

TALKS ON YOGA & SPIRITUALITY

Swami Ananda



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Talks on Yoga & Spirituality



Swami Ananda

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MAA

Asato Ma Sat Gamaya

Tamaso Ma Jyotir Gamaya

Mrityor Ma Amritam Gamaya

Lead me from unreality to Reality

Lead me from darkness to Light

Lead me from death to Immortality



Her Holiness, Maa Bhavamayee Paramahansa

- About the Holy Mother -

Her Holiness Maa Bhabamayee Paramahansa was born on 23rd February 1932 in a Brahmin family of a small village in the district of Cuttack in Orissa. She was the first child of Her parents and the only daughter in the family.

The ‘Mother’ began to manifest Her divinity when She was still quite young, but it was not until the age of eighteen that some divine revelations confirmed to her parents that their daughter was destined for higher things. These divine revelations lasted for a period of one year and during this year the family members and many others witnessed many miraculous happenings.

After these divine occurrences, the ‘Mother’ lived in seclusion devoting Her entire time to spiritual practices, meditation and scriptural studies. Having spent some years in intense spiritual practices and almost a year in complete seclusion and deep contemplation, ‘Mother’ received a divine instruction to travel North to the foothills of the Himalayas. She was to go to Rishikesh, to the ashram of His Holiness Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, a renowned Master. Having formally received initiation from Swamiji Maharaj, She stayed at His ashram on the banks of

the holy river Ganges for a year.

Subsequently, She was advised by Her holy Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj to spend the rest of Her days in Puri. The hermitage named Dibyadham Yogashram where She spent the rest of Her spiritual life gradually became the home for Her disciples. Like a flower's sweet perfume that naturally attracts bees, the 'Mother's' divine love and ethereal spiritual presence attracted many to Her feet. People could sense the fragrance of divinity as soon as they stepped into the entrance of the hermitage.

Irrespective of nationality and religion, many seekers from India as well as from abroad have come to take refuge at Her feet, seeking Her guidance in order to seriously strive for the highest welfare of God Realisation. The 'Mother' has provided this precious opportunity for all of those who by great fortune have found themselves at Her door.

After having given everything of Herself selflessly till Her last breath for the sake of Her spiritual children and for mankind in general, the 'Mother' finally attained Mahaprayana and returned to Her eternal abode on 3rd May 2002. She keeps transmitting Her divine energy and message for the welfare of humanity. The 'Mother's' divine presence continues to permeate the Ashram, radiating peace and unconditional love. Her blessings continue to be showered upon all Her disciples and devotees, inspiring them to go forward on the spiritual path. A temple has been built within the precincts of the ashram over the place where Her physical body has been laid to rest.

- Publisher's Note -

We have the pleasure of presenting Swami Anandaji's book "Talks on Yoga and Spirituality". This book is based on a series of talks Swamiji gave to a group of Japanese aspirants at Dibyadham Yogashram, Puri in August 1997.

The book begins with a simple but very important question which the Holy Mother of Dibyadham used to ask seekers: 'What is your aim in life?' Swamiji invites us to consider this question in relation to the question of the true meaning of human life and clarifies the significance of the four purusharthas – dharma, artha, kama, Moksha – or four ends which man aspires to attain.

Moksha, the final goal of human life, is described by Swamiji as gaining back one's primal nature which is perfect, complete and permanent. In order to reach this state, the guidance of a Realised Master is indispensable. Swamiji elucidates how one comes to the Master by the working of one's past actions and by grace.

Having come to the presence of the Master, one has to make efforts to eradicate negative traits and develop positive ones.

This can be done even while living in the world through Karma Yoga. If we have a clear vision of the purpose of our life, we can dedicate our actions towards this end. Worldly activities can be transformed by doing them selflessly and offering them to God. In this way, our life will gradually become divine.

Swamiji then goes on to talk about how people due to impurities are unable to pursue the goal even when they somehow come to know about the true purpose of life . He shows us what these impurities are and how to remove them. In the final part of the book, Swamiji discusses the nature of mind and Maya and how to go beyond them and reach the goal of Moksha or Liberation. He encourages us to start moving towards this direction from whatever stage we are in and use the invaluable opportunity of a human body for attaining the true goal of life.

We are sure this book will be a great help to the readers by giving them more clarity about their true goal in life and the process of achieving it.

In humble service of our holy Guru, Sri Maa.

- Dibyadham Yogashram Publications -

- Prologue -

There are certain vital questions without answering which one cannot utilize this opportunity of a human body properly. Most people lead their lives without even knowing that this human body is so invaluable - as it is most difficult to obtain. Having gained this valuable opportunity how should one utilise it?

People think the main purpose of this life is to keep oneself busy with earning, eating, sleeping, dressing and entertaining oneself. One gets so used to this groove into which one easily falls that anything which does not come within this limited spectrum is considered strange. One goes through life as if blindfolded, unaware of a higher purpose that Man is here to fulfil.

There are many who believe that the most important questions of life such as 'Who we are?' 'What is the true meaning and purpose of human life?' and 'How we can make this human life truly worthwhile?' are only for a selected few such as philosophers and monks to ponder over. But without a clear idea about the meaning and purpose of life, how can this valuable opportunity of a human life be properly utilised? Moreover, nowadays some people are so concerned about doing good for Society that they do

PROLOGUE

not even think how they can really do so? How can they create an ideal and harmonious society without knowing completely the true meaning and purpose of life?

Many are aware of the many ills in today's Society and the shortcomings of this present day civilisation. But what most are not aware of is that ignorance is at the root of almost all problems. Unless one knows oneself one cannot know the true purpose of this life and guide one's own life and also Society in the right direction. So it is necessary for each and every being to know the answer to this question; only then can he/she start to even dream of an ideal society.

The purpose of these talks which have been compiled into a book form is firstly to make people aware of their true nature and then about a higher purpose in life which they as human beings are here to fulfil. Secondly it is to discuss ways of achieving this higher goal from various stages of psychic and spiritual evolution. In short, to enable people to answer the question, 'Who am I?'

Swami Ananda

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“What is Your Aim in Life?”

When seekers come to Holy Mother, Mother asks them a simple question: ‘What is your aim in life?’ It is a very simple question, but a very important one. Without answering this question, our life becomes practically aimless because there are many other important issues of life connected with this question, such as ‘What is the very meaning of human life itself?’ and ‘What is the real purpose of certain activities that we are doing now?’ These questions are connected with this seemingly very simple question: ‘What is your aim in life?’ This question is actually a challenge.

Without knowing our aim in life, we are like a boat in the sea that wanders about aimlessly, driven by the winds here and there, tossed about by the waves of the ocean. Today, many lives are like this boat, blown by the winds of past samskara,¹ driven about here and there by desires, tossed about by the waves in this ocean of phenomena. There are many kinds of turbulences, storms and big waves that arise in this ocean. There are eddies and hidden rocks in which our life’s boat can capsize. In our lives, there are storms of passion and eddies of delusion which delude

1 *Samskara*: deposit of past lives impressions and residue of past actions.

our understanding and draw us down to the very bottom. There are temptations, sorrows, depressions, and many different kinds of dangers and disturbances. Thus we are not able to reach our true destination.

When we start a journey, there is always a destination. The process of evolution, of which human life is only a part, is also a journey and has a destination. Without knowing that destination, we move about aimlessly in life, waste time and lose this great opportunity of having a human body - this human body which is considered the most valuable of all bodies by the wise.

²
Our shastras say that even the celestial beings wish to have a human body. Why is it so? We should ask ourselves, ‘Is this human body and human life only for sense enjoyments, mundane activities, earning money and physical comforts?’ If it is only for those things, why would the celestials wish to have a human body since they have much more enjoyments and intense pleasures? If we look at the lower species, such as animals, we see that they also eat, copulate, sleep, fear and finally die. So it cannot be these activities which make human life so valuable and special that it is often desired even by the devas.

Human life is precious because in this human life we have the freedom to make effort. We have a sense of choice which animals do not have. Animals cannot make efforts to change their lot. The devas (the celestials) also cannot make efforts. They only enjoy the fruits of their good actions done previously. They cannot change their status by fresh actions. In this human body, however,

2 Shastras: authoritative texts that guide human actions.

we can make the effort to change and transcend the limitations imposed by karma in the form of an inadequate vehicle: the gross body.

Scriptures say that there are four purusharthas in this human life. There are four things for which human beings make effort or four ends which humans aspire to attain. The first two purusharthas for which most human beings make efforts or aspire for are artha and kama. Kama means desires: material desires, material comforts and sense enjoyments. Artha is the means by which we can fulfil these desires. Artha does not mean only money or wealth but all kinds of possessions. Vehicles, animals, servants, power, qualifications and degrees: all these come under artha. We use all these to procure the enjoyments and comforts of this world. I have put qualifications and degrees under this category because unless the aim of education is attainment of true knowledge, they are also means for procuring things of this world. It may not be just wealth, but name, fame and honour. Our twentieth century culture is usually limited to these two purusharthas: artha and kama, or material possessions and fulfilment of desires. This is the very basic material and physical level.

