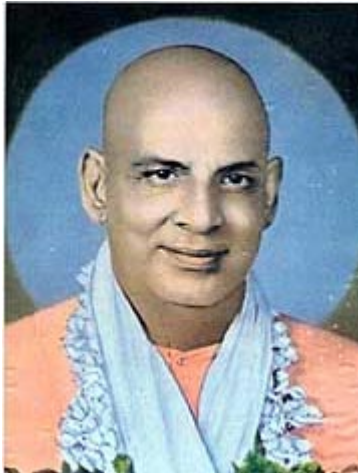


ESSENTIALS OF THE HIGHER VALUES OF LIFE

By

SRI SWAMI CHIDANANDA

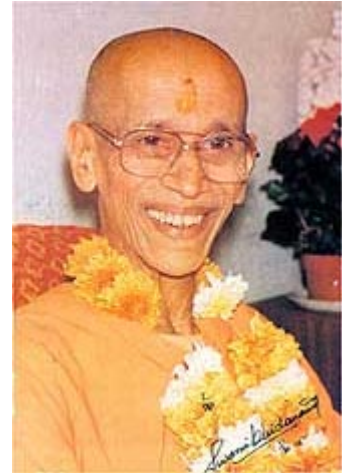


**Sri Swami Sivananda
Founder of
The Divine Life Society**



**SERVE, LOVE, GIVE,
PURIFY, MEDITATE,
REALIZE**

**So Says
Sri Swami Sivananda**



Sri Swami Chidananda

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THE PUBLISHERS' NOTE

This book is a compilation from the lectures to the Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy students given by Sri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj, President, the Divine Life Society. These inspiring discourses provide very valuable guidance not only to Yoga-Vedanta students, but also to all the sincere discriminating men.

This inspiring book throws useful light on higher values of spiritual life and gives guidance for spiritual Sadhana.

We are happy that this very useful book on spiritual Sadhana is released during the Spiritual Sadhana Week.

May the blessings of God be on all.

—**THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY**

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SOME BASIC TRUTHS OF LIFE¹

Radiant Divinities! Beloved children of God! Pilgrims on this earth plane! Seekers!

You have all come here for study. The traditional method of studying the Indian scriptures takes a minimum period of twelve years, and mind well, Saturdays and Sundays also working days and there were six hours of teaching and eight hours of self-study daily. In the first phase, they taught the Sanskrit language, grammar, *nyaya-shastra*, logic, etc. Then they used to teach the preliminary texts, the *prakarana granthas*, like Viveka-Chudamani, Tattva-Bodha, Atma-Bodha. Then only, the *prasthanatrayee*, the three main treatises, namely, Srimad-Bhagavad-Gita, the principal Upanishads and the Vedanta-Sutras which is also known as Brahma-Sutras were taught. The normal period of study required in this traditional ancient *gurukula* method, was twelve years; but sometimes it was more, fifteen years or even twenty years, to study the intricate interpretation of words, their hidden meaning and significance. The different schools of thoughts may have different interpretations of the same combination of words. One such example is the combination *tattvam-asi*. One school may say it means 'thou art That.' Another school may say it is combined with the previous word and when separated it should read *atattvam-asi*, meaning exactly the opposite. Due to such intricacy of the Sanskrit language, a full-time study over a very long period is necessary.

Nevertheless, in this short period of teaching here, a brief outline of the Indian and the Western philosophies and the essence of the Indian scriptures is given to you here, and you will just get an entry into the Indian scriptures, so that you can pursue self-study after going back home. This serves the purpose of *sadhakas* and *jijnasus*.

The traditional twelve year study and passing the various examinations and getting the degrees of *shastri* and *acharya* is necessary for those who want to start their own *pathashala* or take up the career of a teacher or become a *purohit*. That is a totally different field of study in which is included a thorough knowledge of various sacraments, rites and rituals covering various ceremonies like naming the child, thread ceremony, marriage ceremony. This is known as *karmakanda*. A *purohit* is an important member of the Hindu society as no important ceremony can be taken up without him. In the past this was quite a lucrative profession and came in the family from generation to generation.

The Object of the Course: The study of the various paths of Yoga and of Upanishads and Srimad-Bhagavad-Gita provide practical guidance for Sadhana. In the West, there are theological seminaries for the Christians. But, for the philosophical study there is a separate department in many Universities where they teach the thoughts of the ancient philosophers like Plato and Aristotle as well as modern philosophers like Kant and Hegel. Like that, in every country there is some system for the study of both these aspects.

1 Talk given to the students of 23rd Course of YVF Academy, 10-5-1996

One may ask what is the purpose of all these philosophical texts? Why such a phenomenon called philosophy came into human social process of evolution? There are various branches of spiritual literature with relevance to day to day life. But what is the relevance of the study of philosophy?

The purpose of my elaborating these details in connection with philosophical study is to ask you, “What is the object of this study of Yoga and Vedanta? What do all the various Eastern and Western philosophers seek? What do you expect to obtain by this study? What is the purpose of the spiritual knowledge?”

All the secular sciences left the phenomenon of man unexplained, left the origin of man unexplained. So the thinkers who wanted to know about this, probed into the mystery of man and his origin and thus came into existence the subject of philosophy.

What is the subject, scope and area of study of philosophy? It is two-fold:

1) It is a study of man. What is the phenomenon of life? What exactly is he constituted of? What is his origin? What is his ultimate destination?

2) It is a study of the universe in which he lives. What is the nature of the universe?

Philosophy seeks to understand the phenomenon of life. So it has to have a minimum of two dimensions: the beings who live the life and the universe in which they live. Thus, man and the world become the two minimum reducible unavoidable subjects. A deeper study of these two factors leads to the study of a third factor: the origin of the man and the world. What is the origin of the universe? From where this world, sun, moon, planets, stars, galaxies, nebulae and all that have come? Who governs the phenomena of various natural cycles like day and night, different seasons and the phenomenon of rains which is just sufficient to support and sustain the life? What is the origin of man? There must be some source. So a third factor enters in the philosophical analysis and study. This third factor, the unknown source or origin of man and the universe, becomes an important part of the philosophical thought.

One may justifiably ask, “What do I gain by studying this unknown factor?” It must have some practical utility, some valid value. Otherwise, it would have been a for the time-being subject and disappeared soon. But it has persisted for a very long time and is growing and expanding, it is being enhanced and augmented generations after generations. This means that it must have some intrinsic and intriguing value in it.

Suppose you start with a pragmatic and logical approach and come to a certain conclusion that this must be the origin and source of the universe. In fact, most of the conclusions of the Western philosophical thought are derived in this way. They show tremendous speculative heights and a very very amazing great depth and details, incisive analysis, reasoning, logic and wisdom. They theorised their conclusions. They did not accept the previous conclusions and often disproved them by logical arguments and reasoning. They have a quest of perfection and always try to improve upon the existing theories. In this way, great philosophical systems have been evolved in the Western world by great scholars, thinkers and philosophers.

The Role of Saints: The Eastern philosophy is developed in a totally different manner. Our entire philosophical system is based upon and has been derived from the already existing knowledge which is found to be existing from ancient times, beyond the known history of humanity. God only knows when it originated. Its time is not traceable.

All our philosophical systems that are existing now have originated from the in-depth study of that Knowledge which was already existing. Our ancient seers and sages had already presented us certain conclusions about the basic philosophical questions and processes and sealed it ultimately with the seal of indisputable authenticity and genuineness of *Aparokshanubhuti*, their direct personal Experience of the Truth. In other words, the proof and validation of their conclusions was not the logical reasoning, analysis and arguments but this personal Experience. That is the uniqueness of our philosophical system.

In all the countries, in all the races, in all the cultures of the world we observe a unique phenomenon. Quite apart from the philosophers and scholars, there is a separate, unique and distinct category of people, the saints. Every race has produced some saints. Many of these saints were not very highly educated; some of them had even never gone to school, they were illiterate. Yet the world remembers them. Even in the modern world of science and high technology many people study their lives and teachings, and draw inspiration from them though they were neither philosophers nor worldly people. Even after thousands of years their lives and teachings have remained a source of inspiration.

In the beginning came the worship and sacraments, the *karmakanda*. They realised, “This is not enough. Even if we worship daily, even if we perform all the sacrifices and oblations, all the *yajnas* and *yagas* and all the *samskaras*, we can never be free from sorrow and grief, pain and sufferings, old age and ailment, tension and anxiety, fear and fright, fights and quarrels, diseases and death. We have no lasting peace of mind. So we must find out something higher, something which is beyond this and which will really free us. We must find out the state which is *dvandvatita* and *trigunatita*, transcending the pairs of opposites and the three *gunas*. We must find the state beyond sorrow, the state of eternal peace. Let us contemplate on That only.”

Ultimately, in some wonderful moment in the history of India, in the history of mankind, some of these intrepid and gallant seekers, explorers of the unknown and unseen realm, came to experience the Ultimate Truth, the Supreme Reality. They had the direct Experience. They shouted in wonder and amazement, shouted in joy, “Ah! This is That! This is the Light of lights! This is the Reality, the Truth!”

Aparokshanubhuti: What does the direct Experience mean? All the knowledge a human individual gathers in this material world is through the perception of senses. If you have a good hearing faculty you gather knowledge through all kinds of sounds; you can distinguish all types of sound, all types of speech, words, etc. Similarly, if you have a perfect faculty of seeing, your cognition of the entire world is through sight. In the same way, you are able to perceive heat and cold, soft and hard through the sense of touch. Similarly you perceive the world through the sense of smell and the sense of taste. So, whatsoever you know about the world right from the birth onwards, is through the five senses of seeing, hearing, touching, smell and taste in the form of *roopa*, *shabda*, *sparsha*, *gandha* and *rasa*. (Appearance, speech, touch, smell and taste) These are the five

dimensions of your cognition. These are five types of experiences through which you perceive the whole world and acquire all the knowledge. So this is indirect knowledge, it comes through one of the senses or a combination of them. If any one of these senses is absent, that part of perception is absent. A person born blind has no perception of colour, form and appearance. That aspect of the world does not exist for him at all.

In direct Knowledge the senses play no roll. *Aparokshanubhuti*, the direct Knowledge arises only when the senses are completely still. The senses are useless for direct Knowledge. As a matter of fact the senses are the main obstacle in direct Knowledge, they come in the way of the direct Knowledge. It arises without the medium of these senses, when the senses are totally still, the mind is desireless and when the seeker enters a very subtle state of higher consciousness. One just experiences in the depth of one's own consciousness, one's own real Self, transcending the material world and its cognition. That is the direct Experience. That is the *Aparokshanubhuti*.

In some wondrous era in our ancient history, the seers had the great Experience and came face to face with the Truth, came face to face with the Ultimate Reality. The moment they entered into the direct Experience, they were amazed, they were struck-dumb; because, there was a total transformation of their whole consciousness and they became filled with the Light. The darkness of ignorance vanished instantaneously, all doubts, all questions vanished forthwith. They experienced the total Knowledge; everything became clear straightway; no more any questions, any doubts, remained. That Knowledge is known as *Brahma-jnana* and the knower is known as a *jnani*. Thus, whatever is to be known became known to them. The origin and the source of the universe and the man, also became known to them. They became the very embodiment, the very personification of Knowledge itself.

Vedanta: The records of these purely transcendental experiences comprise and constitute the contents of the end portion of *Vedas* known as *jnana-kanda* or the *vedanta*. Some of these seers have very compassionately narrated how they attained It, what were all the Sadhana and *tapas* they did. So Vedanta is the most important and valuable portion of the Vedic wisdom heritage. It forms the very basis and foundation of spiritual life. It is the source and origin of all the Indian philosophical systems, whether it is the Absolute Monism of Sankaracharya, or Qualified Monism of Ramanujacharya or Pure Dualism of Madhvacharya or Dual-nondual Doctrine of Nimbarkacharya or Pure Dualism of Vallabhacharya or *Achintya Bhedabheda* of Gauranga Mahaprabhu. All the great *acharyas* based their philosophical systems on different interpretations of *vedanta*. All these philosophical systems, the schools of thoughts, are known as *vedanta*.

There are many schools of philosophy in the East, Far-East and the West. But the main fundamental subject, namely, the purpose of human life is more explicitly and emphatically spelt out in the East.

Before making a detailed study of the philosophical systems, let us inquire into some basic questions: What is our purpose of this study? What do we obtain or gain from such study? What are their fundamental findings and teachings? What do these seers want to convey to us?

When we try to probe this particular question, we find that what they want to convey to us ultimately, is something so very apparent, so very absolutely clear and plain that nobody will ever

question it a second time. They have given us some plain facts, some home-truths of life. The way by which they reached them at that time must have required a great deal of thinking, a great deal of contemplation, a great deal of analysis and speculation and all that. We should be very grateful to them, for they have proclaimed them and very clearly put before us the conclusions they arrived at. They have spared us all the difficult spadework, all the agony. Now it is like reaching Mt. Everest by an aeroplane or helicopter instead of reaching there by one's own effort, by one's own self, slowly trekking the long route, climbing the extremely difficult mountains and making the final attempt to reach the summit again and again. Whatever is necessary for acquiring the Knowledge, our ancient seers have already done somehow and have clearly laid down the path for us. They have clearly derived the ultimate Truth. We have simply to follow their path.

The Basic Truths:

Now I will tell you something that I usually tell on the last day as a concluding message. Without telling that I am not closing my message. But something prompts me from within to tell this today itself. Once you know it, your entire approach to your study, to your life, will be changed and it will take a new *bhava*, a new viewpoint altogether.

The ultimate highest discovery of the ancient sages and seers is recorded in the *Upanishads*, which reveal the great truths and teachings. It is the great grace, compassion and blessedness of our ancients that some sages might have thought: 'In the times to come, who is going to study this very abstract Vedantic philosophy, understand it and acquire thorough knowledge, ponder and contemplate on it and attain Illumination?' They must have envisaged that the whole world will be career oriented and money will rule the entire life. All the time and energy of people will be spent in earning money and keeping the pot boiling at home. Though the teachings of Upanishads is the highest and the greatest invaluable treasure of the mankind, very few people will be able to take interest in it. So the quintessence of the entire wisdom teachings, knowledge and spiritual experiences of the Upanishads is given to us, to the entire mankind, in a very concise yet very simple, lucid and interesting form in the Srimad-Bhagavad-Gita. In this amazing and epigrammatic poem, all the truths are included. If we try to keep in view what basic, fundamental yet practical and pragmatic home-truths Bhagavad-Gita gives us, we can make our life based on them and enrich it.

Just imagine in eighteen chapters, in seven hundred verses only, the quintessence of the entire teachings, the wisdom knowledge of all the Upanishads, the highest spiritual experiences of so many illumined sages and seers, are treasured in such a simple and easy-to-understand way! Some of these verses are the preamble, the prologue and the narrative and the actual number of verses giving the intricate teachings is much less. It is amazing how in such a concise treatise, in such a brief discourse everything necessary for our uplift and supreme welfare is given to us! If we try to keep in mind the basic and fundamental yet practical and pragmatic home truths this wisdom teachings of Bhagavad-Gita gives us, and if we base our life on them, we can attain our highest good. We cannot afford to ignore these basic truths. Unless our life is based on these truths, our life will be wasted. This is one interpretation of the implication of these truths.

Truth Is God: Another implication of the fundamental Truth is: It is the ultimate Reality. That alone is the real Truth and compared to That, everything else is untrue. All other things fail to fulfil the test of genuineness and authenticity of Truth which That fulfils completely. So the

definition of that ultimate, eternal Truth is *Tat Sat*. This is another implication, the highest one, of Truth.

There are some lesser implications also. The facts of life which no one contradicts are also known as truths. There are two views about this: there are certain facts which are so self-evident that there can be no dispute about them. These are known as *svatah-siddhah* truths. There are many such truths elaborated in the Upanishads, and the Gita has reproduced them in a simple, lucid form.

Such truths are narrated in more interesting, very simple, very easy-to-understand story form in the Puranas. In the Puranas a truth is woven in a very absorbing big story and many people may miss it. The narration is so interesting and elaborate that many people take note of the stories and bypass these truths and the preaching.

1) Certainty of Death: Whereas Bhagavad-Gita puts them in such a straight, direct, undiluted and concise form that no one can ever miss them. One such truth that all of you must always remember and which you cannot afford to forget even a single day of your life is proclaimed at the very beginning of Lord Krishna's teachings in Bhagavad-Gita. What is that? That great truth is: *The absolute certainty of death*. In one categorical statement He says, *Jaatasya hi dhruvo mrityuh* (Certain is the death for the born. II-27). For everyone who is born, death is certain. How many people have really pondered over the importance of this truth? You should ponder: 'Why this has been so categorically proclaimed? In what way this concerns me? How should I relate myself to this great truth? Why *Jagadguru Purnavatara* Bhagavan Krishna told this to Arjuna?' He told this to Arjuna in order to bring him out of delusion, in order to take him out of nervous break-down, in order to bring him out of the weeping condition. He asks, 'For whom are you weeping? If you don't kill them, do you think that they will live for ever? Even if you don't kill them, one day they will die; die they must, in one way or the other. Even at this moment many are being born and many are dying. This is the plain truth of life. Why don't you realise it fully? Why don't you take it calmly? What is the use of breaking your head for something which is inevitable, for the truth which cannot be changed or altered?'

