

**READINGS
ON
SWAMI BRAHMANANDA'S
SPIRITUAL TEACHINGS**

by

Swami Yatiswarananda

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SPIRITUAL TEACHINGS OF SWAMI BRAHMANANDA
(with a foreword by Sister Devamata)
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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Dear Friends,

We are happy to share with you, in the original format, the complete text of Swami Yatiswarananda's READINGS ON SWAMI BRAHMANANDA'S SPIRITUAL TEACHINGS, as delivered from November 21st, 1933 through January 7th, 1934, at Wiesbaden, Germany, to an intimate group of European students he had begun intensively training.

These READINGS in English—the first of a series, copies of which were preserved by Vedanta devotees in Germany, have never been published in their entirety. Apart from a few extracts which appeared in *VEDANTA FOR EAST & WEST* (Bourne End's magazine), only READINGS 1 through 17 (out of 48) were appended in French to Jean Herbert's translation of the original *SPIRITUAL TEACHINGS OF SWAMI BRAHMANANDA*¹ — first published in 1949 by Editions Derain, Lyons, France, under the title of: '*Swami Brahmananda: DISCIPLINE MONASTIQUE*'.

We are grateful to Kurt Friedrichs of Hamburg, a disciple of the Swami, for sharing his copy of these READINGS with us.

Vedanta students, of course, already know of *MEDITATION AND SPIRITUAL LIFE*, the extensive selection of Swami Yatiswarananda's writings and talks. The present READINGS, naturally, duplicate the ideas and some sections in the aforementioned book. However, repetition is welcome to the earnest seeker, and it will be especially interesting for Europeans to identify with the actual format of how Vedanta was pioneered in the Europe of 60 years ago!

Romain Rolland mentions Swami Yatiswarananda in his diary under date of May 1st, 1935, when the Swami visited Rolland in Switzerland together with Paul Geheeb. The Swami had already been moving — since November 1933 — mainly in Germany and Switzerland [Wiesbaden, Geneva, Lausanne, Zurich, Campfer, St.Moritz, etc.], and occasionally also to London and the Hague. He also visited France several times between 1933 and 1938, and represented the Order at the 1936 Ramakrishna Centenary celebrations at the Sorbonne, in Paris. Jean Herbert, in his preface to *DISCIPLINE MONASTIQUE*, says the Swami often used the *SPIRITUAL TEACHINGS OF SWAMI BRAHMANANDA* as a basis for his talks to European Vedanta groups.

It is indeed a great good fortune that the Swami had the foresight to edit and give a permanent form to these READINGS, so that they can be consulted by us today. We are sure you will find them both inspiring, and challenging...

The ADDENDUM addresses the disciple-Guru relationship.

PUBLISHER

1. Original 1931 edition, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, with a foreword by Sister Devamata — republished in 1978, including the biographical portions from Swami Prabhavananda's 1944 *ETERNAL COMPANION*.

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Swami Yatiswarananda
in Central Europe 1933-1940

Swami Yatiswarananda (1889-1966), a senior monk and former Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Order and Mission, was a well-known spiritual figure in the Neo-Vedanta Movement. Beside seven years of pioneering work in spreading Vedanta in Europe and ten years of teaching Vedanta in USA, he also served as President of the Ramakrishna: Bombay Ashrama (1924), Madras Math (1926) and Bangalore Ashrama (1951). He was an initiated disciple of Swami Brahmananda (the great direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna), and was widely respected for his high spiritual attainments, Yogic insight and mature wisdom. He advocated and lived a well-harmonized spiritual life with meditation as the keynote and love and service as the main melody.

(From the back cover of *MEDITATION & SPIRITUAL LIFE*)

READINGS ON SWAMI BRAHMANANDA'S SPIRITUAL TEACHINGS

1 -- Wiesbaden, November 21st, 1933

Spiritual life should begin early

1.01 Those who are not spiritually-minded while they live in the world can never be spiritually-minded when they retire from the world.

1.02 Unless we have sown the seed of spiritual life in our soul, there is no possibility of creating the spiritual instinct in later life.

1.03 One has to begin as early as possible with one's spiritual life, whatever the worldly-minded may say. The cleverness of all such worldly people is just like that of the crow. It thinks itself terribly clever and worldly-wise, but eats filth and dirt all the same. Worldly people always tell you that there is plenty of time for you to take up spiritual life. First enjoy your youth, and then, in old age, there will be time enough to do your practice and lead a spiritual life. And then, when you grow old, you find that the old impressions have become so deep that there is no possibility of effacing them, that you have become slaves of your impulses and instincts and old impressions and can no longer act in the way you would like to, cannot take up a higher and purer life, neither mentally nor physically.

1.04 Our ideal in life is to make a beginning of liberation in this very life and to make the best use of the time that is given to us.

Divine Grace

1.05 Purity is the condition for Divine grace. Without purity and real dispassion there can never be any spiritual life or even any deep spiritual striving.

1.06 The grace of the Divine comes to a person in the form of self-effort in the form of the will to strive for something higher and more permanent than all these phenomena. There are so many people in this world who do not care for spiritual life, so our hankering for spiritual life is really a great grace of the Divine.

1.07 Some speak of destiny, others speak of self-effort, while again others hold, "Yes it is true that everything depends on the will of the Lord, but the Lord desires that I should strive my utmost.

Self-effort comes to me as a manifestation of my 'destiny'. It is the will of the Lord that creates in me the desire for striving."

1.08 In actual spiritual life we find that unless one strives one's utmost and one's best, the Lord's grace will not descend on us.

Divide mind between Divine and world

1.09 We must know how to divide the mind to some extent. The mind has such wonderful powers, and we can make one part of it cling to the Lord and to the Lord alone, whatever be our occupation. This in itself is a great Sadhana.

1.10 What is most essential in all forms of spiritual life is to keep the greater part of the mind thinking of God, thinking of the Ideal, and never to allow it to give its thoughts to the world or worldly affections and relations even when occupied with some worldly duty.

1.11 Through constant and unflinching practice we may develop an attitude of mind that enables us to think and to feel that whatever we do is a service to the Lord, and that we have no right to the fruits of any of our actions.

"O Lord, whatever works I do, I look upon them as a form of worship to Thee."

1.12 This service may be physical, intellectual or spiritual.

No need shake hands with the tiger

1.13 It is quite true that all are the Divine, but it is better to salute some of these manifestations from a safe distance. There are some forms of the Divine you should avoid, others you should not approach too closely during the time of your Sadhana. Always be on your guard and wide-awake. Always watch the reactions of your mind brought about by certain people and things, and act accordingly. Avoid everything that is apt to rouse old impressions and thoughts belonging to your former life. If you do not, you cannot attain mental purification.

2 -- Wiesbaden, November 22nd, 1933

Ideal must be fixed and clear

2.01 The ideal must be fixed and clear before beginning with one's Sadhana. That is what is needed. We must have a very definite idea of the path and a definite idea of the goal to be attained, i.e.,

the goal of life. So long as we allow ourselves to be vague and dreamy, hazy in all our feelings and doings, no progress is felt, and there is a continual conflict in us, which prevents most people from advancing even a single step towards the goal. There is too much shallow, superficial thinking, shallow feeling, shallow willing and acting, without any really deeper urge, without any definite clear-cut purpose, without any deeper awareness.

2.02 When we study the mind dispassionately, we find that the ideal is not fixed, that the path is not fixed, that everything is allowed to remain hazy and muddled. Alternately, different ideals and ideas rise in the mind. There is no steadiness, nothing really clear and definite and purposeful.

2.03 When you sit for meditation, the thought of work rises in your mind. This is most troublesome for beginners.

2.04 We should have the ideal fixed that neither worldly nor heavenly pleasures are our goal, that the only goal is self-realization. Neither this world, nor heaven, nor any other world. Heavenly enjoyment is no better than earthly enjoyment, and so long as there is a hankering after heavenly enjoyment we can never attain the goal. Heaven is a very cheap thing after all.

2.05 We cannot lead the worldly life and the higher life. We cannot allow ourselves to run after worldly love and affections and have the higher Divine Love at the same time. God and worldly affections, God and worldly passion and pleasure, cannot live together. *"Where Kama is, there Rama cannot be; where Rama is, there Kama cannot be."*

2.06 Before we actually begin our spiritual life in real earnest, we must decide if we are really fully prepared to pay the price. Mostly there are two tendencies, a worldly tendency, and a spiritual tendency in us and if both are more or less equally strong at the beginning, one must be strengthened, otherwise there is no progress, and the tug-of-war going on in ourselves can never be overcome.

2.07 That is why it is absolutely necessary for us to fix once for all our ideal, our conduct of life, everything, and then stick to it whatever happens.

2.08 If you really wish to follow the difficult path beset with so many pitfalls and dangers, you must also be prepared to overcome all the difficulties.

2.09 If we wish to transcend all the unrealities, there must always be a certain amount of the dare-devil in us, a certain amount of fearlessness and true heroism.

2.10 The path of the aspirant is a very dangerous path, dangers and pitfalls lurking everywhere, on all sides, and if once caught, there is no more chance for many people.

2.11 Unless you sacrifice all your worldly desires and your sense of I-ness, you can never realize the higher ideal.

“Give us discrimination, give us renunciation, give us devotion and knowledge.”

3 -- Wiesbaden, November 23rd, 1933

Learn to redirect mind

3.01 In spiritual life, although to a great extent, you cut off your personal relations with others, you come to have wider love and sympathy.

3.02 If some other person attracts you, just direct the mind into some higher channels, create higher attractions, and you may even for the time being create in yourself some dislike or disgust for the person in question, so that that person loses all charm for you. Later on, this disgust can be effaced so that you can look at that person with the same indifference as you would look at a stranger you have never known.

3.03 When one finds something higher, the lower automatically loses its attraction and is put aside.

Right imagination

3.04 In the beginning of our spiritual life we have to create our own images, but these are always images of which the pattern is right, i.e., imaginations of something that is real, not of something wholly imaginary.

3.05 Some stress the sense of the Presence more than the sense of the form, although they, too, call up the form. The same Being permeates both the form called up and the devotee, as the devotee's own eternal being.

Meditation on Light

3.06 Just think that your whole heart or head is permeated with

the Divine Effulgence, and that this Light is part of the Infinite Light that pervades everything. Melt away your whole personality, your I-ness, into That. Melt away your body, your mind, your senses, your emotions, into That. Just imagine this very vividly. And then this infinite ocean of Light takes shape, as part of this Light becomes solidified in the form of your Ishtam. But never lose sight of the infinite background of which your Ishtam and you yourself as well as all others are parts, and which permeates all these. The ocean, the One Eternal Principle, lying at the back of both you yourself and the whole universe, must never be lost sight of, because it is That which will be realized by you one day.

3.07 In this form of meditation the One becomes two, as it were, i.e., the Infinite Light becomes solidified into the object of worship and the worshipper.

3.08 Why love these petty miserable dolls, these small human idols of flesh and blood? If you really want to love, love the ideal or the Divine, but not these puny ephemeral human forms.

Control of Food

3.09 Once a king was asked to lead a good life, but when he tried he naturally found it very hard and was asked to practise also a little food-control. But he found that the holy man who was giving him all these instructions was taking very hot food. "How is it possible for you to eat all this hot stuff, and at the same time to maintain your mental balance?" — asked the king. The holy man replied, "I always have before me the thought of Death and it is this that exerts a great influence on me."

3.10 We should practise a certain amount of control and discrimination regarding the food we take, but so long as we are in the body, the body must be properly taken care of and nourished to keep it a fit instrument for the realization of the Divine and for the Divine's work.

There is much more body-consciousness in the person who is ill or weak than in the perfectly healthy and normal person. And we have to see that our body-consciousness is reduced to a minimum if we want to make good progress in spiritual life.

Banish all worldly thoughts

3.11 So long as we allow the love for the world to dwell in our hearts and to be cherished by them, Divine Love can never be born.

3.12 Unless our mind be to some extent pure and non-attached and prepared for renunciation, we can never even think of God-realization. Try to purify your body, to purify your heart, to purify your mind as much as possible. Then the blazing fire of spiritual realization will burn away all desires.

3.13 Banish all worldly thoughts with an effort of the will and with great sincerity, consciously and purposefully, fix your mind on the Divine. One who does not lead a pure life and is not disciplined ought never to receive this instruction, because meditation becomes dangerous in the case of a person who is not properly prepared and has not gone through the proper preliminary training. Only one who has passed through tremendous training and ethical discipline can have true self-surrender.

Never associate too freely with people

3.14 You must never associate too freely with people, and always use discrimination. Once Sri Ramakrishna told Swamiji not to associate so much with Girish Chandra Ghosh, the great Bengali dramatist and actor. He said, *“A cup where for a long time garlic has been kept will still have some of the smell adhering to it, even when it was well washed and cleaned.”*—On hearing this from some other devotees, Girish felt very sad at heart and went to the Master to ask him about it. He asked, “Sir, what can I do to get rid of this smell?” And Sri Ramakrishna answered, *“You have lit such a tremendous fire of Divine Love in you that everything is burnt to ashes.”*

[GIRISH:— “I heard you spoke in this strain, but bless me, that this garlic smell may go away.”

SRI RAMAKRISHNA:— “You have lighted such a fire of devotion, and this will burn away all smell. No smell of your past life can cling to you.”]

Afterwards Girish Chandra Ghosh said, “The Lord has taken away all my vices.” (Opium, etc., etc.)

Activity and self-surrender

3.15 Only one who has really passed through strenuous self-effort can give up and surrender himself wholly and unconditionally at the feet of the Divine. Self-surrender can only come when our wings are dead-tired like those of the bird sitting on the ship’s mast.

3.16 All forms of striving make the mind pure and fit for the Divine touch. And self-surrender can only be accomplished after having gone through one's spiritual practice with great perseverance and doggedness.

3.17 Too much activity is very dangerous, because it usually becomes the aimless activity of the monkey. What for? Nobody knows. This kind of activity is just restlessness and nothing more. But then you find a form of self-surrender, so-called self-surrender, that is nothing more than inertness, indolence, lethargy. And this is just as bad as aimless activity.

3.18 Most people are so active, because they are terribly afraid to be left to themselves. They work and work and work and go to cinemas and parties and theatres, read heaps and heaps of books. What for? Just to keep themselves busy, just to divert their minds from themselves.

3.19 The true aspirant should always try to combine both: activity of the right kind and self-surrender.

Brahmacharya

3.20 Self-realization is the ultimate goal and the ideal. And there must be an amount of asceticism, just as there must be perfect continence, Brahmacharya, otherwise the mind will be drawn away by the senses and become more and more outgoing and sense-bound. We can only have one centre of consciousness if we really wish to progress in spiritual life. Spiritual life without continence, Brahmacharya, is not possible, whatever some people may say. You cannot lose your body-consciousness without disciplining and subduing the body and its cravings.

4 -- Wiesbaden, November 24th, 1933

The benefit of proper study

4.01 Religion is other than, and much more, than book-knowledge. Nor is ordinary eclecticism religion. Nowadays you find everywhere books on all the various beliefs and the many types of messages brought by the various religions. But, ordinary learning, intellectual study by itself, can never reveal the Truth. If we let ourselves get caught up too much in intellectualism and give too much importance to intellectual things, we will never be able to realize the

essential truths of religion. “*He is One; sages give Him many names.*” (*Rig-veda 1.164.46*)

4.02 “*Let us study as much as possible, let us master all the sciences but, when we become great scholars, let us again become simple, like children.*” — Until we become simple, we can have no spiritual life.

4.03 He who wishes to progress must free himself of all deviousness, falsity, dissimulation, all lack of straightforwardness and all mental perversities. He must be perfectly straightforward, sincere, frank, and must meditate.

4.04 Once we learn what the essence of spiritual life is, once we form a clear conception of the Divine, we must to try to practise certain disciplines. Avoid reading too many of those empty words which only confuse and upset the mind.

“Loud speech consisting of a shower of words, the skill in expounding scriptures, and likewise erudition—these bring on a little personal enjoyment to the scholar but are no good for Liberation.”

—(*Sankaracharya, Vivekachudamani 58*)

4.05 However, this does not mean we should not study, but that we ought to study what helps to realize the Truth. The Vedanta always encourages study and recommends that, at the same time, we perform some real spiritual exercises. We need to train our minds unceasingly and to have a definite study plan, we need to reflect deeply on any problems, to read books and to acquire a capacity for clear thinking and deep comprehension. Let this become so habitual that you will feel uneasy on the day you will not have studied a book deeply and attentively reflected on its truths. This daily study should become an important part of our Sadhana.

Overcoming the Passions

4.06 One of the messages of Sri Ramakrishna is, “*Be spiritual and realize the Truth for yourselves.*” — By leading a spiritual life we can invite the Divine to come and live in us.

4.07 The human being is swayed by the passions, mostly by sex and greed, and the Master teaches us how to overcome these tendencies, which are the greatest obstacles to spiritual life. He teaches us how to change our conception about ourselves and about other people, men and women. Both of these must adopt a di-

vine conception of themselves and to cease referring to themselves in accordance to their sex and body. We need to eliminate such conceptions, in order to rise above all sex-ideas in ourselves and in others. This is one of the most essential points to be noted by the Sadhaka. The modern period needs this message, more than any other time did. This teaching, offered by the Master, was above all first realized in his own life, and in that of the Holy Mother. Without purity, no spiritual life is possible. To see the Divine within us and in all others, men and women, is the only solution to the sexual problem in this world.

4.08 *'Woman and Gold'* is the badge of our century, which is a period dominated by sexuality and the worship of Mammon; that is why the Master had to express himself in extremely strong terms when completely rejecting sex, gold and greed. The more I see of the Western mode of life, the more I understand the full meaning of this message for all.

4.09 You can never rise above the idea of sex by merely hating man or woman, as many Christian mystics have tried to do. Something else is needed. Even hate is another form of sexual attraction, and nothing else. — *"The divine is within me, in all, in everything. I am not a man, I am not a woman, I am THAT."*

"Having found the Self by means of chastity, we meditate on it. Imperishable alone, is the Self, attained through unbroken chastity..."

"That Infinite is bliss. There is no bliss in what is finite. The Infinite alone is bliss... and Thou art THAT."

—(Chhandogya Upanishad)

Beyond rituals

4.10 *"Those who want to reach the highest perfection by means of sacrifice and ritual are like children crossing the ocean on a raft; they are attempting the impossible,"* — says the Upanishad, and draws attention to what is essential in spiritual life, namely the One without a second. And this same truth has been taught by Krishna, by Christ, etc. Judaism has always been anti-monastic. The Buddha, the Upanishads, Krishna, Christ, etc. have always been essentially monastic in their teachings.

Buddha's mission

4.11 The purpose of Buddha's mission was to demonstrate to

the people, the necessity of not giving too much importance to rituals and ceremonies, but to make religion living, within themselves, by leading a pure life, of meditation, spiritual discipline and mental control.

4.12 Without morality and without a pure life we can never hope to become spiritual and achieve any progress. We can only indulge in wishful thinking, that's all.

4.13 What did Buddha say regarding God? He said nothing about Him. It is not essential to talk about God; it is much more important to walk on the path which leads to Him and to live a spiritual life. What is the use of saying, "Lord, how wonderful You are! How wonderful are Your skies, Your stars, Your whole creation!" — As if God cared for His creation! The Creator is always greater than His creation and is never proud of such a small thing. Seen, however, from our petty human point of view, the creation appears immense to us, but for God, it is after all but a small thing. It is therefore much more important to walk on the path which leads to God, rather than to go on glorifying Him with lip-service only.

4.14 Once somebody asked the Buddha, "Lord, does God exist?" — "Did I say that God exists? —"So, God does not exist." — "Did I say that God does not exist?" The Buddha wanted to prevent people from trying to split hairs and to lose themselves in intellectual speculations; he wanted them to start doing something to help themselves. Thus, he said, "When the house is on fire, do you waste your time trying to find out how it happened, or do you try to put the fire out?"

4.15 But, nonsensically, we more often try to find the source of the fire and, before succeeding in this, the whole house has burned down and nothing but a heap of ashes remains of it! In spiritual life, we need to stick to what is essential.

4.16 Sri Ramakrishna used to say, "*All jackals in all lands, have the same voice.*" — On another occasion he said, "*I cook the food for you and put it into your mouth, but even then you do not take the trouble to eat it.*" — We always want someone else to accomplish things for us. But without the Sadhaka's personal effort, no mediator can grant liberation. Many of those who consider themselves religious are nothing but parasites in the world of religion and spiritual life. They could do better by turning to something else.

“By chastity, he who knows, attains the world of Brahman. By chastity alone can he who has worshipped the Lord and aspires to reach the Self, reach the Self. The Self which is revealed by perfect chastity is imperishable. By means of chastity, the Supreme Self is attained.”

—(Sankaracharya)

5 -- Wiesbaden, November 25th, 1933

Form and Formless--the wave and the ocean

5.01 Most people cannot begin their Sadhana with the Formless, not even with the Formless with attributes, whatever they may think. But first they must find this out for themselves. Then only can proper instruction be given to them. Not before. Very often we find it impossible to think of the Divine, as such. So it is proper to think of all these great personalities, the great Incarnations, the great Prophets of mankind. To worship God *“in Spirit and in Truth”* (John 4.24) is all very well, but how to do it? If we cannot do it, it becomes a meaningless phrase, and nothing but that.

5.02 Mere concentration without strict ethical culture is not enough. We must learn to purify our feelings and to attain a sense of *vastness*, of the Infinite pervading everywhere. We possess only our small limited, impure, individual consciousness, but they, the Great Ones, possess infinite consciousness. They rise out of the ocean, but the ocean never becomes limited to the wave-form. It is the wave that merges itself into the ocean, that becomes one with it, that comes to have the ocean-consciousness.

“Lord, when I am one with Thee, it is not that Thou becomest myself, but it is I who am lost in Thee.”

5.03 The wave becomes one with the ocean, loses its wave-consciousness, its wave-form, not that the ocean identifies itself with the wave or the wave-consciousness. This would be a very wrong idea and lead to erroneous conclusions. The part becomes merged in the whole, never can the whole be identified with the part. Individual consciousness expands itself into Universal Consciousness, but Universal Consciousness can never become individual consciousness. This is the meaning of *‘Thou art THAT’* or *‘I am Brahman’*. This is the reply to those who say, “How can God become man?” God is never limited and the Incarnation is only a manifestation, but never the whole of God. We are just like small, tiny waves and ripples that

are merged in the ocean, and it is very difficult for us even to have this full wave-consciousness. We are like bubbles, at the most a very small wave, but they, the Great Incarnations, are mountain-high waves, always fully conscious of their true nature and consciously in touch with the ocean. What happens if you try to take a small bubble out of the water?

Answer:— You get a wet hand or wet fingers.

Swami:— Yes, you do. The bubble only bursts, for no bubble can ever exist by itself without this ocean-background, but the trouble is that we are not conscious of it. We believe ourselves to be separate entities, separate from the ocean and separate from each other, and then all other mistakes follow as a matter of course and cannot be avoided.

5.04 Although we take our limited existence to be real, we find, when we dive deep into the matter, that it is unreal. The conception of its reality is wholly due to ignorance, to the fact of the bubble imagining itself to be independent of the ocean. Through this we come to cherish so many petty, undignified conceptions. When we get rid of the upadhis [limiting adjuncts], we rise above all such illusory and misleading conceptions and ideas and become dignified, self-conscious beings—‘self-conscious’ in a higher sense.

5.05 Christ does not mean a personality, but a state of absolute existence. Buddha does not mean a personality, but a state of absolute existence. Theirs is always the Saviour’s consciousness, Infinite Consciousness, not the limited individualized one that we possess. Ours is impure, limited consciousness, theirs unlimited consciousness.

5.06 The personality can be merged in the Principle, but the whole Principle can never be identified with the personality. As substance it is all one and the same, the One Undivided, Indivisible, Eternal, Unchanging Consciousness, but it cannot be denied that there is something which is non-substance during the time of our clouded individualized state. Something other than this one Substance creates all this differentiation.

5.07 Each one has raised a thought-world round himself, and it is that which individualizes us all.

Individualized state -- our second nature

5.08 Wherefrom did this impulse come? Wherefore did it

come? What was our condition before this individualized form came into existence? Wherefore does this body exist. Why do all these diverse and manifold thought-forms exist? Why does the Formless assume forms? It is all madness. When we study the lives of the Great Ones, we find that their consciousness is the Infinite Consciousness beyond all limitation, and not the limited one, although they appear in a limited form.

5.09 The moment this individualized state is brought about, passions, desires crop up and try to get sway over us. If passions, desires, body-consciousness, and all the rest really belonged to our essential nature, we could never rid ourselves of them, however hard we might try to do so. But fortunately, this is not the case. They are merely our second nature.

The touch of the Great Ones

5.10 The touch of the Great Ones brings also to us Universal Consciousness, bursts the bonds of this limited existence by bringing in new light, a deeper kind of awareness that lies hidden in all of us.

5.11 By lifting ourselves consciously to the plane of their thoughts, we get rid of all these wrong and deep-rooted notions of being men and women, i.e., limited beings, drop the limiting adjuncts and get a new and purer sense of existence. Sometimes through the intensity of our feeling we can give such a stimulus to the Cosmic Mind that form arises out of the Cosmic Mind, or if the form does not arise, at least the Cosmic Idea does so as to show us the way.

5.12 If you connect your light with the electric current of a power-station you get plenty of light. The dynamo gives all the necessary current, but you must connect your wire with that of the dynamo.

5.13 By coming in touch with the Great we also are magnetized, as it were, but we must first become attuned. Our attempts at meditation are for polarizing our mind. When the contact is established, the current flows automatically. So you must make yourselves good conductors. Then the current will flow in a natural and unbroken way. We do not give a stimulus to something that is non-existing, but to something that *is* at all times and then as the result of that stimulus something rises in us to the conscious plane.

5.14 If you go and throw a stone into the water, you see the re-

action, but you do not create the water for all that. There is something other than ourselves, something that is more creative than ourselves. So, in a way, prayer becomes something like a very big stone thrown into the water. The water is there, but the stone gives the stimulus to it, and then the reaction follows as a matter of course.

Develop great intensity, and get a first Glimpse of Truth

5.15 We should develop great intensity in ourselves. Intensity is one of the principal factors in the life of the aspirant. Real spiritual life actually begins with a glimpse of the Truth. Not before. It begins, when I see at least the reflection of the sun. Before that there can never be any real beginning of spiritual life. Unless we ourselves have at least some glimpse of the Divine, we are all atheists, whatever we may think ourselves to be or whatever we may call ourselves. Only that person who has had a glimpse is no atheist, all others are.

5.16 In the beginning you have to accept a certain proposition which is to be verified by yourself afterwards. Everything else is but a preparation for the spiritual life, a preliminary training to make the body and the mind fit, and for that reason all the preliminary conditions and purificatory disciplines have to be fulfilled and gone through, before real spiritual life can be taken up.

Purification of mind

5.17 The mind is just like a mirror. We have allowed it to be hidden under masses and masses of cobwebs and dirt. So there is no reflection. Remove all these layers of dirt and cobwebs, then you will see the picture.

5.18 Now you must lead as conscious and as pure a life, physically and mentally, as possible, trying to erase all the old impressions and bringing in better ideas and better pictures. And this is always a very troublesome and very slow process, but each aspirant has to pass through it.

5.19 If an impure mind comes in touch with something holy, there is no reflection. So spiritual life is a cleaning process to make the mind a good reflector of the higher things.

5.20 Set fire to all the desires lurking in the mind and then go cleanse the mind with the ashes that are formed! And when the mind becomes clean, then only it takes on any colour. First, the dirty cloth

must be sent to the laundry, and then afterwards you dye it. When it has become perfectly clean, it will take on any colour beautifully.

5.21 So this purifying process must be gone through by everybody without any exception. There is no comfortable high-road leading to salvation. We must first attune our mind to the Truth. The body is to be attuned, polarized in a certain way. The mind must be attuned, polarized in a certain way, and unless this condition is fulfilled, at least to a great extent, no contact can be brought about.

Cosmic Mind

5.22 The Infinite can never be expressed in terms of the finite. It can only be hinted at.

"Only a part of this Infinite is manifested as what we call the Cosmic Universe."

5.23 All the Great Souls rise out of the Cosmic Mind of which our individual minds are parts.

5.24 Because we bubbles find it impossible to come in touch with the ocean, we want to come in touch with the mighty waves.

5.25 By loving them with great intensity, with our whole heart, we come to love their ideas. Until we reach realization, there should be great intellectual study of the lives of the Great Ones and great love for them. This unconsciously colours our mind more and more.

5.26 The soul is something that is free by nature, but Prakriti is ever ready to bind the soul. Prakriti by Herself cannot bring into existence this manifold world. The soul, in its ignorance, wants to experience the manifold and become more and more outgoing. And Prakriti always wants some sentient being.

5.27 Prakriti is blind and Purusha is lame. The cripple is carried by the blind, and the blind gives the direction. This is a nice combination of the blind and the cripple, and everything follows as a matter of course.

5.28 We must be prepared to be carried by someone who can be a guide, not by a blind man who does not see the way.

6 -- Wiesbaden, November 26th, 1933

Religion is for the chosen few

6.01 Religion, whether you like it or not, is only for the chosen

few. There can never be any mass-religion, however beautiful this ideal may seem to you.

6.02 The *Bhagavad-Gita* says that out of thousands of people we find one fortunate soul taking to spiritual life. But success or no success let us at least strive with all our heart. Let us all think we are these blessed few that are chosen, and strive on and on.

6.03 In the field of religion there is also a kind of aristocracy, but they are always willing to share their riches with others. Those who are strong, those who have the capacity only, succeed. Not the others. There is no place for the weakling in spiritual life. The great aristocrats in the realm of the spirit always place what they possess before others. But you can take a horse to the water, but not make it drink if it does not want to. This is the meaning of *'throwing pearls before swine'*. We must use discrimination and bring the right thing to the right person. Others will not be able to understand it and are not going to follow it, whatever you may say and do. There are people who have greater capacity and smaller capacity. If milk has been watered too much how long shall I have to boil it?

6.04 We should look upon it as a great fortune that for some reason or other our mind possesses an attraction for the higher and eternal things, and should see that we steadily and gradually proceed along the higher path, never flagging till we reach the goal. Our spiritual fervour is to be maintained, and we very often run the risk of becoming slack. This is the end of spiritual striving in most people after they have taken to the spiritual life for a certain time. Their minds are too restless and too outgoing to keep this spiritual fervour and intensity up for a very long time and to go on steadily and doggedly with their practices and daily readings and studies. So we should be on our guard.

6.05 Doggedness, tenacity is the one thing needed for spiritual life. All progress can only be had through great steadiness and tenacity, never allowing ourselves to flag or to become lukewarm.

How to know Him?

"He is the only One that is stainless, sinless, changeless and unnameable, and that is pure and Divine. There is no second. Whoever knows Him, becomes He Himself."

6.06 But how to know Him, that is the point. He cannot be

known in a day, just after a few practices done in a haphazard, slovenly way.

“Practice your disciplines and all that, it is quite right, but you must know how to die.” (Bengali Proverb)

6.07 Let us not die the death of a miserable slave, being slaves to our impulses and senses till the very end of our life, never doing anything.

6.08 Wordsworth says in his ‘Ode on the Intimations of Immortality’:

“Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting.”

6.09 The one task of our life is to assert this potential divinity, to come face to face with the Reality that *is*. Man verily easily forgets that his power of comprehension is so very limited. A little knowledge is always most dangerous.

“Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.”

“The more I learn, the more I find I do not know.” Bengali Proverb)

6.10 One God hidden in all things, pervades all things and is the Inner Life of all things. He is the giver of the fruits of Karma, He lives in all things. He is the Soul of all; there is nothing like Him, and he is without any Gunas, being secondless. He is the great Wise One. He is the one doer among the many actionless objects.

6.11 Generally, it is not the Truth that we love, but we just love ourselves in something. We are in love with an idea, because it is *our* idea, not because it represents the Truth at all.

“God is known to him who really knows Him to be unknown. And he is unknown to him, who thinks He is known.” (Kena Up. 2.3)

6.12 To the true and steady devotee the Lord reveals His glory. And the devotee’s task is to be in tune with the Divine, with the Infinite. And then the Lord manifests His glory to him. Just as man tries to approach God, God is ever ready to approach man.

6.13 If you go on trying to find out the root-cause of things, you find it to be an impossible task. A finer and subtler instrument is needed for that.

“He is without mind, ear, hands, feet, and light. There the worlds are no worlds, the Devas no Devas, the Vedas no

Vedas, sacrifices no sacrifices, mother no mother, father no father, daughter-in-law no daughter-in-law, monks no monks; so one only, Brahman, shines as different."

6.14 It is really very funny. All this manifestation, including the body, the thoughts and all. There is no sense, at least so it appears to us. What is the reason for the Formless to assume form? It is all without rhyme or reason, nothing but madness. There is no explanation for this diversified and multiform play of Maya in the One, and none has ever been able to explain it in terms of the relative. On the relative plane there is absolutely no explanation, whether you call it God's will, as the Christian does, or God's sport or play or Lila. It can never be explained, but it can be transcended.

7 -- Wiesbaden, November 27th, 1933

How to know the Truth?

7.01 Truth cannot be known with the help of one's speech or with the help of one's mind. Truth cannot be seen with these physical human eyes. We can know the highest Truth with a pure heart and with a purified mind, and the highest Truth can be realized by those who have the vision to see the subtle, whose mind is calm and one-pointed, whose mind is purified. With the help of our impure intellect it is not possible to find right solutions. And the spiritual man finds solutions by diving deep into the very depths of his own being, by coming in touch with Truth, by coming face to face with Truth, not by arguing about It. There is within our soul something that is immortal, something that is the eternal witness of whatever takes place outside and inside our mind. And unless we realize this permanent element within ourselves, it is not possible for us even to have a glimpse of the permanent element outside ourselves.

7.02 The great task is "*how to know the Knower?*". "How can that be known by which everything else is known?" (*Brih. Up. 2.4.14, 4.5.15*) — This is the great question of the Upanishad.

"That which is not inside, does not exist outside." (Bengali Proverb)

7.03 In order to be in touch with the perennial source of all waters we must begin digging in our own ground, not in that of our neighbour. And in order to come in touch with them, we need not dig up the whole earth, but only to make a deep hole in ourselves.

Hints re Japam and meditation

7.04 Faith is most essential before taking up Japam. It does not matter if it, to some extent at least, becomes mechanical. The beginner finds his centre of consciousness is continually shifting, going up, coming down etc. This is a most difficult situation for all aspirants.

7.05 Unless you feel that there is a mine of gold under your feet, you may be walking over it, but you do not know. But if you approach this gold-mine knowingly, consciously, trying to dig up this gold, then alone you are benefited and make progress.

7.06 You must never allow yourselves to get into a drowsy state during your attempts at meditation or your Japam. This is most dangerous. Sleep, drowsiness and meditation should never be connected in any way. If you feel very drowsy, just get up and pace the room while you are doing your Japam, till this drowsiness leaves you.

7.07 In the beginner there are mostly two states of mind:— one awfully restless, the other the mind falling down to the subliminal plane. Both are to be avoided if you want to make real progress.

7.08 When the mind is awfully restless and outgoing, we should doggedly persist in our Japam even do it mechanically, without giving in to this restlessness. In that way, part of the mind is always engaged in Japam. Thus the whole mind cannot become or remain restless.

7.09 The other state, that of drowsiness, is most dangerous, and should be avoided at all costs. There are people for whom sitting for meditation is an invitation to sleep. A restless, terribly outgoing mind is even better. One is Rajas, the other Tamas, and Tamas is even lower than Rajas, and for it there can be no place in spiritual life or striving.

7.10 Imagine that along with the repetition of the name of your Ishtam or your Mantram, your whole body, your whole mind, the senses, etc., etc., are purified. This faith must be made very firm, because, in a way, this is the idea underlying Japam. The Ishtam's name soothes one's nerves, calms the mind, changes the body. When the mind is in a state of great tension or depressed, begin at once humming the name and imagine that this is bringing about a balanced state, a new sort of rhythm in the body and in the mind. Actually you will feel how it soothes the whole nervous system, how it

stops the outgoing tendency of the mind more and more. Rhythmic, regular breath brings about calmness, a certain rhythm, in the nervous system, and this again facilitates your practices. The Holy Thought brings about a certain rhythm in the body and mind. Think with each repetition of the name of your Ishtam, or of your Mantram, that you are becoming purer and purer. You cannot know the effect all at once, but if you go on for some time, steadily and doggedly, you feel it and then, after some years you will be astonished to find what a great change has come over you. There is a great scope for experiments. This body is to be polarized and made rhythmic, at least to some extent, and the nerves, too, are to be polarized and made rhythmic. Through practice we must make the body, the senses, the mind, the breath, all of them rhythmic, then only we come to have the proper mood for spiritual practices and meditation, and can begin them in right earnest. Everything else belongs to the preliminary steps.

7.11 While doing your breathing exercises, try to give some strong suggestions to your mind:

- I am breathing in purity, breathing out all impurity.
- I am breathing in strength, breathing out all weakness.
- I am breathing in calmness, breathing out all restlessness.
- I am breathing in freedom, breathing out all bondage.

These suggestions may be given even while doing your JAPAM. They are very helpful in preparing the ground for the real practices.

7.12 Strict regularity and a fixed daily routine for your practices, readings, studies etc. and deep thinking, are very much wanted and very, very essential in the aspirant's life. Then, at such times, through habit, the right mood just comes to you and makes everything else easier. Once this habit is formed, you will make much better progress and feel the strain of all these practices much less.

7.13 Everything is difficult in this path. Visualization is difficult. Control of the mind is difficult. Meditation is difficult. Japam is difficult if done properly, but a little less so. So new strength must be gained. And for this the suggestions I mentioned are very helpful. Make use of the great power of sound and sound-symbols. Man is a psychological animal; we must know how to calm our mind etc. Just as this

mind of ours is ever ready to deceive us, we must be ever ready to deceive this mind, naturally taking the help of something higher.

7.14 You must try to feel that the Holy Name, the Holy Mantram, purifies you. If you just try for some time, this feeling is sure to come. Make the experiment yourself. Verify everything that is being told you. If you do not realize these truths yourself, it would be ever so much better to burn all the books on religion, to throw all the holy scriptures overboard.

7.15 You cannot realize the great effect of Japam now. This rhythmic repetition of the name of the Ishtam has a great effect and is one of the most essential practices in the life of the beginner.

7.16 'OM' is a very fine rhythmic syllable. Sound melting away into soundlessness. Sound-vibration plays a great part in our life, so we should take its help.

Prayers

7.17 Just immediately after sitting down for meditation, with folded hands one says:

"Whether impure or pure, under all conditions, whoever remembers the Lord becomes purified inwardly and outwardly."

The aspirant thinks that along the Sushumna-canal, the Jiva [individualized soul] is taken to the centre in the head and is connected with the Universal Spirit. And he thinks all this gross body and subtle body are burnt away, and he himself becomes one with the Absolute: "I am He, I am He!"

"Do Thou appear here, do Thou stay here, do Thou be steady, do Thou come near me and accept my worship."

7.18 The right spirit of prayer is great intensity, great concentration and one-pointedness. Without these, no prayer will be of any avail.

"Do Thou save me, O Lord, Thou who hast taken this form of the Universe."

"We remember the All-Pervading Being saying this Mantram, the Being with these thousands of heads, thousands of eyes and thousands of feet, who envelopes and permeates this whole universe, nay, even exists beyond."

"Being subject to the limitations (workings) of the vital energy,

intellect and body, whatever sin has been committed by me in the state of waking, dream and deep sleep, in thought word and deed, by means of the different organs of sense, may all that be offered to Brahman. I surrender myself with all who I call my own at the feet of the Lord.”

* * * * *

Transcend the relative

7.19 Transcend both good and evil, for wherever there is good there you unavoidably get bad too. Happiness and misery always go together. The moment you accept happiness, you must take misery too. All the pairs of opposites go together, so you can never have one without getting the other also. The only solution is to transcend them and reach a plan beyond both good and evil, happiness and misery, beyond what we call good and evil, i.e., all relative good and evil, all relative happiness and misery. There is no such thing as absolute good or absolute evil, absolute happiness or absolute misery, on this phenomenal plan.

7.20 Cheerfulness is a sign of great progress, but many people do not understand this. Spiritual life eases all heart-burn, so it makes people cheerful.

The sound-symbol

“Let us meditate on the excellent glory of that Divine Being who illumines everything. May He guide our understanding.”
(Gayatri Mantra)

7.21 Always take the help of the sound-symbol, for sound and thought are interrelated. Thoughts manifest themselves in different sounds. Is there any eternal relation between thought and the sound? To take an instance: the animal ‘cow’. We express this animal ‘cow’ with the help of different sound-symbols. For each language a different sound-symbol is used to express the thought ‘cow’. The bovine idea finds its expression, and there is an inseparable connection between this idea and its sound-symbol.

7.22 Now we find that the Divine idea finds its expression in different Holy Names, and there is an inseparable connection between the holy idea and the sound. That is why we make use of the sound in our spiritual life. It becomes easier for us to call up the thought with the help of the sound. We should see that we pass from the sound-symbol to the thought, otherwise the sound does not help us.

8 -- Wiesbaden, November 28th, 1933

The parrot

8.01 Sri Ramakrishna used to tell his disciples: *"The parrot sometimes is taught the names of God, but when the parrot is caught by a cat, it won't take the name of God, but merrily goes on shrieking and making its own noise."*

8.02 In our case also, when we are really put to the test, we shall see whether we remember the Lord and the Lord only or not.

8.03 Once Swami Turiyananda got some eye-trouble, and the Swami who was then attending him, put some eye-drops in his eye; but, unfortunately, by mistake, he took some acid and dropped that into the eye. Swami Turiyananda said, "What is this?" The first thought that arose in his mind was, "Probably Mother wants to take away this eye." And then the Swami began to weep. The thought of Mother came uppermost in his mind. But such a thing can take place only through great practice. Unless it has become natural to think of God and of God only, we become more or less like the parrot and go on acting like the parrot the moment we are put to the test.

Japam

8.04 *"That which is done with full knowledge becomes more effective,"* — says the Upanishadic seer. But mechanical repetition of the name of the Ishtam or one's Mantram has its effect too. We should always go in for that which is more useful though, but at times, when our mind is very much disturbed, we may just sit in some quiet corner and begin to do our Japam mechanically, but with great doggedness.

8.05 Even the out-and-out Advaita Vedantins go on repeating their 'OM' or 'So-ham'. In all schools, and especially in the Bhakti School, great stress is laid on Japam. Japam is one of the most effective practices for all beginners, although one comes to realize its effectiveness and value only much later.

8.06 Ramananda belongs to the school of Ramanuja.

"What do you speak of these castes, rules and restrictions? He who takes the name of the Lord is the Lord's."

8.07 The great poet-saint Kabir wanted initiation from Ramananda. So he went and lay down on the steps leading to the Ganges in the darkness of night. When Ramananda came early in the morn-

ing to take his bath, he stepped on him, saying, “Ram, Ram!” Then Kabir got up, saluted him and was received as one of his disciples.

Same-sightedness

8.08 Ramananda belongs to the 16th century. Ramanuja to the 12th. Kabir himself became perfect by repeating the holy name.

“I have known that my Kali is no other than Brahman, and having realized Her, I have given up the so-called duties of life.”

8.09 *“Mother is no other than the Absolute.”* — Sri Ramakrishna meant by ‘Mother’ the Absolute who at the same time manifests Herself to the devotee in different forms.

8.10 Tulsidas, in the *Ramacharitmanasa* (the hindi version of the *Ramayana*) writes: *“The Rama who was born as the son of Dasaratha, the same Rama is in all.”* — Every aspirant must be able to approach in some form or other the All-Pervading, the One Reality underlying all manifestations.

“Fire is the god (Divine symbol) of the twice-born, for the sage God dwells in his own heart, and to the man of little understanding God dwells in the image, and to one who has attained to same-sightedness the Lord is in all.”

“Lord, Thy name is same-sightedness.”

8.11 First comes external worship, and the next spiritual practice to be taken up by every aspirant is Japam, then singing of the Divine Glory, then mental worship or meditation, and finally the experience of the Divine alone *everywhere*,— **without closing one’s eyes.**

8.12 This last is the highest stage, and can only be attained after having passed through all the previous ones. It is even higher than Samadhi.

“One should meditate in a corner, in a forest or in one’s own mind.”

“Brahman-consciousness is the best, and the middle-course is meditation, the next lower one is chanting the name of the Lord and repetition of His name (Japam), and lowest is external worship.”

Controlling a turbulent mind

8.13 Even if a great tempest is about to rise in your mind and trying to sweep you off your feet, go on with your Japam, even repeat

the Holy Name aloud or at least audible to you. Very often in a very disturbed state, silent mental repetition is not enough. Try to establish a definite relationship between the sound-symbol and the thought, so that the thought comes the very moment you touch the key of the sound-symbol. The same happens when you type something on your typewriter. The moment you touch a key, the corresponding letter is printed on the sheet. So the moment you touch your sound-symbol, the corresponding thought will arise in you and come to your help. But a very definite relation between the two must be established.

8.14 The moment one tries to control the mind, it becomes more and more unruly, more and more turbulent. Never use any violence.

For most people the early morning is the best time for their practices, although only once in twenty-four hours is not enough if one really wants to make some progress.

