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Rikhiapeeth Satsangs 4

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



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Rikhiapeeth Satsangs 4



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Rikhiapeeth Satsangs 4

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Satsangs given by Sri Swamiji
at Rikhiapeeth, Deoghar, in 1997

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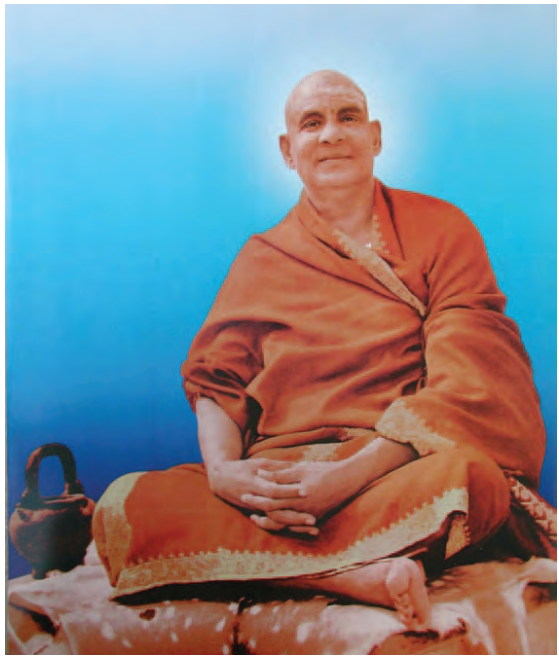
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Dedication

In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga.

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Satsang 1

11 October 1997

Way to peace and happiness

The way to peace and happiness is neither through family nor money. Peace and happiness can be attained only by chanting the name of God. You may repeat God's name in the morning or in the evening, or you may repeat it at any time. There is simply no other way to acquire peace and happiness.

The idea that everything will be fine if you have money is incorrect. People with a lot of money are coming in droves to India, travelling from places where money, job, house, and all other facilities are all easily available. Why are they coming? Why are these people leaving their rich countries, where money flows like water and jobs can be found with just one phone call? It is because the means to peace and happiness is only found in ashram life, in chanting God's name and visiting places of pilgrimage. This is the basis of Indian culture.

Europe and America have taught us trade and the way to earn more money. They are teaching the knowledge of *artha*, commerce, and *kama*, desire. Just as America today is called the 'golden goose', the place where everyone goes for good earnings, once upon a time India was called the 'golden bird'. However, the rishis and munis realized that by seeking the golden goose and focusing on artha and kama, one stops evolving. They also said that if one possesses a feeling of *vairagya*, renunciation or non-attachment, then one should not become a householder. If one has only a little hunger and immediately eats to satisfy it, it is wrong. Until hunger is unbearable, do not eat. If your attraction and attachment

to worldly life is not strong, do not enter *grihastha ashram*, the householder lifestyle. Do not become a householder. Everyone feels a little attraction and desire, as nobody in the world is completely free of maya. However, for the sake of a little attraction one should not enter grihastha ashram. It is not right. Only if the desire is very intense should a person become a householder, otherwise one should live alone.

Our scriptures, *shastras*, and great men have sanctioned a retreat into solitude even for householders. Prophet Mohammed and Jesus Christ said the same thing: happiness and peace is to be found only in the repetition of God's name. To repeat it in the morning is very good, and also in the evening if you have time. However, if the wallet is full and you do not need to work, then repeat God's name all day long.

If someone eats sugar and is unable to digest it, what will happen to the sugar?

Sugar is white poison. If your body is not producing insulin in sufficient quantity then you may be able to digest bread, but it would be impossible to digest sugar; even the natural sugars present in milk and other foodstuff will be indigestible. The body of a stressed-out person will produce less insulin, as his parasympathetic nervous system works sluggishly. When sugar is undigested, it goes into the blood and urine. If ants gather around your urine then know that it is because of the sugar. It is very important to regulate blood sugar.

During Navaratri, should salt be added to the food?

Vegetables have natural salt in them, and for this reason, it is better if you do not add salt to your food. However, this rule applies to people whose digestion is sluggish, usually those who do not exert much physically. Those who work hard physically sweat a lot, and they need salt as an additive to replace what they have lost through sweat.

These days many people add a lot of salt to their food. What is the result? Their blood thickens, and in old age the

arteries and veins through which the blood flows shrivel up. Just as garbage will not flow down a choked drain, thick blood cannot flow down the veins and arteries. Therefore, it is best to give up salt. Eat boiled vegetables. You may also have milk; it contains salt, sugar, protein and many other things.

Boiled food without salt is very good for the liver. The liver is the biggest organ in our body; any problem with it results in jaundice, anaemia or lack of blood and many other diseases. Whoever has jaundice should eat simple boiled food and all will be well in five to ten days. As soon as the liver improves, so does the jaundice. Alcohol and meat harms the liver; and very spicy food also puts strain on the liver.

How did the tradition of using masalas start? Earlier, masalas were not used.

The tradition of using spices has come from Africa and South-East Asia. Actually, it is wrong to call them 'masala'. In English, they would be called condiments or herbs. 'Herb' means a medicinal plant. Coriander, cumin, chilli, clove – all these are medicinal plants. In different countries, many kinds of plant varieties may be found, like black pepper, green chilli, coriander, etc., and all these plants have medicinal properties. That is the reason why we should not use them in cooking, but rather as medicine. It is not as if coriander or cumin is harmful, but they are medicinal and should be used as such and not in daily meals.

For example, coriander cleans the kidneys. Turmeric heals wounds inside the body. Cumin is an aid to digestion. All these are beneficial, but if you start to use medicine like food, it is not right. I am not saying do not eat green chillies or red chillies, but do not eat them in your daily meals. Green chilli, for instance, removes all impurities from water. There is only one remedy for germs in water, green chillies. Many years ago, I met Dr Ramamurti Mishra in London and he was suffering from an ailment contracted from polluted water. I told him to eat green chillies and he would be fine. He ate green chillies for ten days and regained health. Whatever the

colour of the chilli, it will destroy germs in the water, but this does not mean that you eat it every day.

My husband suffers from excessive phlegm in the throat. What can be done for this?

There are three things in the body: kapha, vata and pitta. *Kapha* is mucus. At a butcher's shop you may see sometimes a thin, plastic-like film on the meat. That is called kapha. This exists throughout the body; cut the body anywhere and a thin film of mucus will be seen. Whenever the skin is grazed or there is a wound, it becomes pus-like and this is known as phlegm. Excessive phlegm in the throat means that the windpipe, through which the breath comes and goes, is wounded. The windpipe is attached to the lungs and the 'food pipe' is attached to the stomach. They meet at the throat. From there, water goes to the stomach and air to the lungs. If anything poisonous goes down the windpipe it produces swelling. Only air should go down the windpipe, nothing else. If any other gas goes in, for instance, smoke from the fireplace, there will be swelling. Similarly, the gas inhaled from burnt chillies causes coughing, as if someone is saying from within, "Get out!"

Most of you live in cities where vehicle exhaust fumes go into your lungs all day long. This is the reason why all city-dwellers suffer from coughs and colds. There is only one way to combat this, go to an ashram or a village for a few days and live there peacefully. Nowadays even ashrams are situated in dirty cities. Is an ashram in a city like Delhi any ashram at all? This one here is an ashram, clean and tidy. There are many such ashrams all over India. Go there, and live alone. Practise nadi shodhana pranayama, go for a walk in the morning and evening, and abstain from heavy food. Young people can eat rich food, but older people should not do so. The young ones are strong and sturdy; no matter what they eat, their motor runs very well.

Every morning and evening, take a stroll for ten to fifteen minutes in a place that has many trees and lots of water.

Although air is made up of gases such as oxygen, there is something else in the air that is known as ion. Ions are related to prana shakti. The strength in the air is called prana shakti. Some air contains less prana shakti, some contains more.

Prana shakti is different from oxygen. Oxygen is an inflammable gas and has a heating effect on the body. That is why when pranayama is practised you do not feel cold, there is heat in the body instead. The purer the air, the hotter its effect will be. Even if the air is icy, its effect will produce heat, as oxygen is a combustible gas. When we inhale something hot through our breath, our bodies also produce heat. Oxygen makes the organs in our body capable of action.

During fever, is the body hot because of an increase in oxygen?

No, I am talking about a normal body. When you fall sick, it means that something is wrong somewhere in the vehicle. Some key has become stuck somewhere in the car or there is carbon on the spark plug. Understand that the sick vehicle and the normal vehicle function differently. Do not practise pranayama when you are ill. When you are severely ill, you should not practise any yoga at all. Severe illness means fever, typhoid, paratyphoid, dysentery, and so on. If you are suffering from a long-standing chronic ailment, then yoga works very quickly on it. A chronic ailment means a disease that has made a home in your body, such as diabetes. However, if you are suffering from dysentery, diarrhoea, fever, etc., and you practise yoga, you may even die.

Only lamenting "I am sick" is useless. A cure has to be found. The cure for an ailment related to the breath is clean air, light diet, short walks and repeating the name of God. "I cannot repeat God's name, I am very busy" or "I have problems with the children" are just excuses. After all, everyone has to leave this world some day; no one has come to live here forever. The day we were born into this world was the day we also brought our return ticket with us. Until the chickpea seed is roasted, it will keep sprouting new growth.

However, when one acquires knowledge, one does not have to return. That is why the name of God has to be repeated.

Swamiji, I know a woman who does not like Rama because he gave up Sita, and Sita suffered a lot. That is why she believes more in Krishna.

No, it is not like that. Even though Sri Rama was a man of God, he was still born into a society and culture that had certain boundaries, certain rules and regulations that one had to accept. Rama was *maryada purushottam*, the ideal man. It means that he stayed within the constraints of the social order at that time. His father, King Dasharatha, ordered him to go to the forest, so he went. The correct thing to do was to obey his parents. This is the decorum of this land. Not only this country; it is the decorum throughout Asia from Istanbul to Japan.

Now you will say, "Why obey something that is wrong?" Out of selfish interests, Dasharatha's favourite wife, Kaikeyi, caused Rama's exile. While he was exiled his father died. At that time, had it not been for Bharat, all three queens would have immolated themselves on the king's funeral pyre." Nevertheless, Sri Rama obeyed the dictums of society. Every culture has certain dictums. In our culture, too, twenty years ago there was the custom for women to veil their faces. Today, this is no longer valid. Today, the custom is for a girl to be educated, for brahmins and shudras not to shun each other, and for Hindus and Muslims to live together peacefully. Earlier there was fighting between the Vaishnavas and Shaivites, but it is not so today. In every generation, society makes certain rules for itself. One rule during that period was that no woman, for any reason, could stay outside her house overnight. If this were to happen, the husband would not keep her as his wife. Society made the rule and a version of this rule exists even today. Not everyone obeys it, but the rule is definitely there. If Rama himself did not obey that rule, then why would anybody else do so?

The people of today are educated. From their point of view, Rama did wrong. If a man can live outside his house

for two days, then why not a woman? In ancient society, the boundaries for men and women were not the same. A difference was maintained between men and women; however, society today is refusing to accept this difference. This way of thinking has come from the West. The educated people of society say that the legal, religious and social rights of men and women should be equal. When a woman is widowed, she wears white. So when a man becomes a widower he should wear white too. When a woman is widowed she does not attend any auspicious gathering, so do not allow a widower to attend any either. Why these double standards?

One little known fact is that in vedic society, there was no custom of divorce. This law was made only recently in 1955–56. Pandit Nehru had the Hindu Code Bill passed in the Assembly. There was a huge uproar in India, causing much agitation. Many demonstrations were staged, because Hindus do not understand divorce. They say that a husband and wife have a bond that lasts life after life, so how can there be divorce? At that time, Dr Rajendra Prasad, a very religious, decent and pious man, was the President of India and he refused to sign the Bill.

In the vedic dharma, a man cannot divorce his wife. This has been the custom since ancient times. When Rama gave up Sita, it was not divorce but separation. Sita was still his wife. The sons fathered by him were still his offspring legally, heirs to the kingdom. Whether or not a woman and a man get along, whether the man is a rascal or the woman is a rascal, whether the man or the woman is sick, is a leper, has tuberculosis or something else, it does not matter; they will remain husband and wife. They can never divorce each other. This was the belief of the vedic dharma. This ensured that the right to inheritance remained safe.

However, times have changed. Girls have been educated. Now they say, "He drinks alcohol, I cannot live with him." If educated girls do not like a man, they will not tolerate him, because generally, educated people have less endurance, patience and understanding. If a man errs, leave him. If a

woman errs, leave her. This is the thinking of educated people because they are very sensitive. In this way, Pandit Nehru slowly brought in the Hindu Code Bill, which was a very difficult task. Even now the lowest rate of divorce is in India. In a village it simply does not happen, whereas Europe has the highest rate of divorce. Married yesterday and divorced today!

All the mothers in the world want a son like Rama. Who wants a son like Krishna? He will trouble you to no end. Every day he will get into mischief and get a beating, sometimes he will steal butter, sometimes he will tease a girl. Everyone in the world wants an obedient son like Rama.

Yoga for management of body and mind

There is a basic difference in the bodies of men and women. You may have noticed that some diseases are common to men and not so prevalent among women, while other ailments affect women and not men. For example, the incidence of diabetes is higher in men than in women. That is why it is important that the method of yoga to strengthen the body must be appropriate for the individual.

This generation should definitely practise yoga, whether it is raja yoga, hatha yoga or jnana yoga. Just as science has subjects such as chemistry and physics, similarly, yoga has many subjects. Yoga is very important for today's generation, because the boys and girls of this generation use their brain a lot. Any weakness in the mind and body is due to the faulty mechanism of the brain and the central nervous system. The brain directs the central nervous system, and the thoughts in the mind affect the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. Ask yourself how much your body works and how much your brain works, and you will find that the speed of the brain is extremely fast while the mobility of the body is much less.

Some way or practice must be found to ensure that the mind stays balanced. This brain is an amazing supercomputer made by God. Electrical changes can take place in it like in a computer. Just as you would program a computer and do a

system analysis; similarly, programming and system analysis happens in the mind as well.

Your mind has been programmed. Your mother did it in your childhood; call it 'basic programming'. A child is fully programmed by the age of seven. To say it in another way, a child is fully conditioned by the age of seven. After this, whatever a child learns is external, dealing with the external environment, not internal. A child's first teacher is its mother. If the mother is uncouth and uncivilized, then the child will be uncouth and boorish too. If the mother is intelligent and wise, so will be her child. While in the womb there is the mother's blood, on coming into the world there is the mother's milk, and if the child lives with its mother then it also receives her *samskaras*, or archetypes, and basic cultural conditioning for seven years. After the age of seven, whatever is learnt from aunts and uncles or at school is called education. Education is what you receive from the external world.

This is where yoga is important. Yoga corrects whatever is wrong with the workings of the mind. The stuff inside the brain is exactly like jelly. A little carelessness makes it fluctuate from here to there, which then causes other things to go wrong. The nerves in the brain are not like electric wires, they are like jelly. I have seen this with my own eyes over a thousand times.

Electromagnetic waves also flow in the brain, which are of four types. The first is called beta wave, the second is alpha wave, the third is theta wave and the fourth is delta wave. The electricity in the delta wave flows very slowly, and relates to yoga. Yoga imparts the power and strength to regulate the electromagnetic waves flowing in the brain.

Happiness and sorrow are such big things. Imagine the state of mind of a person who has lost a loved one or won a huge lottery. Once there was a man who had a heart disease. He would often go to the hospital, and he would buy a lottery ticket on the way. One day the physician who was treating him noticed in the newspaper that his patient had won the lottery. He did not tell his patient. Instead, he asked him what he

would do if he had indeed won the lottery. The sick man said, "What chance is there of that? I simply bought the ticket." The doctor persisted, "But what if you win?" The patient said, "I will give you half the money." The doctor had a heart attack and was admitted to the next bed!

Happiness and sorrow both have an effect on the heart. When you are happy, even that euphoria has to be stemmed at some point. If there is sorrow, then even that has to be restrained at some point. Do you want to keep suffering your sorrow? Nobody wants to be unhappy, yet you remain sorrowful. Why don't you pull yourself together? It is only by controlling your mind that these emotions can be properly handled, for the feeling of sorrow is born in the mind. Happiness and unhappiness are not outside you, they are the terms used for the state of your mind. Happiness or unhappiness is not in living or dying or in wealth or poverty, but in the mind of a human being. If you correct it there, then you will not feel sorrow at anyone's death.

How can we control happiness and sorrow?

I cannot tell you that all at once. If you were to ask me how to learn the English language, then I would tell you, first learn the alphabet, then words and then the grammar. Similarly, every *vidya*, every science and art, has its ABC. The ABC of yoga is asana and pranayama. To learn them you do can go to Munger. The greatest yoga ashram in the world is in Munger. An ashram like Munger cannot be found in Germany, France, America or England. There is no ashram equal to it anywhere in the world.

On 14th July, the jyotirlinga at Vaidyanath was freed and a shaligram kept in its place. Was this the right thing to do?

Why should this matter? About the re-establishment of the idol that you are referring to, the *Vaikhanas Sutras* are of the opinion that if any idol of God is lost, desecrated or broken and if it is not a jyotirlinga, a new one may be re-established in its place. It is absolutely certain that the Vaidyanath linga is

not a jyotirlinga, because Ravana brought it there. Wherever a jyotirlinga or a swayambhulinga is found, it is consecrated right at that spot, it is not moved. The word *swayambhu* means one that is born of itself, it is not established or created by you.

Therefore, the Vaidyanath linga is not a jyotirlinga. The *Vaikhanas Sutras* state that in such a case, the idol being worshipped may be propitiated by *pancha*, *ashta* or *shodasha upachara*, five, eight or sixteen modes of worship, and then supported by any other idol. Amongst other idols, the foremost is the shaligram. The Indian tradition believes that shaligrams, and the Narmadeshwar and Gomateshwar lingams are all lingams. These are not considered swayambhu since they originate in one place but are established in other places.

There is no mode of replacement for a jyotirlinga in the *Vaikahanas Sutras*. If it is lost, then what will happen? This matter is very difficult. Historically, when Kashi-Vishwanath was attacked, the jyotirlinga, Vishwanath, was hidden in Gyanvapi. *Gyanvapi* is the name of a well. Later, it was taken out of Gyanvapi and consecrated again. There was much opposition to this in India. The pandits, acharyas, teachers and erudite scholars all said, "A swayambhu jyotirlinga is consecrated right where it is born. You removed this one and put it into Gyanvapi. Now if you consecrate it again, can it still be called a jyotirlinga?"

The people of India are not only ritualistic, but they are also very emotional. To them, Vishwanath is firstly Lord Shiva and secondly a jyotirlinga. At the end, the Vishwanath linga was consecrated again. Even though Vishwanath Baba was moved, he is still respected as a jyotirlinga. This is the result of the emotions of the devotees. The scriptures do not accept the re-consecration of Vishwanath, but the people accept that consecration of Vishwanath. There is nothing wrong with that.

Similarly, when Aurangzeb's army was advancing towards Maharashtra, Nasik's Tryambakeshwar was on his hit list. In the Tryambakeshwar temple, the jyotirlinga is beneath the plinth. You have to walk up first and then descend a few steps

to reach it. So what did the priests there do? They covered the whole jyotirlinga with mud, plaster, lime and stones, and then made another Shivalingam on top of it. Then they began to worship it, unconcerned about the advancing army. Aurangzeb came, destroyed the Shivalingam and went away. Then they uncovered the jyotirlinga and began its worship. This is the story of Tryambakeshwar. Had this Vaidyanath Dham lingam been a jyotirlinga, it would not have been possible to replace it with a shaligram.

Many things are told about Shivalingams in the *Shiva Purana*, *Skanda Purana*, *Vaikhanas Sutras* and other scriptures. We cannot observe so many scriptures today because it is not the vedic age any more. Kali Yuga has come now and in this age the classical teachers and priests no longer exist. Nothing is left because the people are under a lot of pressure. The sons of *pandas*, temple priests, have started taking up other jobs because pandas do not earn much. Why do the pandas earn less? It is because they have fallen into bad habits. They must have that expensive watch. They must have the shoes that cost several hundred rupees and a transistor radio. A television is now an essential item in the house, and foods such as eggs, chicken or mutton must be consumed. One needs money for these things.

The simple life of a brahmin is a thing of the past. Earlier, brahmins lived like beggars. The *shastras*, the scriptures, say that a brahmin should live the life of a mendicant. In ancient times, brahmins slept on kusha grass pallets and lived on alms. Where is all that now? Gradually, social pressures, economic pressures and family pressures have increased. Therefore, it is only natural that a brahmin cannot teach; they have no knowledge of the planets and constellations, no knowledge of the shastras. Ask the pandas here, they know nothing. This situation exists not only here in the North; it is the condition all over India. It is marginally better in South India, but in the North everything has been destroyed. The classical methodology of the tradition has been lost. Everyone has a celebration for the worship of Devi; the sentiment is there, but the correct method is not known.

For instance, the Devi pooja conducted during Navaratri is a tantric ritual. It is described in the agama shastras: the yantras to be used and how they are to be consecrated; how kundalini is to be worshipped; how the Mahavidyas are to be worshipped; the manner in which the *kalash*, pot, is to be worshipped; and at the end, the manner in which the nine maidens are to be worshipped on the ninth day. However, now all this is finished. These days, if you have the money, you invite nine girls and feed them. If you have even more money, then you bring a goat for sacrifice; if you have less money, a pigeon will do.

Today people do not know the science of tantra. Tantra requires one to lead a different kind of life. Actually, Vaidyanath Dham is accepted as the second most important tantric *peeth*, seat. Kamakhya is the number one tantric peeth, and Vaidyanath Dham is number two.

In the olden ages, all one's life was about sadhana and yajna. Times today are not sadhana-oriented, they are earning-oriented. What's important is how much a son can earn, how much a father can earn, how much a daughter-in-law can bring home. In Kali Yuga, economics and desire take centrestage. India possessed many traditional vidyas, but most of them have been lost. Man's lifespan is so short that he cannot achieve anything. Until the age of twenty-five he does not mature mentally, and by the time he is fifty he is an old man, his teeth are falling out, eyesight is failing, hair is greying, diseases are taking hold of him and finally the man dies. He cannot achieve anything. Only if a man lives for at least one hundred and fifty years will he be able to do anything. Stupidity until twenty-five, self-indulgence until fifty, and after fifty years of age he is an old man. Son dies, daughter dies, uncles die, all the sorrows of life are stored in the mental computer.

Guru Gorakhnath used to say, "Transmute mercury", but now if you handle the materials used for transmuting mercury you will be beaten up, sent to jail or killed. In every age or epoch, society creates certain limits for itself. You have made

certain boundaries for society today; you have decided what is right and what is wrong. When you say that something is wrong or unacceptable, I will also have to say that it is wrong. Whatever you have pronounced as acceptable, I also accept. This is called the boundary, the limit, or *maryada*.

The transmutation of mercury is accepted in the practice of hatha yoga. Many Naga sadhus are taught the process, but these things cannot be performed any more, as the rules of Kali Yuga prevent it. There is no point of sadhana in Kali Yuga. Sadhana is like the taming of a horse. How is a wild horse or a wild elephant tamed? Even the foal of a trained horse has to be trained. That training is sadhana and it is not an external process. The mind has to be stopped.

What will be the outcome of stopping the mind? A man will go mad. Mind means thought, mind means determination. Words, touch, form, taste, smell, male-female, hot-cold, sweet-sour, all these are realized through the mind. If this knowledge is suspended and the consciousness is centred on the void, a man will go mad. Then herbs are necessary for him. You may have read in Maharishi Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* (4:1):

Janmaushadhimantratapah samaadhijaah siddhayah.

The siddhis are born of birth, herbs, mantras, austerities or samadhi.

In this sutra, Maharishi Patanjali has said that birth, mantra, austerities, herbs and samadhi are the source of attainment. When you partake of a herb, it affects the body and the mind. Just as alcohol, cocaine, opium, heroin, beer or tranquilizers have their effects; similarly, herbs too affect the brain.

All the sadhus and saints of our country who have been using these have had superior lifestyles. However, even sadhus and mahatmas have changed now. They all live well. As much as possible, a sadhu should live out in the open. He should remain in front of the fire. He should remain near water, bathe three or four times a day, keep the body naked, eat as little as possible, and not keep the body too comfortable. There should not be a

luxurious mattress, pillow and a velvet duvet. Wherever you see comfort, there is indulgence, and yoga and indulgence do not go together. Indulgence implies a connection with those things that please the senses. We have had many good sadhus and mahatmas in our country, but now their number is decreasing. After all, you are the one who will be a sadhu tomorrow and you will be just the same as you are now. A sadhu does not fall from the sky; he comes from among the people.

Gita, Ganga, Gayatri, guru and gau seva

The Indian tradition believes in the service of the *Gita*, Ganga, Gayatri, guru and *gau*, cow. Service, *seva*, can be in three forms: physical, mental and financial. Physical seva is called *karma yoga*. Many people cannot serve physically, so they should serve financially. Those who cannot do either of these should serve mentally. There are many miserly people. In spite of having the money, they do not want to part with it, so they can serve mentally.

A house that keeps a cow is the veritable home of God. We have made a *gaushala*, a cowshed, here too. Our cow gives about fifteen to twenty litres of milk. There are two swamis to look after her, besides the people from the village who come to serve her sometimes. They milk the cow, pick up the dung, cut grass for her; they do everything. At times we keep more cows, and then we call three or four parties of people from the village and ask them to serve for one or two months. These people come and serve the cow, sometimes the wife comes and at other times the children. After two months, I tell them to take the cow home with them.

A wonderful thing is said about the cow. It is believed that the indigestible material excreted by all other animals in the world is impure. The excreta of donkeys, horses, tigers, human beings, insects, worms, frogs, rodents and lizards is impure. Even touching it is enough to contract diseases, as it contains dangerous germs. However, the cow is the only animal whose indigestible remains are pure. Therefore, the cow is worshipped in our tradition.

Satsang 2

12 October 1997



Human programming

Everyone performs action, and every action bears fruit, whether you plant a vine, grass, poison or nectar. You may keep a cow, a dog or a tiger, you may marry or take sannyasa; however, whatever action you perform, you will definitely reap its fruit, nobody can escape it. Even Rama could not escape it. Yet, it is the nature of the mind to worry. Even if there is no cause for worry, we want to be worried, because worrying is a good way to keep busy. We like to be engrossed in worry. If your children are capable and earning well, and everything is all right, then what is the reason to worry?

The human brain is like a supercomputer. I am speaking and everyone understands. What is that process by which you

can understand me instantaneously? What is that process by which you make such a swift association between plans, projects, thoughts, sentences and grammar? All this is in the brain.

Just like a supercomputer, the brain has its language, too. You cannot do anything until you have learnt this language. If the computer has been programmed using only two numbers then it will not know what to do with three numbers. It is the same with the brain. There is so much that we are unable to understand, such as when someone hears of the death of his mother or father. At that time he is unable to comprehend what to do. Your brain stops working. You do not understand what to do or how to behave, because the brain has not been programmed for it. However, if the guru says, "Look here, birth and death goes on, how does it matter? He has found freedom in death," then a program is created to understand this.

The human mind should have a program for the knowledge that tells you not to worry, that death is inevitable. Then you would know how to keep control in such circumstances. Otherwise, the moment a woman here in India hears that her husband is dead, at once she breaks her bangles and bangs her head against the wall. Her brain stops working because there is nothing written in her computer about how to deal with this loss. Many people even go mad.

Spiritual discourses are a kind of programming: guru, scriptures, the Bible, these are all programmers of this computer-like brain. All gurus impart wisdom. This wisdom stays in your mind, and when needed it comes into play. In fact, we have all been programmed already. Whatever you think is not true; it is the result of programming. Social conditioning is a kind of programming, religion is programming. All these influences program the mind of an individual. Whatever is written in the scriptures, in the *Ramayana* and the *Bhagavad Gita*, is all there in the mind. Whatever your beliefs, they have all been filed into your mind quite early. You have been told: behave like this if you are a girl, like that if you are a boy, in this way if you are a brahmin. All this is programming, which is called giving samskaras.

It is said that a mother conditions or gives samskaras to her child for the first seven years. If a mother has five children, all of whom are very different in nature, then how does one mother condition her five children differently?

When a woman bears a child in her womb, the body is the mother's, the blood, the food is the mother's, but the seed is the father's. Now, the seed of wheat will come out of a stalk of wheat, wouldn't it? However, when it is put into earth, the earth nourishes the seed, sprouts the seed, and eventually many seeds are produced from it. Therefore, the earth is the mother and the seed is the father.

The subtle matter in the seed is known as the DNA. When you analyze human sperm in chemistry, you study how much salt it contains and how much water. That is the material analysis. There is something more behind it which, in the science of genetics, is known as DNA, the genetic code. Your DNA or genetic code is a unique blend of the DNA of your mother and of your father, given to you during your conception. Remember that in every part of your body, in every molecule, there exists your unique DNA. Nowadays, criminals are identified by the analysis of the DNA obtained from them. The old procedure of identification through fingerprints has come to an end. Now, a person can be profiled through their DNA. This means that the code of a person is present in every part of his body, in every atom and molecule. In every speck, there is God. God exists in everything; He is present at every step.

When your mother gave birth to you, she also gave you a certain conditioning, *samskaras* or mental impressions. Now, how does a mother condition her child? The first question to ask is: what kind of conditioning can she give you? Until the age of two or three, she will give you milk and feed you, carry you in her arms and play with you. How has she conditioned you? Until the age of seven, you were just a child to your mother. A mother will usually teach something when the child has grown up a little, but she actually needs to teach before the age of seven.

There is the story of Prahlad who was the son of a demon king. Prahlad ought to have been like his father, but he was not. When Prahlad was in the womb, Rishi Narada gave his mother a mantra: *Om Namo Narayanaya*. For nine months his mother did *japa*, mental repetition of the mantra, and so the full effect of the mantra was felt by the child. In this way, his mother was giving him samskaras, conditioning him.

Individual soul

In the womb the foetus is small, the size of a thumb. However, a human being is made up of something other than the body, something other than the father's seed. It is the soul. You have a body, five *karmendriyas*, organs of action, and five *jnanendriyas*, organs of cognition. You see with your eyes, hear with your ears, smell with your nose, taste with the tongue, touch with your skin, and in this manner there are the five organs of sensory input and five motor organs. Besides these, there is the mind with which you think, remember, cogitate, experience fear and desire, happiness and sorrow. Beyond all these, there is one more thing that resides within the body, and it is called 'atma'. The subtle, microscopic form of God is the *atma*, the soul. Where does this atma live? Some say in the heart, others say at the eyebrow centre. Different things have been written about it. The atma is so fine that it has no weight. It is different from the body, mind and feelings. In fact, it is the minuscule form of the Supreme Soul.

The subtle, microscopic form of God, the creator of this world, is present inside you in the form of the atma. It is also called purusha. Purusha here does not mean 'male' as is the common interpretation. The one who is sleeping in the 'puri' is called purusha. In this context, 'sleeping' means dormant, unawakened, and *puri* means city. Deoghar is a puri. Jagannath is a puri. Your body is a city with nine gates. Just as fire is hidden in the wood, just as life is hidden in semen, similarly the atma which is hidden in the puri is called *purusha*. 'Gate' or 'door' indicates a place through which there is the possibility of coming in and going out:

Banglaa khooba banaa mahaaraaja, jisame Naaraayana bole;
Isa bangle men nau darvaaje, beecha pavana kaa khambhaa;
Aavata jaavata kou na dekhaa, sabse baraa achambhaa.

A marvellous bungalow has been made, in which resides Narayana; it has nine doors, a pillar of wind in the centre, who comes and who goes, no one has ever seen, that is the greatest marvel.

In this bungalow, at the centre of the nine doors is 'the pillar of wind', the spine. The atma, the soul inside you, is different from the atma inside your brother or sister. Your sister is another soul. Everybody has a different soul. You think that you were a Sindhi or a Bihari in your last birth! It is not even necessary that you were a woman in your last birth, maybe you were a man. Every being has many incarnations. The conditioning given to you by your mother until the age of seven is useful for a whole lifetime. However, if in a previous birth your soul had been that of a rogue or a brigand, or of a great saint, then later in life that is what you will turn out to be. Suppose your mother is uncivilized and she did not give you any positive samskaras. She conditioned you to be an absolute boor. However, if you have the great soul of a holy man from a previous birth, then you will live like an uncultured person for some time, and then at some point in your life, an incident will occur to open the door once again. Then everything changes.

Lord Buddha was the son of a king who lived in luxury and comfort. The name of his queen was Yashodhara. She was very beautiful. The palace was hot in winter and cold in summer, very comfortable. He had never seen a sad man. He went on like this until the age of thirty-six, living in the darkness of ignorance. Then what happened in his thirty-sixth year? One day he had gone out with his retinue. When he came across an old man, he asked what he was. The servants said, "Maharaj, this is an old man." He asked, "What is this you call 'old'?" The servants said, "One day everyone will become old." He asked again, "Will I become like that too?" The servants said, "Yes."