What was Arjuna's delusion? He thinks: 'All these people will die in the battle-field.' All of them had to die, death is inevitable for all of them. But Arjuna thinks: 'If he does not fight they will not die, they will live.' Krishna says: 'What a foolish notion! Whether you fight or not, all are going to die and you too will die.'

What is the lesson? The lesson is: If we do not recognise and realise the certainty of death very plainly and clearly, and if we do not accept this truth in living our daily life, we are also living in delusion. We do not want to face the hard reality of life. If we are living our life setting aside this truth, we live our life in a state of ignorance and delusion. The root cause of all sorrow is this delusion. When someone near to us dies, we are dismayed and despaired as if something most unexpected has happened. But it is not at all unexpected. Lord Krishna clearly says: 'Everyone who is born has to die.' The time of death is most uncertain; but sooner or later everyone has to die. This truth is based on the actuality and we must accept it and always remember it.

Let us now see the constructive dimension of this truth. In what way it can be useful to us? If we recognise this first truth so forcefully brought out by Lord Krishna in Bhagavad-Gita wisdom

teachings and if we always keep it in mind, we will never postpone anything that is important, we will never postpone our duties, we will never say: 'I will do my duty later'. Who is sure of tomorrow? Then how can you say: 'I will do it tomorrow?' It is said, *alone you come and alone you go back*. It is so correct from one point of view. But if we look from another point of view, one is never alone. From the very moment an individual *jivatma* is born, it is never alone; it is always accompanied by the Lord of Death. The whole life is a slow process of death, a constant march towards death. With every breath, with the passing of every moment, we are moving closer to death. You are never alone; the shadow of death always accompany you. The Lord of Death takes away your life every moment, little by little. At the last moment, he takes away the *pranas* and goes away and the body becomes lifeless.

If you recognise this truth: One day this life will terminate, one day I will die, I will not be here. I must ponder over this and resolve: 'Whatever I have to do, I must apply myself to it now itself, right at this moment; I will never postpone it to tomorrow.' Now you cannot be a loser. You are free from the delusion of tomorrow. Guru Maharaj used to say: Never say I will do it tomorrow. Tomorrow is the most deceptive word. There is no such thing like tomorrow. If you postpone something on tomorrow and go to sleep today; but when you wake up, it is already today and not tomorrow. God's ration is *today* only; tomorrow is our concept.

Past is finished, it has slipped from your hands and you cannot recover it again. There is no use projecting your important work and duty in future, because it has not yet come, it is not in your hands. What you have in your hands is *now*, the present moment only. Remember this always, every moment of your life.

You should always remember the death; remember that this life must terminate one day and you have to leave this world. Therefore resolve with firm determination: 'I will attain whatever I have to attain, whatever the goal of life I have. Right now, from this moment itself I shall engage myself in it, *I shall strive for the goal of life, right now*. I will attend to all my aspiration, duties and obligations, my *kartavya karmas*. Let me apply myself to it right now calmly and quietly, without tension or anxiety. I shall not postpone it, I shall not show any laziness or lethargy.'

God has wonderful sense of justice and has given to all of us enough time. Everyone has twenty-four hours a day, the same ration to everyone without any discrimination. Whether you are a professor or doctor, a big man or a beggar, you have the same ration. If you plan your time properly, there is time for everything, everything can be achieved in this life itself.

There is an English writer called Arnold Benett. He has written a wonderful book, 'How to live on 24 hours a day?' It implies that no one really lives for all the 24 hours a day. We fritter away little, little moments from morning to evening. This book proves that if you can make use of those moments which are unnecessarily wasted on trifle, irrelevant things, you have enough time for everything.

So, the very first truth proclaimed by Bhagavad-Gita is of great importance. You must live with full awareness that one day the life must end in death. Therefore, whatever you have to do, should be done right now. Start doing it right now. You cannot afford to remain idle and waste away the precious time. Time wasted is the time lost for ever, you can never get it back, you can never use

it. Time does not give you a second chance. Whatever you have to do, whatever effort and exertion you have to put forth to achieve the goal, you have to do it right now. In this way, you will be able to achieve what has to be achieved.

2) The World Is an Abode of Unhappiness: Now arises the next question: What is it that diverts us away from our goal? What is it that deceives and dupes us and makes a fool of us? What is it that makes us repent and regret that I have not done what I should have done? When the time of departure comes, you are very sad thinking: 'I have not been able to do what I ought to have done, I have not been able to become what I wish I had become.'

It is the deceptive attractions of the sense objects all around us. They entice us saying: 'Come, come! You will get all the happiness from us'. Some beautiful sight says, 'You will get happiness from me.' Some pleasant, attractive sound, smell, taste or touch says, 'Come, come! You will get happiness from me.' So, all our time and all our energy are consumed by numerous attractive objects of this wondrous supermarket of *Maya-bazaar*. Your attention is scattered through the five holes of senses.

You do not realise that this is only a delusion and there is not an iota of real happiness in these objects. It is only some momentary pleasant nervous sensation. It is not a real happiness. Such pleasant experience is purely a gross, primitive, biological process and a phenomenon common to all the animals. When a sense object comes in contact with the related sense organ, the tactile nerve catches the sensation and sends a message to the central nervous system which passes the message to the brain and the brain feels a momentary pleasant sensation. You are now hooked by this sensation, you are enslaved. All these pleasant sensations are momentary and depend on the proper functioning of the apparatuses. Even if any one of them, a sense organ, the connecting nerve or the receiving centre in the brain is impaired, there is no sensation pertaining to that sense faculty. If you have lost the sensation of taste, you will not be able to experience any taste, even if the most delicious dish is given to you. If your optic nerve has become weak, the most beautiful sight will have no impact on you even though your eyes may remain open.

How long is this experience of pleasant sensation lasts? You are eating your favourite tasty dish. So long as the food is in the mouth there is the pleasant sensation. But once it goes in, it is all over. In a flash of a moment the sensation disappears. But who thinks about this? If you ponder over it, if you analyse it impartially, you will realise that it is only a purely biological nervous sensation and this cannot be called real happiness. But we are duped by it and we interpret it as happiness and we waste our life in chasing the sense objects. Can there be a greater folly? It is a great blunder. It is not wisdom. There is no happiness here. On the contrary He who created all these, says:

*Ye hi samsparshajaa bhogaa dukkhayonaya eva te;
Aadyantavantah Kaunteya na teshu ramate budhah.*

[The enjoyments that are born of contacts are only generators of pain, for they have a beginning and an end, O Arjuna! The wise do not rejoice in them. B.G. V-22]

He makes it quite plain that all the enjoyments arising out of the contact of any sense object are the source of sorrow and pain only, there is no happiness in them. This is the second great truth given by Lord Krishna in Gita. This is a scientific and analytical way of looking at the problem.

He puts this truth in a general form also. He says, 'O Arjuna! Do you know what is the nature of this world? It is *duhkhaalayam-ashaashwatam* [the place of pain and is non-eternal. B.G. VIII-15]. This world is a world of transitory objects with names and forms. The transitory objects cannot give you lasting, eternal, real happiness. This world is an abode of misery and sorrow.'

In a negative way, He describes the characteristics of this world as: *Anityam-asukham lokam imam* [this impermanent and unhappy world. B.G. IX-33]. This world is characterised by a total lack of happiness. The senses are *dukhayonaya eva te*, generators of pain. Again and again He reiterates this great truth that there is only pain and sorrow that you can obtain from this world.

Buddha's Four Truths: When Buddha attained the Illumination, he discovered four great truths pertaining to the human life:

- 1) Life is full of suffering;
- 2) The cause of the suffering is craving, desire (*trishna*);
- 3) The possibility of complete cessation of the suffering by destroying desire; and
- 4) The way to bring about the ultimate cessation of the suffering.

The first step is to become convinced that this world is an abode of sorrow and suffering. The next step is to know the cause of the suffering. Once we know the cause of the suffering, there is an unending hope for the mankind. Because, once you remove the cause the suffering will end. The suffering is an effect. Once the cause is removed the effect does not arise at all, it is automatically eliminated. Once you know the cause, you can find out by one way or the other, some device to remove it. The first discovery everyone knew; but so long as they do not know the cause of the suffering, people live with it thinking I can be happy with the coexistence of sorrow.

The third discovery is also very important. All these sufferings are not unavoidable or inevitable. They are not permanent. If the sufferings were eternal, if there had been no possibility of ending the sufferings, the question of finding a way to end them would have not arisen at all. But Buddha discovered that we can put an end to all the sufferings. He assured us that this is certainly possible.

Lastly, Buddha discovered the way to end all the suffering and putting completely an end to all the suffering. It is called The Noble Eight-fold Path. Like the eight-stage path to Liberation given by Maharshi Patanjali in his Yogasutras, Buddha has also discovered an eight-fold path to cessation of suffering: right views, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort or endeavour, right mindfulness and right meditation. Like in Yogasutras, Buddha also gives minute details of each of these. The first one is Right View and Buddha gives ten aspects of it.

Today I am telling this to reiterate that death is inevitable. Therefore, be alert! Be up and doing. Apply yourself quickly to whatever you have to do. Fulfil all your obligations and duties. *Be up and doing on the path of Liberation, on the path of Divine Perfection, the great grand, glorious Goal of human life.* You have to apply yourself to that Goal right now. What is that comes in your way as an obstacle? The delusion of happiness here. Convince yourself firmly that there is no happiness here and there can never be happiness here. This world is petty abode of *janma-mrityu-jaraa-vyaadhi-duhkha* (the evils of birth, death, old age, sickness and pain. Gita XIII-8), an abode of sorrow, sufferings and unhappiness only.

You are enslaved by the sense objects only if you think that there is some pleasure, some happiness in them. But once you discover their true nature, you are free. But once you are convinced that there is no happiness here, you are no longer deluded, you are no longer made fool of by the sense objects, you are wise. Through all these attractions you can remain untouched and unaffected by them. You will say: 'Yes, I know your nature. You can no longer fool me.' You become established in *anasakti*, total detachment. Even if you are surrounded by hundreds of attractive objects of pleasures, you are not perturbed. You know their real nature and so cannot be deluded. You go through your life as a master of the situation and not as a slave to every attractive sense object of name and form. You are the in-charge of your life.

If you have realised these truths, you become totally detached. Now you are steadily, serenely advancing to the Goal, absolutely unaffected by the sense objects. The basis of your detachment is discrimination and wisdom. You know that there is nothing in them; now they cannot enslave you.

A mother was frightening a little boy by covering the bush with a black cloth and was saying: 'Don't go there. A devil is hiding there.' The father thought that she is unnecessarily frightening the child, this is a bad psychology. The son will afterwards be always afraid. So one day he took the child near the bush and removed the cloth and said: 'Look, there is no devil here.' The child told his mother: 'Now you can never make me afraid of that black cloth. I know there is nothing in it. I know its real nature.'

Like that once you know the real nature of the world through constant discrimination, it will never be able to dupe you, delude you. You will no more be afraid of it. Now you can proceed straight towards the target like an arrow shot from the bow.

This is the second truth about the life about which I have to tell you. All the philosophers tell us that our tenure here is temporary, we are not residents of this earth plane, we are just the travellers. Our life is a journey with a definite destination. The important point is that you should always remember the Destination, the Goal. So many people go from here to the Badrinath shrine day after day. The journey is very difficult, arduous and full of discomforts. But they have only one idea fixed in the mind: 'I will reach my destination sooner or later. I will have the great fortune of having *darshan* of Lord Badrinath.' There is no thought about the discomforts and hardships.

3) The Divine Destination: The next great truth proclaimed by the Upanishads and Bhagavad-Gita is about our Divine Destination. Your destiny is to transcend the sorrow and suffering, pain and misery, defects and imperfections and to attain the state of glorious Perfection

that is characterised by Bliss-absolute, Peace-profound. Perfection, Peace and Bliss. This is your birth-right. You are given this human birth only to attain that state. You are the heir of that profound Experience of unalloyed, unmixed, hundred per cent pure Bliss, a distilled quintessence of absolute Bliss. That Bliss, that Peace, that Happiness is imponderable. It does not come from any source, It does not depend on any object. That Bliss, that Peace, that great sense of Perfection, that Light is known as Brahman, God, Bhagavan, Paramatman, Allah, Khuda. We call It the Kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of God. You may call It by any name, no matter what name, label or appellation you give It, It is that great Experience absolute where all the sorrows disappear, where all the doubts vanish, where all the questions disappear. It is transcending them all, It is transcending all sorrow, pain, grief, suffering, delusion and bondage. You are in a state of absolute freedom and fearlessness.

The Goal of human life is That. You have full potential for attaining It. It is your birth-right. You are given this human birth to attain That. That Experience is called *Kaivalya Moksha Saamraajyam*. That is to be kept as your Goal. Your efforts to attain That should never be postponed for *Jaatasya hi dhruvo mrityuh* (Certain is the death for the born. B.G. II-27). You should not be tempted and diverted into side-channels. There is nothing anywhere else. They are like water of mirage. You should know and remember always, *duhkhaalayam-ashaashwatam* [the place of pain and is non-eternal. B.G. VIII-15]. There is not an iota of real happiness here.

All these are fundamental truths. All the different schools of Vedanta whether it is the Absolute Monism of Sankaracharya, or Qualified Monism of Ramanujacharya or Pure Dualism of Madhvacharya or Dual-nondual Doctrine of Nimbarkacharya or Pure Dualism of Vallabhacharya or *Achintya Bhedabheda* of Gauranga Mahaprabhu, all of them declare these truths. They all tell this is a passing world; one day you have to die. You do not belong to this world, you are only a traveller. The human life is a great journey towards that grand Goal. It is not to be wasted after petty things. If your life is properly directed and properly used, *you can attain That in this very life*. You can attain Immortality, eternal Bliss and Peace at the end of your life.

This is the quintessence of the Indian Philosophy. Contemplate on this. Don't be lost in nomenclature and unnecessary details. *You should know the heart of philosophy: You are Divine, you are the Immortal Atman. You are given this human birth to regain that Experience of your lost Divinity. Do it now. Do not postpone.*

The message of the day is:

- 1) Remember always the death.
- 2) Do not fall prey to the attractions of petty things.
- 3) You are given this human birth to regain your lost Divinity. The goal of life is to attain It.
- 4) Do it now. Be up and doing. *Uttishthatha Jagrata*. Awake, arise! Do not stop till the goal is reached. Keep on, keep on, keep on.

God bless you all.

THE GOLDEN THREAD OF VEDANTA²

The Divine Life Society was founded by worshipful Guru Maharaj Swami Sivanandaji, in order to proclaim to the whole world of the modern times, the way of living one's life so as to be able to attain, experience and become established in the Divine Perfection which is inherent in each one of the human being, as his unalienable, true, eternal nature. All of you have an apparent human personality which is only the external facade of your Reality.

This human personality is not the Reality according to the Vedanta. You have to know this because you are participants in the Yoga Vedanta Academy Course. So you must know what Vedanta has to say about your life, about this world and about everything pertaining to life in this world.

You have come here as *jijnasus*. *Jijnasus* are those who are keenly eager for attaining *jnana*, the Knowledge. *Jijnasus* attending this course have a special uniqueness, a special distinction. You are *jijnasus* with a difference.

Apara-vidya: What is that difference? The difference is: All other seekers of knowledge are trying to acquire *apara-vidya*, the worldly knowledge; whereas you seek to acquire *Para-vidya*. This is a basic, fundamental difference. *Apara-vidya* enables you to get, keep, possess and enjoy objects of this world. But Vedanta says, this world is only a temporary dream. *Apara-vidya* enables you to get distinction, name and fame, and the objects you can possess, keep and enjoy.

The world is transitory: But all these only for a brief while; because the whole world is transitory, subject to decay, subject to ultimate dissolution. Everything here is unstable, nothing here endures, nothing here is lasting, nothing here is permanent. Therefore this world is not having any permanent validity.

What is the meaning of everything? *Aabrahmaa sthoola paryantam*. From a blade of a grass up to the position of *Brahmaa*, the creator; *Brahma-loka*, the greatest, the biggest status in the cosmic scheme of things—everything is worthless, valueless. This is what has been declared by the great sages who have known the impermanence of all the things. So I have said that your outer personality is not the reality according to the **Vedanta**.

The Reality: Why did I say according to the Vedanta? Vedanta gives a specific definition for Reality. What is truly, authentically and genuinely Real? You have to try to understand with a very subtle intellect, what Vedanta wants to convey to you. That alone can be called Sat, really true, the Reality which is beginningless and endless, which is ever present, ever *is*, in all the three periods of time. It always existed in the past, It does exist in the present and will always exist in the future as well. It never will cease to be. There is a further qualification: That is the Reality which abides always, in all the three periods of time without undergoing any change, It always remains the same.