Hunger of the soul

8.15 Unless you give some real food to the soul, you feel you are starving, even in the midst of plenty of things. There is a sense of void in your soul which cannot be got rid of, even if you have everything outwardly. It goes on crying out, because nothing is being done to appease the soul's hunger. This feeling of void, of dissatisfaction can never go, unless we give the soul the food it needs.

Japam

8.16 Mighty waves rise in the mind, trying to sweep us off our feet. In such cases do your utmost to hold on to the name of your Ishtam or to your Mantram.

8.17 Sri Ramakrishna used to say, "*Japam is like a chain. From one link we pass on to the next, and finally we pass on to God.*"

8.18 Thus we approach that to which the whole chain is tied. The efficacy of Japam, done in a conscious and wide-awake way, is very great. When this little raft of ours is tossed in the midst of the mighty waves and storms of life, hold on to the chain.

8.19 If I just go and drive in a pole very deeply, no wave will be able to tear my boat away and carry it off against my wish.

8.21 Japam is stressed in all paths of spiritual Sadhana. And you should see that your Japam becomes better and better. You

should do your Japam consciously, intelligently, and have more and more of it as days go on. Always think of the chain and try to get hold of the next link. Thus you approach the Divine more and more and prepare yourself for meditation.

Clear thinking, clear feeling and clear definite action

8.21 Never be afraid of losing something you have clung to all your life. If your ideas are so brittle that they break at the very first touch, let them break by all means. A little heart-burn does not matter, whatever people may think.

8.22 Discussions, as such, are not bad. If our discussions have some real aim, there is no danger, but most people begin arguing just to prove that they are right and others are wrong. This always ends in useless wrangling, and should be avoided by all aspirants.

8.23 Have discussions amongst yourselves just to make ideas more clear and definite. Never have discussions on spiritual matters with others who have not, at least to a certain extent, tasted this life and its difficulties themselves. The empty jinglings of words leads nowhere and only makes our mind more outgoing.

Our task today

“Whether we can attain to the Divine or not, we know the way.”
(Swami Saradananda)

8.24 Our task to-day is to make all that is indefinite very definite through steady practice. There must be clear thinking, clear feeling and clear definite action.

8.25 Mind is nothing but matter, and as such we must give a good, steady, relentless, severe training to the mind and cease identifying ourselves with the whole mind or any of its modifications. — *“I am the witness of all that is going on in my mind, but different from it, and its master.”*

8.26 It takes time to be able to control one’s mind completely, and it takes more time to become one with Him.

Maya

8.27 This world is the Absolute seen by the mind through the coloured glasses of time, space and causation. Kant is quite right in saying this, but he does not say that this can ever be transcended, whereas the Upanishadic seer says and knows:— Even this is Maya. If we go beyond Maya, we see things differently. Time, space,

causation is Maya, but Maya is these plus 'X'. Kant does not say that the 'thing as such' can be realized or known. The Upanishadic teachers say that this has to be done by all seekers after Truth.

8.28 You never find the full teachings in any book. Books are only the foundations, the scaffolding, but the really important part of the teaching is passed on from the Guru to the disciple. It is never printed.

8.29 Maya has two aspects:— One is its *veiling power*, clouding the understanding of man, and the other is its *creative power*. Both are clouds. Maya clouds the mind and brings about passions and attachments to unreal things, i.e., in its lower aspects. The higher Maya helps us to Freedom and Illumination. The lower one entangles us more and more, the higher one frees us and is itself transcended in the end.

8.30 That which binds us and that which frees us belong to the same domain of Maya. Neither are real in the absolute sense. All these belong to the domain of phenomena, never to the domain of Reality. One is just trying to cut the throat of another, and a third person is trying to save that person; do not both belong to the world of phenomena? The would-be murderer and the would-be rescuer? So both aspects of Maya are facts of consciousness, but wholly belong to the phenomenal plane. On one side we see the saint, on the other side we see the worst criminal. We find both in the same world of phenomena; the saint is trying to free us, the other to bind us.

Maya -- good and evil

8.31 Wherever there are pairs of opposites, there is Maya to some extent. Evil exists from one standpoint to a greater extent than good, but both good and bad are eternally inseparable. If you want to have good, you must take evil also, or you must transcend both and have neither. Just as the holy man exists, so also the unholy person and the criminal exists. The two stand and fall together. Why create barriers? Happiness and misery, pleasure and pain go together. The correlatives exist under all circumstances. So the ideal of the really spiritual man should be one of transcendence, one of indifference to the pairs of opposites.

8.32 And so long as one is not able to transcend, one should maintain and foster the spirit of indifference and non-attachment to what is good, as well as to what is bad or evil. The way of transcen-

dence lies in first controlling evil by what is good, relatively speaking, and then getting rid of this so-called relative good too. By observing strict Brahmacharya [continence] and leading a strictly moral life, first control all your evil and binding tendencies. Emancipation is never possible in a collective sense, never in a mass sense. Unless you rise above the ground-floor, you can never reach the first floor and never proceed to the terrace. Many people are caught in the net of the good. We must transcend good too, otherwise we remain caught in the meshes of Maya. We can never take a big jump from the ground-floor to the terrace.

8.33 First you must get rid of the iron chain with the help of the golden chain, then this golden chain is also to be got rid of. Once you get to the terrace, you just go and kick off the ladder. Absolute good and absolute bad can never exist in the domain of phenomena.

Vedantasara

The Obstacles to Samadhi & Their Removal

“Torpidity (Laya) is the lapse of the mental state into sleep because of the failure to rest on the Absolute.” (210)

“Distraction (Vikshepa) is the resting of the mental state on things other than the Absolute, because of failure to rest on IT.” (211)

“Attachment (Kashaya) is the failure of the mental state to rest on the Absolute, owing to the numbness brought on by the impressions due to attachment even when there is no torpidity or distraction.” (212)

“Enjoyment (Rasavada) is the tasting by the mental state of the bliss of Savikalpa-Samadhi owing to the failure to rest on the Absolute. Or it may mean continuing to taste the bliss of Savikalpa-Samadhi while taking up the Nirvikalpa-Samadhi.” (213)

“When the mind free from these four obstacles rests unmoved, like the flame of a lamp sheltered from the wind, as one with Absolute Consciousness, it is called the Nirvikalpa-Samadhi.” (214)

“Thus it has been said: —‘When the mind is torpid, rouse it; when it is distracted, bring it back to calmness; when it becomes attached, be aware of it; when it is controlled, do not distract it anymore. Do not linger on the bliss that comes from the

Savikalpa-Samadhi, but be unattached through discrimination. (Gaudapada Karika 3.44-45) — 'As a lamp sheltered from the wind does not flicker, so is the Yogi's controlled mind.' (Bhagavad-Gita 6.19)" (215)

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8.34 We have to cultivate some disease germs to eat away the other germs. So first get *complete* attachment for good, then get rid of it. We can get rid of the evil only by cultivating the good. Our good tendencies must be consciously cultivated, but we should see that we never get attached to the good.

There are no shortcuts

8.35 Let him take the shortest cut who has plenty of time at his disposal. The shortest cut is no cut at all in spiritual life. Never imagine that, or you will come to grief.

Where does the man of realization abide?

8.36 The man of realization, after having reached the transcendental state, only comes back to the topmost rung of the ladder, to the floor nearest to the terrace.

Path can never be learned from books

8.37 Never think that you can know about a path through a book or find every important instruction in any book, because there is always side by side with what is contained in books, the practical instruction given by the Guru which you will not find printed anywhere.

Hindu scriptures not speculations

8.38 All these Scriptures are not empty speculations, but experiences and descriptions of experiences. Not mere theories as you find in the whole of Western philosophy. Mere speculation does not change life, does not lead anywhere. It becomes mere intellectual gymnastics. That is why your Western systems of philosophy have never had any influence on the lives of the people, not even on those of the philosophers themselves.

Purity

8.39 Lust and greed must be got rid of at all costs. Purity of heart and purity of body and mind is the price all have to pay for spiritual life. They are the *sine qua non* of all spiritual progress or realization. Before the highest realization is ours, we may get glimpses, but

only to the extent in which we are able to lead a life of purity and non-attachment, freeing ourselves more and more from body-consciousness in its gross and subtle and very subtle forms.

8.40 Swamiji [Swami Vivekananda] says, "*Purity is the condition of Divine Grace.*"

8.41 People who are not prepared to pay this price of purity and sense-control cannot find any place in spiritual life and must be dropped.

9 -- Wiesbaden, November 29th, 1933

Sin and morality

9.01 Always try to follow the moral path, the spiritual path. There are people who have no sense of impurity; the more they commit impurities, the more they harden up and become callous. All the moral fibre and moral sensitiveness is gone and destroyed. They have no sense of morals, of shame, left in them.

9.02 The Brahmos used to speak too much of sin on one hand and of the beauty of God's creation on the other hand. Neither is right. One should stop all one's brooding over one's past whatever it may have been like. What is done is done for all times and can never be undone. So think of purity, think of what you are going to do in the future, not of what you did in the past. He who thinks he is pure become pure. Try to efface the past as much as possible. Try to efface all old associations and impressions by replacing them and bringing in better and purer ones.

9.03 Swamiji used to say, "*Why do you think so much of sin? Will more dirt wash off dirt?*"

9.04 You do not become pure by thinking of impurity, you will never get rid of sin by thinking you are a sinner. This is wrong psychology and will always produce just the opposite effect. If we dwell too much in this consciousness of sin and impurity, we lose sight of the fact that with our own spiritual strivings we can achieve something. Always try to follow the positive method. —Instead of thinking, "Oh what a sinner I am, Oh how impure I am", —just think, "*Purity is my birth-right and my true nature, I am free by nature. My very nature is purity and holiness.*"

9.05 There is a humility that is almost worse than haughtiness

and pride. So Swamiji used to say, "*Behind this mock-humility there is the ego.*" — Here too, the middle path is the only path.

Our centre of Consciousness

9.06 For the aspirant, the conscious shifting of the centre of consciousness is one of the most important points. There is the physiological, the mental and the spiritual aspect. In some people you find that their centre of consciousness is their stomach, e.g., in gluttons, drunkards etc. etc. In others it is the heart, the lower heart if we can say so, etc.

9.07 There is the physiological aspect, but the mental aspect, the thought-aspect, is far more important. The root-cause of all these impurities must be removed, not only its manifestation. Repression and the formation of complexes as such is not bad. They are necessary for a time as steps to complete sublimation which comes much later. Why raise such a hue and cry about complexes? Complexes are formed whatever we do. Sex-indulgence creates a complex in one form, repression in another form, so we have to see which will lead us on to something higher, more positive, which will make us freer and freer and help us in reaching the highest goal. We are continually forming complexes on the relative plane, whatever we do.

9.08 There are natural laws in the spiritual world, and the physiological laws are not the only laws to be observed. In these matters, one must be one's own doctor.

9.09 In this shifting of the centre of consciousness you find three aspects, the physiological aspect, the nerve aspect and the thought aspect. And all are important. Every beginner should make it a point to avoid all dangerous stimuli in whatever form they may come to him. The tender plant has to be given a hedge.

9.10 Every spiritual aspirant must be sure of the place he stands on, i.e., he must be sure of the higher centre of consciousness.

9.11 The centre of consciousness is like the mother-kangaroo's pouch. The baby-kangaroo just runs to its mother and disappears in the pouch the moment any danger arises. So we, too, have to rise to our centre of consciousness if there is any dangerous stimulus coming either from outside or inside.

9.12 There must be some practical application of all these teachings, spiritual life must be lived, and that requires the develop-

ment of tremendous will-power and one-pointedness in the aspirant. This is no life for sluggards and weaklings.

9.13 Swamiji says, *“If you have faith in all the gods and goddesses, but no faith in yourself, there is no salvation.”*

Cleaning the mirror

9.14 If the reflector is clean, the light is reflected in all its splendour, and then we see the light. So what we have got to do now is to go in for some good scrubbing in order to remove all the layers of dust we have allowed to accumulate.

9.15 The sense of sin can be very good in the case of some temperaments, but only if it serves as a goad. It must goad us on to something better. But a far better means to get rid of all these encrustations of impurity is to think of our eternal, innate purity which is our first nature. We are all our own ancestors, seen from the spiritual standpoint, and only reap what we ourselves have sown.

The spiritual evolution of man

9.16 Re-incarnation is not the most vital point. We have to try to get full illumination in this very life. So re-incarnation should never be stressed very much.

9.17 If our present life is the result of our own past, then we can change our future. Karma is never identical with fate. The law of Karma is the law of self-effort, intelligent, conscious self-effort, never a teaching of fatalism and lethargy.

9.18 Nobody is forced to take to spiritual life and to follow the path, but there are some funny people who are made that way. They cannot remain satisfied with leading the worldly life, and yearn for something higher, for greater freedom.

9.19 There will always be many who fall down on the way. What to do? You just let them lie where they are and pass on. The one goal must be kept sight of without either looking to the left or looking to the right, without even caring for the results and the fruits.

The trap of sickly sentimentalism

9.20 There must be no sickly sentimentalism, one day, everyone has to follow the path, and if a person falls down, let him fall. Your duty is to pass on and reach the goal.

9.21 If somebody just accompanies you a bit of the way out of

so-called love, this becomes very dangerous. Such people only want to coil their so-called love around you like an octopus. Rather let their heart break before allowing them to do this. All such love is mere ego written with capital letters and nothing but that. It is the satisfaction of our own emotions and impulses, but never love in the true sense of the term. Such people only want to drag you down, entangle you in their meshes and possess you as their very own property.

9.22 There are people who are somewhat serious-minded from very childhood. They have never adapted themselves to the ideas of the worldly-minded, and for them there are but few dangers and difficulties. Never mind what people may be saying about heartlessness and so on, if they just mean sentimentalism and emotionalism by heart and love. One must learn to be very stiff even if the heart breaks. True love never wants to coil itself around anyone and stifle him, and all other love is attachment and has to be got rid of. You must learn to be very stiff and uncompromising in this. Do not let yourself be caught in the meshes of such sentimental possessive love. "Ah, we were meant for each other. We have been waiting for each other..." All sentimental nonsense and foolishness!

9.23 All these Great Ones, all these Incarnations have come and taught mankind the same eternal truths again and again, but the world just goes on merrily its own way, and those are really very clever who are able to get out of its meshes. Empty emotionalism and sentimentality is one of the worst enemies in the spiritual path. If you only follow the path half-way without reaching its end, there will be no end of misery and trouble. There are the centripetal and the centrifugal forces acting on us. We are safe if we fly off at a tangent and safe at the axis, but nowhere else can we find any safety.

9.24 The pure heart becomes the reflector of the truth. So does the purified, thoughtful mind. In the highest realization both are transcended; heart and mind cease to be.

9.25 Awakened definite thinking becomes more and more alive to the ideals of higher life. The purer the mind, the better thinking it does, the better does it reflect.

9.26 So long as we cling to the false puppets and idols of love that we cherish in our hearts, it is not possible to have at the same time a sincere, deep yearning for God, whatever we may pretend to have. It becomes all empty make-believe. But for everybody there may come a time, when these puppets, these dolls, lose all their

charm and then only comes a true and deep yearning for the spiritual life, then the world and all things worldly become 'saltless'.

9.27 Once a certain king, Trisanku, was about to go to the highest heaven. But one of the gods became awfully jealous and made him indulge in a certain kind of self-glorification. Thus he could no longer go to the highest heaven, because there self-glorification has no place, but, at the same time, he was no longer able to return to this world, as every form of earthly desire had been annihilated in him. So he remained hanging in the air. You see, this is the case of people during the transitional period of spiritual life.

9.28 Once there was a great saint who was told by his daughter, "Father, the day is approaching its end." (This was before he had renounced everything and become a saint) "Really, is it so?" he replied and left hearth and home. He had understood the deeper meaning of the words in a way his daughter had never thought of.

9.29 Before following the path of spirituality, our great poet-saint Tulsidas had a very deep love and attachment for his wife. His attachment was so strong that he even followed her when she had gone to visit her parents. Then his wife said to him, "Had you loved God so intensely as you love this body of mine, you would have realized Him long ago and would not be today what you are." The very same day, Tulsidas gave up the world with all its ties and left his wife.

9.30 Narada, before becoming a saint, once went to a very great teacher. "Sir", he said, "I have studied all the Scriptures, but there is no peace in me. I am full of grief. Do you save me." Then the Guru asked him, "Well, what have you learnt? Please tell me." — "All the Vedas, mathematics, philosophy, all the different branches of knowledge." — "Well, my boy," said the Guru, "you have only learnt words, but words cannot bring realization." And then he began showing him the way step by step.

9.31 The Lord is the essence of bliss and knowing Him alone one becomes blissful. That which is infinite alone can bring peace and happiness. There is no peace in what is little or limited or finite.

9.32 Cases of complete sudden renunciation are very rare. Mostly we find temporary renunciation after a heavy blow has fallen on our heads. But afterwards such people get entangled all the more in 'Woman and Gold' and human puppets, in all the puppet show of

human love. Then they say, "Oh, we know. We ourselves have tested the spiritual life. There is nothing in it after all. These human relations contain a far greater truth. We are meant for each other." All stuff and nonsense and the sign of a weak and muddled brain.

9.33 If all have hobbies, why not have a better hobby? Why run eternally after the mirage? Where is the perfectly sane man? All lunatics think themselves sane, and the worldly man, too, is nothing but a lunatic. Before attaining the state of Self-realization, perfect sanity is out of the question, whatever we may think ourselves to be. The cleverness of the crow does not mean anything. It seems to be very clever, but loves eating filth and dirt. Many very clever people are just like vultures; their thoughts soar very high, intellectually, but they just wait for the piece of carrion they are going to swallow and enjoy.

9.34 The whole world is drunk with the wine of 'Woman and Gold', the wine of ignorance, and has become mad so that it does not know what it does and what to do. All have become carrion-eaters.

9.35 Here and there you just find one who does not drink this wine of 'Woman and Gold', who wants a better wine, some different intoxicant that counteracts the effect of this fateful worldly wine. But you will always find that person persecuted who dares to think for himself, who dares to think boldly and freely and dares to mould his life according to higher standards.

9.36 You should see that you develop great intensity and very great singleness of purpose. Sometimes you can 'help' another with the great fire you have kindled in yourself. And such a 'Help' if done in the spirit of pure, absolutely selfless service, is something very great indeed.

9.37 *"Blessed is the family and blessed is the mother whose son takes to the monastic life."* — At the beginning this God-love seems to destroy, and it destroys many things, all the dross and the non-essentials, but though it seems so, it only fulfills. The only true, eternal, unchangeable love is that which makes the heart beat in the eternal rhythm and non-attachment of true spirituality, loving nobody and at the same time loving all with wonderful sympathy and same-sightedness. True love, love of perfect purity, non-attachment and great intensity is always spiritual, and no love in which there is any form of attachment can ever be spiritual whatever else it may be

and however beautiful it may seem to our blinded eyes for the time being.

Trials

9.38 Most people just want to follow the beaten track, and so very naturally there comes a parting of the way between those who want to follow the higher life and attain to true love, and those who just go in for 'Woman and Gold' in its grosser and subtler forms.

9.39 How can you ever follow the beaten track, once you have become awakened? It is in such moments, the moments of your first awakening that you are put to the test, because in such moments there comes this natural parting of the ways. Then you must be able to see the fight through, or give up the idea of spiritual life. But first you must get a good whipping to awaken your enthusiasm and whoever is not prepared to get this whipping and stand it, must be dropped as chaff.

9.40 We must be put to the test again and again, and we must be able to develop a spirit of determination that knows no fear and is undaunted. And if we get a good thrashing to whip up our enthusiasm, as I said, we must be prepared to stand it and see it through.

The condition of the worldly

9.41 Only see how terribly restless people have become. They run to cinema-shows, to the theatre, to Church, to lectures, to anything and everything, because their centre of gravity is wholly outside themselves—if there is any centre of gravity left at all. Why just take the trouble of thinking, why fatigue the mind? This is their attitude, and thus they become more and more slaves to this outgoing tendency of their mind and get more and more entangled in the meshes of ignorance.

9.42 Why should the mind be troubled by thinking, especially so when anyone goes to the house of God? Why not just allow oneself to be lulled into something like sleep, into some vague and pleasant day-dreaming? Thinking is not at all desirable — at least this is what the modern man and the modern woman thinks. Why do more than go to Church now and then and listen to some sermon in a thoughtless, more or less vague way? But then, you see, spiritually speaking, this does not mean anything at all. For such people it would be far better not to go to Church at all and do something which forces them to learn to be wide-awake and conscious, to think and act.

9.43 There are some people who are sincere, but all their sincerity is of no avail, because they have no backbone, because they are too soft. We must cut off the very roots of all this emotionalism and false love, this personal clinging to some man or woman, "meant for us eternally". All stuff and nonsense and nothing more than that. All beautiful romance, but never the reality. We must become merciless in this. There is no place at all for this kind of softness in spiritual life. The spiritual man must be as hard as adamant and as soft as a flower. Some people may call this cruel, but is there anything more cruel and more enslaving than this so-called love of the worldly-minded, clinging to each other, enslaving each other just for the sake of the satisfaction of some personal craving of theirs? They do not love the other person, they just are in love with their own sentiment and its satisfaction. We must mercilessly strike at the very roots of all such forms of love and have done with them once for all. Let the heart break, if it breaks. Sometimes such hearts must be broken, otherwise, for them, there will never be any progress.

The Song of the Sannyasin

(by Swami Vivekananda)

*Wake up the note! the song that had its birth
Far off, where worldly taint could never reach
In mountain caves, and glades of forest deep,
Whose calm no sigh for lust or wealth or fame
Could ever dare to break; where rolled the stream
Of knowledge, truth, and bliss that follows both.
Sing high that note, Sannyasin bold! Say—
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"*

*Strike off thy fetters! Bonds that bind thee down,
Of shining gold, or darker, baser ore
Love, hate—good, bad—and all the dual throng.
Know, slave is slave, caressed or whipped, not free;
For fetters though of gold, are not less strong to bind;
Then, off with them, Sannyasin bold! Say—
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"*

*Let darkness go; the will-o'-the-wisp that leads
With blinking light to pile more gloom on gloom.
This thirst for life, for ever quench; it drags
From birth to death, and death to birth, the soul.
He conquers all who conquers self. Know this*

*And never yield, Sannyasin bold! Say—
“Om Tat Sat, Om!”*

*“Who sows must reap”, they say, “and cause must bring
The sure effect; good, good; bad, bad; and none
Escape the law. But whoso wears a form
Must wear the chain.” Too true; but far beyond
Both name and form is Atman, ever free.
Know thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say—
“Om Tat Sat. Om!”*

*They know not truth, who dream such vacant dreams
As father, mother, children, wife and friend,
The sexless Self! whose father He? whose child?
Whose friend, whose foe is He who is but One?
The Self is all in all, none else exists;
And thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say—
“Om Tat Sat, Om!”*

*There is but One — The Free — The Knower — Self!
Without a name, without a form or stain.
In Him is Maya, dreaming all this dream.
The Witness, He appears as nature, soul.
Know thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say—
“Om Tat Sat, Om!”*

*Where seekest thou? That freedom, friend, this world
Nor that, can give. In books and temples vain
Thy search. Thine only is the hand that holds
The rope that drags thee on. Then cease lament,
Let go thy hold, Sannyasin bold! Say—
“Om Tat Sat, Om!”*

*Say, “Peace to all: From me no danger be
To aught that lives. In those that dwell on high,
In those that lowly creep, I am the Self in all!
All life both here and there, do I renounce,
All heavens, and earths and hells, all hopes and fears.”
Thus cut thy bonds, Sannyasin bold! Say—
“Om Tat Sat, Om!”*

*Heed then no more how body lives or goes,
Its task is done. Let Karma float it down;
Let one put garlands on, another kick
This frame; Say naught. No praise or blame can be
Where praiser, praised, and blamer blamed are,—one.*

*Thus be thou calm, Sannyasin bold! Say—
“Om Tat Sat, Om!”*

*Truth never comes where lust and fame and greed
Of gain reside. No man who thinks of woman
As his wife can ever perfect be;
Nor he who owns the least of things, nor he
Whom anger chains, can ever pass thro' Maya's gates.
So, give these up, Sannyasin bold Say—
“Om Tat Sat, Om!”*

*Have thou no home. What home can hold thee, friend?
The sky thy roof; the grass thy bed; and food,
What chance may bring; well cooked or ill, judge not.
No food or drink can taint that noble Self
Which knows Itself. Like rolling river free
Thou ever be, Sannyasin bold! Say—
“Om Tat Sat, Om!”*

*Few only know the truth. The rest will hate
And laugh at thee, Great One; but pay no heed.
Go thou, the free, from place to place, and help
Them out of darkness, Maya's veil. Without
The fear of pain or search for pleasure, go
Beyond them both, Sannyasin bold! Say—
“Om Tat Sat, Om!”*

*Thus, day by day, till Karma's powers spent
Release the soul for ever. No more is birth,
Nor I, nor thou, nor God, nor man. The “I”
Has All become, the All is “I” and Bliss.
Know thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say—
“Om Tat Sat, Om!”*

A Benediction

(by Swami Vivekananda — Written to Sister Nivedita)

*The mother's heart, the hero's will,
The sweetness of the Southern breeze.
The secret charm and strength that dwell
On Aryan altars, flaming; free;
All these be yours, and many more,
No ancient soul could dream before—
Be thou to India's future son
The mistress, servant, friend in one.*

Requiescat in Pace**(by Swami Vivekananda—Written in memoriam to J.J.Goodwin)**

*Speed forth, O Soul! upon thy star-strewn path;
Speed, blissful one! where thought is ever free,
Where time and space no longer mist the view,
Eternal peace and blessings be with thee!*

*Thy service true complete thy sacrifice,
The home the heart of love transcendent find;
Remembrance sweet, that kills all space and time,
Like altar-roses fill thy place behind.*

*Thy bonds are broke, thy quest in bliss is found,
And one with That which comes as Death and Life;
Thou helpful one! Unselfish e'er on earth,
Ahead! Still help with love this world of strife!*

Nirvana-shatakam**(A poem of Sankaracharya, translated by Swami Vivekananda)**

*I am neither the mind, nor the intellect, nor the ego, nor the
mind-stuff;*

*I am neither the body, nor the changes of the body;
I am neither the senses of hearing, taste, smell or sight,
Nor am I the ether, the earth, the fire, the air;
I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss
Absolute—*

I am He, I am He. [Shivoham, Shivoham].

*I am neither the Prana, nor the five vital airs;
I am neither the materials of the body, nor the five sheaths;
Neither am I the organs of action, nor object of the senses;
I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss
Absolute—*

I am He, I am He [Shivoham, Shivoham].

*I have neither aversion nor attachment, neither greed nor
delusion;
Neither egotism nor envy, neither Dharma nor Moksha;
I am neither desire nor objects of desire;
I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss
Absolute—*

I am He, I am He. [Shivoham, Shivoham].

*I am neither sin nor virtue, neither pleasure nor pain;
Nor temple nor worship, nor pilgrimage nor scriptures,*

*Neither the act of enjoying, the enjoyable nor the enjoyer;
I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss
Absolute—*

I am He, I am He. [Shivoham, Shivoham].

*I have neither death nor fear of death, nor caste;
Nor was I ever born, nor had I parents, friends and
relations;*

*I have neither Guru nor disciple;
I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss
Absolute—*

I am He, I am He. [Shivoham, Shivoham].

*I am untouched by the senses, I am neither Mukti nor know-
able;*

*I am without form, without limit, beyond space, beyond
time;*

*I am in everything; I am the basis of the universe;
everywhere am I.*

*I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss
Absolute—*

I am He, I am He. [Shivoham, Shivoham].

* * * * *

*Who dares misery love,
And hug the form of Death,
Dance in destruction's dance,
To him the Mother comes.
(From 'Kali the Mother' by Swami Vivekananda)*

* * * * *

The price for spiritual life

9.44 So long as there is any desire for enjoyment, there can be no spiritual life. Enjoyment be it gross or subtle, and spiritual life never go together. So long as there is any clinging to life or death or to some other doll, there can be no spiritual life. This is one of the facts and eternal laws to be faced by every sincere aspirant. There is no shirking this question and we must know whether we are really prepared to pay the full price or not. There should be clear thinking. No use muddling things up and just go on drifting or entertaining some vague hopes.

9.45 First fix the goal and the means, mercilessly. Without shirking the issue you must do this, and then relentlessly stick to your chosen path, whatever happens, whether you live or die.

Divine Grace

9.46 Let the individual *deserve* Divine Grace through conscious self-effort. Grace is always unmerited in a way, but we must strive to the best of our powers.

Dealing with obstacles

9.47 All our activity must be directed to a certain goal which has to be definitely fixed before. There must be no muddle-headedness. With great singleness of purpose and great patience the obstructions have to be removed one by one.

9.48 Be as rational and as little guided by impulse as possible, in your physical and in your mental activity. Our whole life has to be spiritualized. Be a master in your own house, not a slave. It is best to follow a fixed routine in one's daily life. Give good thought injections, killing the microbes of the old associations and bad habits. Rise above your environment. Do not allow old associations to come near you. Avoid meeting all people who awaken the thoughts of such associations in you. Spiritual life means a thorough but slow transformation, an overhauling of our whole outlook. So we have always to be on our guard, always guarded and restrained and dignified, otherwise this will never be possible.

9.49 Learn to stand aloof, as a witness of your different moods, without identifying yourself with them. This becomes easier if one is steady and regular in one's spiritual practices and daily routine. There must be a time for everything: for Japam, meditation, studies, reading of certain passages etc. If we do not create this habit and stick to it, we shall never be able to make any considerable progress in spiritual life. New habits must be formed which must become so strong that they act as a kind of protecting wall the very moment there comes an inner or outer stimulus that may awaken old associations in us. The moment such a thing happens, take hold of your Japam, your practices, your readings, and kill the desire to follow the stimulus, the old association. Only thus will you be able to remain wholly unaffected later on.

10 -- Wiesbaden, November 30th, 1933

The two alternatives

10.01 It is a mark of Divine Grace to have noble aspirations. There are very few people who have some good tendencies, who at least aspire after some higher form of living.

10.02 Most people just rush headlong into the sea of the world and worldly enjoyments and are drowned.

10.03 There are two alternatives before us: His Infinite Bliss, or the pleasures of the senses, of 'Woman and Gold' and all that. The two can never be combined, whatever some people may say. *"Where Kama is, there Rama cannot be; where Rama is, there Kama cannot be."* — Only by giving up all sense-enjoyment and all feeling of I-ness and "I and mine" can Bliss be attained. Never by any other means. We always see the faces of other people, but we rarely see ourselves in a dispassionate, merciless way. Our mind is outgoing, instead of introspective, and with this outgoing mind nothing higher can ever be achieved. Unless you give the mind purity through unbroken continence, through leading a perfectly pure life, physically and mentally, and then give it an inward turn, there is not even the possibility of any spiritual life. This is an eternal law which can never be changed.

The introspective mind

10.04 There are some blessed souls who just shut up the shutters of their senses and then with indrawn mind try to realize the Truth.

10.05 Spiritual life begins when we stop the outgoing tendencies of our mind and become introspective. Not before. It begins only when we learn to draw our mind away from the senses, but this means a terrible strain and struggle. There must be tremendous outward control while trying to gain the inner control, and it takes a long time to make this life free and natural. In the beginning, a complex is formed, but that does not matter, as later on with the disappearance of our false sense of personality, our false "I", the complex disappears with it. Our mind should constantly serve us as a looking-glass, i.e., we should constantly watch it and its movements, become fully aware of all the thoughts that are rising in it or want to rise and get sway over it. Mind is the greatest recorder, but unfortu-

nately we do not notice it, we do not care what happens in our mind. We are thoughtless and careless in everything that is spiritual, and worldly-wise in all our outward activities. Thus no progress can be made. We are just crows sitting on filth and relishing it, but believing ourselves to be very clever and bright. The cleverness of the crow is the cleverness of the vulture, the carrion-eater.

10.06 But some minds are so dirty, so covered by lust and gold, that even a looking-glass would not help. Such people cannot be helped, however hard we may try to. They are hopeless.

10.07 A really introspective mind always brings home to us all the facts that are taking place within ourselves. We must become wide-awake and fully aware of every thought that rises or wants to rise in our mind. This is one of the very first steps in spiritual life. Without getting control over our mind, we cannot advance, and without becoming aware of what is taking place in our mind, we can never control it. So this is one of the very first steps in spiritual life. We should be wide-awake and definite in all we do.

“There are some who will just turn their face to the South when they want to go to the North, and when you ask them they say they are going East.” (Bengali Proverb)

10.08 Two paths are before us. We must decide which path to take and once we have decided to take the higher path, we must do our best to follow it with unflinching perseverance and steadiness, whatever happens.

Elimination of past impressions

10.09 Temptations are very great because of our former life, because we did not lead a perfectly pure, perfectly non-attached life. Whoever has lead a perfectly pure life from his childhood does not find it very hard to overcome worldly temptations. They are more or less like shadows to him.

10.10 Sometimes, in aspirants, old impure desires and pictures come up, old passions rise with all their violence, even impressions which seemed very weak rise with full force, especially during meditation. All the Great Ones had to pass the temptations, but their mind never turned to the pleasures of the senses. Look at Christ’s life, at Ramakrishna’s life, Swamiji’s life, Sri Chaitanya’s life! What tremendous purity, physical and mental! Sri Ramakrishna could never think of woman in any other form than that of the Mother.

10.11 All the 'old friends' come to us again and again, and try to disarm us, and we are still, to some extent, moved by them. As soon as real dispassion dawns on us, we shall be able to face them wholly unmoved, and then they will cease to appear. So do not be cowed when the 'old friends' come, but face them boldly. Face the brute. This elimination of the past impressions is a very slow, very lengthy process.

10.12 Once upon a time there was a man who had a dog. He was very, very fond of this dog and always kept it near him, petting it and doing everything for it. But one day it so happened that that man got tired of the dog and did not want to keep it any longer. So he gave it some hard kicks to make it go away. But the dog came again, not being able to believe that its master did not want it any longer. This went on for some time, the dog coming back to its master, the master giving it more hard kicks. But one day, the dog realized that its master really did not want it any more, and left the master.

10.13 This is just our case. We have been pandering to our senses, allowing ourselves to be swayed by them, doing everything they ask us to do, never showing any real resistance. So here, too, it will take the senses a long time till they realize that their wishes are not going to be fulfilled any longer.

10.14 At present, part of our mind wants sense-enjoyment and sense-life, part of it does not want it any longer. So there is a terrible tug-of-war between the two parts. You must develop a definite antipathy for sense-enjoyment and all persons who may become a danger to you, you must make the 'dog' feel that it is not wanted. The 'dog' is our pet-desires, our pet-passions, our pet-likes and dislikes, and they all must be given some really hard kicks.

10.15 During these moments of trial the aspirant should always pray from the very bottom of his heart to the Lord for purity, for strength, ask Him to efface all the old impure impressions he has taken in through his carelessness and thoughtless living, and efface them for ever from his mind so that they cannot come back. In the *Bhagavad-Gita* it is said:

"When we turn our mind away from the senses, the sense-objects remain away from us; but still there is a deep-rooted tendency created by our previous habits."

10.16 Pray:

*“Thou art strength, endow me with strength.
Thou art energy, endow me with energy”*

10.17 You must try to develop aversion for all things that attract your senses or are apt to rouse old associations in you. Even disgust for some other person may be created for a time. Later on, this aversion, this disgust, has to be transcended too.

10.18 The moment you get real dispassion for the world, the moment real disgust for all worldly enjoyments is created, the problem is solved. Then we come to taste something that is sweeter than these so-called pleasures of the senses, which are a very poor affair after all.

10.19 Once, when the temple-procession was going round the streets, Sri Ramanuja came out just to pay homage to the image, but in the midst of the crowd he found a man and a woman. All the time this man was looking at her face, not taking any notice of the procession and the holy image. He had not time to see the image or anything, such was his absorption in the face of his mistress. “The Lord is taken out in procession, why is it that you are looking at this woman?” asked Sri Ramanuja. “Oh, Sir, her nose is so beautiful! you see, she is my mistress, and her nose is so beautiful!” was the answer. Then out of his infinite grace, Sri Ramanuja showed the man something infinitely more beautiful than the face of this woman. The man and the woman both gave up their sinful living and became great saints, staying with Sri Ramanuja. The vision he had given the man was far more glorious than all temporal and human love, however beautiful that might have appeared to him before, and their love was transmuted and became spiritual and pure.

10.20 This man’s case is mostly ours too. Instead of caring for the Divine and living for It alone, we allow ourselves to get absorbed in worldly pleasures and pursuits and thus come to miss the real beauty and glory of existence, remaining slaves of our senses and impulses and cravings.

10.21 Once upon a time there was a Brahmin who had a mistress. He was so greatly in love with the woman that he went to see her every night. Once he had to perform his father’s annual funeral ceremony, and it became very late before he was able to start. This day is a very holy day, and all people are expected to be perfectly

chaste, but this man was so infatuated that he wanted to go to his mistress without paying any attention to the rules or traditions. There was no ferry available at that hour, and while thinking of a means to cross the river, he found something dark and large floating by, took hold of it and crossed the river on that. When he reached the other bank, he found it was a corpse. With great love the woman then turned to him and said, "If instead of clinging to this wretched body of mine, you would have given your mind to God you would have attained great peace and blessedness." These words at first came as a great shock to the man, but from that day both of them became great devotees and changed their lives. Later on the man became a saint. Once when he was tempted by the beauty of a woman, he plucked out his eyes and became blind. Sri Krishna was his ishtam, but He always vanished when the man wanted to touch Him. So the saint grew mightily annoyed. "Only if you would succeed in getting away from my heart, I should believe in your power", he said. But this could never be.

When temptation comes

10.22 If you feel temptation in some form or other is trying to sweep you off your feet, consider the evil effects of those bad thoughts or dwell on the life of a great soul who is the embodiment of all purity and renunciation. Pride very often helps us also. "I am a devotee of the Lord; I come of a good family, I am noble; I want to follow the spiritual path, so that does not become me." Sri Krishna says to Arjuna, "*Give up this faint-heartedness of yours which is so un-Aryan. This is not the tradition of the Aryan. So why yield to unmanliness?*" — It is always a sign of unmanliness and cowardice to give in to one's desires and sense-impulses. This holds good in the case of the woman too. The really manly man never gives in to his desires or sensual appetites.

"It does not become thee; give up this mean faint-heartedness. Arise o Scorcher of thine enemies."

(Bhagavad-Gita 2.2-3)

10.23 Every aspirant has to be a scorcher of desires and cravings, sense-impulses, passions, attachments, lusts, all these enemies which continually beset his path and try to divert his mind from the truth. This only is 'Aryan-like', and nothing else. Anybody who does not follow this is not 'Aryan', whatever he may be.

10.24 If the brain be very clear and calm, then you can go in for

discrimination:—I am not the body, I am not a man, I am not a woman, I am not So-and-So, etc. etc.— Spiritual life means pricking the bubble of body-consciousness, sex-consciousness and all limiting adjuncts [Upadhis]. This bubble has become so very real that it does not burst when we prick it, just like hardened sea-foam.

10.25 It is very, very trying to hold on to one's rudder when this little raft of ours gets tossed to and fro on the waves of life. We are so un-Aryan that it is always our tendency to let go our hold and begin to drift. In such a case, mechanically go on with your Japam. Do not allow yourselves to be vanquished without even showing fight. You ought to be much too proud for that. At a certain stage pride can be a very great help. We should never allow ourselves to become sheep. In such moments control becomes very difficult as our whole brain tends to be muddled. What to do when this surge of desires and old associations comes rushing on us? Even if you cannot get control over yourself, then go to some fellow-aspirants, divert your mind, have talks with them on some holy subject or person, do not allow yourself to be alone and begin brooding. This only makes it worse, and then you are almost sure to slip your foot and come to grief.

10.26 Your thoughts must be directed towards something else. Force yourself to read and study in such a case, whether your mind likes it or not. Do not give in to your lower tendencies. Seek the company of other aspirants and remain in it if need be, if there is any danger of losing control over your lower tendencies. Speak to them, discuss problems with them, but do not allow your thoughts to sway you and to force you to brood over them, and strengthen them, whatever you do. Do not give in to your desires, do not allow them to find any expression on the physical plane.

10.27 What would you do, if all these fail? — “Sir, then I'd go and have a cold bath.”

10.28 The Christian mystics used to try to mortify their flesh, but they did not know how feelings and desires can be sublimated. So even these terrible austerities did not really solve their problem, and in some cases even strengthened their body-consciousness.

10.29 Never think of sin. You can never wash dirt with dirt. Sin-consciousness only makes things worse and does not bring about any solution. If you want to be strong, you cannot become so just by thinking of weakness.

10.30 It is a very vital point not to brood over the temptations when their voice rises in the mind. Terrible austerities show the sincerity of the aspirant, but at the same time they show complete ignorance of the laws of spiritual life. Never look for the devil outside. Your desires and cravings are in you, not outside. Thinking of sin will never make you any purer. If you go on crying, —"Oh, I am a sinner, I am a sinner,"— you will end by becoming awful. Think of your own eternal, innate purity, not of the superimpositions which have no primary reality at all.

10.31 We should be glad that everything bad and evil is inside. If it were outside, we could never change it in any way.

Temptations -- have alternative weapons against

10.32 At first meditation, if done properly, just stirs the whole sub-conscious mind, and awful things come up. So the aspirant must never feel afraid. The indrawn mind becomes terribly sensitive, and impressions that seemed to have left no mark in the mind, are found to have left deep scars and lines. All such impressions must be completely effaced.

10.33 We have to do the entire cleansing process if we want to get nearer the goal. Without that, nothing can be achieved.

"He who has achieved victory over covetousness, attachment, pride of learning and pleasures of the senses, which are our enemies, he is a true devotee indeed."

10.34 Your moral fibre must be strengthened at the same time. Try to take the attitude of the witness. Cease to identify yourself with your desires and cravings and with outside events. Let your mind go on raving madly. Just watch it and dissociate yourself from it. You are eternally the witness of all the mental states. Never identify yourself with your thoughts. For the beginner this is a very difficult step, but after it has been taken, everything becomes more and more natural, less strained. It is a very useful step in spiritual life.

10.35 Always try to have as many weapons near you as possible. You must be able to use more weapons than one if one fails you.

10.36 Japam is very important. So is thinking of some holy form. The form is the gateway to the formless all-pervading Spirit. Pray to a specialized form and try to visualize it. Then, if any undesirable form rises in your mind, you can efface it with the help of the form of your Ishtam, merge it into that.

10.37 Never forget to give a good injection of Vedanta. It is very helpful. First of all think of your own potential divinity and the potential divinity of all other forms, even those that may trouble you. If we ourselves are pure and holy by nature, we must manifest this in the flesh, in this very life, not merely mentally. Herein lies the test of all true spiritual life. There must be realization in physical *and* mental life. Our spiritual practices must help us in bringing about the needed harmony and union of the physical and ideal. We must not be content to live on mere words and empty theories without being transformed. This is what most people do. After a time they get tired of that and say, "Oh, we ourselves have tried the spiritual life and found it wanting. There is nothing in it after all."

10.38 Spiritual life means tremendous steadiness and singleness of purpose. Without that, nothing can be achieved.

"The Self is eternal and real by nature. The body is transient and unreal. And yet they (the ignorant) identify the two. Can any ignorance be worse than this?" (Sankara)

11 -- Wiesbaden, December 1st, 1933

"Until you fall asleep or until you die, devote yourself to the Vedantic thought." (Siddhanta Lesa Sangraha)

How higher life is achieved

11.01 Go on striving for the higher life. Do not give the slightest opportunity to your desires and passions for upsetting you and making your mind outgoing.

11.02 The greatest struggle is to maintain the steady flow of the undercurrent of thought, to keep one's mind fixed on the goal. The undercurrent always protects you. We may crack harmless jokes and all that, but always this undercurrent is to be maintained. Our jokes must never be immoral or loose or in an way of a doubtful nature, and we must never listen to such jokes when other people tell them. We must always be dignified and not allow others to tell dirty jokes. In this, we must learn to impose our will on others or leave the place. Listening to a joke of a doubtful or loose nature is very bad for all aspirants, and should be strictly avoided.

11.03 An atmosphere must be created that does not allow others to become intimate with us, which prevents them from doing or

saying anything dirty in our presence, whatever they may do when they are left to themselves.

11.04 And you all have to help in creating such an atmosphere. This gives us strength. Bad thoughts vitiate the air, and we must purify ourselves by good thoughts and purify each other by good thoughts also. This can never be lost sight of. We have to shoulder that responsibility and cannot allow others to behave as they like so long as they are in our company. If they do not conform to our standards, we have to avoid them. Never pollute the mind of another with your bad sensual thought or bad sensual vibrations. Even if another person feels drawn towards you in a sensual way, you are responsible for it, and you will have to bear the reaction. So always be on your guard. If you are not fully guarded, *you* will have to pay for it, just as the other person, for the bad or impure thought rising in the other person but caused by you, has its reaction on you too, whatever you may think.