He went ahead and saw a dead man. Once again he asked, "What is this?" The servant replied, "He has died." He asked, "Died?" The servant replied, "Dying means everything is finished. It is a full stop." He asked, "Will I die too?" The servant replied, "Yes, you will die too."

Lord Buddha's whole brain was churned. All night he contemplated, "Sickness, old age, death, what is all this? What is life? If we take birth, then why do we die? If we die, why do we take birth?" When he could not find any answer to these questions, he left home and went away. You know the rest of the story. He had lived in the dark for thirty-six years, but this kind of a breakthrough, this 'accidental' occurrence, happens in everyone's life.

Power of destiny

A mother may have many children. They all receive the same food, similar companions, the same environment, but the destiny each of them brings along is different. After all, whatever my mother gave me, she also gave to my brothers, but nobody else became a sadhu. Why not? It is because my soul was different, it was wandering. I did not know anything about spiritual life until the age of eighteen. There was not even any desire of that sort even though I had undoubtedly read a lot. We were Arya Samajis, a religious creed based on the Vedas founded by Swami Dayananda Saraswati. I had read the Vedas, the Upanishads, the *Bhagavad Gita*, all of them; however, reading the *Bhagavad Gita* is not being spiritual. I read all these, but there was never a thought of sannyasa or sadhana.

At the age of eighteen I met a tantric yogini. She was ugly, fat, a ganja-smoker, foul-tongued, and black as brinjal. One day while I was on my way to Nainital, she saw me and called me over. When I went up to her she said, "Bring some milk and make sure it is a tumbler full." I went to the bazaar and bought a litre of milk for her. Then I sat down and she offered me a chillum. I said, "I don't smoke chillums." She exclaimed, "Arrr! How long will you fool yourself? One day you will have to smoke." So I smoked.

A few people were sitting around her. Now she started speaking about ajna chakra, kundalini yoga, nadis, and other such subjects. I had already read all this in the books of Swami Vivekananda. I had also read the latest book at the time by Swami Dayananda. I thought to myself, 'This woman is not uneducated or uncultured. She knows everything.' I asked, "Up to what class have you studied?" She replied, "Other than the alphabet: ka, kha, ga, I have studied everything." I thought, 'Ah, this one could be useful.' I said to her, "Teach me something also." She said, "Make the arrangements, I will teach."

I was the son of a farmer. We possessed one and a half thousand acres of land, farms, two and a half thousand acres of forest, and hillsides. There, in a cave, I made arrangements for her. She would drink from the bottle all day long and keep smoking the chillum. I told the villagers not to go to her or else she would curse them. She lived absolutely nude. There was nothing remotely beautiful about her. However, she taught me a lot. She was the one who taught me the practical aspects of tantra in six months.

At that time I was studying at a school in town. Every Saturday I would return to the village from town and study with her over the weekend. I attended school, also looked after the work at home, and over holidays spend time with her. Sometimes I would get six or seven consecutive days in which to learn. She would call me every evening to teach. The forests of Kumaon and the vigilance required there is well known. In the forests, tigers are found as easily as frogs are found here. You cannot walk without a rifle, but she would tell me not to bring a rifle, not to kill any animal. My village was five kilometres below Mukteshwar, and at night, in a state of fear, I would walk back and forth to her cave. However, after a day or two, the fear was gone.

She went away after six months, but she overturned my whole mind. At the time of her departure I said to her, "Initiate me." She replied, "No, I am not a guru. To be initiated, go and look for a guru. I had something to tell you, and I have done so." She did not give me diksha; she did not make me a disciple. To become a disciple and to learn are two different things.

Breakthrough experiences

Maybe you are not spiritual at the beginning of your life, but in the course of time, some incidents happen that entirely change the aim of life. If that yogini had not come into my life, I would have been a good farmer, maybe a good husband and a good father. I can look after children very well. I am not the kind of person who would hurry his daughter into marriage just so my mind is at peace and I can think that I have fulfilled my duty. I would say, "You have a brain, so marry if you want to, or else do not."

It is not the father's job to get the daughter married. The father's job is merely to prepare her by educating her. Once the children are grown up, they can look after their own joys and sorrows. They also have the same brain as the parents. After all, once I was the same age as you. I made my own decisions. If I decided my own life, then you can also decide upon your own life. In every individual there exists the capacity to decide upon the course that their life is to take. In the personality of every human being is the person of his previous birth. It can be good or bad. Some people are born into a good family; they are very good in their childhood, but turn bad later. Why? It is because of their previous birth. In childhood the parents had kept them within bounds. Later, when the child is independent, the bad deeds begin.

Although in a social sense, parents and children are one unit, in reality the seeds are from different fields. They may be called carrot, radish or cucumber, but they all come from different fields; the seeds are different. There are many strains of wheat and different types of the same vegetable. Similarly, all the children born into the same family are all of different classes and varieties. They all bring their own karmas.

This is the reason why every man should understand himself. Socrates said, "Know thyself." Ramana Maharshi said, "Ask yourself, 'Who am I?'" Vedanta says, "Know who you are." The way you live and think today, are you that person, or are you someone else? The day that you know who you are will be the day you become a great leader or a writer. There

are so many people who quit their vocation and start to do something else. I know many people who studied one thing and went on to do something else. One studied medicine, another engineering, but then they became dress designers. Why did they do that? It is because at a certain age a thought came to their mind, 'This is my destiny.'

This happens with many people. It does not happen often in India, because here once you let go of a job it is not easy to find another one, so how will you feed your wife and children? However, when there is freedom and independence, you can say, "I will not practise medicine; I will study law instead." Why? There is money in the house, there is enough for the children to eat, and only two more years of studying is needed to qualify as a lawyer. You have dropped medicine and become a lawyer, but now you do not want to be a physician or a lawyer, you want to be an ecologist. So you put in another five years of study. This is possible only when you have the means.

In the US and other wealthy countries, this happens frequently. A person acquires a degree or proficiency in a certain subject, but instead of working in that field he takes up another vocation. I know many girls who have graduated in medicine, but have become involved in some other creative profession. Some of them went into the literary world when they realized their talent. In this way, you can explore what you desire to do, which line of work you can be more useful in. At first you take a particular degree, as that is what the schools and colleges want to give you and your parents desire for you. You study medicine, qualify as a doctor and practise the same. However, it is not necessary for that to be the aim of your personality or your life.

Your parents made you graduate in medicine or science because parents dominate their children. They want their children to grow in their shadow. Parents do not give their children freedom. This is the reason why the young here are not versatile. Yes, they acquire a BA or an MA degree; however, that is not talent or versatility. In a brilliant individual, a light dawns, and I have experienced this. A thought springs to life,

very clear. It strikes like lightning, illuminates like light, comes like a voice, everything becomes clearly visible. Yoga is not my subject; I have not read a single book on yoga. Whatever books I have read on yoga are the ones I have written myself as I needed to improve on them. I am a student of Vedanta. My subjects were Shankara's Vedanta, Advaita Bhashya, Ramanuja's Vedanta, Vasishtha Advaita Bhashya, Mimamsa. I speak Sanskrit as fluently as I speak Hindi or English. Sanskrit is my first language.

In 1968, I set off on a world tour and how this came about is a strange incident. I had never thought of going abroad. The thought had not even occurred to me. Once I was travelling in the Tatas' personal aircraft from Mumbai to Saurashtra. I was invited there to inaugurate some fertilizer company. It was a four-seater aircraft with the pilot seated next to me. He asked my name. I told him my name and added that I was from Kumaon. He asked my previous name, before taking sannyasa. I told him. He then asked, "Do you recognize me?" I said, "No." He told me his name and I recalled that we had learned to fly at the same flying club. Then he said, "Handle the steering." I said, "Oh no, it has been twenty or thirty years since I learned this, what if I crash the aircraft?" However, he took his hands off the steering and said, "Fly it."

The moment I touched the steering, the decision came that I must leave India. As an inner inspiration, a voice came from within. Then I reached my destination and the inauguration was in the evening. From there I went to Somnath for darshan and then returned to Mumbai. As soon as I was in Mumbai, I asked my host to arrange for my passport. He organized it within twenty-four hours and I left India. Thus, in life, there occurs a 'breakthrough' incident that changes one's life completely.

Satsang 3

13 October 1997

Education for women

Parents send their children to school so they will be able to help them earn money. They wish for their children to grow up to be good human beings, but not every parent likes the idea of an ideal school where the children are taught to eat in a certain way, sit in a certain way, do this or not do that. Generally, average working-class people do not send their children to such a school. However, these special schools do exist, and here in India these types of schools each have their own trust fund. For example, there is a large girls' college at Porbandar, the birthplace of Mahatma Gandhi, where four or five thousand girls stay. Its founder, Kalidas Mehta, was a billionaire and the trust fund of that gurukul is substantial. There, the girls are taught subjects like Sanskrit, the Vedas and mantras. It is mostly Gujarati girls studying there, whose parents live in countries such as Kenya or Uganda. Many of the Indian diaspora also send their children for cultural education to the gurukuls here. There are many gurukuls, such as Shantiniketan, with substantial wealth and means at their disposal.

The best example of this is the educational institutions founded by the Arya Samaj. The Arya Samajis founded many DAV colleges all over Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. The acronym DAV stands for Dayananda Anglo Vedic. These schools lay equal stress on all subjects such as English, Hindi, mathematics and science, and they have been very successful in homogenizing education. In modern Kerala, Narayan Guru

is considered the king of reforms. He started reforming every sphere of Kerala's society. Today, Kerala is at the apex of India, whether in the education sector, economics or medicine. The population growth is minimal there.

The people of Kerala say that the methods of population control that the government is adopting from the West are all wrong. They say, "There is only one way to stem the population explosion: educate women." This is the mantra they have given. If all the women are educated, if all the girls are literate or if they at least passed high school, then the population would reduce automatically. Contraceptives will not do anything. Educate the women and the population will decrease by itself.

Marriage

There is a place near Ganganagar in Rajasthan where, in marriage, the woman is always older than the man. It is the tradition of that place that if the groom is twenty, then his bride will be twenty-five. The Rajasthani people ensure that the girl is older than her groom so that she will die before her husband does and will not have to suffer widowhood. Even in today's society, it is still considered inauspicious to be a widow. To be a widow is a matter of sorrow. This is not the case in the western countries. However, here in India, the legal, social, religious and personal rights of a woman are undefined. Men can live anywhere, talk to anyone, or work anywhere. They can buy and sell property, wear dhotis or trousers as they please, grow their beards and moustaches or shave them off at will. These are their personal rights. Women, however, do not have any personal rights in this society. Can they shave their heads? No, they would have to ask their guardians. This is why it was thought that being five or ten years older was better for the wife so that she would die first, which is better than being a widow.

In our society, a woman's situation after her husband dies is like an unclaimed suitcase. If a man dies on a train, then to whom does his suitcase belong? To whoever finds it. In

our society a woman has no status without a husband. She is recognized only alongside her husband, otherwise she has no standing in society. Her state would be like that of the unclaimed suitcase. This is the reason why women commit *sati*, self-immolation, on their husband's funeral pyre. The custom may have been practised due to overt pressure from society or a continuing tradition. However, it was not a widespread custom. It was not prevalent among the common people, only among the upper classes and the elite. These things don't matter to the poor, but if a woman of a well-to-do family were to stray, it would cause disturbance. Anyway, that tradition is now finished. Yet, the state of women is not good. Educated they are, but there is not as much change as there should have been.

Does the tradition of sati still exist somewhere?

Maybe there is an occurrence here and there, but as a tradition it is finished. Times are changing. Much will change in the coming period. In the last fifty to one hundred years, the new ideas and ways of living have all been influenced by the ideals of western culture. This has been all-pervasive. Look at Indians, the way they eat, the clothes they wear when they go out to party, how they beautify themselves, the laws they adopt or their accounting practices. At every place, one glimpses the influence of the western civilization. Whether in the education sector, the judiciary, the police or the defence forces, it is apparent everywhere.

In the old days, the king or the chief of the army used to lead from the front and the soldiers used to be at the back. Today, the soldiers are right in the front, while the commander is drinking in his office somewhere. He does not even enter the battlefield since he is the commander-in-chief of the forces! In this age, all the conditions have changed.

The tradition of divorce

In India, there was no such thing as divorce before the passing of the Hindu Code Bill. In the vedic society, there was no tradition of divorce. Instead, there was a tradition

of separation or abandonment. Divorce means breaking a marriage, when there is no legal connection between the husband and the wife any more. There are many connections between a husband and a wife. One of them is legal, and the other connections can be familial, social, emotional or physical. I am talking of the legal connection. That which you call divorce is actually a process in which there is a break in the couple's legal relationship, whereas *tyaga*, to give up or abandon, is a process where there is a breakdown in the marital couple's social and physical relationship, but legally they still remain husband and wife.

When Rama abandoned Sita, their social relationship came to an end, but legally they were still bound to each other. Rama could still take her back and their children could still occupy the throne. Had there been no children and Rama had died, Sita could have taken the throne. Legally, her relationship would have made it possible. This was the tradition of separation. However, the Hindu Code Bill was passed in 1955–56, and a constitutional amendment was made which you now call divorce. In fact, as there was no provision for divorce in the Hindu Code of Conduct, many Hindus had converted to Christianity or Islam.

Remember that one does not convert only for the love of God; there may be other reasons. In this world, there has been hardly anyone who converted because the new religion was better or showed a better way to reach God. All that is just idle talk. The real reason is something else. Many Hindus became Muslims so they could get a divorce. In the same way, many Parsis became Hindu. There once lived a Parsi lady in Mahabaleshwar who had married a Jew. When she was on her deathbed the question arose as to what was to be done with her remains. The Parsi rites were forbidden to her, and the Jews would not allow her to be buried in their cemetery either. In the end, she became a Hindu and her funeral pyre could be lit.

The real purpose of religious conversion is to overcome social obstacles. In India, many people converted to Islam

as the Muslims were given many facilities. One was that of divorce. Thousands of men wish to leave their wives as they want to keep another girl, but what can they do? There is no way to divorce the wife. You have to keep the first woman as well. Even if she lives in her parental home, you will have to give her a share of your wealth. That is why many Hindu men became Muslim and Christian.

There was an uproar in India during the passing of the Hindu Code Bill. There were so many agitations and demonstrations, it seemed India was burning. The President, Dr Rajendra Prasad, did not accept it either. He was religious, a follower of sanatana dharma, and he sent the Bill back. However, Pandit Nehru was well-educated, and he insisted that a woman had as much right to leave a man as a man had to leave a woman. A man and a woman should live together only so long as they get along with each other. When you cannot get along, what is the point in living resentfully and unhappily?

Even now, divorces are not so common in India. Just like the practice of sati, it happens in only a particular class of society. Common people still consider divorce to be bad, but it is not so in the West. They have certain traditions that are difficult for an Indian to understand. Once when I was overseas, I met a woman who had divorced her husband. One day she told me that she would take me to meet her husband's son. I said, "Your son?" She replied, "No, my husband's son." I found it very strange because I have not grown up in that culture. She meant that her husband had a child with another woman and she wanted me to meet him. I did not understand this.

At different times, man has tried to structure society in different ways, but he has never been completely successful. Look at any kind of society. The western civilization is not going to last long either. Some social calamity will occur as it did in Rome and Greece.

Is marriage not bondage?

I believe that bondage is necessary for man. Man is basically an animal, all his interactions, actions and dreams are inspired

by his basic instincts. Jealousy, hostility, fear, love, carnality, all this is also found in animals. The only difference is that the discriminating faculty is not fully developed in animals; they are completely dependent on the basic instincts. Human beings have both the instinctual drives and the intellect, and that is why they are more savage than animals. The snake lives in the forest as does the scorpion, goat, horse, tiger and donkey. They obey the laws of nature. They do not break those laws at all. Humans break the laws because they have an intellect that tells them that they may do so. That is why bondage is necessary for humankind.

Marriage is, in fact, a connection. To use the word 'bondage' is incorrect. Bondage is a cruel word. In the Hindi language, changing a letter in the spelling of the word makes it 'connection'. Instead of calling marriage bondage, call it connection. Marriage is a very good tradition and I am not opposed to it, but I do say that it is not compulsory for everyone. To marry or not should depend on a person's wish. If I do not wish to marry, then I should not be married off. The parents should not force, coax, cajole or in any way coerce anyone into marriage.

Marriage is not just a personal necessity; it is also a social necessity. However, a far-sighted vision is necessary for it to be successful. The vedic tradition has that vision, yet much reform is necessary. In my opinion, the Indian tradition of the arrangement of marriage is better than that in any other culture. I have made a study of it, and I also know how the people of other cultures live. Even so, I agree that there is a need for reform here, and the reform is this: a girl should be educated. She should work for a few years and earn some money before children come along. Once she becomes a mother, let her stay at home. It is also important to look after the household, a maid or a servant cannot look after the house. To look after the house a homemaker is needed, but the homemaker should not be the maidservant. Her legal rights should be spelt out clearly. Girls should learn martial arts to ensure their safety. Instead of a revolver, give

them the art of self-defence. They should be able to drive a car and file income tax returns. They should know law and politics. Your wife and your daughter should be clever women.

What should be the purpose of human birth?

Nature has decided the goal of human life from the very beginning. Man is the result of nature. When you harvest cotton, you pick and clean the cotton, spin it into yarn, weave the yarn into cloth, make a shirt from the cloth. Now, what is the purpose of the shirt? It is to cover the body. However, the purpose of cotton is not to cover your body. The aim of cotton is to become thread, the aim of thread is to become cloth, and the aim of cloth is to become a garment that will protect the body from the heat and the cold. Similarly, human life has been born out of a subtle egg. Vedanta calls it *pindanda*, microcosmos, and *brahmanda*, macrocosmos.

When you existed as a different species of being and transited through 8.4 million wombs, how did you live? You ate, slept, procreated and died. Look at insects and worms. At their scale of existence, the mind is not yet manifest. Just as the tree lives in the seed, in small insects, worms, animals and birds there is life and limited senses, but the mind is dormant. That is the reason why our scriptures call the sentience that exists in dogs, elephants, horses, donkeys, crows, moths, as the *jiva*. The jiva is within everyone.

Having acquired a human body, man's very first aim is to find out, "Who am I and who is my Maker?" The purpose of human birth is only to know this. However, only thinking about it will not do. Contemplation clears some things, but there is no experience. For that, sadhana has to be practised, and the basis of sadhana is the mind and emotions. Faith and trust become the basis and the supports here, for although you have never seen God, you cannot say there is no God. You do not know if there is a God. You have accepted it because people have said so. Therefore, faith and trust are necessary. Without faith and trust you would not even know that your

father is indeed your father. One has to rely on faith and trust when there is no other way of knowing.

The first sadhana is of faith and trust. Through sadhana the mind is educated and trained. The first part of sadhana is ritual and worship. Ritual and worship, mantra repetition, austerity and pilgrimage, are all primary sadhanas. Once the body and mind are prepared through these, then yoga sadhanas begin through which the mind is directly connected with the higher reality. The mind is the bridge between me and God. If my mind is weak, then the bridge is weak. The mind is the road that leads to God. The mind takes you very far down the road of sadhana. Through the mind you can attain a very high level in life. Austerities, meditation, worship, prayer and japa are all practised through the mind. When you listen to *katha*, stories from the scriptures, or satsang, it is through the mind that you take them in.

The mind can take you far, but if it is weak or crippled, then it will be like an old car. Sometimes there is a puncture, sometimes the clutch gives way or the carburettor is dirty. Therefore, the mind needs to be strong and pure, only then will it take you forward. Then it will take you to a certain place and leave you there. The road goes up to the sea, but there is no road beyond that. What will you do beyond that? You will have to take a ship, won't you? In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sri Krishna says to Arjuna, "O Arjuna! That is when I give the aspirant buddhi yoga." The aspirant acquires a new consciousness, a new mind called the 'higher mind'. The *Bhagavad Gita* calls it buddhi yoga (10:10): *Dadami buddhiyogam tam yena mamupayanti te* – "I give him buddhi yoga by which he reaches me."

What is the reason for a weak mind?

The mind is not weak. For instance, if you are told that there is dal and rice on the menu for lunch, you will say that you are not hungry. However, if you were to go out you would eat biryani or some such nice thing. Where did the hunger appear from? The mind is weak when it does not like or is uninterested in something. The mind of man is not weak, no

individual is inherently weak. If he is wavering, it is because he does not have the taste for it. Is anyone weak when it concerns desire, anger, greed, hostility, unawareness and ignorance? Yet, when it comes to the path of knowledge, man is weak. You can sit for ten hours and watch a TV program, but after half an hour the mala falls from your hand. Then you say, "Swamiji, my mind is very weak, after half an hour of doing japa I cannot do any more."

The mind is not weak; it is the interest that is weak. To become human, the first thing required is satsang. Only that, nothing else. Satsang is an injection. It feeds the mind. And only one on whom God is bestowing grace receives satsang. It is said in the *Ramacharitamanas*:

Binu satsanga bibeka na hoi,
Raama kripaa binu sulabha na soi;
Satsangata muda mangala moola,
Soi phala siddhi saba sadhana phula.

> Wisdom does not dawn without association with saints, and such association cannot be had without the grace of Sri Rama; contact with noble souls is the root of joy and blessings; it constitutes the very fruit and fulfilment of all endeavours, whereas all other practices are blossoms as it were.

Sang means association, *sat* means good, therefore *satsang* means associating with a good thing. *Kusang* means associating with a bad thing. With satsang comes the discrimination that helps you to know, "I am not weak but strong. It is only the tamoguna in me that I think as weakness. Otherwise, I am strong."

Satsang generates self-confidence in a person. Thousands of parts are needed to produce a small aircraft; such hard work is needed. Similarly, to attain God much hard work is needed, one lifetime is not enough. It is not possible to graduate in just a year. Similarly, for a man to attain God, that which is the ultimate aim of life, is very difficult in one lifetime. To attain God is the ultimate aim, the last challenge. This is not a

whirlwind courtship where you do pooja today and tomorrow you see God. Forget about Mirabai, you and I are not Mirabai. Neither are we Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. We are ordinary human beings. We should stick to the rules of japa and tapas so that one day we will attain the aim of our life.

Is the reason for a weak memory physical or something else?

Just as you have memory in your computer into which you can feed and access data, there is a memory centre in the brain. All that you hear, see and read are stored in it. If the mind goes through trauma, whether from grave sorrow or excessive joy, this centre is disturbed and memory weakens. This is one of the reasons for a weak memory.

The second reason is that as a person ages, many things in the body gradually stop working. The body cannot nourish them. For instance, after the age of seventy, the thyroid gland stops functioning. After the age of fifty, the functioning of the prostate gland diminishes in men and the production of oestrogen reduces in women. All this happens because the body is not receiving the appropriate diet or dose of hormones. In old age, the required dose of hormones is unavailable, therefore many functions of the body are weakened. The button for memory does not work, that is why the elderly often have such a hard time remembering. In a similar way, the reason for many things is physical.

A weak memory is seen in young people, too.

Yes, just like a virus gets into the computer, a virus can eat up a human brain too. However, there is definitely a centre for memory. This memory centre exists in the gross body as well as the subtle body and it continues to operate over many lifetimes. When there is a new birth or incarnation, the jiva brings with it all its old memories, old karmas, archetypes and desires. They must be collected somewhere. When you plant a guava seed you will get a guava tree, not a mango tree. Why? It is because the seed has brought with it all the qualities of a guava. Similarly, man's karmas are collected in seed form.

What is karma? It is not only the action of moving a hand or a foot, digging, driving or reading, but every movement of the body is a karma. Thought, memory, like and dislike, these are all karmas. The process of recognizing a colour to be red or green is also a karma. *Karma* does not only mean a bodily movement, rather every movement in life is known as karma. A man is sitting quietly with eyes closed, yet he is performing karmas. Why? It is because thoughts are going on. Thoughts are karmas too. The *Bhagavad Gita* says (3:5):

Na hi kashchit kshanamapi jaatu tishthatyakarmakrit;
Kaaryate hyavashah karma sarvah prakritijair gunaih.

Verily, none can ever remain for even a moment without performing action; for, everyone is made to act helplessly indeed by the qualities born of Nature.

Why? Driven by the three gunas of sattwa, rajas and tamas, a man remains involved in action, which means a man is compelled to act due to the inherent qualities of nature. It is only in the interval between death and birth that he is inactive, that he is in a state of dormancy. He is in the same state that exists inside a seed of wheat or a chickpea. Only for that space of time he is without karma, otherwise no one can live without karma. Nobody can escape action. Arjuna says in the *Bhagavad Gita* (6:34):

Chanchalam hi manah krishna pramaathi balavad dridham;
Tasyaaham nigraham manye vaayoriva sudushkaram.

The mind verily is restless, turbulent, strong and unyielding, O Krishna! I deem it as difficult to control as to control the wind.

Then Sri Krishna says to Arjuna (6:35):

Asamshayam mahaabaaho mano durnigraham chalam;
Abhyaasena tu kaunteya vairaagyena cha grihyate.

> Arjuna, you are right, it is very hard to bring the mind under control. However, you can attain that by *abhyasa* and *vairagya*, practice and dispassion.

What does vairagya mean? If someone dies, then accept it. There was sorrow yesterday, today there is not. It means that one should have only a practical relationship with happiness and sorrow, not an emotional one. It should be a short-term relationship, not a long-term one. This is called vairagya. Many things happen in this world that you do not like, but what is the point of being unhappy about it? For a little while you can be sad about it, in the same way that if a child pushes a wrestler, the wrestler may budge, but he will not fall.

What is the difference between udasinata and vairagya?

In the word 'udasina', *ud* means up and *asin* means one who is sitting. One seated on top is udasina, meaning one who is detached or above joy and sorrow is called *udasina*. Vairagya is related to the fact that anything you have experienced leaves behind a certain craving, a memory. 'What a wonderful house we had.' 'Our mother loved us so much.' 'My son was so handsome, now the poor boy is dead.' Control over that memory is called *vairagya*. The classical scriptural definition of vairagya is (*Yoga Sutras* 1:15):

Drishtaanushravika-vishayaavitrishnasya-vashikara-sanjnaa vairaagyam.

> When an individual becomes free of craving for the sense objects which he has experienced as well as those of which he has heard, that state of consciousness is vairagya.

Incidents of joy and sorrow are always there. In every house someone dies and someone is born. Money comes and money goes. There is love and there are fights. For how long are you going to remain involved in all of this? If you remain entangled in everything, it will affect your brain and mind.

If every film that you watch affects you, your mind will be confounded. Certainly you watch five or six films a day; after all, this world is nothing but a film. Even if it is not, imagine that it is. If you don't, everything will seem real: fighting and loving, sorrow and joy, earning and spending, birth and death, everything will seem real.

How can sanchita karma be exhausted?

Only a sannyasin can exhaust *sanchita* or stored karma. Here I am not talking about sannyasa as a sect. There is *sannyasa sampradaya*, a sect or tradition of sannyasa, there is sannyasa sentiment and sannyasa *ashrama*, or stage in life. After the age of seventy or seventy-five, people take sannyasa, keep eating their almonds and raisins, keep drinking milk, keep looking after their children. They are only following an ashrama, a stage in life. There is also the sannyasa sampradaya in which you shave your head. However, sannyasa is a sentiment, a feeling. The sannyasa sentiment means that nothing is for oneself, everything is for others. Earn for others, speak for others, live for others; every single thing is for others.

Sannyasa means a trust. When you establish a trust fund with your money to start a school for the blind, that money is no longer yours and it will be spent on the school for the blind. Similarly, when a man makes himself into a trust fund, expends his intelligence, strength, money, uses all his means only for the sake of others, then he becomes a sannyasin. A sannyasin spends on himself only for his bare necessities; the remainder is for spending on others. Only then does the mind stop vacillating, not otherwise.

A man has control only over kriyamana karma. *Kriyamana karma* refers to actions you are performing now. There is no control over *prarabdha karma*, the karmas that have already produced fruit. Even God has no control over that. That is like a bullet that has left the gun, it has to hit someone. Sanchita karma is like a bullet in the chamber. Shoot it if you want, or keep it; however, prarabdha karma is like a bullet that has left the gun. When it starts producing fruit, you cannot stop it. In

kriyamana karma the gun is in your hand, your finger is on the trigger, shoot if you want or do not shoot if you so wish. You can control kriyamana karma, but regarding prarabdha karma it is said:

> *Avashyameva bhoktavyam kritakarma shubhashubham.*
>
> One will have to certainly undergo the effects of past karma, whether auspicious or inauspicious.

Whether a holy man or a saint, whoever one is, will have to bear the fruit. No one can be saved from prarabdha karma. Wasn't Sri Krishna shot by the hunter's arrow? Did Rama escape prarabdha? He loved Sita so much, yet he had to leave her.

Sanchita karma can be neutralized with *paramartha*, actions performed for a higher cause. Live for others, not for yourself. If you perform karma with the thought, 'Nothing is mine, everything is for others', sanchita karma will be exhausted. That is the reason for the *daan*, the giving here. Sanchita karmas are exhausted by charity, kindness, compassion, and helping others. There is no other remedy. It does not matter if you go on a long pilgrimage, practise austerities in the Himalayas, practise pranayama, awaken your kundalini, attain the eight psychic powers and nine treasures, when a karma reaches fruition then that sanchita karma changes into prarabdha, and that is not going to spare anybody. This is written in our shastras. Sanchita karmas, good or bad, definitely bear fruit.

Can't sanchita karmas be neutralized by repeating the name of God?

A little is neutralized, but not all of it. The antidote for poison is poison itself. Iron is cut by iron. Similarly, sanchita karmas can be overcome by compassion and charity, for an individual brings all the sanchita karmas with him. When you do something for yourself, you are generating karma, but when you act for the greater good, it no longer remains a

karma; it is already finished. When the food you have cooked feeds others, there is nothing left for you, as it has gone into the stomachs of other people. When you work for others, how can that action bear fruit for you?

Karmas are of two kinds: *swarthi* and *paramarthi*, selfish and selfless. Actions performed for oneself are called swarthi, selfish, and those performed for others are called paramarthi, selfless. Karmas become sanchita only when they are done for oneself, when they are for swartha and not paramartha. When karmas are performed for paramartha, then others will reap the fruit of the karma, not you. It is the same as if you had a shirt made for yourself, you would wear it; however, if you had it made for someone else, how would it fit you? If you had a house built for somebody else, they would live in it, why would you? Karmas become sanchita when performed for oneself. That is why, to be free of them one has to engage in paramartha, working for the greater good.

In the seventy-five years of my life it has been my experience that one must act for the benefit of others. I have lived by the idea that my money is not mine; I will only spend as much as is necessary. In all these years I have never bought myself a wristwatch. I could have bought myself the best had I so desired, but I have believed that no, first I will buy for another. When I started to apply this principle at first, it was a little blurred around the edges, but it is becoming clearer now. As it becomes clearer, a light will gradually begin to shine within me. I have been the one most benefited by this principle. Neither sannyasa nor pilgrimages have benefited me as much, nor has reading the scriptures or practising yoga. Now I have decided that I will live only for others and I say that every person should do the same. I say this to everyone: allocate a part of your earning to the poor and the needy. If fifty saris are brought to your home, then keep aside two for some poor person. If you have eight or ten pairs of shoes, take out two pairs for a poor person. If you have ten tolas of gold, then give a tola for a poor girl's wedding. If you give all ten away, that

is even better. Then the whole problem is solved. For that, you have to be large-hearted.

No man earns all by himself, he earns because of society. If this society did not exist, then I could not earn either. We are all indebted to society. Whatever we possess today really belongs to society. Society has as much right on it as you. This thought came to me here and gradually it has become clearer. That is why I am gathering only such people around me who will live for others. I do not care if you are a sannyasin or a householder, married or unmarried, young or old. Only live for others. Eat twice a day and work for others. I don't have any other requirements. I do not want followers. I want a person who can live not for himself, but for others.

Everyone in the world lives for himself, but who lives for others? Whatever you earn you spend, and only on your wife and children, your friends and relatives. If every person contributes a grain of sand, it will help to build the bridge. You know the story of the squirrel, don't you? It is not necessary to donate one or two million rupees, to give thousands of saris or build a great big palace. If every person lights just one candle it will dispel the darkness. Each and every person should involve himself in such work, bearing this sentiment in mind.

The rich and the poor alike should work with the sentiment of selflessness. The destitute and the beggar should also have this feeling. If the feeling of selflessness can be awakened in robbers and dacoits, all the more better. The robber can think, 'If I have rich pickings today, I can make a house for some poor person, I can give a cow to someone, I can pay the four hundred rupees tuition fees for that boy, I can give twenty thousand rupees for a poor girl's wedding.' Even if someone is a thief or a prostitute, an adulterer, dacoit, sadhu, holy man, householder, lawyer, doctor, lecturer, destitute or a beggar, everyone should feel for others. Only then will karmas be exhausted. Otherwise, you will definitely have to reap the fruit of sanchita karmas.