2 Talk given to the students of 21st Course of YVF Academy, 16-10-'95

Nothing can alter It, nothing can change It. That is something which is always in Its Fullness, in Its Perfection.

This is the classical specific definition of *Sat*, the Reality: It is always present in all the three periods of time, past, present and future and It is never subject to any change, It is unalterable, unchangeable. If you apply this test to anything in this world, you will find that all the things fail to fulfil this requirement. All the things change right from the beginning. Your body changes right from the birth, so it cannot be the Reality. Your human personality did not exist before you were born. The duration of its existence here on the earth plane is for a limited time. One day, everyone who is born has to go. Everyone knows this. It does not require any study of any big philosophy.

Death the Leveller: Gurudev used to sing: *Time sweeps away kings and barons*. Even the big people who wield great deal of power, were powerless before old age, disease, decay and death. The glories of our personality are shadows only, they are not substantial things. There is no power against fate. Death lays its icy hands on kings and barons. Even the biggest sceptre and crown must tumble down in the dust one day. An emperor may be holding a sceptre as a symbol of royal power and may be wearing a crown as a symbol of the royal status, but all these must go in dust and become as worthless as the dust. The title of Gurudev's poem is "Death the Leveller." Death makes everyone equal, whether he is a beggar on the street-side or a great king, a president of a big state or an ordinary labourer breaking stones on the road-side or cutting wood in a forest. When death comes they all become the same, either they turn into a little ash or become food for the worms under the earth! This is a common human experience.

So Gurudev says:

Time sweeps away kings and barons!

Where is Yudhishthira? Where is Ashoka?

Where is Shivaji? Where is Napoleon?

Where is Valmiki? Where is Shakespeare?

Where are those mighty people? Where are Yudhishthira and Ashoka? One is the greatest from the point of view of Dharma, the righteousness, and the other is great from the point of view of vastness of the empire. The empire of Ashoka stretched from South India and went beyond the North India and covered Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kabul and Gandhar. Archaeologists find his coins and Ashoka's inscription carved on rocks and stone pillars and in all these areas. All the great warriors, great poets have disappeared.

Lord Krishna who is the creator, preserver and dissolver of countless billions of universes, who is the supreme Lord Himself, He opens the wisdom teachings of Srimad-Bhagavad-Gita and right in the beginning of His teachings says; "*Jatasya hi dhruvo mrityuh*. [Certain is the death for the born]." For one who is born, death is certain. That is the only certain thing, other things may be uncertain. Therefore, this human personality which did not have any existence before we were born, will come to an end one day. One may live very long, say a hundred years, hundred and ten

years, but ultimately this life has to end. If it does not end, you yourself will pray to God: 'O God! Please take me away from here. It is painful to live here; I cannot stand, I cannot even sit, I cannot eat. Every moment is painful. Please relieve me from the burden of this body.'

Where do you go after death? The human personality is not there. That means the human personality is *asat*. Anything which is changing is *asat*. You were something in infancy, something different in your childhood, adolescent, youth and old age. Everyday there is a change in your mood, change in your attitude, change in your health condition. Everything changes. Instability is the second name of this body. This body is changeful, it has a beginning and an end. It is temporary in time. Therefore, it cannot be the Reality.

Your essential Nature: Which is the unreal aspect of your being? What is *anitya*, *asat*, non-real and changeful? The Reality is always present, always unchanging; It is without a beginning and an end. Why? Because It is a part of the Cosmic Principle that is eternal, infinite, unchanging, permanent, imperishable. That Cosmic Being is called the Universal Soul or Paramatma. They call It God, they call It Allah, they call It Almighty Father in the Heaven, or Ahura Mazda or Tao or the Supreme Reality. They may call It by any number of different names, but It is the same One, the same Universal Essence who is the source, the support and the fulfilment of all the existence. That is Perfect, That is Full, That is Divinity. You are a part of That in your inner Reality, in your essential Nature.

That Divinity is inherent in you. It is your true identity, essential identity, eternal identity. That eternal identity is immortal Spirit, That eternal identity is perfectly Divine.

This Reality is the very central Principle on which Gurudev has focused his message. He says: "You are immortal Atman; you are perfectly Divine. This life is a rare gift, a golden chance, a unique opportunity given to you. You should always make use of this life to become awakened within. Unfold this slumbering Divinity. Your endeavour should be to transform yourself into a Divine personality, into a Perfect Being."

You are not just a human personality with all the drawbacks and weaknesses; you are simultaneously a Divine personality. You are the Divinity on the earth. "Awaken the sleeping God within you," says Swami Vivekananda. This is the great task of your life. Live your life in such a way, make your thinking, feeling and actions in such a way, that all these become a great help for bringing about an inner process in this direction; so that they become a wonderful support for the specific techniques and practices for bringing about this unfoldment.

Gurudev gave his message as a message of Divine Life, living the life in such a way that the Divinity within you becomes awakened through Bhakti-Yoga, Jnana-Yoga, Raja-Yoga and various other Yoga systems and constant practice. If your inner life and spiritual practices are supported by a helpful, and become supplementary and complementary to your outer life which also partakes of the same quality of divinity, then your whole life becomes a unified process of trying to attain one single objective of the Divine Perfection.

That is the great objective with which Gurudev founded this institution; and to initiate you into the ways and means of bringing about this more rapidly, more effectively, he set up this Yoga

Vedanta Forest Academy. His objective was to initiate you into the inner skills, the secrets of *sadhana* and practical spiritual life so that you can live actively an inner spiritual life.

The Vedanta Doctrines: All the Upanishads taken together are called Vedanta, because they comprise the Jnana-kanda, the end portion of the Vedas. Vedanta literally means the end portion of the Vedas. These Upanishads are the culminating portion of Vedas; it is pure *jnana*. So Vedanta means *jnana*. The Jnana-kanda of the Vedas is the record of transcendental Experiences and the ways and means of attaining It. So the contents of the Upanishads is about the nature of that transcendental Experience and about what happens to the person when he attains that Experience.

How many kinds of Vedanta are there? Innumerable. Because, unfortunately the learned scholars who study the Upanishads deeply, reflect over them and try to understand them, have understood them in various ways. So each one gives his own interpretation of what he thinks is the correct interpretation of the Upanishads. According to the interpretation given by that particular person who understood it in a particular way, a school of thought of Vedanta arises.

All the human beings are not the same. They have different intellects and different ways of understanding things, different approaches and different ways of looking at things, both physically, as well as, through the intellect. Later on, the scholars started to interpret the structure of the words of Vedanta. One school says: '*Tattvam-asi*', the other tries to prove that it is '*Atattvam-asi*'. Due to such varied interpretations, certain well recognised systems have come into existence. The amazing part of it is that all these systems form valid parts of the total body of *Sanatana Dharma*. *Sanatana Dharma* does not take any side or validate any particular system. These are merely interpretations of the scholars and have become part of it and it tolerates them and treats as valid. So all these schools are called Vedanta.

The Absolute Monism of Sankaracharya (788-820) is called Kevala Advaita Vedanta Siddhanta, a little modification of which is known as Vishishta-Advaita Vedanta or Qualified Non-dualism of Ramanujacharya (11th century). Sankaracharya said *jiva* and *Brahman* are one. Ramanujacharya agrees with this oneness but interprets that it is so in a specific way only. In the Absolute Monism, *jiva*-hood is considered as a myth or an imaginary existence only; there is no real existence of *jiva*. *Ekameva-advitiam Brahma, Neha naanaasti kinchit*. One and only One exists, there is not many. There is only One without a second. He is uncompromising about this and as though to emphasise it, he says: 'If you think anything else exists, it is not real but it is your *bhranti* only.' You may argue: 'How do you explain *jiva*?' he says: 'What do you mean? There is no *jiva* to be explained. *Jiva*-hood is a myth, it is non-existent, it is a non-entity.' What he was trying to prove was his own *Aparoksha-anubhuti*, his direct Experience of the Reality, his Advaitic Experience of non-dual Consciousness.

Nimbarkacharya (1162) gave another interpretation known as Dvaita-Advaita Vedanta Siddhanta, the Dual-Nondual Doctrine of Vedanta. He says: "It is inexplicable thing! There is *dvaita* as well as *Advaita*."

Then came Madhvacharya (1199) who propounded Dualism or the Dvaita Vedanta Siddhanta. Individual soul and the Supreme Soul are proved by him to be different and separate entities. They can never become one. In essence the individual soul may be like the Supreme Soul,

but it is a *jiva's* status, can never be the same, it can never have the same power or glory as that of the Supreme. He is Supreme, individual is under Him. The distinction, the *bheda*, is eternal and so they remain two, as *jivatma* and *Paramatma*.

Then came another Acharya called Vallabhacharya (1479) who gave Shuddha-Advaita Siddhanta, the Pure Non-dualism, which is also known as the Pushti Marga.

Five hundred years after Sankaracharya, another great scholar, great grammarian and a brilliant intellectual took his birth in Mayapuri, Nabadweep. He is known as Sri Krishna Chaitanya (1486). He expounded a certain school of thought of philosophy and mysticism, known as Achintya Bheda-Abheda Doctrine. He says:

‘The nature of the absolute Reality is impossible for us to grasp. Our mind is a petty, finite instrument. How can it comprehend That which is supernal and infinite? How can it grasp that Being which existed before the mind had come into existence? How can the mind go to that Realm, because it did not exist when That alone existed? That is beyond the mind, It transcends the mind; the mind cannot reach That. The mind cannot even think of That. Whenever the mind thinks that it is thinking about That, it is only a thought or an imagination; it is not That. That Being is *achintya*, unthinkable. So the relationship between That and Its creation, including we all, the *jivatma*, cannot be thought about; it is both, oneness, as well as, *bheda*, the difference.

When a river ultimately merges with the ocean, you cannot distinguish the river from the ocean. There is no more any river, there is only the ocean. But you cannot say that the river water does not exist at all. It is continuously flowing and the river water forms a part of the ocean water, no matter even if it has got mixed up with it. The river water will be different from the water of the ocean at the centre. The river water cannot reach there. So long as the river has lost its separate existence, there is oneness or non-dualism between the river and the ocean. But so long as we cannot completely deny or entirely ignore the existence of the river water, there is *bheda*, a difference, there is duality.’

All these doctrines are having the same origin, the Upanishads or the Jnana-kanda of the Vedas. So all of them are known as Vedanta Doctrines. All these Acharyas were highly learned scholars. Each one of them gave his own interpretation of the Vedanta and proved his system, his view point, to be valid, using arguments, logic and all that. Our great people are so large-hearted that they recognised all these systems to be valid part of our Satya Sanatana Vaidic Dharma. All of them are given a place in it and we study all of them. What is the height of generosity is that even Charvaka Doctrine is studied! It is a school of philosophy that does not at all recognise the existence of God. Ours is a great democracy of spiritual thought with complete freedom of speech and expression. The highest spiritual Experience is interpreted by different sages from different points of view, ability and depth. So have come different doctrines.

Veda accepts such divergence by saying; *Ekam Sad-vipra bahudha vadanti*. [There is only one Truth which the scholars describe differently.] It is also said: *Shrutir-vibhinnaa smritayopi vibhinnaa; tathaa muninaam matayo vibhinnaa*. [Vedas are many, other Scriptures are many; so also the views of the sages.] The views of scriptures also vary; there are different views. So also the opinions of sages and saints are different. This is to be expected in human beings as each human

being is different. In Hindi it is said: 'All the five fingers are different.' Similarly, the siblings of the same parents are all having different temperaments, different nature. But the parents accept them all. Similarly, all the different doctrines are accepted by the parental Sanatana Dharma. The same one Being is termed differently, viewed differently by the sages.

There is one common Golden Thread in all these various schools of Vedanta. Whatever may be the nature of your relationship with the eternal divine Reality, one thing is certain. And all of them recognise that: '*You are Divine; and you are inseparably related to the supreme Being.* That is the origin from which you have come; you are of That; and within you there is something of That.' All the Doctrines agree about this; no one disputes this. There is no disagreement; there is no difference of opinion.

This is the most important thing and Gurudev focused hundred percent on this. This one thing is enough, you need not worry about other things. Let the scholars quarrel and disagree with each other; let them prove one thing and disprove another. You may not bother about all those things if you remember this one thing that *you are Divine*. Beyond your passing, temporary, apparent, imperfect human personality which is non-real according to the Vedantic Doctrines, there is hidden within you the unchanging, eternal Reality, Divine Perfection, All-auspiciousness, All-blessedness. It is the Beauty of beauties, incomparable and unimaginable. It is full of light, full of purity, full of everything. It is glorious and grand, radiant and shining. *That is you.* That is your real nature.

Awaken your Divinity: When you are That, why should you be content in making your life merely a process of petty, little expressions of imperfect qualities of your mind, intellect and all that? When you have the potential, when you have the capacity to become glorious, perfect, pure radiant Being, why do you not opt for That? Why should you remain content at a much lower level? Why should you remain sometimes loving, sometimes hating, sometimes liking, sometimes disliking, sometimes very friendly, sometimes quarreling and fighting? This is foolishness. So our sages say: 'Come! Come! Wake up from this slumber of imperfect life. Awaken yourself to your Divinity. Unfold your Divinity. Attain that All-perfection. Do not opt for anything but the highest and the best. Do all that is necessary to attain your real Nature. Do not compromise.'

That is the ideal of Divine Life. That is the fulfillment of the fundamental discovery of the Truth within as expounded by the Vedanta. The discovery and declaration of the Vedanta about Divinity within you is: 'Within each one of you is the Divinity.' These are the words prompted by Gurudev. This is the declaration coming from the Vedic era. When the ancient sages discovered It, they declared this and they have made a wonderful device to preserve this highest wealth of the humanity, by setting up a system of unbroken succession of a lineage of master and disciple, of *Guru-shishya parampara*.

This invaluable treasure should not be lost. So a disciple should make him fit and worthy of that, so that the wisdom of the scriptures may be imparted to him. He can thus be inspired by the Guru to attain It during this very life. If he chooses ten such worthy disciples and imparts them the wisdom of the scriptures and even if two or even one disciple experiences It, it is enough. Even if we have a single candle lit, we can have from it another, from it another, from it yet another, and the chain continues and the Light will perpetuate perennially. This is the wonderful device of an

unbroken lineage of master and disciple. This *Guru-shishya parampara* has succeeded marvellously and most effectively in preserving this great flame of living spirituality from the ancient times till now, so that even now, towards the end of the twentieth century, you are in a position to be told:

“You are Divine. Divinity is your birth-right. Divinity is your true identity. Divinity is your essential, true, unchangeable, eternal, real nature. That is your super, greater and real personality. Human personality is a subordinate personality. You have a dual personality; the Divine and the humane. In spite of all the drawbacks, defects and weaknesses of your human personality, you are still the Pure and Perfect; nothing can touch your this aspect; nothing can alter it. Even though, you are now subject to imperfections of your temporary, passing human personality, you are fully Perfect. Recognise this and rejoice. Tell yourself: ‘I am always the radiant Divine within. I will not lose a single day, a single chance of trying to bring about the great inner awakening and unfoldment. In this very body, in this very birth, I must succeed in fully awakening my Divinity, experiencing That, becoming established in That.’

“That is the Goal, becoming liberated by attaining the full experience of your Divinity. That is the ideal of your life. That is to be attained right now, while living in this body; not in some unknown state after death, after the body is buried or burnt.”

Divinity is your birth-right: Is this possible? Yes, certainly. The history of our great country shows that in every generation, there have been such great *jeevan-muktas*, the liberated ones, who say: ‘I have attained It. Why don’t you attain It? It is your birth-right. You have been given this human birth to attain It, that is the purpose of your life.’

The human birth throws wide open the portal to this blessed state of Divine Consciousness, the Cosmic Consciousness. It is only the human personality which has power to think, reason, reflect, ask, probe, analyse, and discriminate. The very fact that you have been endowed with this rare gift of human personality is sufficient for you to fix the goal of attaining the fullest Blessedness; and that should always be your endeavour.

This is the declaration of the Vedanta: *Uttishthata jaagrata, praapya varaannibodhata*. [Arise! Awake! having reached the great (teachers) attain that Atman. Katha Upanishad 1-3-14.] Become awakened! Approach knowledgeable persons; they are there waiting for you. Come and ask, they are waiting for you to give the highest Knowledge. They expect nothing from you; they have got everything. They are Full and this Fullness spontaneously enriches the whole world; just as the spring season without any reason, spontaneously brings about abundance of flowers and fruits and turns the earth into beautiful greenery, makes all the lives to flourish. The saints are like that spring. So *Jagad-Guru Adi Sankaracharya* says: ‘They are there; go to them. Become fully awakened as they have become. Attain Bodhi, the full awakening.’