False identifications prevent Knowledge of Brahman

11.05 Is Brahman altogether out of touch with us? Is it a fact that we know nothing of It, that we get no glimpse of It? So long as there is false identification and this false sense of personality, Brahman cannot be realized. There is this false identification, and during the time of this identification we see we are shifting our centre of consciousness continually. Sometimes we identify ourselves with the body:—"Oh, I am hurt, I feel such pain [physical]."— Sometimes with the mind:—"Oh, So-and-So was so rude to me. I feel so worried; I feel sorry; I feel interested."— All this is wrong identification with men (and women) and things, and the common factor is this identification. "I", "I", "I", always this "I" that comes in different forms. And so long as this "I" lasts, we cannot get a glimpse of Brahman. But there is one point to note:— Even at the time of this wrong identification, we have the consciousness of something that abides. At the back of the wrong "I", there is something that does not change. And it is the task of the spiritual man to find out what that really is. Everybody wants to live eternally, even people trying to commit suicide do not want to get rid of life but of all the anxieties and worries of life. What they really want is a pleasant life, not 'no life'. We want to live eternally and happily. Nobody wants to live eternally like stocks and stones, but wants to lead an intelligent life. Nobody has before him the ideal of living among sorrows and miseries. Inordinate craving for the pleasures of

life, inordinate clinging to something ephemeral, makes people commit suicide. In everybody there is always this yearning for peace, for blessedness, for freedom. And we all do not want to be disturbed by cares and anxieties.

11.06 Existence, Knowledge, Bliss Absolute, says the seer, is the nature of our soul, not any attributes, not the *upadhis* [limiting adjuncts]. These:— Existence, Knowledge, Bliss Absolute are the very essence of our soul, our true nature. And when we analyze the outside world, too, we find the same thing standing at the back of all phenomena. Everything sentient and insentient, living and non-living, stands before us as an object of Consciousness. Something that *is*. And every being and thing has the capacity to force itself on our consciousness, a sort of luminosity about it that illumines the sentient and the insentient. There is no difference in kind but of degree. So in the inside world and in the outside world we find this abiding sense of consciousness, and thus a glimpse of the Reality. All things more or less fulfil the want of every individual. We all run after the sense-object, the outside thing, for the satisfaction of our mind or in search of some particular sense-pleasure which we think we shall derive from the possession of that thing, whatever its nature may be. The sense of consciousness is always there. Sense-objects only draw our mind because of the idea that we are going to derive some enjoyment from them. It is because of this that we feel tempted, not because of the intrinsic value of that particular sense-object. Thus not merely in ourselves, but also in all outside objects, sentient and non-sentient, we get a glimpse of what may be called Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. Name and form hide the face of Truth in ourselves and in all outside objects, but all names and forms reflect dimly the glory of the Reality at their back. Always there is a subconscious feeling with regard to this existence. It may be very vague, very indefinite, but still it is there.

11.07 The task of all spiritual life is to make the indefinite consciousness definite, if we really want to come face to face with Truth. First we should begin with ourselves, find out that which exists in ourselves at the back of the ego.

11.08 There is such a thing as having one's centre of consciousness in the Transcendental even while working or living on the phenomenal plane, but this can never be done so long as all this wrong identification with our body and our mind lasts.

11.09 Very often we identify ourselves with the Upadhis [limiting adjuncts]. We say or think: We are fat, we are lean, we are clever. We are poor. We are rich. We walk. We sit. We are blind, deaf, dumb. We are men or women, or we identify ourselves with some feeling that rises in the lake of our mind. This is wrong, although we may note the one common factor: this "I". What is this "I"? No thought of the finite is ever possible without the thought of the Infinite. Positing the one you posit the other too. We cannot formulate the Infinite, Pure Consciousness, the Atman; It can never be formulated, but It can be realized.

11.10 *"The Truth can be realized by him whom It chooses and to whom It reveals Itself."* — You are thus yourself your own Chooser, as this Self, this Truth, is not something distinct from you, and if you go and choose yourself to be the knower of this Truth and really strive for It you become It. Spiritual realization means self-realization.

11.11 Only by rising above our lusts and passions can we become one with It. See that you get purity and dispassion.

11.12 *"Give me discrimination, give me renunciation, give me devotion and knowledge."* — This was Swamiji's prayer.

11.13 *"Be bold and face the Truth."* — There must be merciless self-analysis. First of all try to find and to regain your own soul. Your soul is practically lost to you, and only after having found it again, the question of this higher Realization will arise. Otherwise never.

11.14 Spiritual life begins with the recognition of the idea that we are neither men nor women, but spiritual entities. And it is necessary to have this as the very basis of all our striving.

11.15 The path of self-analysis is always difficult, but it is the most direct of all the paths, and even the devotee [the Bhakta] must practise self-analysis to a certain extent, though his Sadhana is sweetened through devotion.

The concept of freedom

11.16 It is necessary for us to have a true conception of freedom. Do we want freedom *for* the senses, do we want license, or do we want freedom *from* the senses? Which is the right idea of freedom? Is it freedom to allow the mind to run after enjoyment, to be the slave of the senses? Is it freedom thus to dig our own graves? Or is it freedom to control all desires, to master all desires and become free

from the senses and their cravings? This alone is what is called 'attaining to the freedom of the Atman', and the freedom of license is no freedom at all. Do we really want freedom? That is the question.

11.17 The question of spiritual practice comes, when to some extent we become free agents. And as a matter of fact with this alone does spiritual life begin.

"Now begins the discussion of Brahman". (Br.-Sutras 1.1)

11.18 *"They are killers of their own souls". (Upanishads) —* Those who forget their souls, their reality, are the killers of their souls, as it were, because they do not possess them. So long as we go on clinging to our slave-mentality and allow ourselves to be driven like slaves by our senses, we cannot progress. Only the life of sense-control and purity leads to freedom and no other life. There is no doubt about that, whatever the worldly-minded may say or think.

"Even if you doubt your own existence, the doubter is no other than yourself." (Sankara)

11.19 Descartes said, *"Cogito, ergo sum"* (I think, therefore I am). —Sankara says, *"Because I am, it becomes possible for me to think."*

11.20 If you want Vedanta, then here it is, but then be bold and face the Truth. There is no romance and no place for romance in spiritual life, neither materially nor mentally; it is a hard life, a life of struggle and strain.

11.21 There are people who have the experience of the world and others who have the experience of the spirit. But can worldly-minded people, possessing only their experience of the world, talk about spiritual life and experience? They only rush head-long into sense-life and find some nice and plausible excuse for doing so.

11.22 Sri Ramakrishna says, *"Blind belief? There is no such thing. There is only belief or experience."*

Free will

11.23 There must be great intensity of feeling and will, and you must keep your fire burning with the bellows. Everyone has to do that. The moment there is no intensity nothing can be achieved. We are free agents and can choose by ourselves for emancipation. Truth is realized when the mind is purified and the senses are stilled.

*"Speak to my warring passions peace;
Let my trembling heart be still". (Elliot)*

11.24 Let us will that our passions may be stilled, that our desires may be controlled.

11.25 When our will is weakened, then enemies come from all sides to play at tug-of-war with us. And then we are in great danger of being defeated.

12 -- Wiesbaden, December 2nd, 1933

Beyond Jivahood

12.01 Jivahood always means pain, bondage and limitation, and without getting rid of Jivahood, by attaining Brahman, none can become free. Jivahood brings attachment and all the different forms of so-called human love and hatred, which only mean pain and misery in the end, in the endless cycle of births and death the Jiva has to undergo so long as he does not realize his true eternal nature. We want freedom and fearlessness. We want to break the limitations of the body and the mind and be free, free, and this we can never attain so long as we cling to our different desires and passions and animal cravings. Self-realization cannot be obtained without the renunciation of all our clinging to body and mind, to our own bodies and minds, as well as to those of others.

12.02 Our great sage Sankaracharya says, "*A human birth, desire for emancipation, and contact with a holy man, these three are very rare and are attained only through the grace of the Lord.*" (*Vivekachudamani* 3)— But then even those three advantages don't suffice. We must be eager, to profit by them and willing to sacrifice everything for the higher life. Without paying the full price we cannot become free or fearless, and without fearlessness and freedom there is no happiness for us neither in this life nor in any future life. Everything, all our petty human affections and aversions, all our desires for name and fame, all our clinging to the phenomenal, means slavery and pain, and so long as we do not realize this clearly, we shall always remain the bondslaves of our senses and passions. Only think of Swamiji's wonderful spirit of renunciation! Try to follow him. Think of him and of all the struggles he had to undergo while he was being moulded by his guru, Sri Ramakrishna. All this cannot be gained for nothing. You must be eager to realize something. You

must be prepared to sacrifice all your petty feelings and personal desires for the Highest, then alone, one day the Highest will be yours. Struggle, struggle, struggle. this is the only way. Remember, salvation can be had only in this human birth. In no other birth is it possible to attain to salvation. So Sankara somewhere says, *“It is not even desirable for men to attain to the state of a Deva, for even the Devas are slaves to their desires. Therefore the human birth is the best of all births.”*

12.03 In the *Katha Upanishad* there is a fine passage that says:

“Know that the Self is the master of the chariot who sits in it. The body is the chariot. Consider the intellect as the charioteer and the mind as the reins. The senses, they say are the horses. The roads are the sense-objects. The wise call him the enjoyer when he is united with the body, senses and the mind.” (1.3.3-4)

“He who is always of unrestrained mind and devoid of right understanding, his senses become uncontrolled like the wicked horses of the charioteer.” (1.3.5)

Contenance and renunciation

12.04 Without practising strict continence in thought, word and deed, without trying to purify your whole mind, your feelings and thoughts and actions, nothing will be of any avail. Even the Christian mystics put this period of what they called ‘purgation’ first. Purity in the body and mind is the *sine qua non* of all spiritual life, and whoever is not prepared to pay that price to the full, will fall away from the ideal sooner or later. This is the relentless law and has always been the law at all times and in all countries.

“He who is always of restrained mind and has right understanding, his senses are controllable like the good horses of the charioteer.”

“And he who is devoid of proper understanding, thoughtless and always impure, never attains that goal, and gets into the round of births and deaths.”

“But he who is intelligent, ever pure and with the mind controlled, reaches that goal whence none is born again.”

“The man who has intelligence for his charioteer and the mind as the well-controlled rein, — he attains the end of the journey, that Supreme Place of the Divine. (Katha Up. 1.3.6-9)

12.05 Renunciation and chastity are necessary. Without these, there is no spiritual life. And renunciation means not only outward renunciation, but mental renunciation too, renouncing all our clingings to our own bodies and minds and to those of others; becoming truly dispassionate and non-attached in every way—not only with reference to certain things and persons, while trying to cling to others all the more. Why is renunciation necessary? Why have so much renunciation and non-attachment? Spiritual practice can never be successfully performed without true renunciation and dispassion, without giving up all old associations with reference to things and to people. Only to the extent to which we are prepared to renounce our desires and passions and our clinging to others, either in affection or in aversion, can spiritual practices be performed with profit and can any progress be made. Never allow your mind to delude you on this point. The mind always tries to bring forward some plausible reason or other why we cannot renounce this or that thing, why we should be in the company of such and such a person, why it is our duty to talk to him or her etc. etc. Never believe your mind in such cases. It is always out to deceive you and to become the spokesman for your subconscious or half-conscious desires. So we need not only Japam and prayer and meditation and other spiritual practices, but also renunciation, and only to the extent to which we succeed in having more and more true renunciation and non-attachment, can all these have any effect. When these two are combined, the practices and renunciation, it becomes possible for us to control the mind and begin with the cleaning of all its dirty nooks and crannies where we have allowed all kinds of filth to accumulate for ages and ages through countless births. Things or persons whom we love, draw the mind, bring attachment, hatred and aversion, —love and aversion are only the obverse and reverse of the self-same coin. Never make any mistake as to this. So they come under the same category. Hatred, aversion, is love, is attachment, turned upside down. It is not something essentially different. We must get rid of all forms of attachment and of all forms of fear by becoming dispassionate and free from personal likes and dislikes. We must be kind without ever becoming personal, and there should never be any personal claim on anybody or anybody's love, nor should we under any circumstances ever allow anybody to have any personal claim on us or on our affection. Christ says, "*He who loves father and mother more than Me is not worthy of Me*", —and there is nothing truer than that. But he who allows an-

other person to love him more than the Divine, is not worthy of the Divine either and will never attain the Divine, however hard he may try. We only get what we sow, and so long as we go on sowing all these petty affections and hatreds, these likes and dislikes, fettering ourselves and others with the chains of so-called love, etc., we shall remain bondslaves eternally, bringing misery to ourselves and on others. Misery will always come. In some cases it comes soon, in others late, but all have to pay for their folly.

12.06 Learn to develop the spirit of true non-attachment. Free the mind from all old associations connected with purely human forms of love and aversion, connected with attachment and sex, for only then will spiritual practice become slowly possible. Everything before that is just an attempt at spiritual practice, and nothing more.

Hatred

12.07 Hatred is as bad as attachment. Hatred is as bad as love or personal affection, in fact, the same thing. Love and hatred are but the two sides of the same coin, as I said before. Never delude yourself into thinking that one is better than the other. Both are fetters and degrade the human being, preventing it from rising to its true stature

12.08 And this is the secret which all who desire to lead a spiritual life should know. There is both, love and hatred, and we cannot get rid of them all at once. So what to do? We may keep our love and we may keep our hatred, but we should consciously direct our love only to the Highest, to the Divine, never to any person or any thing, and our hatred should be directed towards everything that prevents us from realizing our true nature, towards all obstacles, towards everything that stands in the way of our progress. And there may be an amount of healthy and manly self-condemnation, but it should never become destructive or end in negative emotionalism: "Oh, what a sinner, what a despicable sinner I am!" If I have done wrong in the past, well and good. Let me know that I have done wrong, but let me not brood over it. Let me turn over a new leaf and do better in future, be more wide-awake in future and learn to be a human being instead of an animal. That is the proper way. Whether we are young or old, we must all be reborn in the world of the spirit and begin our march towards the Truth.

12.09 In the beginning, spiritual practices produce both good results and bad results. When you go and water the garden nicely,

you will get fine fragrant roses, but at the same time all the weeds will grow luxuriously and in great abundance, so you will have to do a lot of cleaning and cutting and uprooting.

Strict chastity

12.10 Too much worldliness is like fire. It burns the human heart. It makes it callous and unable to appreciate spiritual life or even come to know what real spiritual life means. The faculty of intuition becomes so dulled in the worldly person that he is no longer sensitive to higher vibrations and higher truths, but just goes on wallowing in the mire of his desires and sex-bound and sex-conditioned affections.

“For all men it is easy to give advice to others.”

12.11 All earnest aspirants should observe strict chastity in thought, word and deed, and true chastity can never be observed if we are careless in our company or allow old associations to come up in our mind through lack of discretion regarding our talks and the people we meet. It takes a long time to eradicate impure impressions, even when people are sincere, and it can never be done if they do not avoid each others' company for a long, long time. There should be no self-deception as to this.

12.12 Christ says,

“For there are some eunuchs, which were born so from their mothers womb: there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men; and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive, let him receive.” (Mt 19.12)

This was the passage Sri Ramakrishna told the two boys, Sasi and Sarat, (the later Swamis Saradananda and Ramakrishnananda) when they first came to see him. He remarked that marriage is the root of all bondage. All Great Ones have been unanimous as to this fact, but worldly people are always so anxious to do something for God's creation, as if God needed them! All hypocrisy and cant. God does not need anybody's help, God does not need anybody to help Him in His creation, neither do these people really care. What they want is their enjoyment, not God's creation. People who are able to fully control the sex-impulse for many years and to observe strict continence in thought, word and deed, gain incredible creative strength on a higher plane. They alone really enjoy life, even physi-

cally, because they alone are masters over their body and over their moods and can direct them as they like. A good horseman has great pleasure in riding his horse and in making it follow his wishes. Worldly people do not know the amount of enjoyment a perfectly chaste person gets even out of his body, not to speak of his mind.

12.13 To think of one's own ancestors is out-and-out materialism. We alone are our own ancestors, not our parents or forefathers. They have given us the instrument, the machine, but not what we are. It is a very wrong and very low conception of life.

Faith and ethical cultivation

12.14 Really speaking, the task of spiritual life is to find the radius that leads one to the centre. And here *"the same coat cannot fit all"*, as Swamiji [Swami Vivekananda] used to say. At the beginning there must be faith and strict obedience to the instructions given us by our teacher. But faith must never end in faith, but in actual, living experience. And if you want signs,—signs there are many, if you only open your eyes and think.

12.15 There should be Shraddha [Faith] in the words of the Seers, Shraddha in the words of the teachers and prophets, Shraddha in one's own potentiality and strength and purity. Without a working ideal spiritual life cannot begin. If we put this working ideal too high, nothing can be achieved, but, at the same time, we should never lower the ideal as such, but rise to it step by step by taking higher and higher working ideals.

12.16 Faith, as such, is not enough. You must strive your utmost. Ethical culture means chastity, purity in thought, word and deed, purity in food, purity in one's company and associations, purity in what one hears and listens to. And chastity, purity, is more important than any other of the spiritual practices. Without these, as a matter of fact, spiritual practice is useless and becomes a mockery.

Purity

12.17 First comes physical purity. Then the mind must be tackled and controlled. Then comes the control of speech which is most essential. We should never listen to anything that is not perfectly pure and should behave in such a manner that others will not dare to discuss anything impure in our presence. This is the first step. After that a new attitude has to be developed with regard to all things or objects that tempt us in any way, till perfect indifference with refer-

ence to them all is reached. So we should keep strict watch over all the movements of our mind so as to become more and more conscious, more and more wide-awake and definite in everything. There should not be any unconscious moment in our life.

12.18 You see, this is very, very essential, because in the first period of spiritual life, —and the first period may extend over many, many years— body-consciousness becomes stronger, and the mind tends to wander more than it used to do, before any practices were taken up. At the same time, affections and aversions become more prominent and more dangerous if we do not scrupulously avoid coming in touch with their objects, either mentally or physically, or both. All who are not careful in this will one day have a nasty fall.

12.19 For a time the body becomes in a special way the centre of consciousness in the beginner, as soon as he begins to try to draw the mind away. So we should not allow ourselves to be hoodwinked by the subtle desires of our body and our mind that may crop up and try to drag us away to their particular objects which they wish to enjoy. The aspirant can never be careful enough in his associations and in the company he keeps during the first years of his training for the higher life. Many do not realize this and then come to grief. So we should learn to be conscious, to be aware of our motives, and stop all forms of drifting and all expressions of a merely instinctive life.

13 -- Wiesbaden, December 3rd, 1933

There is no East and West in essentials

13.01 You can never divide the world into East and West as far as the essentials of life are concerned. All problems are cosmic problems. You cannot say:— “Here the East begins, and here the West begins.” This is a very, very erroneous and misleading idea and has been the cause of many fatal mistakes in the life of the world. There is no Eastern truth and no Western truth, but only Truth as such, which is neither Eastern nor Western, nor anything else but one and only. All problems of the human mind are the same problems. There is no such thing as East or West in this respect. There is no Eastern and no Western mind, in so far as the essentials are concerned, but only the human mind. There are differences in custom and in the non-essentials of life, but the human mind always remains the human mind and its problems are always those of the human mind, not Eastern or Western problems.

Guarding the subconscious

13.02 There is one point which is very essential in the course of one's spiritual practice and spiritual striving. We should all have a short break after dinner, i.e., in the middle of the day, say at two o'clock or so. This is very efficacious, but very difficult for many people to practise. For many it is difficult to have just a little break of consciousness or just a little break in the hectic and feverish activities of one's mind, to fill it again with the holy name and the harmonizing vibrations of the holy sound. We should also make it a point never to read anything worldly, no novels, no fiction, no stories, before going to bed or before falling asleep, but to have some holy thought and some holy sound to dwell on, to think with great intensity that we are going to sleep in the lap of God, or some other such idea, to fill our whole mind before falling asleep with the Divine idea and the feeling of the Divine. If we permit ourselves to read something worldly, this goes on working in our subconscious mind during the hours of our sleep and has very bad effects. In the evening we should be very careful as to what we allow our mind to busy itself with, or get absorbed in. There should be concentrated and peaceful dwelling on the Divine, either the Divine form, or the Divine name or the Divine sound, or on all three combined, which is the most efficacious way. Only thus can we in time succeed in transforming the contents of our subconscious mind. It is very, very harmful to read worldly books before falling asleep, but we do not generally realize the extent of the harm we do to ourselves by being careless in this. The workings of the subconscious during the time of our sleep are very important and should not be lost sight of.

13.03 There is one more point which should be mentioned: If you awake at night, at once begin doing your Japam in a quiet, peaceful way, without any unnecessary strain. But during the time of your practices, Japam and sleep should never become connected. This is very bad. Before going to bed, do 100-1000 times Japam, fill yourself with the holy sound, and make it a point never to stop doing Japam before having reached the number you intended to do.

Formation of habits

13.04 Habits are to be formed and strengthened. Then spiritual life becomes easier and loses much of its initial strain. Strictly preserve your fixed hours. Then meditation slowly becomes possible

even when the mind is very restless. There should be perfect regularity in the hours of your spiritual practice, because only thus does the mind grow accustomed to them. And under all circumstances a certain minimum is to be kept up in one's daily practices. The time of the practices should be slowly and steadily increased in the case of the beginner *and* in the case of the advanced student, and only later can one make use of the undercurrent in one's mind, which enables one to keep part of the mind busy with the practices at all times, whatever one happens to do outwardly. Before that state is reached, the greatest regularity concerning the hours and the minimum amount of spiritual practices which are to be done, is absolutely necessary in the case of *all* aspirants.

Fellow-travellers

13.05 Fellow-travellers can help each other. That is why holy company is of such great importance. There should be mutual help, mutual sympathy, because these help us in sustaining our energy and our striving. We should never try to be teachers, but only students amongst fellow-students, giving to others a helping hand if we can, but never assuming the role of the teacher. This is always safe if we know how to remain within reasonable limits. Then we do not become dangerous to ourselves and to others. Then the 'teacher'-mentality cannot sprout up in us and harm us and others.

13.06 "*Thou are the mechanic, and I am the machine.*" — This is the attitude we should adopt, and never that of superiority. Before you lead others, learn to serve with dedication and self-surrender. Very often we want to lead without proper training. We want to have the fruits without paying the proper price.

13.07 The advantage of a small group of devotees is that in a small group all these direct instructions are applicable, and it is easier to have a true spirit of sympathy and no back-biting in a small group, even if they be beginners. It is always better to have first intensive work then, later on, extensive work.

Facing Death

13.08 We should always act in such a way that we may equip ourselves fully to be able to meet death with a smile. Death should be our greatest happiness. It should be the gateway to Immortality, to be welcomed, never to be feared. This life is nothing but a passing shadow, a phase, a life in a world of unrealities and shadows. Our fu-

ture depends on what we think in this life, on what we are, never on what we appear or pretend to be.

13.09 Bear in mind:— Whatever be the Truth, let us face It un-dauntedly! An unpleasant truth is always infinitely better than a pleasant falsehood, even if this truth breaks our heart, even if it shatters once for all our fondest hopes and illusions. Vedanta is not for cowards or emotional weaklings. No use clinging to falsehood. No use covering the decaying carcass with beautiful fragrant flowers and doting over it! Let the light come under all circumstances, no matter whether the heart breaks or not. Do not care so much for breaking hearts and shattered hopes as for Truth and Light. Sometimes necessary operations are very painful, but if the surgeon should refuse to operate on the patient, the patient would die. Nothing is truer than the fact that some day the body will fall off. And we should so conduct ourselves that we have no occasion to repent for having wasted our precious time and our precious human birth.

13.10 Our great poet-saint Tulsidas sings:

*“When I was born, I cried and others laughed.
Act in such a way that when you die,
you laugh and others cry.”*

This is the real task of our life. So we have a proverb in Bengal that says, *“Do whatever spiritual practices you may be doing, but you must know how to die.”*

13.11 Death is always of the body, never of the spirit or the SELF. So why fear death? Death should neither be courted nor be feared, neither should life be so. The bier is always quite as real as the cradle, the burning-ghat as real as the nursery, but we rejoice at the one and recoil from the other. Why? Why this desperate clinging to physical enjoyment and physical relationships? I neither want life nor do I want death, because life is something infinitely greater than this shadow of life, the phenomenal life. We cling to our bodies and to those of others, to our own minds and to those of others and think we have got hold of Life. We have not. We have got hold of the mirage, the reflection of the reflection of the reflection, and nothing more than that, and go on hugging it to our breast. What terrible fools we are! What an inordinate attachment to all that is not Life! The *true* aspirant, he who has true spiritual yearning, neither clings to life, nor does he ever yearn for death, because, to him, neither of them has any reality. We must learn to be wholly indifferent to our life and

wholly indifferent to our death, but act in the right way to make spiritual progress, so that we may be able to make the very best use of the short span of life given to us. We need not be afraid of death, neither of our own nor that of anybody else, if we just minimize the attachments of life and our personal relationships with the phantoms of others, with the men-phantoms and women-phantoms of which none has any ultimate reality. Relationships based on the mirage always prove to be nothing but a mirage in the end. You cannot have real relationship with what is unreal and which has no ultimate being.

13.12 The death of the Great Ones has taught us great lessons. How wonderful was that of Swami Ramakrishnananda, Premananda, Turiyananda, Brahmananda! The worldly-minded and those who cling to their personal attachments alone should be afraid of death. The spiritual do not lose anything. It is just like passing from one room to another. One day, after the Master's death, Holy Mother wanted to put on the widow's dress. But the Master appeared to her and said, *"What are you doing? Am I dead? Death is just like passing from one room to another."* So she gave up her intention. It is the body that dies, not the SELF. We must be prepared to die for a righteous cause without any hesitation, and we must be fully prepared to see others die for it. So our motto is:— *"To work for our own salvation as well as for the salvation of others."* — This is what Swamiji wanted us to do, and this is the guiding motto of the Order.

13.13 So Swamiji [Swami Vivekananda] said:

"This body we nourish with food, let it be sacrificed for the good of humanity, God in man. This mind of ours that we nourish or develop through studies, let it be made use of also in the service of the God in man. The soul, too, let it be utilized for the service of the Lord in man."

13.14 Thus alone our mortal death leads us to our spiritual birthday.

13.15 Follow the higher Law. Care neither for optimism nor for pessimism. Develop this attitude of indifference to everything except to the ideal, learn to be perfectly indifferent to all other concerns, especially those of material life and all personal attachments and affections, to all things that bind us, that stand in the way of our spiritual progress. We must be able to maintain a perfect mental balance without allowing ourselves to be ruffled by anything, we must always

hold our mind fixed on the one duty, our heart always set on the Lord, our hands ever busy in His service alone.

13.16 All these glorious lives are before us, show us how to live and how to die. We have only to mould ourselves according to the pattern they have given us again and again. Even if we fall in this battle of life, through newer lives and lives we shall work and work and work with renewed vigour. Step by step we shall rise until we attain to our life's only goal.

The conception of the SELF

13.17 The conception of the SELF is the peculiarity of the true Aryan. It is not to be found among Semitic religions. This is why Sri Krishna upbraids Arjuna for his 'un-Aryan' attitude. No Semitic religion has ever risen to the true Aryan conception of the SELF and the higher life.

13.18 Generally we ourselves create all the obstacles that stand in the way of our spiritual progress or self-realization. We think of ourselves in terms of the body and of the mind and do the same with reference to others. Then we go and take up direct relations with them, as men or women, and then all the rest naturally follows in due course. On what does this whole life of the body and of the mind depend? On **consciousness** and not on my man-form or my woman-form or child-form etc. The moment the SELF leaves, the body becomes lifeless. All its charm vanishes. Nobody feels attracted by a dead form, be it ever so beautiful, but what really attracts us in the man-form or in the woman-form is consciousness which we mistakenly identify with the particular body or mind. There is such a lot of blind infatuation in the world owing to this superimposition on the Reality, and without undermining all these wrong notions and conceptions, all these body- and mind-bound likes and dislikes, attractions and repulsions, we shall never be able to make any progress at all. If I love the life of the body so greatly, why do I not look to that on which it depends? I should learn to love the life of the SELF because only owing to Its presence is there any life in the body and in the mind at all. The cause is greater than the effect, and the cause of the life of my body and my mind and that of all others is the SELF alone, not my man-form or woman-form or child-form. If I want life and love, permanent and unchanging, I must look to the SELF and never to any of the Upadhis [limiting adjuncts]. But it takes people many, many lives to see this and realize their Himalayan mistake.

Freedom from lust

13.19 Birbal was the jester at the court of the great emperor Akbar. One day the emperor asked him, "Is your mother free from lust?" So Birbal went to his mother to get the answer. She gave him a box with ashes which he was to bring to the emperor. Akbar understood her meaning and was highly pleased with her answer. Swami Brahmananda once told me, "My boy, if you give yourself to the world, your youth, beauty, health, everything will be gone. If you give yourself to the Lord, you will retain them all."

13.20 Sri Ramakrishna always used to say to the women who came to him for instruction, "*Beware of the snares of man, even if he is a very near relative.*" — One cannot attain anything in spiritual life without perfect chastity in thought, word, and deed. The amount of real chastity attained determines the whole progress of the aspirant. Everyone should be on his guard with every person of the other sex, be he a man or a woman. If we are not on our guard, real chastity can never be attained. Real chastity is infinitely more than the mere avoidance of sexual intercourse.

Music

13.21 There is a nice story of Tansin, one of India's greatest musicians. One day when he was singing all alone in the forest, the emperor Akbar happened to pass by and heard him. He was enchanted, because he had never heard his singing in such a perfect way and in such a beautiful strain at his court. He felt a little displeased and said, "How is it that you never sing to me in such a beautiful way?" Tansin answered, "Sire, how could I? Just now I was singing for someone who is infinitely greater than you, and who is my Beloved." "Greater than me? Who can that be?" answered Akbar. "The Lord, my Beloved. When I sing to you, I just sing to order and am paid for it. But I cannot open my heart. When I sing to Him who is the Author of the universe, I give my whole heart to my song." You see, good music plays a great part in the life of the aspirant and devotee.

Immorality

13.22 Immorality does not mean impurity with outsiders only, but also all physical impurity with one's wife if one is married, i.e. leading a life of incontinence with her. I can be just as immoral with my own wife as with any outsider. If I lead a sexually impure life with

my own wife, where am I to get the energy and intensity from, which are so absolutely necessary for all real spiritual striving? We should clearly and dispassionately recognize this fact. We need tremendous energy for leading a higher life, and this energy of ours, which is really one, cannot be wasted through sexual channels, if we want to progress and to really attain something. Spiritual life is not to be had as cheaply as the Protestants think. It is something more than mere morals and ordinary moral life, although morals are the very basis on which it must rest. No, whoever desires to lead the higher life must pay the price fully. There can be no bartering in this.

13.23 Sri Ramakrishna was always able to tell the character of those brought into his presence. Once a young man was brought to him while he was in ecstasy. He said, *“If this young man touches a woman in a weak moment, he is done for for this life as far as his spirituality goes.”* — Unfortunately, this very thing happened a short time afterwards.

13.24 You see, all beginners, no matter who they are, have to avoid the company of persons of the other sex (men or women) and always consciously to think thoughts which are opposed to the ideas of sex and their own and others’ man- or woman-form. Especially in the beginning the sex-instinct grows in strength in many people. When you water and manure the soil nicely, the weeds will grow nicely too, along with the plants you really wish to grow. So we have to uproot those weeds afterwards, and this we can only do, if we are very, very careful as to the company we allow ourselves to be in for the first few years of our striving. Never believe yourself to be too strong to be above listening to such advice. Avoid spending time in the company of persons of the other sex, no matter how pure they may be, for before you have attained real sublimation, culminating in the transformation of your whole being, concentration influences your sexual imagination also and makes even such pictures more vivid and living as soon as you allow your sexual instinct to be stimulated in any way. This need not be in any gross way at all. Subtle attractions and subtle forms of stimulation are even worse than grosser forms, because these are more easily recognized by the beginner than the subtler ones. Many, many times I have found great carelessness in aspirants as to these points, and many have come to grief because of that.

13.25 When you feel temptation, always say, *“MOTHER, come*

up. Why stay in the lower centres?" — Always try to persuade your mind. Never use any violence. Speak to your mind in a cajoling way, "My mind, what a fool you are to run after enjoyment and sex! Aren't you ashamed to do it? You really should know better", etc. etc. This is very efficacious and lessens the strain. Try to address your own mind as a witness, not identifying yourself with it in any way, but always trying to stand apart and survey all its movements and desires.

13.26 There is a funny story which very aptly illustrates the effects of our carelessness regarding company etc. Once a camel just pushed its nose through the door of somebody's house. The owner first objected to this, but it said, "Oh, I only put my nose in your room, just for a moment. Nothing more." But, in fact, it slowly pushed its whole body through the door and then said when the owner objected to its presence in his room, "If you do not like my presence in your house, you get out. I do not!" Lust sometimes comes in a very noble dress, in the form of 'duty', in the form of 'compassion', in the form of 'self-abnegation' as our mind is always out to deceive us as to its true motive. Without chastity in thought, word and deed nothing can be achieved in spiritual life. The mind, as I said, always wants to do harm to us, but patiently waits for an opportunity to do so effectively. So you should give your mind a good scolding now and then and curb it nicely. After all, it is you who is the master, not the mind. Do not allow the camel to come in. If you do you will have great difficulty in making it go out again.

*O my mind,
thou dost not know how to cultivate the land,
and such a fine plot is lying fallow.
Thou couldst raise crops of gold on it
if thou wouldst but till it."*

Shifting our centre of consciousness

13.27 Always say, "*Why remain down, MOTHER, do come up.*" There should be a conscious shifting of consciousness. The Cosmic Energy usually lies 'coiled-up' near the sexual centre. So it should be made to move up higher. Sometimes it is very helpful if the aspirant just touches the centre of his consciousness (head or heart etc.) with his Rudraksha-beads while doing Japam. Feeling the centre physically makes it easier for him to fix his consciousness there.

13.28 If the thought of any woman comes, associate it at once with the form of the Holy Mother or with that of your own mother. Kill

the sexual thought at once. Do not permit yourself to be in the company of women. In Tantra there is an instruction which says that all woman-forms should be associated with Uma and all man-forms with Shiva. And this is of great value in spiritual life. But the beginner cannot do so effectively, so he should be careful about moving in the company of persons of the other sex and talking to them.

13.29 There is another effective means of counteracting the influence of some sexual thought. Just think of some woman who never knew what sex-life was; or of some man who never knew what sex-life was. This is most important. Think of some Great One, man or woman, who from his or her very birth was a personification of sexual purity in all its aspects. Dwell on that thought daily, making it form a part of your spiritual practices.

13.30 Our object in life should be to transcend the male-principle as well as the female-principle and to go where there is absolutely no sex. On lower planes of life we see male and female, on higher planes, no sex and no form at all. So there is a song that says:

*“Parvati is my mother.
The Great Lord Shiva is my father.
All devotees are my friends and relations,
the whole world is my native-land.”*
(Sankara: Annapurna-stotra 12)

13.31 Sankaracharya says:

*“O Shiva, Thou art my Atman. The Divine Mother is my mind.
My pranas are Thy attendants, and this body is Thy abode.
All this sense-contact is part of Thy worship.
My sleep is like remaining in Samadhi in Thee.”*

And he adds:

*“Wherever I go, I am just going round Thee.
All the words I speak are like hymns to Thee.
And all forms of activities I engage myself in, O Lord,
are Thy worship.”* (Sivamanasapuja 4)

13.32 Another instruction says, “*Keep the eye distant when you see a woman.*” — The same holds good in the case of seeing a man, naturally.

13.33 Girish Babu once said, “Naren became so vast that he could not be caught in Maya’s net, and Nag Mahashaya became so very small that he dropped through the meshes of Maya.” So our

task is somehow or other to get out of this, to transcend, to go beyond this Maya, this whole phenomenal world and reach the Reality. And this can never be done without chastity in thought, word and deed. Unity, ultimate oneness, cannot be reached, so long as one remains physically and mentally tied to duality.

Beyond the ego

13.34 There are some who say, "Lord, I am Thine". Others again say, "Lord, I am Thyself". There is a difference in expression, but the ultimate goal is one and the same, when we clearly understand the standpoint from which both are said. In both cases only the Lord remains as the sole actor and agent. The ego disappears. And this should be our aim and should be attained by us all.

13.35 Reincarnation is in no way the most vital point. What is of great importance is to try to get full illumination in this very life. None is forced to follow the spiritual path, but all those who have decided to do so, should do it with great doggedness and perseverance, never swerving from their path, not even an inch. We should learn to be tremendously sincere and one-pointed and not allow ourselves to be swayed by indecision and doubt.

14 -- Wiesbaden, December 4th, 1933

Strength

14.01 Success in spiritual life depends on our firmly and steadily holding on to the Divine Ideal. Everyone of us must have a central seat of consciousness, a central name to dwell on, and a holy Form to visualize. In the midst of all the confusion and darkness of the relative plane we must find out a definite course of action, of thinking, of willing, without which no spiritual life is possible. And the person who has no ground to stand on, who has no central point of consciousness, can never have any real faith in himself and never have any real strength. Always believe:— *"I am a being that can achieve something in the world of the spirit."*

14.02 Strength is what we want first of all. We are meant for something great, for something nobler and higher. What is needed is not negative humility, but positive humility, born of real inner strength. People think they are nothing, and nothing they become. People think they are miserable sinners, and sinners they become.

People think they are weak, and weak they become. Filth can never be cleaned with filth.

14.03 First of all the body must be strong and healthy. A certain amount of physical strength is necessary. There must be some regular physical exercise in the life of every aspirant. Do not take a negative attitude regarding your body. This body of ours is something noble, a temple of the Divine. It is able to achieve something great. Even such physical faith is needed.

14.04 This body of ours is like a raft, like a boat, with which to cross this ocean of relative life. See that it does not spring a leak, otherwise you are drowned. Make it a point to have regular physical exercise to keep your body in a healthy condition.

“May all my limbs, may all my senses be strong and controlled.”
(Upanishads)

“With strong and controlled bodies, with strong and controlled minds, let us pray to the gods.” (Upanishads)

14.05 Mental faith is only possible when the mind is strong. Strengthen your mind, strengthen your will. Strength of the mind has to be increased. We need the firm faith that this body of ours is a temple of the Divine, that we are spiritual entities. The weakling has no place at all in spiritual life, neither physically, mentally, or morally, he has no place in the world of the spirit.

“This Atman cannot be realized by the weak.”
(Mundaka Up.3.2.4)

14.06 If we have strength, then only can we get rid of fear. Drop all fear of others: “What will others say of me?” — “If I think this is right, what does it matter what others say or think of me and my doings?” Never give in on the vital point. Never lose ground on the vital point.

14.07 Let us devote every drop of blood, every heart-beat of our lives to this cause in some form or other. Live ideal and irreproachable lives as examples to others, not only for your own salvation.

Responsible behaviour

14.08 He in whose name we come is always judged according to the standard of our life. Hence we have tremendous responsibility, hence we have to conform to a certain standard. We cannot do what we like. We cannot allow ourselves every freedom. Our responsibil-

ity is very great, and we all should be fully conscious of this tremendous responsibility. Let us all pray for greater strength and greater purity, knowing that our responsibility is so great, and let us walk on with steady steps, having firm faith in ourselves. The conduct and attitude of all aspirants has to be one of reserve, of dignity—they must be dignified in everything. People must be made to feel once for all with whom they have to deal when they come in touch with you.

Fear

14.09 Sri Ramakrishna used to say, *“So long as you have this false shame and hatred and fear of society, you cannot make any spiritual progress.”*

14.10 And in the Upanishads we find, *“We want to attain to that which will make us fearless.”*

14.11 In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* there is a passage that says, *“Now Janaka you have attained to fearlessness.”* — And that fearlessness which is characteristic of the true Sadhaka can come only when we realize the Divine; and the more we approach Him, the more we become fearless. So our whole attitude should be one of responsibility, of dignity, of fearlessness and faith in ourselves as spiritual entities. We are fully responsible for the impression we make on people with our words and actions. That is why we all have to act in such a way that none can reproach us with anything undignified or unworthy of an aspirant. Here the greatest discrimination and discretion must be used by you all.

14.12 There is a passage that says, *“In enjoyment there is fear, in wealth there is the risk of losing it, in honour that of being dishonoured, in true renunciation alone is there fearlessness.”* —(Bharatrihari: *Vairagya Shatakam* 3)

14.13 And really speaking, without true renunciation and true dispassion for all things worldly and a worldly life, as such, no spiritual life is ever possible.

14.14 *“One who has not desisted from evil, one who has not calmed his mind, one who is not concentrated, can never know the truth, even if he gets knowledge.”* — This is the general rule of the Upanishads.

14.15 Swamiji very rightly says, *“Luther drove a nail into the coffin of Christianity. He took away religion and gave Christianity morality instead.”*

Purity, our real nature

14.16 We should be pure, because He is pure. We should be clean, because He is clean. And if you really were impure by nature this would never be possible. What is the necessity of our being pure at all? We should be pure, because purity is of the very nature of our soul. This purity is not anything that is adventitious or superimposed on our nature. And unless we become pure, it is not possible for us to see God. Purity must find its physical and mental expression in and through our whole life. Morals without God have to stop half-way. They can never really go to the extreme, can never really reach the goal.

14.17 Purity is part of our nature, therefore we should be moral. What we usually call impurity is only something superimposed, something adventitious, never an integral part of us. Herein lies the whole secret of spiritual life and of salvation.

14.18 We want to make that the centre of our consciousness, which is the eternal centre of all. Herein lies the explanation of purity and of being able to lead a perfectly pure and spotless life.

14.19 Give the lie to all the Churches, give the lie to the sinner-attitude! "Oh, I such a miserable sinner, what can I do? I am a sinner!" Give the lie to that by living an ideal, pure life, a life that is purer and more spotless than that of these sinners clinging to the pillar of their institutional religion, but never doing anything, except crying, "Oh, I am a sinner, I am so weak, what can I do?"

14.20 The utilitarian stressing morals for some purely utilitarian reason will never go to the point of leading a perfectly pure, irreproachable life. That is why we have to have morals, but along with morals the foundation of morals which is wholly lacking in all utilitarian schemes.

The state before creation

"There was neither existence, nor non-existence then."

14.21 We cannot describe the state before creation, or as we say, before 'projection', in words. It is beyond all thought and beyond all mind.

There was neither aught nor naught, nor air, nor sky, nor anything. What covered all, where rested all? Then death was not, nor deathlessness, nor change of night and day."

“That existed, that breath, covering, as it were, that God’s existence, but it did not begin to move. Gloom [tamas] existed, gloom hidden in gloom

“Now first arose desire, the primal seed of mind, sages, searching in their hearts, by wisdom, found the bond between existence and non-existence.”

“Who is it that really knows, of what material, and also why this manifold has been created? Do the gods know? No, because they are products of creation. They came into existence after creation. Who else can know it?”

“He from whom this creation has come into existence, He alone knows, and none else. And probably He does not know.”
—(Hymn of Creation, Rig-Veda 10.129)

14.22 It is all beyond human comprehension and can never be grasped by the intellect.

Maya and Reality

14.23 ‘X’ plus mind = the external world. ‘Y’ plus mind = we.

14.24 *“Tat Tvam Asi”* really speaking means that which is at the back of the outside world and that which is at the back of myself is one and the same, the One Indivisible, eternally Undivided, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss-Absolute. We see the something in the outside world, but we always see it coloured by the mind. We see the crystal, but we see it coloured by the red flower behind it. The individualized soul in its *real* nature, and the outside world in its *real* nature are eternally one and the same.

14.25 The bubble, losing its bubble-form, and the ocean, losing its ocean-form, are both one and the same water-substance, and this water-substance is the only reality we really possess. Neither the bubble nor the ocean is so. Everything else is ephemeral and fleeting, never forming an essential part of their nature.

14.26 Even our mind is Maya and nothing but Maya. And there comes a time for all sincere aspirants when ***this mind ceases to be, and there remains only the thing in itself.*** But what it is, none has ever been able to express in words.

14.27 Sankara says in his *Viveka-chudamani*, *“We cannot say it is Sat or Asat, existence or non-existence, or even a combination of both.”*

14.28 The forest consists of trees. But is the forest really only a

combination of trees, or is it something more? Is the ocean just the sum-total of waves and bubbles or a combination of them or is it something more? The whole forest is always something more than the number of its trees taken together. The whole ocean never transforms itself wholly into waves and bubbles. Evolution is only in one part, and never does the Whole become entirely transmuted.

14.29 Maya is to be understood as something that is, but that ceases to be on the dawn of true knowledge. But till then, it is a fact of our consciousness. It is not nothing. Personal Maya is related to cosmic Maya as a tree to a forest, as a wave to the ocean. Maya, Avidya, is not merely negative. It is not merely ignorance in the negative sense, but something positive, the nature of which cannot be described. Maya is a statement of fact, as Swamiji used to say. At one time it exists, at another time it ceases to be, but while you are in Maya you can never ask the question what Maya is. And when you are out of it, the question does not arise. We have to take Maya as a fact at a certain time, and neither existence nor non-existence can be predicated of it.