Satsang 4

14 October 1997



It is said that God is in every grain and speck. What is the definition of God? *Tat tvam asi* – "You are That." Nuclear physics says the same thing. An atom has an electron, proton and neutron, and is complete in itself. Many years ago, during Einstein's time, it was discovered that just as we have a solar system with the planets orbiting the sun, the same structure exists in subatomic particles. The same thing that is happening in the macrocosmos is happening in the microcosmos. Creation is inside every grain, creation is not just external. Whatever is outside is also inside: *Yatha*

pinde tatha brahmande – "As in the microcosmos so in the macrocosmos." It is said in the *Ramacharitmanas*: *Jala bichi sama kahiat bhinna na bhinna* – "The water and its waves are no different." Are there waves in the water or is the water in the waves? This is the principle of Vedanta.

The Indian philosophy cannot be called wrong, as everything in it is based on science. The rishis and munis stated very clearly that there should be no marriage between members of the same sub-caste. A member of a certain genetic group should not marry into the same gene pool, or else they will give birth to unhealthy, diseased offspring. We are seeing this among different groups today, and whole races are disappearing as a result. The more you allow the combinations of human DNA, the better results it will give. There is a lot of work being done on this subject.

Can it be said that in this age people are once again turning towards dharma, spirituality and bhakti?

As I understand it, the movement of bhakti and spirituality is necessary to bring peace to the restless, disturbed mind of a person. There is much restlessness in the rich countries. As an example, Sweden is one of the wealthiest nations of the world. Just as easily as you can buy tobacco at a shop here, you can get a job and a house there. Nobody will tell you that you have to wait. When you go to a teashop, will anyone tell you that you have to wait for the tea? The people who go to Sweden from our ashram are able get a job and a house the next day. They write to someone who is there to find them a house and a job. They arrive in the morning, walk into their house, and the next day they find a job. Even then, the rate of suicide in that country is the highest in the world.

What is the reason for that?

There is a lack of spirituality in that country, therefore the mind becomes agitated and full of despair. Suicide is committed when one is utterly depressed. Ordinarily, why would a person commit suicide? The mind is sick. To put

that mind right, to repair it, spirituality is necessary. Once the mind is all right, one will function normally again.

Adivasi tribes

Adivasi means the original inhabitants of the land. The tribes that lived in India before people from other regions came to inhabit it are called adivasis; for instance, the Santhal in Jharkhand or the Kirat towards Chhota Nagpur. There is a large number of adivasi tribes in states like Orissa, Bihar, Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

The Santhals have their own traditional dresses, they speak the Santhali language, and they even have different communities. The physical structure of the Santhali people is very similar to westerners. The ratio of shoulder-to-waist measurements is different in Indians as compared to a westerner. Measurements of the abdomen, waist and back are all different.

Such original inhabitants exist not only in India, but also in Africa, Australia and North America. People from Europe went to North America and established their rule there. They are not the original inhabitants of that place; they are its citizens. Of all the people who live in the Santhal Pargana here, only the Santhals are the original inhabitants. The other people have come over time and settled here. Why did they settle here? Every tribe has a king. The Santhals must have had a king, too. When he saw that there was political infighting, he invited people from other lands to come and settle, thus maintaining political equilibrium. Now there are forty percent of Santhals living here and sixty percent of outsiders, so a political balance has been achieved. It is so everywhere. The political balance in Kashmir is the same. The king of Kashmir has always been Hindu while his subjects have been Muslim. This was the understanding that was reached in Kashmir: the king would be Hindu and his subjects remain Muslim. For the sake of maintaining political balance, people from outside the realm are invited in. Bangladeshis live in Delhi. Why are we not able to evict

them? What is the problem? It is the electoral field of the politicians. In the Malabar region of South India you will find two skin colours, white and black.

Adivasis mostly live in forests, but now the government's involvement has reached the forests. Earlier the government would not enter the forests; they were private. When I was a child, we had two and a half thousand acres of forest land. Whatever came out of it, we would sell. Tigers, deer, wolves, eagles, all kinds of animals lived there. It was our forest. We paid the government four or five paise as tax, but now the government has reached everywhere. The head of the district and the forest officials go everywhere.

The people of the forest have started to come forward a little. The women of the Kol tribes of the Nigiris wear loincloths. In the Jagdalpur and Bastar regions of Chhattisgarh, the adivasi women just wrap a sari around themselves. When they bathe, they wash half of it and wear it and then wash the other half. These people are untouched by civilization. The Jarawa people of the Andaman-Nicobar islands do not even come out in the open. Even today they do not meet other people. They run away from researchers and photographers. They do not wish to be educated. They ask, "Why should we study? We will be contaminated by education."

They are right, education is bad.

It is not a question of good or bad. It is about existence, of having an identity in society. If someone is uneducated and illiterate, then he cannot fight for his rights if need be, cannot earn and cannot support a household. In fact, it is not a matter of an individual's existence; it is a matter of the nation's existence. Difficulties and calamities always descend upon nations. One should not think that since we have our independence, nothing will go wrong. The enemy is always ready. That is the way of the world. Everywhere in the world there is a fight to occupy another person's land, another nation's land. A fight between North and South Korea, a

fight between India and Pakistan, a fight between northern and southern Ireland, conflict in Bosnia-Chechnya-Serbia, conflict between China and India. How many names shall I count? All this indicates that this is human nature. Not even human nature, but animal nature.

In the forest, a tiger urinates and defecates only in his own territory, and if another tiger trespasses there will be a fight. The principle of conflict, 'This is mine, not yours', is the nature of a sentient creature, and this has always been so. After all, what was the need for the English to come to India? Why was it necessary for Europeans to go to the Americas, to fight and spread violence? This is the nature of man. It is the same all over the world. From Europe, people went to North America and bought New York City, today home to millionaires and billionaires, for a mere twenty-five dollars. If the indigenous people did not submit to persuasion or money, then they had to submit to the bullet. The newcomers set fire to all of America. These days, there are millions of adivasis in the world, and all are suppressed. Look at the Maoris of New Zealand, the Native American Indians and the aborigines of Australia. Everywhere they are in the same condition, backward, illiterate and neglected.

In this age, through the medium of education, girls and boys should know both what is going on in the world and what is going on in their political capital. Are any wrong decisions being taken, any compromises being made? One needs to keep an eye on everything. After all, how did the English establish themselves here? From the time of Akbar onwards, the English began to arrive in India, but Akbar did not allow them to trade. During the reign of Shah Jehan they tried once again to force his hand, but did not succeed. At that time they started some small trade, like selling vegetables. Then the emperor's daughter fell ill. There was no physician here who could treat her, so an English physician was called in. Upon the daughter's cure the physician was told to ask for his reward, but he declined to ask anything for himself, asking instead that English merchants be allowed to trade in

India. That meant there was no opposition; it was the decree of the government.

Under the name of the East India Company, the English began trading as well as gradually mounting attacks. People were opposing the English, and when the king paid no attention, the people started attacking the aristocracy, as often happens. Then the rajas and the nawabs asked for protection. Britain said to them, "Why should we protect you? We will make you our vassals." The Indian royalty agreed. Then the British started to import weapons into the country, because the seacoast was wide open. When they saw that their women and children needed protection, they started to take over disused forts, and the Indian people knew nothing of this. By the time they did come to know, it was too late.

History can be stopped from repeating itself only when the populace is literate and can ask questions. In any country, it is necessary that the citizens are literate. The question does not arise whether education makes you good or bad. The question today is of being an empowered citizen who can speak out, who can write, who can fight. The revolutionaries were just like the goons in the bazaar, but they prevailed. What is the point of people being good? Those who gave their lives for the country may have been ruffians, but we do not criticize them. Rather, we revere them. You tell me, is it necessary to save your house or for your son or daughter to be good?

Swamiji, just as we have a spiritual philosophy, do the Chinese also have a particular philosophy?

Basically, China is an atheist country. The Christians, the Muslims are mostly theists whereas the Chinese are basically atheists. Their most important philosophy is that of Confucius. The bedrock of Chinese civilization and culture is Confucius. He was a great philosopher. In all that he said, God was never the basis. That which cannot be seen was not made a basis. The foundation was solely society, conduct and thought.

After many hundreds of years, the Buddhist thought reached China, which the Chinese people appreciated, as it is an atheistic philosophy. There is no place for God anywhere in the Buddhist school of thought. When the Buddha was alive and questions on God would be put to him, he would say repeatedly, "The question that you are asking is pointless. This is a thing beyond our comprehension. The matter of concern is that people are sorrowful in this world. How do we get rid of that sorrow? I do not say that there is a God. I do not even say that there is no God." He said that it was not his subject. He kept talking on real, everyday, practical matters. That is why the Chinese were influenced by Buddhist thought.

Passing through Tibet, Acharya Padmasambhava reached China and lived in the courts of the Chinese kings and emperors. Dipankar Maharaj went to Tibet and Acharya Padmasambhava went to China. He was received very well there and the study of Buddhist religion began. People started coming to India from China. Many pilgrims came through Tibet, while others crossed the Malacca Straits and came by the sea route. They took books from here that were translated into Chinese. Munger and Deoghar are mentioned in the accounts of those Chinese pilgrims. They saw it all, the chariot festival of Jagannath Puri, the Kumbha Mela, the temples of South India. However, the Chinese did not like theism then and they do not like it even today.

So tantra did not exist there at all?

Tantra has nothing to do with God. Nor is dharma concerned with God. Dharma talks about man's duties. The meaning of dharma is: *Yato abhyudayaha* – "That which uplifts you, that which gives you happiness." Your dharma is to not fight with your wife, to look after and bring up your children, serve your parents. Do not kill, do not steal, do not drink alcohol, isn't this dharma? *Achara prabhavo dharmaha* – "Conduct and thought itself is dharma."

When God comes into dharma, it would be better to call it bhakti or spirituality instead of dharma. If someone wears

a tika on the forehead, people say, "Oh, he is very religious, very dharmic." Do not call him dharmic, call him a bhakta. To believe in God is bhakti and spirituality. However, even if you do not believe in God, but instead fulfil the duties of your station in life as son, father, husband or servant, then that is dharma.

Even if the Chinese liked Buddhist dharma, they still had sorcery, superstition, witchcraft, yantra, mantra, propitiating spirits, tying on a black thread, wearing a blue thread, all the things that happen in the rural countryside. They worship sadhus and holy men in order to beget a child.

After the study of Sanskrit began in China, propagators of Buddhism were prepared and went towards Korea. After China, Korea was the next place where Buddhism was preached. After Korea, Buddhism entered Japan. The Japanese, too, were very influenced by Buddhism. The indigenous religion of Japan is Shintoism. To properly understand Buddhism, the Japanese tried to send people to India. They tried thrice, the first time they sent merchants, the second time they sent monks, the third time someone else. Three times they were unsuccessful for some reason or the other. Due to political reasons, there were difficulties between Japan and China. The Japanese said, "Three times we have tried but failed to reach India. And it is impossible to go through China." So they made a political treaty with China. There was a clause in the treaty that said the Japanese would be allowed to go to China to study Buddhism. It was only after all this that Buddhism spread in Japan. By the time Buddhism spread in Japan, in India it was once again overshadowed by the vedic tradition.

Buddhism gave rise to two branches. The assembly that met in Rajgir after Lord Buddha's nirvana compiled three peetakas: *Surya Peetaka*, *Dharma Peetaka*, and *Vinaya Peetaka*. These three books are considered their Vedas. Then two sects were born: Hinayana and Mahayana, meaning 'small road' and 'big road'. In this way, Buddhism was divided into two. Naropa chose Hinayana. Naropa, Marpa and Milarepa are the names associated with Nalanda.

Milarepa of Tibet? He was from Nalanda?

No, his grandfather guru, Naropa, was from Nalanda. He graduated from there and also taught there. The followers of Mahayana later built another university, Vikramshila, near Kahalgaon. They did not maintain pure Buddhism, but added Tara, Amitabha, Avalokiteshwara Buddha and the pantheon of Indian gods and goddesses into their system. Bhavani was there as well as Durga. If Devi comes, tantra will follow. I am talking about Vikramshila here, which was the university that came after Nalanda.

The influence of Mahayana went through China and reached Japan. I have not been to China often, but I have visited Japan many times. In the villages of Japan I have seen temples dedicated to Indra, Durga, Bhavani, Varuna and Hanuman. I saw there the ruins of temples dedicated to at least fifty of the gods and goddesses mentioned in the Vedas. Along with Mahayana Buddhism, vedic dharma also reached there. Buddhism spread, but vedic dharma did not.

The main thing in vedic dharma is idol worship. Christianity, Islam and Judaism are all against idol worship, reincarnation and polytheism. That is why vedic dharma did not spread much in the West. Many great men went westwards, but no matter how much they preached, it did not take root. Now they have had some success. Vedic philosophy and thought have begun to spread in the West. People have accepted it and have been initiated into it. This was impossible earlier. It is still impossible in Islamic countries. You cannot make a temple outside your house. Go to any Islamic country; it is not possible for you to go to a temple or to be initiated. It has only recently become possible in the Christian countries. Earlier, only churches were allowed to be built. Building any other place of worship was not sanctioned by law. They would not let it take root. Now in all countries this rule stands cancelled. It has been cancelled in Switzerland and France, and America had already cancelled it. Temples have been built, now that it is possible to buy the land for the purpose.

Is Taoism derived from Buddhism or did it exist earlier?

No, Taoism is very old. *Tao* means truth. Taoism means the sect of truth. They do not believe in gods and goddesses as we do, but they do believe in ghosts, spirits, demons, djinns and all such things. "Do not go there, an evil witch lives there." "Do not venture there, a ghost haunts that place." This is belief in gods and goddesses, isn't it? They do not have gods and goddesses like us, but still they will say, "Do not go to that place, something lives there. A black shadow will fall over you if you go there. That place is haunted." What is a ghost?

Once, in England, I had a fight with a woman on the issue. She was very rich and proud of her wealth. She said to me, "You believe in reincarnation, but can you prove it? Have you seen it?" I said, "No, I haven't seen it, but you may have." She replied, "No, I haven't." Anyway, I did not meet her much. When I did meet her, it was as a yoga teacher, not as a guru. I would teach her a little asana and pranayama. Now, my hosts had put me up at a guest house. One day, there was a conversation going on about buying some house and there was talk of building an ashram. Then somebody said, "Nobody lives in that house, you can buy it cheap. It will be available for two thousand pounds." That woman said, "No, that house is haunted." I said to her, "How can you say that? We will surely buy that house." She said, "A man who lived there was strangled. Then, a girl lived there and she went mad. Another man went there to live and he died of fear." I said, "He must have been mad and that's why he died." She replied, "No, a man lived in that house and he was murdered. Now his spirit haunts it. It kills anyone who tries to live in that house." I asked her, "So you do have proof of reincarnation? Last time you asked the same question of me. I am replying to you now: the answer is with you. If a man does not survive death, if everything is finished in the grave, then who is the man haunting that house?" She was flustered at the mention of the ghost.

Incidents such as this happen everywhere. The Chinese do not believe in gods and goddesses, yet they will place

something in front of their house, give it a name and kiss it so there will be no misfortune. Wherever a car can go, there will be a temple and offerings of money will be made. This also happens in Europe. Muslims worship at dargahs, but they say to me that they believe in the one God. In our culture, God is seen in all forms, as Shiva, as Rama, and so on.

China is an atheist nation, but personal, social beliefs prevail there just as in India. A daughter's wedding wipes out the father. A girl's chastity is very important. Girls are protected so carefully that even their feet may not be seen by a stranger. Just as we have the veil, they have similar customs.

Why was tantra mixed with Buddhism, was this necessary?

Suppose you have a lamp, oil and a wick. They are useless unless you can strike a match. You may practise sadhana for eight, nine or ten hours, but your mind is not likely to become one-pointed. Nobody's mind stops for even a moment. If an ordinary man's mind stops for even one moment, he will go mad. So, the question of stopping the mind does not arise. If you tell the five billion people of this world to control their minds, and they all agree to try and suppress it, they will all go mad because it is dangerous to forcibly stop the mind.

The rishis did it, how?

We are not talking of rishis here, only of ordinary people, and the reason why tantra entered their religion and their lives. It is difficult to stop the mind, so how will you do sadhana? And how long does a man live? A very long life is a hundred years, long life is seventy-five years, and accidental death can come at any time. Suppose a man lives for seventy-five years. For fifty years, he does not find any time away from his household, so what will he do? After fifty years, when he is a little free, the vehicle is so old that the tyre is punctured! Sometimes he has pain here, sometimes an ache there, cold, fever, and so it goes. So what will he do with his remaining twenty-five years?

In such circumstances, Guru Gorakhnath prescribes alchemizing mercury. To alchemize mercury one needs the help of tantra. Longevity can be enhanced through alchemizing mercury. Guru Gorakhnath used to say that if a man's lifespan is increased, he may be able to achieve something spiritually. Instead of seventy-five years, if the lifespan can be increased to a hundred and twenty-five years then for forty or fifty years he may be able to do something. That is why many people were crazy about Guru Gorakhnath.

When mercury is transmuted, the heat produced in the body needs to be balanced. There are many techniques in tantra to achieve this balance. The Chinese way of tantra is called Cheenachara tantra. Buddhists adopted this method of tantra and introduced it in Vikramshila University. However, it is also because of this tantra that they were maligned, because tantra is a path wherein there is a great possibility of social objection.

Tantra may be practised only in solitude, not openly, and not everyone is capable of this practice. For the practice of tantra, a person needs to be self-disciplined. Discipline and self-control are required in everything, from diet to lifestyle. One has to overcome the reactions to all seasons, in summer not to feel hot and in winter not to feel cold. One has to be capable of eating all kinds of food. Those who like to live the worldly life, those who want good food and good clothes, will be unable to practise tantra. Tantra is not for everyone, but those who can live in solitude and practise a life of silence, can practise tantra.

I believe the easiest way to attain God for every individual, whether man or woman, is to walk the path advocated in the *Bhagavad Gita*: the yoga of equilibrium or integrated yoga. Practise asana and pranayama for good health, practise raja yoga and karma yoga, do good for yourself, do good to others. If you practise raja yoga, then at least fifty percent of the mind will be harmonized, and alongside practise bhakti yoga. Just as salt and sugar are essential in all dishes, so is bhakti in life. This theory given in the *Bhagavad Gita* is the best. The people who have adopted this path have been successful.

How can bhakti be spiritual and not mechanical? The temples are so crowded. I perform the pooja mechanically and come away.

For that, satsang is necessary. Now and again you will have to recharge your battery, otherwise your emotions will remain mechanical. As for the crowd, how does it matter to you? This is irrelevant. True lovers do not see the snakes, the thorns, or the jungle; they only see their beloved. Forget the crowd on the path of bhakti. Why should you be concerned with the crowd and the dirt? Let it be crowded, let it also be dirty. It is all right if children are crying; you stay with your purpose. Long ago I also used to think like you, but after many years I gradually changed my way of thinking. I thought, 'No excuses, this is simply my complex.'

What should one see in a temple? For what should one search?

Whatever a man does, he does it according to his understanding and capability. My understanding and capacity are different from your understanding and capacity. Every individual's point of view cannot be the same. In a temple, your viewpoint is different from mine. A child, a youth and an old man, all three look at the same thing in different ways. Every person should go to a temple according to his own conditioning, and decide for himself how he should interact or conduct himself. One day, intuitively, you will know. If nothing at all dawns in your understanding, then go to the temple and say, "God, I am very ignorant. I do not understand anything. Swamiji told me to go to the temple so I have come. Yes, I trust, but more than that I do not understand anything." Think of this as an extremely easy way. Whenever a child goes to its mother, the mother will love it. This is the real secret of going to a temple.

The Aryans

There is no historical or written proof that the Aryans came to India from outside its borders. Somebody said it and since

then this false notion has continued to prevail. Now proof against this hypothesis has been found. The Aryans did not come from anywhere outside; they lived around these parts. Proof of this has been found. I can present a few such instances before you. In any ancient Aryan book, other than Ganga, Yamuna, Godavari, Saraswati, Narmada, Sindhu and Kaveri, is the name of any other river mentioned? In the four Vedas, eighteen Puranas, the two epics, or the six shastras, if the name of an eighth river is mentioned anywhere, let me know.

If the Aryans had indeed come from somewhere else, they would have at least mentioned the name of their own river, the name of their own mountain. Only names such as the Himalayas, Vindhyachal and Mandarachal occur in the books of the Aryans, while the Muslims mention names such as Kaaba and Karbala and turn towards the west to offer namaz. The Parsis came and very harmoniously settled down to become Indians. They did not fight, they integrated, but even now they recall and pronounce names of places that exist in Iran and face the north for worship.

If any race goes to another place and establishes an empire there, why would they accept the prevalent religion? Look at the British, did they ever accept Hinduism? The Muslims came here as the victors, did they ever accept the Hindu religion? Does the victor ever accept the religion of the vanquished? He will impose his own religion. When he enforces a religion, it will only be the one that he has brought with him. Then why did the Aryan religion speak of the Ganga and not the Volga? The Volga is not mentioned, nor the Nile, nor is the Euphrates mentioned, no such names. But every river, mountain, forest and desert from Afghanistan to Burma, from Kailash-Manasarovar to Rameshwaram, is mentioned with reverence.

This story of the Aryans having come from outside is a story propagated by the Anglo-Saxon races. In the Vedas and the Puranas, the word ‘arya’ has not been used to denote a race. A wife calls her husband ‘arya’, the minister addresses

the king as 'arya'. *Arya* means distinguished, a noble man. In our culture, the word 'arya' describes the qualities of a man, not his race or caste. The word 'Hindu' has been used since ancient times to describe our race. It is a mispronunciation of the word Sindhu, the name of a river. Our religion is not 'Hindu', that is our race that dwells near the Sindhu river. Our religion is vedic. Nevertheless, now that the phrase 'Hindu religion' has come about, it is all right. Similarly, the religion of the British is not Anglo-Saxon, that is their race. Their religion is Protestant.

Then what is sanatana dharma?

A religion can become rigid and inflexible in the course of its history. A mistake somewhere, some obstacle arises and growth stops. Then that religion cannot be called sanatana. *Sanatana* means continuous, eternal. If whatever is said in the religion is not accepted or followed by the citizens, then the religion will be destroyed, it will not continue. At one time, for instance, women were told to cover their faces, it was our custom. However, circumstances have changed today: children have to go to school to study, therefore the veil was discarded, the attire changed and hair became short.

Did this destroy the religion? No. Sanatana dharma says that so long as an action does not cause destruction and havoc in your normal life, it is permissible. Now that your daughter has cut her hair short, what difference does it make? Has she become bad? Has she lost her humanity? Has she lost her good character altogether by cutting her hair? If not, then accept it. Let religion go on. This is called continuity, eternal. Sanatana means a religion that is flexible and continuous. The vedic religion is flexible, change is possible within it, that is why it is sanatana.

Satsang 5

15 October 1997

Influences on the weather

The seasons and the weather are primarily affected by the sun; however, in India, planetary movements are calculated based on the phases of the moon, which is depicted in the lunar calendar. For instance, the time of the monsoon is based on a particular phase of the moon and it may arrive within ten days before or after a particular date. If the monsoon date were to be calculated based on the solar calendar, the date would remain the same. All the festivals and events connected with the sun always occur on the same fixed date. Makar Sankranti is a solar festival and it always occurs on 14th January. The date of Karka Sankranti is also fixed. If Makar Sankranti were to be calculated based on the lunar calendar, then it will occur on a different date every year; it cannot be fixed.

The second factor is the winds. All the storms we have come from the Bay of Bengal. Storms do not come from the Arabian Sea, as it is enclosed on three sides. All the storms from the Bay of Bengal go down through the Straits of Malacca and into the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean beyond. Mighty storms do not usually occur in the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic Ocean. It is the Pacific Ocean that has mighty typhoons. Earlier, typhoons and storms were a daily occurrence in China, Taiwan, Japan, Indonesia and the Philippines. It rains every day in the North-Eastern regions of India, while it does not in the neighbouring regions of Bengal or Bihar. Terrible typhoons strike Bangladesh. These typhoons become so big so quickly that they destroy

everything within minutes, while storms do not hit Kolkata. And although Vishakhapatnam is on the seashore, it does not face typhoons.

The third factor is that the position of the earth in space is not the same every year. The earth moves a little back and forth in space. This year it is not in the same place as it was last year, because the sun is expanding in space too. The earth moves along with the sun, and is affected by different constellations at different times.

Here in Deoghar, the weather varies every year. For instance, this year it is as if there was no summer at all.

Of course it will be different every year. Meteorology or weather science is a very difficult subject, and even the scientists have not been able to get a handle on it. The earth and the solar system are members of one family. In this cosmos there are many such suns with their own families. How do we comprehend such a vast concept? Space is so vast that even the most learned person's vision cannot penetrate it. The *Rig Veda* says that one does not know if even the Maker is aware of what is going on. An infinite number of suns like ours, maybe bigger than ours, just giant fireballs and orbiting around them planets and satellites. It is said that they are countless.

Now only one question arises, is it all real or merely an experience? Vedanta says that this is merely the experience of the jiva, it is not real; it is not the truth. Creation and life is only an experience and this experience is a result of ignorance. It is only because one does not know the truth that one has an experience. When you know, then the experience is nullified. Experience is possible only where there is duality.

What is the significance of wearing geru clothes and shaving the head?

To keep in touch with their spiritual life, it is important for every individual to wear geru. When you go to the court as an advocate, you wear a black gown. When you go to the hospital as a doctor, you wear a white gown. When you go to

meet your big boss, you wear shirt and a tie, coat and pants. Similarly, when you go to meet God, you should wear geru. Ordinary clothes are all right in the world, but in the ashram you must wear geru.

While living in the ashram it is also a good thing to shave your head. What is the harm in that? The hair will certainly grow back in six months. In the vedic, Jewish and Christian religions, shaving of the head is considered very important. An infant's head is always shaved; the head is also shaved during the *upanayana samskara*, the sacred thread ceremony, and definitely during sannyasa initiation. Jews shave their heads ritually as well as commonly.

In ancient times, the Indian civilization had attained great heights. In those times, women wore the sacred thread, offered twilight prayers and shaved their heads. The same rituals, *samskaras*, applied to both boys and girls. The sixteen rites of passage, including naming, chudakaran, upanayana, marriage, vanaprastha, sannyasa, funeral rites, were the same for boys and girls. Then came the Greeks, followed by the Muslims, and more and more restrictions were placed on girls. Offering of the evening prayers was stopped and many things followed. Now, girls do not undergo the sixteen ritual samskaras. The upanayana certainly does not take place, and many people do not even perform *shraaddha*, a funeral rite performed in honour of departed souls.

In ancient times, instead of saying 'son' or 'daughter', the word *santati*, meaning 'offspring', was used. At that time, women were accorded a lot of importance, because without a woman, birth cannot take place. If girls are well-looked after, good offspring will be born. If there is no mother, then there will be no birth and the population will decrease.

In ancient times, a woman was awarded seniority in society and children were known by their mother's name. Devaki's son was known as Devakinandan, Kaushalya's son was known as Kaushalyanandan, Vinita's son was called Vainateya. The offspring were denoted by their mother's *gotra*, sub-caste. If she was a Verma, then the son born to her would be a

Verma too. If the father was a Pathak, the son would not be a Pathak. After a few centuries, the Iranians came here, the Huns came, the Kambojas, the Mlechhas and many other races; they all brought their own beliefs and slowly the social custom changed.

Whether it is a man or woman, the ritual of shaving the head applies to both. If women do not want to shave their heads it is not because they object to the ritual, but because hair is considered to be an essential part of beauty. While describing a woman's beauty, poets dwell at length on her hair. However, this is only poetic fancy. In fact, periodic shaving of the head is good for the brain.

This discussion started with saying that geru clothes should be worn. While geru and chemical colour may look the same, geru is actually a stone that is mined. It contains a mineral called red oxide. It is the geru stone that is important, and not the colour. The geru colour can be concocted anywhere. Earlier I did not know much about its significance, until some South American sannyasins asked for geru for dying their clothes. I had a large packet sent to them by air, about a five-kilo packet. It was seized at the American customs, as they check everything to see if any nuclear material is being smuggled in. It became a problem for me, and it was then that I found out that geru powder is slightly radioactive! This meant that we were smuggling in nuclear items. Now how were we to explain? A piece of paper cannot explain the significance. Anyway, the matter cooled down, as all Indians know that geru is a sacred thing.

What is the special feature of radioactivity? Any level of radioactivity is lethal to life in some form or another. Places that are highly radioactive will not support any life. No elephant, donkey or horse can survive there. Where the radioactivity is slight, only small life forms will die. The slight radioactivity emanating from geru kills all bacteria, germs and insects. It is the same with the water of the Ganga. It is also slightly radioactive, and this has been proved. Microscopic life is killed in the Ganges water, which is why it is considered pure.

I have had another experience with geru in my childhood. Once I had broken out in urticaria, like hives, where there was a lot of itching and the skin covered in small boils. My whole body was balmed in geru, allowed to dry, and then I recovered.

What I am saying is that geru, shaving the head, and living away from one's kith and kin, meaning sannyasa, all these things have a significance of their own. Is it all right to be involved only with one's wife and children, paternal and maternal uncles, their fights and tensions until one dies? This is why there is a rule in Thailand that every Buddhist must spend at least fifteen days of the year at a monastery. One is not related to anyone there. Whether a king or a queen, whether rich or poor, they enter the monastery, shave their heads and wear the ochre robes. They are given a room with a mat on the floor and a bowl for alms. One has to sleep on the floor. Every morning they set out to collect alms food from five houses. Fifteen- or sixteen-year-old girls come out of the house with a kind of a crown on their heads and give alms to the bhikshu. After fifteen days of this, one returns home. The experience of living like a sannyasin changes one's life. All over the world, people go to the seaside or the mountains for a holiday, but in our culture going on a pilgrimage or to an ashram is considered a spiritual discipline.

I have read that when a man dies he sees a very bright light. Is this true?

This must have been a book written by a Christian. This is what is said in the Bible: the light at the end. Whatever a man sees in the state of void will be in accordance with his religion. In fact, there is nothing like this. This is merely an experience. When a man begins to die, gradually all his switches shut down: from the brain to the eyes, to the nose, to the ears, the heart, the lungs, the liver, and all the other connections between the parts of the body. They are all switched off one by one. When all the switches are off, then the brain has this kind of an experience.

In meditation, when all the sensory doors are shut and the brain is alone, there is a similar experience. Right now your brain is not alone, it is working through the eyes, ears, nose, and so on. When the brain is isolated and alone, then it has such an experience, as does everyone at the time of death. Death is not such a sad event as people fear. Death is as pleasant as sleep. When a tired man sleeps, does he not enjoy it? People are needlessly afraid of dying. They think that everything will be left behind.

Everyone has their own belief about death, but the truth is that if a stalk of wheat does not wither, then how will a new one emerge? If the stalk of wheat remains green, then the grain will not form. The stalk of wheat grows, and then it dries. When it dries the grain becomes seed, and what does the seed contain? DNA, which cannot be seen with the naked eye. We can call it the soul of the wheat. When the wheat stalk is dead, the seed becomes dormant. The soul sleeps. When it re-enters the earth, it sprouts as a stalk of wheat again.

The same happens with man. Vegetables, grain, coriander, dog, cat, everyone goes the same way. That is why according to the laws of nature, birth is uncertain, but death is certain. Birth is not inevitable, but death is. The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* says that from the time a soul takes birth, death follows it. Death says, "I am hungry", and follows the life form like a ghost.

All of you accept the principle of reincarnation, but you do not really believe in it. If you trusted in reincarnation, then you would not fear death. If you really believe that a new house is being built for you, would you have such a problem leaving your old one? The problem arises if you are told that a new house is being constructed for you, but you don't believe it. Then you think, 'If I am to lose this house, where will I live?'

I am willing to leave today, because this is a 1923 model. Until I sell this old model I cannot get a new one. People still have an old car lying around, but they do not wish to sell it. They are still living in an old apartment, still wearing old shoes; nobody wants new ones.

Sage Vasishtha was the rajaguru of Rama's ancestors and he was also rajaguru to Sri Rama. How is it possible that one man could stay alive for such a long time?

There has been a certain tradition about great men in our culture. For example, even today the Jagadguru is known as Shankaracharya. Is the Shankaracharya of today and the one of eleven thousand years ago the same person? No. Similarly, in ancient times there was a rishi called Vasishtha. It was the name of a person, but thereafter all the individuals who occupied his position in the same tradition were known as Vasishtha. Before they took the position, their names were different.