There is a third purushartha: dharma. Dharma means certain principles or values which help to maintain, uphold and uplift the individual and also society as a whole. It concerns every aspect of life—moral, political, economic, social, health, hygiene—everything is included within dharma. Dharma is not just religion as it is usually understood. When life is guided by the principles of dharma, it leads to something higher. Dharma helps the individual

to lead a proper and harmonious life here and gather merits for a higher life in the next. In fact, the first two purusharthas— artha (wealth) and kama (fulfillment of desires)—accrue from dharma or from merits gained through performance of good actions in this life and previous lives.

When these two purusharthas, artha and kama, that is, possessions and fulfilment of desires which every human being aspires for, are guided and influenced by the principles of dharma, it helps to uphold us on the human level so that we do not sink to lower level. One of the meanings of dharma is ‘that which upholds’. When artha and kama are pursued without the guiding principles of dharma, man’s actions can sink to the level of animals. But when human aspirations are guided by the sublime principles of dharma, such as selflessness, harmlessness, honesty, love, compassion and kindness, it helps one to come out of base self-centredness in which an ordinary human is bound. Through a righteous life is aroused the desire for a higher life.

Dharma helps to maintain one on the human level by guiding one in the performance of proper action as an individual and as a part of society. It helps to maintain smooth interaction of the individual with family, society and all other principles of Creation. One great problem today with our modern civilization is that we know so many things, but we do not know how to interact with each other. We do not know how to interact with members of our family. We do not know what our duty towards others is: what we should do and what we should not do. Today’s society faces the great problem about what the duty of a woman is, what the duty

of a man is, what is the duty of a child towards his or her parents, what is the duty of the parents towards the child, what is the duty of the wife towards the husband, what the duty of the husband is towards the wife and what the duty of a statesman is towards the country and the world as a whole.

Dharma is guided mainly by three principles. The first is truthfulness, the second is self-restraint, and the third is non-violence or consideration and love towards others. Today's life in society has lost its joy and is becoming more and more frustrating because these three principles are lacking. If you analyse, you will see this lack of truthfulness and the utter lack of what we call *sanjam*—self-restraint—prevalent in today's society. There is lack of truthfulness in family life: the wife deceives her husband and the husband deceives his wife. Absolute truthfulness is lacking in social dealings and even in the policy of nations. In business policies, people are taught how to deceive others efficiently. Governments profess something and do something else. Something is intended and something else is spoken. Untruthfulness has become the way of life, so much so that people have lost the sensitivity to distinguish untruth and to define what Truth really is.

We do what we want to do, we say what we want to say, we act as we like, and mistake it for freedom of the individual, whereas in reality it is sheer lack of self-restraint. There is also utter lack of consideration for others. People and nations do not refrain from using violent means for the achievement of their ends, but all is done in the name of peace and 'Human Rights'. The word 'Human Rights' is used in such hypocritical and absurd ways.

So I have explained to you these three purusharthas in brief: the three things for which human beings aspire. First is the fulfilment of desires, second is the acquirement of wealth and possessions as means for fulfilling one's desires, and third is dharma which means acquirement of merits that helps to uphold and lift the individual and society. Most actions of human beings are limited to these three purusharthas. It is very rare that a finite soul, a jiva, is aware of the fourth purushartha: Moksha. Through performance of dharma—meritorious and selfless activities—through self-sacrifice and grace, one first becomes purified and then aware of that final purushartha which is Moksha. Moksha means freedom from all limitations, pain and sorrow, and the attainment of perfection or completeness. Without this fourth purushartha, life is not complete and the cycle of evolution does not end.

As long as one's journey is not complete, and as long as one has not reached one's destination, one cannot be free. Without this awakening to one's completeness, one cannot find perfect rest and peace. The desire for attaining this fourth purushartha leads one to the spiritual path. This is the final and most important dimension of our lives.

How can we attain Liberation and what do we need to cultivate within ourselves to achieve this final goal of life? I will tell you about this in the coming Satsangs.

Hari Om.

What is Moksha: How Can We Cross over the Ocean of Samsara?

Spiritual life is an awakening to the possibility of Liberation. It starts with an awareness of our incompleteness and inadequacy. It begins with the understanding that our mundane, result-orientated activities cannot give us everything and that there would always be something lacking. This sense of lack and emptiness is the beginning of the search for that other dimension, which we call spiritual or divine life.

We have been dwelling on how to cross over this ocean of samsara and to reach that other shore of Moksha or Liberation. How can we reach that final destination of this journey of transmigration? How can we attain that final goal which is also our final repose?

Before we start to discuss how to attain Moksha, let us try to understand what is it that we really want to attain. What is Moksha? What is Liberation? There are many fears about this concept of Moksha. There is fear because we think we will lose everything. We think that we will lose ourselves and all that we know. This idea of losing is very fearful and painful.

But, actually, Moksha is not losing but gaining: not exactly

gaining, but 'regaining'. Regaining means gaining back what you already had. It is like the sun that is always there behind the clouds, but is obscured by them. So when the clouds disappear, the sun reappears. The sun has always been there; it was only covered. We can also take the example of an actor. Let's say Mr. So-and-so is an actor and he dresses up and plays the role of a king. After some time, he becomes a servant and maybe in another role he becomes a beggar; but all the time he is always the same Mr. So-and-so. There is no actual change in his original identity, and when he throws off the costumes and takes off the make-up, he regains his original identity. In the same way, attaining Realisation is regaining our true identity that has only been covered because of our identification with the non-self.

Moksha is gaining back our completeness, our true nature and our fullness. From what, then, are we liberated? Since liberation usually means being freed from something. We are liberated from a fallacy of vision and understanding, from ignorance that has limited the all-inclusive and all-pervasive consciousness to a body. It is like a streetlight that has mist around it. When the mist disappears, the light shines in its full effulgence. The light was always there: it neither grew small nor big. It was only when the mist, which was obscuring our vision, thinned out that the light seemed to grow or change. So what we are going to lose is the mist of ignorance or avidya that has covered our understanding and perception and prevents us from realising our true nature.

We are tossed about between two polarities of joy and

sorrow, attraction and repulsion, attachment and revulsion, without knowing that this state of duality is the work of Maya. In the previous Satsang, I was telling you about the boat in the ocean. The dualities of joy and sorrow, acceptance and rejection, likes and dislikes are the waves in this ocean of samsara which toss the boat of life from one extreme to the other. Suddenly, we go from an uplifted mood of joy to the depths of depression. Thus we go on in life being tossed about by these currents of pleasure and pain. In venturing to attain Moksha, what we are going to do is to rise above this duality in which we are trapped and gain a non-fragmented and unified vision.

Now, we will discuss how we can attain a state that is not influenced by duality. Let us again look at the example of the boat being tossed about in the ocean of phenomena. How can the boat reach the other shore? We can read about different paths from books, and we can also have a mental idea about the ultimate goal. But that is like looking at maps in which courses are chalked out. Looking at a map and making the journey are two different things.

To make the journey we need a guide who knows the proper course and also the destination, who has himself/herself made the journey and has already reached the end. Otherwise, just knowing the map and the way does not help us to make any headway or progress. The practice of dharma, which I was speaking about, helps to steady this boat a little; but dharma alone cannot take us to the destination. Another step is necessary.

What is vital and necessary is a driver who knows the course and will guide us properly and take us steadily and safely on

the path to our destination because this course is very intricate, and in this ocean of samsara there are many hidden under-currents and rocks in which our boat can capsize. One who knows the course thoroughly will guide us safely through this ocean and will take us to the other shore.

It is just like when you decided to come to India, you needed someone to guide you here³ - someone who had made the journey already and knew where to go and where to take you. Your first requirement was a guide. So also, the first requirement on this path of Liberation is to find one who will guide you: one who will drive your boat safely through this ocean of phenomena. Otherwise, your state will be like that of an intoxicated man who got into a boat and rowed the whole night, but in the morning found that he had not budged an inch because all the time the boat had been tied to a peg on the shore.

The One who has already reached the other shore, has made the whole journey, knows the destination and the path thoroughly and will also help you to reach it, is called “Guru”, “Buddha” or “Christ”. So to make real progress on this path towards our ultimate destination, it is first necessary to take shelter under a Guru. There is not only one but various ways of reaching that end. A Master will show you which is the best, the safest and shortest way particularly suited to you to traverse and reach that final goal.

Such an all knowing One would know your nature better

3 This talk was addressed to a group of Japanese members who had come to the Ashram for the first time.

than you would yourself. So if you have trust in Him or Her, He or She will show you the shortest, the best and the easiest way suitable for your nature because His or Her vision transcends the limitations of the present. The Master would also know your past, present and future: how far you have come in this journey towards Liberation, how much further you have to go and the particular course you have taken previously.

Hari Om.

How One Comes to the Master

—Samskara and Grace—

We will continue the discussion about the process of evolution of the soul, which develops from finiteness to completeness, from littleness to vastness, and from limitations to total freedom.