That is what you are. You are fully awakened but you are in the sleep state and you are dreaming. You are “*Nitya shuddha, nitya Buddha*.” *Buddha* means awakened. This is the eternal call of Vedanta. This is the Vedanta in nutshell for you. You must respond to this great call of Vedanta. You should never forget it. Vedanta is not to be stored in the books and lectures. Vedanta is to be actively lived for awakening. You must respond to the great call ‘*Uttishthata jaagrata*,

praapya varaannibodhata’ and say: ‘Yes, I shall now wake up and attain Illumination. I am prepared to do anything for It.’ This should become inseparable part of very breath of your life, every cell of your life.

SUBLIMATION OF MIND³

You may open the door. We are keeping the door closed to prevent the monkeys. But when so many people are sitting there is no danger of the monkeys coming inside. Each human individual is more than ten monkeys. He has more potential for mischief than that of ten monkeys. Its potential is limited within its little range of instincts and given capacity. There is a humorous saying: *Brahmachari shata-markatah* [A *brahmachari* is equal to a hundred monkeys]. In old days, after being invested with the sacred thread, the boy was known as a *brahmachari* and was sent to a *gurukula*. There were no outlets like radio, television, cinema or sports. So the *brahmacharis* were either studying or making mischief.

What is the nature of mind? It is full of desires and strong compulsive urges. It is very uncontrollable. How much uncontrollable? It is said, it is as much restless, fickle and fidgety as a monkey. You know, the monkey is considered to be the most restless creature. Similarly, the human mind cannot remain steady on one object at a time even for a single moment. It constantly jumps from one object to another like a monkey. But not an ordinary monkey. Suppose a monkey has been drunk and it becomes intoxicated. Now suppose it becomes possessed by a spirit. How much uncontrollable it will now become! As if to add fuel to fire, suppose a scorpion stings this monkey. If a scorpion stings someone, the agony is so unbearable that he will be screaming and shouting, jumping and dancing, holding this thing and that thing. When all these things are added together, can you imagine what will be the plight of this monkey, what will be its antics? They say, the mind filled with desires and without any discrimination is like this monkey.

Can Mind Be Controlled? No wonder, Arjuna expressed his doubt, when Lord Krishna went on describing very nicely, how to control the mind, saying: ‘You may go to a lonely place where there is no disturbance, where the environment is good and quiet; in a clean spot, prepare a seat that is neither too high nor too low, made of cloth, a skin and *kusha* grass, one over the other; make the mind one-pointed, with the actions of the mind and the senses controlled, fix the mind on Me and meditate, make the mind steady as a lamp placed in a windless spot which does not flicker...’ All this is very nicely described.

But Arjuna had known the havoc his mind had created a little while ago as described in the Chapter I, and here Krishna says: ‘You do this thing and that thing and control your mind!’ Arjuna says: ‘Whatever you have said is good, systematic and scientific. But the only difficulty is it is not just difficult but it is impossible to control the mind.’

3 Talk given to the students of 23rd Course of YVF Academy, 13-5-96

*Chanchalam hi manah Krishna pramaathi balavad dridham;
Tasyaaham nigrham manye vaayoriva sudushkaram.*

[The mind verily is restless, turbulent, strong and unyielding, O Krishna! I deem it as difficult to control it as to control the wind. VI-34.] Mind is more uncontrollable and fickle and difficult to grasp than the blowing wind. Even if we may be able to catch the blowing wind and make it steady, it may not be possible to control the mind. So Arjuna asks Krishna: ‘What is the use of describing all this when it is not possible to control the mind?’

Without contradicting Arjuna, Lord Krishna says:

*Asamshayam mahaabaho mano durnigrham chalam;
Abhyaasena tu Kaunteya vairaagyena cha grihyate.*

[Undoubtedly, O mighty-armed Arjuna! The mind is difficult to control and restless; but by practice and by dispassion it may be restrained. VI-35] I quite agree with you. The mind is extremely difficult to control. But it is not impossible to control it. It is possible to control the mind.”

Everything is done through the mind. Mind is the source of all the problems. The solution always lies where the problem lies. If you have a heart problem the heart is to be treated. If you treat the stomach, the problem can never be solved.

The whole problem of an individual soul engaged in the journey of the earth plane is not outside; it is inside, it is the mind. For example, people who have been born in a family which has been non-vegetarian for generations, for several centuries, are used to that type of food only. Now suddenly, one such fellow, joins a society of strict vegetarians. He tries to stick to the rules of this society. But every time he sees all his people taking non-vegetarian food, there is a problem. His mind urges him: ‘What a foolish idea you stick to!’ It becomes a temptation that is difficult for him to resist; and there is a tussle in his mind.

On the other hand, think of a person who is born and brought up in a family which is strictly vegetarian for centuries. All the relatives and friends are vegetarians. In his body cell, and hereditarily, there is no inclination, no taste, no temptation towards the non-vegetarian food. On the contrary there is some sort of aversion to non-vegetarian food. For such a person there is absolutely no temptation for that kind of food. Even when he goes to a grand party where good many tasty, choicest delicacies are served, he asks for boiled potatoes, toast and salad only, and he is not the least tempted by the tasty non-vegetarian food.

Suppose, in a family everyone—grandfather, father, mother, elder brothers, are drinking and there always is a bottle on the table. The child daily sees them drinking. When all are away and he is alone, he also drinks out of curiosity. In the beginning he does not like it, but soon becomes addict to it. Now when he grows up, he is always tempted to take a drink whenever he sees a bar or goes to a party where drinks are served or when he is in a company of friends who are addict. On the other hand a person coming from a family of teetotallers is never tempted by the sight of a bottle or a bar, never enticed by the friends or party. Where is the temptation? Is it in the bottle or the sight of

bar or in the friends or the party? Certainly not. All these things have no effect on the second person. The temptation is not outside, it is in the mind only. The vegetarian person or the teetotaler has absolutely no thought in that direction. It is the mental condition of the person which makes all the difference.

Mind, the Cause of Bondage: In the same way, the bondage, the *Maya*, the *prapancha* is not due to outside objects. You become bound only because you have a craving for this object and because you have attachment or aversion for this person or that, you have likes and dislikes. It is because you give so much importance to the objects and persons that you become bound. If you are not the least affected, influenced or moved by anything, then you will not be caught in the net of *Maya* even while living in the midst of all the worldly objects and persons. So the entire problem is subjective, the bondage of *Maya* or *samsaara* is subjective. The same *samsaara* exists for all; but a child or a sage or a realised soul is not affected by it at all. The problem is within you only.

What is that problem? Why this problem does not arise for a cow or a dog or a bird? Because they do not have a thinking mind. They don't have desires and cravings, ambitions and expectations, schemes and plans for the future. Their problem is confined to a very limited, small area of survival. All that a non-human creature wants is what it can eat, what it can drink, where it can take shelter, how it can protect itself and is interested in satisfying its basic impulses and instincts like procreation. The instinct of fear is put in it, by the Prakriti, the Nature, as a safeguard, so that it will not rush to its own self-destruction. It is because of this fear instinct that the moment a fire starts in a forest, all the animals, birds and even small creatures run for safety, away from the fire, in the opposite direction. This is the Nature's device or mechanism of survival.

Samskaras, the Root-Cause of the Problem: No other being except man has the problem because only man has a thinking mind. He has the ability to interpret a meaning out of every sense perception. Everything a man sees, hears, touches, tastes or smells evokes different kinds of psychological and emotional reaction in the fields of desires and sentiments. Had there been no such reaction, there would not have been any problem. But he does evoke reactions, and the problem begins. A man is in bondage only because there are desires in the mind, because there are cravings in the mind, because there are attachments in the mind, because the mind is never content. The main reason for this is our *samskaras*, the mechanism of impressions of such sense experiences, such sense enjoyments in the past, and the *vasanas*, the propensity to such experiences and enjoyments, and inclination for repeating them in the present and in the future.

Samskaras are the in-built impressions in the mind like the grooves of different sounds on a gramophone record. What is its nature? What happens if you put your thumb on an ink-pad and then press it on a paper? Exactly the same impression has been reproduced and will remain intact even after a thousand years. But it is inert; it does not reproduce by itself more impressions and has no other effect. But the impressions in the mind are different; they are not inert, they are living impressions, they remain alive in the *chitta*, the mind-stuff. They have an effect, they exercise pressure for repeating the experience. They are living impressions and have the potential of generating desires. They create a desire for exactly the same sense experience as one had it previously. There may be *shubha-samskaras* which are good for you or *ashubha-samskaras* which are not good for you.

When you play a gramophone record it reproduces the song exactly as it was recorded. But it cannot produce the voice that produced it. It only plays back. But what is the nature of the *samskara*? When a particular sense-experience is repeated over a prolonged period, it not only creates a latent dormant tendency and a desire in that direction, but that tendency becomes a *vasana*. *Vasana* may be *shubha-vasanas* or *ashubha-vasanas*, auspicious and positive or inauspicious and negative.

The *samskaras* are living and dynamic impressions. So when you are put in a similar type of situation, they become active and powerful and you are impelled to go after the same sense experience. They are so circumventing to temptations that they compel you to that experience. They are also called seed impressions as they are like seeds produced by previous experience and are capable to reproduce that experience like a seed producing a tree similar to the one from which it has originated. So long a seed is lying in isolation, in an unfavourable ground, it remains inert. But if you give it a favourable ground beneath the fertile earth and water it regularly, it starts growing; it becomes a little seedling and then comes out a sprout with a few leaves also; and if the favourable circumstances continues it ultimately becomes a big tree similar to that from which that seed was produced. The new tree produces more seeds and every seed has a potential to produce the same type of tree again and again. Such continuous chain reaction is the nature of *samskara*.

The human mind, with its imagination, has potential of completely reproducing the same condition or the psychological state of being. This impels the mind to go and indulge in that sense experience and enjoyment. It is because of these *samskaras* and *vasanas* that a man is propelled towards the sense objects, get attached to them, craves for them, wants to indulge in them, possess them, keep them, snatch them away from others.

The mind has four-fold aspects:

- 1) In the form of reasoning intellect,
- 2) In the form of imagining, remembering and desiring mind,
- 3) In the form of feeling mind having emotions and sentiments,
- 4) In the form of the assertive ego. Once a desire arises, it is the ego principle which asserts: 'I want it, I will obtain it, I will enjoy it, I will do this, I will do that.' It now propels the body into activity. The root cause of all the actions is ego.

All these different modifications of the psychological level of the human nature are totally outward-going and make you a part and parcel of the outward world. So you are enslaved by the desires for the outer objects and forget your own real nature, your own real identity completely. You undergo all sort of emotions, elevation, depression, satisfaction, dissatisfaction, fulfilment, disappointment, etc. All these positive and negative experiences are due to your propelling yourself outside through four aspects of your interior psyche. This has created for you a big range of a net spread by your desires to catch the birds of sense pleasures.

*Dva suparnaa sayujaa sakhaayaa
Samaanam vriksham parishasvajaate;
Tayoranyah pippalam svadvattyan-
Ashnann-anyo abhichaakasheeti.*

[Two birds that are ever associated and have similar names, reside on the same tree. Of these, one eats the fruit of divergent tastes, and the other looks on without eating. *Mundaka Upanishad* 3-1-1.] Why the second bird is caught in the net of *karmas* and their fruits? Sankaracharya says, it is due to *avidya-kama-karma-vasana-aashraya-lingopadhi*; it is due to delusion, passion or desire, activities, craving on account of clinging to the adjunct of the body. So you become full of *raga, dvesha, klesha, kalaha*, passion, desire, anger, envy, jealousy, intense craving, dejection, despair, disappointment. One moment you are up, one moment you are down. Now you are constantly in the wide range of outward propelling desires and that keeps you in a state of flux and confusion. This causes the problem.

Be God-oriented: Yesterday we saw that all the things can be directed to that one and only Being, the sole Source. In That only can be obtained, lasting and permanent happiness, unalloyed, unmixed, total happiness, enduring, eternal happiness, happiness that would not decrease or change. That is Brahman, That is God, That is the Kingdom of heaven. Direct your entire being towards That. Direct your mind, intellect, emotions, sentiments towards That, make all your activities God-oriented by spiritualising them.

You may ask: ‘All said and done, how can I implement it? Why should I do so? I am involved in this world. All my friends and associations are here. I have attachment for them, all sort of feelings for them. I am fully involved in my surroundings and the situations I face. This is a familiar ground for me. I am born into it and right from my infancy, it is a part and parcel of my life. So it is spontaneous and natural for my mind, for myself, to move towards them. I had not to learn to do so. I belong to this world and this world is mine; so I naturally flow towards it. It is something most natural, something easiest to do for me. But now you are asking me to reverse that process and connect myself to that unknown Being, whom I do not know, who is absolutely unfamiliar and completely unknown entity for me. How can I ever do it? There is a funny proverb in Tamil: How can I know about the cremation ground until I die myself?’

‘How I can know That which is all perfect, bliss absolute, absolute unmixed peace and happiness? How can I think about It? How can I meditate upon It? It is easiest for me to think of my mother or father, television or cassette-player, a cricket bat or ball because they are a part of my life. I have not to make any effort or undergo any training to think about them. But I don’t know that unknown, unfamiliar Being. How can I have any love or affection, inclination or longing for That? How can I relate myself to It? I know my relationship with my brother or sister, mother or father. But how can I be related to That? When I don’t know what It is, how can I meditate on It?’

True, your problem is genuine. But the solution is quite simple: *Detach from here, attach There.*

‘But how to do it is a big problem. It is quite easy to attach myself here, because everything here is familiar to me. But how to think of That?’

So first of all, you should get yourself familiar, get yourself acquainted, to That whom you want to worship, love, adore, on whom you want to meditate upon, towards whom you want to move.

How you can get yourself thoroughly acquainted with That? There are three different ways. The first is the heredity. If you are born in a family where both the mother and father are devotees and they are doing *puja*, and *kirtan*, singing devotional songs, reading about the *lilas* of the Lord and the lives of saints, talking about Him, you will automatically develop love for Him.

Secondly, if you are not born in such a family, you should think about our rich heritage, you should get yourself acquainted with it by reading the spiritual books. There is a unique tradition in all the parts of India. There are some people whose sole occupation and allocation is to master the scriptures and to go to various places and narrate, expound and elucidate them. Many institutions make elaborate arrangements for such discourses regularly and provide the venue. They go to remote villages also and explain the scriptures in their own, simple, easy way supplementing it with illustrations from day-to-day rural life. This is a part of Indian way of life. So even an illiterate villager also knows some philosophy; he knows about Shabari, Ahalya and many such characters. He knows about *Bhakti*, he knows about God's grace.

Our scriptures are abound in *stotras* and *stutis*, hymns and paeans of the Lord, glorifying Him. Our ancient rishis have not missed, during the narration of the main theme, a single opportunity of introducing *stutis*; so we find them at frequent intervals. We develop great admiration and adoration, great reverence and veneration for the supreme Being. If you listen to the glories, grandeur and greatness of God and the desirability of that wonderful Experience of attaining that Being and attaining the supreme Bliss, Peace and Happiness, and going beyond all sorrow and suffering, it will create in you a longing for God, for that Experience and your life will certainly be changed.

Thirdly, once your taste is developed in this direction due to your family background and upbringing or through listening to the Scriptures, you develop a strong desire to acquire more knowledge and naturally you buy some books. Now the original texts of most of the scriptures are available and they have also been translated in all the Indian languages. So you begin to read and study our great scriptures in your leisure hours, prepare your own personal notes and discuss the finer points with like-minded friends. You slowly build up your own library of inspiring literature. What you argued to be unknown and unfamiliar becomes known and so close to your heart that you will spend most of your spare time on That and you don't like to waste your time on the worldly things. Now, you like to read about It, you like to think about It, you like to talk about It and you like the company of people with such tendency only. Now unknown That becomes your best friend and guide, the remote becomes the closest, He becomes a part of your life, you cannot live without Him.

Shravana-Sadhana

In all the paths of Yoga, shravana is considered as a very important sadhana. It is listening to the description, to a clear elaborate nature and the glorification of that Being, the transcendental Reality. In Vedanta Vichara Marga of Jnana-Yoga its importance is clearly accepted. In the Bhakti-sutras of Devarshi Narada and Maharshi Shandilya, a very systematic and scientific method

of developing the devotion is outlined; and the very first step is *shravana*. If your temperament is not intellectual, if you are emotional by nature, if you have spontaneous ability to have affection, attachment and love for God, or if you are artistic by temperament, then you are naturally attracted to the *Bhakti-Marga*. You should develop deep and firm attachment towards your deity by the *shravana* of His greatness, grandeur and glories. In addition to whatever has been expounded in the Bhakti-sutras of Devarshi Narada and Maharshi Shandilya, the Maha-Purana of Srimad-Bhagavatam gives us a very systematic and practical method of developing devotion in gradual stages and progressing steadily on the spiritual path. Here also the very first stage is *Shravana*.