The one who existed some eleven or twelve hundred years ago was called Adi Shankara. His disciple was Shankaracharya. In the tradition of the gurus, two names are mentioned; the *Vedic Shanti Path* says: *Shankaram Shankaracharyam*. Shankara and Shankaracharya were two different men. It is Shankara the story of the crocodile is about. In this story, a crocodile caught the leg of Shankara, which led him to take sannyasa, and he was enlightened at the age of thirty-two. His disciple was Shankaracharya, and he was followed by another Shankara, Abhinava Shankara. After that, the lineage of the Shankaracharya was established. Nobody knows the name of the person who heads the lineage, he is known only as Shankaracharya. Now, the question arises, who wrote all the Bhashyas? Was it Adi Shankara, Shankaracharya or Abhinava Shankara? This is a matter for history.

Similarly, there were many individuals by the names of Rishi Vasishtha, Vishwamitra, Vyasa, and so on. The Vyasa you talk about was the son of Satyavati and Parashar. Was he the same Vyasa who wrote great books like the eighteen Puranas? No. Vyasa is the traditional name of a lineage, so is Vasishtha. Vasishtha is referred to during the reign of Raja Trishanku. He is also mentioned during the reign of Raja Mandhata. The name is the same, so is the position in the lineage, but the person was not the same.

In the *Ramayana*, there is a reference to Vasishtha telling Sri Rama, "Though I do not like to perform as a purohit (priest), Brahma told me that Vishnu would be born to the solar dynasty, and I would have the good fortune to serve him." That is the reason Vasishtha agreed to be a priest to the Ikshavaku line.

This is just a story in which the author wants to say that a priest's job is not a good one. A purohit's job has always been considered lowly because many are charlatans; they earn money by visiting people's houses, talking to them and offering advice. That is why Vasishtha did not want to be an officiating priest, and he said clearly why.

Earlier in our society, brahmins were highly respected because they deserved it. They practised austerities, believed in self-sacrifice, slept on the floor and lived on alms. Their status was very high. 'Brahmin' is not a caste; social politics has made it into one. Caste is not a spiritual matter; politically-minded people have stamped it as such. Brahmins used to be the knowers and scholars of the Vedas. The one knowing Brahman was a brahmin and the word 'Brahman' has always been used for the Vedas.

Nowadays the word 'brahman' is used for Parabrahman, Paramatma or God, but since ancient times the word 'brahman' has been used to mean the Vedas. The knower of the Vedas was a *brahmin*, the provider of shelter or protection was a *kshatriya*, the holder of wealth was a *vaishya*, and the responsibility of all manual labour fell upon the *shudra*. These things have to be explained from time to time, otherwise erroneous beliefs prevail. One is caste, one is character, one is qualities and one is the action performed. All these are different.

It is not as if there is no truth in the principle of caste, but a man's social standing should not be based upon caste. From a social perspective, every individual is equal. Everybody's civil rights should be the same whether one belongs to a high caste or a low caste. In India, we have made a mistake with the concept of 'untouchables' and we are still paying the price for it. Caste by itself is not wrong, but it does not

mean that one caste cannot have anything to do with another caste. You have to live in society. You are not even talking to someone of another caste. Why will your daughter not visit their home? Why can't you all eat together? This sentiment of untouchability and of high and low castes is all wrong.

I am not opposing the caste system, because doing so would mean opposing the science behind it. Caste is a scientific truth. The word *jati* derives from the Sanskrit word *jnati*, which means identity, and jati is related to genetic organization, the DNA. Nowadays in the US, DNA tests are used in place of fingerprints to catch law offenders. Your identity is hidden in every drop of your blood and saliva. That is DNA and it does not die. It is a strange thing that the DNA of a long-extinct dinosaur can be extracted from its remains. This science is growing so fast that it is a little frightening. Cloning has produced a sheep, but what if someone uses the genetic blueprint of Hitler to produce a new Hitler? If it is Einstein or Newton or some saint, then it is all right.

The basis of caste is DNA or genes, and the divisions created in society based on caste are wrong. The thoughts, 'I am a kshatriya, you are a shudra, our children cannot marry', 'This person cannot eat at that person's house', 'If I touch this person then something bad will happen', are all wrong. This is totally and completely a social and political conspiracy based on man's feelings of hatred and superiority. It does not have any scientific basis or definition.

A girl from one caste can certainly marry a boy of another caste, provided they are genetically compatible. The more differences in their castes the better, because marrying into the same caste, the same *gotra*, genetic family, the same class, the same community, causes genetic disease. All the complex diseases like cancer that are prevalent today are not caused by virus or bacteria, they are genetic diseases. It is because of the mismatch of castes. Maybe your daughter and my son are culturally different, it is not important. Maybe you are a millionaire and I am a poor man, this is also unimportant. The main aim of marital union is the offspring. The rest of it – love,

keeping a house together, the kitchen – all these are secondary. Any servant can cook, make the beds, clean the house; however, legal offspring can be born only through a marriage.

If there is any flaw or fault in the bond of a couple, then the offspring will be flawed, and these flaws will show up as genetic diseases. If you keep this in mind, the children will be fine. The diseases that you see today in society, someone is ill in every house, means that something is going very wrong. Some mistake is being committed somewhere along the line. These maladies are such that medicines cannot cure them, sorcery cannot cure them, Ayurveda and Unani systems cannot cure them, nor can homeopathy. Following a sattwic diet has no effect, nor does fasting. They simply cannot be cured because they are manufacturing defects.

Is there nothing to be gained by a birth horoscope?

No, it is useless because it is mostly wrong. The pandit is called only after the child is born. It is not necessary that a marriage made by matching horoscopes will be successful. You all have more experience of this than I do. The best thing is: educate the boy and the girl. Earlier, a girl had just one project ahead of her, marriage and children. Now she has other alternatives: she can study, she can work and earn, and if she wants she may not marry at all. In our society, unless these options are kept open, talents will continue to be destroyed.

My nature was very fierce. After sannyasa, this aggressiveness was channelled. The same intensity was applied in another direction. What I am trying to say is that everyone may not be enthusiastic about taking sannyasa, nor can everybody become a doctor or a leader of men, but there are so many talents that are frustrated when someone is forced into marriage by social pressure. Every individual is gifted in some way, and that is why the individual should have freedom of choice. Nowadays, offspring should be educated and told just one thing, "Child, educating you was my job, but now you have to make your future." It is better that the parents do not decide the child's future.

This is my personal opinion. I know that a child's blood is its mother's, the seed its father's, and the soul has come from elsewhere. It does not belong to the parents. This soul brings its own karmas with it. Whatever it has earned in its last birth, it brings along. After all, what was Gandhi? Why were there no other people like him? There must have been so many princes like Sri Rama, yet they did not amount to much in their lives. Tulsidas lost his mother the day after he was born, the father had died earlier, his nurse died after a year or two and some sadhu looked after him. However, look at the *Ramacharitamanas* that he wrote, incredible! During all these years in sannyasa, I have read and studied all the classical texts and shastras in great depth, but after reading the *Ramacharitamanas* everything else just disappeared. Now I do not like Veda-Vedanta. How did he write the *Ramacharitamanas*? He caught a small story where Rama and Sita are married, then exiled, Sita is abducted by Ravana, and then Ravana is killed:

Aadau Raamatapovanaadi gamanam hatva mrigam kaanchanam;
Vaidehi-haranam jataayu-maranam Sugriva-sambhaashanam;
Baali-nirdalanam samudrataranam lankaapuri-daahanam;
Pashchaat raavanakumbhakaranahananam chaitaddhi Raamaayanam.

Through such a small story he conveyed Vedanta and Indian philosophy, customs and thought. This is talent, a gift. Surdas was gifted, too. The way he has described Sri Krishna one can immediately picture him. This is talent. Thomas Edison discovered electricity. Without electricity there would be no modern civilization. There would be no fans, bulbs, railways and airplanes; there would be nothing.

Why should you kill talent like this in a forced marriage? It is also true that many people need marriage. Psychology says that if these people do not marry, they would go mad. There are many hormones in a human body that are more poisonous than a snake. There is a lot of poison inside us, mental poison, emotional poison and physical poison, which is released through sexual fluids. Marriage is a custom,

we cannot deny that. Marriage is a healthy and excellent custom that has been prescribed. It is a very good regulatory mechanism.

The Jews

The Jewish race still lives in Israel. It says in their books that God promised their ancestors a country where the rivers would flow with milk and honey. Does Israel have all this? No. Originally, the Jews were inhabitants of Kashmir. Some thousands of years ago there existed a body of water called the Sea of Neelanchal in Kashmir, from where we get the *Neelanchal Purana*. When that sea shifted, there must have been so many typhoons and earthquakes that all the people had to move away.

The Jewish way of worship and their tradition of gurukul and ashram are exactly like ours. Their belief in chastity in family life is exactly like ours. They dress differently; they wear a hat to the ashram. They go to the ashram, live there, work in the gardens, and so forth, and spend two or three months there. Their ashram is called a kibbutz. Their way of worship is very elaborate. All the Jews, whether they live in England, France or the US, are afraid of the modern western culture. Just as the Gujaratis of Nairobi send their daughters to Gujarat to be educated, the Jews send their daughters to the kibbutz in Israel to study. Our traditions and those of the Jews are almost the same. We have never had a conflict with them after so many years. The Jews have been living here, in Cochin in South India, for thousands of years. There has never been a falling out.

The Jewish race has a certain characteristic. Most discoveries in biology, chemistry, physics, etc., have been made by Jews. Newton was a Jew, so was Einstein. There have also been many Jewish scientists in Germany who made many discoveries. The science of nuclear reaction is essentially their invention.

Today, science only works for the benefit of people. There is much DNA research being done on cancer. They have even

isolated a gene in the process. Cancer is a disease that goes undetected in the beginning, and when discovered, it moves into the last stage very fast. Then all the doctors are helpless. Doctors want cancer to be detected in the primary stages so that it can be treated. That is why they have begun research to recognize the cancer-causing gene. They have recognized one gene, but that is in a guinea pig. Whether or not it will work in a human being is unknown. They are trying to reach the origins of cancer through genetics.

Now they want to use genetics to have the desired kind of offspring. It is only at the fundamental level now, but the cloning of a sheep in Scotland has taken research in this direction. It has frightened the public at large in Europe, and the European Union is discussing this. They want to declare this kind of research to be illegal, otherwise it might become a problem. Everyone is afraid that if someone clones Hitler, then people will suffer. Scientists say that they have a thorough knowledge of this science and that they will use it only for good. The government may regulate this science by legislating laws, but they cannot declare it illegal or prohibit it. The ordinary man has now become strong enough to fight a government.

Actually, this has also happened in ancient times. This is how the five Pandavas were born. One was born from a part of Indra, the god of rain, one from a part of the wind god and one from the sun god. We have two words in our culture, *veerya putra* and *manas putra*, the biological son and the son created from the mind or mental powers. Vasishtha was Brahma's manas putra just as Swami Niranjan is my manas putra. The word 'surrogate' is also used for a manas putra, just as in the case of Balarama. Nowadays, a child is created in a testtube and then implanted into the uterus, isn't it? There is nothing wrong in that.

Karma and karma yoga

Actions which are performed for the benefit of others are known as *karma yoga*. Action performed for oneself is *karma*.

When you do something for someone else, they will reap the fruit, not you. You are not even concerned with whether or not the fruit is reaped. However, when you perform an action for yourself, you desire its fruit. There is happiness upon getting the fruit, unhappiness at not getting it. It is better to work for the sake of another through karma yoga.

Who can be classified as 'the other'?

'The other' is someone who has no connection with you; who is unrelated to you. There are two things in this world: selfishness and altruism. Selfishness is whatever is done for one's own sake; altruism is that which is done for another. Working for the person who is the other: someone unknown to you, helpless or orphaned is called altruism, selflessness. However, working for your children, parents and relatives as your duty, even if you have no expectation from them, is selfish, as they are still your own and you count them as 'mine'. Even if you were detached in the performance of your duty towards them, it cannot be karma yoga, although it can be called detachment.

Even if we work for others, the desire for success does enter.

No, if you work for others and any expectation of success enters the mind, then the karma yoga is flawed. Seva done for others should be performed keeping in mind their welfare, benefit accruing to them. When my child falls sick, I have him treated because I can feel his pain, but when your child is sick I do not feel his pain, only compassion. Now this is where *atmabhava*, the feeling of oneness, is lacking. Atmabhava means 'like oneself'. I did not look after your son because I felt him to be my own; rather, I thought, 'Okay, this is a poor man, let me help him.'

Actions are performed with various sentiments or attitudes and they are graded differently. The highest grade of seva is 'do good and forget about it'. This is the best, but also the most difficult. No one can do it because whenever you do someone a good turn, you also think a little about how it will benefit you along the line somewhere.

I left my home and I never looked back. I left my guru's ashram and did not look back. I left Munger, and again the question of returning does not arise. I do not ever return; I do not know how. The past is like a corpse to me. I was the president of that ashram, yet it is not my nature to say, "I made this ashram and now it will run only according to me."

I look ahead. I have even bought a ticket here to go up, but the reservation has not been made. They say there is no availability yet. The request has been made for a return ticket. I will return, but I will not enter the womb of just any mother, I will carefully see everything and then come. I will enter the womb of a mother who says to me as soon as I am born: *Shuddhosi*, *buddhosi*, *niranjanosi*, *samsara maya parivarjitosi* – "Be pure, enlightened, immaculate, be free of the delusions of the world." I will go to the womb of a mother who, instead of kissing and cuddling me, says, "Son, as soon as you are old enough, leave home and go away."

I will have to enlist the support of a mother. I will not go to the womb of a woman who moulds herself according to the dictates of social opinion. Those who pass opinions, for how long will they do so? They will die after some years. Gossip-mongers will die, so will scandalbearers, critics will die, those who applaud will die, too, the ones who help will die, as will those who trouble you. The world is like flowing water, everything passes. I will be born to a mother who thinks like that.

Dattatreya was like that, his mother was Anasuya Devi and his father was Maharishi Atri. Anasuya gave him birth and immediately put a sannyasin's loincloth on him. She said to him: *shuddhosi*, you are pure, *buddhosi*, you are enlightened, *niranjanosi*, you are immaculate, *samsara maya parivarjitosi*, you are free of the delusion of the world. As soon as Dattatreya was able to walk, he left home. That is why the kirtan: *Brahma Vishnu Mahesh rupa Digambara Digambara Sripadavallabha Digambara*, is sung for him. He was dressed in a loincloth at birth, and later he gave up even that. To anyone who sought refuge in him, whether a man or woman, rich or poor, thief

or prostitute, he would have their heads shaved and say to them, "Say, 'Aham Brahmasmi', I am Brahman, pure and enlightened, free of maya, free of ignorance, free of death, free of birth, and go." You know of the Juna Akhara? It was founded by Dattatreya.

One more example like this is Shukadeva. At first he was unwilling to leave the womb, and said, "No, no, I do not want to go out into this world." Once he did emerge, he left home at once. His father, Vyasa, ran after him saying, "Son, where are you going? Stop, son, stop!" The son was running ahead and his father was chasing him. On the way, some women were bathing in a pond. Shukadeva ran straight past them, but when they saw the father approaching, they began to hastily dress themselves. Vyasa asked them, "When that boy was going past, you all kept on bathing, but when I came you dressed yourselves?" They replied, "You have body consciousness, you are physically aware. You recognize gender whereas he does not know it." This is how Brahmarishi Shukadeva was. He is the one who told Raja Parikshit the story of the *Bhagavat Purana*.

Many such rishis and munis were born here, imbued with the highest knowledge and the highest quality of renunciation. Millions and billions of people have been born in this world who have married, had children, been householders, farmers, shopkeepers, fought wars, died, but does this mean that we should do the same? I say to people that the population of India today is almost one billion, and if all the sadhus and sannyasins were to marry then the population would go to one billion this very year. We would not have to wait for 1999. What's more, if a number of people equal to the count of sannyasins existing at present took sannyasa, the population would decrease substantially! We are, in fact, practising population control here.

There is always a lot of conflict in my mind. Sometimes I feel like giving up everything, shaving my head and becoming a sannyasin, then the thought of household

responsibility enters the mind, too. This disturbs my mind a lot. In such circumstances, what should I do?

There is no fault in desiring to live as a beautiful woman or man in *grihastha ashrama*, as a householder, or in wishing to wear good clothes or jewellery and to enjoy good things. On the contrary, it is a fault to suppress such desires. Do not suppress them forcibly. As for shaving the head and taking sannyasa, you should do that too. You should go to Badrinath, Rishikesh, Kashi or any such place, live in solitude like a sannyasin once every six months or once a year or once every two years. You can live like a sannyasin while being a householder and live like a householder while being a sannyasin. I did all kinds of things while being a sannyasin: built houses, did bank transactions, travelled the world, did everything.

These are two lives, try to connect the two. It is important to be free of the frustration within you. Yes, if you do not have money and you wish for many things, then it is necessary to curb those desires for the time being, but if you have the means, there is no harm in wearing good clothes and jewellery and enjoying the many conveniences of comfort. However, alongside that, also think about the remedy of living a sannyasa life. The Buddhist householders in Thailand, be they kings or beggars, will certainly visit a guru's ashram at least once in their lifetimes. There they wear ochre clothes, sleep on a sheet on the floor, eat once a day, meditate, study and pray while maintaining celibacy.

This is essential, not merely to attain God, but to improve the quality of one's mind and body, to remove the weaknesses in one's behaviour and habits. The biggest thing is self-introspection. Introspection should precede self-improvement, and introspection is possible when you change your lifestyle completely. This is often not possible because many householders are delicate from the comfortable lifestyle they are used to. They catch a cold if it is a little chilly and suffer from the heat when it is a little hot. Therefore, one should make some rules for oneself, keeping in mind the limitations of one's mind and body and working according to those limitations. I believe in this solution.

I say to everyone that sannyasa is not a religion; it is not a static concept. It is the sugar in the halva. Halva tastes good only with sugar in it. Similarly, enjoyment is deepened when it is joined with renunciation. When you reach the shade after a hot walk, does it not feel good? Does it not feel really good when you are tired and you lie down to sleep? Similarly, when a man acquires a little renunciation while living amidst sensory enjoyment, he feels very good. It is as if a big burden has been lifted from the mind. Enjoying and renouncing, try to join the two. Physical relations are natural for a householder just as it is natural to go to the toilet, be hungry, be sleepy, worry and be anxious. There should be no frustration or repression in the mind.

What if circumstances are such that a husband has to be away from his wife for three or four years, then what should he do?

Self-discipline will have to be exercised. Fast at such a time. Observe the Ekadashi fast, where only milk and fruit are consumed. Wake up at four in the morning, practise asana, pranayama and the japa of Rama's name. Practise mantra japa on Ekadashi. For a few days this diverts the path of the energy of sexual desire. To forcibly block the path of this energy is the road to madness. I am talking plainly here. It is true that people at large do not wish to talk about this, they wish it to be kept a secret, but it is not a secret. Artha, kama, dharma and moksha are the four great efforts in life enjoined upon man. *Kama*, sexual desire, is one of these. Christians consider it a sin, they believe that other than Jesus, everyone else was born of sin, but this is illogical, unreasonable.

Creation is born of the union of *prakriti*, nature, and *purusha*, the conscious principle. How is microscopic life born? Water mixes with the earth, there is humidity, and a life form is born. It is the union of nature and purusha. This is the law of creation. The physical relation between a man and a woman is in itself spirituality. This is not only my opinion, but that of the shastras too.

The shastras tell of three purposes in relation to sexual intercourse. The first is enjoyment, it feels good. The second is procreation, children are born. The third, kundalini is awakened. A man can give up food, but it is difficult to give up sexual intercourse. He is able to give up his home, but he cannot give up his wife. This is because of the fact that of all the joys in this world, the joy of sexual intercourse is the greatest. This can drive a man mad and also cure him. It can cause the downfall of a man and also elevate him. This is the basis of tantra. The institution of marriage is a tantric institution. The relations between a woman and a man are not merely for procreation, nor merely for enjoyment, but also for the purpose of yoga.

Therefore, look at the relationship between you and your husband in a new light. Not from the perspective that has been drummed into your head from childhood, or that which appears spontaneously. For this, you should practise asana and pranayama, mudra, bandha and meditation. There should be mental equilibrium. Now that you have stepped on to the yogic path, it does not mean a separation of the sexes. This is a wrong viewpoint. *Brahmacharya*, celibacy, means something else.

A man and a woman living separately is not brahmacharya. *Brahmani charati iti brahmacharya* – "When the human mind is pleasurably engrossed in God, then it is practising real brahmacharya." So, in the context of grihastha ashram, drop words such as brahmacharya. The only interpretation of what I am saying is that those women and men living in grihastha ashrama, as householders, should not view their conjugal relations as sin or with revulsion. Rather, they should see it from a spiritual point of view. Do not look at sexual relations as something to be controlled, instead look to improving its quality by practising yoga. Yoga, bhakti, satsang and *sanyam*, self-discipline, all help to improve the quality of this connection. If you misunderstand it then there will be a feeling of guilt: this is wrong, that is wrong. Everyone will go mad.

Satsang 6

16 October 1997

Although it is said in our culture that the relationship of a husband and wife continues over lifetimes, as they grow older, neither the husband nor the wife remain very interested in each other. After a certain age, a woman is more interested in her children and a man in his friends. They do not have much to do with one another and small things lead to skirmishes and fights. I have not seen this side of life myself, but this is what I feel by observing your lives.

Older women are preoccupied with grandchildren, daughters and daughters-in-law; they feel secure in that area, whereas men are not interested in children. If a man lives among his children, he will have to spend a lot of money. Is it true or false? That is why he likes to stay with his friends. Men may go to the club in the evening, to a satsang, go out for a stroll, play chess or cards, or go to the library. This is the rule for keeping cheerful. For the wife to say that her husband doesn't even talk to her, or for the husband to say that the wife doesn't talk to him, is not the right way to go about things. Then there is constant bickering and faultfinding, which means that you are not following the rules.

After a certain age, a man and woman should live apart. From the social perspective also, they should live apart. Only then will the feeling of friendship and camaraderie be maintained in their relationship. You people do not do this. The husband becomes a shadow of his wife and the wife becomes a shadow of her husband. That is why they bicker over small things. With age, one should change the environment. Health is connected to the state of the mind.

A perfectly fine man can fall ill. While you are all certainly in *grihastha ashrama*, the state of a householder, your parents did not tell you all the rules of grihastha ashrama. Our ancestors said that vanaprastha ashrama begins after the age of fifty years and sannyasa ashrama after the age of seventy-five. *Vanaprastha ashrama* does not necessarily mean going to the forest; it is also about one's attitude. After the age of fifty a husband and wife can carry on with their household, but with a changed attitude. The wife may remain engrossed in her grandchildren and the husband with his friends, chess, golf, satsang, or social work.

No matter how much social service you do, it does not disturb your mind. If you build a house for yourself and a house for me, both situations will influence you differently. Work done for someone else never affects one. If a bank is robbed, how does it really matter to the employee of the bank? Yet, if a wallet goes missing in the same employee's home, he feels awful. This is the only difference between 'mine' and 'theirs'. Many people opt for social work, social service. There is much social work being done everywhere nowadays. There are many places: orphanages, schools for the blind, schools for the deaf. Go and become a member of one of these. Do some account-keeping for them or do some odd jobs. This work will not disturb your mind in any way, whereas if you were to do the same for the household you would fall sick. What this means is that when an action is performed for another, it does not cause any karma for oneself, but even the little done for oneself becomes karma. With advancing age, one should adopt such a vanaprastha lifestyle.

I do not understand where and how to do karma yoga.

What is so difficult about it? Go to any ashram and offer your service. The women can look after the kitchen and the running of the ashram like Swami Satsangi does. She looks after all the correspondence, accounts, spending and the labourers. If she had married and had a household, she

would have done the same thing. The capability of a woman can be put to use anywhere. It is not as if you have to become a manager somewhere, just look after the kitchen of some institution. Looking after your kitchen at home and looking after the kitchen here, both affect your mind and physical health in different ways.

The blood flows in and out of the heart through arteries and veins. These grow weaker with age and make the blood-flow sluggish. In simple terms, this is heart disease. This is the reason for bypass surgery, where they put in another tube. However, the best safeguard for heart disease is simple food. Oils, fats, salt and condiments thicken the blood so it flows sluggishly. That is why a person should fast on Ekadashi or eat only fruit and milk, and eat salt-free food on Sundays. That is worship to the sun as well as looking after your health. Walk in the morning for ten or fifteen minutes. All Punjabis go for strolls. It is a very good habit. They call it 'morning walk'. Eat a light meal in the evening. Eat boiled potatoes, boiled vegetables, drink milk. The husband and wife should live separately after fifty. Not separate as in they should undergo a physical separation, but they should live according to the rules of vanaprastha ashrama. Otherwise, you will fight over small issues and sometimes these skirmishes escalate to the point of causing a heart attack. This is why the shastras have written about the four ashramas: brahmacharya for twenty-five years, grihastha for twenty-five years, twenty-five years for vanaprastha and then sannyasa.

It is said that everything is done by God, it is all His will. Then what is the importance of a man's efforts? I am a doctor, I may be trying to save someone, but are my efforts meaningless, is it all really the will of God? This conflict rages on in my mind.

In this infinite cosmos there is an energy which is all-pervasive. It is in you, in me, in a woman, in a man, in a good person, in a bad person, in everyone. You may call it God or you

may call it consciousness. It does not have any name of its own, but through its own will, it has given birth to this entire creation. These are the words of the Vedas: *Ekoham bahusyamah* – "I am one, let me become many." It gave birth to creation from within itself because it is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. Nature or *Prakriti* was born from this desire, and then Nature gave birth to this entire creation. Space was born. Wind, fire, water and earth elements were born. Animals were born. Based on the three supports of sattwaguna, rajoguna and tamoguna, Prakriti gave birth to everything. This creation is made up of the five elements and the three qualities or *gunas*.

Having made a house of the five elements, the *pancha tattwa*, all the players began to play. We are all players. In these circumstances, whether you are a doctor or an engineer, you still have two elements within you, Purusha and Prakriti. They are within everyone; there is no creation without duality. Purusha means *atma*, or consciousness. It is the non-doer. It does nothing, it simply is. All the work is done by Prakriti, and this Prakriti controls both, *purushartha* and *prarabdha*, the efforts made and the results accrued. Purushartha means your efforts and prarabdha means the results of the efforts that have gone before.

Last year you had sown wheat, the harvest that you are reaping today is the prarabdha. The harvest is the prarabdha and the seed you are going to plant today is the purushartha, the effort. Purushartha and prarabdha are mutually connected in many reciprocal ways, and that is why every creature is free to make his own efforts even while accepting God's will as supreme. Otherwise you will say, "You made me an idiot, that's why I am an idiot", "You made me sin, so I sinned", "You made me a priest, so that's what I became", "You made me an engineer, I became one", "You made me a woman, I became one." You are passing the responsibility of all your misdeeds on to God. No, this is wrong.

In the life of a man who thinks like that, all conflicts are over. Prakriti is ever full of conflict and strife, whereas there

is no conflict or struggle in the soul or atma. To have no taste for any karma is another state altogether, attained by only a few. That is not going to be attained by you, so do not even think about it. It happens only rarely to just one or two. If someone manages to escape, then they are free, but the rest of the creatures in the world are slaves of Prakriti.

Nobody is free of Prakriti. The day you are free of Prakriti, the day you are outside the regulations, bonds and laws of Prakriti, that day you can certainly say, "I am not the doer, not the enjoyer, whatever I am doing is being done by Him." Right now, you cannot say that. Now you have an ego. If you do something well, then you know that you are doing well. If you are at fault, then you are aware that you have made a mistake. You are depressed. If someone curses you, you feel angry and bad. If someone speaks to you with gratitude, you like it. As long as you have this ego, you are within the bounds of Prakriti.

It is all right to say that whatever is happening is the will of God, but this principle should be given a practical form. It is all right for a man who has transcended the laws of nature, but if he has not then he must obey those laws. This topic has been much discussed in the scriptures and the religions. There has been a conflict on this subject between the scientists and the religious-minded people. Islam also says that everything is done by God. He is the one who gets you married and it is He who brings down calamities upon your house. It is all done by Him. The servant does nothing. This is the message of Islam and the message of Christianity.

In this matter I accept vedic dharma, the principles of which I told you at the beginning. On the scales of life, vedic dharma considers purushartha and prarabdha to be the two balances. It is not as if God's omnipresence is being challenged here. God, after all, is not a fool. He is the lord of the world, the director, the coordinator. When He wants to run the world, He would certainly need to have an executive director, an assistant, would He not? In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sri Krishna says to Arjuna (7:4–5):

Bhoomiraapo'nalo vaayuh kham mano buddhireva cha;
Ahamkaara iteeyam me bhinnaa prakritirashtadhaa.

O' Arjuna, earth, water, fire, wind, space, mind, intellect, ego, these are my eight unparalleled powers.

Apareyamitastwanyaam prakritim viddhi me paraam;
Jeevabhootaam mahaabaaho yayedam dhaaryate jagat.

This is the inferior Prakriti, O mighty-armed (Arjuna)! Know you as different from it My higher Prakriti (Nature), the very life-element by which this world is upheld.

To describe it allegorically, God has two wives. At Tirupati, God has Sridevi on one side and Bhudevi on the other. The transcendental energy, *Para Prakriti*, is Sridevi and the manifest energy, *Apara Prakriti*, is Bhudevi. Para Prakriti creates all of creation and Apara Prakriti runs it. This is a very great government.

However, the scientists of the West have challenged this belief. The church said, "God is the doer." The scientists said, "No, it is not He, but we who are the doers. If a woman is childless, no fears, we will produce a test-tube baby. If someone has a bad heart, no need to worry, the heart can be replaced with another healthy heart." Only yesterday, scientists sent the biggest satellite ever into space to examine the planet Saturn. It will reach there in some years. See how capable man is! Now, why would such an able person listen to the Church? While they listened to the Church, Europe was a beggar. Ever since the scientists have held sway, Europe has become rich and glorious.

Purushartha and prarabdha are both fine in their place. There is no conflict between the two. Neither one can be held to be greater than the other. Purushartha, effort, can set right the prarabdha that comes with you, while prarabdha is the result of purushartha. If the seed that you plant is good, then your wheat will be good, and if your wheat is

good then it follows that the seed is good. Do not see these as opposing each other; rather, see them as the seed and the tree. Purushartha and prarabdha are always connected to each other.

How can a fine line be drawn between violence and non-violence? At home, we kill mice and burn a coil to get rid of the mosquitoes. Is this violence or not?

There is a straight answer to that. It is not violence. There is no problem in killing creatures that are aggressively destructive. It does not matter whether they are animal, bird or human.

The most destructive creature in all of creation is the human being, isn't it? He uses all kinds of species in some way or another for his selfish ends.

No, it is not like that. There is a lot written about this in the *Mahabharata*. It is said there, *Jivaha jivasya bhojanam* – "One creature is the food for another." One creature is dependent upon another. In the scriptures, Puranas, and in other literature this has been discussed, debating whether the killing of a creature maybe considered *hatya*, murder. The first point is that one creature is the food for another creature. A hen is sentient life, so is a goat, a frog, a snake, a rat, a termite, these are all interdependent. The meaning of *atatayi* is very clear, 'one who terrorizes another for no good reason'. I may make use of you, I may make you work, but when I give you sorrow simply to cause you distress or to terrorize you, then I may be called 'atatayi'.

You cannot call a human being 'atatayi'. The strongest word you can use for a human being is 'colonizer' or 'imperialist'. Certainly, man has troubled the community of animals in this creation, but he cannot be called an atatayi. A snake eats a rat; it is his food. If all the snakes in the world died then there would a huge increase in the number of rats. Nature has allowed violence in the interests of maintaining balance. No thought of sin or virtue should be brought into this. *Himsa* and *ahimsa*, violence and non-violence, are the two

laws of creation designed to maintain balance. If you place more importance on one of the laws at the cost of the other, then the balance in nature will be disturbed. The Buddhist and Jain religions gave a lot of importance to non-violence.

Look at the condition of India today. The Mughals simply rode in with their cannons and India was defeated. Then Shivaji captured the Portuguese, took cannons from them and fought the Mughals. Tell me, did *ahimsa*, non-violence, help? Violence is being perpetrated everywhere in the world. There is violence in Africa, one tribe is killing another tribe. In Serbia and Bosnia the violence is between Muslims and Christians. Conflict is going on between Jews and Muslims in Israel. As for the question of killing mosquitoes, yes, it is okay to burn a coil. Do not think too much about this.

Then doesn't everyone have equal right to live upon earth?

This is idealism. There are two things in life: one is the ideal, the other is the practical. The ideal is that which feels good, that which ought to be done. It is ideal not to kill anything. If thieves enter your home, give them your wallet as well. If someone slaps you on your right cheek, show them your left cheek. If someone asks for your coat, also give him your pants. This is an ideal, but do you have the courage to live your life based upon this ideal? Someone steals your wallet and you say, "Take my jewellery box as well." Does anyone have the guts to do this? Then why talk about it?