We have discussed the necessity of taking shelter at the feet of an enlightened Master. But what is the force that draws us to the Master? What is it that makes our connection with the Guru? What is it that brings us to the doors of an enlightened one? What are the qualifications we should possess when we come to the Master? Is there a law behind it? Does it work by some rational principle?

According to our rational mind, there does not seem to be any rules about how one finds one's way to the feet of the Master. But there are definitely some principles and laws by which it works.

I say that there do not seem to be any rules according to our rational mind because sometimes seemingly very unqualified souls also find their way to the Master and receive the Master's grace. So how can we say, or how can we ascertain exactly, what

the qualifications and qualities are that bring one to the Master? We see fallen souls who become the recipients of the Guru's grace. How does this happen?

Sometimes souls come to the Master when there is some sorrow in the world and there are some troubles and trials. But this is not always the reason why people come to the Master and to the spiritual path. Sometimes there are some who are seeking neither the spiritual path nor a Master, but find their way to the door of the Enlightened One. So from our limited view there does not seem to be any logical reason that brings one to the Master.

But there are some forces working behind our limited vision. These forces beyond our rationality make this connection and draw these souls to the presence of the Master. One may be born thousands of kilometres away from the Master, but still this connection is made. The invisible force that brings one to the presence of the Master is called samskara.

What is samskara? Samskara is the accumulated residue of past actions both good and bad; it is the conditioning created by the experiences in our evolutionary process. It is the imprint on the psyche of whatever we are experiencing, doing, seeking and desiring. All these leave impressions in our consciousness, build up a force within us and influence our nature. It influences our actions concretely and directly and guides our steps in this life. That is why one sometimes becomes that which he/she never expected to become, or one's life takes a turn that he/she never expected it to. We do things that we did not plan to do, and sometimes we go to places where we did not desire to go. Things that we have not

desired or planned happen. Relationships are established which we never even imagined would be. What is the force that does this? It is an invisible, but concrete force - samskara.

All what we have desired, searched for, experienced and done in the past have left impressions and remain in an accumulated form inside us. It is like information that is fed into a computer and remains stored there. When we so demand, it produces that information for us. All the information we have put into it appears on a screen when we press a button. A few years back, when we did not know much about computers, all this seemed like magic. So also, the outcome of the force of samskara appears sometimes like magic and people sometimes use a term called fate without actually knowing what it really means. How do certain things happen? Why do we follow certain behaviour patterns? When people do not have any logical answers to these questions they call it the hand of fate. But this fate is neither a magical nor imaginary power. It is this deposited force of our own past actions.

What we call fate or destiny is actually a force of our own making, which works behind the covers of our conscious mind invisible to us. Fate and destiny have been considered as something supernatural, but it is only a force that we ourselves have built up - subtle currents which work under our conscious mind and influence our everyday activity, thinking, decision making and our nature as a whole. If we have collected or harvested good thoughts, good actions and positive aspirations in our past lives, they remain as positive impressions within us. The negative actions

done in the past also remain as negative samskara that propels us away from the Truth in this life, and leads us along dark paths of unrighteousness. Christ said this in a very simple way, ‘We reap what we sow’.

Parents bring up a child in a certain way and expect the child to become so-and-so or to do certain things, but sometimes the child does not want to do those things and becomes something totally different. The parents probably want to make him a saint, but he becomes a rogue. They want to make him a highly placed person in society, but he becomes a pauper. They wonder what the logical laws behind this are, because they do everything to make him one thing but he becomes something else. All this is the play of samskara.

The cricketer, Bradman, became famous as a cricketer at a very young age. He started to play when he was quite young. When he was still a small boy, he started playing with a bat and ball. What made him do this? Sometimes we have child prodigies, who take up a brush and start painting or singing and create excellent art and music. There are also mathematical wizards and many other such people. We call them geniuses and prodigies; but all this does not happen by accident or by chance, there is a law behind it. It is not a miracle. These people had cultivated such things in the past.

I remember someone had once asked Holy Mother, “How did Ramana Maharish suddenly gain Atma Gyana—the Ultimate Knowledge—without a Master?” Mother gave a very simple but meaningful answer, “He had finished all his studies and had answered the examination papers in his last life. But he left

his body before the result was disclosed, so in this life he got the results of his past life's efforts.”

So, it is by the force of a subtle law called samskara that many fallen ones find their way to the Master. But I do not think it is only samskara. There is another element—a very necessary element—which saints have called ‘grace’. Samskara is our own making. But there is also a very subtle principle called grace. How it works is very difficult to define. But there must be some such thing because we see so many people with much potentiality, or with good samskaras, but these potentialities do not blossom or flower.

Why is it so? Sometimes people have good samskaras and are very proper people, but still they do not find their way to the feet of the Master. So besides samskara there must be another invisible factor or power that makes these connections and brings the receiver and the giver together. Sometimes, there may be a potential seed somewhere within our samskara, but it is covered with so much dirt that it cannot possibly sprout of its own accord or by its own strength. It needs the help of another force, and that force is grace. So I say that there are these two forces: one is past effort and the other is grace. These two forces are not only necessary to bring us to the feet of the Master, but also to sustain us on this path and take us to the very end.

What can make this grace descend on us? What can draw the compassion of a Master, or a Buddha? When the jiva has no other path in front of him and is thrown into a dire state of helplessness, having reached a cul-de-sac in life; in that state,

grace sometimes descends and guides the soul. At that time, we are not conscious that we are being guided or of the subtle workings of grace. Grace works without us being conscious of it. I am just making a little analysis and telling you my little understanding of it.

Now, do not see this state of helplessness from a negative point of view. Helplessness is not always weakness or inability. From a spiritual point of view there is a positive aspect to it. When a soul—a finite being—can realise its true state either through a combination of circumstances or due to dawning of awareness, there is born within him a state of helplessness. Man easily forgets his or her real status as a miniature being in this vast cosmic play of creation and becomes puffed up with the pride of one's abilities. In certain situations when our abilities fail and we realise how false our pride is and that we are really nothing by ourselves there is a feeling of helplessness.

Why is this helplessness necessary? Because it is a great awakening. It gives rise to sincere humility; and it is this attitude of humility that attracts grace. Even after having come to the Master you will not be able to attract the grace of the Master if the attitude of humility is lacking. Only when one is emptied of one's self-esteem and is willing to submit or surrender then grace in its full force will descend.

But one naturally becomes humble when one realises the misery of transmigration and that just by one's own effort one can do nothing to free oneself from it - just by one's own efforts one cannot control the mind or cross this ocean of samsara. It is said,

‘As a tree laden with fruits bends, a wise man also bends.’ That is why the Bhagavad Gita says, ‘Tadviddi pranipaatenā pariprasena sevayā upadekshyanti te jñānam jñāninastattvadarsināh (Know that by long prostration, by question and by service; the wise who have realised the Truth will instruct thee in that knowledge)’ (Chapter 4, verse 34). It says ‘long prostration’ to the Guru. What does prostration signify? Prostration signifies an attitude of humility and surrender and long prostration signifies absolute surrender.

The primitive man found himself surrounded by hostile forces of Nature. Hostile forces mean danger from his wild surroundings, animals and other creatures and from the principles of Nature, such as thunder, lightening, storms and many other unfavourable elements which surrounded him. In this state, he was helpless and needed support; so he clung to his gods or whatever his idea of God was.

Maybe his idea of God was not a developed one, but he clung to It because of his helplessness. He realised the state of his loneliness and prayed to the higher forces, imploring them for support and help. He looked at the principles of nature, the vast skies and stars, the titanic seas and winds, and he was filled with wonder. Wonder is a sense of fear and also appreciation. From wonder and amazement, he developed an idea of the invisible force that works through this creation and he called It ‘God’. He prayed and prostrated to Him and sought His help.

Science and technology has given the modern Man many things but has removed the sense of wonder and with it humility,

surrender and devotion. Scientists have analysed and (think they) have found an answer for everything: how the rain comes, how the wind blows, how tall the mountains are, how the snow on it have formed and the combination of atoms that make matter. So we also think we know everything and thus lose the sense of wonder; and with it we also lose the sense of humility and belief in the invisible power which is working through this whole creation. Science has dissected the flower, studied each part of it but has not been able to catch the cause of its beauty and its subtle fragrance. But Science properly understood should only confirm the presence of a subtle power which man calls 'God'.

Besides science, man has invented many ways and material supports that make him feel secure and proud. He has many means to protect himself—wealth, possessions, acquirements, degrees, qualifications—and he keeps adding to them in order to forget his true status as a microscopic being and to cover himself with a fake sense of his own self-esteem, ability and strength. He has built a system to temporarily escape from this state of helplessness and loneliness, and protect himself with walls of false security.

But even then, there are sometimes cracks in the walls he has made around himself. He has probably escaped the hostile forces that are outside, but not the hostile forces that are within him. So he is still helpless. There are many opportunities and privileges that are given to Man to realise his state of helplessness. He has many chances to turn to the higher forces with humility and salutations. But very few do. Many are brought to the feet of the

Master, but very few can sustain the awareness of their true status as finite beings and the urgency to liberate themselves from this state.