In the science of meditation of Raja-Yoga of Maharshi Patanjali, though it has not been specifically stated as a specific *sadhana*, it has been included in another hidden form. The second *anga*, the limb, of the *Ashtanga Yoga* is daily *svadhyaya*. In *svadhyaya*, *shravana* is more important way to grasp the right understanding. In ancient times, the main method of imbibing knowledge was listening to the teachings of Guru and other great sages. You may study at home, but you may have many doubts or you may not have grasped the proper meaning. So listening to others is necessary. The proper understanding of the scriptures and the basic truths of life is possible only after a complete purification of the mind and the heart, refinement of the intellect and deep faith.

In ancient times, an aspirant was approaching a guru with the request: 'Please elaborate the nature of the Reality to me so that I can meditate on It.' The guru used to say: 'First of all you prepare yourself for that higher knowledge. A gross mind cannot grasp subtle truths. First of all, the mind is to be refined and it is to be made pure and subtle.' Even if these truths are told to an impure mind, it will not retain their impressions. So *chitta-shuddhi*, the purification of the mind-stuff, purification of the interior and sharpening of the discriminating intelligence are the necessary pre-conditions. *Shravana* is of great help in this direction. So *shravana* is the preliminary *sadhana* that prepares you for higher *sadhana* and the higher knowledge of Vedanta.

Why these preliminary *sadhanas*? If your mind is always filled with grossness and if you have no proper discrimination, it will always go after sense indulgence; and as long as the mind is craving for the sense pleasures, you will not develop a keen discrimination, your intelligence will never be refined. Our ancient *rishis* must have reflected upon this. So our scriptures clearly declare that: 'Have a clean discrimination and Realise it. Free yourself from the deceptive nature of the sense objects, free yourself from the harmful nature of sense indulgence, free yourself from the clutches of your gross nature by constantly exercising discrimination, everyday, every moment of your life.'

You must be a person of great discrimination, intellectual, ethical and spiritual discrimination, so that the material world cannot fool you, cannot trap you. Then only you will be really free and you will be able to imbibe the great wisdom teachings.

Know it well that there is nothing good for you in these sense objects which attract you, entrap you, enslave you. They are the root-cause of all your pain and diseases, sorrow and suffering, disturbance and restlessness. So long the mind is restless, there cannot be real peace or happiness. Whatever intense passion and desire you may have for the sense objects and the sense enjoyments and all that, you gradually get rid of that with firm determination and constant discrimination. You

convert your *raga*, passion, for the sense objects into *viraga*, dispassion, and then develop *vairagyam*, detachment. You will have to exercise very strict discipline on your mind. Because the senses have been habituated with certain behavioral pattern over a long period and you have never tried to curb them, you have never tried to exercise any *samyama*, sense-control due to your delusion and ignorance. You have never come in contact with that type of people, that type of a society, that type of the world that do not run after the sense pleasures, but are trying to curb them. So you think you must have sense enjoyment. Soon you are accustomed to have sense enjoyments. Now it won't leave you unless you make a very determined effort.

Develop that firm determination. You must control the turbulent behavior of your mind. You must control its constant chasing of the sense pleasure. You must try to restrain yourself. This is one pattern of disciplining your mind.

Sadhan-Chatustaya

In the ancient times, the *guru* used to tell to a new seeker: 'First of all, practise the four-fold *sadhana* of *viveka*, *vairagya*, *shat-sampatti* and *mumukshutva*; and then only, I will give you the knowledge of the subtle truths of philosophy and Vedanta. Otherwise, even if I tell you these subtle truths, you will not be able to understand the correct implications of what I teach you, you will not be able to retain it. This requires purity of the mind and subtle intelligence.' Therefore, first you get yourself established in four-fold *sadhana*; then only you are qualified to do *shravana sadhana* according to the Vedantic *Jnana-Marga*.

In *sadhan-chatustaya*, the four-fold *sadhana*, *viveka* or discrimination is the first aspect, *vairagyam* or dispassion the second.

Shat-sampatti: The third *sadhan* is *Shat-sampatti*. It includes *shama*, *dama*, *uparati*, *titiksha*, *shraddha* and *samadhana*.

Shama: The determination to subdue these will come only when you realise: 'As long as I allow the senses to push towards the sense objects and allow myself to get caught in the excitement of the sense indulgence, my mind will always be restless, agitated and disturbed, it will be in tumult and it can never be calm or serene. I can never have peace and happiness.' Once the mind realises that this is not the proper direction, it will say: 'No I will not think of the sense objects. The senses naturally plunge in the sense objects, only if I think of them. The problem arises in *my thinking* of the sense objects. The sense objects are inert and non-intelligent; and so they cannot trouble me by themselves. But I myself allow them to become troublesome; because I do not control my mind, because my mind is full of desires to pursue them, enjoy them, experience them. So long as I have desires for them, my mind dwells upon them. Now I shall not allow it to dwell upon them. I shall divert my mind on to higher things. I shall cultivate different interests, other than mere sense indulgence. In this way, I shall be able to wean my mind away from its habitual propensity of chasing the sense objects and dwelling upon them.'

Now the mind will say; 'Like a lotus remaining unaffected by water even though remaining in the water, I shall remain unaffected even while living in the midst of the sense objects. Even if they come in my gaze I will not look towards them, I will withdraw my attention from the sense

objects. First of all I will withdraw the senses from the sense objects; but if in spite of that the objects come into my perception, and if the linking sense is aware of it, I will withdraw my connection with that sense; and if it is too late, I will refuse to identify myself with the sensation that has already been created. Even if an object has come in contact with the sense, the sense sends the message and there is a cognition of the sensation, I will refuse to identify myself with that sensation.

‘In this way, I will exercise triple withdrawal: The first and foremost, the most effective and the best, is the withdrawal of sense from the sense object. Secondly, it is the withdrawal of the mind from the sense. If both these fail and the sensation already reaches the mind, I will refuse to identify myself with that, I will not become an enjoyer of it, but will remain merely a pure witness to the happening and will remain absolutely detached and unaffected.’

As the mind begins to practise constantly this inward, invisible, subjective discipline, gradually it becomes free from the influence of the sense objects, free from the outer world of perception; it does not move towards the sense objects but thinks of higher things. And the mind ultimately attains a state of quiescence, absolute serenity. This state of quiescence is called *shama*. *Shama* is a discipline of establishing a state of serene quiescence in the mind. The mind will no more be restless, agitating or outward-going. Such inner stability must be supported by disciplining the senses, curbing of the senses.

Dama: *Dama* is controlling of the tumultuous and extremely uncontrollable activity of the senses. Just as a rider of a chariot exercises a firm grip over the reins and controls the horses, exercising a constant vigil to check them and not allowing them to move in a wayward manner; in the same way, the five horses of the senses are checked and controlled by the awakened intellect endowed with keen, active discrimination. Now it does not allow them to sway and to do what they like. Now you are the master, you give proper directive, you determine the path on which the five horses will have to tread. Now you have the control and you do not allow them to do what they like. This is known as *dama*, the subduing of the senses. This is the first step in the third aspect.

Uparati: This three-fold discipline will bring a complete transformation in your entire nature. The natural tendency of the mind and the entire psyche is centrifugal, it is to propel out and chase the outer objects of attractions and sense pleasures. It moves in all the directions towards thousands of objects and the world is filled with countless objects. The bees are always wandering here and there, never sitting quietly. But if the queen-bee moves to another place, all other bees will abandon their chase and follow it. Similarly, when the mind settles on higher things, all the senses follow the leader and give up their natural tendency to chase the sense objects. If the leader of a political party decides to change the alliance, all the cadre of that party will automatically join that alliance and become a part of it. Similarly, if the mind carefully observes and analyses the hollowness of the glitter of the attractive objects of this *Maya-bazaar* and of the repeated sense experiences, and starts discriminating and turns away from the sense objects, it will be awakened. It is like joining a new alliance by the leader and the senses will follow it. When the mind becomes established in that state, a peculiar marvellous thing happens: the senses give up their in-born natural propensity to go towards the sense objects of attraction and temptation. The senses which were the main cause of the problem, give up their fundamental nature and the problem automatically ceases to exist. The senses now follow the new nature of the awakened mind, the

mind full of discrimination, dispassion and detachment, the mind which is desireless and free from passion. When that happens, it is known as the fourth *sampatti* and is called *uparati*.

Titiksha: The third factor that obsesses and troubles the mind is the unpleasant experiences which upset you immediately. Too much of heat or cold, some little discomfort or inconvenience upsets you easily. Be a Spartan and develop a habit of bearing these without being upset. Don't leave all your work to correct them and to restore that comfort immediately. Don't allow it to distract you from your work, from your path. As the saying goes; Grin and bear it. This is called *titiksha*. It means to bear the little discomforts and inconveniences, troubles and unpleasant experiences, little ups and downs, which are part and parcel of everyday life. If you go on being upset by them and try to correct the situation, your time and energy will be wasted and your psyche will be affected. You should bear them and ignore them unless they are of a very dangerous nature.

Shraddha: *Samadhana* is possible only if you have absolute faith in whatever ideal you may have chosen. You should convince yourself: I know I have chosen the right path. Many have treaded this path and attained the supreme Being. They say this is the greatest Experience. They cannot be wrong. They had no personal axe to grind. They had no thread attached to it. They have nothing to gain or lose whether we adopt it or not. They did not want us to suffer. They wanted us to attain our highest welfare. They were our well-wishers, they have motiveless goodwill for us. It will be foolish for me not to have complete faith in them. So I have total faith. This is the sixth *sampatti* known as *shraddha*.

Samadhana: When one is well established in that state, he resolves: 'That and That alone is my goal. One-pointedness will be my state. I will not be attracted by anything other than That. There will never be any lack of self-control. I will never allow my aspiration to tone down even a little. I will not stop till the great goal is attained.'

Now your daily routine is totally changed. You are no more interested in petty things; you are no more wasting your time and energy after them. All your energy is fully directed in the inner direction, towards your goal that you have accepted. This is the fifth *sampatti* called *samadhana*, giving oneself entirely to a single ideal that you have adopted.

Mumukshutva: The fourth *sadhana* is *mumukshutva*, a strong desire of final emancipation. If all the things described above are to be kept up at the same pitch of intensity, you must have a very keen and intense longing for attaining Liberation. If you become a little slack, if you allow your effort to be diluted a little, finished. You may fall back to the square one.

What a great thing, great fortune it was to become one of the twelve disciples of Lord Jesus Christ! But one of them was tempted a little by the glitter of the gold and betrayed his Master. This is symbolic. Even after reaching such a very high state, if you allow your keen, intense involvement in that state to be diluted a little, finished. Therefore, intense longing for the goal is necessary.

JEEVO BRAHMAIVA NA-APARAH⁴

Sri Jagadguru, Bhagavadpada, Adi Sankaracharya is one of the greatest philosophers India has produced in its long chain of great philosophers. He is also regarded as one of the greatest philosophers of the world by good many philosophers and thinkers of the whole world. He was a giant intellectual personality and no one has equalled him till now on the scene of philosophical literature of the world. His contribution is simply amazing. He is regarded as a phenomenon.

In a brief life span of thirty-two years, he has brought out voluminous philosophical, spiritual and devotional literature of such high standard that it has set for ever the norms for classical spiritual literature for the entire world.

For a long time his literature was confined to India only. But its richness, the towering pinnacle of its conclusions, sheer strength of its logic, its crystal clear rationality are so remarkable and irrefutable that once some German scholars read him, they immediately started translating his works into German language and soon his works attracted the attention of the European scholars. The German translations were soon translated into other European languages.

Maharshi Veda-Vyasa gave us the quintessence of the Upanishadic philosophy in Vedanta-Sutra which is also known as Brahmasutra and he was indirectly responsible for bringing to us the great spiritual discourse of Lord Krishna to Arjuna. This *jnanopadesha* is known as Srimad-Bhagavad-Gita. It covers all the aspects of spiritual life. As it is woven in the great epic Mahabharata written by Maharshi Vyasa, he is indirectly responsible for bringing to us the divine preaching of Bhagavan. He also gave to the world the elaborate and very much voluminous eighteen Puranas. After giving to the world such unthinkably vast literature, he has said something very peculiar, very extraordinary, towards the end of his life: 'I have brought out this Puranic literature with the welfare of the mankind at my heart. In all this voluminous literature I have brought, I have told you what is meritorious to human activity and what will lead you to your greatest good and also the opposite of it, what is demeritorious or what you should always avoid, because it leads to your greatest harm, to greatest sorrow. I will sum this up in half a verse:

*Ashtaadasha-Puraneshu Vyasasya vachana-dvayam;
Paropakaaraaya punyaaya paapaaya para-peedanam.'*

[Vyasa has to say only two things (as quintessence) of the eighteen Puranas: *to do good to others is worthy, to harm others is unworthy*]. To harm, harass or injure others, or to inflict pain on others, to cause sorrow to others, is the greatest demerit and one has to suffer for that. If you make your God-given gift of the human life in being good to others, utilise it in doing good to others, in benefiting life around you, to help all creatures, that will lead to your own highest good. It will result in your own happiness, in your own supreme welfare.

4 Talk given to the students of 23rd Course of YVF Academy, 11-5-96

Jagadguru Sankaracharya, this towering philosopher has given the quintessence of his colossal, towering philosophical literature in a similar way. At the end of his career he says: 'Look here! Listen! All that I have written about, all that I have commented upon, I sum up in half-a-verse:

*Shloka-ardhena pravakshyaami yad-uktam grantha-kotibhih;
Brahma Satyam jagan-mithyaa jeevo Brahmaiva na-aparah.*

[In half-a-verse I shall express what has been said in crores of books: Brahman alone is real, the world is *mithyaa*; the Soul is Brahman and no other.] The Reality alone is. The Supreme Existence is eternal, non-dual and without a second. *You are That only*. Everything perceived through the five senses and understood by your mind and intellect is unreal. All the objects of the world are like the water of a desert mirage, they are like the glint of the nacre, the mother pearl lying on the sand of seashore and appearing like silver, *shuktikaa hi rajatavad-avabhasate*. They have no real existence but they have only seeming appearance and that too temporary.

What appears in a dream as cent percent true, true beyond doubt so long as you remain in the dream state, disappears in a fraction of a second once you come to the waking state. Similarly, this world disappears once you are awakened. The dream experience is so graphic and so complete in all respects, and you perceive every detail, and you experience it through all the five sense-organs, that that experience dominates your consciousness completely and during that period that experience remains the only truth for you. But when you wake up suddenly due to the ringing of the alarm-clock or any such disturbance, the very next moment everything disappears, everything becomes unreal! You cannot say that your dream was non-existence or unreal because you remember it in full details; yet you cannot say it is real because you cannot photograph it, print it, or you cannot reproduce the conversation and the scene or the objects and the characters in any other way. Nevertheless, one part of your consciousness retains its memory and you can write it down or narrate it. But now it is non-existent. The moment you wake up, it becomes non-existent and irrelevant. Now your consciousness is dominated by some other events of some other reality which takes over the charge of your consciousness.

Our seers say, it is just like that. You are a part of this dream experience, this dream world, and you think that it is real, your outer personality is real. But when you wake up to the supreme, cosmic Reality, your true identity, then only you know that your false identity was as much a figment of that dream as the characters and all the factors of that dream world. You thought, you knew yourself as Mr. So and So, you conceived your identity with a certain name and form; but when you wake up, when you attain the *Bodhi*, the Enlightenment, the Illumination, that very second you yourself become Light only, your false identity disappears completely, like the disappearance of darkness as soon as you put on the light. You may wonder: How could I cling to the darkness all along! Why was I thinking like that? What a foolish way of thinking!

Sankaracharya does not stop at that. He asserts that your present personality is false; because you are no other than that supreme, wonderful Being. You are one with It. In a most wondrous way he is able to tell us graphically how it is so, so that, with a little common sense one can easily understand it and it becomes absolutely clear and beyond doubt.

The world we see and we know with all our sense perception is not real and non-eternal. It is there for a moment and ceases to exist the next moment. It is your delusion to think that you are a weak and imperfect, limited being confined to this physical body and the name and form associated with it. Remember! *You are no other than That, you are the Brahma-tattva only.* You are the cosmic Being, you are the Perfect, Divine, Universal Being. You are no other than That.

How is it possible? It is *svatah-siddhah*, self-evident. Because Brahman is *ekameva-advitiam*, the one and the only Existence, without a second. There is no second. So your Soul is no other but That only.

Our seers have proved this in an amazing way, so that an ordinary man can also easily understand. In an ocean, there are innumerable waves; some small, some big, some very big, some giant size. They are of different shapes and sizes. You can see them, you can observe them dancing and playing. You can distinguish them, identify them. You can photograph them. You can hear them roaring. There are innumerable waves with different shapes, characteristics and different life spans. Each wave has its own separate identity, its own existence. Even when you are watching at these waves with different individual shapes, sizes and characteristics, what you are looking at? Do you see anything other than the ocean?