How can you do what is not practical and common-sensical? The talk of human rights going on all over the world today is idealistic, not practical. Western thought and culture is ruling the world today. Ruling does not only refer to politics. In every sphere, only the western drum is beaten. In medicine, the methodology is theirs, the entire system of education is theirs, ways of cooking are theirs, and engineering is entirely theirs. Biology, anatomy, physiology, physics, chemistry, all kinds of science has emerged from the West. India had knowledge of the sciences, China had knowledge of medicine, but these nations met their end by

getting endlessly involved in small questions like whether a thief should be put to death or not, whether or not a mosquito should be killed. It was by involving people in questions like these that the great men emptied their minds of all common sense.

Look at the history of any race, the Vikings, the Mughals, Ghengis Khan, and you will see that the thirst for victory exists in everyone. My house should be better than yours. The race that gives up this thirst dies out and is destroyed. There was a time when the Hindu race was spread far and wide, in Afghanistan, Karakoram, Burma, Java, Thailand, Cambodia, Bali, Sumatra, and so on. Even today in Indonesia, many names are Sanskrit-based.

Due to conflicting opinions between violence and non-violence in the Buddhist and Jain religions, the problem caused by the untouchability practised by the brahmins, and the narrow-mindedness about male-female relations, this country became very weak. There are three castes on one side and one caste on the other. As for women, they are paralyzed in India. Women here are mostly unemployed. They only cook, wash and iron clothes. What is their contribution to society and country? What scientific breakthrough have they achieved? Has there been a Madame Curie amongst them?

All these things weakened India so much politically that it could not withstand the onslaughts from the North and the South. They could not battle the invaders. The underprivileged castes converted to Islam or Christianity. Whenever foreign forces entered, these castes were the first they targeted. It were these people who the Buddhists converted to Buddhism, that were made Jain, Muslim and Christian. Today's political scenario, too, is centred on these 'backward' castes.

Buddhism adopted the middle path, did it not?

Do you know the meaning of the 'middle path'? I will tell you the story of how and when the middle path came about. When Buddhism was spread far and wide, it reached Tibet

and it reached China, where the diet commonly consists of lizards, frogs and snakes. People then began to say, "Oh my God! Buddhists have begun to eat meat now." This was a problem, so Buddhism split into two, the Hinayana and Mahayana. Those on the path of Hinayana chose to remain pure Vaishnava-type vegetarians, while those on the path of Mahayana said, "Everything is acceptable." It was at this time that the middle path was created and so was a university named Vikramshila.

Initially, Buddhism did not accept women as renunciates, *bhikshunis*, but later on, they had to do so. Wherever men and women live in proximity, there is bound to be some accident, nobody can stop that. It is a law of nature, a dictate even. However, the biggest difficulty faced by Buddhism was that during the reign of Ashoka it was changed into a state religion. Kings and emperors had been influenced by Buddhism in Buddha's lifetime, as Buddha was a prince himself. However, when Ashoka converted to Buddhism, he declared it a state religion for all of India, just like Islam is the state religion of Pakistan today.

A religion meets its downfall when it joins hands with politics. It is destroyed. This, and nothing else, is the main reason for the decline of Buddhism; not the induction of women into the Buddhist *sangha*, nor the entry of tantra into Buddhism. The downfall of Buddhism began with it coming into coalition with the ruling power. Christianity is the other example of this. The Christian Church joined politics and came to its end. Where does Christianity stand in the world today? In Europe, the Church today exists merely as a social institution and a festival.

If there exists any active spiritual movement today it is Bhaktivedanta, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Acharya Rajneesh, Krishnamurti and those that belong to the sadhu-sannyasi traditions like us. Heads have been shaved and books on vedic dharma have reached every house. In the future, too, we will continue to work like this. Not in an institutionalized way, but independently, for an institution can be damaged.

This is the reason that religion and politics should be kept separate. Sadhus and mahatmas can give guidance, but they should not join politics. The day they do so, they will be hurt. It was the reason for the downfall of Buddhism and also the reason that Jainism stayed alive. Jains are merchants, they sell diamonds and pearls. There is no place for politics in their religion. That is why Jain merchants are always rich.

They say that politics devoid of dharma is like an intoxicated elephant without a rider, without an *ankusha*, a goad. Our country today is in a condition where politicians do just as they please. Is the immediate reason for this the fact that there is no longer any regulation or control over them? If sadhus and mahatmas offer guidance, would the situation not improve somewhat?

No, it would not. If sadhus and mahatmas were to sit in Parliament, they would be in the same condition. An honest man can never be in politics; he can never handle the reins of power. Leave Rama aside, as we cannot know all the difficulties he must have faced. There is as much corruption in the theocratic countries where religion rules, as it is here, whether it is the US, England, Saudi Arabia or Japan. Bribes have always been accepted and will always be given. Bribery also happens in the US. The only difference is in the way of giving the bribe.

Appointing sadhus and mahatmas would make no difference. If you want to end corruption, you will have to change its definition. Bribes were taken even in my time. Even when I was ten or twelve years old, a constable of the police force would take a bribe, an inspector would accept a bribe. Bhama Shah bribed Maharana Pratap. Today you do not call it a bribe because Rana Pratap was fighting for the nation. Therefore it was called 'aid', simply a change of word. Even so, the question arises, why did Bhama Shah give seventy-five thousand coins?

The definition of corruption must be changed, otherwise it will keep happening. No one can stop it. No matter how

much people scream about it, it will not stop. Even sending the guilty to prison will not change things. An officer earns eight thousand rupees, but wears a suit worth twelve thousand rupees, so where did he find the extra four thousand? Besides that, his shoes cost a thousand, his son rides around on a motorcycle and his wife dresses well. Where did all this money come from? You who are employers also do not pay your people so much. A driver earns six hundred rupees a month. How can a household be run on six hundred rupees? He drains petrol from the car and sells it, replaces a new sparkplug with an old one and sells the new one.

It is not a question of whether or not we tolerate corruption; the question is something else. Imagine that you have passed a law saying that no one can urinate by the side of the road or else they will be fined. Now, you have not built any toilets, yet you have passed a law prohibiting public urination. You set a rule not to throw garbage here and there, but then you do not organize garbage removal and disposal. You say to the collectors and rule enforcers, "Do not accept a bribe," but you pay so little! Pay a collector fifty thousand rupees a month and he will never accept a bribe. No man wants to take a bribe. No one wants to be dishonest. Flawed circumstances and wrong social pressures push a man. If you pay a driver five thousand rupees a month, will he steal petrol? Will he steal spark plugs? No, but on six hundred rupees he certainly will.

The way things are today, is there any hope for reform or improvement?

No, it will go on like this until you change the way things are organized. The very first thing to do would be to increase people's income. This is an agrarian country, it has never been industrialized. Agrarian does not mean only farming, but encompasses horticulture, orchards, forest and animal husbandry. Approximately sixty to seventy percent of the population of this country is completely dependent on agriculture. It is everything to them. The cow means

everything to them, the land means everything to them, and yet the government of the land, the politicians and the intellectuals of this country are not giving this sector any thought. They are not doing any work on it.

No farmer has the means or the wealth to acquire the items that could increase their income: no pumpset, no tube well, no tools for farming and no ability to properly care for cattle. Everyone talks about multinational companies, but nobody thinks about the farmers. There is no money coming to the farmers, so they are unable to spend, and shopkeepers are unable to sell their goods. Millions of people live in India, and out of those, at least seventy to seventy-five percent do not have a chair in their home. If they had the capacity to buy, if every household were to buy a torch, then the companies in India would be so busy that they would not be able to meet the demand and would have to import! This is such a big market. Yet no one is paying any attention to such a big potential consumer class. Until you think of them, there is no remedy for the problem.

India has an agrarian base, not a business base. The companies and the industrialists coming here from outside will gradually make India their trade colony, just like the East India Company did two hundred years ago. Another Gandhi will have to appear. I am telling this straight. The government of India and the people of India have to emphasize and pay attention to one thing only: bringing money into the villages.

There is no need for family planning here. Nothing is achieved by birth-control pills and forms of birth control. Go and see how the people of Kerala have achieved family planning. There is only one sutra for family planning: educate the women, nothing else! 'Us two and our two' meaning husband, wife, and two kids, is useless sloganeering; a waste of money.

The other important necessity for the villages is water and medical clinics. There is one fatal disease in the villages, tuberculosis. The rest of the diseases are well in check. Eczema, stomach aches, jaundice, all these can be looked after by a small

clinic. Even an ordinary doctor can do this work. That is what we do here. Whether an operation is needed for the gall bladder or the eyes, it is done in Deoghar or Bhagalpur. However, we look after the tuberculosis patients here. We have had a one hundred percent success rate. Since I have been here, at least three hundred tuberculosis patients have passed through and have been cured. We use ayurveda, homeopathy, unani, allopathy, and many other kinds of medicine. Medical treatment is not as big an issue in the village as it is in the city. The biggest problem here is water. There should be water for every person in the village. Until that is achieved, everything else is useless.

Degrees such as BA, MA, LLB, MBA, are fine for those who score above eighty percent marks. Only they should go in for higher studies, not the rest. If you cannot score over eighty percent in the school leaving exams then do not study further. Everyone is leaving the villages for the city. It is such a problem. Educated people should come to the villages. A man who has two to four acres of land and two or three lakhs of rupees in the bank should certainly not live in a city. We have two cows; together they give about forty litres of milk. If we were to sell forty litres in the market, it would be Rs. 400 per day. The expenditure on the cow, including a servant to care for it, is Rs. 100 a day. That leaves me with a profit of Rs. 300 daily, Rs. 8,000 or 9,000 a month, and how much in a year? This is with only two cows. We can keep four or five cows, and they in turn will have two or three calves of their own.

The point is the amount that can be earned by keeping a cow. We do not keep hens, goats, pigs, but we can keep cows. We can also keep a horse. Why not? We can have horseracing. I told the villagers, put your money into it and we will make a racecourse and train a horse! I know of horse breeds, I learnt it in childhood. You can earn more in a village as compared to the city and expenditure is less. Expenses here are one-third of that in a city and income is three or four times more.

The answer to your question is that in order to improve the situation in the country, ensure that India rules from

the villages. *Gram rajya*, or village rule, was Mahatma Gandhi's dream. Give the children a basic education, give women practical education like tying bandages, reading a thermometer, giving injections, applying a poultice, knowing where the heart is, what the liver does. What is the use of studying about Ashoka and Aurangzeb? Village women do not have to become sophisticated ladies. Yes, some of them may. Educate the intelligent girls to acquire BA, MA, MBBS or LLB degrees, and those who do not score very high marks, teach them things that will be useful in running a household. Boys should be taught things to do with the farm, water, bricks, sand, straw, building a house. Teach the things that are useful in daily life, economically useful, helpful in earning a living.

Does that mean there should be a change in our methods of education?

The current methods merely train one to become a bureaucratic babu. For example, a brahmin girl can be taught astrology so that she can cast horoscopes for people in the village. She can earn ten or twenty rupees daily, and in a month she will collect at least three or four thousand rupees. A brahmin's daughter, she need not even go out of the house. Those girls in the village who have a good voice could be taught singing, those with flexible bodies can learn to dance. There should also be a beauty salon in the village. Do only the girls from cities have the right to make themselves beautiful? No, that is also the right of the villagers.

Nobody in our country has thought about all these things. Mahatma Gandhi did, but he did not live very long after Independence. He had started basic schools. In those days I would go and teach in these schools, too. Nowadays the competition is to go to Delhi, Bangalore, Hyderabad or Kolkata. It is going to be a grave problem in days to come, one that will be hard to handle. There is only one remedy for this. Go all over the country and tell every person in India to return to their village. Increase the price of land in the village. The people here should be given importance. Every family

should have water on tap. In every village there should be someone who is medically trained.

Once I had gone to Europe for a yoga seminar. It was being held in a small hamlet between France and Switzerland. There were some twenty-five or thirty houses in that village, and each house was no less than a five-star hotel. The house had a kitchen, utensils, hot plate, every essential item. We cooked for ourselves. I liked that place. I told Swami Satsangi that I would like to stay on there for three or four days after the seminar. For this it was necessary to change our flight bookings, and we thought that we would have to go into town to do it. I asked the organizers of the seminar for a car that could take us to town to change our bookings. They said that it was unnecessary to go into town, it could be done locally. And sure enough, an international flight booking could be changed from that little village!

India must reach this state. Villages must have conveniences, capability, energy, which can meet modern needs. Here in Rikhia, if a house burns down, Deoghar cannot be informed, as people do not have the means to do so. If there is a burglary, a dacoity, a fight, a bomb blast, there is no way of informing the police. We have had a public phone booth installed here, but the line often goes out of order and breaks during the monsoon. We then had a solar telephone installed and things are easier now. If a cellular network reaches here, then we will use that, too. If a letter comes to Deoghar, it reaches us in Rikhia after three days, so I said forget about letters and snail mail, we will send a fax. I never write a letter to Munger. I take a piece of paper, type on it and put it into the fax machine. This is my personal convenience, but the same convenience should be available in the villages. We are even getting internet and e-mail. We want a directory of all the institutions in the country that perform social work and this directory can simply be got off the Net.

For all the handicapped people here, for those who cannot walk, we have ordered tricycles. We will have an amputee fixed up with an artificial limb. We are now gathering information

on what kind of an institution would be suitable for an orphaned girl or for a widow. We are doing all this because we have the knowledge and the means. Why does the government not do this same work, why does it not bring solar telephone to the village?

Even if a telephone does come to the village, whom will they telephone?

This is the problem with your thinking. Whenever a product comes into the market, the need for it comes along, too. Always remember, the principle of the market is that people should get the best-paying jobs. If telephone services were to come here, so many people could get work to earn their living. Rural folk are not fools, they are intelligent.

They do not have enough to eat, what will they do with a phone?

Have you ever stayed in a village? Do you know how uncomplicated people are in the village? Last year, during the Rama-Naam Aradhana, Swami Punyananda had come here to give a discourse. His discourses were short on humour but full of truth. The villagers liked him very much. They even told me, "Swamiji, don't have all this song and dance, just invite him instead." If you want people from the city to listen to a *katha*, story, it will have to be peppered with humour and masala. Villagers work hard. There is less stress, and because of this, they are able to concentrate better. Their diseases are not as serious.

You will have to change the way you think about villagers. A villager gathers sticks to cook his food and does not waste anything. You will not find any wastage anywhere in the village. They use everything, whereas there is so much wastage in the cities. I was born in a village. In my village we did not even have lanterns, we used small bottles filled with kerosene oil and fitted with a wick. At night when we went out for toilet we needed to keep two things in hand: a rifle and a torch made of sticks, because there were many tigers and bears.

Whenever I had the chance to visit the villages overseas I was very happy. Those people look after their villages, whether in America or Europe. In the villages of Switzerland I saw boxes being made to pack fruit in. They also have the facility to sell flowers. During the winter when it snows and there is no grazing, the cows are airlifted from the mountains to the plains below. There are thousands of fat cows with udders like heavy sacks of wheat, all airlifted by helicopter.

A country needs to serve its villages, instead here you serve the merchants and big businesses. The only way for India to rise is that complete attention is devoted to the villages. Whatever else is being debated or spoken about in the Parliament and outside, is of no consequence to us.

There are many people in politics who do wish to do good work, bring development to villages, but they are unable to do anything.

Circumstances defeat even the best of people. I have watched political leaders from close quarters and have reached this conclusion: circumstances defeat them. Having entered that environment they have no choice. They believe in dharma and karma, in visiting gods and goddesses. Most are connected to some guru and ashram. However, in spite of doing everything, *Kajala ki kothari mein kaisohun sayana jaye*, *eka daga vahu ko lagihain pain lagihain* – "If you go into a coalmine you are bound to be touched by the black soot." Even if it just one stain, it is still a stain. By going into politics you will be tainted, because political circumstances are such that a person becomes a puppet of the system. Even if you become a minister tomorrow, you will not be able to get anything done, because you cannot change the system alone. This paper will go there and that paper will come here. Paper-pushing has to be fuelled from time to time so that it will move along, or else it will not move. The system is like that, what you call 'bureaucracy'. Every country has its own kind of bureaucracy. The bureaucracy here is geared for everything to move slowly, so no matter how good a

minister you are, there is nothing you can do under such circumstances.

Mahatma Gandhi had entered that 'coalmine' too, how did he come out clean?

No, Gandhiji was not a politician, he was a statesman, a man of the nation. To call Gandhiji a politician is to honour politics. He was a national figure. He never entered power politics. Had he wished, he could have been the Prime Minister or the President of India; instead, he was roaming in Bengal while India was celebrating her Independence. Gandhiji was born with a mission. He was not an ordinary man. I have seen him. I have stayed in Sabarmati and Wardha. He was not an ordinary man; he was an avatara. An avatara comes with a mission and upon completing it, departs. Gandhiji had only one mission, to free India.

Many people tried to gain freedom for India, many people presented different ways of thought. Subhash Chandra Bose showed his way and Bhagat Singh showed his path. Gandhiji followed one road, satyagraha. This way of *satyagraha*, civil disobedience, worked with the British. It was a fitting reply to the British. If Gandhiji had not come, had it been left only to revolutionaries like Subhash Chandra Bose, even if the Azad Hind army had reached India, we would still not have won freedom. A fitting reply to the British was not military might, but law and order. Gandhi found their weak spot and made *ahimsa*, non-violence, the foundation of his movement. In Indian parlance if someone says that they will fight an institutional war using legal strategy, nobody will understand it. But everyone understood ahimsa, no explanations were required.

Gandhiji was an avatara who had come with a mission. He had not come to become a king. Therefore, it is wrong to debate whether he became tainted or not. However, if Gandhiji had become part of the ruling party, he would not have escaped either.

Satsang 7

17 October 1997



The education imparted through internal *samskaras*, impressions, is completed by the age of seven years. After seven, intellectual education begins. I have my own thoughts about education, but I cannot put them forward to everyone as they touch upon many cultural notions. I do not think the treatment of girls is right in India, be it socially, politically, legally or economically. Whether it is in the interests of the human race or not, it is still injustice. It is also contrary to vedic culture. In the vedic culture, a woman was central to society. Today, the first thing that we have to do is educate girls.

Is academic education in a school in fact necessary? Isn't it very restrictive?

I agree that school education limits one, but its value is accepted everywhere today. It is possible that a man is very intelligent, but unless he can read and write, can he get a job? Formal education has nothing to do with life; it has to do with one's personality and status in society. Now take Swami Satsangi. Give her a pen and a subject, and she will finish writing a book in a night. She didn't know how to cook, how to make a bed or wash utensils, she had never done any of this. Six months of the year she used to live in London. Sometimes she would live in Perth, sometimes in Tokyo. She did not even know how to put away clothes. She would take off her clothes and throw them on the floor. The maidservant would tidy everything. Now she has to do all these things. She had a degree, and because of the degree she earned money. When she put in an application for a job, she received responses from eleven places. She appeared for interviews in all eleven places and was selected by them all. She asked me where she should work, so I said, "You must go all over the country and abroad. You must experience the food, the ways of living, the society and politics of different cultures."

Whether a person becomes a merchant, an academic, a sannyasin, a thief or a dacoit, no matter what he does, he must have a comprehensive knowledge of the world. It is necessary because the world is a small place today. In the amount of time it would take to go from Munger to Bhagalpur earlier, you can go much greater distances today. The world has become like a small village. So I told Swami Satsangi to work with Air-India. She was accepted there because of her qualifications, and she learnt a lot. However, she did not know valuable customs, such as sleeping on the right side and not on the left, washing the hands and feet before meals, or removing footwear before eating, because she had always lived alone. Here she has to do everything because I do not let anyone else do it. She had the habit of waking up late. Before she came to me she did not know what the morning looked like.

Here I would force her to wake up at four am. Even now she says, "I can sleep for three or four consecutive days!"

An educational degree is necessary for girls. They should be educated and made wise to the world, or else girls will be unable to cope with society the way it is today. European girls have this freedom, and that is why they go everywhere. They travel alone to Rajasthan, Kashmir and Nagaland. Not only that, they even travel to Muslim countries on their own. They have had the chance to cope with every situation and circumstance. Most of the correspondents of the BBC are women. Afghanistan is a dangerous place for women, but their female correspondents reach there too. One should have the strength to cope with any situation.

The old enshrined ideals of girls being beautiful, tender and soft-spoken have all been perpetuated by people for their selfish ends. For their own use and indulgence, for their own comfort and their own pleasure, girls have been moulded in that way.

People say that modesty is a maiden's ornament. If she is to be modest, how will she go out to study?

Go anywhere in the world today, it is the day of competition. If you are married and cannot compete as a wife, then another girl may enter your husband's life. It is a straight equation. As soon as you become a wife you have entered a competition. A husband also has to compete in earning, in his occupation, in society. It is the same everywhere. This is an epoch of status, of competition, of rivalry and we all have to strive within this. It is like this today. It may change tomorrow.

Girls should be taught the *Ramacharitamanas* at home and if they know Sanskrit, then the *Bhagavad Gita* as well. These two contain the essence of all the vedic texts: the *Ramacharitamanas* in Hindi and the *Bhagavad Gita* in Sanskrit. Just as you expose them to satsang, similarly, every now and then you must expose them to modern culture and music. At home, usually girls sing in the shower because they like music. If they listen to the music of Pandit Bhimsen Joshi

and Pandit Jasraj, they should also be familiar with Michael Jackson. While they learn Indian classical music, they should also know about opera.

It is not like mixing fire and petrol to let a boy and a girl sit together. This was the social dictum once upon a time, but it need not to be like that any more. We have to change the circumstances that perpetuate such a situation so that our boys and girls can go about freely, yet maintain the cultural norms. Our culture has certain social boundaries and we understand those perfectly well. However, to remain within those boundaries we do not have to suppress our daughters, rather we must prepare them. Do not let a girl run wild, let her be civilized. The only reason for indecent and wild behaviour is the lack of freedom and openness.

Spiritual experiences without a guru have been thought of as madness by people, but I feel as if I have lost something.

The state of non-duality, *advaita*, or *nirvikalpa samadhi*, seeing God in everything and everyone, are not states that are achieved in one lifetime. It took you fifteen to twenty years to become a doctor. At the beginning you had to learn the alphabet and then all the rest. Similarly, no one attains eternal knowledge in one lifetime, whether it is you or me. One has to go on with the belief, 'This is not my last birth.' Even if it does happen to be my last birth, still one needs to maintain the belief that it is not.

In 1947, on 12th September, when I took sannyasa, Swami Sivananda taught me kriya yoga, told me many things. However, he added, "You should wait for forty years, you have karmas and desires to finish." I waited exactly forty years. I left the ashram in 1988 and came here. As long as a man's wishes, desires and karmas persist, he should follow the path of bhakti. Bhakti marga means pooja, reading the scriptures, japa and satsang. On the yogic path, asana and pranayama are for everyone, while satya, ahimsa, brahmacharya, asteya and aparigraha should be practised according to one's station in life, one's *varna ashrama*.

Dharana, dhyana, samadhi are the practices of raja yoga. This is ashtanga yoga which is practised only after bhakti yoga. Read the original shastras and find out when the practice of yoga starts. The first sutra of Maharishi Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* says: *Atha yoganushasanam*. Here, the word *atha* means 'now, therefore'. 'Now' that you have passed your graduation, you may study further. Now that you have practised bhakti yoga, we will tell you the discipline of yoga. This is how it is written in all the sutras. The first sutra in the *Brahma Sutras* is: *Atha ato Brahmajijnasa* – "Now we seek to learn the knowledge of Brahman." 'Now' indicates that you have practised bhakti yoga and have completed the sadhana of raja yoga, now you can study and practise Vedanta. These practical texts of the vedic tradition, which you may call yoga or knowledge or Vedanta, are not merely for one lifetime. To attain this state, a brahmachari in his station, a householder in grihastha ashrama and a sannyasin in his station of sannyasa ashrama, must practise sadhana.

After his initiation, when a sannyasin sweeps his guru's ashram, cooks, does the banking work, accounts, typing, constructs buildings, he does the same work that all householders do in the outside world. Similarly, living in the *grihastha ashrama*, as a householder, one should follow the ethics of a sannyasin. This is called integration. What did I do after my guru initiated me? Did I simply sit down? No, I constructed his ashram, looked after his money, looked after his kitchen, grazed the bullocks, cut grass for the cows and milked them. I worked for him for twelve years. Then I made my own ashram and then worked for the ashram. A sannyasin living in the sannyasa ashrama stage should still work like a householder. Similarly, while living in grihastha ashrama, a householder should maintain the *dharma*, the ethics, of a sannyasin.

What is sannyasa dharma? To wear geru clothes, shave the head and wear a rudraksha mala is not sannyasa dharma. These are the codes of the sannyasa sect. There is a difference between *sampradaya*, a sect or community, and

dharma, ethos or ethics. What does sannyasa mean and what is the meaning of being a householder? When sannyasa and grihastha ashramas are mixed, that khichari is easily digestible.

The *Bhagavad Gita* has made this clear. Sri Krishna says to Arjuna (5:3): *Jneyah sa nityasannyasi.* What does nitya mean? *Nitya* means 'that which is present not merely in the day or at night, but always'. What is a sannyasin? Sri Krishna says, "O Arjuna, to work is something you have the capability for, like planting a garden, getting married or opening a shop, but having planted the garden, whether it will bear fruit or not is not something you can do anything about. Once you are married, it is not within your control that you will certainly have a child. Having opened a shop it is not within your control whether or not it will do good business. Arjuna, to act is within your capability, that right you have, but the ensuing results fall outside the bounds of your rights." This is the union of grihastha and sannyasa dharma.

By itself, what is grihastha dharma? It is to plant an orchard and say all day long, "I want fruit, I want money", and beat your head if you do not get it. To spend a whole life in hope, and to be disappointed when the hopes are unfulfilled, to be heartbroken; this is grihastha ashrama. To act and to be hopeful of the fruit of the action, this is pure grihastha ashrama. Not to work and not to be desirous of the fruit is pure sannyasa ashrama. The union of the two is to act like a grihastha and not be desirous of the fruit like a sannyasin: "We will see what happens. If I get the fruit, that is good; if I don't get it, it is okay." This attitude is the bija mantra of the *Bhagavad Gita* (2:47):

> *Karmanyevaadhikaaraste maa phaleshu kadaachana;*
> *Maa karmaphalahetur bhoor maa te sango'stwakarmani.*
>
> Your right is to work only, but never with its fruits; let not the fruits of actions be your motive, nor let your attachment be to inaction.

Sri Krishna is saying to Arjuna: "Do not give up action like a sannyasin, neither hanker for the fruit like a grihastha. If you run after the fruit, it will certainly cause your downfall." Some people are suffering from heart disease, some are suffering from tension, someone else has hypertension. It is all madness. Do not make a mistake about sadhana. Practise as much sadhana as you want, practise day and night, take bhang and practise, take opium and practise if you like. Practise sadhana to awaken your kundalini, but only time will cause the tree to bear fruit, even though you water it every day. Sadhana proceeds slowly, it needs courage and control.

Grihastha ashrama is in itself a big sadhana. The father educates his son and then the son is disrespectful to the father. Now, what is to be done? Give him a couple of slaps or bear it? It is better to bear it. This is the training in forbearance. A husband and a wife, partners of many births, they bicker all day long. What is to be done? Be understanding or keep fighting? You have to be understanding. In grihastha ashrama, many strengthening virtues are earned such as forgiveness, forbearance and fortitude. The senses have to be kept under control in grihastha ashrama also. When the children are born, money has to be saved so you must spend less.

In grihastha ashrama an aspirant gathers the qualities that will later remove obstacles on the path of sadhana. If you sit for meditation without having earned virtue, without having cleansed your personality, you will head for a mental asylum. An aspirant has to be very strong. His mind has to be very strong. Who has a strong mind? A man who can forgive. Truly he has a strong mind. Unless your heart and mind are strong, can you forgive another? Can a weak person forgive and be tolerant? Can a weak person be compassionate? It is said:

Kshamaa sohatee usa bhujanga ko jisake paasa garala hai,
Usko kyaa jo dantaheena, visharahita vineeta sarala hai.

> Forgiveness befits the snake that has venom. What does it matter to the one that is fangless? Politeness is easy without poison.

Who has kindness and compassion within them? Who can give up her child, a weak mother or a strong mother? Virtues such as self-sacrifice, endurance, kindness and forgiveness should definitely be cultivated before beginning sadhana. Never undertake the peril of meditation, certainly never without a guru. Sadhana is never decided upon by oneself, it is given by the guru. A guru is needed in every sphere. If someone wants to commit burglaries and dacoities, even then he needs a guru. Without a guru, no knowledge or *vidya* can ever be actualized. This must always be kept in mind.

The second thing is that no one should be in a hurry to realize God. This is not a whirlwind courtship and quick wedding. God is such a subtle element that on this subject even the last words of the rishis and munis were: *Neti*, *neti* – "Not this, not this." *Neti* means 'not even this', meaning that they could not find out. When the rishis and the munis could not comprehend God's infinite form, then they felt that perhaps God might have a manifest form. God is not only formless. He is unmanifest as well as manifest, with form and without form. He is all forms. Water becomes ice but remains water. When they understood this truth, they began the worship of form.

Grihastha and sannyasin, householder and renunciate, both should practise *sakara upasana*, worship of the form. Adi Shankaracharya was a proponent of advaita, but he still wrote so many stotras for Devi, Shiva and Vishnu. The *Annapurna Stotra* was composed by him too. Why did he worship the manifest form? Why did he install Ma Sharada in the Sringeri Math? Instead of the statue of Sharada, he could have kept a formless lingam, but he did not do that.

God's manifest form is very difficult to deal with, because one cannot understand a manifest God. Whereas the formless aspect of God is very easy. When you say 'formless', everybody

will accept that, nobody will refute it, neither the Muslim, nor the Christian, neither the Parsi nor the Jew. Yet, if you speak of the form then many will raise questions, such as: "What was Lord Rama like?" "What was Sri Krishna like?" "Was Ramakrishna Paramahamsa in fact an incarnation of God?" That is why dealing with *sakara*, the manifest form, is very difficult. However, once your mind has become steady in the manifest form, your way is clear. It is as if your car has come to the national highway, and now you can drive on at full speed.

The signs of insanity and the higher states of meditation are similar. I have seen many mahatmas who, once they have had the experience of realization, cannot return to the mundane plane. If you want to live as a householder, in the role of a wife, in the role of a husband, a son or a daughter, or work in the role of an officer or a college professor, then you must have the capability to live like an ordinary person.

When my guru told me to wait for forty years, I asked him, "Why forty years later, why not now?" He said, "If you had gone to the station three hours prior to the departure time of the train and the train had not arrived, what would you do?" I said I would go home. He said, "And what if your train arrives and departs in the meantime?" He said, "Stay right here until that time. Whatever you were going to do at home, do it here." Then he told me to start a *goshala*, a cow stable, and to build a colony for the lepers who begged by the side of the road in Rishikesh. I took ten or twelve acres of land from the government and the local administration. Gandhiji's assistant, Miraben, lived there at the time. She had a very big farm. I took some bamboo and straw from her and put up huts for the lepers. I also gave them goats, bidis and some pocket money. In the evenings, I would read the *Ramacharitamanas* to them. I would dress and clean them and look after their medication; all this I would do.

As soon as that work was done, I was sent to North Gujarat. Eye camps were held there and over two hundred cataract operations were performed. In 1947, I was in Pakistan. A

magazine was published from there and I was the resident editor. I was there on 14th August when the Partition riots began and I got stuck there. I knew that all this was going to happen. I wrote a letter to the ashram, but it probably never reached there. Regardless, the army evacuated me by 17th August. When I returned, I was sent to Bangladesh to feed four thousand people at the relief camps.

The point I am trying to make is that I did the same kind of work in the sannyasa stage as I would have done as a householder. Swami Sivananda had said to me, "Son, you have arrived at the railway platform three hours earlier than you needed to, now sit in the waiting room, read the newspaper, eat peanuts, stroll around, smoke a cigarette, time will pass. Go when your train arrives." In 1987, the arrival of my train was announced and the green flag was waved. In 1988 I left Munger ashram and in 1989 I came here and established myself. Now the train has arrived and I am sitting in it happily. Sadhana has to be practised like this. Never do incorrect sadhana. In any case, do not practise any sadhana without a guru.

It is true that a guru is needed in every sphere of endeavour, be it music or cooking, in every small thing one needs to learn. Why then is it said that 'one should be a light unto oneself'?

Even I say the same thing, that every person should be a light unto himself. There is an anecdote in *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* where a disciple asks his guru how a man can walk in the dark. The guru replies, "By the light of the moon." The disciple asks, "What if the moon sets?" The master replies, "By the light of the stars." Again the disciple asks, "What if the moon sets and there are no stars, then how can a man walk in the darkness?" The discussion goes on in the same vein, it is a long episode. Finally the guru says, "Walk by your own light." The point of the story is that when all the senses are calmed, when the intellect is at peace and the mind is not working, then a man has to trust his soul. The senses throw

light on objects. If the senses stop throwing light on things, then how will a man see? With the help of the soul.