Today I have discussed about the forces that bring one to the Master and how one can make the best use of this opportunity of being in the Master's presence. Also I have told you how you can attract the grace of the Master and the essential quality you need to develop to make the connection with the Master. In the next Satsang, we will discuss what we have to do after having come to the Master, what we need to cultivate and how we will progress on this path towards the Ultimate Truth.

Hari Om.

What Prevents us from Taking the Spiritual Path?

It seems that the workings of some mysterious and invisible force brought us to the presence of the Master. In the previous Satsang, we discussed what this force was and called it samskara, a force which is a collective impression of our own actions in the past. It influences and guides our activities, behaviour and attitudes in our present life in definite ways. Certain traits in our nature, such as likes and dislikes, and preferences, influence our activities in this life. These traits and preferences are directly influenced by samskara or the conditionings of our past lives.

But the question is whether this force guides everything and there is no room for any choice or effort by an individual. Although this samskara is a very strong guiding power in our lives, there is somehow still a sense of choice and also effort. There is a sense of choice and effort in how we utilise the tendencies we have and in how much we undo our unfavourable traits and cultivate favourable ones. This is the grand opportunity that human life offers. The real challenge of this life is how we use our positive potentialities and eradicate negative ones. This process of eradicating unfavourable

traits and developing positive ones is what we call sadhana.

Sometimes samskara brings certain opportunities, we are brought by samskara to the presence of the Master but we can stop there. We come to an ashram but we can only eat, sleep and lead a comfortable life and not make efforts for self-improvement. Thus we can misuse this opportunity we get as a result of our past samskaras.

Sometimes we are gifted with certain talents for music, aesthetics or arts. But how we utilise these talents is our choice. These talents can be used for a higher purpose. For example, a musician can make divine music as service to God and use it as a means to connect with his inner being, or he can use that same talent to only entertain others, gain name and fame and serve his lower ego. I know some who have a little clairvoyance and instead of using this gift for attaining some higher state of consciousness they use it to gain name, fame and wealth or to establish themselves as Masters. Thus, by their own efforts, people can either strengthen their bondage, or loosen the strings of bondage and progress towards freedom.

Before we come to the aspect of sadhana, or the way to better ourselves and progress towards Liberation, there is one more point we should discuss. This can be put in the form of the following questions: What is it that prevents many people from coming to this path of spirituality? What is it that prevents us from coming to the Master, or having come to the Master, what prevents us from opening up to Him or Her, from accepting the Master and receiving spiritual benefits from Him or Her?

It is exactly those abilities which we have cultivated for survival and success in this world - such as ability at speculation,

pretence, material efficiency and individuality that prevent us from knowing and accepting the Master. It is the pursuit of pleasures around which we have built our entire life that stands as a big impediment and barrier, making it difficult to come to the presence of the Master and to accept Him/Her in our lives.

It is the process of desiring, seeking, looking, finding, acquiring, possessing and protecting - seeking sensual pleasures, finding material things, accumulating wealth, gathering possessions and trying to keep them forever that prevent us from accepting spirituality. Our material possessions, abilities and efficiency give us a false sense of security and self esteem. The pride of physical beauty, wealth, learning and nationality, and many such vain things which stand as barriers between us and our ultimate goodness. When Christ said, 'It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a wealthy man to enter the kingdom of God.' He did not mean just material wealth when he mentioned a wealthy man; he implied pride that comes with wealth. This pride is the real impediment and not actually wealth.

These impediments in our spiritual path are of our own making. A Nobel poet laureate of India, Rabindranath Tagore, wrote in a poem about the prisoner who found himself in a prison and the chains that bound him were forged by himself. - These chains of desires, acquirements, possessions and pride which imprison us and prevent us from reaching out towards God, contact with whom leads to freedom from the cycle of transmigration.

In the first Satsang, we discussed the two purusharthas, or the ends towards which most human beings direct their efforts,

namely kama and artha: the pursuit of desire and the acquirement of the means for enjoyment. These two ends towards which we direct our efforts become impediments when we start to seek final freedom or Mokshya. That is why many schools of spiritualism advise us to discard desires and the pursuit of wealth.

But a question arises, is it possible to become desireless? Is it possible to give up the desire for acquirements? The moment one enters a monastery, or puts on ochre clothes, will one become desireless? Is not renunciation much deeper than the giving up of just outward things? These tendencies that have become one's nature are much more difficult to overcome than just giving up one's clothes or possessions. It is much more difficult to go above this impulse for acquiring things and possessing them. It is embedded very deep in our human nature and psyche. I have seen some who seem to have given up practically everything, they have no possessions, but still have not given up the desire for them. I have seen so-called renunciants absolutely naked, but still not free from the tendency for acquiring things. So having thrown off their clothes and possessions, did they go above their desire for acquirement and possession? In some monastic orders, there is a debate over whether monks should get married and have families or not. This is the reality; so indomitable and subtle is desire.

Then are we prisoners forever? Are we prisoners of our own human nature, our desires, possessions and sense of wanting? Or is there a way out? Yes, there is a way. The way is not an immediate solution but one of gradual transformation. There is a process of gradual transformation which happens when we take shelter under

a Realised and able Master. I have been repeating the necessity of a Master, but I cannot stress its importance enough. Only a true Master can know how an individual soul can be guided to gradually transform his weaknesses, tendencies and traits that he has acquired from the past. The Master will show you a way, a path and a means to reach that end. He or She will give you the guidelines and the means to support you on this difficult path. It may take you some lives to reach that destination, but the soul will have a proper direction and an unfailing support.

In short, one has to follow a steady and gradual process of purification, freeing one's self from the bondage of habits or samskaras and the impurities of desires which create restlessness inside and do not allow one to be still and contemplative. There is no magic by which one can suddenly become desireless and free. This force of habits, which pulls one back again and again into indulgence in pleasures—even though one sometimes knows that the outcome of these sense pleasures is only pain—has to be transformed gradually.

So to summarise our discussion, we have talked about what prevents us from taking the spiritual path and accepting the Master and Guru in our lives. We have seen that desires, habits and attitudes in life which we ourselves have cultivated stand as obstacles when we want to take the spiritual path. How we can purify ourselves will be the topic for the next Satsang and we will also discuss the question of whether this process of purification, called sadhana, can be performed while living in the world or is only for those recluses and hermits who live in monasteries and ashrams.

Hari Om.

Purification Even While Living in the World

Sadhana is a process of purification. We are in essence pure and sparkling Atma. We are that jewel of Complete Consciousness. But this jewel is covered with the dust of impurities. If we can remove the dust, the jewel will shine in all its splendour, beauty and original brilliance. It is like a mirror covered with dust. When the mirror is covered with dust, it does not reflect. In the same way, our inner mirror is covered with dust. So, what is necessary is ‘Chitta darpan marjanam’, which means cleaning the mirror of our consciousness.

But before we come to this process of cleaning, we should understand what is that dust that covers it, and from where it has come. At the root of all impurities is the sense of individuality or ego-sense. The ego-sense is the cause of separation from the source of all purity and blessedness. Due to this ego-sense, there is a sense of separation from the Totality and a forgetfulness of our true identity and essential nature. When our true identity is covered by a veil of ignorance, we become an individual or a jiva forgetful of our own true nature. This forgetfulness gives rise to a sense of fear because we do not know who we are, where we have come from, where we will finally go and what we should do.

The jiva then follows its outgoing consciousness in search of its lost identity and gets conjoined with a vehicle or body. When the jiva conjoins with a body, the process of preservation of the body—which we call life—begins. Due to the primal fear that comes from forgetfulness of its true nature, the jiva begins to grasp the objective world. It begins to grasp at things, people and everything around it. This grasping is connected with the instinct for survival and protection of individuality. In the process of evolution this desire for preservation of individual identity becomes more and more complicated. It is actually a search for one's true identity, but due to ignorance, one does not know what one is really looking for.

The loss of one's essential nature is also the loss of true joy. Since life is not just about survival but also a search for joy. The finite being develops a hunger for joy, and directs this hunger towards the objective world. It tries to appease the hunger of the senses by feeding them with objects of the world and thus starts the process of desire. The jiva gets attached through desires to things which give it a false sense of fulfilment and security and also a false identity.

In this process of grasping, acquiring, seeking pleasures—which we call life—we begin to gather the dust of attachment and desires and put on the covers of false identity and unreal individuality. Hence, the gap between us and our true essence grows wider. Finally, we get imprisoned in a cage or a self-made cocoon and limit ourselves in selfishness. All impurities are born from this limitation. At the root of greed, jealousy, competition and

violence is selfishness: the desire for self-preservation and survival.

This process—which we call the process of transmigratory existence— goes on. The soul takes one body after another, and by its actions and experiences puts on more and more covers that hide its essence. Although our essence is nothing but part and parcel of that Totality, we become limited beings. That is why the noble Buddha has said desire is the cause of sorrow because it is due to desire that we go through the painful cycles of birth and death.

