes more and more natural through practice. And in spiritual life it becomes easier to have this balance if you try to be in the higher meditation mood, in touch with some vaster consciousness. For then you pass on the reactions that are in you to something vaster. You get the shock, but you pass it on to something else. So, in a way, the Infinite becomes our shock-absorber.

Devotees try to do this—to pass the shock onto the Infinite—in their own devotional way: “Lord, it is Thy will. What to do?” This is the psychological way of the devotee of minimizing reactions.

The Jnani type tries to think of the Infinite of which he is a part. And the part can never jump out of the whole. This Infinite is always ready to serve the finite, because the two can never be separated.

In the case of the bubble we see that unless the ocean would support the bubble at every step the bubble would burst every moment. Sometimes it has to shift its centre, but then it shifts its centre lying on the ocean. And this is what we have got to do.

If, one day, there is a rise of tremendous feeling in you, and you do not know how to find relief, rush to the Infinite, let this impulse take you to the Divine, and if you want to cry, wait until you have reached the Divine. Let us not stop short of that. That is

the only way: to pass on everything to the Infinite.

Unless the finite tries to be in touch with the Infinite, no radical cleansing can be done. We cover all the filth and dirt, sometimes even hide it under flowers, but so long as there is no real cleansing our whole mind, nothing can be done in spiritual life. Mere surface cleansing won't do.

The limited is always impure, and it becomes pure only by coming in touch with the Infinite, thus realizing its infinite nature. The real Original Sin is finiteness, the finiteness of our nature, and this Original Sin can only be got rid of by losing our finiteness, by coming in touch with the Infinite, with our true, primary nature.

And suppose one dies before reaching his goal? Then one would begin the same course. It is only a change of point, but the Infinite remains always with us. And when we get this idea, we do not get any fear of death, neither in the case of our death nor in that of others. We must be prepared not merely for others' death, but also for our own death. Neither court death, nor court life. Let things take their own course, but, under all circumstances let us move towards the Divine.

“Just as when the king bee leaves the hive, all others accompany him, so when the soul leaves the body, all the vital airs and the senses etc., accompany it.”

Really speaking, this king bee is a queen bee. So people stressing the unessential, would say that, as in the Upanishadic passage a king bee is mentioned, it must have been a king bee, and thus become ridiculous, losing sight of the essential which is true. In real religion we must always be prepared to give up the non-essentials and stick to the essential. We must be able to separate what is really essential from what is non-essential. The essential ever remains the same. And the greatest task in all religions is to try to separate the essential from all non-essentials and to be prepared to do away with all non-essentials.

The essence of religion is to bring about the contact between the soul and the Divine. But we busy ourselves with certain

rules and certain customs and not with the essential.

If need be, let us change the form, but let us not change the spirit. The Theologians would rather change the spirit and stick to the form. The modern materialistic tendency is to throw away both the form and the spirit which is no solution at all. But much of the so-called revolt of youth against religion is not against the religion as such but against empty, meaningless forms.

We try to gain something for ourselves and then try to share it with others.

At the beginning, greater stress may be laid on our own growth, but the other point, *i.e.*, the welfare of others, is not to be lost sight of.

First of all we must have an amount of preparation; otherwise we cannot even serve others efficiently.

First let us ourselves be divine and then help others to be divine. But these two must go together.

When one has promoted one's own welfare, then only can one work for others and that in an efficient way.

When Swami Vivekananda says: "I do not care for my own salvation", he has attained his salvation already. After having attained the ecstatic state, one works for others.

Once Swami Brahmananda told us, "Devote a few lives for His cause".

Only if He keeps us in a higher mood and gives us the strength to do His service, let us go in for it. This form of service will take us nearer the goal.

Sometimes one has to remain in a higher mood not only for one's own sake but also for that of others. This serves as an additional impetus.

Unless you have, what are you going to give? So sometimes not of your own goodness, but out of necessity we have to gather more, because more is to be distributed.

This is the ideal of all of us: To try to promote our own welfare as well as that of others. And really speaking, the two can never be separated.

Through service there comes the sense of unity more and more. To the extent the sense of ego is less stressed, the sense of unity asserts itself more and more to that extent, and finally we come to realize the Divine in all men and women, in the whole outer and inner world. So service is a great help on our path, only we should see that we do not give more than what we already possess. Otherwise, we become bankrupt.