What is the origin of these waves? From where they have all emerged? Do they really have separate individuality? How the seeming individual existence of these waves was possible? When they broke away, where they went? Each wave arose from the ocean. It owed its existence to the ocean. When it momentarily existed as a seemingly separate identity, it was always supported by the ocean and always remained a part of the ocean. It never had an existence independent of the ocean. When it subsided, it merged back into the ocean only. Thus, ocean is its *aadi, madhya* and *anta*, the beginning, the middle and the end; that is, it emerges from the ocean, its existence is possible with the support of the ocean only, and when it subsides it merges back into the ocean and once again becomes one with the ocean. Even when it momentarily looked something distinct from the ocean with a separate individual identity, it was at no moment other than the ocean itself.

What is the implication of this? Like the wave being ever no other than the ocean, the individual soul is never other than That. The ocean is the only real existence; the apparent multiplicity in the form of waves has no ultimate reality. No other thing besides the ocean ever exists.

There is such a large variety of clothes with different colours and different designs. But beyond all these forms, what exists is only cotton *tattva*; nothing exists there other than cotton. If you go to a big pottery store, you find hundreds of different articles of different sizes and different names and different forms. Even when you are seeing these variegated types of pottery articles—delicate, big, small, artistic, decorative, utilitarian—you are looking at one thing only, the clay. All the pottery is made out of clay only. You may give different names to pots, but they are nothing other than clay. There are different ornaments, but a goldsmith sees nothing other than gold.

These are some of the classical analogies given by our ancient sages, in order to bring home the non-duality of *Brahma-Tattva*, in spite of so many variegated manifestations of that *Tattva* in

different names and forms. There is only one Existence, beyond all these multifarious names and forms. While explaining this to a Vedanta student, the teacher does not elaborate, but simply says: *Ghata-pata-adi nyaayavat*. *Ghata* means pot and *pata* means cloth. So it means, like the analogies of pot, cloth, etceteras, there exists only one *Tattva*, even though seemingly there are so many, and are seen as many.

Some people give another analogy: A spider decides to make a home for itself in a corner of a room. If we have to build a home for us, we have to buy so many different things—bricks, cement, iron rods, various items of hardware and sanitary-ware—from so many different shops. A bird builds a nest as its temporary abode. It goes here and there and collects so many things from various places. From how many sources the spider has to obtain all the materials? What are the materials? It does not go anywhere to collect the materials. Whatever is necessary to make a web, it brings out of its own self and remains in that web; and when its purpose is served, it absorbs the web back into its own self. Can you ever say that the web is different and separate from the spider? In spite of there being seemingly two different things, the spider and the web, there is non-duality. The web is no other than the spider.

What is the purpose of the various philosophical systems and vast spiritual literature? Why do they exist? They exist to tell us certain home-truths. Why should they tell us these home-truths? What is the value of these home-truths? Because if you are not aware of these truths, you will be living in delusion, you will be deceiving yourself. You can live in wisdom only if you are fully aware of these truths; you will then no longer remain in delusion.

The second important, pragmatic necessity of knowing the truths is: The eternal quest of the entire mankind in the whole universe is: How to overcome pain and sorrow and obtain lasting happiness? Our scriptures have summed up the answer to this in an amazing manner. All the people are in quest of so many things. A farmer is engaged in trying to get a proper field, proper manure and fertilisers, proper seeds, proper pair of bullocks, proper equipment, water for irrigation, this and that—hundreds of different things. Similarly, people in other occupations are also trying to find so many things. But the scriptures say: ‘Ultimately, all are engaged in search of one thing only. That one thing is happiness. No one wants pain, sorrow, grief or suffering. Everyone wants to avoid unpleasant, undesirable, painful experiences. All want happiness and they want to perpetuate that experience of happiness. *Sukham bhuyaad, maa bhuyaad duhkham*. Avoiding sorrow and suffering and trying to obtain happiness.’ This is the eternal quest of mankind in all the parts of the world. This sums up in nutshell, the eternal quest of the man on this earth. We may do it in so many different ways, but our objective is the same.

If you know certain truths of human life and base your life and conduct on them only, you will be able to get rid of sorrow, suffering and pain, and obtain real happiness. Real happiness is not momentary but permanent. If you do not base your life on these truths, your quest will be a leap in the dark, a wild-goose-chase. You cannot get permanent happiness from those things which are themselves temporary. And everything in this world is temporary. So, the worldly things cannot give you happiness. Therefore, you should not crave for anything in this world; you should not go after anything in this world; you should not allow yourself to get enslaved by the temporary objects of this world. Everything in this world is temporary; there is not a single thing which is permanent. What are the adjectives used by Lord Krishna for this world? *Anityam, asukham, ashashvata*,

impermanent, unhappy, non-eternal—these are the adjectives with which the Lord refers to His own creation, His own work. Our experience teaches us that even while some happiness seems to be present sometimes, it is not eternal, it is for a short duration only; and you cannot rely on it because that experience of happiness is always changing. One moment it is there, the next moment, before you can grasp it, it disappears or diminishes.

Why do you crave for it? Your imagination of a thing may be something and you may think: ‘I will be happy if I get it.’ But when you get it you find it to be totally different from what you had imagined. Now you want to get rid of it! You are imagining something, but the actuality is something else. And even if the actuality tallies and coincides with your imagination, it goes on changing while you have it.

Here is a simple analogy. You want to enjoy your Sunday with an ice-cream party. The carry-home service delivers you the best quality ice-cream. It is served in beautiful bowls to each member of the family. It is decorated with cherry and special cream. Everything is ready. But the telephone call comes and you have to attend it. It is some urgent and serious matter. You ask other people to take the ice-cream and you continue to talk on the phone for twenty minutes. When you come to the party again, where is your beautifully decorated ice-cream? It is no longer what it was. It is neither cold nor does it stand, it has already dissolved. So also, all the things in this world are changing. Even the most beautiful or the nicest thing will also become worthless.

Suppose, you have brought the best quality alphanso mangoes. As soon as you enter your home, there is a phone call from your boss. He wants you to rush immediately to some place for a few days on some urgent important work. You leave home in a hurry, forgetting to tell your wife about the mangoes. When you come back home and remember about the mangoes and open the packet, what you find is that all the mangoes are spoilt and some juice is coming out of it. You had expected the fruits to give a great joy; but now you have to do the cleaning and throw them away. Is there any intrinsic lasting value in the mangoes? All the objects of this world are non-eternal and yet we are always clinging to them!

Suppose, a boy meets a very beautiful girl. He is so much enchanted and enamoured that he thinks he will never be happy unless he marries that girl. They got married. After some time, the girl is severely infected by small-pox and it makes her very ugly. The love of the boy changes completely. He says; ‘Where is that beautiful girl whom I had married. She is not that beautiful dream-princess of mine.’ So Gurudev says, what attracts the mind is the outer physical beauty.

Suppose, you like *khir* very much. You are invited by your bosom friend for a party on some festival day and the menu includes *khir*. Its preparation is most delicious. You eat beyond your capacity. Now your friend fondly insists for a couple of helpings more and you take some more *khir*. Now it is the turn of his wife. You cannot say no and the *khir* causes you discomfort and nausea. The same *khir* which you like very much is now the cause of all the trouble. Where has gone that pleasure-giving power of the *khir*? If it has in itself an intrinsic power to give you happiness, your happiness should increase more, the more you take it. But on the contrary it causes you discomfort. That means the experience of happiness is subjective and is not in the outside object; the object has no inherent quality to make a man happy.

All these analogies bring out one common truth: There is no happiness in the objects of the world. They are the cause of pain. Lord Krishna says:

*Ye hi samsparshajaa bhogaa dukkhayonaya eva te;
Aadyantavantah Kaunteya na teshu ramate budhah.*

[The enjoyments that are born of contacts are only generators of pain, for they have a beginning and an end, O Arjuna! The wise do not rejoice in them. B.G. V-22]

The first home truth is: All want happiness. Why do you then chase those outside objects which have no intrinsic capacity to give you happiness? If you want happiness, make effort in the right direction. Time flees away. You are here for a limited period only. The rare chance of human birth is not endless. Therefore, be up and doing. If you seek happiness, exert yourself in the right direction.

What is the wrong direction? The world is the wrong direction; anything and everything in this world is the wrong direction. There is not even an iota of happiness in the objects of this world and they can never make you happy. This creation of Brahma has some utilitarian value; but it has a nuisance value as well. It can never give you happiness.

The second home truth is: The real Happiness is in That All-perfect, non-dual *Brahma-tattva*, One without a second. All the objects of the world are merely generators of pain, sorrow and suffering. Therefore, don't waste this precious opportunity by running in the wrong direction and ultimately getting caught in disappointment, frustration, sorrow and lamentation.

Which is the direction that you should follow? You need not study deeply the scriptures and big volumes of philosophy to learn this. Many saints, mystics and spiritual seekers have treaded the right path and reached their destination and attained That. They implicitly followed the right direction, obtained that experience and obtained the Happiness. Whoever has followed them had also the same wondrous Experience. Make a deep study of their lives and try to follow their footsteps. A poet says:

*The lives of great men oft remind us
That we can make our lives sublime.*

We should emulate the lives of the mystics and saints who have attained That; we should follow their footsteps. They were people who lived a very austere life, they were men of *vichara* and *viveka*; they never led a haphazard life.

Therefore, always do *vichara* and have *viveka*, enquire and discriminate every moment, every step, every breath of your life. Let there always be active discrimination and enquiry within you. You have not to worry now, because you will not miss your step and go in the wrong direction.

The third home truth is: It is the lives of the saints that teach us in what direction we should go, how to lead our lives and what practices to engage in, so as to attain the highest state of supreme Blessedness and Bliss, of eternal Happiness beyond sorrow and suffering. *Mahajanah gataah sa*

panthah. That is the path which the great ones have trodden. That is your path. That is the path you should follow.

When they attained the supreme state of Blessedness and Bliss, they found that That Blessedness and Bliss was no other than the eternal *ekameva-advitiam Brahma-Tattva*. The very nature of that Supreme Reality is the quintessence of one hundred percent, unalloyed, pure, total Bliss. So they declared: *Anando Brahmeti vyajanaat*. [He knew Bliss as Brahman. Tait. Up. 3-6-1.]

Therefore, strive by all the means possible, through thought, word and deed, through whatever action you may engage yourself, to connect yourself to that supreme Reality. Because from that with which you connect yourself, its nature will flow into you. This electric bulb is connected with the electricity and so it gives you the light. But if you cut off this connection by switching it off, there will be darkness; because now the nature of the electricity is not flowing into the bulb. So, why don't you connect yourself with That which is Light of lights, which is Bliss-absolute, Peace-absolute, which is eternal Happiness? *Teshaam shantih shaashvati netareshaam*. [To them belongs the eternal Peace, not to others. Katha. Up. 2-2-13.] So connect yourself with It. Link yourself with That. That is the essence of all the *sadhana*, all the philosophy. Establish contact with that supreme, transcendental Reality. Make a permanent inner link-up with That and go on striving for It by every means possible and move in the direction leading to It. Go on increasing that relation by leaps and bounds and make your progress in geometric progression. Have full faith and you will reach That.

That is the essence of all Vedanta, essence of all Yoga, essence of the *sadhana*. Connect yourself with That, sustain that connection and move towards That more and more. Intensify your relationship with It. Make it more intense, and more and more intense. That is the purpose of all *upasana*, that is the purpose of *japa*, that is the purpose of all *kirtan*, that is the meaning of *aaraadhanaa*, that is the meaning of meditation. All these are the means or processes of building up and consolidating that relationship, the spiritual link-up with the Divine. All these are to move progressively towards the supreme Reality, till you ultimately attain Oneness with That.

When a small stream comes out of a glacier of a snow-clad mountain, it is so narrow that you can jump over it and go to the other side. But slowly more streams join it, and its flow goes on increasing. It becomes a small river. Some other rivers join it, and it becomes a big river. There is so much water! But it goes on to its chosen path to meet the ocean non-stop, continuously, untiringly. If there is some obstacle in the form of a rock or hill, it remains undeterred and finds its right path again. Ultimately, it does meet the ocean and becomes one with it. That is the success of its life-long effort. That is the fulfillment of its life. Your life should flow like that continually on the same one path, progressively coming nearer and nearer towards that supreme Being. Stop not till the Goal is reached. This is the call of Upanishad: *Uttishthata jaagrata, praapya varaannibodhata*. [Arise! Awake! Having reached the great (teachers) attain that Atman. Katha Upanishad 1-3-14.]

This is the quintessence of all the philosophy—eastern, western, ancient or modern. All the philosophies exist to tell you that the greatest Bliss is in That, the One, non-dual; and not in the many fleeting appearances. It also tells us that this human birth is a rare opportunity and so you should not postpone your march towards the Goal, you should not waste a single moment. Be up and doing. Stop not till the Goal is reached.

All the scriptures, all the philosophies exist only in order to liberate mankind from the web of sorrow in which he is caught, and to take him beyond all sorrow, pain and suffering; and to make him attain and become established forever in the state of supreme Bliss, Perfection, Blessedness and Liberation.

Hari Om Tat Sat.

(At the end of the discourse a student asked: “Is it possible to attain such a state in this very life?”)

Sri Swamiji assured, “***Emphatically yes. It is possible, one hundred percent.***”)

OBJECTIVE OF YOGA-VEDANTA⁵

You are the students of the twenty-fourth Yoga-Vedanta course of the Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy of this spiritual, Dharmic and ethical institution founded by Guru Maharaj Sri Swami Sivanandaji sixty years ago. First, you should acquaint yourself with what you are engaged in.

The first objective of this course is: You want to know something about the Indian culture, about Yoga, Vedanta, meditation and about the Indian scriptures like the Gita, Upanishads, Bhagavatam, Ramayana. That is, you want to fulfil your *jijnasa*, your thirst for knowledge.

Secondly, in some of you there may be an urge: ‘I am born in India. If I don’t know anything about the Indian culture, I am an Indian in name only. If I have to become a true Indian, representing my culture I must absorb and assimilate the Indian culture so that I may live according to the ideals of our culture and these ideals may manifest in me. Then only, I can become a true Bharatiya.’

In addition to these, in some of you there may be a still higher third dimension of spiritual longing, the spiritual *jijnasa*, *mumukshutva*, a spiritual hankering: ‘This course may help me to become a spiritual person. It may help me to put me on the path of spiritual seeking and spiritual progress. It may help me to move towards God.’

All these three objectives can be achieved here, if you live here not only as students but also as persons seeking spiritual unfoldment of your personality, if your approach is: ‘I want to move ahead in the life, I want to make progress not only in the dimension of intellectual knowledge, not only as a lover of Indian culture, but also in the dimension of my spiritual Reality.’ We are not merely human beings. This personality, this identity is merely a temporarily added token identity. You were not having this human body before you came to this earth plane, before you were born to your parents. You did not have a human name and form, a human personality or even the human consciousness. In that state you were something else; what it is you do not know.

5 Talk given to YVF Academy students on 12-9-96

If you think deeply about the life, you also realise that this temporary human personality shall end one day. One day you will have to discard this human identity.

The whole of our religious thought originates from a mass of Knowledge and Wisdom. It does not originate from any specific single, divinely inspired outstanding personality like Buddha, Mahavir, Zoroaster, Moses, Jesus, Mohammed or Guru Nanak. There is no such personality behind the Satya Sanatana Vaidika Dharma. It is timeless. It is so ancient that its beginning is not known to anyone. The end portion of the Vedas, known as Upanishads, is the treasure of the mass of knowledge, wisdom arising out of the highest supernal Experience. The earlier portions of the Vedas may be still more ancient which goes beyond the recorded human history. This is the only non-prophetic religion in the world.

There were some ancient civilisations like the Assyrian civilisation, the Egyptian civilisation, the Greek civilisation etc. Whatever way of worship and living they were having, were dubbed by the occidental scholars by the common label of paganism. Those scholars thought that the Hindus were superstitious and they always criticised them. But when they came to discover the towering heights of the philosophical wisdom that we have attained, they were bewildered, they were stunned. They started looking at our religion with reverence. Their scholars started studying the Vedas. One of the first people to study the Indian scriptures were the Germans. They found in the Vedic wisdom profound depth. A great scholar Max Mueller translated the Vedas in the German language. The English translations are from the German translations of Max Mueller, Paul Deussen, Schopenhauer and other outstanding German philosophers who studied the Indian philosophy. Schopenhauer was so much inspired by the Upanishads that he said: "Upanishads have been the solace of my life and I know that they will be solace of my death also."

The quintessence of all the Vedas is in the end portion, the *summa cum laude*, the epitome is the Upanishads; and the essence of Upanishads is the Bhagavad Gita. Bhagavad Gita starts by telling this terrible truth: *Jaatasya hi dhruvo mrityuh* [Certain is death for the born. II-27]. For everyone born, departure from here is a certainty. If you have come here, you have to go one day leaving everything here. Therefore, whatever we have to achieve, we have to achieve in this life itself. Also, it makes it very clear that we did not have a human personality before we were born and we will not have this human personality when we depart from here. When you go beyond, you will have no name, no form, no body and no human personality.

What is that state? A state transcending the name and form where the human identity is dropped, it is reduced to ashes or buried. That is a state where you do not have this time consciousness of seconds, minutes and hours, days, months and years. You go beyond all that. There, there is no sunrise for you nor any sunset. In that state, you are a centre of spiritual consciousness. That is called Atman and It is a part of the cosmic, spiritual, universal Soul. That is your real identity. You are an *amsha*, a part of the supreme Being.