That is why I say that sadhana is a process of removing these impurities or dust of accumulated desires. The essential purpose of this purification is to rise above littleness and limitations to a universal life, towards a fuller and total identity. This process of gradually rising from the limitations of the senses, body and mind to a fuller and higher life to a more complete consciousness is true spirituality.

How is it possible to rise above one's own limitations? By using exactly the same principle that has bound us. It is like taking out a nail by a nail, or a thorn by a thorn. What is this nail? It is our actions: the selfish actions we have done to support our little self and the actions we have done for the fulfilment of our little appetites. When we start doing the same actions for a higher purpose instead of just self-appeasement, then it will be like using another nail to take out that which has pierced us. This is the starting of the process of awakening from the slumber of ignorance.

To start with, let us take the family for which we have to make sacrifices and adjustments. Why do I say family? It is because the only possible way to get out of this selfishness and

to do selfless actions is through love; and as an ordinary man's heart is bound to one's family, we will start with this small unit. At first, we learn to feel and sacrifice for our family members and then slowly we begin to expand the circle and make it bigger. The more we can exclude our self-interests, the more we can extend our activities and service to include others. We can then do actions for a bigger cause, such as society, nation and so on. Thus a jiva grows gradually out of the imprisonment and limitations of his little self. Through this preparation, he slowly comes to a stage where he can dedicate his life and channelise his energy for the highest goal that is the Realisation of the Self.

So, the first thing is service. Service is a great purifier because it helps to expand our heart and draw us out of our self-made cage. When our heart begins to expand, our consciousness also begins to expand. Holy Mother has said, "In my opinion the training of the heart is true spiritual training." Service is the first step in this process of purification. That is why the Bhagavad Gita says, 'Tadviddi pranipaatena pariprasrena sevayaa (Understand That by prostrating, by questioning and by rendering service)' (Chapter 4, verse 34). 'Pranipateena' means to humble yourself and 'sevayaa' means to do service. In order to free yourself, at first you should do actions for the sake of service.

How does one make one's actions selfless so that instead of binding one, they become an aid in the process of Liberation? This is what Karma Yoga is about. Someone was mentioning today about working without expectations of results. In the beginning, it is not natural for an ordinary human being to work without

any expectations. But it is possible through love. When we love someone or some cause sincerely, we can work selflessly. Like a mother who loves her child. She can make many sacrifices for her child. But if this love is not selfless, it usually grows into attachment, entraps one and becomes a cause of sorrow.

Thus, the path of Karma Yoga is linked to the path of love: Bhakti Yoga. Through Bhakti Yoga, one learns to cultivate and direct one's love towards God. You can begin the practice of Bhakti Yoga by performing actions for God. Service and devotion are deeply interlinked. Particular or specific activities done for God are called upasana or worship. The purpose of upasana or worship and adoration of God is purification. We will elaborate later on this aspect of Karma Yoga and service and Bhakti Yoga as a means of purification.

I told you in the last class that you do not have to go away from the world in order to become spiritual, to grow in divinity and aspire for higher life. Now I am telling you a means by which you can purify yourself, lead a higher life and prepare yourself for a divine life while living under conditions in which you have been placed, such as family and society. The way is Karma Yoga. It is the first stage.

Hari Om.

Work as a Means

The question is, ‘How we can free ourselves from the bondage of passion and attachments?’ One of the means we have mentioned is Karma Yoga. But the issue of Karma Yoga arises only when the purpose of life is clear. It is only after knowing what the true goal of life is that we can dedicate our actions towards that end.

When we are convinced that the true purpose of life or the true goal of human life is Self-Realisation, God-contact or Liberation then only we can sincerely start to direct our actions in that direction. This channelisation of effort or action for the purpose of Self-Realisation or Union with God is what is called Karma Yoga. Yoga means to unite, yoke or to bring together; and karma means action. Hence Karma Yoga means to unite with God through actions. Or to put it another way, yoke our actions to God. Till now, our aim has been the pursuit of worldly pleasures, acquirements and relationships. So our actions and thoughts have been directed only towards those ends. Our actions conjoin us with the world. Thus we have developed love and attachment for this world, and we are bound by it.

We develop love for whatever or whomever we serve.

As a mother takes care of the child, bathes, feeds and protects the child, she develops a bond with the child. Her love and attachment is for the child. In the same way, we have served the world. We have nurtured desires for the world: we have sustained, supported and made them grow. By feeding and fulfilling these desires, we have increased them and developed a strong love for this material world and an almost unbreakable bond with it.

Therefore, to do Karma Yoga properly, the first thing is to change the central purpose of one's life. When the central purpose is changed, one's actions will be done for a higher purpose instead of only self-appeasement. When one understands that the true goal of life is not just eating, sleeping and having sense pleasures, then in whatever situation one may be in—whether one is with a family or without one, whether one is in an ashram or in the midst of the world performing activities that seem worldly—one can still progress towards the goal of Self-Realisation. Because what is important is not just what one does, but how one does it: with what attitude and purpose one does the actions. This is the central pivot of Karma Yoga.

There was one question, 'How can one live in the family and still lead a spiritual life?' Indeed, we may ask, "How can we perform the activities of the world and still follow the spiritual path?"

The answer is we can transform all these activities into divine ones, depending on our attitude. Every activity can be transformed when we have a higher goal in life and do not live only for the fulfilment of bodily wants and pleasures. What seems

commonplace or secular can also become sacred. That is what Swami Sivananda Maharaj—one of the greatest saints of the twentieth century—meant when he said, ‘Be a divine doctor. Be a divine professor. Be a divine engineer. Be a divine worker of this world.’ What he meant was to bring God into our daily lives and transform these activities into service of God, whose manifest form is man and this creation.

The philosophy of India tells us not only to change the outer circumstances into which you have been put, but to change yourself. This is one of the basic differences between the Eastern philosophy of life and that of the West. Do not only change the outer world but also change yourself. Make adjustments within you. If you are put in circumstances that you cannot change - if you cannot live in an ashram, transform your home into an ashram, if you have a family or you have to work in the world - if that is what you have to do according to your karma⁴, then transform your attitude. If you can do that then wherever you have been put, you can utilise that situation as an opportunity for growing towards the Divine.

One can mould worldly activities, activities within a family for example, towards a spiritual purpose. These temporal activities can also become sacred depending on your attitude. ‘Yajnaarthaat karmano’nyatra loko’yam karma-bandhanah tad-artham karma kaunteya mukta-sangah samaachara’ (‘The world is bound by actions other than those performed for the sake of

4 *Karma* here has been used in a sense of destiny which has been built by our own past actions.

sacrifice. Do thou, therefore, O son of Kunti [Arjuna], perform action for that sake [of sacrifice alone], free from attachment.’ Bhagavad Gita Chapter 3, verse 9). This means that when our activities are performed as a sacrifice, as an offering, without expectations of anything but for the good of others or the joy of God and without attachment to the results, these actions become service and a means for transforming one’s nature. Whatever actions that are performed become yangya. Yangya has two meanings: one is sacrifice and another is Vishnu or God who pervades all. So action performed as a sacrifice for the Universal Spirit that pervades all is yangya or Karma Yoga.

Sacrifice means actions performed not for selfish ends but for the good of others and as an offering unto God. The most commonplace actions of eating, seeing and hearing can also be transformed into worship if they are done as an offering unto the God within. There is a mantram which we use before partaking food: ‘Aham vaishvaanara bhootvaa praaninaam dehamaasritah praanaapaana-samaayuktah pachaamyannam catur-vidhamaah’ (‘Having become the fire Vaisvanara, I abide in the body of living beings and associated with the prana and the apana, digest the fourfold food.’ Bhagavad Gita Chapter 15, verse 14). It is a mantram that sanctifies the food by making it an offering to the inner fire as an all pervading aspect of God and transforms the most commonplace act of eating into an act of worship.

When we are able to perform every activity as an instrument of God, for God, without the sense of agency, those activities become worship. ‘Brahma arpanam Brahma havir

brahmaagnau brahmanaa hutam brahmaiva tena gantavyam
brahma-karma-samaadhinaa' ('Brahman is the oblation; Brahman
is the melted butter (ghee); by Brahman is the oblation poured
into the fire of Brahman; Brahman verily shall be reached by him
who always sees Brahman in action.' Bhagavad Gita Chapter 4,
verse 24). So, without putting God at the centre of our activities,
it is difficult to convert our work into worship, that is, to make
action a means of Yoga or union. When we perform actions as an
instrument of God for the pleasure of God, as an offering to God,
our actions become amplified, go beyond bounds and help in the
expansion of our self.

There is a Twentieth century saint. When he was still a
disciple, he once said, 'I walk for my Guru, I eat for my Guru, I
sleep for my Guru, I work for my Guru.' He was an ideal disciple.
If these very common day-to-day activities can be transformed into
service through this attitude of offering and surrender, why cannot
activities in the world when done as an offering to God or Guru
be transformed into divine activities? Instead of bondage, these
seemingly worldly activities can also help us to progress towards
freedom by gradually clearing us of the impurities of selfishness.