15 -- Wiesbaden, December 5th, 1933

The concept of freedom

15.01 The ideals of non-attachment and purity are associated with the Spiritual Being, and thus man comes to realize Divine Consciousness, which is beyond all multiplicity, in fact, beyond any form of being and non-being, Sat and Asat. In all scriptures we find the conception of freedom associated with the Divine, and freedom can never exist where there is no absolute purity and no absolute non-attachment. Freedom is beyond personal affection and beyond hatred, beyond attraction and beyond aversion. A person who has become free cannot be touched by any of the pairs of opposites, but always rests calmly in his own true being. We all associate Divinity with the ideas of purity, freedom, knowledge, fearlessness etc. etc. Man aspires to freedom, to fearlessness, to independence, to a state of security and stability. But first we must try to realize this ideal of purity, of sexlessness, of freedom, of fearlessness in our own life. Only through our own realization of the ideal can we rise to our true human stature. Only thus can the ideal ever become the real. The person who has no definite idea of the spiritual entity has no foundations for his morals, and if he at all possesses morals, they are, as it were,

hanging in the air. There is no rhyme or reason for them in his life. How wonderfully free are the Great Ones! Free from passion, free from attachment, free from fear! We too must become free from lust, from sex-consciousness, from anger, greed, jealousy, and all forms of covetousness, subtle and gross. We must rise above the cravings of the flesh, above our man-form or woman-form, to the pure heights of Divine Consciousness. And spiritual life is not merely moral life. It is something more. The great mistake Protestantism in its different forms committed was to put moral life in the place of spiritual life and thus to kill all spirituality. A merely moral or ethical code is insufficient for giving fearlessness and peace to the soul, for lifting it up beyond all temptations and insecurities.

Ethics, love and sacrifice in the lives of the Great Ones

15.02 In the lives of saints the ideals of morals and of spirituality are wonderfully blended, but Protestantism was not prepared to understand and recognize the example of such saintly lives, because it had lost the key to their meaning. A moral man is no spiritual man, but all spiritual men are always moral. This is the great point to note if one really wishes to understand spiritual life. We find in all true saints a wide sympathy that we miss in the utilitarian or merely moral man. Buddha attained to Nirvana, but he wished to share Nirvana with all others, so his prayer was, *"Let all misery come to me. Let all evil, let all troubles of the world come to me, but let others be free from them!"* — How he was prepared to save even poor animals with his life! How he saved the sheep which were to be sacrificed by offering his own body to the King! Buddha's heart melted at the sight of the suffering of our dumb brothers. He was one from whom all worldly attachment had passed away, who no longer had any worldly love or any worldly desire, who had given up wife and child for the sake of the world. This dynamic charity we find in all our saints. When Buddha went to the king to save the sheep, the king was very much astonished at his courage and love for all living beings, was at once converted and stopped the sacrifice. Buddha's dynamic charity saved the life of all those poor animals. Even before becoming a Buddha, he was fully conscious of his great message: *"I want to attain to Immortality and this Immortality I want to share with others."*

15.03 Such people are never alone, in however great a solitude they may happen to live. One day, somebody saw that Muhammad

was quite alone. He went and asked him, "Are you alone?" "No, I am not", was the answer, "I am in the company of God."

15.04 Once a Bedouin attacked Muhammad while he was all alone. "Who is going to save thee now, tell me?"— he cried. "God", came quietly the reply. Then the Bedouin's sword fell down from his hand. Muhammad took it up and said, "And who is going to save *thee* now?" "None!" "Well, then learn the lesson of love and mercy from me."

15.05 In all these great souls we witness the expression of a love that is not personal and that we find missing in all others. And this ideal of love is closely connected with Divine Love.

15.06 Sri Chaitanya had a great disciple whom he used to call his brother. His name was Nityananda. He used to go about singing the name of the Lord to the people. Now, in the city of Nadia, where they were working at that time, there were two brothers, great ruffians, who had become dangerous to the householders. In fact, they were rogues of the first water. They got angry at all this singing of the Holy Name and said, "Why do these fellows come making all this unpleasant noise? We shall teach them a lesson, we shall!" And the ruffians began throwing stones at them. Very soon the blood came trickling down, but Nityananda cried, "Brother, O Brother, it does not matter whether you have hurt me or not. Just take the name of the Lord, do!" Seeing this deep love for all beings, the ruffians were fully converted and began to lead saintly lives.

15.07 You find this spirit of love and sacrifice in all the Great Ones. Sri Ramakrishna imparted some instructions even on his last day, when he was suffering agonizing pain. A young man had come from some distance to see him and to receive spiritual instruction from him, and when Sri Ramakrishna's attendants wanted to prevent him from seeing the Master, Sri Ramakrishna ordered them to let him come in and gave him the desired instructions in spite of the tremendous suffering this meant to him.

15.08 In the *Bhagavatam* there is a story of a poisonous snake that lived in a pond and which Sri Krishna wanted to punish. He said to it, "Why art thou poisoning the water of this pond with thy venom?" The snake replied humbly, "Lord, what else can I do? It is thou who hast endowed me with venom, so I must secrete it. It is not my fault, but Thine."

Motive forces

15.09 The spiritual ideal is the surest support and the main-spring of all true morals, ethics, culture, etc. etc. But we should see that we become wide-awake and fully conscious of all our motives and the motive-forces that stand at the back of our thoughts and actions.

15.10 I do not know whether you have heard the story of a great Christian monk. It is very instructive. One day one of his brothers had been accused of having shaken hands with a woman, and was brought before the chapter. He pleaded that she had been a person of good reputation and of great purity and devotion. But this great monk who was presiding answered curtly, "Rain, no doubt, is good, and earth is good, yet mingled they form mud, which is not good. Similarly though the hands of men and women are both good, yet great evil may arise in thought and affection if they are carelessly brought together." This story can teach the aspirant a great lesson. Always learn to go to the very root of a matter and never stop at the first superficial impression an action or a thought gives you. Learn to become fully conscious under all circumstances and in all situations of life, and learn to recognize your own motives mercilessly, but without too much self-condemnation. You should sometimes criticize yourself severely, but this criticism must always be constructive, never merely destructive if it is to help you in your spiritual striving and evolution. The negative "I am a sinner, I am a sinner" attitude makes you a sinner, and a greater sinner from day to day, and takes you away from all true spirituality.

Never say you cannot find time

15.11 Never say you cannot find time for your practices. It is never true. One of our monks is a great expert in gardening and spends much of his time in the garden growing beautiful flowers to be offered in the shrine-room at the time of our different pujas. When he was one day scolded for not devoting enough time to his spiritual practices, he said he could not do so as the garden needed so much care that most of his time was taken up with working in it. Then he was told to uproot all those plants which had become old or did not yield good fruits, for then he would be able to find time for both, for his garden and his spiritual practices. No, the thing is this: our mind is so restless, in such a tension, that we imagine we have no time. We set

such a high value on outside cleaning, that we forget to clean the mind properly. Really we can do both.

15.12 We should be very careful not to forge new fetters for ourselves or others through passion. There are men and women who go on forging fetters for others and for themselves all their life, and they have to pay heavily in the end. There are men and women whose whole life is spent in making others free from all such fetters, and it is they who find love and bliss and peace and the fulfilment of life.

Seeing the Lord in all

“He who sees the same Atman in himself as well as in all others, he cannot hate anybody.”

15.13 But, you may remain indifferent. It is not necessary for you to love everybody in the beginning.

“Seeing the one Lord, equally present in all, he does not kill the Self by the self and attains to the highest goal.”

(Bhagavad-Gita)

15.14 And seeing the one Lord in all means that there cannot be any attraction, nor can there be any aversion, because he who has reached such a state, no longer sees the person, but only the Principle. That is why he is able to remain unaffected and to love all without loving anybody. He has wholly transcended the domain of personal affection, of personal likes and dislikes, and rests in the Atman alone.

16 -- Wiesbaden, December 6th, 1933

Never pray for worldly things

16.01 Sri Ramakrishna used to say, *“We should not ask God for the things of the world. Suppose he grants them. It may mean great trouble to us.”* — When we approach this great Boon-giver, we should never approach Him for worldly things connected with personal wishes and worldly prosperity or love. We may approach the Lord just for saving our souls from getting drowned in the ocean of worldliness and infatuation for worldly things. Even if we are unhappy, we rather adjust ourselves to our unhappiness and cling to our desires and loves than change our ways and come to Truth, even if a person asks us to do so and shows us the way to unchanging peace and bliss. We are so body-bound that we stress physical

enjoyment more than anything else and are not prepared to renounce it. Rather we go on clinging desperately to its different forms although we get nothing but kicks and blows again and again. Such is the tremendous power of the Lord's Maya.

The play-field of illusion

16.02 The Great Father or the Great Mother is witnessing the children at play. It is only when a child gets disgusted with its toys and childish occupations that the Lord really comes to it and draws it away from the play-field of illusion. Children play with sweets, with dolls, with soldiers, with houses and cars, and nothing can be done by the Lord, until they get tired of it all and turn away from it in utter disgust. God takes it as great fun. And then, one day, the child has become a little grown-up and cries, "What have I done with my life?" and the Lord says, "Yes, what have you done, my child? Who asked you to do it? Who asked you to go on playing indefinitely in such a foolish way? Who asked you to get hurt and entangled in your toys? Who? Who did it all?" And then very often it is already too late, and the child sits on the ruins of its shattered life and wails. We all have had many an opportunity to follow saner and better ways, but we clung to our particular toy and did not let go our hold. So we had to suffer, and shall have to suffer till we learn this one great lesson life teaches us again and again in innumerable ways. Just as most people try to achieve their worldly ambitions and ideal, we should strive for spiritual life and illumination, but this most people won't do. Just as we feed the body, we should also take food for our soul. Both the means are before us. And it depends solely on our own choice whether it shall be the worldly life or the spiritual life, whether slavery and fear, or freedom and perfect fearlessness.

16.03 We must strive to achieve something that is higher, that is not subject to change and decay. But we very often choose the path of Avidya [ignorance] willfully and deliberately, because we cling to the phantoms of physical enjoyment which we shall have to give up sooner or later. We all, one day, must let go the hold, and if we do not do this of our own free will, the toy will be torn away from us, and there will be great pain and in many cases a broken heart. For most people this is the only way in which they can be made to learn their lesson, but it is very painful and usually takes many lives. We should try to live a spiritual life, knowingly, consciously, deliberately, with great dedication and singleness of mind. This will of ours may be di-

rected towards the higher channels of life or the lower ones, just as we please. New tendencies of the mind have to be formed by all aspirants.

16.04 There is such a great void in the human heart and it tries to fill it with some beautiful doll, a male doll or a female doll, and then, one day, the doll breaks, and it turns round to find some substitute for that beautiful doll it was so fond of, or, in some rare cases, the heart breaks with the doll. This void can only be filled by the Divine, by our own true eternal Self, and not by anything else. No satisfaction can be found in the doll in the long run, for, one day, even the smallest child becomes a grown-up person.

16.05 We are just like cows tied to a post with a very long rope. The cows could graze and have a certain amount of freedom in their movements, but the silly animals just turn round and round the post, till the whole rope has become wound up, and they cannot even reach the grass at their feet. God gives a very long rope to man, but only in rare cases does man make the proper use of the rope. Mostly he entangles himself hopelessly in it, till he can scarcely move one way or the other. That is not God's fault though. Learn to take the whole responsibility always on your own shoulders. It is a great mistake to hold God responsible for all that happens to you. You forget everything else for a moment's pleasure and do not care to listen to what God has been telling man through all the ages.

16.06 The *Bhagavad-Gita* says:

"The Lord dwells in the hearts of all beings. Take refuge in Him with all thy heart, by His grace shalt thou attain infinite peace and blessedness."

"Thus has wisdom more profound than all profundities been declared to thee my Me. Reflecting over it fully, act as thou likest." (18.61-63)

Will-power

16.07 Spiritual life, if it means sublimation and purification of our feelings, means at the same time, developing our will-power and forcing the mind to take to the higher path. This will must be wholly directed towards the higher life. We find in the world tremendous will-power and concentration, but both are given a wrong direction and thus lead man into deeper and deeper darkness and ignorance. If we want to follow the spiritual life, we must rise above temptation,

and in order to do this, tremendous will-power is necessary, tremendous undauntedness and singleness of mind. If all the will-power you find in the world were directed along the right channels, this world of ours would immediately become a heaven.

16.08 The parasite ever remains a parasite because it can never have any independent existence. And instead of leading the spiritual life in right earnest, we wish to be parasites or to get some religion 'by proxy'.

Set the spiritual goal very clearly

16.09 We must set the spiritual goal very, very clearly before ourselves. If we are able to rouse tremendous enthusiasm in ourselves for the spiritual goal to be attained, then only shall we have the necessary energy to strive for it and do our utmost. In the world of the spirit you very often find people with a chaotic brain. They do not care to follow any definite clear-cut system and like to drift on the bottomless sea of their emotions and impulses. So they cannot attain anything, in fact, just as little as out-and-out worldly-minded people. No person with a muddled brain can have any success in the world, and much less so in the spiritual world. Settle once for all what you really want. Very often when we want to attain peace, we follow a path that can only end in restlessness and trouble.

16.10 There is a song by Raja Mohun Roy that says:—"*Relinquishing the abode of peace, you are just striving for peace. Is it possible for you to get it?*"

The Lord within our heart

16.11 God alone is the repository of all peace and blessedness. "*The Kingdom of Heaven is within you.*" — We should try to look within and find the Lord seated within our own heart. This body of ours is the best of all temples, the holiest of all temples. This is a conception we find stressed again and again in all our Scriptures. The highest temples of the Divine are the great prophets and seers. That is why they exert the greatest attraction. Those who have realized the Truth in their own souls alone can teach others the way to realization. The Lord is always at the back of our mind, at the back of our whole personality, and only if we pray with a fervent heart, the prayer will be heard, otherwise not. When we pray, we pray half-heartedly for different things of the world. Who cares to pray for the Lord and for renunciation and perfect dispassion? We should never think in

terms of happiness when praying. This is bartering, not praying. Happiness is no index for spiritual life. It is just like taking the mango of a tree that is reflected in water. Happiness is no proof whatever of spiritual progress or realization.

Long, regular training and glimpse of Truth

16.12 The lover, when dreaming of his beloved, imagines things that have no reality. The madman, too, imagines things. We must try to get a glimpse of the truth, but if such a glimpse comes unawares, and if we are not properly prepared for it through long and regular training, the reaction will be tremendous, and we may become unsettled for life, because we must first learn how to become fit for such glimpses, so that we can then make them our own for good.

The criterion of happiness

16.12b Never judge of a thing in terms of happiness. It is even far better to judge of it in terms of misery. Spiritual evolution brings great pain to the aspirant, not happiness. In the intermediate stage his life becomes very difficult. Then he has no longer any real interest in what he has, but he cannot yet obtain realization. It is still beyond his reach. It is just like hanging in mid-air without being able to get either down or up.

16.13 Very often when I get a thing I find that I never really wanted it. I may have been seeking it, but when I get it, I actually find the desire has vanished, and some other desire has taken its place. Many people mistake the true nature of their yearnings, giving them some worldly direction, whereas in reality no human yearning can ever find satisfaction in anything that is not permanent and unchanging, however we may try to deceive ourselves on this point. The void which is in each human heart can never be filled by anything that is temporal, that belongs to the phenomenal world, to the world of manifestation and change. In the world, no love, no affection, no possession, nothing can ever take away the terrible void in our heart. And if we are sincere and look at things in a dispassionate and merciless way, we must confess that we all carry this void within us and have never succeeded in filling it with the dolls and puppets and the glamour of the phenomenal world. We may persuade ourselves to have done so, but this can only be for a time, and then this old haunting void appears again and mostly in a more terrible and relentless form than before. So we can never avoid facing it one day. Only Truth

takes away all our wants, and as soon as all our wants are taken away, there is no void, but only fulfilment in every sense. Let Truth come and break our heart and let it break that of others. All that does not matter, because a puppet-show can never make anybody happy in the end. It may delude him for some time, but when the awakening comes, it is all the more terrible, the longer the delusion lasted. Never, as I said, think of such things and relations in terms of happiness, but try to see them in the light of Truth, without identifying yourself with what is non-permanent in you. People seek happiness outside, happiness in attributes, in forms, in the phenomenon, whereas it is only that which is your very own from all times and for all times which you can never lose. **Whatever I can lose in any way, can never mean true happiness to me.** We commit the mistake of looking at a certain span of time instead of looking at the whole. Temporary happiness there is, no doubt, in worldly things and worldly relations of human love and human affections, but temporary happiness can never mean happiness, rather it is the opposite of it.

16.14 There are other people who get a glimpse of Truth, but then go and commit the mistake of filling in the picture with their own unpurified imaginations.

16.15 If you give worldly things, your possessions decrease, if you give spiritual knowledge, your possessions go on increasing indefinitely.

The Test of Truth

16.16 The test of Truth is this: Whereas in the case of worldly things and worldly relations you will never get any ultimate satisfaction, in the case of spirituality and spiritual life you will get perfect satisfaction which is not dependent upon anything external. So our great sage Narada says, *"Realizing That one attains to one's hearts desire. And thus only does one become immortal. Thus only does one become full of Bliss."*

16.17 In the case of worldly things, once we get them, they always pall upon us and fall short of our expectation. They can never really satisfy us deep down in our souls. The seeker after Truth must be strong and undaunted enough to face Truth as It is, for It may shock him, It may break his heart, break all his worldly ties and affections and thoughts and aspirations. All our miseries and troubles are due to a false conception of ourselves. We want to cling to falsehood

and hug it to our breast. We want to cling to false human dolls, calling them our own. We want to love phantoms, we want to possess things which decay while we are still holding them in our hands.

You are the SELF

16.18 You are not a man, not a woman. Your Reality is ever beyond the pairs of opposites, ever beyond the dualism of sex. Because you desire to have contact with human love and human beings, you cannot realize Truth. Because you imagine you are a man or a woman or even a human being, you cannot realize Truth. You are none of these things. Most people are shocked when they are told this fact. No human love is true, because all human love clings to falsehood, to the fatal falsehood of personality. Initially you get a false conception of yourself, and once this initial mistake has been committed, you begin piling falsehood upon falsehood. There are innumerable false conceptions haunting your brain.

16.19 Sankaracharya wants to strike at the very root of these false notions. Let us have the desire to know our true nature, to know ourselves. Everywhere there is self-love. So naturally, spiritual striving is self-love too. Human love is self-love, but this form of self-love can never find any satisfaction, because deep down in his soul no human being is fully satisfied with the human love he gets. He may try to hide this truth from himself. He may push it into some dark corner of his subconscious mind. But still it is there, and he will recognize it if he is sincere and has the courage to uncover what he has been trying and trying to hide from himself and others. Love can only find satisfaction when it begins to love the true SELF. Christ's famous saying might be interpreted as "*Love thy neighbour as thy Self*" — This is what Christ meant, because this alone gives the ultimate reason why I should love my neighbour.

16.20 First you must find your real Self, and then you can love others. Do not try to love others before you have found your real Self, because such love will be blind and will do harm to you and to them. Such love is a fatal mistake that many people are inclined to make, even with the very best intentions. And this at once bars all spiritual progress. Before you get the realization of your own Self, all love for others is mere imagination, if not something worse. It is always and in every case self-deception. It is not love. Real love only comes with the vision of Truth. Everything before that may be done as discipline. Try to serve others to the best of your ability. Try to make yourself eli-

gible for Love by becoming selfless, but do not flatter yourself that by trying to do this you have come to know what love really is. And above all, do not sacrifice your ideal for anyone, whatever happens. Do not care for a broken heart. The moment your ideal is involved you must become hard, as adamant and as relentless as a stone. Never sacrifice your ideal for anyone, not for anything that belongs to the world of manifestation. If my parents, my wife, my children etc. etc., want me to take the wrong course, let their hearts break, because I am not called to sacrifice Truth to their selfish interests and to their selfish love. I do not want to give them that wrong happiness and increase their delusion. If anybody makes a demand because of which you have to give up spiritual life, never satisfy him, even if his heart should break. If the bond is snapped, all right, let it be snapped, even learn to face such possibilities in the case of your nearest and dearest. To-day there may still be the question of your striving being pleasant or unpleasant to others. Later on the day will come when others will have to accept your ideas or to reject them, causing thereby a definite breach. We cannot fulfill any demand by falling off from our ideal, even if such a demand comes from one of our nearest and dearest. In such cases all bonds must be snapped relentlessly without hesitation. *“Call none your father upon earth: for one is your Father who is in heaven”*, — as Christ said. All misplaced sentimentality must be uprooted, and your hearts must become as tender as the tenderest flower and as hard as the hardest adamant, as soon as the very principle of spiritual life is involved. Never sacrifice the highest for the sake of some temporal bond. This is the most fatal mistake an aspirant can commit, and the one for which he has to pay most dearly. It is a betrayal of God and nothing short of that. Learn to have the higher outlook in all such matters, however difficult this may be in the beginning.

17 -- Wiesbaden, December 7th, 1933

Whatever we consider Real absorbs us

17.01 It is very often very difficult to have a yearning heart in the beginning, and the reason is that God does not seem a reality to us. With most of us this body is our soul, and it is for the enjoyment of this body on the material plane —it need not necessarily be a very gross form of enjoyment— that we are anxious. Religion to most of us is something highly amateurish, a kind of fashion, just like so many

other fashions. But if some day through our spiritual striving God comes to be a reality, we feel that our whole being responds to that reality and longs for it alone. If the world is real to us, it absorbs our entire attention, if something else is real, that does so too. That which we take to be reality affects us, calls up feelings and desires in our mind, draws out our will, appeals to our intellect. In fact, our whole being responds to this reality. If we carefully study our own lives and those of others and then those of the saints we find a great difference. It is the so-called reality that affects the minds of both, but the reality is something very different to the saint from what it is to us and to other ordinary worldly persons. To us this world is real, to them the higher world alone is real. Their whole life is busy with this one idea, how to realize the Divine, how to make Him a living reality instead of an intellectual and rather vague concept. If we are able to appreciate what the saint calls reality, we can also appreciate why he is ever ready to lay down his life in the pursuit of his realization.

17.02 When we study the life of a Christ, a Buddha, a Sri Chaitanya, a Ramakrishna, we find that God to them all is the highest reality. A Hindu devotee's soul was once possessed by God, and as a result of this he could no longer see the world as others did. God can be compared with an evil spirit. Just as the evil spirit possesses human souls, so the soul can be possessed by the Divine too. Madmen live in a world of their own which is very real to them. Spiritual men live in a different world altogether, although, to us, they appear to live in our own world. The Divine Thought is the central thought of their lives, and they constantly think of this central thought and subordinate everything else to it.

17.03 When Swamiji [Swami Vivekananda] first came to Sri Ramakrishna, his first question was, "Sir, have you *seen* God? Can you show Him to me?" Till then none had been able to give him an affirmative answer. At once Sri Ramakrishna replied, "Yes, my boy, I have *seen* Him as I see you, only in a much clearer way, and if you want to, I can help you to see Him." Twelve long years of relentless strenuous spiritual discipline had gone before. Never forget that. And Sri Ramakrishna had never even known what sex was. For many months it had been Sri Ramakrishna's constant cry, "Mother, where art Thou? I am not yet blessed with a vision of Thee!"

17.04 You can take up any aspect of God that appeals to you most: The mother-aspect, the father-aspect, the child-aspect, the

friend-aspect, the comrade-aspect, the play-fellow-aspect, the lover-aspect etc. etc. Only make Him somehow your nearest and dearest. So there is a prayer that says:— *“Thou are our father, Thou art our mother, Thou art our friend, Thou are our comrade, Thou art our knowledge, Thou art our wealth, Thou art our all-in-all.*

17.05 The idea is to establish a close relationship with the ideal. And we should clearly note that this God is not merely personal, but impersonal too.

The Real

17.06 As I said, whatever we take to be real, whatever we call real, draws our whole being, absorbs our whole mind, attracts our whole feeling. And according to Vedanta nothing is real which does not remain unchanged under all circumstances. Real is that alone which was in the past, is in the present and will be in future without ever undergoing any change. Everything that changes or decays, undergoes evolution or involution, is unreal.

17.07 The lover is always disillusioned in the end, and this is not due to any inherent fault of his beloved. He lives in a world of his own romance and creation during the time of his infatuation, just as the madman lives in an imaginary world of his own which is real to him. When the romance breaks, things begin to appear in their true light, and disillusionment comes, but it is wrongly attributed to the object of love and to some fault inherent in it. Naturally, every object of love that is transient or subject to birth and death, is wrongly chosen, but we should blame *ourselves* and not the object for having done so. So long as one loves falsehood, one cannot get truth. Loving an unreality we cannot expect our love to prove something real in the end. So many people wail about their misfortunes and all the disappointments life has brought to them, but they never take the trouble to study whether their life was based on reality or not, whether they tried to erect a fine building on bad foundations or whether they first saw to it that the foundations were right and laid in the proper way.

The danger of the secularisation of religion

17.08 The greatest temptation in the course of spiritual life is to drag the ideal down to our own level and thereby to justify our action. There is a strong tendency to secularize the spiritual life which took such a fatal turn in Protestantism. We may have working ideals, but never should the ideal, as such, be dragged down. If we keep the

highest ideal intact, it always acts as a great corrective. Whenever we find we cannot reach the ideal, it is only honest on our part to confess our weakness, and not to drag the ideal down to suit our purpose or to serve as an excuse for not doing what we should do.

The great privilege of human birth

17.09 We should fully realize the greatness of the privilege that has been given us. Should we not make the best use of it? Should we not do our utmost to attain the goal? Three things are necessary, as Sankara says, a human birth, desire for liberation and the guru. It is rare grace to get them all, and everyone of us should try to attain to self-realization and not to waste his precious human birth.

17.10 If we want a brighter future, we must so act that we may enjoy the peace and blessedness we miss so much now. If we analyze our mind we find how many have been the glimpses of peace and calmness in our life, and how many have been the occasions on which we felt deep sorrow and trouble, what long dark nights and days of misery and trouble we have gone through. Even if we have no physical misery, we always feel a vacuum, a great sense of void within us. This can never be satisfied with anything sensuous or worldly or any outside relation.

17.11 If we really and whole-heartedly desire to reach the ocean we must follow some stream or other. We cannot reach it without following some main-stream. Breadth of vision we must have by all means, but this in no way means that we should lose in intensity. The Vedantin is no eclectic. Some definite path is to be taken up seriously. Some definite course is to be followed once for all if we want to achieve something and not remain mere weavers of words.

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Sri Ramakrishna on other paths and God-realization

From M's Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna
(translated from the Bengali Original)

SRI RAMAKRISHNA:— “One should not hate other schools of thought, neither those who follow them. The person who believes in a formless God as well as he who believes in Him with form, both are moving towards Him. The Jnani, the Yogi and the Bhakta, all are in search of Him. Those who follow the path of Jnana call Him Brahman. Yogis speak of Him as Atman-Paramatman. Bhaktas call Him

the Lord, — Bhagavan. There are devotees who think of the Lord as eternal Master and of themselves as the eternal servants.”

DEVOTEE:— “How to know that *all* paths are true?”

SRI RAMAKRISHNA:— “If one follows a path with single-minded devotion one reaches Him. Then one can learn all about other paths too. Just as when you have got to the terrace by some means or other, you may go down by the wooden staircase or by the staircase of bricks and mortar or with the help of a bamboo pole or with that of a simple rope. When the devotee receives His grace he comes to know everything. If one realizes Him, one can know everything. Somehow or other see that you have an audience with the rich landlord. You must make acquaintance with him, and then he himself will tell you all he possesses, how many garden-houses, how many water-tanks and how many government bonds.”

DEVOTEE:— “But how to receive His grace?”

SRI RAMAKRISHNA:— “One should always sing the name and the glory of the Lord, and one should give up all worldly thoughts as much as possible. Suppose just for cultivating some plot of land, you bring some water through a channel with great difficulty for irrigating it, but all the water continually flows out again through some rat-holes in the raised demarcation. Then all your labour will prove useless. It is all wasted.”

[Swami Y.: If we have all sorts of desires and allow our mind to busy itself with all sorts of worldly interests and things, there are 'rat-holes' in our head and heart, and then we shall never be able to achieve anything, whatever other practices we may be doing.]

SRI RAMAKRISHNA:— “When the mind becomes pure and is freed from worldly attachments and longings, one comes to have true yearning, and then alone will your prayers reach the Lord. No message can be sent if the telegraph-wire be broken or if there be any other interruption, some non-conductor etc. With a yearning heart I used to cry to the Lord in solitude. I used to cry saying, ‘Where is the Lord?’ Sometimes while crying I used to become unconscious and then I lost myself in the world of the spirit. How to have connection, how to have connection! Is it possible if there be a break in the wire? The mind must be completely free from all worldly attachments.

“The devotee should not entertain any worldly attachment or desire. If he has these desires and yearning for the things of the world in his mind, this would be devotion with attachment. If devotion be free from attachment it becomes unconditional. ‘I love you without caring whether you love me or not in return’— this is called unconditional devotion.

“The truth is, the Lord is to be loved, and where there is great love, there is vision.

“One comes to have the vision of God when there is this threefold attraction: the love that a chaste wife has for her husband, the love that a mother bears for her child, the love that a rich man has for his riches.”

March 11, 1882

SRI RAMAKRISHNA (*to Rakhal in Bhava—this is the first Bhava that Rakhal had*):— “Be calm, be calm, be calm.”

SRI RAMAKRISHNA (*talking to Mother*):— “Ma, everybody says, ‘My watch alone is correct’. The Christian, the Brahma, the Hindu, the Mahomedan, they all say, ‘My religion alone is true’. But in truth Ma, no watch seems to be correct. Who can know Thee fully? But of course one can reach Thee if one cries unto Thee with a yearning heart and receives Thy grace.

“Ma, once show me how the Christians pray to the Lord in their Church. If I get inside the church, people may criticize me, and suppose there would be some trouble! Suppose they do not allow me to enter the Kali-temple after I have been to the Christians! So show me how they worship from the door of their church.”

SRI RAMAKRISHNA:— “What does it matter if there are superstitions in other religions? There are mistakes in *all* religions. Everybody just thinks his watch is correct. It is enough if one has sincere and single-hearted yearning, if one has true love for the Divine. He is the indwelling spirit. He looks to the yearning of the heart.

“Suppose a father has a number of children. The bigger ones are able to address him as father, clearly saying, ‘father’ or ‘pappa’ or ‘daddy’. Now there is a very small child who can at the most say ‘fa’ or ‘pa’ or ‘da’; will the father get annoyed with those who can say only ‘fa’ or ‘pa’? The father knows they are all calling him, but they are not yet able to pronounce his name properly. To the father they are all his children.”

SRI RAMAKRISHNA:— “Until the mind is perfectly pure we cannot know Him. It is only when we conquer lust, anger and greed that the Lord’s mercy falls on us, and then comes the vision.”

[Swami Y.: Sri Ramakrishna repeats this time and again, time and again]

DEVOTEE:— “We are all sinners. What will happen to us?”

SRI RAMAKRISHNA:— “Take the name of the Lord, sing His glory, then all sin will fly away. This body of ours is like a tree on which the sins are like birds. You just take the name of the Lord, clapping your hands, and this clapping will scare all these birds away. All sins go away, when one just takes the name of the Lord and sings His glory.” ...

18 -- Wiesbaden, December 8th, 1933

Start from where you are

18.01 Many people want to begin from the topmost rung of the ladder, but that cannot be done. There are no long jumps in spiritual life, neither can anything be achieved without first finding out where one really stands. High philosophical flights and wonderful metaphysical dreams do not mean realization and by themselves never lead to realization, but only to abstract and superfine speculations that have no connection at all with real or practical life and do not change the life of such persons in any way. We should know where we stand and then proceed from there. We must begin as beginners and go on step by step. As an ideal, Monism may be all right for us, but when we come down to the practical aspects, we are dualists and shall remain dualists for a long time to come. I am always amused when I hear everybody talking in high terms about the Absolute, the Principle etc. etc., because in our case all these are nothing but empty speculations and frothy words and do not even mean that that particular person is fit for the Monistic path. Nobody who stands in Dualism, in whatever way this may be is a Monist, whether Monism appeals to him or not. Very often the mind of the modern man revolts at the idea of any particular discipline. It says, “Why should we busy ourselves with that? Haven’t we got enough drudgery in the world? So why should we follow practices which do not appeal to us? We want the Absolute, so what is the use of Japam, of attributes, of personal forms? Let us reach the Absolute. Let us worship the Divine

‘in spirit and in truth!’ All this, no doubt sounds very grand and highly spiritual, but as soon as we come down to realities, we find out it does not mean anything at all. Mostly such people are convinced dualists as far as their own actions in daily life go. To worship God ‘in spirit and in truth’ is all right. It is very good, but where is the beginner who can do so? This is the point. For most people it means just haziness, vagueness, hazy feeling and hazy thinking and acting in a way that has no connection at all with the Divine.

Disciplining the mind

18.02 Our mind is always out to deceive us and play tricks on us. Therefore we need strict daily discipline in everything we do.

18.03 How to begin, that is the point. How to get the necessary mental training, that is the problem before us. Different thoughts constantly keep cropping up in our mind. When we wish to make the mind calm, the mind becomes most disturbed. It revolts the very moment we try to concentrate. It suddenly takes the form of a mighty ocean in which we are in danger of being drowned. The whole surface of the mind is disturbed by mighty thought-waves, and the more we try to calm it, the mightier these become. So meditation makes us very tired in the beginning, instead of soothing us and bringing us light as it should.

18.04 As in the case of a horse-trainer, the trainer has to take great trouble to break the horse, similarly we must follow a certain definite system of discipline from which we should not deviate, to break the mind. In our spiritual discipline there must be great definiteness regarding everything. It won't do for us to put two legs in two different boats. We must learn to follow one course definitely without vacillating, to proceed step by step, if we wish to reach the goal one day.

Meditation. its conditions

18.05 What are the conditions for meditation?

18.06 For meditation and for all forms of spiritual practice, the first point is a **steady posture** [asana], usually a sitting posture. So Patañjali says, “*Any posture that is steady and pleasant.*” Squatting, no doubt, is very helpful, because the weight of the body is perfectly balanced in that posture, but it must be easy, otherwise it disturbs the mind of the person trying to attempt spiritual practices. For us, it is natural, but for many Western people it may take quite a lot of

practise, and some may not even be able to do it at all. Anyway for those who can, it is the best posture for spiritual practice.

18.07 The second most important point is **continenence**. Without Brahmacharya [continenence], there is no real spiritual life. When you allow the water to flow out through the rat-holes of the body by wasting it through sex and sensual desire, there will be no energy left for higher forms of spiritual practice. No use rowing a boat while leaving it tightly anchored near the shore. —Sri Ramakrishna said, "*What we want is communion with the Divine.*" —If there is any obstruction in the form of sexual desire or intercourse, communion is not possible. It is just like the case of the broken telegraph-wire. The electricity may be there, the operator may be there, but the communication will never reach its destination as long as the broken wire is not repaired, or as long as some obstructing non-conductor is not removed. —"*In heaven there is no marriage nor giving in marriage.*"

18.08 Our cravings of the flesh, our desires, usually stand in the way of real religion, not the sham-thing you ordinarily see in life, not the religion of the Sunday-crowd going to church and listening to a 'nice' sermon, talking of the spirit, but doing all they can for the flesh. This kind of thing may have proved highly profitable for the Church, but it is not Christ's teaching. The right mood is essential for all forms of spiritual practice, and without spiritual practice there can never be anything like spiritual life. The early Christians knew this perfectly well. So did many of the great mystics of the Middle Ages. But now the whole tradition seems to be lost in the West, and that is why the West is sinking to the level of the brute. Without ethical culture we can never come in close touch with the Divine. If after creating a perfect void, we are able to have the right thought, well and good. Then this kind of practice is very useful. But it is very dangerous for the beginner, because he does not succeed in having the right thought after creating the void, but just falls asleep or is dominated by his subconscious mind. In the case of the beginner there is always the great danger of his mind falling below the threshold of consciousness.

18.09 The mind is very much like an unruly horse which has to be broken. The horse acts in two ways: when we want to drive it, it either becomes dreadfully restive or it simply lies down and refuses to move. It does not wish to be steady. So in order to break this unruly horse of our mind a certain amount of ethical culture is necessary.

So long as the thought of sex and money is allowed to dominate it, it cannot be broken.

Virtues necessary for spiritual life

18.10 Which are the virtues to be practised in spiritual life?

18.11 Manu says, "*Ahimsa*", not to harbour any ill-feeling towards others whether they are good or bad. Realize that these ill-feelings but arise in the mind. With a disturbed mind it is not possible to have any form of concentration. It is not possible for us to have a concentrated mind and at the same time to cherish an evil thought against anybody. I am speaking of higher concentration.

18.12 "*Non-stealing*". This must never be taken in the gross sense only. Anything that we wish to possess at the cost of anybody else, anything that we get by unfair means, is stealing.

18.13 "*Purity*". Physical as well as mental purity is absolutely necessary. Sometimes we commit the mistake of stressing only physical purity, because it is so much more difficult to achieve true mental purity. There are many who satisfy themselves by taking baths, but who do not trouble themselves to have a pure mind. It is, however, impossible to concentrate a dirty mind on higher things. So long as there is the thought of a woman in man or of a man in woman, real higher concentration is out of question. There may not be any gross physical relations, but it is sex all the same, and so long as there is any form of sex, purity has not been achieved, and without purity having been achieved the higher spiritual life remains very far off.

18.14 "*Sense-control*". One who abandons himself to any form of sense-enjoyment cannot have any calmness or peace of mind. So he cannot do his practices well, however hard he may try. And there is this great point to note: Before the aspirant takes up the practice of asana [posture] he must already have gone through the whole of this ethical culture. So highly do the teachers of spiritual life value purity and non-attachment.

18.15 Now, let us sum up what we have to do and what we have to practise in spiritual life.

- 1) *We must practise a steady posture [asana];*
- 2) *We must calm the mind;*
- 3) *We should make salutations to all the teachers of the world or to one particular teacher if this appeals to us more.*

18.16 And what is necessary for really calming the mind has already been told. The mind can be calmed only by good and perfectly pure thoughts, only by holy thoughts, not connected with the body or the world.

18.17 The Upanishads say, "*We must worship the Lord with a calm mind.*" — So this calming of the mind is most important for all aspirants. In spiritual life especially we should follow the footsteps of the Great Ones.

18.18 We generally find it helpful to pray not only for our own spiritual welfare but also for that of others. Pray intensely for concentration, for calmness, for singleness of purpose, and for your own spiritual welfare as well as that of all other beings, so that they, too, may become pure and calm and concentrated and given to the higher life.

18.19 That is why Swamiji [Swami Vivekananda] taught, "*Immediately after sitting for meditation, send thoughts of love South, East, North, West, to all creatures.*" — You will find this immensely helpful.

18.20 As I said, during all our prayers we should also pray for the good of others. This sort of prayer, if done with a certain amount of concentration, brings to us in a general way a feeling of love for our fellow-beings who are struggling for the Higher Life and passing through great anguish and difficulties. The expansion of the soul is very essential for truly calming the mind and concentrating it on Divine things.

18.21 There are some people who find rhythmic breathing very helpful. You see, mind and breath are always interrelated and always act on each other. While doing Pranayama the proportion should be 1:4:2, but mere breath is not enough. If it were so, the foot-ball bladder would be the greatest of all Yogis of the world. Along with this breath we must have the intense thought of overwhelming purity. "*Everything is purity, I myself am purity, I am purity.*" Give strong suggestions to your mind. Inhale purity, exhale purity, fill yourself with purity. Inhale calmness, exhale calmness, fill yourself wholly with calmness. Inhale peace, exhale peace, fill yourself wholly with peace. Inhale peace, exhale all mental disturbance. Inhale dispassion and renunciation, exhale all attachment, passion and desire. Inhale purity, exhale all that is impure in your body and your mind. Inhale strength, exhale all weakness and fear. Go on giv-

ing these intense suggestions to your mind again and again before coming to your real practices.

Thinking of the Divine

18.22 What next?

18.23 After that, the thought of the Divine must be taken up. Where to think of the Divine? Where to have the centre of one's consciousness? Either in the head or in the heart. These two centres are safe for everybody. Never should a centre below the heart be taken. Here instructions can be imparted only to individuals—because here they differ from one another—but both head and heart are always safe. If we do not consciously raise the nervous current at least up to the level corresponding more or less to the place of the physical heart, no spiritual meditation becomes possible. This conscious raising of one's nervous currents leads one beyond all sensual temptations and establishes one firmly in moral and ethical culture. For very dry and over-intellectual people it is advisable to take the heart. For emotional people, the heart-centre is very dangerous and should be avoided.

18.24 Think intensely of the particular centre and imagine it to be a centre of Divine Consciousness. Have the thought that the Divine Consciousness that is within you is also outside, part and parcel of a mighty consciousness which is undivided and indivisible.

18.25 In the beginning you may think of it as light, but really speaking what is meant is the light of intelligence, i.e., the Divine Light, and this Divine Light which is in me pervades at the same time the whole universe and is one and eternally indivisible. This body of ours is like a temple of Brahman, and, remember, *each* body is like a temple of Brahman!

18.26 Having done all this, try to merge your consciousness in the Divine Consciousness as in the case of the salt-dolls getting merged in the sea. You know the parable of Sri Ramakrishna. This body-consciousness stands in the way, and as soon as we try to merge it in Divine Consciousness we get the idea that the soul is not the body.

18.27 Meditations should not be focussed on the void. There should be no creating of a void in the beginner. This is very dangerous. Meditations must have some definite positive spiritual content. Those who find meditation on the formless too abstract should cen-

tre their feelings on some holy form. This is very effective in two ways: it leads them away from their too personal affections and aversions and, at the same time, intensifies their feelings in a good sense, makes them more definite and leads them on to the light of the spirit. If ever any picture or any person you used to love or hate troubles you, set a very vivid picture of the holy form you have chosen, of your ishtam, against that picture and the feeling you have for your ishtam against the feeling you have for that person, be it affection or aversion. Vivid pictures and memories must be counteracted by vivid pictures, feelings by stronger and purer feelings.

Sublimation--learn to think in terms of soul

18.28 There is too little attempt at sublimation. We must learn to think in terms of the soul. Never stress the body-aspect. Never think of yourself as a man or a woman. It is very necessary and very helpful to deny the body as much as possible. Sublimation is of the greatest importance. — Think intensely, *"I am not a man, I am not a woman. I am not even a human being."*

18.29 Repeat all these grand passages from Sankara's works. He says,

*"I am neither a human being, nor a god, nor a demi-god.
I am neither a Brahmin, nor a Kshatriya, nor a Vaishya, nor
a Sudra.
I am neither a student, nor a householder nor a
forest-dweller nor a monk.
I am the Self, the infinite Consciousness.*

(Hastamalaka Stotra 2)

*"I am neither the mind nor the intellect, nor the ego, nor the
mind-stuff.
I am neither the senses of hearing, taste, smell, touch or
sight, nor am I earth, fire or air.
I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss
Absolute,
I am the Self, I am the Self."*

(Nirvana-shatakam 1)

*"I am neither male nor female nor neuter.
I am the Beneficent Being, the Light Supreme."*

18.30 Just blast this rotten personality with these grand passages from Sankara by bombarding it with them at the time of medi-

tation. It must be blasted, and if it does not go, nothing can be achieved.

18.31 Go on repeating, *"I am He, I am He"*.

"I am neither the body nor the senses, neither the mind, nor the ego,

neither the vital energy nor the intellect.

Husband, wife, child, wealth or prosperity are free from me.

I am the Witness, the Eternal Indwelling Spirit, the Being Beneficent."

"I am the light of the Atman, the Light that is inside, the Light that is outside, the Light that is the inner Self.

I am the Supreme Being, the Light of all lights, the Light self-existent."

18.32 All these ideas are always associated with Mahadeva [Shiva] the Great White God of Renunciation, of Purity, of Dispassion, Who has always been the Ultimate Ideal of spiritual men in India.

"I am the Being Resplendent, and none else.

I am Brahman, not subject to misery.

I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute, eternally free by nature." (Sankara)

18.33 And then there is the beautiful prayer in the Upanishads:—

"May my body become pure. May I be free from impurity and evil. May I realize myself as the Light Divine. May my mind become pure. May I be free from impurity and evil. May I realize myself as the Light Divine. May my soul become pure. May I be free from impurity and evil. May I realize myself as the Light Divine."

Meditations on Formless

18.34 Different forms of meditation without human form should also be practised:—

(1) *The aspirant imagines he is a fish swimming in the one un-*

divided and eternally indivisible ocean of Existence, Knowledge, Bliss, without any obstruction whatsoever.

(2) *The aspirant imagines he is a bird flying in the infinite sky without anything to stand in its way anywhere.*

(3) *The aspirant is like a full pot immersed in water. Water inside and outside.*

(4) *The aspirant is like an empty pot floating in ether. Ether inside and outside.*

(5) *The aspirant imagines himself to be a point of self-conscious light, immersed in the one indivisible Ocean of Light.*

18.35 You identify yourself with the point of light, then you feel it to be part of an infinite sphere of light, and after that everything becomes just light everywhere. Nothing but light is left. Either make this point of light expand or merge it or let it move wherever it goes, because wherever it goes, there is the one infinite light. Try to expand during the time of your meditation. Keep your body-consciousness hanging on a peg, as it were, at least for a time.

False conceptions, bubble-relations

Thus you raise counter-currents against all your false conceptions and feelings which lie at the root of all your troubles. All such ideas as 'I am So-and-So, I am a husband, a wife, a child, a lover etc., etc.' come from this mistaken identification with what is non-self. Really speaking worldly love is nothing very grand. Association with others in bodies is nothing very fine. Learn to be realistic.

18.36 If one follows such a path, it is just like being a yeast-cell which goes on dividing and dividing itself, but never becomes big.