This is what Lord Buddha meant by saying: *Atmadeepo bhava* – "Be a light unto yourself." Buddhist thought has emerged out of vedic thought. Lord Buddha was not a Buddhist himself. He was a Hindu born into the kshatriya lineage; his disciples were Buddhists. Similarly, Jesus Christ was neither a Catholic nor a Protestant; he was a Jew. Bhagavan Mahavir was not a Jain, neither was Sri Rama a Vaishnava, nor was Lord Shiva a Shaivite. These are the communities or sects made by you and me. *Atmadeepo bhava* means that the one who has inner vision will walk by himself, he will not need anybody's support.

If Buddhist thought is similar to vedic thought, then why did it disappear from this country?

At one point of time, India possessed such strength, wealth and riches that she was known as the 'golden bird' the world over. Where is that 'golden bird' now? There are only beggars all around. Who stole the happiness and prosperity of this country? People of foreign countries did. Why did they steal it? It is because we did not have the capability to keep it safe. During the reign of Ashoka, weapon-making was stopped. On the decree of the government, shopkeepers could not stock anything poisonous. Can any bomb be made without poisonous material? You have to add chemicals, don't you?

Rishis Vasishtha and Vishwamitra taught Sri Rama not only the scriptures but also weaponry. Agastya Muni gave him the armour. I believe that ahimsa is a political weapon. Gandhiji used it as the political weapon suitable against the British. However, at other times it is not suitable for a country and that is why I do not accept it as a philosophy.

This is the reason why not only did Buddhism diminish in India, it became zero. No religion should join hands with politics. Religion is a matter for saints and sadhus. It is a thing of purity; it is that which uplifts life. It should not enter politics. In the reign of Ashoka, Buddhism became the state

religion just as Islam is the state religion of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Iraq. This is the reason for the demise of Buddhism in India.

A religious institution should never join hands with a political institution. We are not concerned with this leader or that leader, with this political party or that. Dharma is always there to guide a person. Jainism has never gone towards politics and that is why it has survived.

Tulsidas was such a great poet. He composed such a great epic as the *Ramacharitamanas*, but why did he say that 'a drum, a boor, a shudra, an animal and a woman all deserve to be beaten'?

You are an educated girl. You understand that in a book a poet has to write all kinds of things. A poet has to write Ravana's words and Shurpanakha statements. He has to also write what Rama said, all that Dasharatha said and all that was spoken by Kaikeyi. It is not necessary that all that they say will be congruent with justice and dharma. Shurpanakha belonged to the race of the demons, and was all that she said appropriate and right? All of that has been written by Tulsidas, too. When Kaikeyi began her argument with Dasharatha, who wrote all that she said? Tulsidas did. All the words of wisdom spoken by the rishis and munis were, after all, also written by Tulsidas. So, it is not correct to accuse Tulsidas of having said this or that.

The verse that you are talking about comes just before the end of *Sundarkand*. When three days had passed in waiting for the Ocean to arrive and there was still no sign, Rama was very angry and said to Lakshmana, *Lacchimana bana sarasana anu, soshaun ani bisikha krisanu* – "Lakshmana, bring me my bow and arrow, I may as well dry up the Ocean with a missile presided over by the fire of god." He then readied his weapons, which greatly pleased Lakshmana, and also caused the Ocean to appear in person. In this context it is said, "A drum, a boor, a shudra, an animal and a woman, all deserve to be beaten." Is this principle right? A principle may also

be wrong. Although Tulsidas has written it, they are not his words, they were uttered by the Ocean.

When a poet has various characters saying various things, the responsibility for their utterances must not fall on the poet. In any kind of literature the writer has many characters explaining principles of different kinds. Some theories come from the mouth of the jester, some from the villain's and some from the hero's. Who is the hero of the *Ramayana*? Rama. Who is the villain? Ravana. There are many other characters besides them. Sometimes Maricha enters the story and somewhere Vali enters it. So stop blaming Tulsidas. This question has been asked of me a thousand times. I am weary of answering it. It has been printed in every book of mine.

The matter of the shudra, the uncouth, the drum, the animal and the woman remains unanswered. What is the meaning of the word *tadan*? It means to see, to look, to protect, to examine. The word 'tadan' has come from the word 'trataka'. In common usage, it means 'to ogle or stare', does it not? Tadan means to see something very closely.

Now, if you do not look at the drum closely as you play, then its skin might tear. It has to be always watched. If the weather is hot then the drum has to be oiled and tightened. The same applies to an uncouth, ignorant person. If he is not watched, he will keep sitting idle and chewing tobacco. Similarly, if an eye is not kept on a woman, somebody will carry her away because she is innocent and vulnerable. She has no knowledge of the world as she has been sheltered and protected by her parents. She does not know what kind of people live in this world and so she is taken in by whoever talks nicely to her. I am not talking of the modern European woman here. I am referring to the women who lived in the times of Tulsidas, at the place where he wrote the *Ramayana*, in Avadh. Normally a person writes of the environment in which he lives. In the times of Tulsidas, were girls not watched like hawks? So, if Tulsidas wrote this of his own volition, he was not entirely wrong.

Now the second thing is, in the *Sundarkand*, read the verse before this one and the verse following it and you will

feel as if this verse is a later addition. At first you need to see what the situation is: the Ocean is saying to Rama, "O Lord, you have created the five elements, you have made the laws to govern them. You can dry me up if you wish, but then you would end your own laws." This is the situation. Where does 'the drum, the boor, the shudra, animal and woman, all deserving to be beaten' come into this? When you read it in this light, you will realize the validity of my statement. It is possible that someone, at some later time, added this verse to either defame Tulsidas or to push forward his own viewpoint.

Tulsidas was not a poet. He wrote the *Ramacharitamanas* in a state of samadhi. Let me tell you that I speak Sanskrit much better than I do Hindi or English. I have learnt Hindi and English, but Sanskrit is my mother tongue. Even today I remember the Vedas in full, I can recall the complete *Bhagavad Gita*, all of the *Brahma Sutras*, I know the complete interpretation by heart. After reading all the Sanskrit shastras, after reading all of Shankaracharya's compositions, there is only one book that I have found to have the last word. I have removed all the other books. There is no other book in my library now. I have sent all my books to Munger. Only one book remains, the *Ramacharitamanas*; so sweet, so simple, so lovable. An uneducated villager can understand it, and a person pursuing a PhD can write his doctoral thesis on it.

A book which can be understood by a villager and researched by an intellectual sitting in a university cannot be an ordinary book. It must be contemplated upon. I say that in every home the *Ramacharitamanas* should be read every day for half an hour. Here we read it every morning between 4 and 5 am. Everyone attends regularly, whether they are Indian or foreigners. Read it as you can. Reading it is in itself mantra japa. In a state of samadhi, when a yogi is having a vision of God, whatever he utters is a mantra, whatever he writes is a mantra.

There is such a beautiful incident in *Ramacharitamanas*. In her second incarnation, when Parvati asks Shiva about the story of Rama, he is elated and says, "The story of Sri Rama

which you are asking me to tell you is the sacred river Ganges which will purify all the worlds. For this, I thank you." Tulsidas had the entire *Ramacharitamanas* narrated through the mouth of Shiva. It was written by Tulsidas but who narrated it? Lord Shiva. And to whom did he narrate it? To Mother Parvati, who in her last incarnation had doubted that Sri Rama was an *avatara*, an incarnation of God. As a result of that doubt, she had immolated her body. Then, she had reincarnated as Parvati, and finally says, "Lord, all my doubts are now destroyed, now tell me the story of Sri Rama in full."

When a great yogi such as Tulsidas is in a state of samadhi, whatever he writes or says is a mantra. It is not necessary that the eyes be closed in the state of samadhi. Just as a man under the influence of alcohol or bhang can speak, similarly all kinds of actions can be performed in the state of samadhi. He wrote in a state of samadhi and he wrote in the Hindi language. He was very well versed in Sanskrit, he wrote prose and poetry in Sanskrit. When he would write in Sanskrit in the evening, it would all disappear by the morning. He then received a message from God that he should write in his own language, which was Avadhi.

I cannot call myself great, but I have studied a lot. I have studied all the English literature. I have read all the Buddhist literature. I have read the texts on Vedanta written by Shankaracharya and Ramanuja. I have even read all the trashy literature. Finally, I am stuck on the *Ramacharitamanas* and I read it every day. At times, I have read it in one sitting from the beginning to the end. I begin at midnight and finish the next day at four in the evening. I like reading it very much. There are so many beautiful episodes. Where is the necessity to understand the meaning? Everyone knows the story of Rama.

While reading it, you will notice the rhythm that it has, the electricity, the spontaneity, the deep emotion. It has a certain spell that you will not find elsewhere. Read it every day for fifteen minutes and one day you will have such a delightful time that you will forget everything else.

You are so full of knowledge. You can discuss and talk on so many subjects. Don't you feel sometimes that all the nerves in your brain are strained?

No, I have the blessings of my parents and my guru, though I have certainly lost a little of my capacity. I had a photographic memory, whatever book I read I could see it with my eyes closed. At school I would only study in class, I would never study at home. I was the son of a zamindar; I farmed, looked after the forests, took care of the land and the estates, looked after the cattle, took care of the staff and the servants. I had to do all the work myself. We possessed one and a half thousand acres of farmland, one and a half thousand acres of forest, forty or fifty horses, twenty or twenty-five mules, two to three hundred sheep and goats and fifty servants. I had to mind them all myself. When did I have the time to study?

I have no experience of being sick or having any disease either. Sickness is of two types. One is seasonal and temporary, such as flu, diarrhoea, dysentery, headaches, insomnia, etc. The other is long-term sickness that affects the life process or life experience, such as diabetes, liver, kidney, heart and respiratory problems, etc. I have written many books on diabetes, asthma, high blood pressure, and can even talk about these things for hours, but I have no personal experience of these illnesses. I do not know what it is to have diabetes, but I can tell you that by practising shankhaprakshalana you will become well again. This is a great boon to me, and it is the gift of my parents, my genetic inheritance. My genetic inheritance has been very good.

This must be your prarabdha or perhaps the samskaras you have carried from a previous birth.

No, no. When I was born, the astrologer cast my horoscope and after looking at it, he said that this boy will be a vagabond, a destitute, and will bring an end to his lineage. The Sun is in Saturn in my birth horoscope. Can you imagine what it is like for a person to have Sun in the house of Saturn? Poor in spite of having money in the house, that was the situation I was in. I do not even know how to handle money.

It is said that there is no difference between a poor man and a rich man; the man who wants nothing is indeed the emperor.

No, it is not like that. 'Vagabond' means a person who wanders about. 'Destitute' means someone who does not have any money. 'Destroyer of the lineage' means one who does not have any offspring. All three things are right in their own way in my case, but only one thing changed. My guru touched me, I received mantra and then he changed the entire interpretation. 'Vagabond' became parivrajaka, 'destroyer of lineage' became the unmarried sannyasin who can have many disciples, and 'destitute' became one who practises *aparigraha*, non-accumulation, one who doesn't hoard or hold on to things. The touch of the guru changed the entire interpretation. Otherwise, a person in whose horoscope the Sun is in the house of Saturn is penniless even amidst plenty, like a fish that thirsts while swimming in water.

Did you find your guru because of prarabdha?

No, guru is not found because of prarabdha. Guru is found only by the grace of God: *Rama kripa bina sulabha na soee* – "You cannot attain anything auspicious without the grace of divinity." To get a guru and to recognize a guru is very difficult. If you tell a beggar woman to go to the jeweller and buy a diamond, how can she do it, she cannot recognize a diamond. She will ask someone if it is indeed a diamond or not. If you know diamonds then you will say, "Yes, it is a diamond", and if you have no knowledge of diamonds then you will say, "Yes, well, it looks like that." Guru is like a diamond, it is a very great *tattwa*, element, in life. In India, in almost every community and region there is a tradition of having a guru. In Madhya Pradesh, those people who are uninitiated, those who do not have a guru, are not allowed into the kitchen. It is the custom in Madhya Pradesh that until the daughter-in-law is initiated by a guru, she is not allowed into the kitchen.

Not every teacher in life is a guru. *Guru* is one who opens your eye of knowledge, removing the darkness from life. How

many have found a guru like that? Swami Vivekananda did, and his life became worthwhile, but that was not because of prarabdha. If a lost traveller in a dense jungle comes upon a forest ranger who leads him out of the forest, would you call that prarabdha? This is not prarabdha, it is due to God's mercy that the forest ranger reached the spot and showed the traveller the way out.

The happiest event in your life must have been when you had darshan of your guru?

Yes. Actually, my childhood had no conditioning for sannyasa, not at all. The conditioning was all about family and household. I started to look after the land and estates at a tender age. I studied in Almora, and my village was five or six miles away. On Saturday I would go to the village, oversee the farms and other things, and on Monday I would be on my way back to Almora to study. Later I became a class monitor and was given a cupboard, which meant that I could leave my books there and not have to take them with me. I never took my books home. My father was an Arya Samaji and my mother followed the teachings of Mahtama Gandhi, therefore our home was filled with the ideals of Swami Dayananda and Gandhiji. I read many books, but I could never understand the principle or theory of sannyasa.

Then I was caught in the noose of Sukhman Giri, a tantric yogini from Juna Akhara. She was eighteen years older than I was. She was fat as a pumpkin, dark as an eggplant, and very repulsive. It was revolting to look at her. It should not be revolting to look at a woman, but one just did not feel like looking at her. Everything about her was *nakaratmaka*, not conducive. However, she had one good quality which I caught on. She would speak on chakras, mantras, the seven aspects of knowledge spontaneously, without a break. I was astonished, because she was such an uncouth, ugly, illiterate woman and used such foul invectives, sparing no one. She would drink a bottle of alcohol at night and eat meat. How could anyone accept a person like that?

I went the first day, then I went the next day and I went the third day. Matters such as how to awaken the kundalini began to become clear to me. Whatever she would say I would listen to intently. One day I asked her, "Will you teach me?" She said, "Prepare yourself." I had a lot of land and estates. I readied a cave. In the vacations I would go to her and learn from her. In six months she must have given me forty or fifty lessons. In my eighteenth year, she gave me *shaktipat*, an energy initiation. She did not call this shaktipat, but 'grace'. I had the same experience as Arjuna did in the eleventh chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*. I had a vision of all sorts of amazing things.

Did you receive the experience through touch?

There are many things that are not to be revealed. They are a matter of contemplation. After the shaktipat, I asked to become her disciple. She said, "I do not accept disciples. I have only shown you a glimpse. I have led you to have this experience. You do not have the required strength just now to experience this on your own steam. You should go and seek a guru. Once you have attained guru's *kripa* or grace, then enter this path and discover the experience yourself, not now. In the quest for guru, I was caught by sannyasa. Otherwise, in childhood I never so much as gave a thought to it.

Secondly, I never ever had any thought of going overseas. I was flying from Bombay on a four-seater aircraft belonging to the Tatas. I was on my way to inaugurate a factory near Dwarika, Tata Chemicals. I was sitting in the front, next to the pilot, and he asked me where I came from. Then he asked what my name had been before sannyasa. It came to light that we had both belonged to the same flying club in Lucknow. He offered to let me handle the steering of the craft. I said, "I haven't touched the steering for twenty years." Nevertheless, he let go of the steering and said, "You fly the craft now." As I touched the steering, I had a vision of travelling overseas. It was absolutely clear, just as you see on the television.

I inaugurated the factory and then went for darshan at Somnath temple. In the evening I returned to Bombay and

asked my host to have a passport made for me. He had it ready for me the very next day, within twenty-four hours. I came to Munger, had my bags packed, wrote to everyone overseas informing of my arrival and left India within ten days.

The point I am making is that many events happen which are not planned; they just happen. I had not planned or thought about sannyasa, but it happened. I had not thought of travelling abroad, but it happened. I have been thinking for forty or fifty years of moving into the next phase of life, and I am waiting for that to happen.

In ancient times what were the arrangements for lighting?

In those days they had diamonds, pearls and other gemstones, so there was an arrangement of a different sort. Maybe you know that when Sri Krishna founded Dwarika, gemstones were set into the stairs. They were luminous. Every epoch has its own technology, its own way of life. Many centuries ago, Adi Shankaracharya walked from Kerala in the South to Badrinath in the North, then returned to Kerala to perform his mother's last rites. Once again he started from there and conquered all of India, established the maths of Puri, Dwarika, Joshimath and Sringeri. Can one man travel such distances on foot in fifteen to sixteen years? There must have been something. The people of India had their own peculiar capability, and they still do. We are only talking of India, and not of the world.

India's talent does not lie in trade and industry. Trade and industry are means of commerce. Mercantile nations have corruption, decadent customs and evildoing. The culture of India is agrarian and based on animal husbandry. Alongside there have been big and small traders. This has been the eternal culture of this land. When the British came, they neglected this prevalent culture. That is the reason why India is poor and penniless today. That is why problems beset India. That is why there is corruption in India. If this country focuses on its strengths of agriculture and animal husbandry, there will not be any corruption. Corruption

exists only where money flows like water, only where looting is possible.

Indians and the government of India should work mainly for the farmers and the villages of India. Today, the government of India works only for industrialists and big businesses. I am not saying this from a political viewpoint, but from the viewpoint of a thinker, a sannyasin. The foundation for the progress, purity and simplicity of India is the village. There can also be good income here. If the villagers wish to earn, if the government helps by providing enough water, then a good income can be earned here. Our cow gives fifteen litres of milk every day. If there were three or four cows, then it would be about forty or fifty litres of milk, meaning five hundred rupees every day. Even if you take out expenses for servants and feed, etc., you would still have three hundred rupees left, so it is nine thousand rupees a month. The cost of the cow is recovered in two months.

This is a country of farmers, of labourers, of cowherds, of small shopkeepers. Accept that, and let all the policies of the government be based on that. The basis of education should be the needs of a village, a self-reliant village. What is the use of learning about Akbar and Aurangzeb? I have studied them and it has been of no use to me. Only addition and subtraction has been of any use to me. When Akbar died, when Aurangzeb was born, when Nadir Shah invaded, these matters are for those who get more than eighty percent marks in their examinations. We come in the category of those who get left behind.

Rural education must be different. When a girl goes to her in-laws' house, what will her father-in-law ask her? Who was Aurangzeb's father? What will the mother-in-law ask? She will ask if the girl knows how to cook, whether or not she can sew and knit, if she can discern the purity of silver and gold, if she knows how to care for a cow, if she knows how to milk a cow, whether she knows some first-aid or not. Basic education is what is necessary in a village. A girl should be taught only that much. After boys are six or seven years old,

they should be taught vocational skills. Otherwise, everyone goes to the city and only the lame and the crippled are left in the village. In the city, water and electricity have to be organized for them and all the money gets spent on that. That is the reason why I keep repeating just one thing: if you over-educate, unemployment will increase.

Whether or not you accept it, one reason for unemployment is excessive education and one reason for overpopulation is family planning. Family planning does not shrink the family. The way to shrink the numbers in the family is education. Education is the key to family planning. All that is told on television, to take contraceptive pills, to do this and do that, is useless. What has been the outcome of the family planning campaign so far? Our population has almost reached one billion. If all of us sannyasins decide to marry the count will reach one billion this year itself, there will be no need to wait for the next year.

The culture of India has been independent since ancient times. It knows that without freedom, corruption will rise. If we continue on the way we are going now, then one more Gandhi will have to appear in the twenty-first century because we will not be able to remain independent any more. There will be big companies and big factories. We will be unable to remain free because merchants are cold and heartless. As people, they are like that. I have lived among them. I know them very well. For them, parents and siblings are one thing and money is another thing. Once we are caught in these mercenary coils, we will have to once again raise the slogan: *Inqalab zindabad* – "Victory to the revolution", in the twenty-first century.

We are making a mistake somewhere. You are educated people, don't you agree with me? The English did not attack India directly. First came the East India Company. They were trying to force their way in from the time of Akbar. When Shah Jehan's daughter fell sick during his reign, they received the sanction of the governing regime. Finally, the entire government passed into their hands because the British

are merchants. Business is their hobby, their addiction, their madness. It is a dead civilization, not an eternal civilization. That is why there is a saying: 'East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet.'

Indians do not have the mentality of a trader. This is the civilization of rishis and munis. We are the children of rishis such as Parashara, Jamadagni and Kashyapa. We are born of their blood. We only want a small house, a little food and a few clothes to cover the body; that is enough. Why have such a huge household with so many things? Keeping money in a Swiss bank, one house in Austria, another in Germany, wife stays here and son stays somewhere else. All this is not part of our culture.

You must all think about these things. There should be a discussion on the subject of what we really want. If the same amount of help was given to a farmer as to the businessmen, he would be able to earn well, live within his means and lead a virtuous life.

It is essential for a village that educated people come here and work. Earn some money in the city and then come to live in a village, buy five acres of land, sink a tube-well, keep a few servants and keep four or five cows. I tell all the villagers that they will be able to earn a hundred thousand rupees a year from a cow. The ashram buys three or four cows and selects three or four men from the village. We train those men in husbandry for a month. The women of their households come every morning and evening to milk the cows and tend to them. We teach them everything. After a month they take the cow home. We also provide them the feed for the cow for a whole year. This is the custom here.

I never drank milk earlier; I am not a milk and curd man. When I was born my parents put a drop of honey and alcohol on my tongue and touched my skin with the metal of a sword. In the evening before bedtime, I was given brandy. Not a day went by without eating meat. So what would I be doing drinking milk? The only milk I drank was my mother's as an infant.

We are from Kumaon and my mother was from Nepal. We marry into the families from Nepal, Garhwal and Kumaon. Our people are great worshippers of Devi. Whenever there is a pooja, buffaloes and goats are sacrificed. So many animals are killed that no home cooks vegetables and rice. One house gets the neck, another cooks the head, and so on. Each house receives *prasad*, consecrated food, and they cook that. This is an ancient tradition alive to this day.

This tradition of sacrifice is not prevalent among Hindus alone; it exists among Christians, Jews and Muslims. The tradition of animal sacrifice is still prevalent throughout the whole world. Since the Buddhists objected to it, the government put an end to it through a series of laws. Then people said, "If the government will not let us eat meat on a communal level, we will do it at a personal level."

At first this tradition was community based. Two or three hundred animals would be sacrificed at one spot. When Lord Buddha witnessed the killing of thousands of animals, his heart melted. He criticized the shrutis and the tradition of sacrifice. Then, due to the influence and pressure of Buddhist thought, communal animal sacrifice was banned by law. However, it has been accepted by the Vedas. In the Vedas there is a full chapter on the tradition of animal sacrifice. In ancient times, when brahmins were ritually fed, the food would be non-vegetarian. Anyway, this does not mean that I advocate that kind of diet for anyone. This is only for general knowledge.

Even now in Orissa and some other states during *shraaddha*, funeral ceremonies, a brahmin is fed fish, isn't that so?

Yes, even here, in Bihar, in some places brahmins are fed fish. Well, anyway, all these things are social in nature; no spiritual significance should be attached to them. Many cultures, races and tribes have come together in this country. The fact that we are a united country is a great help for us. Otherwise, we may have remained divided into small bits like Europe. Our exchange rate mechanism, ERM, has been taken care of.

The European nations have been trying to resolve this ERM problem for years because their ERM is not good; however, they have not even arrived at a skeletal structure yet. A thing that costs or fetches a certain amount of money in France may not fetch anything at all in London. This does not matter to us because we are one nation. It is important to be an undivided single nation to protect the ERM from instability.

No matter how many languages, customs and rituals we have, on some level, we have a common culture. A dhoti for men and the red dot for women are common all over India. Only in India do women apply sindoor; nowhere outside Indiais this custome prevalent. In North India people offer coconut and betel nut in a pooja even though it does not grow there. Kumaon does not even grow bananas; even so, during a pooja, bananas, coconut and betel nut are offered ritually. This is one aspect. Another thing is that if a person in South India wants to be initiated into sannyasa he comes to North India, but a person from North India does not go to the South. I am talking of tradition here and how it has been perpetuated. If a person from Bengal wants to go on a pilgrimage, where will he go? He will go to Banaras, Allahabad, Haridwar, Gangotri, Yamunotri, Badri or Kedar. In this way, everything has been arranged. It is important to be one country. Even though we are all different, there are many similarities. The mantra *Om* is common from North to South India. If you look carefully you will see that there are thousands of similarities.

Satsang 8

18 October 1997



The sannyasa community

Among the spiritual traditions, Vaishnavas are usually married. The Kanphata yogis are also married. In the sannyasa tradition, those who get married cannot remain sannyasins. They are cast out. They are called *gosais* and ostracized. Gosais should wear white, tie their hair and look after their children and farms. They cannot remain as 'swami', and must add 'gosai' after their name. This is a common tradition, for those who are initiated at a young age sometimes wish to be married. If this is allowed, just about everyone will want to get married.

In earlier times, sannyasa was taken after the age of sixty or sixty-five, so the question of marriage never arose. The principle that a sannyasin should be unmarried has come about due to the ethics of the ashrama system, and those ethics have been enforced strictly. Once it is relaxed it will be become very difficult. If someone builds an ashram, establishes a trust or math as a sannyasi, and then gets married and runs away with all the trust's money, it will be an abuse of public trust and funds.

Vaishnavas, however, are permitted to get married. They marry and their wealth remains personal. For instance, Prabhupad Bhaktivedanta established such a huge empire and all his wealth remained in his name. This custom is prevalent among Vaishnavas. This does not happen in the Udasin sect, and the question simply does not arise in the order of sannyasa. It does not happen among the Sikhs or among the Jains. Once initiated into sannyasa, there is no personal wealth any more; it is all communal. When the Vaishnava sect was founded, it had become necessary for the Vaishnavas to be married. At that time, the Buddhist sannyasins were indulging in mischief and the populace was angry with them. The Vaishnavas thought the people might lash out against them also, therefore it was considered better to allow marriage, then no one could rightly say anything. So the Vaishnavas started getting married. There is not even a provision to remain unmarried among them. Vaishnavas wear the sacred thread, keep the tuft of hair, so it follows that they are householders.

The sadhus of all these different sects live in many maths and temples all over India, even in villages. Near Lakhisarai, which is in Munger district, is Badhiya, which has a big temple. The Gosais in Munger are followers of Kabir. The sadhus who are followers of Kabir generally have a math and a few acres of land. They have a small temple where they worship, a cowshed, an Ayurvedic pharmacy where they keep medicines for the villagers. You can find such places everywhere in India.

In India, sadhus have lived on stilted platforms amid

fields, and in caves, but this is not really permitted to a sannyasin while in the stage of sannyasa ashrama. It is permitted in kshetra sannyasa. There is another stage after sannyasa, which is kshetra sannyasa. I have left even sannyasa; I am completely independent and free. I may wear geru or not, I may wear black, red, I may wear anything. No rules like prohibition from eating certain foods or performing certain acts apply to me now. Otherwise, sannyasins are supposed to stay in ashrams and maths. From early times, Sanskrit has always been taught to sannyasins. This is compulsory for all sannyasins. There is usually a cowshed, a temple, etc., in every sannyasin's ashram.

We have three main sects in India: the Shakta, the Vaishnava and the Shaiva. The fourth is Udasin. The Udasin sect was founded some four or five hundred years ago by Shrichandra, the son of Guru Nanak. Shrichandra was a deeply devout man and he lived like Dattatreya. The community of sannyasins is divided into ten *akharas*, groups: Niranjani, Juna, Nirvani, Mahanirvani, Agni, etc. There are akharas for the Vaishnavas as also for the Udasins.

All these akharas were mutually opposing the influence of the Mughals. After the advent of the Muslim Mughals, the local rajas and maharajas started adopting their ways and lifestyle. Polygamy is accepted amongst Muslims, so it was convenient for the kings to follow suit, to eat and drink unrestrainedly, to eat mutton and chicken, to do this and that. When they started to become corrupt, there was opposition from some quarters. First it came from the bhakti movement with Surdas, Tulsidas, Keshavdas, Charandas, Mirabai, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, etc. Then the sannyasins began to establish the akharas, the foremost of which was the Juna Akhara. The Juna Akhara prepared the avadhutas. *Avadhuta* means those who stay naked. Whether it is cold or hot, whether they have fever or aches, they accept every condition and it has no effect on them. Their power of resilience is phenomenal. They would go from village to village and advice people so they would not convert to Islam.

The general meaning of 'akhara' is a place where people learn to fight, but in this context it means a resistance group whose aim is to reach every place and explain the situation to the people. Sannyasins began to go to the villages to provide spiritual sustenance to the people and protect the temples, which otherwise would be destroyed by the Muslims.

Niranjani Akhara, which is the akhara we belong to, is a very powerful akhara. All of Haridwar belongs to Niranjani Akhara. All the shops have been hired out on licence and do social service. When the war for Independence was being fought with the British, the Niranjani Akhara bought a warship. We people are a little slow to fight. We hang back because it is said that fighting should be the last resort. If there are other options available, why not try them? Sannyasins never participate in active politics at any period.

Tulsidas wrote the *Ramacharitamanas* during the Mughal period, but is there any hint of the political climate anywhere in the book? There were so many wise people then, there was Surdas and there was Mirabai, but there is no hint of politics in their writings at all. We sannyasins never enter the political arena. We are never high-profile. Mirabai left Chittor and went to Mathura, and she left Vrindavan and went to Dwarika. How did a single woman travel so far in those days? Mirabai was no fool. She could not travel so far and remain uninformed about the political world around her. She must have been well aware of what was happening in the world, but she did not write of it anywhere. She thought of showing the way to bhakti rather than merely distracting people. There was no point in rousing the people against the king, he would simply have you killed. Mirabai, Tulsidas, Surdas, Keshavdas and the other poets, they merely showed people the way to bhakti, for the Muslim rulers could not object to it. After all, in Islam, bhakti is very important. That is why we made our religion bhakti-predominant and not Veda-predominant. We did not reject the Vedas; we just paid more attention to bhakti.

It was during the Muslim rule that the biggest dispute of form versus formless was put to rest, and was thoroughly

explained. Islam believes in the formless God. They do not accept an idol of God; they do not even accept an incarnation of God. The Christian religion does not accept it either. They accept messiahs, divine messengers, or the son of God, but they do not accept an *avatara*, an incarnation of God. In our culture, Rama or Krishna were not messengers of God, they were God Himself. This understanding had to be saved too. If God is formless, then how can He incarnate? Rama was the son of a king, so how can he be God? There are always people who ask such questions. Their doubts were reconciled not through lectures, but through music.

Doubts were resolved through song and poetry, for the effect of poetry and song on the subconscious mind cannot be matched by the effects of prose and lectures. Four lines of a song can be easily memorized, but four lines of prose cannot be. Human memory grasps poetry easily, but it is not so with prose. The *Ramacharitamanas* can be read in full in one day, but I could not have done it had it been in prose. This is why the saints and sadhus of that time took recourse to poetry and song, picking up emotions that were relevant to the lives of the people, such as maternal love, romance, sorrow, despair, competition, separation, abduction. The *Ramacharitamanas* has been written in relation to such emotions.

The *Ramacharitamanas* has been written on a form of God, so did the Muslims not object?

He had not written it for the Muslims at all. Why would the Muslims read it? It was written for the ordinary Hindu people living in the rural villages. The emphasis of the Muslims on the idea of a formless or *nirakara* God and their criticism of worship of idols in temples only influenced the Indians who could not understand the manifest form, *sakara*. There are many sects, such as those who followed Kabir, who could not understand the sakara, the manifest God. Such people liked the attitude and behaviour of the Muslims towards idol worship.

Christian thought spread its influence in a similar way. The Christian way of thinking is not new to us. Serve, be compassionate, love, all this is already written in our scriptures. Every society has its poor, sick and the neglected. In India, wherever a man is found to be kind and compassionate, people like him. They took advantage of this fact. However, there has been no special philosophical, fundamental, or social contribution of the Christian religion to India. That is why it could not grow its roots very deep here. Neither could Christianity reach the higher rungs of society. It could not influence the elite.

The fundamental foundation of Christianity is sin. What God holds to be wrong is sin; what the law holds to be wrong is *aparadha*, a mistake. We are talking of sin here, not of mistake. They have made sin the very foundation, the very basic thing. You have heard the story of Adam and Eve. The Christians believe that except for Jesus the Messiah, everyone else is a child of sin. Jesus was born of an immaculate conception. Whether all these things are true or false is no concern of ours, but is this a rational philosophy? Is it logical that all of humankind is born of sin? Food, fear, sleep and sex, these are the basic drives of all living creatures, and you label these very drives as sin!

Swamiji, you talk of bhakti yoga. What aspects of that path should ordinary people like us adopt? For example, there is prayer, satsang, rituals, so what kind of practice would benefit us most? Or should a combination of practices be adopted?