Take the instructions and teachings of great Masters,
make them work in your daily life and transform your life.
Gradually your life will become divine. If you are fortunate enough
to come to an ashram and live in it, it is a wonderful opportunity.
But if not, wherever your karma (destiny) has put you, you can
utilise that situation for your spiritual growth.

I will give you an example of another Twentieth century

spiritual Master, the Dalai Lama, who is the temporal, secular and also the monastic and spiritual head of the community of Tibetans. I do not know his spiritual attainments, but one thing I see is how he has combined the sacred and the secular in his work in this world. What he does today for his Tibetan people seems almost worldly. He travels to different countries, meets reporters and Heads of States and takes part in conferences. This is like the work of a politician or a Minister of a State, and not that of a saint. But these seemingly secular activities become sacred because he does not perform them for himself—not for power, pride, wealth, name or fame—but for his community. As I said, ‘Yajnaarthaat karmano’nyatra loko’yam karma-bandhanah tad-artham karma kaunteya mukta-sangah samaachara’ (‘The world is bound by actions other than those performed for the sake of sacrifice. Do thou, therefore, O son of Kunti [Arjuna], perform action for that sake [of sacrifice alone], free from attachment.’ Bhagavad Gita Chapter 3, verse 9). He is doing his activities with the spirit of sacrifice for his people. So it becomes service to God and these seemingly secular activities done selflessly become completely spiritual and a means for his personal upliftment.

So, the most common activities—leaving aside special activities, such as service which we perform specifically for God—can also be converted into worship of God and be an aid in developing devotion for God. The purpose of Karma Yoga is purification and this purification will naturally lead to dispassion towards the world and devotion for God.

I gave you the example of the Dalai Lama. Now I will

give the counter example of those very rich people whose names are flashed in the newspapers for their so-called charitable acts: for donating millions of dollars. If the intention behind these so-called very magnanimous acts is that their names will be well known, that they will be acclaimed for their charities and that these actions will help them to promote their business, then even though charity is a sanctified activity in such cases it will only help to inflate the ego and enhance one's attachment to the lower self. If charity does not help to free us from attachment to the body and the world, if it does not help to purify us of the impurities of selfish desires (such as power, honour and glory) and if it does not set us free from the demands of our little self, then these actions become like chains that bind us to transmigratory existence.

Let us look at another aspect of this. Sometimes we can do specific actions of a seemingly religious nature, but it may not always be Karma Yoga due to the attitude of the doer. If there is pride, and if the religious act is a means to boost one's ego - 'I am doing such a pious act, I am so devoted, I am such an elevated being, I will be admired by others', then such activities cannot be called Karma Yoga. They may be religious but they will be considered as only karma. Even religious activities done for the appeasement of the lower self, for name and recognition fail to become Seba or service.

In the context of those who live in ashrams and spiritual institutions—disciples and spiritual aspirants—service performed for the Master becomes truly service and Karma Yoga if it is performed in obedience to the instructions of the Master and

without one's own sense of choice and without any other motive save the pleasure of the Master. Again, if in the course of doing this service, the disciple thinks, 'What a great task I am doing, I am supporting the work of the Master, without me all this would not be possible, I am most indispensable', then the service does not give the fruits of Yoga, but only helps in increasing the pride and ignorance of the disciple. The purpose behind service of the Master is to prepare one to finally annihilate one's ego, will and individuality because individuality is the wall that separates us from God. Actions performed selflessly without pride and sense of agency and without expectations of any material rewards, even praise and recognition, become a means for Liberation.

Hari Om, Guru Narayana.

Impurities and the Ways for Removing Them

The soul separated from Totality, covered by the veil of ignorance or avidya, goes through the cycles of birth and deaths. It goes through this process of seeking, acquiring, possessing, and grasping, and finally it finds itself in a maze. He is in a situation from where he does not know the right direction in which he should proceed. Worst of all having entered this maze he does not know how to get out of it. In this situation he asks himself, “What is the true purpose of this life?” Being covered by impurities which he has collected through the process of transmigratory existence, he does not immediately find an answer to this question. Even if he is fortunate to find an answer, he is not able to pursue it to its logical end. He finds it difficult to clean himself of his impurities and see clearly. Either he is not bold enough or we can say his impurities prevent him from doing so. If by chance the impurities do clear up for a moment, they are back again covering his awareness like the scum on the surface of the water.

Today, I would like to dwell a little on what impurities are; in what form, and how they are present within us. The wise have classified the impurities as mala and bikshep. Let us first deal with mala. Mala means impurity or dirt. Let’s take water as an

example. When a pool of water is covered with dirt we cannot look beyond the surface, we can neither see the bottom nor know what is within. Likewise because of the dirt within us, we cannot look deep into ourselves and see the reality of our being. This mala is present on the physical level, in the form of blockages and in the form of imbalances between the elements – mainly, water, air and fire that are within us. Let me clarify this a little. Our science here holds the view that this gross human body is a combination or to use the exact term a quintuplication of five subtle elements of earth, water, fire, air and ether and Ayurveda says not only is the body made from the combination of these five elements, but basically three of these elements, water, air, fire which are termed kafa, bata and pita drive this body machinery. Ayurveda also classifies

every individual into either of the three categories - of bata nature, pita nature and kafa nature according to the prominence of the elements. And as these three elements are connected with the three gunas of Prakriti, an individual's mind and nature are directly influenced by these elements. The purpose of Hatha Yoga is to remove the blockages in the physical level and also to balance the three elements in the body; so that the body which we use as an instrument for sadhana is clean and balanced.

This same mala is present in the emotional level, in the form of selfishness, and attachments. Till we take to the spiritual path or have some higher understanding, our life is usually spent in the preservation and protection of individuality – and this makes us selfish, closed and self-centred. Moreover, our worldly life brings us constantly into contact with some specific things and specific

people. Regular contact and force of habit creates attachment for these things and these particular people. With material development, our possessions and acquirements increase; thus increasing also our selfishness and attachment to them. So the heart gets totally self-centred and bound by these attachments.

Now, one of the ways to remove the impurity of selfishness is through Karma Yoga – that is through actions done selflessly for others. It is a reversal of our approach to action. We change these actions that we were performing for only self-gratification and start doing things selflessly; doing it as a duty, without attachment or expectation of rewards. By this process, we change the central theme of our actions and thus convert our work into worship. Doing actions in such a manner removes the impurity of selfishness which is binding and limiting. The self-bound mind cannot contemplate the Truth. Through Karma Yoga we can change all that. There was a great Christian devotee, St. Francis of Assisi. He said in his prayers something like - not to seek love for myself, but to be able to give love to others. This is the gist of Karma Yoga.

Practically, the ways of doing this Karma Yoga are many. You can do actions for society, or you can serve God. Probably this idea is not familiar to you so it will need some clarification. There are different ways of doing this. First, doing for society or doing for a higher purpose, but without seeking any reward for it, not even name, fame and honour. Second, doing certain specific actions for God as an offering to the Divine. But, all are not able to do these specific actions so there is another way - that of converting all our day to day activities, our ordinary actions by a change in

our attitude. For example, working for the family; but feeling that the family members are manifestations of the Divine. This attitude transforms day-to-day mundane activities into service. Instead of serving man, we are serving God in man. That is what Mahatma Gandhi said, “Service to man is service to God”. Another prophet of this twentieth century, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa also said, “Siber bhabo jiber seba”, “Serve jiva with the attitude that he is Siva.” – which means serve the Infinite through the finite being. He knew that in this age we would not be able to perform these specific actions for God, so he instructed us to serve God in man. This is an effective way of removing impurities and selfishness from our emotional level and for preparing for a higher life.

Now, how to remove the impurity in the form of attachments? To change our attachment for material objects and material beings we need to practice love for God. Actually there are two ways. One is divinisation of those attachments; the other is denying them. To cut or deny these attractions and attachments is more difficult. Only rare souls can follow the path of denial. This denial or dispassion, which is not possible in the beginning for most people, will come naturally when you develop a strong one-pointed passion or love for God or Guru. So, a way to remove worldly attachments is by directing this sentiment of love and affection towards God or a Higher Being, then these emotions instead of becoming a hindrance become a help.

Thus our actions and our emotions, which bind us, when transformed, liberate us. That which is the cause of bondage becomes a means for liberation. Through the science of Karma and

Bhakti Yoga, the transformation of actions and emotions which are causes of our bondage is possible. Running away from desires and attractions is not the solution because they are inside you so you cannot escape from them. Instead while living in the world we can learn to perform our duties in a way that actions will lose their binding power.

Now coming to the impurities present in the mind that create Bikshep. Bikshep is restlessness or tossing of the mind. After our true nature is covered by a veil of nescience there is projection of duality and multiplicity. This multiplicity is the objective world outside, and the mind and the senses with their hunger for pleasure, run towards the objective world. Due to this movement outward the mind is never steady. It is always in a state of agitation.