18.37 The impulse of creation remains. It is the same impulse which leads to sex and physical creation on the animal plane, which leads us to the highest on the spiritual plane. The man, forgetting the real background of his manhood, goes and associates with the bubble of a woman-form, feeling himself to be a man-bubble. So bubbles merrily associate with bubbles. Yeast-cells go on dividing themselves eternally and never become big.

18.38 All these relations based on the body are bosh and nonsense. "Oh, I have been longing for you all my life. You are the star of my life." All nonsense! Afterwards, when all is over, when your body is satiated with enjoyment, each goes again his own way. Inwardly we all remain strangers, however hard we may try to deceive our-

selves on this point. Never can our void be filled by a man-bubble or a woman-bubble, not by any bubble-star, by anyone who has always been “my life”. All this sounds very grand and romantic, but there is no ultimate truth in it. To the child, the dolls are something very real. It loves them and caresses them and for a time feels very happy in the company of its dolls. Then, one day, it has lost all interest in them and sees them merely as absurd-looking, shabby dolls, hardly being able to understand how it could have cared for them so much. This happens to the grown-up man-child or woman-child also, sooner or later, after many lives, or in this life. But to all, this awakening comes one day, and in the beginning this means terrible pain and misery.

19 -- Wiesbaden, December 9th, 1933

(Continuation of No.18)

Bubble-relations

19.01 All should think of themselves as parts of an infinite Cosmic Existence.

19.02 If we find this too hard, we need not follow the path of the formless. We can also follow the path of the devotee, taking up some holy form. For many people the path of the formless is too difficult the moment they come down to the practical side. Taking high flights in imagination does not mean anything. Mere soaring has no practical value, and the out-and-out Dualist who has realized something is far better than the intellectual Monist who just soars in his vague speculations, but never realizes anything.

19.03 Ordinarily, in all our human relations, we commit the mistake that we wish to take up direct connections with others. We ourselves, as bubbles, try to come into touch with other bubbles. Two bubbles drifting on the ocean just come close to each other through the action of the waves, but they think there should be some direct connection between them and commit the mistake of their life. The same action that has brought them together, will, one day, tear them apart, never to meet again. And this always means untold misery and will always happen again, so long as we human fools try to come in touch with another bubble, instead of thinking of the ocean alone and being in touch with all through the ocean, without really being in touch with anyone. All bubbles burst sooner or later. So there can be no stability in any bubble-relation. We should do away with vague ro-

mance and childish dreams and see things as they are. We should cease to be emotional cowards covering the rotting carcass with fragrant flowers and going in for all sorts of absurd make-believe.

19.04 In worldly life the Infinite has no place. We are so self-centred and so absurdly bent on our bubble-relations that we just push It aside and cling to falsehood with desperate doggedness. For all forms of spiritual practice, the most important thing we need is a correct and dispassionate outlook about ourselves and others, for then alone is it possible for us to have a definite goal without constantly being tossed about on the waves of our irrational and body-bound emotions and impulses.

19.05 Really speaking, as bodies, we are nothing. And so long as we believe and feel ourselves to be bodies only, the question of spiritual life does not arise at all. Then drink and be merry. But this is not the truth. This world is not the only place for our existence. Therefore it becomes incumbent on us to revise this body-idea about ourselves and others. If it is found to be wrong, then our whole attitude towards life will have to be changed.

Atman--God--Creation in Hindu Philosophy

19.06 In all the different schools of Hindu philosophy, especially in the Advaita School, we find the conception of the Atman as a spiritual entity that is not dependent on anything and that is not created and does not create. God, as Creator, is not the highest in any of our schools of thought. All schools hold that the mind is matter and that the soul is separate from and independent of the mind, although associated with it in some of its moods.

Monism -- Dualism: Begin from where you stand

19.07 We must begin somewhere. There is the ladder, and each one of us must find out first where he actually stands, not where his thoughts soar when he happens to be in a good mood, for it is from there that he must proceed. His spiritual life can only be begun from that point, never from any higher point. We must know where we stand and where to begin, and then proceed.

19.08 Monism, no doubt, may serve as the background for all, but Monism cannot be reached without passing through the different intermediate stages. One in a million, perhaps, can take up the Monistic path from the very beginning. *"Greater is their trouble whose minds are set on the unmanifest, for the goal of the unmanifest is*

very hard to reach for embodied beings”, says the *Bhagavad-Gita*.—A good Dualist is infinitely better than an intellectual Monist who, at the same time, is nothing but an out-and-out Dualist in daily life. Never deceive yourself on that point.— And then the *Gita* goes on, “*But those who worship Me, resigning all actions in Me, regarding Me as the Supreme Goal, meditating on Me with single-minded Yoga, for these whose mind is set on Me, verily, I become ere long the Saviour out of the ocean of mortal existence.*”

Creation--Preservation--and Destruction

19.09 You in the West try to detach creation from destruction, the God of Creation from the God of Destruction, and try to stress creation and preservation only. It is very wrong to make such an attempt at detaching these three aspects, which are eternally inseparable. If your God creates at all, it is He, too, Who preserves, and He again Who destroys. A synthetic view is very necessary for the devotee if he wishes to progress. The devotee who only wants the God of Creation or Preservation is a pleasure-seeker, but no devotee. What he really wants, is worldly pleasure, infinitely prolonged and made safe against all misfortunes.

19.10 We with our inordinate clinging to life and its phenomena are mortally afraid of the destructive aspect of God. We must go beyond the creative aspect and beyond the aspect of preservation as well as that of destruction if we wish to find peace and attain to illumination.

19.11 Once one of our Swamis was asked by one of his students, “But, Swami, what do you mean by telling us to control the senses! When the senses are fully controlled, then what is left of life?” The Swami had been talking of the necessity of sense-control. Yes, if you take that to be life, then what is left indeed!

“Brahman is that out of which all this comes into being, in which it lives and to which it goes back after dissolution.”
(*Upanishads*)

Attitude re Death

19.12 Death is quite as real as life. Destruction is quite as real as creation. Why not face both? Why stress creation, why love creation if you do not care to have destruction also? Why cling to life if you do not welcome death also? Either have no attachment to the phenomenon or take both gladly.

19.13 *“Do not court death; neither court life.”* — This is the proper attitude for the real seeker after Truth. That is the real spiritual attitude. By merely ending life we do not attain anything great. By clinging to life we remain the slaves of life. So both attitudes are wrong and should be got rid of.

19.14 Really if we die, and die we must, let us at least not die as miserable slaves bound to ‘Woman and Gold’. Let us die as free men. Let us die heroically, not as cowards constantly afraid of this phenomenon. Let us have attained fearlessness in every respect before we die. Let us become men before we die. Let us face death with a smiling countenance. Before we die we should have thrown overboard all these petty attachments of ours and realized our true being.

Happiness and misery

19.15 *“Happiness and misery come by turns,”* — say our Scriptures. Creation and destruction come by turns. If you take one side of a certain pair of opposites you must take the other side also. There is no such thing as just getting one. One always comes after the other. Pain comes after pleasure. Destruction comes after creation. They all go round like a wheel without ever coming to any stop so long as we do not transcend this phenomenon and refuse to take either pleasure or pain.

19.16 All these relations of ours are like so many will-o'-the-wisps leading us away from the true path until we sink in the morass of our desires and lose our manhood. There is no such thing as a direct relation between one bubble and another.

19.17 Misery can only come by a false conception of ourselves, by clinging to our bodies and personalities, by trying to possess shadows. Sometimes we find the shadow to be a shadow, and then comes depression and misery. We can always trace all our miseries back to our false conceptions of ourselves and of others. So long as we think of ourselves as men and women, there cannot be any truth.

“Blessed is misery to those who come to have a higher ideal of life.” (Swami Vivekananda)

The false dream-personality

19.18 Forgetting our true nature, we very often dream false dreams, but false dreams can never bring truth, and very often when we find that the dream has been false we become broken-hearted,

because we even cling to our false conceptions. Then comes the dreadful lightning-flash of Truth and brings us untold misery.

19.19 You have had so many false dreams in your past life. You have so often taken the mirage to be real. Do you not see how often you have been living in a fool's paradise, clinging to some other false personality, making emotional castles in the air, dreaming of a love which does not exist? Very often as an effect of disillusionment, life all of a sudden becomes a void. We have to remove this void.

19.20 The Western ideal of life is a false dream. Sooner or later disillusionment will come for the West, and then the awakening will be dreadful.

19.21 It should be our goal in life to rid ourselves of this false dream-personality and to regain our soul. There is not a single human being that belongs to us. Father, mother, brothers and sisters, wife, child, none of them is ours, and they can never be ours. But generally we must get no end of kicks and blows in the course of our different lives to learn this lesson. And then one day we realize that IT alone can be relied upon, and, what is more, that we are IT.

19.22 The first step is to attain a right conception of ourselves. Then only the question of spiritual life arises.

19.23 We must only have relationship with others through the Divine, and only because we want to have direct relations with others, all this misery comes again and again.

19.24 It is our task to adjust all our relations in such a manner that no relations, except those through the Divine, are left in our life. Otherwise misery and misfortune will come again and again, and we shall not be able to grow, because we cannot grow as long as we do not let go our hold on falsehood. Never cling to any other human being. Neither make him your slave, nor ever become his. Gain your own eternal freedom and help him in gaining his. This is the only possible attitude in spiritual life. There is no other. You cannot have the cake and eat it too!

20 -- Wiesbaden, December 10th, 1933

Practise, even when disturbed

20.01 Because our mind is so full of tension and disturbances, of unsteadiness and different desires and impulses we need spiritual practice more than anything else. Never say, "Oh, to-day my mind is

so terribly disturbed, to-day I cannot go in for any spiritual practice. I shall have to wait till my mind grows a little calmer, or till there are less disturbances outside." Such an idea is a fallacy, because if we wait for the day on which there won't be any disturbances, you might just as well wait for the day on which there will be no wave on the whole ocean.

20.02 Our meditations will soothe the nerves, calm our mind and give us steadiness and purpose in all we do. Then only shall we begin really to care for spiritual food. Till then everything is just drudgery, but we must pass through this drudgery first. Only when we feel this craving for spiritual food, do we know that spiritual life has really begun for us. So long as there is not this strong craving for spiritual things, it has not yet begun, even if there be a certain liking for it, even if we feel ourselves attracted by the spiritual ideal in some of our saner and less sense-bound moments. And once this craving has really begun, as a result of it, some day we shall get a glimpse of the truth, and this again creates in us a real and lasting taste for spiritual life, so that renunciation becomes something pleasurable.

The Goal and after

20.03 God-realization is the goal, and after that, to work with God-realization for all others, for then alone work becomes perfect and does not bring with it any danger for ourselves and others. We must first know that which is called Advaita, and in connection with that we shall have to lead a spiritual life in practice, not only in theory. Wonderful flights of imagination and speculations do not count. The greatest philosophical system or idea does not count. It is just nowhere, if our life has not become completely transformed by it. Devote more time to spiritual practices than to philosophy and to work. What the perfected soul does is the perfect way, but we, at present have to imitate it, doing all this in a more or less strained, artificial way in the beginning. This naturally means great tension and strain for us for a time. Do not place the cart before the horse. The perfect man is able to help others and to work without attachment, but we must first eliminate attachment before we may risk doing this. A little working-knowledge of Advaita and spiritual life should, however, be there, otherwise the practices tend to become mechanical and bereft of meaning.

20.04 Unless you have passed through a certain amount of strict discipline, both physical and mental, you cannot even grasp the

Truth, because then you have not yet attained to the sublimation of your unpurified desires. And what can you achieve in spiritual life without sublimation and purification? Just nothing. To most people, physical enjoyment becomes the goal of life, and most people do not lead a sexually pure life, so unless we regularly train our mind and our body, we can never escape being influenced by them and by their vitiating thoughts and thus cannot reach the goal, neither now or later.

20.05 All true spiritual experiences belong to the fourth state. We must first go beyond the waking state, the dream-state and the state of deep sleep for attaining to realization.

20.06 Once Swami Turiyananda attained a very high Yogic state during which he did not sleep at all for many months on end without feeling in the least tired. It was very wonderful to see him. Such a sleeplessness is very different from ordinary sleeplessness which makes you feel irritable and exhausted. This kind of sleeplessness is a very high state of realization during which neither the body nor the mind need any sleep because they get the necessary cosmic energy without it.

Be on your guard

20.07 In the Upanishads there is a passage that says, *“Let only those works be done by thee that are free from blemish, and not others.”*

20.08 Narada, the great sage, says, *“Shun by every possible means the company of the wicked, for it will only breed in you desire and anger, delusion and forgetfulness, unreason and death. These grow in the company of the wicked as the tiny ripple swells into a wave.”*

20.09 Never be careless about the company you allow yourself to be in or about the talks you allow yourself to listen to. All this has a very bad effect on the aspirant if he is not sufficiently on his guard. Nothing can be achieved in spiritual life without constantly being on one’s guard so as not to take in bad food through *any* of the sense-organs. This ‘bad food’ should not be taken in the literal sense only. It is not only the food that I eat which must be pure in spiritual life. People are so crude in all their notions about these things. There are some terrible fools who eat pure food and shudder at the idea of impure food like meat etc. etc., but who do not mind taking in all sorts

of filth and dirt through their other sense-organs. It is better to eat impure food and to be very careful about the food one allows the eyes, the ears, the smell, and touch to take in, than being over-scrupulous about meat-eating and all the more careless and easy-going about the company one allows oneself to be in or the things one allows oneself to read or to see. Real purity belongs more to the mind than to the body. If the mind is perfectly pure, the body is pure too. Without an impure thought, there can never be any impure action. So do not put the horse before the cart. Never.

20.10 If we depend on the Divine alone, He comes to our aid. He prevents all impurity. But if we do what we please, if we are careless in our ways, we come to grief. Life's mission can be accomplished only through hard struggle. We must be prepared to pay the price and not shirk those spiritual duties we may find unpleasant or too hard.

20.11 Learn to be on your guard and wide-awake every moment of your life. If you are not wide-awake, you won't be able to see the dangers, and then you will grow careless and come to grief. The thoughts of a person who does not lead a perfectly pure life have tremendous influence if one does not know how to neutralize them and how to throw them out again. And only if you are wide-awake, you will be able to recognize the subtler vibrations of such people. Otherwise they will just appear harmless to you, and then, one day, you are bound to have a nice fall.

21 -- Wiesbaden, December 11th, 1933

Sri Ramakrishna on "Good and Evil"

From M's Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna
(Translated from the Bengali Original)

DEVOTEE:— "Why is it that evil thoughts arise in the mind?"

SRI RAMAKRISHNA:— "In His world we find such a diversity. He has made good men and He has also made bad men. Some He gives good tendencies and others bad tendencies."

DEVOTEE:— "Then we are not responsible for our sins?"

SRI RAMAKRISHNA:— "You must remember that this is also God's Law that if you commit sin you must take the consequence also. If you take chilli, do you not feel the burning sensation? Mathur

Babu, during his youth did many bad and impure things, and therefore before the time of his death he suffered from many ailments. During the time of one's youth one cannot reap all the consequences of one's impure deeds."

DEVOTEE:— "Sir, why has He created evil men?"

SRI RAMAKRISHNA:— "His will, His play. In His Maya we see both, good and evil. There is need for darkness, too, so that the glory of the light shall manifest all the more. He has given us lust, anger, greed, all these bad things, but why? So that He may make great men out of us. If one control's one's senses, one become great. And what cannot the man of sense-control achieve! Through the Lord's grace he comes to have even Divine realization!

"The Lord has made all sorts of things, good and bad. There are good trees and poisonous trees. There are weeds too. Among animals also we find some are good and some are bad, — the tiger, the lion, the snake and all these!"

* * * * *

Comments by Swami Yatiswarananda:

21.01 You see, Sri Ramakrishna hints at the truth that it is not possible to find a satisfactory explanation for good and evil, so long as we remain on the phenomenal plane, the plane of gross and subtle manifestation. But it is possible to transcend them both, to go beyond both good and evil and beyond the whole domain of manifestation and reach Truth as It is. No man who does not lead a perfectly pure life in body and in thought can ever reach such a state though. Without strict discipline and sense-control in every respect, the problem of good and evil and their why and wherefrom can never be solved, and we just go on groping about in the dark, helpless, growing more and more bewildered by what life brings to us. That is why Buddha never wished to give any metaphysical explanations about God etc., to his disciples. The impure mind can never grasp any Truth about the Divine, so it is useless to tell impure minds the truth which they cannot grasp. Without previous purification all such discussions are useless and simply serve to while away the time. Buddha said, "*When the house is on fire, do you first inquire into the origin of that fire or do you run and extinguish it first?*" —Our task is to get out of this whirlpool somehow or other, not to go into deep metaphysical speculations about the Ultimate Truth and the reason of

good and evil. Both are there. So we have to face them, whether we know their reason or not, and the only way of facing them is to transcend both good and evil and reach a state where both are not. Empty discussions about good and evil and why God created them are useless and lead nowhere. This Sri Ramakrishna has shown again and again, and we should try to realize Truth, not discuss problems belonging to the phenomenal plane or to raise wonderful philosophical structures which, after all, do not mean anything as they do not transform our life.

21.02 You see, it is this: There is a time when good and evil exist for the spiritual man and there is a time when both good and evil no longer exist in any form, but there can never be a time when good alone exists. You cannot just take one side of a pair of opposites and refuse to take the other also. So long as you try to do this, you will never find a satisfactory solution.

* * * * *

The Divine in you makes you pray

21.03 To the extent we are pure, we feel peace. To the extent we are selfless, we feel an expansion of the soul. To the extent we are truly dispassionate and non-attached, we become free. To-day our task is to drive the good thought deep into the mind, so that the whole mind may become coloured by it. The whole difficulty for the beginner is to colour the whole mind with the Divine idea.

21.04 Really speaking, it is the Divine in us that makes us pray. It is the first cause of our prayer and of our turning to It. Our true self is eternally within us and we follow Its promptings when we begin to pray sincerely and intensely. It is not that we choose to pray. And the Divine we pray to are we ourselves, i.e. that which is the Self in us, not any of the upadhis, the limiting adjuncts, nothing that belongs to the body or the mind.

How to realize that you are the non-evolving Spirit

21.05 There is such a thing as evolution of matter, but there is no such thing absolutely as evolution of the spirit.

“Of that being which is ever unborn, birth is predicated by some, but it is impossible that the unborn and the immortal could ever partake of the mortal. The immortal does not become mortal, or vice versa; for in no way is it possible that a

*thing can be changed into something quite the opposite.”
(Gaudapada)*

21.06 There is no such thing as evolution seen from the standpoint of the Self. Evolution belongs to the relative plane of Maya alone. I do not evolve into my own eternal Self. It is there all the time. It neither undergoes evolution nor involution. It **imagines** Itself to do this, but It never actually does. You are always the witness of your own actions and of your own mentation.

21.07 Make the body finer, make the mind finer, make the heart more non-attached and purer. Practice strict, unbroken continence in deed and in thought. Avoid all association with worldly-minded people, then you build up a better mental body which will be a great help to you in your spiritual struggle. Company, association, plays a great part. Never associate freely with persons of the other sex, even if they seem to be pure. If you do, there will never be any progress for you, nor will you ever be able to eliminate and efface old impure impressions. Then everything just becomes a vicious circle and nothing more. So be constantly on your guard.

21.08 The body has to be made rhythmic, the mind has to be made rhythmic, and the building up of a purer mind is the most difficult task in spiritual life. Stress Brahmacharya, continence, constantly. Lead a perfectly pure life, avoid all association with the other sex, even in thought. Be very careful about your company, even about that of your own sex, because a person of your own sex who does not lead a pure life or mixes with immoral people, brings their subtle vibrations also to you, and these always affect your mind. Maybe you are not yet sensitive enough to feel this, but subconsciously they always do. Never believe you can progress if you are not on your guard. We need continence in thought, word and deed to make this body and mind very subtle and sensitive instruments of the Self. We must make them cleaner and cleaner, so that they can give better reflections of the Truth. Your whole nerve-current must change. It must be made to flow upward. Your body must change. Your mind must change. It is not an easy task at all.

Brahmacharya

21.09 That Brahmacharya [continence] is harmful to the body, all that is nonsense. The Western world has not become so nervous through lack of incontinence. Everywhere you come across these

nervous wrecks, men and women, and they have not become so by leading too pure a life. In the case of a person who leads a perfectly pure life, the nerves become much stronger. If you lead a very chaste life, you build up an exceptionally strong body. The purer you become mentally, the purer you become physically also. To the extent we lead a purer and purer life, this life finds its expression in the face too. You can always tell what kind of life a person is leading by studying his face, once you have developed the capacity of reading it. Continence must be very much stressed. It removes all the base fibres from the face. Mentally you feel perfectly fresh and elastic. Mentally you feel young if you are continent. Here you see so many people who have a lewd look on their faces. Sometimes they hurt me when I pass them in the street. There is such a lot of sexual perversity in all these faces. You can tell at a distance. The person leading a pure life always has a look of straightforwardness and simplicity, a great personal charm of a very special kind. Purity is the very root of all forms of spiritual life, and with the higher thought purity becomes easy.

21.10 You see, for you the trouble is, mind tends to go to the plane of sex, and if you have the sex-impulse without being able to raise the centre of your consciousness effectively, you will never be able to resist it in the long run. That is why I am warning you so much about company. It will take time till you can efface all the old impure impressions, all the dirt and filth you have allowed to accumulate in the mind, and you will never be able to see the end of this cleaning process if you are not careful in the company you choose to keep. There must be no awakening of old memories through associating with people. Change the nerve-current at once, the moment you feel any sexual temptation, and do not allow yourself to be in the company of persons belonging to the other sex, no matter whether they be pure or not. This you will have to do for some time to come. It is difficult to erase old impure impressions, but it has to be done, if such impure impressions have been taken in through leading a careless life.

21.11 The best way to disarm woman is by looking upon her as Mother, never by hating her. See Mother in her, but salute her from a safe distance. Never rely on your own strength at present. It will fail you. Never allow old memories to come up and tempt you by meeting people who may rouse them in you. You cannot be careful

enough in all this if you really want to progress. Be very dignified in your behaviour to women as well as to men, and make all women understand once for all, that they will not be allowed to look upon you as a man, that you will not suffer them to approach you in any other light except in the light of a sexless spiritual entity. If you allow women to become free or familiar with you, your foot will slip sooner or later. You cannot take any risk so long as the old impressions in your mind are not completely effaced. I have seen a good number of aspirants in India who came to grief through sheer carelessness on this point. There are many who cannot appreciate the necessity of these prescriptions, but you can believe me. I have seen many people, many different types and characters, and I had to study them all very minutely if I wanted to help them.

21.12 There are many who cannot grasp the necessity of sex-purity in spiritual life, but without sex-purity in its three aspects, thought, word and deed, there can be no spiritual life at all. All those who have been leading a really spiritual life know all this from their own experience. It is not just mere words. Avoid the other sex as much as possible for a long time to come. There are many old impure impressions to erase in your mind.

21.13 Never underrate the value of what I am telling you now. The beginner should never dare to give the enemy a frontal attack, and during your Sadhana you will find what an amount of trouble these old impressions are going to create for you. So always be on your guard and do not rely on your own strength so long as traces of the old impure impressions are still left and so long as there are still sensual desires in you.

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Sri Ramakrishna: on world and giving it up

From M's Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna
(Translated from the Bengali Original)

SRI RAMAKRISHNA:— “On seeing the attitude of a child (in the devotee regarding women) the Divine Maya hides Herself from one's path out of the sheer sense of shame.”

DEVOTEE:— “Sir, why have you given up the world? The Scriptures speak of the householder's life as the greatest.”

SRI RAMAKRISHNA:— “I do not know much of what is good or

what is bad. [Swami Yatiswarananda: 'Here Sri Ramakrishna just avoids giving an answer to the worldly-minded person for whom real instruction would have been valueless.'] I do whatever the Lord makes me do. I say whatever He makes me say."

DEVOTEE:— "If all people give up the world that would be going against the will of the Lord."

SRI RAMAKRISHNA:— "Why should all people give up, and again is it the Lord's will that all should get themselves merged in the enjoyment of 'Woman and Gold', and lead the lives of cats and dogs? Have *you* known what He wills and what He does not? You say, His will is to lead a family-life. When wife dies, why don't you see there also the will of the Lord? When you starve, when there is illness and poverty and faithlessness, why don't you see there too the will of the Lord?"

"It is owing to Maya that you do not know the Lord's will, and it is due to His Maya that the unreal appears to you to be real and the real unreal. The world is constantly changing. Now it is and then it ceases to be, but owing to Maya it appears to be real. It is owing to Maya that we believe ourselves to be the doers, and also that we have all these: wife and children, father and mother, house and property etc. And in this Maya there is both Vidya and Avidya. Avidya makes one forget God and cling to the world, 'Woman and Gold', while Vidya, which is devotion and holy company, takes one Godward.

"He who through God's grace goes beyond Maya looks upon both Vidya and Avidya with complete indifference."

* * * * *

(Swami Yatiswarananda, continues:)

Giving no rest to the Divine

21.14 You find many grown-up people who have a child-mentality. They will never give up their playthings, all their human dolls. The more we play, the more playthings we want. We want to go on playing eternally. Only very few children grow tired of playing and give their minds to something more serious. No doubt, there are some very troublesome children who stop their play and begin to cry. They give no rest to God and are bound to get Him. There is such a nice parable of Sri Ramakrishna illustrating the general attitude of man:

21.15 Vishnu was once sitting in His heavenly abode with His consort. All of a sudden Lakshmi saw that He was getting up in a great hurry. She said, "What is the matter?" Vishnu replied, "Just wait a moment. I must at once go and look after a devotee of Mine who is in danger. I must protect him." As a matter of fact, a devotee of Vishnu was to get a good thrashing from some enemies of his. After a short time, however, Vishnu returned. Lakshmi asked Him, "What is the matter now? Why are you back so soon?" "Oh", replied Vishnu, "I was not necessary at all. The devotee had already taken the law into his own hands and given the others a good thrashing. So what was the use of My coming to his protection?"

21.16 If we depend wholly on Him, He comes to our aid, but if we do what we please, we come to grief. We cannot have the two feet in two different boats. But real self-surrender is a very hard thing and cannot be attained without great struggle and perseverance.

21.17 The inner voice becomes still as soon as we turn deaf ears to it. Many people talk of this 'inner voice', but in most cases it is nothing more than their own higher moral sense. The voice of the Divine cannot be heard so easily as these people imagine.

Training the mind to have thought of Divine

21.18 We cannot be expert divers all of a sudden. We must dive deep, but first we must train ourselves properly. The diver does not get the precious pearls if he does not even reach the bed of the oysters.

21.19 First we must shake off this mental lethargy. We must so train the mind that, at least to some extent, we shall be able always to have the thought of the Divine. One current should constantly be flowing Godward, while in the other part of the mind bubbles may rise and try to create troubles. Always keep part of your mind engaged with the Divine.

21.20 We should strictly avoid the company of the evil-minded and all those who do not lead pure lives, whether they be of our own sex or of the other sex. We should seek the company of the good and holy. If I meet a man who leads an impure life or mixes with impure people it is as bad as if I were in the company of the other sex myself.

21.21 You see, it is this. The mind that has once become dirty and full of all sorts of filth cannot be cleansed without great and prolonged effort. If I take a match and it slips out of my fingers and falls

into a puddle, it gets wet. And once having got wet, it cannot be struck any more. So the first task is to make it dry again. Then it can be struck and will leap into a nice flame at once. Hence the question of company and of strict ethical culture, mental culture above all, is of such great importance. How to dry the soiled mind, that is the point. Do not let us brood over the fact that we have allowed it to get soiled and highly impure. Let us cleanse it. Let us do everything to make it pure, so that it will give clearer and clearer reflections of the truth. Brooding leads the aspirant just nowhere.

21.22 The mind is soiled, has become dirty. There is no doubt about that. There is no doubt about our having led a careless, impulsive life. So, now, the mind can no longer take on the colour of the Divine. Try to dye a dirty cloth. It is impossible. First you must wash it then dye it. Set fire to all your worldly desires and then cleanse the mind with the ashes that are formed. It must be some good chemical cleaning. The mind has become so dirty. Whose fault?

21.23 Below the surface-layers, there is the true metal, and that metal, as such can never be soiled. So there is the possibility of cleaning it. But it needs a lot of rubbing and scrubbing. The electric wire has these surface-layers of silk, and they may become dirty, and even the metal may become dirty to a certain extent and thereby a non-conductor, but it can be cleaned. It is good to throw away the silk altogether, to burn it. In our case, in the case of the beginner, the 'silk' is only half-burnt. That is the whole trouble. We are not fully sincere. Otherwise just one single gust of wind would sweep it all away.

"This heart of ours, which has been burnt by the fire of the world, O Lord, do Thou revive it with the 'mantram that brings back life to the dead'." (Literal translation from the Bengali would be: 'revivifying mantram')

21.24 The Holy name revives, as it were, the heart that has become dead by all the worldly dirt that has been accumulated by our desires and inordinate affections. It brings new hopes in place of the old deceptive ones that are lost and burnt. It brings love in place of the old impure affections that have become ashes and are gone for ever. It brings peace in place of the shadow of peace at which we thought to clutch now and then, but which always again slipped out of our fingers. In place of falsehood it brings truth. In place of uncertainty and desire it brings certainty and dispassion, because there is

no want in the Divine, and he who has realized it does not lack anything.

21.25 Let us struggle day and night to attain the purification of our mind and let us see that we do not accumulate any new dirt by our carelessness. Let us strictly follow the instructions we are given, for only then can the cleansing process be accomplished and spiritual life become a reality.

22 -- Wiesbaden, December 12th, 1933

Controlling the restless mind

22.01 In the *Bhagavad-Gita* Arjuna says very touchingly to Sri Krishna:—

“You speak of Yoga which is characterized by evenness of mind, but I do not see the possibility of its being made steady owing to the restlessness of the mind. Verily the mind, O Krishna, is restless, turbulent, strong and unyielding. I regard it quite as hard to achieve its control as to achieve the control of the wind.” (*Bhagavad-Gita* 6.33-34)

22.02 And then the Blessed Lord in His infinite kindness and love for all beings said reassuringly to Arjuna:—

“Without doubt, the mind is restless and difficult to control, but through practice and renunciation it may be brought under restraint. Yoga is hard to be attained by one of uncontrolled self. Such is My conviction, but the self-controlled man, striving by right means, obtains it.” (*Bhagavad-Gita* 6.35-36)

22.03 Here Sri Krishna holds out His helping hand to everybody who is sincere, just as Christ does when He says, *“I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.”* — But the mind can be controlled only if we follow the right means unconditionally. There is no religious life without previously attaining control of mind. Mental control, in the case of the beginner is a regular warfare, and this we can carry on only if we observe strict continence and wisely follow all the laws of warfare. Making use of the wrong methods, we may strive eternally without any success. Religious life without mental control is not possible, except the popular religion of the unthinking crowd which, after all, amounts to nothing more than certain outward observances.

22.04 And there is a general rule to be observed by every-

body:— Never give the enemy a frontal attack, unless you have already become very strong and very well established in purity.

22.05 Do you know the story of the monk who was molested by a rat? There was a monk who was continually disturbed in his meditation by a rat. So some kind people, meaning well, brought him a cat to catch the rat. Now, naturally, the poor monk had to feed the cat and needed milk, and as it was rather difficult for him to get it always, he decided on getting a cow. He did so, but another difficulty offered itself to him. The cow had to be fed, so people told him, "Why not buy a field". Finding this advice very reasonable he bought a field, but after a short time he found out that the field had to be tilled. And this meant quite a lot of work which he could not do alone. So he married and was gone. This, presented allegorically, is what generally happens in human life. One desire just breeds another, till in the end they have become innumerable and can no longer be controlled.

22.06 If any temptation comes, raise just the opposite current of thought. But if you can, you should avoid temptations by being very careful in your company. All temptation is mental. It is not what you do, but what you think. So be aware of how people's vibrations affect you, and develop more and more a very high sensibility. Do not say, "I have not done anything impure," but realize what you feel and what you think in the company of others, whether they attract you or not. The moment there is any attraction or aversion, be on your guard. Salute all such people from a safe distance. No attraction is harmless in a finer sense. Neither is aversion so. Never deceive yourself on that point. You should not allow old impure associations to crop up in your mind by mixing with people who may awaken them through their form and old memories. When you follow this advice and raise strong opposite currents of thought, you will be able to efface the impure impressions in time—those impressions which you have allowed to sink into your mind by your life—and then your spiritual life will be made safe to a certain extent. By raising opposite thought-currents, temptation, in time, becomes weaker, and finally the new thought completely replaces old associations and memories, but only if you strictly follow the advice. There can never be a vacuum in your mind, so new thoughts must come in if you drive the old ones away.

22.07 Control of the mind comes step by step through practice and circumspection, but never hope to attain it if you are careless in

your ways. If you allow the attraction of any other person to gain influence on you, you will never be able to attain control of mind, whatever you may be doing at other times. Then you are bound to have a nasty fall after some time. If you allow any woman to meet you as a man, if you allow any woman to attract you or see the man in you, control of mind is out of the question. You should always behave in such a way that no woman will dare to speak to you as a man, and that every woman will feel that she cannot meet you on the plane of sex, that you do not see the woman in her and are not interested in the woman. But for the beginner the only way is to avoid the company of the other sex as much as possible and never to have intimate talks with any person belonging to the other sex. We should be dignified and reserved, though polite, but never allow a person of the other sex to become friendly with us. If others want to stand in our way, we must just brush them aside, even if their heart breaks. There must be a parting of the ways, however intimate we have been before. A love that is dangerous has to be avoided at any cost. Do not grow sentimental. We have to pay the price for our folly and egoism, and why should we not? If I have made a mistake by loving the man or the woman, let me suffer for it, and let him or her suffer for it. If someone tries to embrace me, I must just avoid him. If a person of the other sex offers me kind words, I must just leave him. Otherwise he kills me, i.e., he kills the only thing that has any value in me. Even if such a person tells you, that you make him miserable for life, there must be a parting of the ways. Once having committed the great mistake, you suffer and he or she suffers, and why not? Why should you not? And, very often, sex hides under the cloak of 'duty'. "It is my duty to be kind to him or her." Nothing but sex coming in some nice garb and finding some nice excuses for my clinging to a certain person. Never allow yourself to be caught in the snares of your own mind. "Oh, my heart will break if you leave me." Are you responsible for the other person? Those who have committed the folly must pay the price. We should be sympathetic and pray for such people, but there must be a parting of the ways. We must have great patience because the mind always wants to run away and deceive us, because we are not fully sincere in our spiritual struggle. We succeed only after a long time, but the struggle must be carried on unceasingly and doggedly. Medicine is so unpleasant, but it has to be taken if the patient wishes to be cured.

22.08 The opposite thoughts must be allowed to break our

heart and that of the other person completely. Never be afraid of truth, even if truth means death. If truth breaks your heart well and good. If truth breaks other peoples' hearts, well and good. Allow your heart to be broken. What is the use of clinging to your pet-ideas? What is the use of clinging to your petty affections? At the beginning, truth destroys everything we used to hold dear. First there comes a new foundation and on this new foundation the superstructure is to be built, slowly and carefully, with great circumspection. The laying of a new foundation naturally always means destruction, but in the end, this alone brings peace and happiness and freedom to ourselves and to others. The poison-tree planted by our thoughtlessness and desire must be cut down ruthlessly. Having reared the poisonous tree we find it very hard to cut it down, but it must be cut down.

22.09 How to bring in the better thought? This is the great task to be performed by the beginner. The rest can be left to the Lord. But there must be a parting of the ways. It is very difficult, but without it, you will never be able to control your thoughts or your emotions. It is this: If you rear a poisonous tree with great love and care, you haven't the heart to cut it down after it has grown so nicely. You get caught in your own snares. Never listen to the voice of sex coming clothed in the garb of pity—either self-pity or pity for the other person, or both.

22.10 The whole thought-structure must be overhauled and reformed. We have been living on empty dreams, created by our desires, and when the whole edifice comes toppling down, we are left standing in the road without any support.

22.11 Filling the brain with all sorts of useless and impure thoughts, making the mind a chaos, instead of making it pure and systematic, we have lost all capacity to think in a dispassionate and consistent manner without considering our own satisfaction. We have very many ideas, even good ideas, but we have not the capacity of thinking them in a definite order and in a detached and dispassionate way. Very often we go on thinking and thinking the same thought again and again, but all this is useless. If you want the mind to be pacified, you must go through a series of meditations. At the beginning have fixed hours and lead a very retired life as far as you can do so. Do not mix with other people if you can avoid it in any way. First rid yourself of the too many different thought-currents, which are neutralizing each other in your mind. Otherwise you can never

maintain a balanced and dispassionate state of mind. Dispassion, true dispassion, is so very necessary for all spiritual progress, facing things as they are, not as we would have them to be.

22.12 Through meditation the mind becomes stronger and clearer. It slowly develops a kind of very strong non-attachment to everything. The will is also to be strengthened systematically. Intelligence is to be developed, the mind must be purified and our sentiments and feelings must be chastened. We must have a definite system whereas most of us have no system at all. They just drift through life on their emotions and impulses. In spiritual life everything has to be systematized.

Few care to follow the instructions

22.13 *“Gurus may be had by hundreds of thousands, but it is very hard to find a disciple.”* — Nobody really cares to follow the Path. Nobody is really sincere. Nobody wishes to be on his guard and to avoid contact with others, which is harmful. We even find pleasure in such contact, instead of avoiding it. So for us, there is *no* real spiritual life. Out of thousands of people there may be one or two who really care to lead the higher life. The others are not sincere. It does not matter whether we attain to the goal in this life or not, the principal thing is to struggle, to fight, to become a man, to sacrifice everything and everything for our goal.

22.14 Most of us are worse than animals and more impure than animals. Most of us lead an impulsive life which is far lower than that of any animal. Men just go on whetting their sensual appetites in the name of affection and love, a thing which an animal would never do. Men artificially create sensual appetites, and even seek stimulants. We must work hard, but unfortunately we have neither patience nor the will to rid ourselves of our impure impressions and old associations with people, nor do we care to follow the advice that we have been given. We have neither the will nor the patience to wait. We must work hard, as I said, and have great dogged perseverance, but, in fact, we have neither patience for the one nor the inclination to have the other. So our spiritual life just remains a vague and idle dream, while we merrily go on following our impulses and trying to cling to our connections with others or even, what is worse, trying to form new ones. This is not spiritual life, whatever else it be.

23 -- Wiesbaden, December 13th, 1933

A prayer for Divine grace

“O Thou, King of kings, pray bless me with a vision of Thee. I beg of Thee Thy grace. Do Thou cast Thy merciful glance on me. I am offering to Thee this soul of mine, scorched in the burning flames of the world. My heart is covered with dirt and stains. The spell of ignorance has made me almost dead. Do Thou, O Lord, purify and revive me with the shower of Thy vivifying grace.”

“O Thou, O Lord of the miserable, please pour the nectar of Thy Love into my soul. Then alone will my burning heart be soothed, and none can prevent this. At the touch of the waters of Thy Love the dry plant again blossoms forth, and springs bubble up in the desert and in the rocky places. Having come to hear of Thee, Redeeming Stream, of Thy Immortal Love, I crave for a drop of it for my heart scorched by sorrow. Being blessed with Thy Love, O Thou Greatest Friend, may I go out of the darkness of the world, rid myself of the miseries of life and thus find comfort for my troubled soul.”

Training, slow and steady

23.01 Slowly, steadily, but with great perseverance and energy, train the body. Train the mind relentlessly. Make them both fit. This ‘slowly and steadily’ does not mean that we should be careless. We should do no violence to either body or mind, but we should never become slack.

23.02 As it is a new life, a new course, therefore the rule for all is:— Strengthen your nerves. Spiritual life, in the beginning, always brings tremendous tension and tremendous reactions. So the nerves must be made strong to bear it and tension must be minimized. The mind must be calmed and, at times, relaxed.

23.03 Food is not the most important thing, I mean, physical food or nourishment. So Sri Ramakrishna used to say, *“Meat or no meat, fish or no fish, the mind should be kept pure.”* — The best instruction is to avoid all those who are not necessary for your spiritual life, and to do away with all those things which are not needed for it. The food must be pure: the food for the eyes, the ears, of all the senses. Physical food alone is not enough. This is very important, as I have said many a time.

23.04 It is always necessary for the aspirant not to keep the nerves highly strung.

23.05 There is a little piece of poetry by Edward Markham which is very nice. He says:—

*“For all thy days prepare
And meet them ever alike;
If you’re the anvil, bear,
If you’re the hammer, strike.”*

This little piece Miss MacLeod used to like very much. So she sent it to me one day.

24 -- Wiesbaden, December 14th, 1933

The true purifiers

“Holy places or stone images may take a long time in purifying us, but one who has installed the Lord in his own heart purifies us in no time.” (Bhagavatam 10.48.31, 1.13.10)

“They make holy places holier and they prove in their lives the truths of the Scriptures.” (Narada)

24.01 If we really desire to instill the higher life we should take the help of those who are leading it, not of moth-eaten books. Hence we are asked time and again to follow their footsteps.

Doubt

24.02 Doubt is a very great danger and can obstruct all progress in spiritual life, because doubt comes to all beginners at certain times. Doubt means a lack of faith in oneself and a lack of faith in anything higher, but we cannot rid ourselves completely of doubt before having attained to realization. Doubt will crop up again and again, but it should never be allowed to overpower us or to make us waver in our decision.

24.03 And here, too, in the case of doubt, holy company is very essential. By seeing the way such people live, by seeing their life and their actions, doubt becomes minimized.

Types of listeners

24.04 There are three types of listeners:—

- 1) *a type that turns a deaf ear;*
- 2) *a type that allows words to enter through one ear, but at*

the same time, allows them to pass out through the other ear;
 3) *a type who allows the words to penetrate into his brain and to bear fruits.*

24.05 We may listen to all these ideas and talks for ages, but we shall not attain anything if we do not work them out and make them living in ourselves.

Atman, how to realise?

24.06 *"This Atman cannot be realized through the study of the Scriptures, neither through intellect nor through mere talks", — proclaim the Upanishads.*

24.07 How is this Atman to be realized? *"You must hear of It, you must think deeply on It, and then you must meditate on It", — says the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.*

24.08 Without leading a life of strict unbroken continence we can never develop a very good retaining faculty, especially in so far as spiritual things and the whole spiritual life are concerned. We must lead a pure, an ethical, a continent life, a life of perfect truthfulness and uprightness, a life that knows no secrecy. We must learn to become perfectly straightforward in all we do and say.

"This Atman is to be realized by following the Path of Truth, by leading a greatly disciplined life through right knowledge and perfect unbroken chastity."

24.09 This is exactly what Christ taught also, when we study His teachings earnestly, without prejudice. This is what all the really great teachers of the world tell us time and again, and if we desire to progress, we should not turn a deaf ear to their words, but try to follow them in practice in our own life, for then only shall we attain the goal.

25 -- Wiesbaden, December 15th, 1933

Going beyond the animal life

"We see the play of life everywhere. Plants live, animals live and birds also live, just as men do, but he alone really lives, who lives a higher life, who lives for a higher ideal."

25.01 Sankaracharya says, *"Both men and animals eat, drink, sleep, procreate, follow the impulses of the senses, and Dharma alone, the path of the higher life, should differentiate men from other*

beings. Without Dharma man falls to the level of the animal or behaves worse than the animal.”

25.02 Our ideal should be not so much external solitude, but the inward solitude that we are able to create in our mind wherever we are. This inward solitude is of great importance in spiritual life. Make the mind more and more indrawn, give it a glimpse of the real solitude and make it practise that at all times.

25.03 Prepare the mind through great purity of thought, word and deed, and then begin to lead an intense spiritual life. Solitude is not something negative, neither is dispassion or renunciation. We want to be left alone with God and not with anybody else. We do not wish to be in the company of other beings, but in the company of the Divine, at all times. Merge yourself in God, and then there will only be one, wherever you be.

25.04 Narada says, *“Realizing God, the devotee is full of bliss. He gets the taste of the highest immortality. He attains to the goal of his life. He himself is saved and he himself becomes a saviour to others.”*

Beyond concentration to sublimation

25.05 In a way we make the mind concentrated, but then we do not know how to manipulate it. This concentrated mind will run after sensual enjoyment and all sorts of worldly distractions and objects with all the greater intensity for having become concentrated, so if we do not know how to manipulate it in the right way, it becomes a great danger. It is better not to have concentration if one does not attain sublimation and purification at the same time. Therefore the aspect of purity, of non-attachment and absolute continence in thought, word and deed, has to be stressed so much. I am repeating this time and again, so that there may be no misunderstanding as to this fact. Without sublimation of all our desires and feelings we cannot progress in the spiritual path, and if we do not follow a strict code of ethics and morals we should never even attempt concentration. The concentrated mind that is not purified becomes a veritable demon. The fulfilment of all these ethical and moral conditions is absolutely necessary and without it all forms of spiritual practice become extremely dangerous and harmful and lead to insanity or nervous collapse. If you do not follow this code strictly and go in for spiritual practice in spite of that, you will go mad. That is all. Never

underrate the danger. If certain attachments and certain associations are not resolutely given up once for all with an effort of the will, no spiritual practice leads anywhere.