9

DIRECT YOUR ENERGY PROPERLY – 2

The Cosmic Energy is flowing through us all. We are all instruments more or less. But when we consciously stop the expression of this energy through the lower centres and let it find expression through the higher ones, we feel always fresh, then there is no old age so far as thought-life is concerned. Sometimes we are not able to maintain the activity in the higher centres through our old impressions and tendencies, and then there is a strong downward pull, a real tug-of-war which cannot be avoided if we are to grow at all. We can never stop the flow of energy, but we can give it a certain direction, consciously, intelligently, with an effort of the will.

Conscious, intelligent thinking is necessary. Conscious thinking removes the barrier. And when the obstruction is removed, then more thoughts come.

First of all, give a conscious start, with an effort of the will, and then the flow proceeds. Consciously try to have new ideas, consciously find new channels of expression and thinking, and when these are found, the whole thing becomes natural without any effort.

Through conscious higher thinking we open up the higher channels. And then, when the passage is open, higher thinking becomes easy. Higher thoughts rush, flow. But always the beginning should be a conscious beginning with an effort of the will. If unconsciously higher thoughts would be coming to us, then, one day lower thoughts would be coming to us too. So the unconscious process is to be avoided by all means.

Higher thoughts must be consciously allowed to flow through us. It must never become an unconscious process. Through conscious struggle, when the higher channels are opened higher thoughts come to us consciously, intelligently, and then the higher life becomes very easy. A new passage is opened, physiologi-

cally and psychically through which these higher thoughts can flow without any obstruction. “Higher” really means deeper. We speak in terms of outer space, but really it is “deeper.” As I said, the start must be a conscious start. This is the preliminary work that has to be done, and everything else follows.

The finite is always in touch with the Infinite. On the lower plane this is unconscious; on the higher plane it becomes conscious. You feel it. And what you have got to do is to rise to the higher plane, and then have higher expressions of the energy, higher activity.

The task of the spiritual aspirant is to make the higher centres work, to stimulate them.

One should consciously stop the activity of the lower centres and stimulate that of the higher ones, but stimulate it consciously. It must be a conscious, intelligent process.

Japa, prayer, meditation etc., all these are meant to start the activity of the higher centres.

Sometimes you may feel the higher centre and the lower centre at the same time, *i.e.*, both want to act at the same time. And then comes a terrible tug-of-war. That cannot be avoided, and everyone has to pass through that state. Then you have to stop the activity of the lower centre with a great effort of the will.

Through our daily spiritual practices, through our whole striving, the activity of the higher centres would become more and more natural, less strained. But this can never be attained before having passed through this state of war, as it were. A general purification of the body and the mind is necessary, if the obstructions are to be removed so that the energy can find its expression through the higher channels and become creative on a higher plane. Creative it must be, either on the lower, the physical plane, or on a higher plane. Its expression can never be stopped, but its direction can be changed. And this is what is to be done by the spiritual aspirant.



10

THE IDEAL IN PRACTICE

The ideal and the practical, unless they are related, do not mean anything. If they are not related, religion becomes a mere matter of empty talk.

If you say “no” in an obstinate way, the other person will not feel convinced. But if you say “no” calmly, quietly, others will not dare to take advantage of you.

If there be true democracy it should be based on culture. If democracy means lack of culture and only vulgarism, it becomes dangerous. We attain equality only on a higher level, not on the lower plane. But generally we want to break down everything, throw all culture to the winds and attain equality on a lower plane, and that is dangerous. There should always be levelling up, not levelling down.

“That form of caste that breaks down caste is to be welcomed.” (—Swami Vivekananda).

That form that helps us in rising above all forms is to be welcomed. Those limitations that help us in rising above the limitations are to be welcomed.

We take up certain ideas. What for? To rise above them, to transcend them. We should always try to follow the synthetic method.

Dualists stress the object too much. Patanjali’s school of Yogis stresses subjectivism too much. The Vedanta says: “Transcend both the subject and object”. And this is the only solution.

Synthesis can be attained on a higher plane only, by transcending both the subject and the object.

In the path of the Devotion feeling is stressed. In the path of Jnana intellect is stressed. In Raja Yoga and in Karma Yoga the will is stressed but our ideal should be to transcend feeling, intellect and will, to transcend all of them and the whole realm of sub-

ject and object.

Try to have co-ordination on the lower plane, and transcendence on the higher plane. Our modern world needs co-ordination even on this lower plane.

Our life is such that we cannot be too dreamy, but at the same time we should always make it a point not to be too practical, busying ourselves with the sense world. There should be a conscious synthesis between practicality and idealism. That is what is needed in the present day.