It is important, therefore, that you try to become aware of your real identity, try to become aware of your inner centre, your inner Being. From that awareness only, you can unfold your Divine Identity. God is Divine; and you are a part of that Divine Being. So you are also Divine. Divinity is your essential Reality. It has neither birth nor death, It has neither name nor form, It has neither time nor space, It has neither pain nor suffering, It has neither grief nor sorrow, It has neither bondage

nor liberation. It is beyond all these. It is a state of peace and joy. It is a state of bliss. There is no other experience; there is no weeping and wailing, no fighting and quarrelling. All these pertain to your physical and psychological levels. All the experiences on this earth plane are either physical or psychological. But the Spirit is beyond physical and psychological levels. It is far above and physical and psychological experiences cannot reach It. It is a state which is devoid of the entire range of earth experiences of human beings. It is beyond them, It transcends them.

In that dimension, you are *Sat, Chit, Ananda*. You are the luminous Consciousness. You are the Existence and you are conscious of your Existence. That state of Being is pure Bliss, It is pure Peace and Joy. You are free and fearless.

That is to be realised. That is to be known. That is to be contemplated. That is to be experienced. That is the Goal of your life. That is the greatest ideal of real India, the spiritual India and has remained so for thousands of years, year after year. No matter what upheavals were there on the surface of India, this living stream of spirituality, the living stream of *Atma-sakhshatkara* and *aparoksha-anubhuti*, of Self-realisation and direct Experience has been flowing continuously as a silent, unseen, inner current.

You are entering the spiritual life to participate in that Experience. Apply your common sense and enquire: 'I was not a human individual before I was born. When I will have to leave this body I will be no more having this human personality. Then who am I?' Soon you will be convinced in what our seers have said: 'You are not this body, nor this mind. You are the immortal Atman. You are the shining centre of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, you are the shining centre of peace and joy. You are full of purity, full of love, full of compassion, full of harmony, full of unity, full of light. You are *Jyotishaam-api taj-jyotih*, [That, the Light of the lights. B.G. 13/18].'

You should learn this. You must start reflecting upon your real identity. You should try to do *vichara* and *viveka*; if out of *viveka* and *vichara*, little spiritual consciousness is awakened and unfolded within you then your attending the course is really fruitful, it is worthwhile. Otherwise, you will be going back, taking with you some bookish knowledge only. No doubt you will enrich yourself and you will be a better individual. But the real purpose of Guru Maharaj in starting the Academy was not only to equip you with some knowledge of Indian philosophy, religion, scriptures, culture and all that, but also to awaken your inner spiritual consciousness out of slumber.

Yoga and Vedanta are the two terms which imply the highest Experience, the Divine Experience, the God Experience which our ancient Vedic sages, seers and *siddha mahapurushas* had experienced. That Experience is Vedanta. Vedanta is the actual Experience of your true identity; it is not merely knowledge at intellectual level. Yoga is studying and practising the scientific methods, step by step, to attain ultimately, that Divine Experience. So Yoga and Vedanta cannot be separated. They are inter-connected. The objective of Yoga is to give you the highest Vedantic Experience and in doing this, Yoga takes the totality of human personality.

Yoga tries to achieve that Experience through various paths. Through the Bhakti-Yoga, that is through the emotional path of your being, your *bhava*, sentiment, emotion, through prayer, faith, devotion and worship. Through the Raja Yoga or Dhyana Yoga with the power of your mind; by the withdrawal of the mind, making it turned inward, controlling and overcoming its restlessness and

making it still, concentrating it and meditating to pierce the veil of ignorance and attaining Illumination. Through the intellectual part of your being in Jnana Marga or Vichara Marga, through *vichara, viveka*, reflection, analysis and investigation. Through the Karma Yoga by dedicating all your daily activities to God.

All these four paths can be combined into a single spiritual process, because the ultimate objective of all of them is the same. Our seers say: 'Make use of all the faculties God has given you as a part of your human personality and direct them towards the attainment of *Brahma-Jnana*.'

Yoga is a systematic way of trying to rise into the spiritual Consciousness by a well-regulated series of progressive steps. Vedanta is the ultimate Experience and Yoga is the method to attain It. So you have to learn both and make use of this knowledge and practices to bring about gradually the ascent of the spirit. It is possible provided you have the proper understanding and you are seriously practising them.

You can make use of all the four faculties by using all the four main paths—Karma, Bhakti, Dhyana and Jnana—in order to have the Vedantic Realisation. This you must bear in mind. Though you have come here as students and after going back you will be living your daily life in your own way. But even if you continue to live your life as you were living previously, the life should not be the same. Now your life is supported by knowledge and wisdom which you have acquired here. Your life may remain the same outwardly, but it will not be the same. You have a better vision, a more clear perception, you will have a fuller wisdom about your mission in life.

The quality of your life will now suddenly become transformed. It will be much superior life, much purposeful life. Your life will be ever ascending on the spiritual path. May be you will come again and again to the Ashram for the spiritual atmosphere.

Life is short, time is fleeting. The human life is a very valuable, very precious gift of God. You should utilise it properly and try to attain something. Always remember what is That which is to be attained.

First and foremost, you must know how to become an ideal human individual. All the positive as well as the negative qualities are within us; many weaknesses as well as favourable qualities are within us. Whatever is not good, whatever is negative, whatever is imperfect must be eliminated gradually, so that you can shine with all that is positive and virtuous, so that you can become an ideal human individual. You will move forward continuously. Many people will be benefited by your good nature.

Secondly, our ancient ideal is to do maximum good to maximum number of people to the extent you can, in as many ways as you can, as long as you can, in all the circumstances, in all the places. Constantly make yourself a centre of '*being good and doing good*.' This body is given to you for doing good to others. The fellow human beings, animals, plants, the whole world must be benefited through your life. This is an integrated way of life. It is known as *paropakara*. We should live in such a way that we become of some use to God's creation, to all life around us.

Thirdly, your human personality is temporary. You have come here to know your real Self, to know your spiritual nature. Make use of this human birth in such a way that you can leave this body shining with Wisdom, shining with the Light of that great Experience, the Self-realisation.

These three should be your ideals:

1) On the subjective level, to become an ideal human being. Make use of all your knowledge to reform yourself, so that you will have the satisfaction that you have not wasted this gift of God.

2) On the outer level, to become a great *paropakari*, a benefactor of all life with utmost humility, without slightest egoism.

3) On the inner level, to attain spiritual Realisation. The first two ideals are pertaining to this world; but you do not belong to this world, you belong to a higher spiritual dimension.

These three are the great tasks of human life. So, become an ideal human being. Secondly, become a centre of good to the whole world around you. While leading ideal human life, while doing maximum good to life around you as a *maha-paropakari*. You practise a rich inner spiritual life of prayer, *japa*, *swadhyaya*, meditation. But all these you have to do silently, secretly, in your private life. No one should know about it, do not make propaganda of it and continue to live your life as before. This inner secret transformation should be known only to God. Suppose, you have kept in your bag some iron thing and a *siddha* turns it into gold by touching *parasmani* to it. Only you know there is an immense treasure inside but others do not know. You are careful not to tell about your treasure to anyone so as to guard it. Like that, as far as possible, never divulge your spiritual practices, your spiritual treasure to anyone. Then only, you will get maximum benefit out of it.

This is the objective of the Yoga-Vedanta Course: To help to become an ideal human individual; to transform your life with the noble ideal of *paropakara*; and with the knowledge of Yoga and Vedanta becoming a spiritual seeker, *jijnasu* and thus making your life a continuous progress towards connecting yourself with the supreme Being, a continuous spiritual ascent towards Him.

DETACH, ATTACH⁶

Radiant immortal Atman! Beloved children of the Divine! Immortal souls, temporarily in a state of physical embodiment and for a brief duration engaged in living with a material, physical, gross outer world, made up of ever changing, temporary perishable names and forms!

This episodic presence of yours upon this ever-changing, momentary, perishable earth plane of apparent things with names and forms is characterised by a beginning and an end. These are indisputable and incontrovertible truths regarding our presence here that it is a relationship with changeable things, perishable things, momentary in time and space, imperfect because they are not capable of imparting to you the same experience permanently. They are capable of giving you both enjoyable or painful feeling. But they cannot give you a uniform positive experience of happiness or satisfaction. You will not find it here, because of the nature of objects in this world is temporary; and temporary objects cannot give you a lasting experience.

Your life here on this earth plane is a great sojourn or a journey and you are only a traveller. You do not belong to this world. This world is not your real abode. Kabir addresses the human individual as *musafir*, as a traveller in this famous poem:

*Utha jaga musafir bhor bhee
Aba raina kahan jo sovat hai;*

[O sojourner! Awake! The dawn awaits you. There is no darkness now; why are you (still) asleep?] In another poem he says this earth plane is a halting place for a night for the caravan of life; this is not the permanent abode. People spend a night together, get themselves little acquainted with one another, they share a common place. But when in the morning, it is time to go, each goes his way. They diverge on different paths, never to meet again.

Your journey on this earth plane is like that. But because you do not think about it, you develop attachment and get yourself involved. Attachment leads to many other situations and states of mind and the ultimate result is always pain. Attachment leads to all your problems.

When Mahatma Gandhi soon after he left South Africa and came to India and decided to devote his entire life for the service of the Indian people, he came in contact with Srimad Bhagavad-Gita and made it his personal guide-book and manual of life. He was so much impressed by the vision in this compact little scripture that he decided to make it available to all Gujarati people by translating it into Gujarati, just as, much later Sri Vinobaji translated it into simple Marathi verse which is known as *Gitaee*. Mahatma Gandhi interestingly enough gave it the name *Anasakti Yoga*, also known as the Yoga of Detachment or the Gospel of Selfless Action.

What does Gita have to tell and teach to the traveller? Go through this world in a spirit of detachment. Do everything that has to be done, fulfil your duties discharge your obligations; but be

6 Talk given to YVF Academy students on 12-5-96

unattached. Know that even this fulfilling of obligations and doing of duties is ultimately being engineered and carried on by some other great Power that pervades the universe and works in and through everyone of us. Arjuna had the good fortune of the actual demonstration of this by Bhagavan Sri Krishna Himself in The Yoga of The Vision of the Cosmic Form, the Eleventh Chapter. He shows to Arjuna that the whole universe is nothing but His body. There is no army, nothing; everything is finished, everything has been annihilated by the *Virat Vishvaroopa*, the all-pervading Cosmic Form. After coming down from that height of Consciousness, Arjuna says: 'Please come down to assume your normal form; I am unable to bear the impact of this Cosmic Vision.'

What we are supposed to do? The Lord says: '*nimitta-maatram bhava savyasaachin* [Be thou a mere instrument, O Arjuna! XI-33]. Be only an instrument, because I have done whatever has to be done.' It was a state of Consciousness where past, present and future are all fused into one. Arjuna sees the future events as already happened and realizes that he is only a *nimitta*, an instrument.

So, go through your life knowing fully well that some great power is working and doing all the things and you are merely an instrument of His work. Therefore, you must try to be a good instrument, an efficient instrument, so that, that work be done in a perfect manner and the Cosmic is not affected negatively by you; you have to make a positive contribution on your part. Your efficiency will suffer if you get yourself emotionally attached or get yourself involved through desire. If you are *anasakta*, totally detached, then you can act in a way that will not be affected and influenced by your personal involvement. Therefore, Mahatma Gandhi gave his Gujarati version of the Gita, the title of *Anasakti Yoga*.

This has to be the approach and attitude towards life and the manner in which to live our lives; because in the ultimate context, we have no permanent lasting connection with anyone here. A mystic says:

*Bhai, bandhu, kutumb, parivaara, sab jeete jeeke naate hain.
Kiske ho tum? Kaun tumhaaraa? Kiske bal Hari-naama bisaara?*

[Brothers, friends, family, relatives, are (all) relations of a living being only. To whom you are (truly) related? For whom you have forgotten (the only real relation,) God?] As long as you are alive, these relations are there; but once the last breath goes away, then who is your relative and who is your friend?

Therefore, go through the life unattached. Fulfil your duties and obligations in a spirit of detachment, while taking full interest in whatever has to be done. When it is being done you should see that you are not caught in the web of delusion, in the net of sorrow and suffering, and you have not to weep and wail. That is what everyone wants. That is the universal quest of all the living beings on earth, specially so, of the human being. Because of the intelligence the man knows what he wants. But even reptiles, insects, birds, beasts, fish, who do not know and cannot understand or analyse the purpose of life and who are all after one thing, namely, avoidance of pain and suffering, have also this quest of satisfaction, contentment, happiness. So the Gita says if you do not see this clearly that you are a temporary dweller on this earth plane, that this life is a journey and you have

no ultimate connection with any one here, no one belongs to you ultimately and you do not belong to anyone, if you do not ultimately cultivate this truth-oriented view of life and approach to life, you are bound to get caught in the net of delusion, in the web of *Maya* and then weep and suffer. If you want to avoid sorrow and suffering and that is what everyone wants, *be detached*.

This is the negative side of the problem as to how to conquer sorrow, how to overcome pain, misery and unhappiness. But we are also in quest of positive experience. This negative experience is obtainable even by other means also. If some one has lost everything and becomes insane, he keeps on laughing. But that is not the state we seek. This is not our goal. We should consciously, purposefully and in an intelligent manner work to avoid suffering. This avoiding of suffering takes place automatically in a certain state.

We are more interested in the other side, the constructive and the positive side of the eternal quest of all life, finding a fulfilment, attaining perfection. When there is the sense of lacking, sense of insufficiency, then you are always trying to attain fulfilment.

How can this be achieved? That is the positive side of mysticism. But this has not been enough focused, enough expounded, enough explained. So the Indian philosophy has come to bear the brunt of very severe negative criticism.

There is also a negative fatalistic attitude, a world-denying view of life: No one is interested in making the world a better world. No one is interested in trying to remove the sorrows and pains of others. They say: 'This is all temporary, this will all go away. After all, everything is coated with the varnish of death. One day, everyone must leave everything and go. Therefore, why unnecessarily exert oneself?' So there is no positive effort to improve oneself. To some extent it is true. But this is due to non-assimilation of the positive dimension of our understanding of life and philosophy.

The eternal call from ancient times, as reflected in *Yoga Vasishtha* is for *Purushartha Chathushtaya*, the four-fold effort, endeavour; and it has been even built-in in our view of life. An individual human person must strive to obtain certain values to make the life worth living and to enjoy life. While you are here, why should you live in discomfort?

There was a period in human history all over the globe when monasticism, turning away from the world and turning towards God, was interpreted in a very painfully negative way. They believed that you should not give the body any comfort or any pleasurable sensation; because that experience will make you go after that, you will have a craving for it. You will become attached to that pleasurable sensation. That concept was carried to such an unnatural, abnormal, illogical and irrational extreme, that this body was thought to be an obstacle. So they used to have certain practices of subjecting the body to torturous experiences. In summer they will wear very rough camel hair, wearing which you will die of heat. One should not have anything soft, anything cool, anything light. So inside your apparel you wore something very rough, very heavy, very uncomfortable. As though this was not enough, you slept upon a plank of wood and kept a stone as your pillow; not to use any foot-wear, to put on minimum clothes in the winter, and in this worst period even one whipped one's own self. Mortification was carried to such extremes in the medieval period.

This is the most awesome form of penance. But ultimately, nature is nature. The law of Nature cannot be flouted. The person of penance became afflicted by various diseases. He caught pneumonia, or he may get some stroke or burning of the eyes or kidney trouble and all that. But they did not attribute it to their own irrational way of extreme *tapasya*. Ultimately, their own *sadhana* suffered as the body became ill and weak. The body could not bear the strain of this extreme *tapas*. Due to the extremes, the body, the one and the only instrument through which you have to attain the supreme goal by *sadhana*, by appropriate practices, becomes no longer useful. The wrong notion of mortification beyond a certain stage becomes harmful.

This was long recognised by our ancients. They have said: *Ati sarvatra varjayet* [Give up excess of all kinds]. Equally bad is too much indulgence, too much of pampering of the body and the senses. You must know what is the limit of the other kind where if you go beyond a point your body will break down, it will suffer. You must also know the limit where if you have no longer control over the senses, the body becomes indulgent and demanding. It is through constant experimentation you can know what is your golden mean. Each one has got one's own golden mean. You must know your golden mean. There is a very telling, very meaningful saying in Tamil language which says, *Akavukku minjnaal amritham*. If you go beyond a certain measure even nectar can become poison. This is a contradiction of the very concept of nectar. Because, nectar is that which makes one immortal, deathless. Nectar can never become a cause of death. Even if a single drop of nectar gets inside you, you will never die, nothing can kill you, death can not touch you. Poison is that which causes instant death. But, it says in a funny way, if you go beyond a limit, even nectar can become poison!