25.06 The general rule is: If you have some worldly desire to fulfill, never pray for its fulfilment after you have begun your spiritual practices and meditation. First the desire has to be renounced or fulfilled. Then spiritual practice can be begun. It is very troublesome to have a concentrated mind and not to be able to make proper use of it. It is good to have a devil's strength and will-power, but it is not good to use these as a devil. We must know how to manipulate the concentrated mind. I do not even like people to practise concentration before they have already attained to certain purification of the body and the mind. It is so very dangerous, and very often people just play with fire. They turn deaf ears to what they are told and then suffer the consequences.

25.07 Through leading a life which is sexually perfectly controlled we store up a tremendous amount of energy, and if we do not allow this energy to find expression along physical lines, it finds its expression along another line. Hence we get psychic powers, etc. etc. Never spend your capital. Increase it steadily, but never spend more than the interest. You must increase your fund of energy and avoid all unnecessary friction, so as to minimize the wastage of energy. There may be friction on the other side, in the other person, but that does not concern you. You cannot do anything without perfect Brahmacharya.

Acceptance of suffering

25.08 There is a very fine song by Rabindranath Tagore, our great poet:—

“Lord, give me the strength to bear Thy standard to whom Thou hast been pleased to give it. Give me the devotion to bear the great pain that is unavoidable in Thy service. Thou mayest fill my heart with the great pain.”

“I do not want even to get rid of this gift of suffering that Thou art giving me with Thine own hands. This misery will be my crest-jewel if with it Thou givest me also devotion to Thee. Give me work as much as Thou likest if Thou doest not allow me to forget Thee, nor my heart to get itself caught in the entanglements of the world.”

If Thou wishest, do Thou bind me as much as Thou likest, but

keep my heart open to Thee. Do Thou not allow me to forget Thee on any account."

25.09 All this terrible suffering is our training. The will is to be subjugated, to be controlled, to be burnt, as it were, in the furnace. If you want to do this, take to this life. If you do not, if there is the very least idea of bargaining in you, if you do not wish to give everything, do not go even near it, but do as you please and live as you please. There is no half-way house in spiritual life. For a time you will be between the anvil and the hammer. When the iron has become crooked, it needs hammering all the more. Only then can it take shape. The general rule is:— Never be a coward. Let us have troubles. Let us have untold misery. Let us have unspeakable suffering, but let us face all these and remain unaffected. Let us learn to be the witness in everything.

"O Lord, if the doors of this heart of mine be kept closed to Thee, do Thou break them open and come to me. Pray do not go away from me."

"If any day the strings of my soul do not vibrate with Thy sweet Name, pray, wait standing, but do not go away from me."

"If any day I place someone else on Thy seat in my heart, O Thou, my eternal King, do not go away from me."

"If any day my sleep does not break at Thy call, do Thou awake me with the blast and pain of the thunderbolt, but pray, do not go away from me."

25.10 The devotees should always compare notes among themselves. This is very, very essential. But then we must be really eager to help one another. We must be really and truly sympathetic. Learn to judge yourselves mercilessly without any destructive self-condemnation. Just stand aside as the witness and look at things as the witness, not as the agent. There should be absolutely no sense of agentship left.

Control of good and bad sentiments

25.11 Very often we find that those who are not able to control their good feelings and impulses, are not able to control their bad feelings and impulses either. We should try to have perfect control in both cases. Even the good feelings, the good sentiments, the noble impulses have to be controlled and to become fully conscious and definite.

25.12 If we are able to drive a good sentiment into our very being, it colours it. If we give it expression too soon, it is all gone in no time. The driving power of the engine comes from the tremendous steam-pressure. If the steam be let out too soon, there won't be any driving power left and the engine refuses to move. The steam has to be kept under pressure, otherwise there won't be any transforming power, and if life is not transformed, all these teachings and suggestions have no value whatever. We might much better busy ourselves with other things. But generally people just go on listening and listening and creating some nice feelings for the time being. This, too, is nothing but a form of enjoyment, but not spirituality.

25.13 If you are not able to control the noble sentiment that suddenly rises in your mind, you will succumb to the bad or impure sentiment the very moment it rises in it. First create capital with great doggedness. Then spend the interest. But first you must possess a large amount of accumulated capital, otherwise if you spend out of your capital, you will end in bankruptcy.

25.14 Have tremendous feeling, but be a master of your feeling. And if a feeling brings about a sort of nervousness you may be sure that there is something seriously wrong with that particular feeling or with its object. Swami Brahmananda had tremendous feeling, but the greater the pressure of the feeling, the more he controlled it, the calmer his mind used to become.

Tenacity

25.15 Tenacity is wanted. A balanced mind is wanted. Always. There should be tremendous intensity coupled with great calmness and steadiness. There should be tremendous will-power and determination coupled with great peace and self-assurance.

25.16 All those that are mere meteors cannot go in for spiritual practice. Tremendous doggedness is needed. "Even if He should tear me to pieces, I am going to cling to Him and to Him alone. I do not care what happens, but I shall not give up clinging to Him." That is the proper attitude.

"Whether He embraces me and makes me His slave, or crushes me down or chooses to keep company with others, discarding me,—He is ever the Lord of my heart and none else."

"O Lord, I have no desire for wealth, for men, for beautiful

women, for the gift of poetry. But I pray that from birth to birth my motiveless devotion to Thee may continue.”

—(Sri Chaitanya: Sikshatakam 4)

Kundalini--danger of partial awakening

25.17 A partial awakening of the Kundalini is very dangerous, as it brings tremendous sexual reactions. Therefore first have ethical culture.

25.18 Swami Brahmananda says,

“Swamiji used to say that a little awakening of the Kundalini was very dangerous. Until She rises up higher, lust, anger and other lower passions become very disturbing. The Vaishnavite Sadhana of Madhur Bhava or Sakhi Bhava is exceedingly dangerous. In trying to remember constantly the story of Sri Krishna’s Divine play with Sri Radha, the Vashnavites cannot control their lust and they do all sorts of lecherous acts. Hence the restriction for the beginner in reading Rash-Lila and such works. Meditation is not an easy thing. Eat a bit more and your mind will not settle that day. When lust, anger, greed and the whole host of evil passions are kept under control, then and then alone does meditation become possible. If any one of these asserts itself, meditation will be impossible.”

Impediments

25.19 All thoughts and impulses that flow in a contrary direction are impediments to meditation. So they must be controlled and slowly minimized and annihilated. External penance is far easier than to control and purify the mind.

25.20 There are a good many people who think they can leave religion for their old age after having enjoyed all the fruits of life. But for them the time never comes, because after having wasted the greater part of their energy in physical enjoyment, they begin spiritual life much too late to be able to achieve anything. Their whole life has been in vain, and they all suffer for it.

25.21 Never say, “Oh, my mind is so restless. How is it possible for me to meditate?” Just because your mind is so restless you must meditate, all the more. A perfectly calm mind does not need so much meditation.

25.22 The really thirsty man always needs water, but those who are not thirsty can do without it for a long time. The really sincere as-

pirant will do all he is told, but we are so half-hearted and so little sincere, that we are in no great hurry to follow the advice we are given.

25.23 And then, we want the purest water, not adulterated water, or water that has become terribly dirty. We should rather feel really thirsty than go in for anything that is not good and pure.

25.24 Sri Chaitanya said, *“Even if you trample me underfoot, even if you break my heart, I would know that you and you alone are my beloved.”*

“Even if I am to pass through various lives and through the greatest of miseries, O Lord, let my mind be turned to Thee and Thee alone.”

25.25 And then there is the beautiful prayer of Kunti:— *“Lord give me misery and yet greater misery, for when we are in the midst of misery, we are made to think of Thee more and more.”*

25.26 Divine Love can never be judged by the standard of our worldly prosperity. Wherever the Lord Himself becomes the charioteer, success is assured. When the devotee allows himself to be guided by the Lord alone, then alone success is assured. This is the real meaning and significance of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Nothing short of that will do, but it takes a long time to attain real self-surrender and renunciation.

25.27 There can be no security in our life unless we have attained the ultimate goal, i.e. self-realization. Any devotee may tumble down at any moment before he has attained the ultimate goal. So we should all be very careful and strictly follow the advice we have been given. Do not have worldly or useless discussion either amongst yourselves or with others. *“Only that kind of discussion that helps us in arriving at the Truth can be taken recourse to, but not other kinds.”* — Sri Ramakrishna used to dislike all empty discussions very much and warned all his disciples of their danger.

Requiscat in Pace

**(Written by Swami Vivekananda, in memoriam,
to G. G. Goodwin, August 1898)**

*Speed forth, O Soul! upon thy star-strewn path;
Speed, blissful one! where thought is ever free,
Where time and space no longer mist the view,
Eternal peace and blessing be with thee!*

Thy service true complete thy sacrifice,

*Thy home the heart of love transcendent find;
Remembrance sweet, that kills all space and time,
Like altar-roses fill thy place behind!*

*Thy bonds are broke, thy quest in bliss is found,
And one with That which comes as Death and Life;
Thou helpful one! unselfish e'er on earth,
Ahead! still help with love this world of strife!*

26 -- Wiesbaden, December 16th, 1933

Meditations

“The Atman is one. It is absolutely motionless, yet swifter than the mind in its movements. It transcends all and hence the senses cannot reach it. It is perfectly steady and still. It outstrips all that run. In it does the vital energy sustain all the activity of living beings. It is ever moving and yet immutable. It is far and it is at the same time near. It dwells within all and yet it exists also outside everything. The wise one who perceives all objects as existing in the Atman, his own Self, and the Atman in every being, does not hate anyone for this reason. When to the seer all things appear as nothing but the Atman, then what delusion, what sorrow can come to the sage who beholds that Oneness?”

“The Self is all-pervading, self-resplendent, formless, scatheless, muscleless, pure, unaffected by ignorance. He is the Great Knower, Omniscient, Transcendent and Uncreated.”

“It is He Who has allotted their respective functions to the powers that govern the universe.”

“Under the cover of a golden brilliance the face of Truth lies hidden. Do Thou, O Protector, remove this cover so that I who am devoted to Truth may realize it.”

—(Upanishads)

Divine discontent

26.01 We must rouse a tremendous Divine discontent, the discontent the mystics of all ages speak of. This is what Swami Brahmananda means. Unless we are able to rouse in the soul this Divine discontent that drives us towards God, spiritual life cannot begin. This discontent destroys all our attachments to worldly things and all our desires.

26.02 Peace with the world is no real peace. There can never

be any real peace with the world. There must never be a kind of slackness in our striving, nor any kind of satisfaction with things as they are. Such forms of satisfaction are very, very dangerous for all spiritual aspirations. There must be tremendous discontent and tremendous restlessness for not having advanced sufficiently in our moral and spiritual life. We must consciously keep up the fire of restlessness and discontent for the Higher Life. We must never waste our energies for anything lower. We must never prefer the peace of lethargy to this higher restlessness.

26.03 There can be no security unless we have already proceeded very far towards the ultimate goal. Any devotee may come to grief or have a nasty fall at any moment before he has attained to self-realization. So we should never risk too much relying on our own strength before having advanced considerably.

Steady practice

26.04 Spiritual practice and prayer are needed. Constant prayer, day and night, constant meditation, constant thinking of higher thoughts, if we can do so. The mind of the beginner must be kept constantly busy with the Divine idea so as to create the habit. After having created the right habit, the path becomes smoother, and there is less strain in the life of the aspirant.

26.05 Never allow any break in your practices and daily routine. This is very bad and should be avoided by all. Try to develop great doggedness and unshakeable determination. Then everything will become easy and pleasant in the end.

27 -- Wiesbaden, December 17th, 1933

Pray purposefully

27.01 Your prayer should never be aimless, i.e. without definite aim, not like balls just thrown into the air without hitting any mark. You must have a definite goal and direct your prayer to that. If you shoot with blank cartridges and your whole shooting is, at the same time, aimless, nothing will come of it. We may pray or pretend to pray, but in most cases the Lord can ask us, "To whom have you prayed? Certainly not to Me."

"The Pranava, OM, or the Mantram is the bow, and this soul is the arrow. Brahman is the target." (Mundaka Up. 2.2.4)

27.02 With a calm and steady mind just aim at the target and hit it.

Renunciation

27.03 Sometimes we get in our heart a little fire of renunciation, but then we again pour the waters of the world on it, until this fire becomes extinguished. The love for the world and everything that the world holds dear extinguished the little love for the Divine we have. This fire of renunciation and dispassion must be constantly increased as there is every chance of its being extinguished by bad physical and mental associations and all outgoing tendencies of our impure mind. In the beginning, dispassion is a very tender plant which must be hedged round and protected from all strong gusts of wind and frost, otherwise it can never grow into a sturdy tree which no storm can shake. We must always be careful not to put wet wood on it instead of oil or clarified butter. To the extent we become freer from all personal relations and reactions and attachments we make a greater fire and thus become freer from the world.

27.04 In spiritual life, renunciation and dispassion are the two most important factors without which nothing can be achieved. Divine Love fulfills everything, so really speaking, there is no giving up, but fulfilment. Real Love for God finds its expression in love for man without loving anybody as such. If we develop this new outlook, our life changes altogether, because this new outlook breaks down all the barriers and snaps all bonds. It is the tendency of work always to bind and fetter the soul in every way, but if we offer all the fruits of our work to the Lord alone, this very work breaks down all the barriers, destroys all bondages, because then we become only instruments in His hands and know ourselves not to be the agents. We must find room for the Divine in the monastery, in the world and above all in our heart.

27.05 Usually we find our mind is burdened with desires and passions, and to the extent we are able to rid ourselves of this load we feel more and more light-headed in the higher sense. We should try to shift our centre of consciousness from ourselves to God, and then we find we and everyone have a place in God.

Everything must be clear-cut

27.06 You must never permit yourselves to be indefinite or

vague. Everything must be clear-cut. You must pass through all the different stages being fully conscious of everything.

27.07 Very often we choose the wrong path owing to our false conceptions of life, and ultimately come to grief.

27.08 Meat-eating, as such, is not so bad as its effects on others. We dehumanize a certain class of people because we wish to eat meat. The butchers are not at fault, but we. The deceivers are not at fault, but we who allow ourselves to be deceived by them. And we have to reap the consequences of dehumanizing others for our sake.

27.09 There is an adage that says, "Like Guru, like disciple."

27.10 You should read the story of the pigeons in Sri Krishna and Uddhava. It is so very instructive. We should profit by the experience of others. It is not necessary for us to pass through the same experience. It is not necessary for us to put our hand in the fire to know that it burns. But we do it and then, as soon as the pain is over, we put the hand again in the fire.

27.11 Swami Brahmananda used to teach us, "*At the time of meditation you must think that desires and passions have no existence, that they are unreal. Gradually this impression will sink into your mind*".

27.12 It is necessary for us to build up a new thought-life, a new world of thought and a new and better way of looking at things. This can be brought about only by conscious effort, by banishing all bad thoughts and bringing in new ones.

27.13 If you meditate on some form, you should do so thinking it to be bright and instinct with life. If you meditate intensely on some holy form, you become holier. If you meditate on some pure form, you become purer. Buddha says in one of his beautiful instructions, "*Look upon the world as a bubble. Whatever is subject to the law of origination, is subject to the law of dissolution.*"

27.14 The sage seeks the Divine when he wants to have perfect security, when he wants to have something that knows no change. And in Him all this world-play takes place, but He ever remains the same eternally.

27.15 There is the sky, and there are the clouds, but however many clouds may pass over the sky, the sky, as such, remains unchanged, ever the same, and never becomes identified with or diversified into the clouds.

Direct perception

27.16 The ultimate proof for everything is direct perception. If there be a God at all, He must be seen. He must be felt. Mere theorizing will never do. We have to believe in the words of those who have seen Him, we have to follow their footsteps and then verify their experience. Mere faith won't do, although faith is necessary in the beginning. And, as Swami Vivekananda used to say, *"If anybody tells you, 'I have seen God, but you cannot do so', never believe such a person"*. — All can see Him, although it may take years and years till we get the vision of God.

"O Lord, when will Thy name cause streams of tears to flow from my eyes, and my voice to be choked with emotion and my hair stand on end?"

"One moment to me is like an age, my eyes are flooded with tears, the whole world is a void to me,— all this because of the separation from Thee."

28 -- Wiesbaden, December 18th, 1933

Merely stilled mind is of no use

28.01 The mind should be stilled, no doubt, but then we should see that Divine Consciousness takes its place with new thoughts, otherwise the merely stilled mind is of no use. It becomes a state of dullness or lethargy, but never a state of illumination. Unless we are able to remain wide-awake, to keep our consciousness, when the mind is calmed, there is every chance of the mind falling below the level of consciousness to the subliminal plane. What the Yogi really wants is the higher plane of consciousness, not a state of inertness like stones or stocks.

28.02 Yoga means restraining the mind-stuff, not allowing it to burst into waves.

28.03 Even in the state of deep sleep, there is no absolute unconsciousness. All the so-called unconscious processes go on, only very rhythmically, but for all practical purposes it is an unconscious state in which the soul even forgets self-consciousness. The self-conscious Principle is shrouded in a kind of ignorance. We do not get wiser in any way because of deep sleep. We do not attain illumination. Only the brain and the body feel a little invigorated by it.

28.04 In the lower states of Samadhi the breath and the heart-beats may continue, but in the higher state both stop.

28.05 Out of the causal comes the subconscious aspect of mind, and out of this the conscious aspect. The mind is like an ocean, and in this the conscious mind is at the most like a small island. In the lower layers of the mind there is always movement, but in the really deeper layers there is no movement at all.

Absolute non-evolution of Being

28.06 Sankaracharya says, "*Being is everything, becoming is nothing.*" — And in Gaudapada's *Karikas* on the *Mandukya Upanishad* we find, "*As belief in the unreal attaches the mind to the unreal, knowledge of absolute non-evolution frees it from relativity and turns it away from the unreal.*"

28.07 In Sat, Being, there can be no question of evolution or involution at all, and becoming is only true on the relative plane, and even then all becoming must have an end somewhere, and it must, one day, end in Being. Seen from the highest standpoint evolution is a myth, but the idea of evolution serves its purpose for a time on the relative plane. Our great thinkers were very thorough-going in everything they taught. They were not afraid of Truth and what it implies.

28.08 The Vedantin of the Advaita school knows there is no evolution in reality. What is real, cannot evolve. What is permanent and unchanging, cannot evolve. So Being alone is real, and nothing that pertains to change or to evolution is real. There is never a break in the soul's consciousness, although the soul's consciousness may be clouded by Avidya and imagine all sorts of untruths.

Spiritual experience, its nature

28.09 The state of spiritual experience is not unconsciousness. It is something positive. It must have a positive content. It must never be negative, and it is the very opposite of inertness. Falling below the level of consciousness to the subliminal plane is not spiritual experience. In the West, very often this point is misunderstood and hopelessly distorted, especially by the missionaries who do not know what they are talking about.

28.10 In the state of spiritual experience the soul becomes conscious of itself as it is. At other times it is identified with all the different modifications of the mind. And the task in Yoga, is to separate oneself from these modifications. The Self is something that is utterly

distinct from the body and the mind, and the Self, as such, knows neither evolution nor involution, nor any becoming or development. It is very wrong to say that that which *is* real can evolve, because evolution means change, and anything that can undergo any development can never be real.

28.11 What we have to attain is Brahman-consciousness as distinct from Jiva-consciousness. But in the path there are some dangers which we have to meet, and one of them is to identify ourselves with the causal state of our personality or with the Anandamaya-kosha, the sheath of bliss, as it is called, which is not the ultimate reality, but which makes us feel very happy and elated.

“Brahman is the self-conscious Principle that animates everything, It is the ear of the ear, the eye of the eye, the mind of the mind, the source of all vital energy. Knowing thus the wise give up all false identification of the Self with the senses and the mind etc. etc. and become immortal.”

It is never perceived by the eye, nor by speech, nor by the mind. We know It not nor do we see It. How to teach one about It? It is different from all that are manifest and known, and is beyond even all that are unmanifest and unknown. Thus have we heard from the ancient seers who explained this to us.”

What none can comprehend by the mind, but by which the mind can be comprehended, what none can see with the eyes, but by which the function of the eye can be seen, know that alone as Brahman and not that which people worship here.”
(Upanishads)

The few who care for the teachings

28.12 People who still have some attachments, who are not comparatively free from attachment, cannot really care for Vedanta, nor can they really care for the teaching of Christ. Such people do not like it, because all the Great Ones have preached renunciation as the only way. For people who do not lead a moral, pure, controlled and non-attached life, the teaching of Christ as well as of Vedanta is absolutely useless and cannot have any place in their lives as such people can never realize their goal. Without purity, non-attachment, non-violence and dispassion in thought, word and deed, there can be no form of spiritual life whatever name you may choose to give it.

28.13 People who are not prepared to renounce their attachments, who permit themselves to be governed and influenced by

lust, anger and greed, cannot take to spiritual life and can never be Vedantins or followers of Christ. I do not say Christians, because the so-called Christian has nothing to do with Christ.

Give strong suggestions to mind

28.14 While doing Japam you should give very strong suggestions to your mind, e.g., that at each repetition of the Holy Name or sound your mind becomes purer and purer, that your whole being becomes cleansed by the purity of the Holy Name or sound, that all the encrustations shrouding your reality brought about by your past passions and impurities are blasted, all superimpositions removed, and that your true being is thus liberated and brought to light.

28.15 And then, all the preliminary conditions of Yama and Niyama must have been strictly fulfilled, and this not only in a gross way. Before that you cannot attain anything. How could this be possible? Nothing will change, nothing will come, if these have not been fulfilled by you. First their fulfilment means strain and effort. Later on it becomes natural and easy, but you will have to pass through this period of struggle, or have to go away, sad at heart, like the youth who came to Christ to ask Him what he should do. That youth was not able to renounce, so he could not do anything, could not follow Christ's words and had to go away in sadness.

28.16 In the spiritual realm Vedanta means allopathy and not homeopathy at all. Vedanta is out-and-out allopathy. Strong injections and large doses of medicine. There is no such thing as homeopathy in Vedanta. Homeopathic treatment won't do in the case of the Vedantin, because Vedanta can never be diluted if it is to be at all effective. You see what has become of Christ's teaching by endlessly diluting it.

28.17 Desires and senses are our constant enemies. Hence the absolute necessity of leading a disciplined and controlled life. There is no limit to the all-consuming power of desire, and so long as this is permitted to hold sway over us, we shall not be able to follow any of the spiritual teachings given us by the Great Ones. There should be no conscious or unconscious veiling of this fact.

Sex-oriented European culture

28.18 No one who constantly stimulates those centres in the brain which act on the sexual nerve-centre in the body, as the European does, can even think of leading a spiritual life. It all becomes

sham and a hypocritical counterfeit of the real thing. In European life everything is being done to stimulate sexual desires: through the cinema, through literature, through dancing, through music, through conversation, through drugs and intoxicants etc., etc., and so long as a person does not realize this fact, does not become fully awake to it, he is not able to lead a spiritual life, neither is he able to be a follower of Christ.

28.19 This is really the Kali-Yuga. Everything has become body, animal, brutish. You can clearly see why the Great Ones like Buddha, Christ and Sri Ramakrishna, etc., why the great messengers of humanity like Mahatma Gandhi in our days, have to fight everything that in any way pertains to sex. For sex brings destruction, and wherever there is sex, there you shall find the manifestations of brutality, because they are closely interconnected. And Europe has raised sex to the position of a god and constantly sings praises of sexual love in its literature, cinemas, theatres and general conduct of life. You cannot imagine the harm European films have done to the European in India. Indians have begun to despise him more and more after the Great War and after seeing these films. It is just pandering to the lowest animal propensities in man.

Cultivate purity by tuning yourself to the Divine

28.20 For spiritual culture the most essential thing is a healthy mind, a pure mind, a mind that has not become perverted, that still has the capacity to strive after realization.

28.21 It is not possible for us to take up each individual hankering and rid ourselves of it. No, a general pitiless massacre is necessary. When we turn to the Divine, allow Him to light the Divine Light in us, all darkness will vanish at once. Then He Himself appears on the battlefield and fights for us. The Lord does His work, but we must also do our part so long as we have our individuality or are still conscious of being individuals. We have to give up our clinging to this world of manifestation. We have to give up all bodily and worldly desires. We have to renounce all attachments and all 'duties' pertaining to these attachments. That is the only way by which you can rid yourself of the troubles and miseries of life and the darkness that is shrouding you from the Light. Allow Him to bring about your transformation, to give you the capacity to follow the Higher Life. Pay no more heed to the world than is absolutely necessary. You are always in the world, whether you live in the monastery or outside the monas-

tery. You cannot run away from the world. But you must never allow the world to absorb your attention.

28.22 The energy at your disposal, physical as well as mental, is so very limited that you have to use it for spiritual purposes and not waste it in the world and for the world. This, no doubt, means tremendous struggle, but you have to pass through it. There is no other comfortable short-cut. Try to be in tune with the Cosmic Power, and then this Cosmic Power works through you. This process is to be a conscious one, not an unconscious one as it usually is.

28.23 We have been caught in the net of Maha-maya and we must get out of it. Allow the Lord to be the ferryman that takes you across the turbulent ocean of Maya to the shore of Immortality.

“O my Shiva, O my Ferryman, do Thou take me to the other shore beyond this ocean of Life and Death.”

28.24 It is necessary for us to surrender ourselves whole-heartedly to this Ferryman. But self-surrender can only come after long and desperate struggle. Real self-surrender is not an easy thing.

Dynamic faith--shraddha

28.25 When doubts arise in the mind, you must brush them aside with an effort of the will. Our word ‘Shraddha’ means much more than mere faith. ‘Shraddha’ always brings to the aspirant an amount of faith in himself. So Nachiketas in the *Katha Upanishad* says, *“I am not a worthless person.”* — Never think you are a worthless person. Be ever ready to face even death for the sake of spiritual life.

28.26 Having a faith that is not dynamic, that has no transforming power, a faith that does not make us intensely active in a higher sense, is no use. It must make us tremendously strong in the pursuit of spiritual life.

28.27 The man who constantly entertains in his heart destructive doubts comes to grief. He can never attain anything in spiritual life.

28.28 *“One who is ignorant and at the same time does not possess Shraddha, one who possesses an eternally doubting heart, comes to destruction,”* — says the *Bhagavad-Gita*.

28.29 Unshakeable faith comes only when faith merges into experience, not before.

28.30 Divine Knowledge transforms life altogether. Attaining to this knowledge there are souls that transform other lives altogether, not only their own lives. If we do not see Him it is owing to the impurities of our mind. But this is no reason for our saying that God does not really exist. If God *is*, we must be able to see Him some day, sooner or later. But first we must develop our own inner power of vision and purify our mind. To-day our mind is gross, and with a gross mind you can only see the external world, but never anything subtler than the grossest forms of manifestation.

28.31 We must get a 'mental telescope'. This capacity lies dormant in everyone. It does not come from outside, nor can it ever be super-added to our true nature. But then it is something that we do not care to develop. When the mind becomes pure to some extent, we begin to feel the presence of something more permanent and vaster within us. Spiritual life means making this mind subtler and subtler. It does not mean making this mind more and more hair-splitting. We should always be on our guard against too abstract flights of thought which are not given any reality in the expressions of our own lives. It is better to be a Bhakta than a hair-splitting make-believe Jnani. And none can become a true Jnani without having almost completely purified his mind. So these sham Jñanis we meet should not be taken seriously. There is always a danger for certain minds to raise wonderful philosophic structures and to revel in them, which do not transform their lives; and, for most people, the safer and quicker path is the path of Bhakti tempered with a certain amount of Jnana. This is what Swami Vivekananda really wanted. There are some very clever and highly intellectual minds which even split hairs which nobody wanted them to split. I meet so many people talking in glowing terms of Advaita and of the Absolute that I am becoming afraid of them and their wonderful knowledge. They do not even know what they are talking about.

28.32 The mental world is infinitely vaster than this gross world. When we catch a glimpse of the glory of this inner world of thoughts, the external world and all its attachments loses all charm for us. But first we must prepare ourselves thoroughly to get access into this inner world of ours.

The balanced state

28.33 Dhyana [meditation] is unbroken like the flow of oil which is being poured from one vessel into another. And when this Dhyana is continued for a longer time it merges into Samadhi.

"Meditation is consciousness solidified, concentrated, a sense of existence solidified, concentrated, intensified."

"If ever you have a glimpse of the peaceful state, call up the memory of that. It will always have a soothing influence on your mind."

28.34 Dwell on that. Very often we dwell on all sorts of useless memories. Why not dwell on this kind of memory?

28.35 The *Bhagavad-Gita* says,

"Being steadfast in Yoga, O Dhananjaya, perform actions abandoning attachment, remaining unconcerned as regards success and failure, This evenness of mind is known as Yoga." (Bhagavad-Gita 2.45)

"Sattva, Rajas and Tamas,— these Gunas, O mighty-armed, born of Prakriti, bind fast in the body the indestructible embodied one."

"Of these, Sattva, from its stainlessness, luminous and free from evil, binds, sinless one, by attachment to happiness and by attachment to knowledge."

"Know Rajas to be of the nature of passion, giving rise to thirst and attachment; it binds fast, O son of Kunti, the embodied one by attachment to action."

"and know Tamas to be born of ignorance, stupefying all embodied beings; it binds fast, O descendant of Bharata, by miscomprehension, indolence, and sleep."

(Bhagavad-Gita 14.5-8)

28.36 Ordinarily we are the creatures of our moods. But if we sincerely wish to follow the Path, we must stop being creatures of our moods. We must gain perfect mastery over them.

28.37 Guna means 'rope' or that which binds the soul. The soul is caught in the meshes of these Gunas.

28.38 Spiritual life should not be abstract thought; neither should it be egocentric, but cosmocentric. We should not be conscious of the point only, but of the whole circle.

28.39 The task of the spiritual aspirant should be to attain the

'balanced state' and, at the same time, to have his eye on that which is beyond the balanced state.

*"That which is like poison at first, but like nectar at the end; that happiness is declared to be Sattvika, born of the translucence of intellect due to Self-realization."
(Bhagavad-Gita 18.37)*

28.40 The secret lies in making ourselves cosmo-centric. All are part of the vaster consciousness. Hold on to the anchor. If you do not, you will be tossed again by the waves of delusion. If you do, then in the very depths of your mind there will always be this calmness and balance. The storms and battling waves will only touch the uppermost layers of your mind, but never again disturb it completely.

28.41 If we are not able to bring about a transformation in the whole organism, even Sattvika food is of no use to us. The body of Sri Ramakrishna was too Sattvika to be able to assimilate any impure or gross food. But mere physical food will never transform us. This is a very erroneous idea I find in some people. They cling to their impure minds, allow their senses to take in all sorts of filth, but their physical food for their stomach must be pure. What nonsense. If the food I take through my eyes, my ears, my touch etc., be not pure, the purity of material physical food for my stomach is unessential. Spiritual life is not to be found in the kitchen-pot.

"The fourth is that which is capable of destroying all evils, ever changeless, of all beings the One without a second, effulgent and all-pervading." (Gaudapada)

28.42 This is the goal, and we should know it, but once having known it, we should busy ourselves with the path and not so much with speculation as to the wonderful nature of Truth. If it is to have any effect, Vedanta must be made practical. Theories, wonderful thought-structures, as such, have no value in life, and just form one more of the innumerable delusions we cherish so much.

29 -- Wiesbaden, December 19th, 1933

Practical application

29.01 We should always try to give the instructions we receive some practical expression in life. Philosophy is all right as the background, but the application to life must never be lost sight of.

29.02 *"Through purity of food comes the purity of sense,*

through the purity of sense comes steady memory of Truth, and when one gets this memory one becomes free from all bonds." (Upanishads) —Then the mind thinks of Brahman in an unbroken stream.— As I have said many a time, everything that comes in contact with the senses is 'food'. We must have pure food for the eye, the ear, the touch, the smell etc. etc. Taking pure physical food for the stomach without purifying all the food that is taken in by the senses is no use. *"If by taking the purest of Sattvika food a person does not turn the mind to the Divine, fie unto him. If he takes contaminated food, but is able to turn the mind to God, blessed is he"*, — this is what Sri Ramakrishna used to say.

Beyond Gunas

29.03 The Gunas are like ladders leading us to the terrace. The indolent person must become active, the active person must become pure. And Sattva is the topmost rung of the ladder leading to the truth, but not Truth as It is.

29.04 Our purity must lead us to God-realization. Attaining to the Divine means going beyond all the Gunas. All these Gunas are like robbers who do not dare to have access to the town. Our goal should be the Divine and Divine realization, i.e., to realize Him within ourselves, and then to realize Him in all others also. The ideal is the person who is not bound by any Guna, who has known God, who remains always indifferent to all actions of the Gunas. When by getting rid of the evil tendencies with the help of purer thoughts one is able to get a glimpse of Truth, transcending even Sattva, he comes down to the highest rung of the ladder in a Sattvika state, but he can never again go below that highest rung.

29.05 Mere ethics do not make a man spiritual. Mere morals are no proof whatever for the spirituality of a person. This is the great mistake of what is generally called 'Protestantism'. Morals are necessary, and there can be no spirituality without previously leading a perfectly moral life, but they can lay no claim to 'spirituality' which far transcends the plane of morals.

"Having mastered all the scriptures and having given up all learning, be like a child. And then after attaining to your spiritual childhood live a life of meditation."

29.06 We should all cultivate great simplicity and be free from all desires and passions, which make us more and more complex

and impure. We should minimize all personal feeling and all personal relationships with others by stressing the Divine more and more and becoming more conscious of the Divine than of others. Never commit the mistake of loving a person for his or her own sake. The feeling of love is all right, but the very moment its true aim is hidden it turns into side-paths and brings us no end of misery and delusion, although many people, for a time, call this happiness.

29.07 We should avoid all forms of austerity that are merely tamasika. So Sankaracharya says, *“Simply by making the body dirty, one does not become like a child.”* No, certainly not. This spiritual childhood is characterized by perfect mental purity, sense-control, freedom from lust in all its forms and freedom from passions and desires. One who goes beyond all Gunas is no longer bound to any particular mood.

Cosmocentricity

29.08 The spiritual aspirant should feel he is an instrument in the hands of the Cosmic Power. The best attitude is that of an instrument, knowing oneself not to be the doer, not to be the agent.

29.09 Let us take an example. There are different clocks all driven by the same electric energy. If every clock just thinks that it goes by its own strength, this is a serious error. We are all parts of a mighty energy that is working through us and with us. We should always try to be cosmocentric and become as impersonal in everything as possible. This body and the mind are instruments of a mighty power. To the extent we are able to become cosmocentric and more and more impersonal, to the extent we succeed in giving up all ideas of agentship, we attain to peace. The more we run away from the Divine, the more miserable we become.

“Mother, Thou hast created this vast universe, and Thou alone as all beings art coming in touch with the outside things. Thou art the only doer, Thou are the only enjoyer.”

29.10 Sri Ramakrishna used to say, *“Mother, I am the machine, Thou art the mechanic. I am the house, Thou art the mistress of the house. I am the chariot, and Thou art the charioteer. I do as Thou makest me do. I speak as Thou makest me speak.”*

Facing obstructions

29.11 If at any time dejection comes, still go on with your disciplines. If obstruction comes, it must redouble your effort, rather die

than give up. The greater the trouble the greater should be our determination and our will. We should not be weaklings.

"If before we pass away we are able to know the Truth, we attain to the goal of our life. If we fail to do this, everything is to no purpose. We miss the object of our life."

"By realizing the same Divine in all beings, the person of steady intellect attains to the state of immortality." (Upanishads)

"If there be God, what else is there that matters? If there be no God, what does life matter?" (Swami Vivekananda)

29.12 First of all, the ideal is to be fixed once for all. There must be no vacillating and no two ways. If we are side-tracked, at once let us fix again the ideal. There must be no "I may do this or this". No. "I can do this only and nothing but this." This alone is the attitude of the sincere aspirant.

"O Lord, I have made Thee the pole-star of my life. In this ocean of existence I shall not lose my way if I have my mind fixed on Thee."

29.13 You see, the compass, even the best and most modern one, may fail. The pole-star never fails.

India does not believe in arms and ammunitions

29.14 India does not believe in arms and ammunitions. She believes in knowledge and wisdom. With Her, knowledge is power, and love is the one weapon which alone is necessary to conquer the whole world, to win over the hearts of the whole of humanity. India stands for cultural and not for political conquest. Learn to be men. There are so few men in the West. Be men, true men, not animals wallowing in the mire of sensuality and greed, but men of love and reverence, of wisdom and knowledge and purity and non-attachment.

29.15 The sum and end of life is freedom and fearlessness, freedom from the ever recurrent bondage of births and deaths, freedom of the soul from the toils, and the ultimate and final attainment of peace. The knowledge of the Self is the way to freedom and the discovery of Truth, and at the very end of the journey the reward is peace, that peace of which Christ taught that it "passeth all understanding".

30 -- Wiesbaden, December 20th, 1933

Marks of progress in spiritual life

30.01 If we find that all our life we remain in a certain stage, there is something seriously wrong. We should always see whether as a result of our Sadhana we are making spiritual progress or not.

30.02 We should not be like the musk-deer. It has the musk in its own navel, and in certain seasons it goes mad and runs and runs just to find the source of the sweet fragrance, and then it finally falls down dead. Similarly the God we seek dwells eternally in our own heart, but we want to find Him outside.

“Fire is the god of the twice-born; to the seer God dwells in his own heart; people of poor understanding take up idols as their gods, and one who is same-sighted finds God everywhere.”
(Uttara Gita)

30.03 We are always creating our own god or our own gods. We try to create Mahadeva, Shiva, and it turns out to be an ugly monkey. We make an image, and then it proves to be the image of an ugly monkey. If we do not know the right idea and also how to apply it to life, everything becomes an ugly monkey. This is the danger.

“For one who attains to salvation, worship of images is a hindrance and brings about rebirth. Therefore the man of renunciation should worship the God who dwells in his own heart. He should give up all external worship.”

—(Maitreyi Up. 2.26)

30.04 These higher forms of spiritual practice are meant only for advanced souls. It is all just like a staircase. We must proceed step by step. We must find out where we are, otherwise progress is not possible, never.

30.05 So Sankara says, *“Even for learning how to steal, a teacher is necessary”*.

30.06 The voice of God of which so many people speak can only be heard by those who have a completely purified mind, never by others. There is very often great self-deception, because there are the impulses of the lower mind. Very often we take our impulses to be the voice of conscience, but really then the ego speaks, not God. When you want to hear the voice of God, stand aside as the witness, dissociate yourself from your body and your mind. If you do not, you cannot hear the voice.

30.07 One must bring the message of Sri Ramakrishna to the people, but above all one must stress morals, purification and sublimation. *"The pure in heart shall see God."*

* * * * *

Brahmacharya

30.08 Question:— Should these be stressed from the very beginning? I have observed that most people who just begin to be a little interested are scared away at once as soon as they are told to practise Brahmacharya. Must one raise this demand at once?

30.09 The Swami:— Yes. At the very beginning. None is a child of Sri Ramakrishna who is not prepared to pay the price of Brahmacharya. Brahmacharya is one of the most important and essential points. It does not matter if such people are scared away. We do not count the number of people, but their quality. We only want those who are prepared to pay the full price unconditionally. Others cannot follow spiritual life or the seers of Vedanta or any other Great One. None is a Christian who is not prepared to fulfill all this. Everyone who revolts against sense-control and Brahmacharya should not take to any form of spiritual life. Above all, do not soil the holy name of Christ and Sri Ramakrishna with such people. **You in the West need Brahmacharya even much more than we do. All this terrible immorality you find here leads to violence and brutality and the whole host of those demons from whom you are suffering so much nowadays.** You can never separate sex from brutality.

30.10 Question:— And what about householders who feel interested in the message? You cannot expect Brahmacharya of a householder.

30.11 The Swami:— The householder has to practise control just as all the others. Just look at Nag Mahashaya. His father forced him to marry even twice, but he never had any marital relations in all his life. Your idea of marriage is so coarse. Both the wives of Nag Mahashaya became his disciples, leading a life of the highest purity and devotion. So you see, outwardly, Nag Mahashaya was a householder all his life, but there has never been a monk who was purer and less attached than he.

30.12 Question:— And if one party revolts?

30.13 The Swami:— **None is allowed to be prevented from following the spiritual path by his partner, even if the heart of**

that person breaks. About that we have already had many talks as you know. A person who becomes an impediment to another with regard to spirituality, is so low, so sense-bound, so egotistic, so brutish in all his emotions and feelings, that he can boldly be pushed aside, whatever happens. God save me from all such emotional people. If you belong to them I should leave this place tomorrow morning. Certainly. Such people are not fit to become children of Christ or of Sri Ramakrishna, because both represent the ideal of the very highest purity and non-attachment.

30.14 Even in worldly life you need a very strong backbone, if you wish to achieve anything, but in spiritual life you need, as it were, a worldly backbone, a moral backbone, and a very strong spiritual backbone. You need infinitely more strength and manliness than you ever do in ordinary life.

30.15 It is very essential for the beginner to have an outward or a mental idol on which to centre all his thoughts and emotions. If you do not have this, you are bound to cling to some other human being, making it your idol and getting entangled in its meshes. Then you believe that some other human personality can fill you, but this only leads you further and further away from the goal.

30.16 Question:— How to avoid old associations rising in the mind?

30.17 The Swami:— First of all learn to avoid all people that may tend to rouse them in you. You must mercilessly cut yourself away from them all for a long time to come. You should avoid as poison anything that may awaken impure memories in your mind. As I said, the moment anybody or anything stands in the way of your spiritual progress, push it mercilessly aside. There is no other way if you desire to progress and go through the process of purification. Whose fault if we have been careless in our life? Now we have to pay the price, and we shall not go free before having paid the very last farthing.

“In the darkness that surrounds us on all sides, do Thou O Lord, just rise like the sun and dispel it all with Thy light Divine.”

“Shiva is my mother, Shiva is my father, Shiva is my Lord, Shiva is my friend, Shiva is my play-fellow. Shiva is my all in all. I know none else, I know none else. No, not I.”
Shiva Stotram)

“O Lord, you have assumed many names, and endowed them all with your full powers; there is also no particular time for remembering your names, such is your mercy. Yet such is my misfortune that I have no love for your names.”

“The glory of God is best sung by him who is humbler than a straw, more forbearing than a tree, and who does not honour himself but gives honour to others.”

31 -- Wiesbaden, December 21st, 1933

“Let only those works be done by thee, that are free from blemishes, and not others.” (Upanishads)

Guard yourself

31.01 Narada says:

“Shun by every means the company of the wicked, for it will only breed in you desire and anger, delusion and forgetfulness, unreason and death. These grow in the company of the wicked as rapidly as the ripple swells into a tide. Who is the man that frees himself from the snare of the world? The man who shuns the wicked and seeks the wise, and who is free from attachments. The man who loves solitude and snaps the bonds of the world. The man who goes beyond the gunas and gives up to God all that he owns. The man who first abandons the fruits of his actions and then even the actions themselves, for the sake of God, and who passes beyond both good and evil. The man who leaves even the Scriptures behind and loves God without a break. Such a man saves himself, he saves others as well.”

31.02 Always keep impure people at a safe distance during the period of your training. Never become intimate with them. There are so many different kinds of lust, specially with regard to women: impure thoughts, glances, speaking of women, touching women. All these must be annihilated in their root-forms in you. Throw away all human dolls without mercy. Burn all your desires in your heart, but then see that you do not take up new dolls again. See only MOTHER and SISTER in every woman you meet, but so long as you are not yet fully established in dispassion and non-attachment, do even that at a safe distance. The same holds good in the case of women with reference to men.

FAITH

*“As the fish in the sea
So live I in Thee
Ocean of Power and Love—
As the star in the sky
Lonely am I
Yet Thou art below and above.*

*As the bird in the air
Swiftly flies here and there
Yet ever returns to his nest
So I run to and fro
To gather or sow
Yet ever in Thee am at rest.*

*The flower in the sun
Its ecstasy won
Falls back to its life in the sod—
And I, when my soul
Has reached its far goal
Shall be consciously one with my God!”
(A.L. Begg)*

32 -- Wiesbaden, December 22nd, 1933

Real Ahimsa

32.01 If you practise ahimsa, non-violence, out of cowardice it is no merit at all. Real non-violence means the greatest strength and power of endurance a human being can attain to. It means the greatest courage and undauntedness coupled with the greatest love. Ahimsa in which there is even the very slightest trace of aversion or hatred is not non-violence.

32.02 When you lead the higher life, do not stand in anybody's way, do not preach hatred or aversion against anybody, sinner or saint, do not trample underfoot anybody, whoever he be. Do not elbow out others, do not sacrifice the interests of others to yours or that of those who are dear to you. In the animal kingdom, struggle and the so-called survival of the fittest is necessary, but if we wish to be men, we must go beyond all the rules prevailing in the animal kingdom and in nature. We must have the idea of love and non-injury in thought, word and deed. We must not be swayed by our impulses, we must

rise above attraction and aversion and learn to be and remain the witness of everything.

32.03 The ideal of the spiritual man should be, not how to stand in anybody's way, not how to enslave anybody, as his is not the ideal of animal existence, as he has to rise above all the laws of the animal kingdom. If he does not do so, he will never become a man. He must always be prepared to help others, even at the greatest sacrifice, and he must never allow himself to be used by others for their selfish interests.