Do whatever you have got to do, definitely, deliberately, clearly, without hesitation on your part. Proceed step by step. You cannot reach the goal by taking any long jump. There must be mental drill. Drill plays a great part in spiritual life. If we have to struggle and fight in ordinary life, we have to struggle and fight even more in spiritual life. Every thing must be done steadily, regularly, not allowing the mind to fly off at a tangent.

And until we have really reached the goal, there is no peace of mind for us. If you are ready to fight and to pay the price, go on until you reach the goal. There is no other go. And whatever makes you weak, avoid as poison!

Always let right knowledge fight against false knowledge, and then let both be destroyed. The goal is beyond both knowledge and false knowledge, beyond subject and object.



11

VERIFICATION OF EXPERIENCE

Unless there be the fullest realization, we can never know this phenomenal world to be unreal, till then it appears to be real more or less. With the doubt 'probably this is not reality' spiritual life begins. Then the world comes to have a reality of the second order, its reality is no longer considered to be a primary reality. But it can never become wholly unreal before the highest realization has been attained.

Control is necessary, so long as the mind runs after something that is real, but when the mind realizes that very something to be unreal, it no longer runs towards it.

The Bhagavad-Gita says:

"For one who is living a life of great control, objects of sense cannot have any influence, but still the subtle yearning may be there. And even this yearning disappears when one comes to realize the Highest."

Control of the mind means a bit of the mind is drawn towards sense objects but the bigger bit does not want it. And unless we pass through this state of control, there can never be any transcendence.

In the perfect man there is no longer any control. For him there is only one way. Every thing has become natural. For us there are two ways, and we must use our discrimination to find out whether we should turn to the right or to the left. For the perfect man this question no longer arises. For us, moral life means strain, means control. For the perfect man it has become natural. He cannot act in any other way. But first comes this state of control and tension, and all must pass through it on their way to Truth.

Sometimes, if we pry into the very depths of our mind, we see some lurking desires in seed form, as shadows, and if we are

not very careful in our conduct, these will rise some day, sprout nicely and create a lot of trouble. Before realization there may be tremendous control, but the desires and tendencies as such have not yet been annihilated. They are only kept under control. So before realization we are never safe and are sure to slip our foot one day if we do not use the greatest discrimination in our whole conduct and all our associations and dealings with people. The devotee should never be too bold, even if he is a person of the greatest control. And even for such a person there should be a definite conduct, definite rules to be followed, because of which he is never allowed to lapse into something evil, into careless ways or bad associations.

The Gita says: "Rasa (taste) doesn't leave us easily".

And really speaking, even in the man of the greatest control some taste is left in seed form for the sense objects, until they are burnt by the fire of realization. After that, there may be the form, the burnt rope, but that doesn't bind any longer. The contents of the consciousness of such a man have become wholly different, and he can no longer be affected.

Sometimes we see in our dream all of a sudden an awful picture, something lying hidden in the utmost recesses of our mind. Sometimes, during meditation hideous forms come up, rise in the mind and make us shudder. There is such a lot of dirt and filth in the very depths of our mind and all this will come up one day, rise to the surface and try to drag us down. We should never get unnerved by this, but just take it calmly and go on with our practices. Even the person having the greatest control, but who has not got the higher realization, should be always on his guard, because the trouble may arise any moment in its subtlest form, through some unguarded association with others, through a word, through something seen. Try to be always guarded, always watchful. Mostly we are affected in a very subtle way, and then it goes on growing and growing, becoming larger and larger, assuming enormous proportions, and finally we are swept away. This can happen any moment when we are not properly guarded and watchful.

The person who is really guarded, who is wide awake, notices even the subtlest desires that arise in the slightest degree, and kills them in their causal form, not even allowing them to rise fully in the mental plane. So we should all try to control even the causal, and this we can never do if we do not become watchful and discriminative. If we be really watchful, we are able to detect the trouble in its causal form and kill it there.

This is a great law: Whatever one takes to be real draws one's whole being, one's thoughts, one's feelings, one's will.

So if the unreal, this world, comes to us as real, then it draws our whole being. If the real, the Divine, comes to us as real, then we turn away from the unreal and set our whole heart on the Divine. When the world appears to be real, we are full of it. When the Divine appears to be real, we are full of the Divine only. So, whatever has become a reality to us that we follow with our whole heart.

Even before the highest realization we may have a very clear and definite conception of the idea, because this idea is in the very depths of our being. It is a reflection, but this reflection proves the light so long as we are not able to see the light directly.