The emotional and the mental are very much interrelated. It is very difficult to draw a separating line between them. This tossing of the mind is also created by our emotional involvement with the world. That is why the mind is never still. Bhakti Yoga is a means to train and direct one's emotions away from the material world, free them from the webs of attachments in which they are trapped and direct them towards a Higher Reality thus transforming them. Here I would like to explain a little about how this Yoga works. When one accepts initiation from the Master, the Master gives a mantram or a holy name and directs you to do constant repetition of that mantram - this practice of repeating a mantram is what is called japa. It is like pouring fresh water into a bottle full of dirty water. If one keeps on pouring fresh water into a bottle full

of dirty water, at first the clean water mixes with the dirty water and appears dirty but finally the dirty water flows out and only the clean water remains. Thus the mantram like the clean water drives away the distractions present in the mind in the form of names and forms and helps to calm and concentrate the mind.

The mantram can also be compared to a magnet. Like the magnet that can pull together a handful of scattered iron filings, the mantram can pull the distracted thoughts together and focus the mind on itself. The mantram is not just a word but is a sanctified vibration energised by the Master's own power of realisation. It helps to uplift the mind to an elevated mood or bhava and thus making the mind naturally concentrated and focussed. This concentrated mind freed from restlessness is then fit for meditation.

There is another aspect to it. Form can also be used to train and control the mind. The mind can be made to focus on a chosen image. The image can be that of a particular form of God or that of a Master; even the form of a sacred syllable like the Om is sometimes used. By worshipping this form, by developing a relationship with this form, by serving this form, by directing one's emotions towards this form, you are able to remove the manifold forms of the world from the mind and replace them with this one form on which your mind can dwell. This will prevent the tossing of the mind that keeps running after many different forms and names. After all, this objective world is nothing but names and forms. And the magic is that this world of names and forms actually exists in the mind and not just out there. So, focussing on a specific form is another way of controlling the tossing of the mind,

and of taking the mind gradually back to its true state of serenity and stillness.

I will now explain with another example what this restlessness or tossing of the mind is. Taking again the example of waves in water. In our mind, there are also waves that are created by desires. When there are waves on the surface of the water one cannot see into the depths, likewise the waves of thoughts generated in the mind by desires prevent one's awareness from being concentrated and from penetrating deep into one's self and discovering one's true nature.

And how are these waves created? Exactly the way they are created on water - by wind and undercurrents. Winds of desire, and undercurrents of impressions, which we have collected in this life and from other lives. There is a motor within our minds; it is the motor of collective impressions which generates impulses which convert themselves into reactions and actions. One thought is immediately replaced by another thus the mind is never steady and concentrated. So this flux of the mind is actually the impurity that prevents the mind from being focussed.

How are we going to remove this? A scientific way of going about it is the practice of Raja Yoga. This Raja Yoga has two aspects. One is pranayama, it can mean channelising or equalizing of the ingoing and outgoing breath and also the cessation of breath. The mind is intimately connected with the life-current which is called prana. The outer or gross manifestation of this prana is breath. This prana is called chi in Chinese. It is a manifestation of the Primal Creative Energy in the form of life-force and is

responsible for the existence of everything on the macrocosmic and microcosmic level. It is prana that gives life and activity to every organ of the body. It makes the mind also active. When the prana is subdued the mind can also be subdued. Like a bull and a string. Wherever one pulls the string tied to a bull, the bull goes there. As you have not learned to control the string tied to your mind, the mind is out of control. Because the string is loose, the bull of the mind is running here and there. The control of prana starts with breath control. The origins of this science of prana or chi, are from the Rishis and Munis, who experimented on it and used it not just for physical well being, but to attain mind control. This is a scientific method, the technique of which has to be learnt from a Master. This science is one of the greatest gifts of the Masters, to humanity.

When you do pranayama and are able to somewhat master the prana, what happens is pratyahara, that is, natural withdrawal of the mind from the objective world. Control of the senses and the mind is not possible in the true sense of it if you have not gained control over the prana. As long as the prana is engaged in the activities of the body and in the functioning of the organs of action such as hands, feet etc. and the organs of knowledge such as eyes, ears etc. the mind will follow the prana and will definitely be outgoing and many-branched. Unless the mind is focussed within, sama or equanimity of mind cannot be perfected. Trying to achieve equanimity and withdrawal of the mind will only be a fruitless struggle. But once the prana can be disengaged from the bodily activities and be harmonised then quiescence of the mind can be

easily attained. Note I have said harmonised and not control. When the prana and apana are harmonised then the retention of breath or kumbhaka is naturally achieved, one does not have to forcefully close the nostrils to retain the breath. When there is kumbhaka the mind is naturally still. When the prana is active the mind is active. When the prana is still and steady the mind is focussed and tranquil. This is the central key of the whole process of the science of pranayama. The secrets of this harmonisation can only be learnt from a Master perfected in this science.

Then comes another step, a most important step in the spiritual process - meditation. When through pranayama the mind can be withdrawn from outer sensations and can be held steadily on an object of contemplation for a certain period of time, then real meditation starts. And in this process of meditation, there are different phases or stages which the Yogi experiences and with these experiences he advances step by step towards the goal of Self-Realisation.

We have discussed some ways of removing the impurities which prevent us from knowing ourselves. Success in this process of purification depends on following sincerely the specific instructions of the Master in regard to whether you have to concentrate more on the physical, emotional, mental, or intellectual plane. The Master not only knows how far you have come and how far you have to proceed further, but also instils these methods which He/She instructs you to follow with a living power, so that they become effective means for the removal of ignorance.

Hari Om

Towards Liberation

– Mind and Maya -

We are coming to the end of the visit of our brother and sisters from Japan and also we are coming to the end of our investigation about bondage and the ways of liberating ourselves from it. Before we come to the end of this discussion about the impurities that are present at different levels of our being - the physical, the emotional, and the mental - I think it is necessary to discuss something more about the mental process, because mind is the biggest factor of our bondage. The mind is the main instrument of Maya.

If you introspect properly you will see that this mind works in terms of raga and dvesha. Raga is the attraction for that which one supposes is pleasant and dvesha is the repulsion for that which is painful. This duality is present in all the activities of the mind. Attraction - repulsion, like - dislike, good - bad, wanting and rejecting. One scientific way to release ourselves or to rise above these dualities is, as I told you yesterday, by harmonising the Prana; since the function of the mind is intimately connected with the flow of Prana, or life force. Like the mind the Prana also has mainly two currents of flow. There is a movement upwards

and there is also a movement downwards of the life force. Because of this dual function, the life-current has been classified as prana and apana. As the mind is interconnected with the life-force, there is an upward and downward movement of the mind also. In short the unsteadiness of the mind is related to the movement of the Prana. Someone was telling me the other day, “My mind is going backwards”. What he was actually referring to was this dual movement of the mind, interrelated with the movement of Prana.

The whole mechanism of the mind is such that it dwells either in the past or in the future, never dwelling in the ‘now’ moment - the Present. Meditation is a practice and a discipline to make the mind dwell in the absolute present, and pranayama or the harmonisation of the life flow is a great aid to meditation and a scientific way of making the mind dwell in the perfect stillness of the ‘now’ moment, without having to fight and struggle with it. In the ‘now’ moment, there is no thought, there is no memory or imagination, no past or future. In the ‘now’ moment, the mind cannot function, because the mind functions either in terms of memories from the past, or imaginations of the future. Meditation is to dwell in the eternal ‘now’ moment, the absolute silence and stillness of Non-duality; no past, no future, no time nor space.

There is another factor by which we are bound to this world. It is called in Yogic terminology *avinivesh*, which means holding on to life or strong love and attachment for this material life, a state of complete involvement with the mundane. This strong attachment for life can be overcome by doing *vichara*. *Vichara* means contemplating on the real and the unreal nature of things,

the transitory nature of this world and this life. Thus the practice of vichara is a means for loosening the tight grasp on life. It is a weapon by which to cut the strong bonds of attachment that we have for this transitory life.

There is a small anecdote about this attachment or clinging to life. Once there was a disciple and a Master, and the disciple one day asked his Master, “Everyone says that Maya holds us. How does Maya hold us?” The Master remained silent on this point. He did not give any immediate reply to the question. Another day they were taking a walk, and in the course of the walk suddenly the Master ran to a tree, caught hold of it and held onto it very tightly. He told the disciple, “Now, pull me, pull me! The tree is holding me!” The disciple tried his best, and said, “Let go, Let go!” But the Master kept holding on to the tree. The disciple kept pulling but there was no way that he could free his Master from the tree. Then the Master loosened his hold and let go of the tree, looked at the disciple and said, “Did you see how the tree held on to me? This is how Maya is holding on to us.”