Every individual should first look at their own routine, the availability of time, their own level of enthusiasm, their occupation. Then they should first participate in satsang and *swadhyaya*, introspection. Satsang is of two kinds. One is keeping company with the scriptures and holy books, and the other is company of saints and enlightened people. Satsang with saints is not always available, but one can always practise swadhyaya, introspection, and study the scriptures.

The *Bhagavad Gita* and *Ramacharitamanas* are considered to be the most important books for study in this day and age. These are also often explained to the public at large.

Besides these, saints such as Swami Vivekananda, Swami Sivananda and Swami Ramatirtha have written many books. Mahatma Gandhi has written very good books on bhakti. Vinoba Bhave has also written some. All these books should be read. Dongre Maharaj and Panduranga have also written many books on bhakti. The books of Sri Rama Kinkar Upadhyaya are very good. A great scholar of the *Ramayana*, he is now very old and living in Benares. He has written a critique on the *Ramacharitamanas* as well as the *Bhagavad Gita*. Each and every verse of the *Ramacharitamanas* has been explained very well by him. For example, on the basis of the verse *'Kankana kinkinee nupura dhuni suni'*, he has explained the basis of a man's attraction towards objects. The attraction that arose in Sri Rama's mind, the mood of romance and playfulness that was generated, was because of the tinkling sound of Sita's bracelets and anklets. That is how he explains it.

Books like these should be read, and after the study, one should have a short program of practices. At the same time, there should be no tension in the matter of spiritual practice. When the time is right, all practices fall into place. After all, can a girl become an old woman overnight? At sixteen she is a girl, at twenty years a youth, at thirty she will be an adult, at fifty a mature woman, and when she is sixty or seventy years old she will be an old woman. In one life it takes a person sixty or seventy years to grow old, then think how long it must take to grow old in sadhana. One lifetime is not enough; it takes several births.

One should practise sadhana without any expectation of results from its practice. After all, what is the fruit of sadhana? Do you know? Is it what is written in the books and what you believe? What you understand may be wrong. You only think according to the capacity of your brain.

In this age, the two practices that are best for sadhana are kirtan and japa. From time to time and if one feels like it, one

can have the darshan of God by going on a pilgrimage. Go to Gaya or to Deoghar, go to any place of pilgrimage. You can even go to the hilltop of Parasnath, what difference does it make? It is we who have created these differences. Everything is one; it is we who have stamped them with various labels.

A person should enter spiritual life slowly, gradually. Spiritual life is like academic life. Can you ascertain now what your daughter will do after she completes her education? No, you cannot ascertain anything now. You will say that she will become a doctor, but she may or may not agree to that. Nothing happens just because you or she says so. It all depends on how deserving she is, what her conditioning has been, what her capability is and what her basic *tattwa*, or fundamental principle is. Every individual has a basic tattwa that carries over from birth to birth, and the individual always walks according to that principle. It takes a long time to recognize and know that fundamental tattwa.

I have tried many paths. I have studied Vedanta, introspected, steadfastly practised pranayama at Gangotri, got high on bhang and ganja, but nothing happened. When I contemplated upon those experiences of God that I have had, I realized that I was not the doer at all. He was everything. Then I sat down to sing bhajans on the glory of God, and I found my way.

This means that my original basic tendency was towards bhakti, towards devotion and surrender. I could not actualize that surrender because there was ego. The pride of belonging to a high-placed family, the pride of belonging to an upper caste, the pride of being educated, the pride of being the disciple of a well-known guru and the pride of being an intellectual. There were many kinds of pride and ego. That is the fact of the matter. Now I understand that one does not actually have to do anything. He is already doing everything, so why are you beating yourself over the head? The train is running and you are running inside it! What is the need to run? Lie down. However, this thought did not strike me at the beginning. It strikes me now. Why? After a few experiences I realized that He is the doer, and I am not.

Do you advocate this path for everyone? Will this be the truth for everyone?

The truth for everyone is that they must find out for themselves what they can qualify for. This is the Kali Yuga where, barring a few exceptions, mostly everyone should adopt the way of bhakti. When a storm is blowing hard outside and the windows of the room are open, then a candle will not work. Even a lamp will not work, not even a tinder box. In such conditions only a hurricane lantern or a bulb will work. In the storm of Kali Yuga, your mind is always flying. You go to college, work in society, live with your family, so the mind is being assaulted by something or the other all the time. If you sit down for even a minute, the mind starts doing its rounds of the past, the present and the future. When the mind is unstable, when it is always easily distracted, how can you practise raja yoga? Will you forcibly practise brahmacharya? Will you force yourself to meditate? If you force yourself to meditate you will go mad. In the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* it is said (4:6):

Dvaa Suparnaa Sayujaa Sakhaayaa Samaanam Vriksham
Parishasva Jaate; Tayoranyah Pippalam Svaadvattyanah
Ashnannanyo Abhichaakasheeti.

> Two birds having very fine feathers, united in firm friendship, rested on the same tree. One of them eats delicious fruits from the tree while the other looks on without eating.

This body is a tree on which sits the *jivatma*, the individual spirit, and *Paramatma*, the Supreme Spirit, in the form of two birds. One sits on a lower branch and the other on a higher branch. The one below tastes the bitter fruit and spits it out. He thinks that the next fruit may be sweet. He tastes it and again spits it out. Then he starts on the third one. The bird above is watching him. The bird below says, "Friend, why don't you eat?" The bird above replies, "You eat, I am content to just watch you."

The allegory points to the fact that meditation has an effect on the nadis in your body, just as thoughts and emotions do.

After all, both the birds sit on the same tree. Fear affects the adrenal glands, carnal desire has an effect on the gonads. Every emotion, whether it is fear, desire or anger, affects the nerves, the psychic pathways and the endocrine glands. Meditation affects the stuff in the brain. The stuff inside the brain is like jelly. If shaken just a little, it moves a lot here and there. That is why it is so difficult for doctors to operate on a tumour in the brain. All these sensibilities are within that jelly-like substance. When the mind is being distracted, it is the jelly substance that is being distracted and there are lightning flashes happening in it. There are alpha, beta, theta and delta waves emanating from it. However, when you practise meditation forcibly you are opposing these electric frequencies.

If there is a lot of joy while meditating it means that you are going towards depression. There are two signs of a depressive state of mind: excessive joy and excessive sorrow. If there is a death in the house, if the house burns down, or there is some misfortune, then there is sorrow. Both happiness and sorrow take one towards depression. That is why the scriptures say to rise above both. While meditating, if a yogi experiences much joy, then he should beware.

I am speaking from experience. Joy experienced during meditation leads at once to depression. Always be aware of this. It is a scientific truth that whenever a man experiences a state of extreme bliss, signs of depression are born in the mind. Joy and sorrow both cause depression in man. So happiness is not a good thing either. Upon winning a lottery, you jump and dance, get very excited and open a bottle of champagne. All these are the first signs of depression.

Look at Europe, how much depression is there. Sweden, where they have solved many problems, still has the largest number of suicides. People from that country can live here at the ashram for three or four months, then a day before leaving they will call a friend there and say, "I am arriving on such and such date, have a job and a house ready for me." They come from the airport, drive straight to the house and report to work the next morning. Can anyone do that in India? In

a country with such security of home and employment, why should there be suicide? It is because they get so engrossed in their amusements that they go into depression. That is why the great men here say (*Bhagavad Gita*, 2:37): *Sukhaduhkhe same kritva labhalabhau jayajayau* – "In joy and sorrow, in gain and loss, in victory and defeat, keep the mind balanced."

The reason for saying all this is to point out that sadhana has an effect on the elements and the rhythms of the body. Not only does sadhana have this effect. If you were to feel fear now, adrenaline would begin to flow in the body and at once would begin to mix in the blood. If you were to be sexually excited, then sexual hormones would at once begin to flow. When maternal love is generated in a woman, so does the flow of breast milk. The state of mind and emotions definitely affect the body. Why does this happen? It is because both the birds are sitting on this same tree. One is called jivatma and the other Paramatma. Jivatma is located at mooladhara and Paramatma at sahasrara. Therefore, one should not be hasty and forcible while practising sadhana. The biggest thing to understand is that if God is doing everything, then let Him also do the sadhana. At this age, this is the conclusion I have reached. Everything that I have done was not done by me but by Him.

This does not mean that no effort is to be made. Pride is a peculiarity of man and he cannot be rid of it by contemplation. If you try to think yourself free of pride, it cannot happen. No thought or technique of contemplation can liberate you from pride. Even thoughts such as, 'I am nothing', 'I am the servant of God', 'Only God is the doer', cannot free you of ego. To be freed of pride, one needs to have experience of life.

Something needs to happen, something needs to be lost, only then you realize, 'Oh, I was wrong.' When something receded from my life, I realized that everything had been done by Him. I had not done a thing. Prior to this experience, I used to think that it was I who had accomplished everything. In every person's life, there are incidents when they receive

clear signs that the doer is someone else. It is either the fruit of something from a last birth, God's wish, or a decree of the Creator. From where did you get to claim that you are the doer? How did the puppet come to think that it is dancing?

Will such an event certainly occur in everyone's life?

Events and signs occur in everyone's lives, but generally people ignore them. When Ravana was fighting Dasharatha's forefathers, they died cursing him, saying that he would be killed by one born in their lineage, but Ravana ignored this. The fact that at the public ceremony he failed to win Sita's hand in marriage, while Rama was successful, was also something he ignored. Marich was exiled by Rama, but this was also ignored by Ravana. Such a great warrior was Ravana that the three worlds trembled in fear of him, yet he stole Sita like a common thief. He could have fought for her like a warrior, called a challenge, but due to circumstances and ignorance, people neglect such signal events in their lives.

When I left home, I first went to Rajasthan. A friend of mine, who I had studied with, lived there. She was in the medical profession and was married. I knew from before that she was on the spiritual path as she often talked of Sri Vidya and such subjects. I thought that she was the best person to meet. To find a guru I would first have to find out where to look. When I went there, she sent me to a holy man. I stayed with him for a while. He had a very big ashram. The holy man was very pleased to see me. He thought that since I was an educated young man I would make a fitting heir to him. However, I did not want to become an heir to any ashram. I had plenty in my own home. I left that place and went to Bareilly.

To this day, I cannot remember how I reached Rishikesh from Bareilly. I do not remember at all on which train I bought a ticket to Rishikesh or which class I travelled in. I remember only the last incident, meeting an old man in the waiting room. What we spoke of I do not remember. Maybe it was he who gave me the address in Rishikesh. When I became

conscious, I realized that I was sitting on a train in Luxor and a holy man with dreadlocks was sitting in front of me. The man was smoking a cigarette. It was nice to see him because I smoked cigarettes, too. I asked him for a smoke, to which he replied, "What, so young and smoking cigarettes? Where are you going?" I said, "I am going on this train, that's all." He said, "You want to be a sadhu, you want to become a disciple?" That was it. I got the address and God sent someone. What happened in between I do not know.

The point of the story is that when a man fails to understand certain signs, God then overrides his intellect and pushes him in the right direction. He had overridden my intellect for a little while. If it had been left up to my mind, I do not know where I might have gone from Bareilly. I would certainly not have gone to Rishikesh, because I did not know about it. I could have gone anywhere. Instead, He overrode my intellect and sent me to Rishikesh. I met a holy man who took me to Kali Kamli Wallah Dharmashala and said, "He has come to be a sadhu." The next morning I made my way to Kailash Ashram and found out that a great holy man lived next door who was learned and an ascetic, Swami Sivananda. I went there. I saw Swami Sivananda and knew from that first darshan that he was my guru.

Many incidents such as these happen to every human being in their life. This was one incident, let me tell you of another. In 1963 I had prayed to Lord Tryambakeshwar to help me for twenty years in my mission to propagate yoga, and I promised that after that I would leave everything and come to Him. A prayer and a promise were made. This is the rule of a boon, *manauti*. Whenever anything is asked for as a manauti, something of an equal value to the thing asked for must be promised in return. I promised equal return to that which I had prayed for.

The spread of yoga from 1963 to 1983 was tremendous, but I forgot that I had made the promise. I had already resigned from the presidentship of the Bihar School of Yoga, but I remained caught. In 1985 I was in a major road accident in

Australia. While I was driving, I noticed that the front bumper was shaking, and I hit the brakes hard without changing gears or using the clutch. That accident affected my heart, liver and gall bladder. My ribs were also hurt and I lost several teeth. It was such a serious accident that if I had been in India I could not have been saved. Swami Satsangi was with me. She was in the back and I was in the front. Within fifteen minutes I was in the emergency room and within three hours I had been operated upon. I was unconscious and there was little hope of my survival. I regained consciousness the next day, and then I stayed in the hospital for a month after that. I could not walk. I could not stand on my own two feet and I did not feel interested in anything. There was so much pain in my body that it pained if I turned one way and pained if I turned the other. My body hurt all over. I asked for a television in my room and ordered all kinds of films: English ones, Hindi ones, there would hardly be a film that I did not see during that time!

After that I went to the Philippines, and from there I returned to India. Upon returning to India I stayed at the Sun 'n' Sand hotel in Mumbai, but I did not inform anyone. I came silently and stayed put. Then one morning it struck me that Nasik was very close. I ordered a taxi and went to the Tryambakeshwar temple in Nasik. I entered the premises in a wheelchair. The deity in the temple is set in a subterranean section so one has to descend down steps. From above, when I bowed to the floor, a memory flooded my mind: I had promised that I would leave everything and come, but now it was not 1983, it was 1985, so I had been breaking my promise for the last two years.

That is when I thought, 'I will not stay in Munger for very long.' Just like an electric shock, this thought seared through me in an instant. Then I began to think of where I should go, what I should do. Engrossed in these thoughts I stood up and made my way straight to the car. Only after reaching the car did I realize that the wheelchair had been left behind! A man who previously could not stand had walked to the car. Then I realized that this was a divine experience, a sign from God.

Can anyone have a more tangible experience of God than this? It is not necessary for one to say, "O God, come in an unmanifest form", or "O God, appear in a manifest form", or "O God, appear as Devi or as Shiva." People are enchanted when they see a woman with their mundane vision and their sensory eyes, but Lord Rama had become romantic not upon seeing Sita, but 'upon merely hearing the tinkling of her bracelets and anklets' – *Kankana kinkinee noopura dhuni suni.* Similarly, even without seeing God one should be entranced by His play.

I recovered that very instant. I was completely all right. I went straight back to Bombay, bought a flight ticket for Patna and from Patna, took a car to Munger. I summoned Swami Niranjan in Munger and told him that I was leaving. In a few days I picked up my bag and set off from there. I travelled a lot here and there. After having travelled to all the places I wanted, and after having visited all the gods and goddesses, I reached Tryambakeshwar on 14th July. The priest there gave me a broken-down room in a *goshala*, cowshed, allotted for the Niranjani Akhara. I had the place repaired somewhat and cleaned it up. Then I stayed there for two months. I discarded my geru clothes and put on a loincloth and a mala.

There was a terrible storm on 16th July. Maybe some of you will remember that everything came to a standstill in Bombay for three days. I was sitting in the goshala with a storm raging within and a storm raging without. The mind just drowned, and a voice came. I had asked what I should do next, and in answer to my question came this voice saying, *Chah sau sahasa ikkisau japa* – "Six hundred thousand twenty-one hundred repetitions." I understood what had to be done and started at once.

The question then arose of where I would live. I could not live forever in the cowshed, as it belonged to the Akhara and there were rules to be followed there. There were many possibilities open to me: I had a cave in Gangotri; in Rishikesh my guru's ashram was big and they had offered to build me a hut; and there was an Akhara in Mt. Abu, where they offered

to cook my food and warmly invited me to stay. On the 8th September, however, I heard a voice, 'Chitabhumau', and I saw this place absolutely clearly, just as one sees something on TV. I called Swami Satsangi and told her to buy this place. She reached Deoghar on the 9th, found the land and started negotiations on that very day. In one or two days the land deeds were signed. I was informed on the 14th and set off on the 17th.

The point is that God's grace, when it happens, is absolutely unmistakable, but we often ignore it. For this reason one should constantly remain as alert as a watchdog so as to be able to understand and know God's mercy, God's play, God's glory and God's grace. We should not miss that experience. Many such incidents occur in life, but we miss all of them.

This is not an age for raja yoga. This is Kali Yuga. The paths of truth, non-violence, celibacy, yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, dharana, dhyana, samadhi, etc., are not for the ordinary people. Yes, they can be useful for the one or two exceptions, but in this age there are only two things that you can do easily: one is to repeat the name of God and the second is to be helpful to others. Other than these, there is no other way in this age. If a man says that he wants to practise hard sadhana, then let him give up everything and come and live with a strict guru who will beat him well.

This means that sadhana is not possible in a householder's life?

Only as much sadhana as is necessary for a householder should be done; only as much as is written in his practice program. Being a householder does not only mean being married, it is more than this: *Grihitva tishthati iti grihastha*. The verb *grih* means 'to grasp', and so *grihastha* means 'he who sits holding on to something'. Every man is holding on to his thoughts, wishes, desires and ambitions. He has his own fancies, likes and dislikes. This is applicable to all, married or unmarried, grihastha or sannyasi. While this is so, do not

take the vihangam path or the solitary road. Rather, take the pipilika path trodden by others.

There are two paths one can take to achieve life's goal. One is that of the *pipilika*, the ant, where you keep on walking and walking, like an ant. The second is the *vihangam path*, flying like a bird. In this Kali Yuga there is only the *pipilika path*, the path of the ant, available to all of mankind for reaching God. The vihangam path is for those whose wings are strong, those who can withstand the commanding attraction of maya, who can battle desire, anger, arrogance, attachment, wishes and ambitions. Maya is the primary drive of human life. After all, it is by maya that you are bound, are you not? You can call it maya, attachment or desire. There is always one thing that every human clings on to. If you are a mother, then you are clinging on to the children. If not children, then you are holding on to the father. If not that then you are holding on to money. If there is not even that, if there is nothing, then you will hold on to some enmity. The mind always holds on to something, somewhere. When this tendency drops, only then will the strength develop to oppose the strong attraction of maya. Only then will the path of Dattatreya, Shukadeva, Shankaracharya and Paramhamsa Ramakrishna, the path of the vihangam, the path of the bird, be suitable for you. At the moment you do not come into that category, that much is certain.

Swamiji, there is a lot of change in what you say now and what you said in the yoga books printed by the Bihar School of Yoga.

No, there is no contradiction. At that time, whatever I said was not meant primarily for Indians. Every thought on yoga that I expressed then was in places like Australia, Europe and America. To teach the path of bhakti there would have reminded the people of religion. The young people there consider the fundamental principles of religion, which are 'God is everything' and 'God is everywhere', to be silly. They believe they do everything themselves. They say, "We have made the satellites, the electricity, we have made the

aeroplanes, and we have made the atom bomb." People there consider self-effort to be God. They do not ascribe much importance to God's grace.

To repeat the same thing to such people would have been the wrong thing. I did not want to do that. So I taught them raja yoga, because yoga is very scientific. All kinds of sciences, social, physical, spiritual and medical, are integrated into it. How the nerves and glands are regulated through asana, pranayama, mudra and bandha, and how the electrical frequencies of the brain can be regulated, this is all technical. The countries of the West needed something scientific. If you want to attract a dog you will offer him meat, and if you want to attract a cow you will offer her green grass. I wanted to give those people something new. I did not want to give them the old religious feed of 'God is everything' and 'God does everything'. I did not want to say all that.

From the very start I discussed raja yoga: yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, dharana, dhyana and samadhi, and then hatha yoga. When I started talking on hatha yoga, I also began speaking on science: glands, nerve plexuses, alpha-beta-delta-theta waves, the techniques of tantra, ida, pingala and sushumna. When I began talking about all of this, they understood. Alongside this, I began talking of mantra because the western culture considers tantra to be a great science. Those people are greatly enthralled by tantra. Ajit Mukherjee's book on tantra is sold to thousands. Millions appreciate the sculptures of Khajuraho.

In August, thousands of westerners come to Jagannath Puri to touch the rope during the *Rath Yatra*, the Chariot Festival. I did not know about this until I met the wife of the Swedish ambassador. She told me that she had just called her son over from London. I asked the reason, and she replied that the Rath Yatra was going to take place soon. She was urging her son to come and pull the rope so that he would receive a blessing that is said to last a lifetime.

Foreigners have a lot of trust in tantra. That is the reason why foreigners did not reject the teachings of Acharya

Rajneesh. They said that he was right. Acharya Rajneesh has greatly opposed Christianity, but he did not oppose Freud because Freud's psychology agrees with the principles of tantra. That is why tantra is not considered 'bad' in foreign countries; they are not afraid of tantra and do not consider it inauspicious. What happens in tantra? *Pancha makara*, which are also called the five elements. Pancha makara consists of the use of wine, meat, fish, sexual intercourse and mudra. Freudian psychology completely agrees with this. The Christian culture is non-existent today in the western world, be it America, England, Germany or France. What exists there today is the culture of Freud.

That is why what I had said then is not contradictory. If your child does not want to eat roti, then you cannot force him do so. First find out what it is that he does want to eat. If he has a taste for sweet or sour or spicy, make him a roti like that. My discourses and satsangs at that time were aimed at a society that had already turned its back on its own religion. The girls and boys there do not live like Christians. They do not know what a Christian priest is like. Once, a priest was passing through Florence. He asked a young man for the location of a certain hotel. The boy asked, "Who are you?" he said, "I am a priest." Then the boy asked, "What work do you do?" So he said, "I tell you God's address." The young man said, "You know the way to God, but do not know the way to your hotel!" This was just a joke, but the mentality there has become somewhat like that.

It is due to this mentality that if the desire to practise sadhana, meet a guru, or have satsang awakens in someone from the western countries, they come to India and do not go to the Vatican. A person like this will shave his head if you tell him to, will wear geru clothes if you say so, will also change his name if you tell him to do so, but he will not become a Christian.

For such people, Swami Satyananda was inspired by God to teach them science. Not Vedanta, not karma yoga, not even bhakti yoga, because these are people with a scientific,

technical bent of mind. Raja yoga is pure science; it can be proven. What is the effect of truth versus untruth, hoarding versus non-possessiveness, restraint versus indulgence and violence versus non-violence on man's mind, body, nerves, psychic pathways, digestion, glands, hormones, and his sympathetic and para-sympathetic nervous systems? Today, all these questions can be answered from a scientific point of view, which can be easily understood by these people. Now I have started to speak on bhakti, which is also being accepted. First you catch the sparrow, then you clip its wings.

There are many people in India whose thinking and lifestyles are quite western. What is your message to them?

Such people are very low in numbers. It would not even be 0.0001 percent. There have always been different kinds of people living in India. Here, there have even been Charvakas, materialistic philosophers, who stated very clearly:

> *Yaavat jeevet sukham jeevet rinam kritvaa ghritam pibet;*
> *Bhasmeebhootasya dehasya punaraagamanam kutah.*
>
> For howsoever long you live, live in pleasure; borrow if you like, but partake of the best; this body turns to ashes on its demise, where is the possibility of rebirth?

Eat, drink, make merry, and if need be, borrow and make merry. This is the principle of the Charvakas. Buddha was here as well as Mahavir, and both rejected God. Then there were the Naiyayikas, who had to prove God. Is God something to be proved? *Yatra dhoomah tatra vahnih* – "Where there is smoke, there is certainly a fire." Wherever there is a child, its mother will surely be around. Where there is creation, there will surely be God. God is already proven, where is the need to prove Him? Even a fool will say that God exists.

Stop worrying about India, the soil here is something else. There are no atheists here. There are atheists here in name only. Was Mahavir an atheist? He spent his life as a sadhu and did not even wear a loincloth. Now would you call a man like

that an atheist? Was Buddha really an atheist? He ate once in twenty-four hours and went to beg for alms until he was an old man. Would you call a man like that an atheist? No, you do not have to worry about people in India. Here, if a father is an atheist, the son will be a theist and compensate for the father. However, in the countries west of Istanbul, where the rise of scientists happened and where the Greek philosophy has been popular, materialism is everything. What is matter? What are the elements in it? How can it be defined? What kind of energy is contained in matter? Is it animate or inanimate? Is it one unit or many? To attract countries that have only researched matter toward the vedic culture can only be done by raja yoga. No other yoga can do it.

Today medical science is saying that we can create a child through cloning; we do not need a human being to do it. They say that they are the creators of life. A country whose people can say something like this cannot be shaken up by only saying, "Bhakti, bhakti." That is why other people have been unsuccessful in the West.

God gave Swami Satyananda the idea to teach just this. You will be surprised to know that I have never studied yoga. I have not studied the *Goraksha Samhita*, the *Gheranda Samhita* or the *Yajnavalkya Samhita*. I have only heard the names. However, the One who said it, had it said by my mouth. I am just a gramophone record. My subject has been Vedanta. In India, sannyasins are only taught the Vedas. We only study Advaita Vedanta, commentaries by Shankaracharya and Ramanujacharya and the *Sribhashya*, and not in English or Hindi, but in pure Sanskrit. I speak Sanskrit better than I do English or Hindi. My basic language is Sanskrit. I have studied everything in the Sanskrit language. However, I neither spoke nor wrote on Vedanta. God put it in my head that hatha yoga and raja yoga are the only way. It is wrong to compare Europe to India. The young people there are educated; their society is different. They look at things differently. Until you examine or prove a thing scientifically, they will not accept it.

Satsang 9

20 October 1997

A village home

Here, in the village, most houses are made of mud, and personal wealth is very little. India is an old civilization and the people here remember history very well. They know that at any time there can be war, as when the country was partitioned. Suddenly, millions of people were displaced in Bangladesh and Pakistan. For a man of great wealth and a big house, it is a huge loss to leave it all.

Many other nations are suffering the same situation. A migration is underway in Africa. The boat people of Vietnam are being displaced on a large scale. People from Burma have fled to Thailand, and people have fled from Uganda, Serbia and Bosnia. At the beginning of this century, people fled from Russia and China. This matter of people leaving one place for another always goes on in the world. It is a historical truth that, whether for political reasons or unemployment, millions of people will leave one country and go to another. If people put all their money in building permanent homes and they suddenly must leave it all, they stand to lose all their savings. That is the reason why ninety percent of people in India live in houses such as you see here in the village. Houses all over India are the kind you see around here, whether in Orissa, Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra or Madras. In some places straw is used, in others bamboo, cane or wood. Not only is this seen in India, this is so all over Africa, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and China.

There are many reasons for an exodus of people from one place to another, for instance, natural calamities such as

earthquake and floods, and political and economic calamities. All the Jews who are in Israel today were displaced from Kashmir. The Himalayas were at one time a sea; it was all a big sea stretching from Kashmir to Arunachal Pradesh. At that time, present-day India existed in two parts, North and South India. South India was in the middle of the ocean. Many thousands of years ago, the mountains arose and the sea disappeared. The mountains did not rise overnight; it must have taken a few thousand years. In the meantime, people kept on leaving, as more and more became displaced.

That is why in the rural areas, village housing will remain the same. No government or institution can make the number of houses you will need for so many villages. If they do build they will have to use mud, they cannot do it with cement. There would not be enough cement in the world to make so many permanent houses in India.

In the villages, whether in England, Switzerland or Ireland, houses are made of mud. Wood is placed in the shape of a cross in the building of a house and mud is rammed in between. If you go to Greenland or Alaska, houses are made of bands of ice. The ice there is as strong as the rocks here. They cut it with a chisel and hacksaw. They cut sections of ice, make pillars out of it, then make a house. They light a fire inside for warmth. The fire is kept lit twenty-four hours, and an iron grill is kept over the fire with pieces of seal meat hung over it. This keeps gently cooking over the fire. They eat their meat in this way. To catch the seal, they make a well-like hole so they can access the water under the ice and kill the seals with spears. Then they put it on the roof. Whenever it is needed, pieces of it are hung over the iron grill. They do not even salt it; they just eat it straight. This is village life I am talking about.

It is like this all over the world. For someone to imagine, or even for the villagers to imagine, that the government is going to build houses for them, is unrealistic. Some houses were built under the aegis of Indira Awas Yojana, but just to garner votes. They get millions sanctioned, then they give a

little to this one and a little to that one. There are all kinds of ways for this kind of earning and everyone knows it, but who will speak out? Whatever money comes from the government for the Indira Awas Yojana is siphoned off by the people in the middle. Still, dishonest people can never be happy; disease enters their house, maybe somebody's son will die, someone may get cancer or tuberculosis. Not one among those who make money dishonestly is happy. Someone's wife is sick, someone else has heart trouble, there is insanity in someone's house, marital strife in another's, somewhere there is a lawsuit between brothers. All this happens because of dishonesty.

In a family of a wife, husband and two children, a thousand rupees is enough. If you could find a job paying a thousand rupees, you would be able to look after your family very well. I am not talking of Bombay but here, in the village. It is not a lot, but you would be able to make do. If you can earn two or three thousand rupees a month then that will be more than enough. A person who drives an auto rickshaw here easily earns about thirty-five to forty thousand rupees a year. Earning this much is enough for one family, but he will not be able to save. Why not? If the child becomes sick, he has to take it to a doctor and two hundred rupees are gone. If his wife has a tumour in her stomach then at first the man in Deoghar will take a few hundred, then he will have to go to Calcutta where he will have to part with a few thousand. Half the year's salary will be spent like this. He starts drinking because of this burden of sorrow. A happy man will never take to drink. A man drinks to suppress sorrow, to numb the pain in his mind.

One of the school teachers' daughter-in-law here was also saying that their home runs on a thousand rupees a month, can two families manage with this amount?

Yes, I know, because we keep accounts here. We are ten or twelve people living here. I know how much we spend per person on flour, dal, rice, vegetables. Here in the village, an ordinary man can look after his whole family on a thousand

rupees. There are people though who do not do that, they are dishonest and cheat others. For example, they will not pay their phone bills, instead they will bribe the linesman with a little money and make calls wherever they like. I was told to do the same in Munger, but I said, "No, I cannot do that. The day we do not have the money, we will not stay here, we will go. We will live within whatever God sends us." This has been my principle throughout life.

Here, if you go into any house you will find some problem or the other. Someone has a lawsuit against them, someone is being fired from his job, someone's daughter-in-law has died, someone else's daughter has eloped, someone has been murdered, someone else has tuberculosis, in yet another house the son is insane. All these sorrows are the fruit of a man's karmas. These fruits belong alike to the rich and the poor, but no one looks at these things. People think that if they are sick, the cure lies with the doctor. If the doctor had the cure then no one should have been ill in the US today. The US has great doctors and specialists. If we accept and live on the premise that a person who has money is happy, then Americans with so much wealth, should be the happiest people. They would not come with their bag and baggage to touch the feet of a loincloth-clad person like me.

Sweden is the world's best welfare state, then why does it have such a high suicide rate? Why are people unhappy in a country where a job and a house can be had so easily? People are well-educated in Europe. Their youth are well-educated. They find jobs easily and they earn money easily. Nobody goes hungry there because everyone gets enough for their livelihood. Despite having all this, why do their people come here, shave their heads and live in ashrams?

They come for peace of mind and for the right way of living. Right living means that a man should get two rotis in the morning and two in the evening, a small child should get milk, a pregnant woman should be nourished properly. The clothes may be worn-out and old, but there should be a roof over one's head, that much is necessary. These may be called

the 'basic necessities'. One who subsists on this much is happy. Foreigners live in three or four-storeyed houses, their homes have a refrigerator, a TV, a washing machine, a dishwasher, a mixer, a microwave oven, they have everything. Then why do they cry? It is said, and I have seen it myself, that people in these countries cannot sleep without sleeping pills. While the most simple and the easiest thing to do in the world is to sleep.

What you call happiness and sadness are just perspectives of looking at the world. For everything, a man can have either a positive point of view or a negative one. Sorrow is the name of a negative state of mind. Sorrow and joy are not caused by external circumstances, bear this in mind. All great men say this. If the father dies, son dies, mother dies, daughter dies, if there is sickness, poverty, this is not sorrow. Sorrow lies in a man's mind. Sorrow and joy, both are terms used for states of mind, for two perspectives.

Imagine that some man is my friend, but we have had a falling out. He has become my enemy. Now, if his offspring dies, will I be happy or sad? Happy. Was the reason for the joy or sorrow linked with the death of the offspring or with my own relationship? Sorrow and joy are linked with relationships, and that is why attachment is the first cause of joy or sorrow. Attachment means possessiveness, a sense of 'mine-ness'. Attachment is the cause for happiness as well as unhappiness. If anything happens to those you consider your own, you will experience joy or sorrow. If anything happens to those you do not consider your own, it will not have any effect, neither joy nor sorrow. When a man understands this, then he attains real happiness:

Godhan, gajadhan, vaajidhan aur ratnadhan khaan,
Jaba mile santosh dhan, sab dhan dhoori samaan.

The wealth of cows, elephants, horses and jewels is a mine indeed; when the wealth of contentment is received, every wealth seems like dirt.