When we try to think of a soul or of the spiritual consciousness that somehow or the other gets mixed up with our thoughts and our physical consciousness, we find a great help during our troubles and miseries. The soul cannot be troubled, it always is, continues to be ever the same. And finally we find that the soul and the Divine are one. The water-substance of the bubble and the water-substance of the ocean are the same water. So when the bubble gets rid of its bubble-consciousness and all the limitations of its bubble form, and the ocean gets rid of its ocean form, they are one and the same water.

Unless we have attained to the fullest realization, we have to go on with the idea, the conception of the ultimate Reality. But in every case our faith, our belief has to be verified. If belief be based on reality, it comes to be vitalized. If belief or faith be not

based on Reality, it goes on for some time and then perishes.

The principle of consciousness in the subtle body is the Atman.

There must be clear analysis. We can even stand apart from our thoughts and watch them. We can watch our mind. So the mind is an object that can be watched by some other subject.

“The form is perceived and the eye is its perceiver. It (eye) is perceived and the mind is its perceiver. The mind with its modifications is perceived and the Witness (the self) is verily the perceiver. But It (the Witness) is not perceived by any other.” – (*Drg-Drishya-Viveka*)

Here we get a glimpse of the soul, the subject that witnesses the object. But the highest Truth is beyond both subject and object.

When you are very reflective, you see, ‘O, this thought rises in my mind’ etc., etc., so you become the witness of your thought even.

The principle of Self-consciousness is the very basis of our personality. In the midst of all physical and mental changes there is some unchanging principle. And here we get a glimpse of the soul.

That which is real in our consciousness ever continues to be. If the bubble disappears, the water particle does not disappear. That which is the essence in us ever remains, that which is not real from the absolute standpoint drops off. The non-eternal element drops off; the eternal Element continues to be.

The highest state of realization is a sense of existence that is very, very different from our idea of this empirical existence. Nirvana in Buddhism does not mean annihilation. The highest state does not mean annihilation. How could Buddha have taught for so many years after having *nirvana*? How could Swamiji have become a teacher after his *nirvikalpa samadhi*?

Our sense of individuality is so strong that the Infinite eludes

our grasp. Let us first of all try to feel the Universal in the individual.

It is just to receive the lost memory of our real essence that we undergo the different practices. Our spiritual practices do not create anything new. We do not create anything by our Japa, prayers and meditation. These only bring us in touch with That which exists under all circumstances.

If we are able to find the Reality lying at the back of this empirical world that we consider to be real, we have gained a great thing. If at the back of all forms we really get a glimpse of the formless, we advance very greatly. If at the back of all names we really get a glimpse of the Nameless, we advance very greatly. And this is what concerns us now more than anything else. We see the many, but not the one. So first of all we have to realise the One in the many, as in our present state the question of realizing the One without a second does not arise at all. The many are all connected by the One. We have to look upon the many as manifestations of the One. And this is what we need now.

The ideal that can never be realized is something illusory, a mere shadow. So Truth is to be verified through our own repeated experiences. Whether something we believe is true or not, has to be verified through our own experience and can be verified through it.'

There must be verifications of these three:

- (1) Verification of my own experience by repeating it again and again.
- (2) Verification of my own experience by comparing it with what I heard from my teacher.
- (3) Verification of my own experience by comparing it with what is said in the true scriptures.

And we should never go without these three kinds of verification. Otherwise we become deluded, become a prey to our own fancies.

We should make it a point to verify our experience by having

it more than once. Then we verify it by comparing it to what we have read in the scriptures and what we have heard from our teachers. If we do not do this, there is great scope for self-delusion, and our experiences may even become dangerous fancies of an uncontrolled mind.



12

ATTAIN A STATE OF BALANCE

Balance cannot be got on the plane of heat and cold, pleasure and pain and the other pairs of opposites. We want to remain on the plane of heat and cold, pleasure and pain, but there we can never get any control, any balance. In order to get that, we must go deeper and deeper, rising to a higher plane. When the wave comes and dashes against us, what should we do? Hold on to the chain. Never own defeat.

In the midst of all the changes we must take a position which does not change. Remaining on the plane of changes, we can never get any real balance. And remember that balance does not mean passivity. We should never become passive.

In dealing with others, we should try to maintain our own balance and at the same time try to do good to them, to help them. But always we should be so strong that we convince others of our own strength. Our attitude and strength should be such that others will not dare to take undue advantage of us.