In the wisdom teachings of Srimad Bhagavad Gita, this point is brought home in a very effective and telling way [VI/11-19]. Either way, over-indulgence destroys your chances of attainment and so also over neglecting the needs of the body. Yoga is for that person who keeps a balanced moderation in all the things. Yoga is not for that being who either sleeps too much or denies indispensable minimum requirement of sleep for the physical body. Yoga is not for that person who either eats too much or denies the body the minimum requirement of nourishment that is absolutely, indispensably required for the body.

Yoga is not for the workaholic who indulges in constant activities, over-activity, who is always distracted with some compulsive, impulsive action. He cannot remain quiet. If he remains quiet for five minutes, he will become very restless, very upset! He has to keep on doing something or other because he does not know about the inner wealth and he wants to forget the emptiness within. Nor for that being who is lethargic like a buffalo, who has no desire for activity, always lethargic; that is *tamo-guna*. Yoga is neither for that one who indulges in over-activity, nor for the one who is totally inactive, actionless.

Yoga is for that being who knows how to strike a balance between the two extremes. Therefore, we should know the golden mean, we should know how to strike a balance in all the things in our life. *Samatvam* [evenness of the mind] or moderation in all things is the key for success in Yoga, success in *sadhana*.

With regards to *Vedanta*, they say: 'Within you, you must always have that *bhava*, that attitude that nothing exists; this world is only a dream appearance, there is no reality in it.' You must

always cherish this *bhava*. Then only, you will be safe and you can be successful in overcoming all the external impacts and influences. This attitude should always be there within you, it should never be lost. But you should not apply it to your outer relative plane of worldly relation; otherwise it will cause problems. Also, even if you apply this *Mayavada*, this *mithyavada*—everything is *mithya*—to all the three worlds, you should never apply it to your Guru! Don't say he is also *maya*, he is also *mithya*. You must serve him, surrender to him and be like a slave, like a servant to him.

Advaitam trishu lokeshu na-advaitam gurunashah. [Non-duality with all the three worlds, but not with Guru]. You can apply this principle, 'I alone exist, nothing else exists besides me,' towards all the three worlds but not to your Guru.

I used to explain it in this way: The *Advaitic* declaration is based upon the non-dual, transcendental, absolute Experience that goes beyond relativity. That was the Experience that was revealed. It was not meant for application in day-to-day life. To explain this, I used to say: Some modern, superb, great, eminent physicists have discovered there is no such thing like real, solid matter. This is all energy, waves of energy. They call it energy in waves. That means, they have come to the view that the real, gross, visible, tangible, solid matter is only our imagination due to the sense perception; there is no such reality. There is no gross, solid matter.

They first thought that the ultimate substance is an atom. But they went beyond and found that even this atom which was once irreducible, smallest of all particles, is divisible, and there are smaller parts within the atom: proton, neutron and electron. When they looked into this electron with modern super-instruments, they saw that even within this electron there is ninety percent empty space only! These particles are moving at tremendous velocity. So they give the appearance of some tangibility or solidity, but otherwise, it is more of empty space than actual substance or matter.

In this way, ultimately, they came to the conclusion of the Shaakta Philosophy that everything is nothing but Shakti. We have the concepts of Adi Shakti, Kriya Shakti, Para Shakti, the Primal Cosmic Power, the motivating Power, and the Transcendental Cosmic Power. The modern Physicists have come to similar discovery and they are trying to make it intelligible to the layman. This is the actuality about this world. That is what they have actually seen, experienced, and ultimately arrived at as the conclusion of modern super-physics.

In the same way as in metaphysics, is that tremendous Experience, the towering pinnacle point of ultimate transcendental, absolute Experience of *Ekameva-advitiam Brahma* [Brahman is one alone without a second. *Sadachara-anusandhanam*, 44] and *Brahma satyam jagan-mithya*. [Brahman alone is real, the world is unreal. *Brahma-jnanavali-mala*, 20] That is something which you must keep as your Goal: 'I have to go and attain That, I have to reach that state of non-dual, cosmic Consciousness.' Then there will be no more duality. Pleasure and pain, happiness and misery, joy and sorrow, and all such duals become meaningless, they are at a level that is far below; whereas you go beyond all the relative or opposite dual experiences. You should say: 'Yes, that is the Goal of my life. That is the only Goal to be attained. I must reach that state of non-dual Consciousness. But it is not a principle to be applied to my day-to-day living. Otherwise, unnecessary chaos will arise.'

I used to try to bring home this unavoidable and indispensable axiom of our behaviour in this world by an analogy: Modern physics has come to this discovery, this conclusion, that there is only energy, there is no real, solid, substance called physical matter. Suppose you are in a room and you want to go out. There are a couple of doors. If you say, 'Why should I use the doors? They are nothing but energy. There is no real thing called matter. So let me walk through the wall.' If you try to walk through it, it will hit on your head. Though their discovery, their ultimate declaration, is an undisputed fact, yet it is not a fact which you can bring down to your field of daily relative activity. Then you will have to go and get yourself bandaged. Nevertheless, your breaking your head in going through a wall does not contradict or invalidate the truth of the discovery of modern super-physics. It is true but it is not for application in your daily life.

In the same way, *Advaita bhavana* is true in one dimension; but it is not for application. Even that great philosopher Jagadguru Adi Sankaracharya, had to posit and include within his philosophical system, a secondary reality called relative reality. *Brahma satyam, Jagan-mithya. Brahman* is the *kevala Satta*, the absolute Reality. True. But as long as you are bound up in the worldly consciousness, it has also a relative reality, a reality which you can not dismiss, which you cannot ignore. It is known as *Vyavarharika Satta*.

While you are in a state of dream, dream alone is real; outer world does not exist. It is only when you wake up that the world becomes real and the dream world becomes unreal. Similarly, as long as you are here, in your present state of consciousness, this world which has a relative reality, is true and is relevant to you. With reference to your own present state of relative consciousness, where your experience is not non-duality but on the contrary, where your experience is the multifariousness, you do have to make a distinction between red and blue, green and yellow, white and violet. When you are driving a car and on an intersection the red light comes, you cannot drive through it saying that you believe in non-duality and for you there is no distinction between red and green. You will get arrested. So we have to accept the relative reality of the world.

When you have to climb up a staircase you have to use your limbs in one way but when you have to climb down the same staircase you have to use your limbs in a different way. Likewise, you have to use different yardsticks for the two different states.

You cannot say: 'I will drink my solids.' It will get stuck and you will get choked. You cannot escape giving the due attention and regard to the relative reality that is very much a fact. As long as you yourself are in a relative state of consciousness, you feel: 'I am a male, I am a female, I am young, I am old, I am tall or I am short.' If you are tall, you can reach up and take something from a height; but if you are short, you cannot say: 'All these notions are false, I am the Atman.' You have to ask for a stool, get up on it and then take the thing.

This being the case, this world has to be dealt with on its own level, on its own dimension of reality. Having come into this world, we should know that all the things are limited, changeful, perishable. Therefore, no lasting experience of true happiness can be found here. This is only fifty per cent of the truth. Not only happiness is not to be found here, on the contrary, what you get here if you get involved, is only weeping and wailing, grief and sorrow, disappointment and frustration, agony and misery, little fulfilment, then again frustration and disappointment!

What is the way to avoid it? Be *detached*. Don't get caught in the net of attachment.

What is the way of positive experience? This is where the constructive and creative side of Yoga-Vedanta comes. Does it simply say: 'Don't go in that direction. Don't get involved. You will get caught in sorrow, you will weep and wail.' Does it leave you in the lurch like that? No, no, no! It also says; 'Go in that direction, you will get total bliss, total satisfaction, eternal happiness. You will get all that you want and even more than what you ever imagined you will get!'

How to do it? What are the means? Well, that is the real question.

Here I would like to give you two oft-quoted analogies. One is an analogy from Vedanta, and the other is an analogy which you can imagine from your common sense.

Someone was imprisoned on a tower because he had displeased the ruler of the land. His hands and feet were bound by a rope and he was thrust up like a chicken, thrown up on the tower. While coming down, the jailer closed the door of the tower. No one had any access to the tower. He was left to die exposed to the wind, heat, cold of the night and may be vultures later on. He was in such helpless condition; but he was not a person to despair. As an optimist, he thought: 'There is nothing hopeless. Even in the most extreme conditions, there may be some way out. There is always some hope.' So, as he lay there tied in that helpless condition, it struck him: 'So long as I go on struggling with this bond, the tightness will not relax. I must relax and make myself as small as possible. Then only some part, some little bond may become a little loose.' Several hours passed. Whole day, he had not taken anything. His belly was now empty. That also became a blessing in disguise. He thought: 'Now is the time. I will try to relax.' He relaxed his muscles, he tried to make himself as small as possible. He drew his belly in, and slowly tried to work upon the bonds. At long last, he managed after a very, very careful gradual effort to bring out one bond. From that point onwards, he went on loosening his body. After much effort, exhaustion, perspiration and straining, he managed to gradually remove all the knots that had bound him. The rope which had made him a helpless prisoner, lay at his feet to rescue him.

When it was totally dark, he tied one end of the rope to some portion of the tower and then let him slowly slip down the entire length of the rope. At the end of the rope he hung himself and gave up even that rope which had rescued him, and jumped on the ground to become liberated for ever.

Suppose, a man is walking in a forest and a sharp thorn enters his foot. It is so painful that he cannot walk further. He is not equipped with a thorn-puller, a needle or any sharp instrument. There were many thorns around. He picks up a strong, sharp thorn. He uses it as an instrument to pull out the thorn from his foot. The cause of his pain and agony was a thorn; and a similar thorn comes to his rescue! Now, he discards both the thorns and moves ahead on his path.

What causes the bondage of the *jivatma*? Our ancients say the cause of the bondage of *jivatma* is attachment, desires, craving. Once you are caught in this net of *Maya*, you are bound. Now your desires go on increasing; there is more and more craving for this thing and that thing, for money, wealth, position, power, authority, status, enjoyments, name and fame, appreciation and all that. You run after so many things! Anything you run after, catches hold of you, you become

possessed by it, you become enslaved by it. Our scriptures tell us that if you are caught by even one of the five senses, you are doomed.

A fish is caught in the hook due to its greed of taste; a moth burns itself into the flame due to its attraction of *roopa*, the outer appearance; a deer is killed because of its attraction for sound of music, an elephant falls in captivity being blinded by touch; and the attraction of smell destroys the bee. Various creatures get caught by one or the other senses. But in the poor human individual all the five senses are centred! He is enslaved by all the five senses! When a single sense is enough to lead to your destruction what will be your fate when all the five attack you? So, be very careful and guard yourself from being enslaved by the senses.

You are caught in this net of *Maya*, in this worldly process because your mind conceives desire, because your mind gets attached. It is the mind which is doing *avichara* and *aviveka*, improper reasoning and lack of right discrimination. It is the mind which says, 'I want this thing and I want that thing; I want to enjoy the things; my happiness is in these objects of attractions. I want status, I want position, popularity.' The mind misguides you and pollutes your intellect also. Your intellect is clouded due to lack of proper enquiry and discrimination. That is the second factor that contributes to your bondage.

Then comes your involvement in the ceaseless activity, driven by the desires and attachment, emotions and sentiments. This is another dimension of the mind.

So long you lack *viveka* and *vichara*, your mind moves in the wrong direction. Your personality has four aspects: The physical level, the emotional level, the mental level and the intellectual level. In the absence of *viveka* and *vichara*, you are caught in the net of the outer world process of the phenomenal existence through all these four aspects of your nature. This is the situation. But the thorn which was the cause of the problem, becomes the solution of the problem; and the same rope which bound the man, becomes the means of his freedom. So, applying the solution of these analogies, you should make use of all your four faculties to attain freedom by diverting them Godwards. You are the highest of all the creations of God and you have been endowed with the power to think and feel, reason, and act in a purposeful way. But, unfortunately all of them are applied in a negative manner in a negative direction.

You have to reverse that process. Your attachment to persons and to the passing, perishable objects of pleasures and enjoyments is the cause of your delusion and bondage. Now make use of the same faculties and attach yourself through intense longing, through intense devotion, intense emotion, to the eternal Reality. Put your reasoning onto the right channel through enquiry and discrimination. Analyse the real nature of this world and know that there is not an iota of real happiness in these objects of attraction which tempt you in sense indulgence. They are only source of pain and sorrow. Yet they always tempt you, draw you towards them, make you run after them, enmesh you, entangle you, enslave you. Know well that they are momentary and useless, there is no real worth in them. They are *alpa*. How can you have any attachment once you know the real nature of the world?

So making use of the intellect in the right way, in a rational, logical way, with proper discrimination, you can convert the very bondage into an instrument of freeing yourself from the

bondage of the outer world through the same mind with the process of *vichara* and *viveka*: ‘What is the Reality beyond? What is it that can make me really satisfied, happy, free, full of peace? That is only in the Non-dual Experience. *Dvaitad vai bhayam bhavati*. Where there is duality, there is fear. If there is no duality, there is no fear. Who is to fear whom, if there is only One non-dual Consciousness pervading all?’

Vedanta says, through intellect, through proper reasoning, proper discrimination, proper analytical thinking, come to the conclusion that there is only one Reality, the non-dual Consciousness of the Supreme Reality alone. There is Absolute Peace, Absolute fearlessness, Absolute joy, eternal happiness in That.

In that way, attach yourself to That. And through your *bhava*, through your sentiment, either through feeling or through reasoning or through giving a spiritual turn to all activities, always feel: ‘I am always in the presence of God. Therefore, all activities are adoration to that constant Presence, in whose presence I live, move and act.’

If the power of thought is completely diverted towards and focused upon ephemeral things, ultimately, it will become a costly bondage. If the same power of thought is directed towards the Great Reality, being taken away from the passing scene, turned round and given a new direction; and the outgoing power of the mind is made to reverse its direction, made indrawn, through *pratyahara*, *antarmukhatva*, [withdrawal of the mind from the sense objects and focussing the mind inward] then the scattered rays of the mind are focused within through discipline, through the subsiding of this constant restlessness of the mind by ceaseless practice.

Raja Yoga is the *yoga* of the mind, *yoga* at the mind level, *yoga* of the thought-power. Its *sadhana* is in completely subsiding this constant restlessness of the mind and then gathering the rays of the mind inwards into one powerful ray and centring it upon the concept of the Great Reality, making it steady and focusing it upon It like ‘a lamp placed in a windless spot does not flicker (B.G. VI-19),’ by constant practice again and again. Whenever the mind moves away, bring it back and once again focus it upon the Great Reality.

Then one day you will succeed. The mind will stop moving out. It will lose its restless nature. It will change its nature and will become your ally, become your asset. It will no longer be your liability or your problem. It will be your solution. It will become your asset. A concentrated mind focused upon the supreme Reality will ultimately bring you to a state where the outer world fades away, recedes and becomes centred in the Reality through the concentrated power of your mind.

So that is Yoga of the mind. Vedanta is the Yoga of intelligence, rational intellect, reasoning process, *Vichara Marga*. *Prema Marga* or *Bhakti Yoga* is *yoga* of the heart, *yoga* of the emotions, *yoga* of all your feelings, *yoga* of sentiments. *Karma Yoga* is the Yoga of connecting all your activities from morning till night, with God, not with a remote Reality but here and now Reality, because God is all-pervading, God is present here all the time. The world is always filled with God’s presence. Connect all your activities with God manifested around you, then it becomes *yoga*. Action will not take you away from God, it will take you towards God. Offer all your actions to Him, and your whole life will become spiritual. All the outer activities of the day-to-day life will

also now take you in that very same direction in which your devotion is trying to take you, in which your concentration is trying to take you, in which your Vedantic Vichara Marga is trying to take you!

Then what happens? Your entire life becomes integrated and takes the form of the Absolute. This is the rationale, this is the scientific basis of the four Yogas, namely, Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Dhyana Yoga and Jnana Yoga.

Thus the very situation which is now your problem, is now holding you bound, that very situation becomes converted into a liberating process when you divert and channelise all these potentials of your human nature in that direction, Godward direction. Now your whole personality and all your actions become God-oriented.

You are having in yourself, all the ingredients for your liberation. You don't have to search outside. God does not expect you to do something, with something which do not belong to you, which you don't have, which He has not endowed you with. Whatever has now become your problem, the cause of your bondage, that very thing becomes the means of your liberation, by taking away from here and diverting it in that direction.

At the end of his life Gurudev gave two words to sum up the entire Yoga and Vedanta: DETACH, ATTACH. *Maya Ka sang Todo, Hari ke sang jodo.* [Detach yourself from *Maya*, attach yourself to the Lord.] That is the Yoga-Vedanta *sutra* for you.

Ponder deeply over this and try to find out how you can do this process of gradually detaching from here and attaching it There, giving the Godward direction and keeping up in that direction. In that lies your sure Liberation. Let all your faculties become oriented towards It. Let

Asato maa sad-gamaya;
Tamaso maa jyotir-gamaya;
Mrityor-ma Amritam gamaya

God bless you all. Hari Om Tat Sat.