32.04 Ahimsa is the highest goal. We must proceed step by step. Ahimsa is to be practised both physically and mentally. The mind must be purified of all impure impulses and thoughts. We can have real Ahimsa only if we really advance. The ideal of Ahimsa and the full realization of Ahimsa in our own life are very wide apart. So we must consciously proceed in the right direction and learn to analyze all our motives and impulses in whatever garb they come.

32.05 At a higher stage you develop such a soul-force that people dare not take advantage of you. Do not be soft or sentimental when the Principle is involved. Do not yield, whatever happens. We must learn to compromise less and less. The higher goal should never be lost sight of. We do not want to make a virtue of softness or bonelessness, but we have to fight all ideas of violence in our nature. Ahimsa does not mean softness. The world is so impure and so bad that you cannot live in it if you do not go on hissing. But the limit of hissing should never be passed.

Keeping one's balance

32.06 Until your power of discrimination increases, never lose your balance. At least, do so only mentally, never give expression to it.

32.07 Whenever any tempting thought arises with reference to lust, anger, passion etc., do not give it any physical expression and carefully avoid coming in touch with the object that makes it rise in your mind. Try to calm the mind, withdraw the mind steadily from all sense-objects. If you give such a thought or impulse a physical expression it becomes very difficult for you to erase it again. Everything remains recorded in your mind, and so it creates no end of troubles for the aspirant who has to efface all such impressions before he can really progress in the spiritual path. You will be astonished to find

how many bad impressions will rise during your practices, impressions you have never been even aware of before.

“Whenever desires and passions, anger hatred and other feelings trouble you, sit down quietly without paying any heed to them.”

32.08 If some wish arises in your mind which you know to be wrong as it stands in the way of your mental purification, annihilate it by giving your mind a different direction. Do not fulfill that wish. If you do, new impressions will be created which will make it all the more difficult to efface the old ones even. Freedom does not mean following one’s desires and impulses, but freedom means being the master in one’s own house, physical and mental, and teaching all such desires a good lesson, so that they dare not come again and trouble one. None who follows his wishes and impulses and desires and gives in to them is free. But most people do not even realize the state of slavery they live in.

32.09 Do not have useless discussion. Do not have useless reading. Do not see useless things. Do not meet others uselessly. Discussions very rarely are of any use unless the people you are discussing with really want to change their ways of thinking. *“Only that kind of discussion that helps us to arrive at the Truth can be taken recourse to, but not other kinds,”* — was Sri Ramakrishna’s advice in this respect.

32.10 If you are careless in all this, one day you will find that you must pay a heavy price for your carelessness. But then it will be too late to escape paying it to the full. Spiritual life without mental control, without curbing one’s desires and wishes and passions, becomes an impossibility. Spiritual life without becoming free from the trammels of all such desires, of attraction and aversion, violence and hatred and possessive personal love just remains an empty dream. Nothing more.

33 -- Wiesbaden, December 23rd, 1933

Yogic versus Vedantic realization

33.01 The Vedantic path is different from that of the Yogi. The Yogi need have no conception of the Divine as ordinarily understood, so his concentration can be fixed on anything, any gross or subtle object, and in his realization comes to a perfect withdrawing of

the senses from their objects and a perfect stopping of all his mental activities, i.e., he realizes the Purusha as distinct from the world. Prakriti remains, but the connection between Prakriti and Purusha is severed. With the *Vedantin* there can never be any kind of Samadhi without Brahman-consciousness, and with him, in the highest state of realization, Prakriti ceases to be, i.e., he realizes the whole phenomenal world to be non-existing, as in the case of the snake and the rope in which the snake never had any real existence and only continued to be so long as the person superimposed the idea of the snake on that of the rope through his mistake. For the *Vedantin* the highest realization is an absolute state in which the soul realizes its own reality without any adjuncts, and for both, the soul and the outside world, the reality is the same. The soul, ridding itself of all that which is non-self, i.e., of all the limiting adjuncts, and the world free from all its limiting adjuncts, are both one and the same reality, the One Undivided and Indivisible Principle that alone has any real existence.

33.02 In our ordinary state of consciousness, Purusha or the Atman is, as it were, mixed up with the ego, the mind, the senses and all their sensations.

33.03 First the Yogi tries to think of gross matter, and then, later he passes from the objective side to the subjective side and from that to the ego. The goal for him is to pass on to the Purusha without getting merged in Prakriti.

*“Through tapas you must know what Brahman is.”
(Upanishads)*

33.04 When you have tremendous concentration, but do not attain Divine Consciousness you develop wonderful powers, but all these powers can only be had through tremendous concentration and austerity.

33.05 Patañjali says:

—*Success is speedy for the extremely energetic.*

—*The success of Yogis differs according as the means they adopt are mild, medium or intense.*

—*Or by devotion to Ishwara.*

—*Ishwara is a special Purusha untouched by misery, actions, their results and desires.*

—*In Him become infinite that all-knowingness which in others is only a germ.*

—*He is the Teacher of even the ancient teachers, being not limited by time.*

—*His manifesting word is OM.*

(Yoga-Sutra-s 1.21-27)

Japam

33.06 Japam purifies the mind and makes it more introspective, removes the obstacles, physical as well as mental, and makes the body and the mind fit for realization. You should never underrate the value of Japam if properly done. In the beginning many people cannot grasp the utility of Japam, and that is only natural, but as we advance we come to realize its tremendous utility and efficacy, especially when the mind is dull. Japam serves, as it were, as a kind of ladder which helps us in rising to the heights of spiritual consciousness.

33.07 From one link of the chain we come to the next link, and passing from one link to another we just come to God.

33.08 The cosmic sound in its subtle aspect arises from the Divine, and if we are able to follow it we approach nearer and nearer to the Divine. OM has its gross, subtle, causal and absolute aspect. (A, U, M).

33.09 What are the obstacles that stand in the way of the beginner? *“Disease, mental laziness, doubt, lack of enthusiasm, clinging to sense-enjoyments, false perception, non-attainment of concentration, and falling away from concentration when it has been attained.”*(YS 1.30)

33.10 With infinite patience one must follow the path of Japam and meditation. Japam is specially suited for this age and the one practice that everybody can follow.

33.11 What you have to do now is to raise a certain thought in your mind and after that to make it flow in an unbroken stream. The movement of the beads should not be mechanical, but must be accompanied by the movement of thought. Mere movement of the beads won't do. It has no effect at all.

33.12 Japam if it be real Japam, is Dhyana [meditation] with interruptions and Dhyana is Japam without a break.

33.13 When the mind becomes a little concentrated you will find that this current is maintained. Somehow the thought then flows to

some extent along the right channel, whereas now it is flowing, too, but flowing in a wrong direction.

33.14 We want to have a definite object of meditation and maintain an unbroken stream of thought.

Vedantasara

[The Meaning of "I am Brahman"]

"Both the intellect and the Consciousness underlying it come into contact with the jar. The intellect destroys the ignorance regarding the jar, and the underlying Consciousness manifests the jar' (Panchadashi 7.91)." (179)

"Just as the light of a lamp coming into contact with the jar or cloth existing in darkness, dispels the darkness which envelops them and through its own lustre manifests them as well." (180)

[Study of Vedantic Texts]

"Till such realization of the Consciousness which is one's own Self, it is necessary to practise hearing, reflection, meditation and absorption (Samadhi). There these are also explained." (181)

"Hearing is the ascertainment through the six characteristic signs that the entire Vedanta philosophy establishes the one Brahman without a second." (182)

"Repetition is the frequent presentation of the subject-matter in the section. As e.g., in the same section, Brahman, the One without a second, is repeated nine times in the sentence, 'Thou art THAT'." (186)

[Reflection & Meditation]

"Reflection is the constant thinking of Brahman, the One without a second, already heard of from the teacher, by arguments agreeable to the purport Vedanta." (191)

"Meditation is a stream of ideas of the same kind as those of Brahman, the One without a second, to the exclusion of such foreign ideas as those of the body etc." (192)

[Samadhi its Nature & Varieties]

"Samadhi is of two kinds, viz., that attended with self-consciousness and that without it." (193)

"Savikalpa Samadhi, absorption attended with self-conscious-

ness, is that in which the mental state taking the form of Brahman, the One without a second, rests on it, but without the merging of the distinction of the knower, knowledge and the object of knowledge.” (194)

“Nirvikalpa Samadhi, absorption without self-consciousness, is the total mergence in Brahman, the One without a second, of the mental state which has assumed its form, the distinction of knower, knowledge, and the object of knowledge being in this case obliterated.” (197)

“Then, just as when salt has been dissolved in water, it is no longer perceived separately, and the water alone remains, similarly, the mental state that has assumed the form of Brahman, the One without a second, is no longer perceived, and only the Self remains.” (198)

[Samadhi & Sleep]

“Therefore there is no apprehension of its being identical with the state of deep sleep. For, though the mental state appears in neither, yet the difference between them lies in this that it exists in the Nirvikalpa Samadhi, but in deep sleep it does not.” (199)

[The Eightfold Practice]

“The steps to the attainment of this (Nirvikalpa Samadhi) are general discipline, particular discipline, posture, control of the vital force, self-withdrawal, concentration, meditation, and Savikalpa Samadhi, absorption with self-consciousness.” (200)

“General discipline, Yama, consists of non-injury, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence, and non-acceptance of gifts.” (201)

“Particular discipline, Niyama, consists of cleanliness, contentment, austerity, study of scriptures and meditation on God.” (202)

“Asana, posture, means the placing of one’s hands, feet, etc., in particular positions, such as Padmasana, etc. etc.” (203)

“Pranayama, control of the vital force, refers to exhalation, inhalation and retention of breath, which are means to the control of the vital force.” (204)

“Pratyahara, self-withdrawal, is the withdrawing of the sense-organs from their respective objects.” (205)

“Dharana, concentration, means the fixing of the mind on Brahman, the One without a second.” (206)

“Dhyana, meditation, is the intermittent resting of the mental state of Brahman, the One without a second.” (207)

[The Obstacles to Samadhi & Their Removal]

“Samadhi is what has already been described as attended with self-consciousness, Savikalpa.” (208)

“The Nirvikalpa Samadhi, of which these are the steps, has four obstacles, viz. torpidity, distraction, attachment and enjoyment.” (209)

“Torpidity is the lapse of the mental state into sleep because of the failure to rest on the Absolute.” (210)

“Distraction is the resting of the mental state on things other than the Absolute, because of the failure to rest on It.” (211)

“Attachment is the failure of the mental state to rest on the Absolute, owing to numbness, brought on by impressions² due to attachment, even when there is no torpidity or distraction.” (212)

“Enjoyment is the tasting by the mental state of the bliss of Savikalpa Samadhi owing to the failure to rest on the Absolute. Or it may mean continuing to taste the bliss of Savikalpa Samadhi while taking up the Nirvikalpa Samadhi.” (213)

“When the mind, free from these four obstacles, rests unmoved, like the flame of a lamp sheltered from the wind, as one with the Absolute Consciousness, it is called the Nirvikalpa Samadhi.” (214)

* * * * *

33.15 In Samadhi there is the spiritual consciousness, but in deep sleep there is no element of spiritual consciousness. The fact of spiritual consciousness being present and maintained differentiates one from the other, and it is the spiritual consciousness that brings about transformation. Then you come down from the heights an altogether changed, and altogether transformed man, whereas from the state of deep sleep you return just as you were before entering it.

33.16 Without the preservation of the vital force it is not possible for anyone to have real concentration of any kind, whether spiritual or non-spiritual. That is why continence and discipline are necessary for all forms of spiritual life before one can attain to any form of real-

2. The lurking desire for pleasures once experienced

ization. And all the Great Ones have taught this, in the East as well as in the West.

33.17 Ordinarily the mind is constantly running after sense-objects, and in order to fix the mind on the object of meditation, we must draw it away from all sense-objects, be they good or bad. Never allow the mind to be diverted from its own aim by any other thought. The Vedantic spiritual culture is always associated with the conception of Brahman.

33.18 In Dharana there are many breaks. In Dhyana there are breaks, but between these some connection is maintained. In Samadhi we have one unbroken flow of spiritual consciousness like the flow of oil that is being poured from one vessel into another.

33.19 The man who has not even Dharana, is the slave of his mind that goes in all directions. But as soon as a person gets at least to Dharana, he can fix the mind and fix it again and again, the very moment it begins to run away, and so one state gradually merges into the next. Dharana merges into Dhyana, Dhyana into Samadhi and finally Savikalpa Samadhi into Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

“As a lamp in a spot sheltered from the wind does not flicker’— even such has been the simile used for a Yogi of subdued mind, practising concentration on the Self.” (Bhagavad-Gita 6.19)

“When the mind, absolutely restrained by the practice of concentration, attains quietude, and when seeing the Self by the self, one is satisfied in his own Self; when he feels that infinite Bliss— which is perceived by the purified intellect and which transcends the senses, and established wherein he never departs from his real state; having obtained which, regards no other acquisition superior to that, and wherein established he is not moved even by heavy sorrow; —let that be known as the state, called by the name of Yoga, —a state of severance from the contact of pain. This Yoga should be practised with perseverance, undisturbed by depression of heart.” (Bhagavad-Gita 6.20-23)

“With the intellect set in patience, with the mind fastened on the Self, let him attain quietude by degrees: let him not think of anything.”

“Through whatever reason, the restless, unsteady mind wanders away, let him, curbing it from that, bring it under the subjugation of the Self alone.”

“Verily, the Supreme Bliss comes to that Yogi, of perfectly tranquil mind with passions quieted, Brahman-become, and freed from taint.”

“The Yogi freed from taint of good and evil, constantly engaging the mind thus, with ease attains the infinite bliss of contact with Brahman.” (Bhagavad-Gita 6.25-28)

33.20 Slowly, steadily, build up your meditation. Fix your mind on the Self. The candle may flicker before you attain Samadhi. But before you attain Samadhi, let the candle burn at least. See that it continues to burn, but stop its flickering.

33.21 The joy of those who have attained to the highest consciousness is so great that their mind goes on in its onward course. They do not return.

33.22 Our task is how to make the candle steady, how to remove the gusts of wind, how to curb all the thoughts that rise.

33.23 Energy will always find manifestation. If you stop the manifestation of energy on one plane, it finds its expression on another plane. If you stop the creative force on one plane, it manifests itself on some other plane. Then you come to have psychic powers. But we need that concentration that is connected with the sublimation of all desires and passions and raises the creative urge from the physical plane to the mental or, even better, to the spiritual plane. We need that concentration that brings about tremendous sense-control and purity and a complete transformation of the person, leading him up to spiritual consciousness.

Paying the full price

33.24 Sri Ramakrishna always used to say, *“When you go to buy a piece of cloth worth a rupee, the merchant will not give it to you for even a pie less. You have to pay the full price.”* — In spiritual life we will not get our piece of cloth if we are not prepared to pay the full price in every way. There can be no bargaining or bartering in the spiritual path.

33.25 In North India a sadhu never even talks to a householder of the higher aspects of Vedanta, or of spiritual life, as such. Spiritual life, the higher form of Vedanta or Christianity, and sex-life are wholly incompatible. Vedanta without purity is impossible. Sometimes householders ask me, “Is it not good for us to read books on Vedanta?” Then I say, “Yes. Read them if you like.” But a house-

holder can never achieve anything regarding the higher forms of practices or spiritual life, so long as he does not give up his attachments and physical relations with others. First the gross form of desire must go, after that, the subtle form. The causal form remains until you reach the very highest illumination. But after the realization of Brahman even this is completely burned. A burnt seed never again sprouts. A burnt rope never again binds anything. First there must be no sex-life on the physical plane, if you really desire to follow some Great One, like Christ or Sri Ramakrishna, or if you wish to follow the teachings of higher Vedanta, otherwise everything will be mere talk, frothy words. First you must pay the full price, and, remember, the full price is a large amount.

“This Atman has to be realized through Truth, through penance, right knowledge and Brahmacharya.” — First of all physically, then mentally, then in all the different aspects.

33.26 The Vedantic practices demand much energy and power of resistance, and above all a calm mind and strong nerves. Therefore Brahmacharya [continence] must be stressed. Unbroken Brahmacharya is necessary, otherwise not one even of the Vedantic practices is possible. They can even become very dangerous. As I said, you have to pay the price for your piece of cloth, and this price includes sexual purity. Never break your Brahmacharya. Do not brood over your past and the impurities of your past. Wipe out all such impressions. What is done, is done. You can no longer change that, but you can build up a new future. Strike at the very root of all desires. Remember Christ’s teaching, *“For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother’s womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.”* (Mt 19.12) — That is Christ’s opinion of marriage and sexual relationships.

34 -- Wiesbaden, December 24th, 1933

Christmas 1933

34.01 Christmas, in the West, has become a social function. Nothing more. It is not Christ’s birth that is being celebrated, but it has become a social custom and the occasion for worldly, social festivities.

34.02 All the Great Teachers are still there on the mental plane. According to their tendencies, the devotees get the vision of them. As you know, Swamiji saw Buddha when he was still quite a boy, and became terribly afraid. In later years he was sorry for that.

“And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold, I bring good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good will toward men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them, concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.” (Luke 2.1-20)

[After that, Swami Vivekananda's 'Christ the Messenger' was read.]

34.03 Sankara has said, *“Let the Buddha in me awake.”* Simi-

larly we may pray, “*May the Christ in us awake. May we realize the ideal for which He stood, the ideal for which He laid down His life, the ideal of all the Great Ones. May there be illumination, peace and good will on earth and among men.*” May Christmas mean the birth of Christ in us, not only a social function, and not only even the mere remembrance of His physical birth.

34.04 On the birthdays of all the Great Ones we should devote more time to recollection and meditation and prayer and avoid all outer distractions all the more. They should not be days of outward festivities and social rejoicings, but of quiet withdrawal into our own innermost soul where we can find them always if we are able to reach their plane of consciousness. Do not think they are gone. No. They exist now as they existed in the past, as they existed in their life-time. So everybody who is sincere and learns how to raise his consciousness, withdrawing it from the physical, and how to fix it on them and their ideal, can come in touch with them and be in their company. Do not think Christ merely lived two thousand years ago. Do not think Buddha is dead and gone.

34.05 In the beginning of our spiritual life we may think God is separate from ourselves, and we are all separate from one another. As the result of our moral and ethical discipline, when we are really able to chasten ourselves, we find we are part and parcel with Him, we all form the different parts of a mighty organism. When our mind is further purified, we come to feel that in our true spiritual nature freed from the limiting adjuncts we are eternally one with God, that our individuality and personality is a myth and becomes merged in the One Undivided Principle, the One without a second, the *THAT* of the Upanishads, the “*I and my Father are one*” of Christ. This is the ultimate consummation of all spiritual striving and Sadhana.

34.06 Without caring for the greatest thing in life we continually busy ourselves with the passing, with the ephemeral things of the world, with phenomena instead of with that which is, has been and will be for all time to come. Let us ponder deeply over the unfalsified teaching of Christ. Let us go to Him and not to His interpreters. Let us listen to His voice and pray to Him to grant us the capacity to understand His eternal teaching. Let His birthday be our birthday, the birthday of our reality, doing away with all the encrustations and superimpositions which veil our true nature and prevent us from reaching the light which has been ours since time immemorial. May

His grace and the grace of all the Great Ones descend upon us and illumine our understanding and heart. May this birthday of Christ awaken in us the true yearning for the higher life and give us the strength to follow Him and to reach Him.

35 -- Wiesbaden, December 25th, 1933

Temptation

“God has so created the senses that they go outward, and man sees only the external world, and not the self.”

(Katha Upanishad 2.1.1)

35.01 It is only the wise person who turns his mind and senses inward. Unless we are prepared to rise above the temptations of the senses, it is not possible for us to lead a really spiritual life. The senses must not be given food, they have to be curbed. Unless we are able to rid ourselves of the temptations presented to our mind by the senses, unless we are able to achieve the control of this unruly mind, it is not possible truly to turn to the Divine and make Him the pivot of our life.

35.02 When Nachiketas went to Yama, Death, and asked him the most difficult question as to what was Truth, Death answered:—

“Choose sons and grandsons which shall live a hundred years, herds of cattle, elephants, horses and gold; choose a vast territory on earth, and live thyself as many years as thou desirest. Ask for some other boon that thou thinkest equal to this, such as wealth and long life. O Nachiketas, be a king of the wide earth. I will make thee the enjoyer of all desires. Whatever objects of desire are difficult to get in this world of the mortal, do thou ask for them all according to thy choice; —these fair damsels with their chariots and musical instruments —such indeed are not obtainable by man— be thou attended on by them whom I bestow upon thee. But ask not anything about death.”

35.03 And then came the beautiful answer of Nachiketas which proves him to have been a real devotee:

“All those are most transient, O Death, they wear out all sense-vigour of the mortal. Moreover all lives are short indeed. So keep thy horses, dance and song for thyself. Tell me, O Death, about that, that Supreme Life of hereafter, in which people have doubt. None shall Nachiketas choose other than that goal which is so mysterious.”

35.04 And after having tested him thus, Yama proceeded to instruct him in the highest knowledge.

35.05 We find temptation in the lives of all the Great Ones. By this they have shown us how to overcome temptation and how to follow the path. They themselves did not need any temptation, but without being shown practically the possibility of overcoming all temptation we would have said that this was impossible and that their case was different.

35.06 Especially during our meditation our desires become very vivid, take a terribly definite shape. So do our attachments. It is a severe test that comes to all of us without any exception. So our attitude should be that of Nachiketas. During the moments of our temptation we should say, "O Lord, keep all these temptations to Thyself. We do not want them." Physical temptations are nothing compared with mental temptations. The finer our world becomes, the more sensitive we grow, the greater the struggle. So the thoughts of the different Great Ones and of their attitude should give us greater and greater strength to fight the battle successfully. Hence when sitting for meditation always send salutations to them.

35.07 There are two different states, the state of the aspirant, and the state of the perfect man. Of the first Sankara says, "*He avoids the company of people, looking upon them as poisonous serpents. Even the most beautiful form he looks upon as a dead body, and objects of sense-enjoyment he avoids as he would poison.*" — This is in the beginning when the aspirant wants to lead a pure life without having overcome his passions and desires. But when he himself has realized Truth, all this sense of hatred and of aversion passes away. So Sankara says, "*The whole world has become to him like a Divine pleasure-garden. All trees appear to him to be the wish-yielding tree in heaven. All waters appear to him as the holy Ganges water. All acts become to him consecrated acts. All sounds, whether gross or refined, good or bad, become to him the Vedic sound. The whole world becomes to him the holy city of Benares. Such becomes the vision of him who has realized the Truth, who has known Brahman.*" — Then all fear of temptation has left him. At that stage he has gone beyond its sway.

35.08 But these two stages should be clearly separated. First we must make use of the staircase, and only afterwards, when we ourselves have reached the terrace can we look down upon the stair-

case as something very small compared with the terrace and its amenities.

Steps to realization

35.09 We must have dispassion for all enjoyments in this life and in future lives. We must be able to discriminate between what is eternal and unchanging and what is transitory and fraught with pain and danger. We must come to possess the six ethical virtues: Tranquillity of mind, restraint of senses, renunciation of desires, endurance, placidity of mind, and faith. And lastly we must possess a burning desire for liberation from the trammels of nature. This means we must have a tremendous yearning for the Truth.

35.10 Learn to see things as they are. Everywhere on the phenomenal plane you find filth and flowers side by side. They are eternally inseparable so long as we do not go beyond the plane of manifestation which is the plane of the pairs of opposites. During the time of your early Sadhana create a disgust for the world and its expression through these pairs of opposites.

35.11 The first step towards a realization of God is to see in this body the greatest temple of the Divine. You must throw away all the filth you have stored up during innumerable years and above all you must see that you do not allow your mind to accumulate any new filth.

“There are various holy things, holy waters, holy mountains, temples, and the like, but the heart of the devotee is the greatest temple. It takes time for us to be purified by the holy waters etc., but the truly holy man purifies us in no time. And it is he who makes the holy places holier and makes our Scriptures that embody his experiences sources of inspiration to us.”
—(Bhagavatam 10.48.31, 1.13.10)

35.12 Only when the aspirant realizes Him in the very depths of his own being, he realizes Him in all. The human body is the greatest temple of God, for in it we have to realize Him.

“All dependence on externals is misery. Dependence on the Self alone is Bliss.”

35.13 Childhood has to be outgrown. And if we want to be children all our life, we cannot be children in the higher sense. We should possess the purity of a child, but not a child's ignorance.

35.14 You must learn to touch the mind at the right point. You

cannot get milk from the cow if you do not know how to milk it. You must become expert milkers if you want to get the greatest quantity of milk.

35.15 The mind has many compartments. Some of them you must lock up carefully, and then set fire to them. Other compartments must be unlocked, but finally you must set fire to them also, for Truth is beyond both.

35.16 Spiritual life does not mean passing over a bed of roses. The soul's path is not a path strewn with beautiful fragrant flowers. We must never be afraid of tremendous struggle. Spiritual life means this, but then there is pleasure in weathering the storm, there is pleasure in struggling. You get greater strength, greater steadiness and greater knowledge.

35.17 Swami Vivekananda used to say, "*Constant struggle is a form of worship to the Lord. Repeated defeats should not unnerve thee. Let all thy hankerings, all thy desires be reduced to dust. Make thy heart a cremation-ground, and let the MOTHER dance there. God comes only when the heart is pure. Let the MOTHER dance there.*"

35.18 Without morals spiritual life cannot be begun. And the higher forms of love must uproot our sense-bound affections for human dolls and create the right outlook which, in its turn, gives us great sympathy and insight and the true spirit of sacrifice. Once this new outlook has become alive in us, there is no more danger from human dolls and affections that are time-bound and create fetters and dungeons for ourselves as well as for others. The very moment Love comes into our heart, all counterfeits of Love vanish.

36 -- Wiesbaden, December 26th, 1933

Practise

36.01 The morning is the best time for the practices and meditation, immediately we get up from bed. Always the early morning is the best time, but then, we should practise Japam and meditate at least for a few minutes in the evening, when dusk is falling, too. If we have time enough, it is good to perform our practices at the time of the four junctions of the day, i.e., at dawn, midday, nightfall and midnight, because they mean a change in the current and in the vibra-

tions. If we cannot do so much, we should at least stick to the early morning and nightfall practices.

36.02 How many times do we eat during the day? So if we can find time enough for our meals, what about our spiritual food? Is it less important? The early morning is the best time, because sleep, in a way, has cut us off from our memory.

36.03 The general rule is:— practise rhythmic breathing, because breath acts on the mind, just as the mind acts on breath. The breath becomes very much attenuated during Japam. Whenever the mind is really concentrated, breath is minimized. This is a great sign by which to measure the stage of concentration we have attained.

36.04 We in our true nature are not products of Maya, but unchangeable spiritual entities. Man is a spiritual entity, not a body or a mind or a combination of both. Man is eternally beyond Maya, and only for this reason is there any hope of salvation.

36.05 Such is our inordinate and blind clinging to this body of ours that we are only busy with the pleasures of the body.

36.06 We go through the experiences of life, undergo the miseries of life, repeat the bitter experiences again and again, but all this does not make us wiser in any way. We are continually running after the mirage to quench our thirst with its waters, but this can never be done.

“As a lamp in a spot sheltered from the wind does not flicker’—even such has been the simile used for a Yogi of subdued mind, practising concentration in the Self.”

“When the mind, absolutely restrained by the practice of concentration, attains quietude, and when seeing the Self by the self, one is satisfied in his own Self; when he feels that infinite bliss—which is perceived by the (purified) intellect and which transcends the senses, and established wherein he never departs from his real state; and having obtained which, regards no other acquisition superior to that, and where established, he is not moved even by heavy sorrow; let that be known as the state, called by the name of Yoga—a state of severance from the contact of pain. This Yoga should be practised with perseverance, undisturbed by depression of heart.”

“With the intellect set in patience, with the mind fastened on the Self, let him attain quietude by degrees: let him not think of anything.”

“Through whatever reason the restless, unsteady mind wanders away, let him, curbing it from that, bring it under the subjugation of the Self alone.”

“Verily, supreme bliss comes to that Yogi of perfectly tranquil mind, with passions quieted, Brahman-become, and freed from taint.”

“The Yogi, freed from taint (of good and evil), constantly engaging the mind thus, with ease attains the infinite bliss of contact with Brahman.” (Bhagavad-Gita 6.19-23, 25-28)

36.07 Slowly, steadily build up your meditation with great purity of heart. The mind must be fixed on the Self. The mind must be made steady and unflickering. Very often we imagine that if a certain desire were satisfied, it would leave us, but the truth is that every time a desire is satisfied it becomes stronger. You cannot really satisfy any desire. Desire, as such, refuses to be satisfied and only begins to clamour all the more, the more you try to satisfy it.

“Verily this desire for enjoyment never becomes satisfied through enjoyment. The desires go on increasing and become more and more intense as in the case of the fire when clarified butter is poured into it.”

36.08 If this be the truth, we must cry halt somewhere and turn the mind fully to truth.

36.09 *“This body is full of filth and dirt and contains thousands of worms; really it is so repulsive when you think of it, so foul.”* — Learn to face the truth. Those who are ignorant find pleasure in it, but not the wise. Even if you feel repulsed by such ideas you must have the strength and the capacity to face this truth. Is there anything truer than that? Can you ever keep the body clean? Make use of this body for higher purposes. Do not neglect it, but, at the same time, know its true nature. We all should make use of this life that is given us for higher purposes.

36.10 True discontent must be created, because true discontent is the beginning of spiritual life.

36.11 We only look at the outward beauty which is but skin-deep. We forget the spirit and think that this beauty belongs to the body. It is just one aspect of Maya. It is all a question of separating what is true from what is false, a question of dispassion and discrimination and sober judgment. The spirit has been caught in the

net of matter. Reality and unreality have become mixed up, and it is the task of the spiritual aspirant to separate the Real from the unreal.

36.12 The Reality, the Truth, the Atman, has to be realized as the Upanishads say. If a man attains IT here, then he reaches the goal of life. If he does not realize IT here, then he passes through miseries of births and deaths. *“The wise, having realized the Atman in themselves and in all beings, attain to Immortality and Peace.”*

36.13 In Vedanta you must first of all create terrible dispassion in yourself and then turn the mind from the unreal to the Real. This world itself is a prison-house and this body of ours is a terrible dark cell in this prison. So the task of life is to light the cell with the Divine Light, and, after that, to break the cell and the prison and become free.

36.14 The spiritual aspirant should always be bold enough to face the Truth as IT is. It is very grim, very painful, but in the long run Truth brings Light and annihilates all pain.

36.15 We should endeavour to attain to the Highest in this life before we die.

“The fire of knowledge burns away all our Karma, all our sins; it turns them to ashes.”

36.16 But then we must allow the Divine to burn all this Karma, instead of constantly creating a new one.

“All doubts are removed, all the knots of the heart are rent asunder, all Karma is burnt away, when Truth is known.”

37 -- Wiesbaden, December 27th, 1933

Pilgrimage

37.01 Pilgrimage is the lowest form of spiritual practice. First come meditation on the Truth, then dwelling on the higher ideals spoken of in the Scriptures, and next dwelling on the Mantram, and then the lowest is pilgrimage.

Cease being egocentric

“The wandering monk and the running stream gather no moss.”

“Without caring for pleasure and misery, without caring for gain or loss, fight this battle of life. Thus you will not commit any sin.”

“Make Me the centre of your life. Surrender yourself to Me. Then you will attain grace.”

37.02 We must shift the centre of our interest, not only the physical nerve-centre in the body. We are trustees of the Lord. We should cease to be egocentric and try to fix our whole mind on Him. If we have to choose between extensity and intensity, we must always chose intensity.

“Those who speak of non-dualism and busy themselves only with the affairs of the world, lose this world and the next. Such people have to be always avoided like the outcaste.”

“Lord, when I have this body-consciousness, I look upon Thee as my Master and I am Thy servant. When I think myself to be a soul endowed with a mind, I feel I am Thy part and Thou art the Whole. And when I feel that I am the spirit distinct from the body and mind, I am one with Thee.” (A prayer of Mahavira [Hanuman])

How to progress

37.03 Our progress is always to be judged by our purity and non-attachment, by our introspection and discrimination, by our peace and selflessness. The test is whether we feel purer and purer and become less attached, whether the trend of the mind is away from all sense-objects and manifestation and becoming higher and higher. The test is whether we are slowly becoming able to stand on our own feet spiritually when we pass through moral and spiritual tempests which all striving brings. We have to colour our whole mind with the Divine and centre all our feelings and endeavours on IT alone

37.04 It is the great task of the devotee to increase the capacity for noble thought, but this noble thought must not be given any outward expression in the beginner. Drive it deep into your mind, for then it gets tremendous power. You see, when an elephant gets into a small pond, the whole water is disturbed and begins to overflow the banks. But when it gets into the sea, there is no change at all.

37.05 Maya’s net is spread everywhere, and somehow we are always caught in it. We are able to make progress if we succeed in throwing aside all the stumbling blocks that lie in our way in the form of ‘Woman and Gold’ and undauntedly to forge ahead. *“Arise, awake and stop not till the Goal is reached.” (Katha Up. 1.3.14)* — We should go farther and farther and farther without looking back, with-

out caring for the small, petty, transient things of phenomenal life, without giving in to our desires and impulses, for then alone can we gain true freedom.

37.06 The moment you want to go in, bolt the door. The moment you want to come out, open the bolts. This is the goal to be attained. We must have perfect control of our own moods, and not be the slaves of them. Instead of just looking at the face of the Lord, saying, "O Lord, how beautiful is Thy nose, how wonderful are Thy eyes", lead a higher life, lead a life of consecration and purity and freedom from desires and impulses, and continence. Become moral. Do the will of the Lord. No use talking endlessly of the beauties and marvels of creation and worlds and the universe, because the Lord is infinitely greater than His so-called creation which only seems great to us.

37.07 We must rise to a plane which is beyond all desires and impulses, above the good ones and the bad ones. For from the good emotion to the bad emotion is but a very short way. Never should there be any uncontrolled experience of love. Never allow love to be expressed or seek expression on the physical plane. Avoid any kind of emotionalism if you want to lead a spiritual life. Keep your emotions under control and learn to direct them into the right channels.

37.08 One should never feel shy of facing the Reality, however grim it may be.

37.09 Especially people who have some good and pure tendencies, some higher aspirations after a spiritual life, should be particularly careful and never give in to any form of lower desires for enjoyment, never give them any expression on the physical plane. They should avoid externalizing their desires and wishes more than anybody else, because they carry in them the germ for higher things. With great care separate the old thoughts, eliminate them, see that they can no longer gain ascendancy over you. When we water the tree, the weeds become very strong too, but the weeds will have to be rooted out.

*"Thou art woman, Thou art man, Thou art boy, Thou art girl.
Thou art born everywhere."*

"He is neither woman nor man, nor neuter."

"He is associated with various bodies and is spoken of as having the sex of that body."

37.10 Very strongly and decidedly strike at the roots of all sex-ideas. Only when we think of the sexless, we can rise above the sex-idea. All sex is of the body, not of the soul, and the best way to conquer lust and bodily passions is to think of ourselves as spiritual entities. Vedantic teachers go to the very root of the matter, others only take us to some half-way house, without really solving this most important problem.

37.11 Sankaracharya says, *“Truth is neither feminine, nor masculine, nor neuter. It is beyond all differentiation.”*

Imaginations that help

37.12 Certain imaginations help us very much. Think of yourself as a Divine spark that is associated with the body, with its centre between the eyebrows, or even higher up in the head, but for most people it is better to take the eyebrows. Imagine a house that is lighted in the upper story. Imagine the light of the soul to be between the eyebrows. There must be a fixed centre of your consciousness. It is this:— The lamp is always placed in a certain part of the room and its light never penetrates equally into all the corners of the room. Having a fixed centre of consciousness in one of the higher centres is the only remedy against all lust and sex-troubles and infatuation for a man or a woman.

37.13 It is very necessary for us to think of others as absolutely devoid of and beyond sex, and of ourselves as absolutely devoid of and beyond sex too. Associate the idea of Brahman both with the object and with the subject. *“Salutation to the sexless Self that is within, salutation to the sexless Self that is without.”*— Give the same injection to both over and over again. These Vedantic injections must be very strong. Real, strong allopathic injections.

37.14 Imagine very vividly that only one undivided mass of Divine Effulgence exists everywhere. Dissolve everything else into that till nothing else exists anywhere. Sometimes for meditation merge the subject and the object in the Infinite and Limitless Ocean of Light.

37.15 If you really care for Jnana or wish to dwell on the Impersonal Aspect, you will have to withdraw the mind completely from the lower centres, and fix it firmly in the higher centres of the head, because the highest part of the body is the seat of the Paramatman. There alone can the individual be merged into the Universal. There alone full illumination and transmutation are possible.

37.16 There is one very important point to note in our striving. When we judge ourselves, we should always judge ourselves from our weakest point, never from our strongest. The strength of a chain consists wholly in that of its weakest link, not in that of its strongest link. And we can only know where we really stand by testing the weakest link of the chain in ourselves, not by overlooking it and complacently dwelling on the stronger links.

37.17 Raising one's consciousness really means giving the brain-centre alone the work and guidance, and never to any of the lower centres in the body which are connected with it. It means forgetting the body and its impulses and coming in touch with subtler and higher currents.

37.18 The flow of the vital fluid should be upward too, never downward. All gross and physical manifestations of the vital fluid have to be avoided by the earnest aspirant, even if now and then such a thought arises in his mind, even if now and then the centre of his consciousness shows a tendency to go down. Our task is to control the centres and to learn to switch off the current at the original power-station. Try to control the different centres from the power-station, from where it can be easily and naturally done. If you do this, there will be just enough nervous current to flow through the entire system to keep it in a fit and healthy condition, but not more than that. The downward flow of all the current that is not absolutely necessary for that, will be completely stopped.

38 -- Wiesbaden, December 28th, 1933

You are pure by nature

38.01 Too much of human feelings sometimes stands in the way of our spiritual progress. It is not a question of heartlessness, but a question of really purified feelings, of becoming 'pure in heart'

"If you want to worship the Divine, first be Divine."

38.02 In many cases it is good first to note down a definite set of ideas before we sit for meditation, otherwise the mind gets confused and everything becomes vague and hazy even when the beginning was good.

38.03 Spiritual life means developing a new sense of consciousness as distinct from the gross body, the subtle body and the causal body.

“May this physical body become pure, may my mind become pure, may my soul become pure.”

“I am the Spirit, free from all taints and impurities.”

38.04 The best way of attaining real purity is to think we are pure by nature, and never to think of sin, of impurity, of weakness, of imperfection. No. We are all perfect by nature, but we have forgotten our eternal perfection and thereby go on committing no end of mistakes. But as soon as we regain the memory of our true essence, impurity, sin, imperfection are nothing more than so many dreams. This purity wells up from within, because it is ours and has been ours from time immemorial. It never comes from outside. It is not superadded, nor to be newly created. Spiritual life means this growth from within, though really speaking it is not really a growth, but only an ‘un-covering’, for unless perfection and purity were inside and belonged to our own essence, we could never become pure and perfect, we could never be saved.

38.05 Bring about a transformation within, then this transformation automatically finds expression in the outside world. Our entire nature must be purified. See that you do not only whitewash it but that you lay the ground-colour on in the proper way. Have daily intense spiritual practice. That will help you to rise above your false, impure personality. Through your false, impure personality your thoughts become impure and tainted, but if your real personality were impure, you could never be purified, and there could be no hope of salvation for any of you. Good thoughts, deeds and words are great aids, but they alone, without steady spiritual practice, are not enough, and they could never transform you into something which you are not.

The Mantram

38.06 The Mantram is, as it were, the body of God and brings us nearer to the Divine. Shoot the arrow and see that the arrow reaches the right target and becomes fixed in it. With a calm, steady mind hit the target, and then, just like the arrow, be one with it. Ordinarily we have no target and then everything just becomes aimless bombardment. Unless you have succeeded in hitting the target you should never be satisfied.

38.07 Never tell anybody about your spiritual practices and your Mantram. Never disclose to anybody what you are told to do.

Guidelines for the celibate

38.08 Too much softness, too much goodness, too much kindness, all these are very dangerous, especially if one wishes to lead a perfectly clean, sexless, celibate life. Fatiguing the body has its use, but it does not go to the root of the matter. It does not go to the root of sex. One has to take special care if one finds these thoughts troublesome. During such periods take a little less food. All such rules must be followed carefully. It is always better to be a little stiff on the surface, not to give expression to one's feelings, always to be reserved and dignified. Every aspirant must be reserved and dignified in his attitude towards the other sex. For then no person of the other sex will ever dare to show wrong feelings for him. The aspirant should be polite, but not chivalrous or romantic, but aloof and dignified. Every aspirant must be a gentleman or a gentlewoman, but there is no place for chivalry in the spiritual life, for chivalry, in most cases, has sex as its basis and is an expression of sex. In such cases it is far better to let the other sex say, "Ah, this fellow is afraid of us. He is rude. He has no heart for us." Never pay attention to anybody saying such things, but first you must redeem yourself from sex, and then you can show others the way to do this and attain freedom. It is always better to salute the other sex at a safe distance, till a person has succeeded in redeeming himself from his sexual desires and impulses.

38.09 Always keep your centre of consciousness, always watch the trend of your thoughts; always prevent impure thoughts from taking form through concentration, through some extra meditation. This will greatly help you in giving them all the right direction. Always be careful in the choice of your food, too.

38.10 In the case of a householder, if there are passions, the passions are satisfied, but in the case of the Brahmacharin the struggle becomes tremendous in some cases and at certain periods of his Sadhana, and then the danger is very great. First the Brahmacharin has to control the sexual passions and then he has to sublimate them. So the Brahmacharin and the earnest spiritual aspirant can never be careful enough. If we do not attain the ideal of perfect celibacy—which includes mental celibacy, not only physical celibacy—or if we lower it the least little bit, we are just nowhere as spiritual aspirants.

38.11 Plenty of hard exercise is very good. Torturing the body

as the Christian mystics used to do, helps a little, for it, too, diverts the superfluous not yet transmuted energies and inhibits certain sexual centres, but all these do not strike at the root of the matter. Thus the problem just remains in abeyance and is never really solved.

38.12 Sex-consciousness is inseparable from body-consciousness, and to the extent we think we are not bodies and sexless, we attenuate the sex-instinct. Always shift the consciousness to the centre of your consciousness. See that you give the whole nervous current an upward direction.

38.13 Some people become very aggressive at the time of their Sadhana. The reason is this:— We try to control the sex-thought, and some outside stimuli awaken it. So it finds its expression in aggressiveness etc. Be very careful about the company you allow yourself to be in. Avoid all people that are not leading a sexually pure and strictly moral life. All these are extremely dangerous, if you really wish to struggle on.

*Truth never comes where lust and fame and greed
Of gain reside. No man who thinks of woman
As his wife can ever perfect be;
Nor he who owns the least of things, nor he
Whom anger chains, can ever pass thro' Maya's gates,
So, give these up, Sannyasin bold! Say—
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"*

(Swami Vivekananda: The Song of the Sannyasin)

38.14 People who give free license to their desires and passions in the name of freedom or fearlessness always come to grief. Once the Holy Mother remarked in connection with the fall of an advanced aspirant, "**My child, one who at first accepts all objects of enjoyment except woman, cannot by any means resist woman for a long time. He cannot but succumb to this aspect of Maya.**"

38.15 So long as Unity has not been fully realized in practical life, and one takes the relative plane to be intensely real, one should not fail to mark the difference in the manifestations and act wisely. In the One there is no difference, but in the phenomenal world there is always a difference between a fool and an intelligent person, between an unreflective and a reflective one, between a spiritual person and a worldling.

38.16 As Swamiji very nicely puts it, though both are made of the same substance, the clay-elephant is not the same as the clay-mouse. There is no question of equality on the phenomenal plane. So Sri Ramakrishna always used to say, "*Give honour where honour is due.*" Those who lose all sense of proportion in the phenomenal never attain to the Absolute plane. One who is established in Unity is alone fearless. All others are cowards who try to hide their inner weakness with a show of strength and independence. It is all self-deception.

38.17 In the West, all these sexually aggressive people one meets make it terribly difficult for you and intensify your struggle. Avoid all such danger-zones and all such free people who are proud of their so-called freedom which is nothing but abject slavery. If you cannot find clean people of your own sex, avoid all company and stay alone in the company of the Lord. This is the only way to salvation for the beginner. Avoid all talks about the other sex or sex-topics. Avoid seeing any sexually attractive picture. Do not read any novels or any other books on such topics. Do not see any plays that have to do with sex. Avoid the outward sex-stimulus so long as the tug-of-war is going on inside you. All reading and any occupation that brings us in touch with any form of sex-stimulus must be carefully avoided during the period of our Sadhana. If we do not do this, we shall never attain the necessary purification for the higher forms of practices, and we are bound to come to grief, sooner or later. Then there is no freedom and no fearlessness for us. Then we shall never rise to the full stature of a human being, but always remain animals with more or less developed minds.

39 -- Wiesbaden, December 29th, 1933

Auspicious days for more meditation

39.03 Very good days for meditation on which we should have some extra meditation are the **new-moon** day, the **eighth day before the full moon** and the **full-moon** day.

Brahmacharya

39.01 Good nerves are absolutely necessary for spiritual life. Both, good nerves and the storing up of energy are the condition for

success. There are so many storms on the path of which you have no inkling up to now. Never try to lead a woman. Never show your affection for another person outwardly, because then the mind comes down to the lower centres very easily.