If we keep quiet, when others do us any injustice or do something wrong, we must be strong. If we retaliate, we must be strong. Strength is needed in both cases. And we must be so strong that others feel this strength, even if we keep quiet. There is a way to keep quiet that is awful, that is so strong that the other person feels his wrong and will not dare to approach you or take advantage of you again. We should always make others feel that we are not weaklings. And there must be no trace of passivity, even if we keep quiet.

One may have strength, but one must not make use of this strength like a giant, i.e., recklessly. The world is so bad and so low that it will always take advantage of you if you are weak. So the first thing to develop is real inner strength, a strength that won't own defeat.

If an undeveloped person does something wrong it is not so bad as when a more highly developed man does something wrong. If the uncultured person is rude it is not so bad as when the cultured person is rude. The more highly developed a man is, the greater is his responsibility. The more evolved a person is, the more should he be expected to act in a better way than one who is not morally evolved. Their responsibility is not the same.

As we grow, we grow also in ethical culture. The ordinary man does not mind very much telling black lies. Most people would not mind telling a white lie. But there comes a time in the life of the aspirant when he becomes so very sensitive that he feels pain when he has to tell white lies even. Anyhow, never try to justify yourself if you have a compromise, but know the compromise to be a compromise and not the ideal. Know your wrong to be wrong, and do not try to justify it.

So long as a person's mind is gross, he avoids the deed, when it grows subtler, he avoids the thought, and the thought is always the more important of the two.

In morals and in spiritual life the thought is to be stressed even more than the action. But the gross mind does not see this. The person with an undeveloped mind thinks he is not affected when he is affected. That is the fun. A bad thought is as bad as a bad act. In the case of the highest morals this is the condition that would be fulfilled: Thought should be pure, word should be pure, deed should be pure. And without purity of thought there can be no purity of word and far less purity of deed.

Patanjali says in his Yoga Sutras:

“Non-killing, truthfulness, non-stealing, chastity, and non-receiving are called yama.

These, unbroken by time, place, purpose and caste rules, are universal great vows.”

And all these i.e. purity, continence, non-stealing, etc., are to be fulfilled by the aspirant in thought, word and deed. And the thought has to be stressed more than anything else. There can

be no higher morals without purification of our thought-world.

In the highest form of ethical culture we find that nothing bad is being done by the person or caused by him or even approved of by him. His is a threefold responsibility. He should not do anything bad, should not cause anything bad to be done, and should not approve of anything bad being done or profit by it.

Sometimes we lower the ideal, whereas we should try to raise ourselves to the ideal. And if the ideal is too high, we must have a working ideal, using it as a stepping stone. But never must the ideal be lowered. If we have not been able to live up to the ideal, we should not justify ourselves by lowering it, but should know that we have failed and go on struggling.

If we come to have some strong like or dislike for a thing, our judgement is not unbiased. Even a thing that concerns us most vitally should be judged from a neutral standpoint. Then we see things in a clearer light, and the brain gets less muddled.

Even if we fail, we should never own defeat, never stop struggling. We fall down, and again we try to rise, without making this an excuse for falling continually. The inner struggle is never to be given up. Then we come to have new strength, greater discrimination, clearer thinking through Japa, prayer, meditation etc.

Sometimes in our life there are two evils. Good is not in view. What are we to do then? Follow the lesser evil. To the extent we grow spiritually, we develop more and more of moral sense and a sense of proportion. And as we grow morally, we grow spiritually. This is a parallel growth, not a vicious circle.

Remaining on the moral plane, we may not find a solution for the problem that faces us. That is why we try to rise to the spiritual plane, and then look at things from the higher standpoint. Then if possible, act from that plane, or coming down, act at least with the light you have got on that plane. These are the two alternatives. There must at least be some remembrance of the light on the higher plane.

Moral life cannot be taught with the help of catechisms.

Indecision is very harmful. It is the swinging between the two extremes, never coming to any decision. Indecision is due to weakness, to a lack of co-ordination between head and heart. And if remaining weak, you try to solve the problem that faces you, the brain gets all the more muddled, the action less clear and definite. So, leaving the problem aside, first, try to get more strength. Without strength nothing can be done in moral life.

If we remain in a state of indecision for a long time, instead of gaining strength, we become weaker. To remain in a state of indecision and act to try to gain strength is almost criminal.

In the case of indecision there is a conflict between thought, feeling and action. Unless you are able to co-ordinate these three, nothing positive can be done, no positive course of action can be taken. When there is indecision have more of intensive thinking, intensive feelings. Generally the heart says: "Go this way" the head says: "Go that way" and the hand does not move.