Let me also relate another beautiful anecdote about this holding on. There was an old monkey and one day he found a jar of peanuts. You know monkeys are very fond of peanuts. So the old monkey put his hand into this jar and caught hold of a handful of peanuts. He made a tight grasp of the peanuts, like you do of worldly things not even thinking how much you really need. Then the monkey kept trying to take out his hand. Well, the hand was spread out and he had all the peanuts in his hand so the hand did not come out. The monkey began to think there was a ghost

inside the jar and the ghost was holding onto his hand. He went around with this jar stuck to his hand, then suddenly he met a wise monkey. The wise monkey said, “What’s wrong with you? What is this jar doing on your hand?” He replied, “There’s a ghost inside and he is holding onto my hand.” The wise monkey said, “Well, well, let me have a look. Put your hand and the jar down.” And the wise monkey took a look. He said, “Why is your hand spread out?” “Well, there are some peanuts.” “Then it’s very simple, there is no ghost in there, just let go of the peanuts and take your hand out.”

The wise also tell us that there are no ghosts in this world. It’s only our fears, our sense of insecurity, our greed, our attraction for life, our *avinivesh* which makes us grasp onto the things of this world; and they tell us to loosen our hands a little. But we do not like their words, we do not accept them because we ‘want’ to believe in ghosts. So we say Maya is holding onto us but actually we are holding onto the world, clasping onto this life because of lack of discrimination or *vichara*. We hold on to the body. We develop a lot of attachment for it. And we don’t want to accept the idea that we are not this body and this body is transitory. So this is another factor that separates us from the Truth, and it is called *avinivesh*.

Now, we come to *asmita*. *Asmita* means the conjunction of consciousness with a vehicle or principle of perception, such as *buddhi*. That is called *asmita*. Consciousness conjoined with a vehicle of cognition, is called *asmita*. To explain this, I need to talk about the primal cause of our separation from Totality. At first, the all-inclusive and all-knowing nature of consciousness is covered as

if by a veil of ignorance called avidya. The moment this happens Consciousness loses its All-knowing and independent nature and it feels the necessity of a vehicle or a body for Its existence, a medium for knowing and expressing Itself. The conjunction of consciousness with this vehicle is called asmita. From here follows the progressive process of involution of Spirit or Consciousness in Matter.

Now our concern is with this aspect of veiling of Consciousness or avidya. This veiling of consciousness is the starting point of the process of Maya or duality and manifestation. In the process of regaining ones true nature or swarupa stithi, avidya is the last hurdle one has to cross. Unless and until this veil of avidya or Primal Ignorance is penetrated and torn apart one cannot gain complete Self-Realisation, even though one may have gained control over the vital, the emotional, the mental and even the higher mental planes. Destruction of asmita and piercing the veil of avidya are interrelated. The more one frees consciousness of all identifications, the more one eradicates avidya and gains Swarupa-stithi or the state of Pure Being.

It is mainly through discrimination and dispassion that the bonds of asmita and the veils of avidya can be removed and the complete knowledge of the Self be attained. Viveka (discrimination) and Vairagya (Desirelessness or Dispassion) are the two main angas or limbs of Gyana Yoga Sadhana. Viveka is the light of pure intelligence by which the Yogi or sadhak is able to clearly distinguish between the Self and the Non-Self. With this clear awareness of the distinction between the Real and the

Unreal, between the Permanent and the Transitory, he/she is able to develop disinterestedness or dispassion for the Unreal and detach his/her mind from it. This detachment from the non-self with which Pure Consciousness had identified itself is what is called vairagya. When this detachment and discrimination reaches full maturity it naturally leads to Swarupa-stithi or reinstatement in the state of Pure Being.

This state of being established in Pure Being or Self Consciousness is what is called Samadhi - a term which we very often hear. The Yogi proceeds through different states of samadhi; in each state of samadhi throwing off more and more of It's identification with the Non-self. Overcoming step by step what is called in Yogic terminology – the kleshas or the various causes of It's bondage and misery and finally attaining Mokshya or Liberation.

With this ends our discussion and with it also ends the story of the process of bondage and Liberation. What remains now is only Silence. When you all go back to your country, try to feel this silence - the silence of your soul. The way to reach this Silence is only one. Let all of you move forward in that direction. Start from whatever stage you are in. The path starts from dharma and ends in Mokshya. I have told you of another purpose; a higher goal for which to live. May you all use the opportunity of this human life, this invaluable opportunity for attaining the true goal of life and not fritter life away aimlessly.

Hari Om.

GLOSSARY

<i>anga</i>	limb
<i>apana</i>	downward movement of life-force related to digestion, discharge of urine and faeces etc.
<i>artha</i>	wealth and possessions by which one can fulfill one's desires.
<i>ashram</i>	a monastery
<i>asmita</i>	Consciousness conjoined with the vehicle of cognition or I-am-ness
<i>Atma</i>	soul
<i>Atma Gyana</i>	Knowledge of the Self or Ultimate Knowledge
<i>avarana</i>	cover, veil
<i>avidya</i>	ignorance
<i>avinivesh</i>	strong love or attachment for life, a state of complete involvement with the mundane
<i>Ayurveda</i>	Traditional Indian science of Medicine
<i>bata</i>	air element
<i>Bhagavad Gita</i>	the Song of God, the teachings of Lord Krishna to Arjuna on the battlefield during the Mahabharata War
<i>Bhakti Yoga</i>	the Yoga of Devotion
<i>bhava</i>	elevated mood
<i>bikshep</i>	tossing of the mind or restlessness of the mind
<i>buddhi</i>	intelligence
<i>deva</i>	celestial beings
<i>dharma</i>	certain principles or values which help to maintain, uphold and uplift the individual and also society
<i>dvesha</i>	dislike

GLOSSARY

<i>guna</i>	quality
<i>Guru</i>	a Realised Master
<i>Gyana Yoga</i>	the practice of gaining knowledge of the Self
<i>Hatha Yoga</i>	a system of movements, postures and breathing techniques
<i>japa</i>	the practice of repetition of a mantram
<i>jiva</i>	individual soul or material being
<i>kafa</i>	water element or phlegm
<i>kama</i>	desires; material desires and particularly sexual passion
<i>karma</i>	action; also the accumulated deposit of past actions
<i>Karma Yoga</i>	the practice of performing actions as a means of purification and God contact
<i>klesa</i>	the causes of bondage such as; avinivesh, raga-dvesha, asmita and avidya
<i>mala</i>	impurity or dirt
<i>mantram</i>	holy name, sacred syllables or sound vibrations
<i>maya</i>	manifesting and deluding force
<i>Moksha</i>	Liberation
<i>Muni</i>	One who contemplates - does <i>manana</i>
<i>Om</i>	Primal vibration from which Creation manifested
<i>pita</i>	fire element
<i>prakriti</i>	individual nature; Creative or Manifesting Force
<i>prana</i>	life force; upward-moving life-force related to respiration
<i>pranayama</i>	control of breath; equalisation of the ingoing and outgoing breath
<i>pratyahara</i>	withdrawal of the mind from the objective world
<i>purushartha</i>	things for which human beings make effort or which humans aspire to attain; also means the individual's effort to attain something

<i>raga</i>	likes
<i>Raja Yoga</i>	practice of restraint of thought waves.
<i>Rishi</i>	Vedic Seer; to whom the Vedic mantras or chants were revealed to in ancient times
<i>sadhak</i>	spiritual aspirant
<i>sadhana</i>	ways of purification or the practice to free oneself from the limitations of the body and mind, finally leading to Realisation of the Self
<i>sama</i>	control of the mind
<i>samadhi</i>	the state of being established in Pure Being or Self Consciousness
<i>samsara</i>	a word used for the phenomenal world of change
<i>samskara</i>	the collective deposit of past actions, experiences and actions or conditionings
<i>sanjam</i>	self-restraint
<i>Satsanga</i>	the company of the Wise or the Realised. <i>Sat</i> means Truth, <i>sanga</i> means company
<i>seba</i>	service
<i>Shastra</i>	authoritative or sacred texts
<i>Swarupa-sthiti</i>	the state of Pure Being
<i>upasana</i>	worship
<i>vairagya</i>	desirelessness, dispassion, disinterestedness
<i>vichara</i>	discrimination
<i>viveka</i>	the light of pure intelligence by which the yogi or sadhak is able to clearly distinguish between the Real and the unreal, the Self and the non-self
<i>Yangya</i>	sacrifice; Vishnu or God who pervades all
<i>Yoga</i>	to yoke or unite; also a way that leads to union

- About the Author -

Swami Anandaji has been giving talks to various audiences from all over the world for the past 20 years, acquainting them with these traditional ways of discovering one's Self and improving the quality of one's life.

These ways have always been in India and he himself having practiced them for the past 30 years under the guidance of his venerable Master, speaks with confidence of their effectiveness even today in our present society. This has been clearly proved by the transformation that has occurred in the lives of many – all over the world – who have practiced and followed the ways under his guidance.

At present, Swamiji is the President of Dibyadham Yogashram since the Holy Mother returned to Her divine abode in May 2002. He continues to keep his Master's teachings and ideals as a living tradition at the Institution.