39.02 There are so many different types of men, but women are far more complex than men. So, in a way, women are more dangerous, because of their greater complexity. Never allow any woman to become familiar. In spiritual life Brahmacharya must be kept on all accounts. One may have feelings and emotions, but all these should be kept under pressure and never be given outward expression

39.04 If the present-day world comes to recognize again the great value of Brahmacharya, there is still some hope of its recovering. And it is our task not only to be pure ourselves, but to attain to such a high state of purity that others, too, in our presence feel pure and begin to think pure thoughts.

39.05 We should think as souls, never as men or women, never in terms of relations of sex. We must overhaul our whole thought-structure. Dig up the foundations, build new ones and only after having done so begin to raise the new structure.

Carefully study the mind

39.06 Every aspirant should carefully study his own mind when left to himself. He should find out who are the persons with whom the mind is busy, what are the desires and tendencies of his mind when there are no outward stimuli. Smuggle in the Divine in some way or other, when the mind is trying to deceive you, as it always does.

39.07 This mind is to be watched over constantly. When we find that it is careless in small daily things, it is sure to be careless in meditation and other practices as well. That alone which conforms with the higher standard of life is beneficial and is to be done by you.

39.08 A careless thinker cannot be but careless in his meditation. We do not get a new mind when we sit for meditation. No use living in a clean room, with a dirty mind.

39.09 In Karma-Yoga two points must be stressed. The work of the Karma-Yogi must be entirely disinterested, it must be systematic and steady. There must be no idea of self or of the fruits of his work in anything he does, and it must be done only for others.

40 -- Wiesbaden, December 30th, 1933

The Divine purifier is in us

40.01 No man lives without love, only the object of love is different. We either run after creatures and sense-pleasures or after the Divine, and this running after the Divine comprises all phases of spiritual life, as it were. The purificatory disciplines, as such, are not spiritual life, but steps leading to the beginning of spiritual life. In the very nature of things, spiritual life means something higher than negative injunctions, something positive. But we can never really care for spiritual life from the very bottom of our heart, unless all such negative rules and prescriptions serving the purificatory stage have been strictly followed. Wherever there is lust and greed and desire for worldly things and worldly enjoyment, there real Divine Love can never come. You cannot serve two masters, as Christ said.

40.02 The Divine is in us and works in us, as the sun is in the air, as fire in the red-hot iron ball, and as soon as we come to feel this, as soon as we get a glimpse of our real nature, of the indwelling Principle in all, all weakness and falsehood and wrong actions gradually begin to disappear in our life. But first we must become, at least to some extent, conscious of our true nature, and allow the Divine to purify our impure limited mind and body. That is why a clear conception of Truth and Reality is so very necessary in the beginner, whether he happens to be a Bhakta or a Jnani or one following the path of analysis and psychic control.

40.03 Never lose sight of the fact that the purificatory stage and disciplines are but phases leading to spiritual life, but are not spiritual life, and that true spiritual life is not a negation, but the greatest and most fearless affirmation possible, i.e., the affirmation of our very own Self, not subject to any limiting adjuncts, not subject to sin or weakness or ignorance, not bound to anything, not fettered by anything, devoid of all forms of desires and want, eternally free, eternally unlimited by impurity and all the pairs of opposites and eternally full of the highest Bliss and Knowledge. "*I am He*" is the greatest affirmation of Truth ever taught and ever realized in the world of man.

40.04 In the purificatory stage Brahmacharya is absolutely necessary, and if the world to-day comes to recognize again the great value of Brahmacharya, there is still some hope of its recovery. Impurity, immorality, sex-indulgence, are eternally inseparable from

brutishness and brutality, and these can never be outgrown, unless Brahmacharya is once more give its real place in the life of men and nations. What is natural in the man of self-realization, must needs be strained in the life of the aspirant approaching the threshold of spiritual life.

True vision

40.05 All the Great Ones exist eternally, not on the physical, but on the mental plane. There are visions and visions, and the test of them is whether there is any real transformation of our whole being or, whether we are what we were before the vision. If a man does not lead a life of perfect chastity, he has certainly not seen the Divine, but may have seen a monkey.

40.06 All the Great Ones have the personal and the impersonal aspect, because they all represent both aspects in one person.

40.07 A vision of the right sort we can have only when we possess a very strong, healthy, chaste, pure body that is really able to withstand all the reactions consequent upon such a vision, and when we possess a wholly purified and dispassionate mind and true spiritual insight that makes us feel we are neither the body nor the mind, nor man or woman, but spiritual entities distinct from all these.

40.08 Our body and mind and senses must be perfectly attuned to each other, so that even the body reflects the glory of the soul.

40.09 True vision, even with form, always contains the spiritual element and reflects the glory of Brahman. And, remember, it is always better to be a dualist with realization, than a monist without realization. True vision with form is a step leading you to higher and higher stages of spirituality, but theoretical monism without any realization just leaves you nowhere. The Absolute is very far off, and what we are concerned with in our present stage is qualified non-dualism at the best.

40.10 If all the senses are stilled and controlled, in perfect condition, and if the mind, too, is in that state, then alone true vision becomes possible, not otherwise. There is a very marked difference between the hallucination of an overheated brain or body and that state of true vision.

Always the test is whether we attain more and more purity and greater and greater dispassion, holiness and concentration.

Stages of spiritual practice

40.11 When by strictly following the rules of **Yama** and **Niyama**, mind and body have become fit, then only will Japam and meditation become efficacious. Persons who do not wish to follow the prescriptions of Yama and Niyama, should give up all attempts at spiritual life. Their time has not yet come.

40.12 There is a test whether our body and mind are becoming fit for spiritual practice, whether the mental and physical purity is all right, and it is this:— whether true disgust for one's own body and intercourse with others arises in a person or not.

40.13 **Pratyahara** is the drawing in of the organs by their giving up their own objects and taking the form of the mind-stuff, as it were. The senses are drawn away from their objects, and the one thought on which we have decided to dwell, alone exists.

40.14 **Dharana** is holding the mind on to some particular object. And then this Dharana develops into **Dhyana**, which is an unbroken and steady flow of knowledge in that object. As soon as this Dhyana becomes really steady the state of **Samadhi** is reached.

40.15 All these are but the preparation for spiritual life. Ethical culture, breathing, Asana [posture], Pratyahara are but helps to real concentration and meditation which begin with Dharana.

40.16 Japam must be performed even during our work, whatever we do. Go on repeating the Holy Name of your Ishtam or your Mantram, but when you sit for meditation, you should do it in a more concentrated and a more intense way.

40.17 A greater portion of our mind must be awakened, must be made conscious, must be brought under control. When we sit for meditation we should try to see that the undercurrent in our mind and the upper-current, which are divided in ordinary life, are in tune, flow along the same line, and are busy with the same thought.

40.18 To the extent in which we are able to love the Divine, feel and interest in the Divine, spiritual practice becomes more and more steady and successful. And this interest can be created. Divine Love can be created.

40.19 During the period of your Sadhana you should reduce the quantity of your food. The physical aspect has to be stressed in the beginner, as the body must be strong enough to withstand the tremendous strain of concentration and reaction which always comes

in the beginning. Concentration always brings about a tremendous reaction in the untrained mind and in the body.

Consciousness--Cosmic and Absolute

The aim of Vedanta is to melt away this personality in the Universal Consciousness that finally, in its turn, melts away in the Absolute, the One without a second. Cosmic Consciousness is concerned with the *One in the many*, Absolute Consciousness with the *One without a second*. These two states are not one and the same.

41 -- Wiesbaden, December 31st, 1933

Individual ego--Cosmic Ego

41.01 Turning the mind constantly and without any break, whatever you may be busy with, to God, is the most efficient of all forms of spiritual practice. But you must be able to raise the plane of thought. See that you do not tie your boat to the bank by not fulfilling the preliminary conditions of Yama and Niyama. If you allow your boat to remain tied to the bank, no amount of rowing and exertion on your part will move it even an inch onward.

41.02 Try to make the individual ego subservient to the Cosmic Ego. The ego is very difficult to subdue. It is like a monster with hundreds and hundreds of heads.

41.03 Never try to face the enemy openly in the beginning. Never give him a frontal attack. The enemy is still too strong for you. Let us first save ourselves even by flight. Later, we come back with greater strength, with the strength of the Lord, because some day the enemy has to be openly faced and vanquished. Eternal flight won't do.

Ganesha: symbol of purity

41.04 Once Ganesha was sitting on the lap of his Mother Durga, when he happened to touch Her back and found there to his great astonishment a deep scar. "Mother", said he, "who did that?" "My boy", the Goddess replied, "you ill-treated a little cat, and so I got this mark, everything being My own body." When the question of Ganesha's marriage arose, he refused to be married, because the experience of the little cat he ill-treated and the scar of his Mother's back had taught him a great lesson and had made him realize that all women were but his own mother.

41.05 There is another story about Ganesha which is highly illustrative. Once Mother promised a beautiful necklace to that one of Her boys who would be able to go round the universe and be back first. Kartikeya departed at once with all possible speed, but Ganesha just remained sitting on the lap of his Mother, and after some time quietly got down, went round Her once, and got on to Her lap again. So when Kartikeya came back he found to his great astonishment that Ganesha was already sitting on Durga's lap and had received the necklace. Ganesha had realized that, his Mother, being all-pervading and omnipresent, it was sufficient to go round Her once without going round the whole universe as his brother had done.

41.06 All these symbolical stories and representations of truths are highly instructive if we but know how to read them right. See Mother in every woman, then you, too, will say like Ganesha, "How is it possible for me to marry?" Through the infinite grace of Mother our whole attitude towards men and women can change, just as it had changed in the case of Ganesha.

41.07 The more we progress, the more we cease to love ourselves and to identify ourselves with our physical form, and, at the same time, the more we cease loving others as bodies or feeling any sex-attraction for them. In India, Ganesha is one of the greatest symbols for perfect purity.

41.08 Self-realization is a very difficult process, and it takes a long time to attain it. But as soon as you come to feel the tide, you know that you are approaching the ocean. And then you should be glad that there is any tide at all. The ocean may still be distant, but if the tide makes itself felt, you know you have travelled a good way down the river. The old impressions must be attenuated, erased through rubbing and rubbing and rubbing, till they have completely disappeared.

41.09 Just as the thickness of a cloud in the sky differs, just as this cloud may be only a very thin veil or a dark black cloud which does not allow the sun's rays to penetrate, similarly in this world of Maya there is a thin coat or a thick coat covering the Truth.

41.10 Some manifestations of Mother are to be saluted at a very safe distance so long as we ourselves are not yet fully immune from their influence. The Mother's play has two aspects, one which binds and one which frees, but both are within Maya, not beyond

Maya. Never think that the freeing aspect is beyond Maya. It too, is within the ambit of Maya.

“Whenever you come across a person who is of a different ideal of life, do not speak out your thoughts.” (Sri Chaitanya)

41.11 First there must be physical control. Then mental control, and once mental control is attained, thought can never again come down or be dragged down to the sensual plane. This only happens if we have led a controlled life, physically and mentally, for many, many years without any break. Then impure thoughts may now and then arise, but they are no longer able to stain us.

41.12 There must be a completely new attitude towards ourselves, towards all men and women in the outside world, towards all mental pictures and memories in our mind.

41.13 We should feel sorry when an unclean thought wells up in our mind, but this should spur us on all the more and make us more dogged than ever. We should be thankful that we have come to know that such unclean things exist in our mind. If we did not know this, we would never fight them successfully. The greater the trouble, the more manly the fight, the greater our determination to remove them, the greater our relentless tenacity!

41.14 If really there is dirt and filth in our mind, let us know this fact, and know how bad it is. To know an evil as it is, is half the battle. It is always good for us to know the possibilities of our mind to do us great mischief, so that we may be on our guard and become fully aware of its wily attempts at deception. What a terrible amount of misery man creates for himself and others by giving in to the impulses of lust, anger, greed, violence etc. etc.! And all these impulses lie deeply hidden in our mind, too, if we do not come to know them and annihilate them. Unless we turn our mind consciously to the higher life, it will always remain full of these.

42 -- Wiesbaden, January 1st, 1934

Real non-violence

42.01 Let us try to be as hard as possible against ourselves without any unnecessary or destructive self-condemnation.

42.02 I should always use my discrimination even with regard to non-violence. The scorpion, no doubt, follows its own law of being

when it stings, but I, too, should follow my own law and protect others from its sting if I can do so.

42.03 Buddha taught, *"Hatred cannot be conquered by hatred. It is by love that hatred can be conquered."* — Christ taught, *"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you."* — Evil can never be conquered by evil. Violence can never be conquered by violence. The only weapon that conquers all is love and loving kindness to all creatures.

42.04 And what an amount of strength and undauntedness true non-violence requires! We should not be weak, we should not be cowards, but we should at the same time be kind. The person who does not retaliate, however he is hurt, however he is offended by others, is a person of terrible strength, and he alone is a man. All others are miserable cowards hiding their fear and abject cowardice under a cloak of braggardism, physical and mental, and never rising to the stature of a man.

Struggle, unceasingly

42.05 Struggle, struggle, struggle. There is no other way. Let us not be afraid of struggles.

42.06 Very much depends on the regularity and intensity of our daily practices. Very often we are so careless in this. Without steady practice nothing can be attained in spiritual life. Spiritual life must be a life of dedication to the highest, a life of consecration and sacrifice and one-pointedness. So we should be more wide-awake and more careful about our own thoughts for our own benefit and for the benefit of others to whom our thoughts may become a danger. Our thoughts, if they be thoughts of lust or greed or violence, are worse than poison-gas, and the havoc created by them is far worse than the havoc created by poison-gas. By our impure thoughts we make people who we do not even know impure. By our pure thoughts we help others in their struggle after purity.

42.07 It is essential for us to create the right mood before sitting for meditation. There must be steady, regular practice. Let us rather die in the struggle with our body and our impure mind than give it up. What does it matter if I die or not? What matters is that I realize the Truth, that I attain my full stature, my true being. If we struggle our utmost, if we do our utmost, we have fulfilled our duty. Then the rest

must be left to the Divine. Here true self-surrender and resignation to the Lord have their place.

43 -- Wiesbaden, January 2nd, 1934

Towards spiritual experience

43.01 In the beginning of our Sadhana we do not get any spiritual experience, because that is only the scavenging period when loads and loads of dirt and impurities have to be removed. Only when the mirror is clean does it begin to reflect.

43.02 Evil thoughts arise even if the mind has already been made strong to a certain extent, but then they no longer harm it and can easily be conquered. If a boat has a good and experienced helmsman it can face the storm without fear of perishing.

43.03 Unless this phenomenal world has been effaced completely, desires and passions, attraction and aversion, can never be annihilated in their subtlest form.

“When he realizes the Atman as dwelling in all things and finds all things dwelling in his own Self, the sage ceases to hate.”

43.04 Until then the passions still rise in the mind, but if we have strengthened our moral fibre through our Sadhana, we are able to withstand them and drive them away.

43.05 Love need not take always the calm, peaceful method. True love can often be as hard as steel, can use harsh words. The knife of the surgeon cuts, but it cuts in order to heal. These Great Ones may appear cruel and heartless in some of their advice, but through the kindness of their ‘cruelty’ they heal and bring life.

43.06 Until we feel the coming of grace, we must strive. Self-effort has its place in spiritual life, and never can real self-surrender come, unless we have really striven our utmost.

43.07 When the devotee has caught a glimpse of the transcendental, he no longer troubles and bothers about the right breeze, whether it is a hot breeze or a cold breeze or no breeze at all. He need not unfurl his sails any longer.

43.08 The two tests of vision are: **Bliss, certitude**. Then the mind knows Truth is real. Then something in us knows it is true and it carries with it its own unmistakable light and conviction.

43.09 **Let the teacher be merged into your own Ishtam**, let

the form-aspect get merged into the formless. By so doing, you will avoid all fanaticism and bigotry and always remain conscious of the One Principle standing at the back of all teachers and all teachings.

43.10 Once Girish Chandra Ghosh, the great Bengali dramatist, said to Sri Ramakrishna, "The Lord has created you with His own hands. Us he has created with the machine."

Brahmacharya

43.11 Brahmacharya alone is real tapasya, and there can be no tapasya whatever without perfect Brahmacharya in thought, word and deed. This has to be stressed again and again.

44 -- Wiesbaden, January 3rd, 1934

"If one in search of a piece of broken glass comes across a jewel, will he care for this broken glass any more? He will take the jewel." (Dhruva)

44.01 As I said, Brahmacharya is real tapasya, but this Brahmacharya must be mental Brahmacharya too. If we allow our senses to take in all sorts of filthy stuff, there can be no question of real Brahmacharya, even if we observe strict physical Brahmacharya. Brahmacharya implies much more than mere physical observance of continence. A mind without Brahmacharya will never be able to realize the Truth, whatever path it may try to follow. Austerities, as such, are no tapasya. The control of the physical act merely is not real tapasya. The only true tapasya is the perfect and unbroken observance of Brahmacharya in all its aspects, i.e., the control of the physical act, control of all mental and verbal expression.

"Renounce the world whenever you come to possess true renunciation."

44.02 Only absolute and unconditional Brahmacharya is real and really efficacious tapasya for the spiritual man.

Sri Ramakrishna on Divine Grace

From M's Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna
(translated from the Original Bengali)

SRI RAMAKRISHNA:— "Make your acquaintance with Girish and then you will be able to see the drama free of cost."

NAREN:— "I had talks with Girish. He is a great man. We are having talks about Ramakrishna."

SRI RAMAKRISHNA:— “What talks?”

NAREN:— “We were saying that you did not possess much education, and that we are all scholars.” (*All burst out laughing*)

A DEVOTEE (*to Sri Ramakrishna*):— “But *you* are a scholar without having studied.”

SRI RAMAKRISHNA (*to Naren and others*):— “Really I tell you I do not feel sorry in the least for not having studied the Scriptures. I know what the essence of Vedanta is:— ‘Brahman alone is real, and the world is unreal’. What is the essence of the *Gita*? Repeat the word ‘Gita’ ten times then it becomes ‘tyagi’, ‘tyagi’ [Renunciation]. Lead a life of renunciation, this is the essence of the *Gita*. Renunciation of desires and attachment. (*To Girish*) What were you talking about me? I do not know all that. I eat and I sleep and I feel happy.”

GIRISH:— “What am I to say of you? Are you a Sadhu?”

SRI RAMAKRISHNA:— “No. I do not possess the consciousness of a Sadhu really speaking.”

(Naren sings a song. He is tuning his instrument)

SRI RAMAKRISHNA:— “You are taking such a long time in setting the instrument right. I feel inclined to break it.”

DEVOTEE:— “At the beginning of a musical performance one cannot help feeling disgusted.”

NAREN (*setting right the strings*):— “Yes. Quite true. One feels so, unless one is able to appreciate music.”

SRI RAMAKRISHNA:— “He refutes all with one word.”

GIRISH (*to the Master*):— “Sir, through your grace everything can be achieved. Just look here what I was before and what I have become now.”

SRI RAMAKRISHNA:— “Well, all that you had in a potential form. Therefore you have changed so much for the better. And nothing ever takes place, unless the proper time has come. When the disease is about to be cured, the doctor says, ‘Take such and such medicine’. And then the man becomes healed. Who can say whether the medicine cured him or whether it was nature?

“Lakshmana said to his brother, ‘You do not know the glory of Rama. At the touch of His feet even Ahalya who became a stone got back her human body’.

“Then Lavakusa replied, ‘All right. You know everything. It was owing to the words of the sage himself. The sage said that when Rama passed the Ashrama, Ahalya would get back her human body’.

“Who is to decide whether all this took place owing to the glory of Rama or because of the words of the sage? Everything takes place through the will of the Lord. If on coming over here you feel a spiritual awakening, know that I am only an occasion. Everything takes place through the will of the Lord, just as the moon is everybody’s uncle.”
(*In Bengal the moon is called everybody’s uncle*)

GIRISH (*with a smile*)— “You say, everything takes place through the grace of the Lord? Well I, too, say the very same thing all the time.” (*All present laugh*)

SRI RAMAKRISHNA (*to Girish*):— “One can very easily realize God if one possesses a simple and guileless heart. The following are the people who cannot have any spiritual knowledge:—

- 1) *Those who are crooked and not at all straightforward;*
- 2) *those who are too fastidious about external cleanliness;*
- 3) *those who are always of a doubting temperament.*

“The swan, when taking milk mixed with water, is said to separate the milk from the water. There is some acid in its mouth, because of which such a thing takes place. A Paramahansa also has in him such an acid. It is his unqualified love for the Lord. And it is due to this love that he has always the discrimination between the Real and the unreal. It is because of this that he sees God, realizes God.”

* * * * *

Renunciation of world

44.03 Sankaracharya, our great teacher, says, “*Since the most ancient days there have been two paths:— the path of the Sannyasin [monk, world-renouncer] and the path of the householder.*”

44.04 Spiritual life cannot be had without paying the full price, and everyone should give up the world as soon as he comes to possess real renunciation, as soon as the world begins to lose all its attraction for him. There is no salvation without renunciation and purity, and all the Great Teachers of the world have taught that. You can never have both: the pleasures of the world and your attach-

ment, and Self-realization. “*Where Kama is, there Rama cannot be; where Rama is, there Kama cannot be.*” —Kama is the Indian god of Love, the Western Cupid.

45 -- Wiesbaden, January 4th, 1934

Greed and sex in the West

45.01 In the streets you see such a lot of hideousness and perversity in the faces of the people. Painted women, nicely shaved men, all beautifully dressed, but on their faces there is nothing but greed and sex. As soon as you become a little more introspective and sensitive, you, too, will see, how hideous all this is. Then you see in every face which desire dominates that person and holds sway over his mind. Rarely do you come across a face in the streets that has not got Beast and Lust clearly written all over it. This strikes me again and again when going for walks. All this is a sign of degeneration. **This makes the leading of a pure life so difficult for the beginner in the West.** If Western society does not change for the better in this respect, there is no hope. So long as this beastliness is not dropped, and they are content to remain beasts all their life, the degeneration of the West is certain and cannot be stopped in any way. Beware of being stained and polluted by the thoughts of these beasts poisoning the air all around you.

45.02 And if you cannot redeem this degenerate society, then redeem yourselves, but realize how miserable all these brutes are. They are themselves miserable and they create misery for others, they soil others, poison others through their dirty vibrations. All their dirty thoughts can be read clearly on their faces. That is what makes it so very unpleasant to walk in the streets. You see that all the talks of these Western people turn round and round the topics of money-making, politics, and sex in all its most dirty aspects. What do you see in your theatres, cinemas, novels, songs etc.? Sex, Politics, Money-making. All this is so hideous. Since the Westerner has sent his cinema-reels to India, he has gone down in the eyes of the Indian. His greed for money did not make him realize, what he was doing and how greatly he was harming his own prestige by that. Now no prestige is left.

Governing the mind

45.03 We are not yet sensitive enough. We do not yet clearly

recognize our own motives. Sometimes our mind is allowed to find nice plausible explanations for our doings and thoughts, no end of them, just to deceive us as is always the case in the untrained person. Tell your mind:— “Let me see that you break down,” if it complains against the great strain of the practices. If we try to lead the higher life, we should not mind our dying even, if we die in the attempt. And the mind will go on revolting and complaining for a long time. It says, “Look here, to-day you have had very little sleep. This may be bad for your nerves. Take care that you do not get a nervous breakdown. Stop your practices for a day or two.” Just give it some good kicks in such a case, whip it nicely, be very hard with this bad mind. Just as a horse gets whipped when it lies down with its rider, so you must give your mind a good thrashing if it revolts.

Fixed daily routine

45.04 There must be a fixed daily routine. Do Japam 1000—2000 times. You must have a minimum, and that minimum is to be done and finished under all circumstances. In the morning never touch food before having done this minimum of your spiritual practice. On no pleas whatever should we stop doing it. Our mind is now more or less like an untrained horse. It must be broken mercilessly as a young horse is broken. Always be on your guard with all these dirty vibrations of greed and sensuality all around you.

45.05 *“Think of Me and fight, carry on your fight, and through My grace you will be able to vanquish the enemy and find peace,”* says Sri Krishna. And this fight takes subtler and subtler forms as we progress, and thereby becomes all the more difficult and relentless. It must be fought till the very end. Our struggle becomes more and more intense. The subtler the world, the subtler and greater the struggle.

45.06 Even if a bad thought rises in dream, you must find no excuse for yourselves.

45.07 At the beginning, when we are given the seed, we cannot yet know its potentiality, but as we advance we find the seed contains a mighty tree, but it must be properly watered and manured.

45.08 Have some holy picture as the first thing and the last thing directly after awakening and directly before falling asleep. Never think of other people or objects before having had this holy

picture before you and filled your mind with it. This is very necessary for the beginner.

45.09 Ramprasad sings, *“O my mind, why do you not put up a fence round the tree with the Mother’s Name?”*

45.10 At the beginning we take it to be just a name and nothing more, but this name has its subtler aspect and takes us to the Divine. We cannot recognize its infinite potentiality in the beginning.

45.11 When we do our practices regularly for some time, this mind of ours becomes tutored, trained, but even then, at times, just like a trained horse, it tries to bolt.

45.12 Regarding Asana [posture] you should have two different ones, so that you can change it as soon as your body begins to hurt you.

45.13 The central theme of Sadhana is meditation, and everything else is but a preparation for the mind to have the right mood. When the right mood comes, meditation becomes very easy. In India there is now a revival in practising the different Asanas, and they have raised their number to 82. But it is not at all necessary for spiritual life to practise 82 Asanas. The ease of an Asana can only be realized after sufficient practice.

45.14 Five to six hours of sleep is enough for the spiritual aspirant. Eight hours is generally too much. Sleep, as such, is not so necessary as the conscious minimizing of our nervous and mental tension at all times of the day. In order to be able to meditate, we must be able to relax, we should first learn how to decrease the tension of our nerves. Very nervous people can never meditate. After that we should get control over our sentiments and feelings, even if they be good and pure or elevated ones. By developing the spirit of self-surrender we should make the mind passive, attuned to the Infinite, and thereby minimize all anxiety and our terrible nervous and mental tension. If we are able to do this, we feel a sort of peace, even long before being able really to meditate, a sort of rest and relaxation, physical as well as mental. We should make it a point to relax our nerves as much as possible before our attempts at meditation. And then only with this relaxed mind should we begin them.

45.15 Everything must be definite, clear. You must know how to sleep and what to do with your waking time, how to awake, how to fall asleep, what thoughts to have on awakening, and what thoughts to

have just before falling asleep. The life of the spiritual aspirant must be conscious and regulated in all its phases and aspects. Before sleep make your mind passive by filling it with some very holy and pure thoughts of the Divine or of a Great Spiritual Personality in a wholly dispassionate and unstrained way.

Woman and Gold

45.16 Everything depends on the purity and absolute chastity of thought, and unless this is brought about, our tension can never be reduced. Our sleep is undisturbed only if we know how to think and feel properly in the waking state. Let all those who lead the spiritual life not be bothered about the animal existence.

45.17 The more I study life and the more I see of it, the more I am convinced of the great truth of 'Woman and Gold' Sri Ramakrishna taught the world, and of the fact that body-worship, sex-worship, is the most vicious and degenerating form of idolatry that can ever exist and ever existed.

The symbol of Kali

45.18 Hideous as some aspects of Kali are, do you find Nature pleasant? Do you find all the manifestations of life pleasant? Is Nature not very often hideous too? Be consistent in your thinking. And do not cover the festering sores with flowers. Kali is represented with four hands, one boon-giving, one preserving, one protecting, one destroying. And destruction is nothing more than going back to the cause. Thus Kali is the most perfect and most beautiful symbol of the whole cosmic process ever conceived.

45.19 Everybody wants to worship the pleasant aspect of the Divine, but the terrible aspect has its place too, and you see it everywhere in nature if you only dare to open your eyes and look at things without prejudice in a dispassionate way. But what Mother really likes most of all is the cremation-ground, where all the dross of life is burnt to ashes.

45.20 The Tantrikas wanted to take an undaunted and synthetic view of the totality of life. Why only worship life? Why do you not worship Death? Is there any reason in worshipping life? Be consistent. The Truth is to go beyond all life and death. And this idea the Tantrikas tried to perfect every way. The symbol of Kali may be hideous to look at, but it is the greatest symbol of all symbols that can be.

45.21 Is your modern civilization not hideous? Is it not death? Is poison-gas pleasant? Are guns pleasant? Is sex and greed beautiful? And do you not find all these in nature? Are not some of your thoughts hideous?

*“He who misery loves,
And hugs the form of Death,
Enjoys destruction’s dance,
To him the Mother comes.”*

—(Swami Vivekananda)

45.22 Our heart is to be made consciously a cremation-ground. The cremation-ground of all our attachments, of all our impurities, of our whole personality. This eternal struggle is the worship of the Lord, the only true worship there is, and should never unnerve you. Our trouble is that we worship only a God who gives us pleasure and sense-satisfaction and blessings. But is not also misery His? Everywhere we worship the God who is full of boons and the Giver of boons. As soon as we think of a Thunderer we are afraid. Shiva as Giver of boons is all right. Shiva dancing the mad dance of destruction is horrible? Why? There is no rhyme and reason in our attitude.

45.23 The good and kind God of the Christians has brought so many people under the banner of Christ by bloodshed and unheard of cruelty, through force, through torture, through bribery, and is condemning three fourths of the human race to perdition, but in the eyes of the Christian missionary and fanatic He is all the same a good God. How absurd! To the Christian especially, although also in all popular forms of religion, God is God only when there is creation, when there is preservation, but when there is destruction, God has no hand in it. No. God is God only when he is God in all aspects. When He is the God of Creation, Preservation and Destruction, and above all the God who is none of all these.

45.24 So the present-day reaction against the religion of a good God merely, is to be welcomed. When you give the modern mind a kind and good God, it will throw Him overboard, but when you give the modern mind the whole, it will, in most cases, accept Him.

45.25 God in His aspect of Creator, Preserver and Destroyer is Mother, and Mother again in Her absolute aspect beyond all these is Shiva. Thus the relative aspect of God, as it were, is Mother; the absolute aspect of God, i.e., the same Mother in Her state beyond Creation, Preservation and Destruction, is Shiva. Mother is dancing Her

mad play of creation, preservation and destruction on Shiva Who is lying under Her feet motionless and unconcerned, appearing to be dead. What wonderful infinitely deep symbols of Truth all these are!

45.26 Why be afraid of death? Death can be glorious. Where do we find the greatest play of Mother? Only in the cremation-ground, and the cremation-ground is as real and true as the nursery is. In life and in death the aspirant should cling to the Mother, and the Mother alone, giving up both.

“Mother, even if Thou wouldst tear me to pieces, I will not leave Thee.”

45.27 It always so happens that he who has a great clinging for pleasant things gets misery. Physical distress is nothing compared with the mental distress and suffering we all have to pass through in life. So we should always know that Truth is beyond happiness and misery and can only be attained by transcending them both.

45.28 Ramprasad sings, *“O my fickle mind, never stop taking the name of the Mother at all times, come what may. You pass through misery. You may have more. What does it matter?”*

45.29 No physical suffering can ever be compared with the terrible tempests raging in the human mind, and all these tempests can never be transcended so long as we cling to life in its pleasant aspect and deny or try to deny its terrible aspect. We must be fully prepared to transcend both the good and the terrible aspect of God if we really wish to reach Him and to attain to peace and blessedness.

46 -- Wiesbaden, January 5th, 1934

Real silence

46.01 Real silence is silence of the mind. It is stilling the mind and freeing it from all unwelcome thoughts. First attain the thought of the Divine, and then try to eliminate all other thoughts that cannot be directly connected with the Divine thought.

“Mere external solitude will not make one forget the world, and that alone is real solitude in which one merges oneself in Brahman.” (Upanishads)

46.02 We do not enter into solitude by merely getting into the

forest or the monastery. We must know how to annihilate the world in our mind.

When you sit for meditation

46.03 When you sit for meditation, erase all ideas of the world in your mind and think of the Lord alone.

46.04 If we possess anything we must possess it as trustees, not as owners, administering it on behalf of the Lord alone. There must never be any sense of personal possession, however much we may happen to possess.

46.05 Faith in oneself is absolutely necessary in spiritual life. But in the case of the really spiritual man faith in himself means, at the same time, faith in God, because he has realized that his essence is the Divine and nothing but the Divine.

*“By thinking that we are the Atman we gain infinite strength.
Then through the highest knowledge we attain to Immortality.”
(Upanishads)*

46.06 Since the advent of Sri Ramakrishna in this world a new current flows, a new tide has come, and if we dare to throw ourselves into this tide, the current itself will bear us along to the right goal. Only we must let go the anchor, we must not be afraid, we must allow ourselves to be carried away by the swell of the tide. And if we then do a little swimming ourselves, we shall reach the ocean all the quicker.

46.07 Sri Ramakrishna has, as it were made a tunnel for us to protect us from the world. Get into it, then you will be safe. But before being able to do this the ego must be completely melted down, and very often we have not the patience to do this.

46.08 All the Great Ones stress Brahmacharya in all its aspects again and again. The Atman is ever pure and ever sexless. All our troubles arise through this clinging to a false personality. Spiritual life is blasting this false personality, the pulverizing of the ego, of all our littleness and limitedness. And the thought of the Atman shakes the very foundations of this false personality and of all our false relations with others.

46.09 Think deeply on this conception of the Atman before beginning your meditation. Think that you are spiritual entities freed from the body, mind, passions, desires and all the rest. If there be such a thing as sin at all, it is this clinging to creation and to the personality.

46.10 That alone is moral and spiritual which helps us in purifying our heart and our mind, and in attaining the goal. Everything else, whatever it be, is immoral. Purity alone is the condition of the Lord's grace, as Swamiji said.

Renunciation

46.11 Renunciation is the central theme of all spiritual life and of all those who have really followed it—mental *and* physical renunciation. Renunciation of **wealth and greed**, renunciation of all forms and aspects of **sex and lust**, renunciation of the **ego**. When these three things are achieved, spiritual life becomes natural and unstrained, and then God-vision comes to a person as a matter of course.

46.12 This is the ideal of the threefold renunciation for this sense-bound ego-centred age of ours in which we are all running after the vanities and will-o'-the-wisps of life. Everything has become 'Woman and Gold' and it is the redemption from their trammels and unrealities that is salvation. As Swamiji said in his song of the Sannyasin:

*Truth never comes where lust and fame
and greed of gain reside;
No man who thinks of woman as his wife can ever
perfect be;
Nor he who owns however little, nor he
Whom anger chains, can ever pass through
Maya's gates.
So give these up, Sannyasin bold, say—
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"*

46.13 This is the great unchanging Truth proclaimed by all the Great Ones, and this Truth includes the threefold renunciation without which there can never be any spiritual life.

46.14 In every country we need just a few sincere individuals who strive for the highest ideal, for this ideal of perfect purity in thought, word and deed, who are prepared to give their all for this ideal, who are prepared to suffer all for its realization. Then Sri Ramakrishna's message will be an accomplished fact. Then we shall have done something through Him for the enlightenment of the world. But, remember, it takes years and years till Sri Ramakrishna accepts a devotee. He watches and waits and sees whether the dev-

otee is really sincere or whether he is but a worshipper of 'Woman and Gold' in his heart of hearts. He never accepts anybody who does not lead a perfectly pure life, physically and mentally, and always puts one to the test again and again before accepting him as his very own. You cannot deceive Sri Ramakrishna as you can deceive a person.

46.15 We can influence other people to the extent in which we succeed in influencing ourselves for the better. We can never convert the masses. We can never make the masses spiritual, but we can change the lives of a few sincere individuals whose time has come.

47 -- Wiesbaden, January 6th, 1934

Proper work

47.01 Sri Ramakrishna has shown us all the different steps of spiritual life. All work that can be done, can be done only through that which we ourselves have actually become, never through fine words or sermons.

We must observe perfect Brahmacharya, for without perfect Brahmacharya no lasting work can be done. Work is never a question of eloquence, of high philosophy, of superfine thoughts and sermons, but of actual living. And if there is no perfect Brahmacharya at the back of our work and our words, nothing we do can ever produce any lasting effects.

Treating the strong disease of Woman and Gold

47.02 The stronger the disease, the stronger must be the medicines. And in the West this terrible disease of 'Woman and Gold' has become most virulent. So very strong injections are needed to cure people and make them regain consciousness. In this age small doses no longer suffice. In the beginning smaller doses may be given, just to prepare the system, but the strongest dose must be taken by all of us some day. And these high doses will have to be taken for a long time if the germ is really to be killed. Many different crises will come. In the case of every disease there is a curative crisis, and even this curative crisis is one of the necessary steps leading to the perfect cure.

47.03 Sankara says, *"I have no mother, I have no father, there*

is no birth for me. Neither is there any teacher nor any student for me. I am the Self."

47.04 Through all our innumerable previous lives we have enjoyed these things, we have been fathers and mothers and friends and children, undergone birth and death. Why not see what a real life of renunciation is this time? Just as an experiment, so that we can compare the two kinds of life? Let us see out of sheer inquisitiveness what the higher life of perfect purity is like.

47.05 Ramprasad sings, *"O my mind, why art thou lying fallow when thou canst raise crops of gold if thou wishest to be out of thyself?"*

47.06 Never use the violent method with your mind. Try to cajol it into reason. Try to persuade it with quiet, calm and reasonable words.

47.07 Our whole evolution becomes easier if it becomes a conscious evolution. Your power of determination must be made stronger day by day through different spiritual practices.

47.08 Because we are not able to get the higher thing, why should we take the lower one instead? Fasting is always better than taking filth. Die for the higher ideal. Swamiji once said to his brother-disciples, *"If I wish to get a certain thing, and do not get it, does this mean that I should run after something else?"*

Words of Instruction by Swami Adbhutananda

47.09.1 *"When a dog runs after you to bite you, the more you run, the more it follows you. Go and take shelter under him who is the dog's master. Similarly, if you desire to get rid of Avidya [ignorance] take shelter under the Lord."*

47.09.2 *"Man sees all darkness because he turns his back towards the Lord. If he turns his face towards Him, it will be all light, all bliss."*

47.09.3 *"The Lord is all-powerful and is the abode of all noble attributes. He fulfills the desires of all who worship Him in different ways. None comes away empty-handed, having prayed to the Lord, the Giver of all boons; like the wish-yielding tree everyone, whether he be a Jnani or a Yogi or a Bhakta, or even a non-devotee has free access to Him. Everybody can realize Him in the way he pleases."*

47.09.4 *"The Jñanis, the Yogis, realize bliss and peace in*

their hearts, no doubt, but that is realization of a sort. When one sees the Lord outside oneself and serves the same Lord Who is realized within as the inmost Light Divine [Jyotis], oh, what a great source of bliss it is! Our Master used to say, 'What is the use of saying "I am God", "I am Shiva", unless we realize Him and be one with Him?' It is better to remain in the attitude of a devotee. There are many who possess love and regard for God, but very few who have the good fortune to serve Him.

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47.10 The *Bhagavad-Gita* says, "Verily there exists here no purifier equal to wisdom. He who is perfected by Yoga finds it in time in himself by himself."

47.11 After long and steady practice and long and unbroken Brahmacharya the aspirant will find spiritual wisdom in himself; as soon as his own mind is fully purified, it becomes his Guru.

48 -- Wiesbaden, January 7th, 1934

Existence--spiritual, mental, physical

48.01 The subtler is always the cause of the grosser and pervades this at the same time. So first comes spiritual existence, then mental existence and last physical existence. Each has its origin in the other, the grosser one in the subtler one.

"The mental world is like the soul of this material world and at the same time it pervades it. And the spiritual world is the soul of the mental world and pervades it." (Upanishads)

"This Atman is in the Sun, in the Moon, different from the Sun and the Moon, dwells in them, pervades them, is in all beings, but different from all beings and controls all."

48.02 And that existence that is in the planets, that fills all space, that is in us, is a homogeneous mass. There is no inside and outside in it. It is all one. And we all are like small tiny bubbles, like the points of geometry which do not possess any magnitude.

48.03 *"Were it possible to cover up all space with a piece of skin, then alone would it be possible for man to go beyond all misery without the realization of God." (Upanishads)* — This is very humorously expressed, but such assertions contain a great truth.

48.04 It is the duty of the spiritual aspirant to raise the mind from

the lower centres to the higher ones. Always consciously lift the mind from the lower centres of physical creation to the higher ones of mental and spiritual creation. Unless we do this, we will never succeed in our meditation, whatever other spiritual practices we may be doing.

48.05 *“May this body become dried up, let the skin, flesh and bones perish, without realizing that perfection that is very hard to attain even through ages, this body of mine will never again leave this seat.”* — This was Buddha's resolution at Buddha Gaya before he sat down on his Asana [seat].

48.06 And let us always remember Buddha's beautiful words: — *“Be a lamp unto yourselves!”*

48.07 Brahman alone is real. Our personality is unreal. The world is unreal. There is nothing that is real but Brahman. Let us realize this in our life and not merely talk about it. Let us attain union with Brahman or awaken to our own eternal reality.

**END OF THE READINGS
ON
SWAMI BRAHMANANDA'S SPIRITUAL TEACHINGS
by Swami Yatiswarananda**



Swami Yatiswarananda

A NOTE ON THE GURU CULT

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CHAPTER 8**

A NOTE ON THE GURU CULT

by Swami Yatiswarananda

From time immemorial the *Guru* or the spiritual teacher has been given the highest place of honour in India and elsewhere. The Hindu scriptures go to the length of saying that the *Guru* is *Brahma*, *Vishnu*, *Maheshvara*, nay, even the *Param Brahman*—the Supreme Spirit Itself. (*Guru Gita 1.46*, *Skanda Purana*) Most people, however, forget that this has been said from the spiritual angle, and never from the physical point of view.

The trouble with most spiritual seekers is that they identify themselves with their bodies and personalities, and become devoted to a male or female deity, and remain stuck there. And if they have a spiritual teacher, they cling to the form and personality of the teacher also. This is nothing but materialism, though given a spiritual colour. However useful it may be in the beginning, this spiritual materialism must be transcended; but how to do it is the question.

As one advances in the spiritual path, one must come to realize that the worshipper is a soul, and the deity that is worshipped is none other than the *Paramatma* Itself. The soul is, as it were, a part of the *Paramatma*—the Infinite Spirit, and the *Guru* also, in his true nature, is a divine manifestation through whom flows the divine grace, knowledge, love, and bliss. The task before us is how to realize this truth that the devotee, the *Ishta Devata* [the holy Personality that appeals to you most], and the *Guru* are in reality manifestations of the same Transcendent Spirit.

Before beginning our meditation, let us first consider the body as the temple. We may now enter this temple through the gateway of the heart and find that our heart is filled with the light and consciousness of the *Jivatman* which is a part of the *Paramatma* —the Infinite Light and Infinite Consciousness. Let us merge our body, mind and the whole world into this Infinite Reality, and imagine that we are like a little sphere of light and consciousness, interpenetrated and permeated by the Infinite Light and Infinite Consciousness. Since this form of meditation is beyond the reach of the ordinary people, let us think that our soul puts on a pure mental body and a pure physical body, and the *Paramatma* takes the form of the *Guru* on one side, and of the *Ishta Devata* on the other. After saluting the *Guru*, we

should merge his personality in the *Ishta Devata*, and meditate on Him or Her, repeating the *Ishta Mantra*.

The first step is *Rupa Dhyana*—that is, to meditate on the entire luminous blissful form of the Deity. The next is *Guna Dhyana*—that is, to meditate on the infinite good qualities of the Deity like infinite purity, knowledge, love and bliss. The third and last stage is *Svarupa Dhyana*—that is, to meditate on the All-pervading Consciousness of which the Holy Personality as well as the *Guru*, and the disciples, are different manifestations. This infinite background should never be forgotten even during the previous stages of meditation.

The spiritual seeker should always remember that the idolizing of a human form and the blind worshipping of a human personality are a stumbling block to spiritual progress, and is harmful to both the disciple and the *Guru*. A true teacher is a free soul, and would very much like to see that all his disciples stand on their own feet, realize their divine nature, and solve their individual problems, developing a cosmic outlook. If the disciples continue to cling to the *Guru's* personality and look up to him for help and guidance at every step, he feels the drag, and regrets his inability to make them attain that spiritual strength and freedom which he himself enjoys. He will rather have one free soul as his disciple than a multitude of then following him blindly.

It is for this reason that the wise spiritual teacher deprecates the idea of blind personal service which is very common in India. Most of the disciples forget that the following of the ideal and the living of the life are much more important than attending on the *Guru* in person.

We should so train ourselves that instead of depending too much on the outside teacher, we depend more and more on the Indwelling *Guru*, and reach a state of spiritual consciousness which we must be able to maintain, whether the *Guru* is alive in this world or has passed on, as Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna said, “from this room to that room”, meaning from the physical plane of consciousness to a subtler one.

This danger of falling into the rut of the *Guru Cult* we can avoid only by meditating in the aforesaid way on the basis of the Formless Infinite Spirit, who is also Infinite Knowledge, Infinite Love and Infinite Bliss. Again when we return to the plane of personality, we should stress more the spirit, and not the form. In order to avoid self-deception, it is good to meditate on the Infinite Spirit, merging all

forms into It, and try to be established in the Supreme Consciousness through repeated practice. This helps not only the student, but also the teacher towards the realization of perfect freedom and peace.

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