When we fail, and every time we fail, we should know what is the cause of the failure, and finding it out, we should try to remedy it. And always we should try to be strong, as strong as possible, intellectually, emotionally and also actively.

We must be very decisive in small things and then we come to be decisive in big things. Even the smallest thing in life is to be done consciously, intelligently, decisively, coordinating all the faculties.

Persons, who are indecisive with reference to small things, are indecisive with reference to big things.

The routine life, if properly followed, helps us to a great extent. The whole daily routine is to be followed in details, scrupulously. Our practices, our studies, our readings, all are to be done regularly, consciously, steadily whether we feel inclined or not. Everything is to be acquired through practice. We form a habit, what we call "second nature", and then this "second nature" helps us to a great extent and makes things easier for us.

We must not lie in bed and go on thinking for half an hour, "Shall I get up now or not?" Either get up or sleep for half an hour more but do not remain in such an indecisive state even in these small matters. This is what happens to all of us. "Shall I sit for meditation or not?" Decide at once. Either sit for meditation or get up, but do not remain in an indecisive state. It is very harmful.



13

THE FINITE AND THE INFINITE

A little study of astronomy gives us a sense of the vast. We cannot think of the Infinite, but we can think of the vast, and then slowly go on making it bigger and bigger.

In the case of the *jivanmukta* (one liberated in life) outward activities seem to be much the same, although there has been a revolution, as it were, in his mind, and his activity is like the light that has started from a distant sun, and as it reaches us, the sun may have disappeared.

In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad it is said: "The Infinite dwells in all the stars and planets. It is inside them and outside them and the same Infinite is in all human beings too." Instead of thinking of the finite, the little, the petty, the small, it is better to think of the vast, the infinite, of the stars, the solar systems, the milky way which is new systems in the process of formation. And then to dissolve everything, this earth, the sky, the solar systems, everything, in the Infinite, in that infinite undivided ocean of Light. The ancient Seers say:

"Even all these manifestations form only a fragment of the divine glory."

Such a small bit after all!

Whenever our mind shrinks as the result of dwelling on small, petty, mean, trifling things, we should try to think of such elevating thoughts. Think of the vastness of the sky, of the vastness of the innumerable solar systems. But see that you think of the Divine in such manifestations, the Divine in nature, the Divine in the sky, not of nature as Divine.

Sometimes, for our concentration, we need some definite forms. Otherwise concentration is not possible for most people. Without something having definite form, we are not able to fix our mind and have it concentrated. Anyway the ordinary person is not able

to do so.

So for concentration, something definite, finite is necessary, and then let us try to meditate on the vast, the Infinite that is in the finite. If you are able to connect the Infinite and the finite, look upon the finite as manifestation of the Infinite, that meditation is something very grand, but the finite must never be taken as Divine. The aspirant has to see the Divine standing at the back of all finite forms but not the finite forms as Divine. In one case he stresses the Divine, in the other he stresses the form which is very dangerous and leads to illusion.

When we meditate upon the finite as manifestation of the Infinite, we have both intensity and extensity. Such a meditation is very grand if done in the proper way.

Have some meditations and some fixed prayers that are to be repeated regularly after your meditations and your Japa from day to day. Then a habit would be formed and this habit will help you on. And finally the elevating thoughts would last, when you are in a good mood, even without any effort of the will. But this can only be done through steady practice.

You should go on with your Japa even while doing your work, so that it becomes a habit with you to keep one part of your mind continually fixed on the Divine or your holy Form (Ishta).

When the mind has a tendency to wander away, do your Japa, taking hold of the centre of your consciousness, never allowing the mind to come down and at such times, do your Japa audibly. The sound checks the mind.

Ordinarily, it is not possible for you to do any meditation. Japa alone is what can really be done. And audible Japa becomes very effective when the mind is particularly disturbed or shows a tendency to wander.

We should never minimize the effects of holy vibrations. The vibrations that we try to create through our Japa bring us in touch with the cosmic vibrations and this helps us in having a certain amount of rhythm and harmony.

The holy thought that we think brings us in touch with the Cosmic Mind, and the moment we come in touch with the Cosmic Mind, we feel stable. After getting this contact, you should dwell on this, dream of this.

First we come in touch with the cosmic vibration, next we come in touch with the Cosmic Mind, and then we feel the contact between our finite consciousness, and the infinite Consciousness.

From one standpoint all these are concentric circles. One is inside the other and pervades it at the same time.

The deeper we go, the more we come in touch with a vaster existence. And there are two kinds of approach, the subjective and the objective. Some find it easier to think of the Infinite in the subjective world. As the aspirant advances, he finds that the Reality is the basis of both the subjective and the objective worlds. It transcends both and manifests Itself through both.

The higher mood is to be created whenever we please. And when we come to have the idea of the Infinite, let us try to apply it to the physical plane, the mental plane and the spiritual plane.

First of all let us suppose there is this infinite ocean of light, then just in a portion of it there comes a cloud, the Cosmic Mind, of which our individual minds are parts, and then this cloud takes a physical form, occupies just a bit of this Cosmic Mind, and this is the infinite matter of which our minds are parts.

Or, let us suppose there is an infinite ocean of vapour. Then just a portion of it becomes water and a bit of this water again freezes. Really speaking body is to be drowned in mind.

At a certain temperature, water and vapour may exist at the same time. So at our present temperature, we have all the three, physical, mental and spiritual. At a higher temperature we have only two, mental and spiritual, water and vapour. At a still higher one only vapour is left.

Naturally, this is only a physical analogy and should not be taken too grossly.

So really speaking, it is thought that has taken shape as matter. We take the physical to be more real than the thought world, but if any day you succeed in making the form you are meditating upon very vivid, very living and instinct with life and light, you come to realize that all these physical forms too are only made of thought, that thought is their primary reality.

So a devotee may at times be in a mood in which he sees all physical bodies to be thought-forms. Sometimes, mind becomes very sensitive, and then we see a person, but we do not see so much his body as his thoughts. His thought vibrations leave such a deep impression that we can read him like a book, that we see all his thoughts.

All this does not mean that on the physical plane things are unreal. They are all right on that particular plane, but from a different plane they appear different, so their valuation becomes different too.

And if we are really able to look at these physical forms from a higher standpoint, we regard these forms as manifestations of the formless, and never as primary realities, matter as manifestation of thought, thought as manifestation of infinite Consciousness. We then see everything in its right place, in its true setting and are no longer deceived by the physical or mental form as such.

You remain wide awake, see a thing in its proper light and then act accordingly. Then you are able to have clear, definite thinking, clear, definite feeling and also definite action. And to the extent we are able to think clearly, feel clearly and act clearly and definitely, we are able to have more and more of this higher mood. There must be no haziness, no vagueness, either in thinking, or feeling or action.

Physically we are in tune with this physical Infinite, mentally with the mental Infinite and spiritually with the universal Soul. And then we see everything in its proper place and light and act accordingly.

The finite should be always in tune with the Infinite and that

on all the different planes, in all the different forms of consciousness. And this alone is the higher religion.



14

PRAYERS**Beginning Prayer**

Let us offer our salutations to the all pervading, all-blissful divine Spirit who dwells in the hearts of us all. He is the Lord of the past, present and future. By realizing Him, one goes beyond fear and attains to peace. He is the supreme Principle of existence, the supreme Reality, the supreme Light and the supreme Self. Out of Him, the all pervading, all-blissful divine Spirit, we all have come into being, in Him we live, to Him we return.

OM Santih, Santih, Santih.

Pre-Meditation

Let us for a few moments sit quiet, relaxing our body and the mind. Let us offer our salutations to the supreme, all-pervading Spirit. May He guide our understanding. Let us offer our salutations also to all the great teachers and saints of the world; teachers and saints whose teachings we all have inherited. May they inspire us with love for the Truth.

The supreme Spirit is the Source of all purity. Let us breathe in vibrations of purity, let them destroy all our impurities; let us breathe out vibrations of purity. Let us breathe in vibrations of strength. Let them destroy all our weaknesses. Let us breathe out vibrations of strength. Let us breathe in vibrations of peace, let the vibrations destroy all our restlessness. Let us breathe out vibrations of peace. Let us send forth currents of purity, strength and peace to all our fellow-beings, to the East, to the West, to the North, to the South. Let us be at peace with ourselves, at peace with the whole world.

Let us now take up the position of the witness or the spectator and draw our mind from all distractions, from sounds and other troubles. Let us detach ourselves also from all the thoughts,

pictures and feelings that rise within. Let us be wide awake.

Our body is the divine temple. Let us focus our consciousness in the sanctuary of our heart and there feel that our soul is like a little sphere of light and this little sphere of light is part of the infinite Spirit shining everywhere. The infinite Being is immanent in the sun, moon, stars and planets. The Infinite Spirit shines in all beings. The Spirit is immanent in our eyes, ears, in all our senses. The divine Spirit shines in our mind. It shines in our heart. Let us all feel the contact.

The monist meditates on the supreme Spirit as Sat-Chit-Ananda, Infinite Existence Consciousness Bliss. The devotee worships the same Being in various aspects as God the Father God the Mother, God the Friend, God the Beloved. The infinite Spirit manifests Itself as the great gods and goddesses. He again comes down on earth, as it were, in the form of the divine incarnation for blessing mankind. We may select any theme we please for our meditation, but as we meditate, let us all feel that both the worshippers and the Worshipped are drowned in the one Sat-Chit-Ananda, Infinite Existence-Consciousness-Bliss.

It is really the one infinite Being that manifests Itself in one aspect as the devotee, in the other aspect as the Deity. Let us feel the divine contact in our heart of hearts, and may the divine Presence soothe our nerves, calm our minds, quiet our hearts. May the divine Spirit guide our understanding and enlighten our consciousness.

Let us for a few moments meditate on the all-pervading, all-blissful Spirit in any aspect we please, in any way we please. But let us by all means feel the divine contact.

.....**MEDITATION**.....

Ending Prayers

*OM. Sahanavavatu; Saha nau bhunaktu; Saha veeryam
karavavahai; Tejasvinavadheetamastu ma vidvishavahai,
OM Shantih, Shantih, Shantih.*

May the all-pervading, all-blissful Spirit, the Soul of our souls protect us all, may He guide us all, may He nourish us all, may the teachings that we learn become fruitful and forceful through His grace. May peace and harmony dwell amongst us all—Om, Shantih, Shantih, Shantih.

- O Lord, with the passing of every day the duration of life is seen to shorten, and youth decay. The days that are gone never come back; time verily is the devourer of the world. Fortune is fickle and short-lived as ripples on the surface of water; while life is momentary like a flash of lightning. Therefore, O Thou refuge of all, do Thou even now protect me who seek refuge in Thee.

- May the wicked become virtuous. May the virtuous attain tranquility. May the tranquil be free from bonds. May the freed make others free.

- I offer worship unto Thee, O Lord Whom the worldly-minded cannot reach, but Who art to the devotees the wish-yielding treasure and the object of worship to all. Lord of the universe, Thou art formless and yet with forms. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, and pray promptly grant me devotion to Thy lotus-feet.

- Salutations unto Thee, the All-pervading and the Great Lord. Thou art liberation itself and the holy scriptures are Thy embodied form. I worship Thee, the unborn, attributeless and unconditioned One. Thou art without any desire. Intelligence itself is Thy nature, and sky Thy garment.

- O Mother, Thou art knowledge supreme. Thou art known through the Vedanta and Thy glory is recited by

perfect ones. Thou art the giver of salvation. Thou art the way to salvation, but yet dost transcend it. Be propitious unto me. Be pleased to remove my dullness, and endow me with a keen and tranquil understanding.

- O Lord, while I identify myself with the body I am Thy servant. When I consider myself as an individual soul, I am Thy part. And when I look upon myself as the Spirit, I am one with Thee. This is my firm conviction.

- Whether the highest Being is called Vishnu or Shiva, Brahma or Indra, Sun or Moon, Buddha or Mahavir, I always offer my salutations to Him alone Who is free from attachment and hatred, worldliness and ignorance, Who is endowed with compassion towards all creatures, and is possessed of all noble attributes.

- May He, the one without a Second, who, though formless, produces by means of His manifold powers, various forms without any purpose of His own; from Whom the universe comes into being in the beginning of creation and to Whom it returns in the end, endow us with good thought.

- May He, the indwelling Spirit, the remover of all sins, the presiding Deity of all undertakings, be pleased. For, He being pleased, the whole universe is pleased. He being satisfied, the whole universe is satisfied.

- O Lord, all spiritual paths are like streams to Thee, the one Ocean of existence, consciousness and bliss.

Thou art the Soul of our souls.

Thou art our Mother. Thou art our Father. Thou art our

Friend. Thou art our Companion. Thou art our knowledge. Thou art our wealth. Thou art our all in all.

- From the unreal lead us to the Real. From the darkness, lead us to the Light. From death lead us to Immortality.
- Reach us through and through our soul and evermore bless us all with Thy inspiring presence.
- May we find Thee in the heart of our hearts. May we find Thee in all our fellow-beings. May we love Thee and serve Thee in all.
- May the world be peaceful. May all be free from danger. May all realise what is good. May all be actuated by noble thoughts. May all be happy everywhere.

OM. Shantih, Shantih, Shantih.