Our rishis and munis, Jesus Christ, Prophet Mohammed and others have said the same thing: contentment is true happiness. When I lived in Rishikesh fifty years ago, I just had a blanket and I slept on the floor. I had no bed or any furniture. I would get up in the morning, bathe, read or write something, then I would set off at 9 am with my torn dhoti and bowl. The Kali Kamliwalas ran a kitchen where free food was served. Sadhus were given *bhiksha*, alms, there. They gave four substantial rotis and a big spoon of dal. That was it. I would just sit on the banks of the Ganga and eat my food, completely happy. If the same thing were to happen to you, you would be unhappy.

One needs to understand the origin of joy or sorrow. Once one has control over joy and sorrow, one does not need anything. The palace or the street, it is all the same. After all, why are so many people from America, Europe, Japan and Australia spread out over India? They number in thousands, and they are all young people between the ages of fifteen to twenty, coming and going through ashrams from Kashmir to Kanya Kumari. Why? They have all the conveniences in their country that the majority in India do not have and who consider themselves unhappy for the lack of it. Now tell me, is joy and sorrow connected to wealth and material goods, or something else? You do not have these things and feel unhappy. They have these things and still they feel unhappy.

There are some in Acharya Rajneesh's ashram, some at Sivananda ashram, some at Ramakrishna Mission and some are at Swami Muktananda's. Some learn yoga, some learn bhajan and kirtan, some learn the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Some do manual labour, some till the fields. Our Swami Vedananda labours hard all day long and what food does he get? Dal, rice, roti in the day, and roti-tadka in the evening, that is all. He does not get anything else. In his country even a pig will not eat this food. There, bread and butter, cornflakes, a glass of fruit juice and coffee are all taken at one go, and that is only breakfast. They change their clothes five times a day, go to a salon to have their hair done every week, apply some cream here, some medication there. They do not drink water; they

drink beer. They will go dancing at the club in the evening. Yet, when a man leaves all this and comes to this path, he considers himself happy. This means that happiness lies in a man's soul. There is no happiness in the senses. There is no happiness in wishes and desires, and no happiness in achievements and gains. Happiness is the form of the soul. One whose soul is happy is truly happy.

This is something to understand properly. You may live anywhere in the world. You may own many things: a good car, a good house, a good wife and children. You may have everything, but remember: happiness cannot be had from material things. Happiness is born in and from the mind. There is happiness in a life of simplicity, but such life should be out of choice and not out of need. The people of the village have a simple life, but it is a cause of discontentment to them. The sadhus who live in Rishikesh, Uttarkashi and Badrinath are even poorer than these people. What is the true definition of poverty? Whom would you call poor?

If you call yourself poor, then tell me, why did you get married to begin with? Even if you did get married, why did you have children? Even if you did have a child, why did you raise him to waste money? Make your child work from childhood. He will earn twenty-five to thirty rupees daily. He will push a handcart, drive a rickshaw, drive a tractor, be a coolie at the railway station. Let him do any work. After passing from university or college, will anyone do manual labour?

Bharat felled Hanuman with an arrow when he was flying with the Sanjivani herb in hand. He found out who Hanuman was at that time. Then, after the battle of Lanka when Hanuman brought the news of Sri Rama's arrival, why did Bharat not recognize him?

When Hanuman was felled by the arrow, he was in the form of a monkey and when he carried the news of Sri Rama's arrival he was in the guise of a brahmin. That is why Bharat asked him who he was. Hanuman could wear many guises. He had the boon to change form at will.

In one or two places in the *Ramayana* it is said that it is on the strength of his *tapas*, austerities, that Vishnu sustains the world, and it is on the strength of his austerities that Shiva destroys it. What is the definition of this tapas? How is it done? What kinds of people are permitted to practise this?

Just as 'karma' is a generalized term, so is 'tapas'. Karma does not have a particular meaning. Any action is called karma. Whether you write, read, speak, till the field, drive a car, fly an aeroplane, or fire a gun, these are all karmas. Similarly, tapas also takes various forms.

Generally, yogis bearing cold and heat, fasting, standing on one leg, etc., are said to be practising tapas. However, tapas is also something else, as is mentioned in the *Bhagavad Gita* (17:14) where Sri Krishna talks of three kinds of tapas: physical, mental and verbal. What is physical tapas?

> *Devadwijaguruprааjna poojanam shauchamaarjavam;*
> *Brahmacharyamahimsaa cha shaareeram tapa uchyate.*
>
> Devata, brahmins, guru and the wise should be listened to and revered; pure living, talking clear and straight, not cheating, being celibate and non-violent, these are parts of physical tapas.

Sri Krishna has referred to all the three categories of tapas. What you think of as tapas, such as bearing the cold of the Himalayas or the heat of panchagni, is one meaning of tapas. When God wants to bring about creation, He also undergoes labour of this sort. He goes to the Himalayas not to practise tapas, but to labour. *Tapas* means 'hard labour', wherever it may be. Don't they say that being a householder is very hard tapasya, meaning it is very hard work? So, whatever has been said about God doing tapas has been said in this context.

'Keep a rein on your tongue', what does this mean? Does it mean to speak honestly?

The tapas of speech is to read the shastras, to speak little, to speak correctly, and not to trouble anyone. It is very difficult

to accomplish. You get angry and lose control of speech. Whatever is tough, is tapas. Whatever becomes easy does not remain tapas. When you climb it is difficult, when you descend it is not difficult any more. If you roll a stone, it rolls down by itself. It is not difficult. However, when you have to pick up a rock and carry it on your shoulders, it is not easy. In simple words, tapas means hard, gruelling work.

What is the connection between brahmacharya, celibacy and sadhana?

Carnal desire is the energy that most influences the mind of a human being, just as the leaves and the tree shake when the wind blows. When the wind blows very hard trees bend a little, and when a storm comes they even break. Carnal desire is like a storm; when it comes nothing else exists in the mind, nothing else remains in the mind. *Brahmacharya* means to remain constantly in the state of Brahman – *Brahmani charati iti brahmacharyah. Brahman* means *Paramatma*, the Supreme Soul. The mind being engrossed constantly in Paramatma, in higher awareness rather than the mundane, is brahmacharya.

It is said here that brahmacharya should be observed until the age of twenty-five. This strengthens the sexual glands and the brain, the mind becomes capable of one-pointed concentration and is never depressed. This is essential for the body, mind and the soul. If this is not followed, then the mind remains shaky. Desire causes anger in the mind. Desire is the reason for anger. One who is free of the desiring tendency is never angry. Sri Krishna has said in the *Bhagavad Gita* (2:62–63):

Sangaat sanjaayate kaamah kaamaatkrodho'bhijaayate;
Krodhaadbhavati sammohah sammohaatsmritivibhramah;
Smritibhramshaad buddhinaasho buddhinaashaat pranashyati.

> From desire anger is born, from anger attachment, and attachment causes reason to be lost. Loss of reason causes disasters and in the end all is destroyed.

Brahmacharya is very important in sadhana; there is no doubt about that. Siddhas and holy men have been saying this from ancient times.

Does the word 'kama' here refer to common desire or carnal desire?

Kama means wish or desire. Desires are of three kinds, the first is *putraishana*, desire for progeny, the second is *vittaishana*, desire for wealth, and the third is *daraishana*, desire for carnal relations. Everybody has these three kinds of desire. Amongst these, daraishana is the strongest.

If these desires were missing in a man then he would remain a vegetable. Man acts because of desire. If you did not wish for a son, did not wish for wealth, did not desire a woman, would you work at all? All the effort you make in life today, all the twenty-four hours, is propelled by desire. There is some wish or another behind every act. If God were to put an end to these desires in man, then man would become actionless. Not to act will destroy creation. Therefore, God created desire in man and man started to perform action: he kept a wife, had children and made a home. At first he made a hut, then a house and then a hundred-story skyscraper. At first we travelled by bullock or horse carts, after that seafaring vessels, then by train and aeroplanes. Not being satisfied with all this, man then started to go to the moon and to Mars. The point here is that man desires, and because of desire he has dreams and then he works to fulfil them. It is this desire or wish that is called kama. This kama is the basis of creation.

Swamiji, if brahmacharya has such an essential place in sadhana, then should married people not practise sadhana?

Of course they can practise. I said that brahmacharya was essential up to the age of twenty-five. Then comes grihastha ashrama for twenty-five years. At that time, sadhana is of a different kind. There are some sadhanas that can be practised only in conjunction with brahmacharya and there are others that are practised in a marital context. Sadhanas are of two

kinds: one is bhakti sadhana and the other is yoga sadhana. Yoga does not mean the ordinary practice program. Kundalini is raised in yoga and brahmacharya is required for that.

Our rishis and munis have written in the Vedas, and still say today, that no one has the right to complete, unbroken, total celibacy. The right to *naishthika brahmacharya*, selective celibacy, is for sadhakas. Selective celibacy means that you are married but observe restraint on certain occasions. The shastras call these special occasions *ashoonya shayan vrat*. The *panchanga*, the almanac, specifies the dates of ashoonya shayan vrat. This means to sleep alone. There are special days designated when it is essential for a person to observe celibacy. The days have been decided based on the movements of the planets, etc. This is called naishtika brahmacharya or selective celibacy, when it is observed as a discipline and practised with faith and sincerity.

There is something to be kept in mind here. In our vedic shastras, sexual relations between a man and woman have never been considered a sin. Christianity calls it a sin, but it is not so with us. We have been told that this drive is the most primary, dominant and the strongest among all drives in all creatures, and that it should be regulated and disciplined. That is why the householder needs to observe ashoonya shayan vrat. There are some rules to it. For instance, you decide on an observance for nine days. This is called selective celibacy.

Besides this, there is kalpa brahmacharya. If you were to go on a pilgrimage or to the Kumbha Mela, then for a definite period, a *kalpa*, you would observe celibacy. From time to time, different views on the subject have been presented. Then there is the most difficult of them all, tantric brahmacharya. Nobody will even tell you about that.

Brahmacharya is not such a simple subject. If you talk to a nuclear physicist about an atom bomb, certainly he will tell you something, but he is talking about a deep subject, not an ordinary one. He may say some things about nuclear physics, but he will certainly not teach you to build an atom

bomb. Similarly, to regulate and channelize sexual energy is a very important matter, and it is a very difficult matter. The rate of success is very low. Great sadhus and mahatmas have slipped on the path. Rishi Narada got into such trouble. So, a householder must sincerely observe the rules for householders as they have been set out and prescribed in the shastras.

Swamiji, you said that complete, unbroken brahmacharya or *akhanda* brahmacharya, was not the right of anyone. What is that akhanda brahmacharya?

Just as you have an akhanda deepak when it is lit and stays lit, so *akhanda* means that which is not broken.

Is Shankaracharya not considered to be an akhanda brahmachari?

He will not be accepted as an akhanda brahmachari because he was an avatari purusha, a man who was an incarnation. Gyandeva, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Swami Vivekananda, were all avatari purushas. What does *avatara* mean? Suppose you are a man who lives in Bombay and one day somebody asks you to play a role in a film that is being made next door. You go and play the role and in the course of that, you get married and have children; yet you have not violated your celibacy. Avatari purushas come only to enact a *leela*, a play. If an avatari purusha gets married it is part of the play; if they have children it is part of the play; if they steal it is part of the play; whatever they do, it is part of the play. That is why this rule is not applicable to avatari purushas.

An avatari purusha means a man who has been born with a part of God in him to fulfil a particular mission on earth. He is a messenger of God. God has sent him in the form of a messenger to go and do a piece of work and return. That is why to ask why they were a certain way or not a certain way, or why did Prophet Mohammed marry, or why did Jesus behave as he did, is all meaningless. Avatari purushas descend at a particular time, perform a certain task and then depart. Ordinary people do not understand this.

When Shankaracharya arrived, a political upheaval was underway because of Buddhism, and the political scenario was very grim. When Gandhiji appeared, the Indian people were thirsting for freedom, but could not see the way. There were no guns, no cannons, no educated people. The educated elite sided with the British. The people said burn the British, kill them, lock them up in dungeons. This is what people were saying and doing, but no one could see the way ahead.

Mahatma Gandhi was an avatari purusha; he came with a thought, did the job, and went away. Supposing Gandhiji had not come and Subhash Chandra Bose had arrived with his Azad Hind Fauj, what would we have done then? Their 303 rifles would not have worked with the British. After all, the British force had defeated the mighty German army, so they would have made short work of the Azad Hind Fauj. The British would not have proved weak in that arena, but faced with Gandhiji they fell short, because Gandhiji discovered their weakness.

To defeat an enemy, do not look at your own strength, rather look for your enemy's weakness. Gandhiji did not weigh his own strength, he weighed the weakness of the British, and South Africa was his first experiment. There, he measured his enemy's weakness. That is why he was never in agreement with Subhash Chandra Bose and the other revolutionaries. He always repeated 'ahimsa' like a mantra. Alongside, he would talk about the upliftment of the *harijans* or the untouchables, widow remarriage and basic literacy, for he knew that the mistreatment of the lower classes by the upper castes is wrong. His dream for the betterment of the untouchables has been realized today. His movement for home-grown cloth was very good. Every single act of Gandhiji was an attack on the British rule, whether it was the salt issue, satyagraha or something else. He was indeed an avatari purusha.

Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Swami Vivekananda, and all the avatari purushas before and after them have descended with one glorious attribute of God, performed their work and departed. They are not concerned with anything else. We have

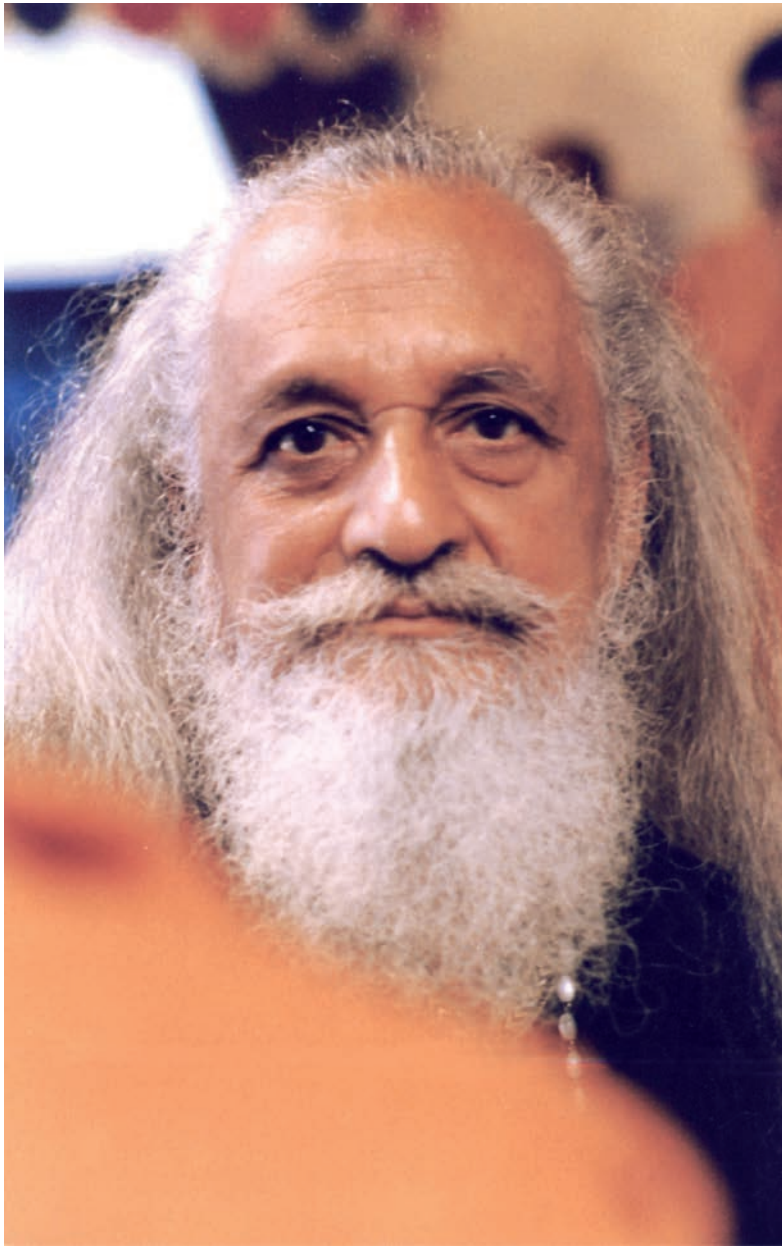
taken birth to enjoy the fruit of our last birth, but they have not come to enjoy any fruit of any life. They are designated for a certain task. They return as soon as they finish the job. Therefore, the question of titles like akhanda brahmacharya does not arise with such people. Ramakrishna Paramahamsa was even married, but would you call him a grihastha or a brahmachari?

If God has given birth to everyone, then what is this difference in the avatari purusha?

No, everyone is not made by God. Everyone has been made by Prakriti. By himself Ishwara is actionless and Prakriti is his partner. *Ishwara*, God, has three energies or *shaktis*: iccha shakti, kriya shakti and jnana shakti. It is these three energies that are responsible for the creation, sustenance and destruction of the world. For instance, the director of the factory does nothing at all; he sits in the head office, a non-doer, not participating. He only calls meetings. All the work is done by the labourers, the workers. Now tell me, who actually runs the factory, the labourer or the director? Some will say the labourers and some will say the director. The same principle applies to God and creation.

Then who is the labourer here?

Just as any institution has various departments, all of creation is divided into working departments. These are headed by the three energies: iccha shakti, kriya shakti and jnana shakti. Iccha shakti is inseparable from God while kriya shakti and jnana shakti are separate from him. *Kriya shakti* has many names like Prakriti, Maya and Nature. It is this kriya shakti that creates the world. This world is a created by the mixture of the five elements and the three gunas. Now this has many rules governing it, such as the law of gravity, the law of electricity. Under the aegis of Prakriti, other energies do all this work. There is a very big plan behind this enormous cosmos that you see and you do not see, and to understand that we come upon names like Kubera, Yama, Varuna, Maruta

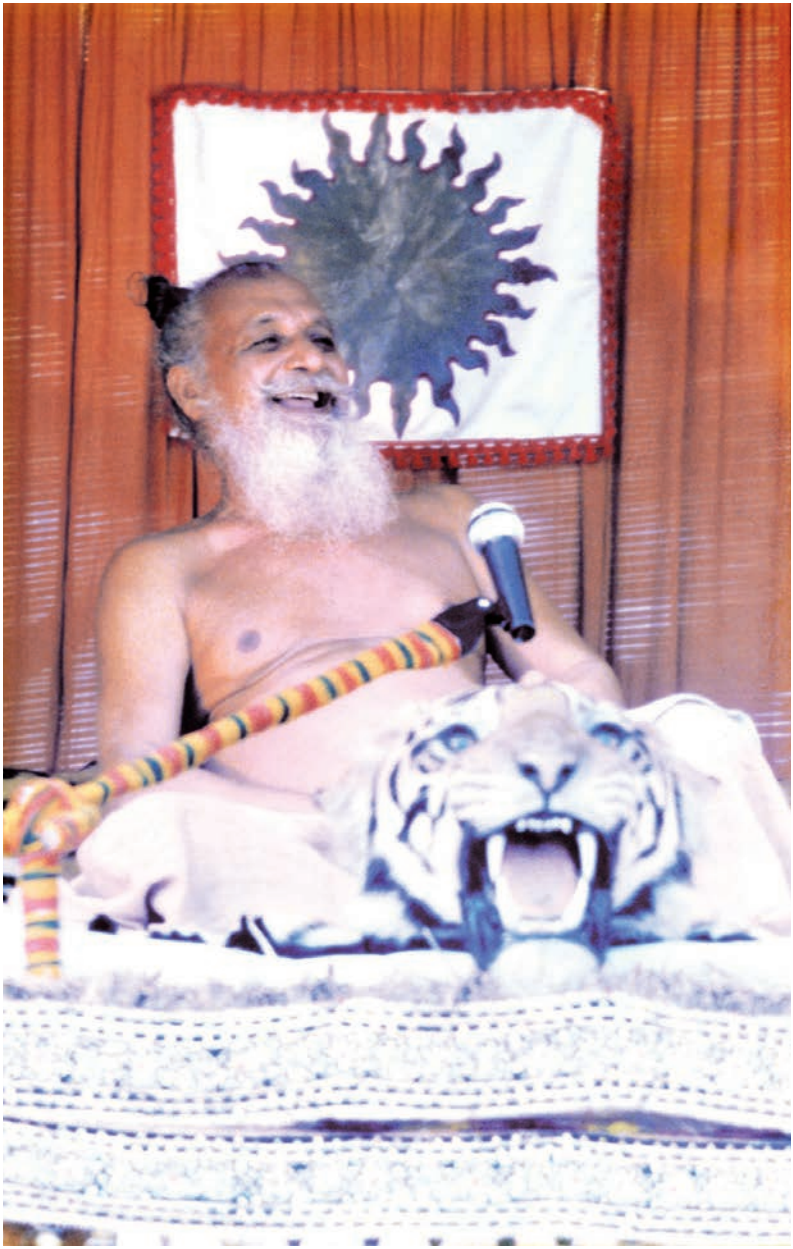












and Agni. These are the *digpala*, the guardian deities of the different quarters, who look after the various departments. Their names occur in the Puranas and also in routine worship. This is the reality of creation.

Whatever we study in the natural sciences, whether it is plants, minerals or gases, there is a nucleus, a centre somewhere. Imagine there is a big typhoon in the Bay of Bengal; it will have a centre from where the typhoon gains strength. If you disturb the centre of the storm, then the storm will dissipate. A storm is a reaction wherein the air goes round and round, but where did it originate, where is its starting point, what started it, what is the reason for it? Why did the low pressure or the depression, as we call it, happen? All these things, which are explained in the physical sciences, we also explain in spiritual terms by giving the energies the names of gods and goddesses.

The term 'Bhagavan' is used for God, who is the creator, the owner and the director of creation. It is wrong to use the term Bhagavan, as it gives an idea of the masculine and if you say *Bhagavati*, it gives an idea of the feminine. Is God male or female? The shastras say that God is neither male nor female. It neither walks nor runs. It is here and also there. In the very first Upanishad, the *Ishavasya Upanishad*, it is written (v. 5):

Tadejati tannaijati taddoore tadvantike;
Tadantarasya sarvasya tadu sarvasyaasya baahyatah.

> That moves and also does not move. That is the farthest and also the nearest. That is present within this whole world and is also outside.

To consider God male or female is part of *sakara upasana*, the worship of the God in a form, and should be done for the sake of one's sadhana. In reality, though, God is neither man nor woman; it is energy. Suppose I ask you, is nuclear power masculine or feminine? If I ask you to draw a picture of nuclear energy, would you draw the picture of a man or a woman? If you draw the picture of a woman you will draw her

with long hair, not with a moustache and a beard. By drawing such a picture, has nuclear energy become a woman? It is just a symbol that you have made. We have a symbol for everything. When we made up a symbol for anger, we made it in a certain way, with big teeth, long nails, a cavernous terrifying mouth and tangled, dishevelled hair. However, anger itself is not a woman like Taraka the demoness. It is just a symbol used to provide a better explanation.

Desire, envy, attraction and hostility, all have symbols. What is Ravana? Ravana had ten heads. You have ten too, five senses of action, *karmendriyas*, and five senses of cognition, the *jnanendriyas*. You have twenty hands too, ten on the right and ten on the left. 'Right' meaning the positive and 'left' meaning the negative. Thoughts, experiences, sights, tastes can be both good and bad. That makes twenty. This is a symbol. Ravana's entire character is a symbol of tamoguna. The well of desire, or *piyush kunda*, at his navel is also a symbol.

One may control one's senses, but it doesn't make any difference. Shut your eyes, close your nose, shut your ears, but the desire is inside. The well of wishes is inside, in the form of memories of fulfilled desires, in the form of desire itself. After all, why does a wish arise? You ate halva yesterday, today again you wish for it. The desire to enjoy a thing that you have enjoyed before is called trishna. *Trishna* means thirst. Until that trishna is burnt out, Ravana will not die.

God is beyond everything. Just as *vidya*, knowledge, and *jnana*, wisdom, have no dharma, just as plants, wind, water have no dharma, God also has no dharma. God does not distinguish between different objects of His creation. Man has imposed divisions based on religion, gender, race, etc., only to suit his political ends. You are not a shudra, nor a vaishya, not a brahmin, nor a kshatriya, these are all political stamps. You are a human being, and basically you are a soul made by the Paramatma. Now whether He made you or whether Prakriti, which is a part of Him, made you, it is all one and the same.

You have no caste. Why do we accept caste and creed? The reason for it is political and social. In God's creation,

there is equality and unity. This social prejudice based on caste and religion is not made by God. At first, Jesus was not a Christian, Prophet Mohammed was not a Muslim, Lord Buddha was not a Buddhist, Guru Nanak was not a Sikh, nor Rama a Vaishnava. However, the people made the Church. Then there was a fight within the Church and the Greek Orthodox, the Catholic Church and the Anglican Church all went their separate ways. One of the reasons for their internal conflict was politics. Henry the Eighth, the king of England, wanted to divorce his wife and take another, but the Vatican would not permit him to do so. He was king, however, so he thumbed his nose at the Church and the Pope, and set up his own Church, which is known as the Anglican Church today. This is how Protestant thought came about. The Catholic-Protestant fight goes on in Ireland to this day.

As for Islam, you people do not know much about Prophet Mohammed. Just as there are *dhabas*, where trucks stop for the night, fill water, the drivers eat a meal, there used to be caravanserais those days, where the camels of a caravan would stop for the night. There would be water, arrangements for food, and the camels would be tied to pegs. Prophet Mohammed was a boy who worked in such a caravanserai and he had great belief in God since early childhood. At night when the day's work was over, he would go somewhere and pray. When people started to talk about him, he was married off. His wife was a girl from a very rich family of Medina. The marriage, however, did not have much of an effect on him. He would still go off every night with his black blanket, and sit and meditate in the nearby mountains.

One day Mohammed felt the presence of God there and began to hear the verses of the *Koran*. Just as we call the Vedas *shruti*, meaning 'that which is heard', similarly the *Koran* is also shruti. Mohammed Sahab could not write anything, he was illiterate. Whatever he heard, he gradually started to tell the people. He would explain it to people in small gatherings and meetings, and people began to

accept his words. He was a devotee, a *bhakta*, and people are naturally attracted to those who practise bhakti. Many people became annoyed at what he said, as there is cheating, deception and hypocrisy everywhere in established religion. When he started talking openly against hypocrisy, some people became very angry. They would throw stones at his meetings or disturb them in some other way. However, Mohammed Sahab fearlessly kept talking and the number of his followers kept growing.

He would say just one thing, "God is one, everything is done by Him, we are all His servants, whatever you want, ask Him, you do not need intermediaries and priests." Devotion to God is not something that should be used for earning money. That I have become a sadhu should not be an excuse to take money from people. That is not the dharma of a sadhu or a priest. If people make offerings out of love, that is one thing, but one should not lie and swindle money out of them. He would say things like this straight upfront.

The frequency of attacks on him started increasing and there were conspiracies to kill him. His followers asked him to run away, and so he fled Mecca for Medina. That day is generally accepted to be the start of the Muslim almanac. His in-laws lived in Medina. They were rich and politically well-connected. They said to him, "Son-in-law, the *Koran* alone will not do. Hold a sword in one hand and the *Koran* in the other." The sword, meaning an army, was given to him. He would set off with a band of forty or fifty soldiers and give discourses that were attended by thousands of people.

Is no one ever converted forcibly to Hinduism here?

We will examine this subject a little expansively. No man leaves his *dharma*, religion or faith, without good reason. Yes, sure, some people converted to Islam or Christianity under coercion, but mostly people converted out of greed for a good life.

From time to time, people have converted to other religions for social prestige and status. Not only this, many

times people have even converted for the sake of marriage. Many of those who are persecuted by caste prejudice convert to other religions. The caste prejudice here was astounding. Maybe you do not know. Given the times you are born in, you will not be able to even imagine how those times were. The moment people entered a village of *shudras*, the lowest caste, the minute their shadow fell on them, people would bathe. Brahmins would not share water from the same well with them. I am talking of 1950 here, not very long ago. Shopkeepers would not take money from the hands of a shudra. There would be a box full of water, and the shudra customer would put the coins in the water, then tie a cloth around his mouth and ask what the man wanted.

The weaker castes were subjected to a lot of social injustice. Oppressed by this injustice, they became Buddhists in the time of the Buddhists, Muslims in the time of the Muslims, and Christians in the time of the Christians. Then the Congress Party came into being during the time of Mahatma Gandhi, and since then these people have joined various political factions.

I am telling you as it is, there is no criticism of anyone here. If we want to save our society from things like this, then we have to first understand that discrimination on the basis of caste is wrong. If you are of the warrior caste and I am of the lowest caste, no one should see any difference between us. God did not make castes, religions and classes. He has kept everybody in the mother's womb for two hundred and sixty days, and has given everybody a similar body. When there is one law for all creatures and for all creation, then why have you made two laws for yourself?

Allah ne to sabako insaana banaayaa;
Hamane hi unhe Hindu Musalmaana banaayaa.

Allah has made everyone a human being. It is we who have made them Hindus and Muslims.

You live in Punjab, so you call yourself a Punjabi, but that is only recognition of the place where you live. It is not as if

your eyes are Punjabi or your ears or your nose is Punjabi. Everything is the same as it is in a Bengali boy. In the last three or four thousand years, this has been the greatest weakness of our nation and the cause of our downfall. The reason for the downfall of India has been nothing other than this divisiveness of caste, untouchability, high and low.

In England or America, when people marry, no one asks about their caste. If God has created caste then why has He not done so all over the world? Why has India been the unfortunate one to be saddled with caste? Or maybe there was some anger toward India or a bias that it should have a caste system. All these traditions are so deeply entrenched now that you will not be able to break them. Neither will your father permit you to do so, nor will your relatives or your society. Even today, you will not be able to marry a suitable girl of a lower caste. Society has become so cruel.

The following incident occurred a few years ago. A German girl had come to visit Rajasthan. During her visit, she was captivated by a rickshaw driver. He would not take a paisa more from her than the fare that they had decided upon earlier even if she wanted to give it to him. She was captivated by his honesty and his values. Though he was a poor man from an impoverished home, she thought he would be a suitable match for her, and she married him. That caused a public outcry in Rajasthan. People thought that she had, in some way, entrapped the boy. The matter went to the court, but the girl was German, a native of a powerful country. She had his passport made and flew off with him. What could anyone do? She did not belong to a weaker caste. An educated girl came to the country alone, found a suitable boy, a good boy at that. She said, "Boys are alike everywhere, but there are some who live by certain principles that they will not compromise for anything, be it poverty or sickness. Such a man I would wed." And she married him.

Satsang 10

21 October 1997

Pay heed to others

Other than the rare few who possess true wisdom and discrimination, people should pay heed to what others have to say. Generally, man cannot see his own face, therefore he needs to listen to what others have to say, rather than always trying to have his own say. What proof do you have that what you are thinking is right or wrong? There is no proof. Every man thinks that he is right. No one ever considers himself to be wrong. This is called *abhimana*, pride, which is the foundation of man's personality. This is natural, for if a man does not consider himself to be right, his personality would be distorted. Yet, everyone must listen to what another person has to say. I did not say that he must accept it, only that he must listen long enough to know whether what is being said is right or not.

How useful the opinion will be to the listener is difficult to say. For that, it is necessary to know the person who is talking. If the speaker is a poor man telling you how to become rich, then hear with one ear and let it out through the other. If a chronically ill person is telling you how to achieve good health, to follow this diet, to do this and that, then hear it and forget it. If an alcoholic tells you not to drink, ignore him.

Listen carefully only to a person who has some attainment in the subject on which he is talking. For instance, a poor man who has become a millionaire, a person of a backward caste who has done a PhD, the son of a prostitute who has become a saint, or someone who was a feared dacoit yesterday and

has now become a great man of wisdom. Such people should be quietly heard out. There is no danger in listening to the words of an experienced person. Do not pay any attention to those who talk on matters of spiritual knowledge but have no experience of it themselves.

Every individual has an opinion that differs from others on every single topic. Ask anyone when to plant roses. One person will say, "After October." Another will say, "No, after March is all right." A third person will say, "Well, you could plant in June or July." You will have to look into the reason for the three men saying three different things. Maybe they were each right in their own place. Maybe one man was from Australia, maybe he was thinking of the seasons according to his own country. You will have to see if you can plant here in October or in May. Ultimately, it is you who has to take the decision, and it is not easy to take decisions in life.

Suppose there is a project-in-charge and he assigns a piece of work to a subordinate. The subordinate thinks that the work should be done in a certain way, but not as he was told. At such a time should he tell this to his in-charge or should he quietly do just as he is told?

Yes, whatever the project-in-charge has said should be followed. There are many people who get angry, cry and lose control. If there was an in-charge like me, he would say, "Either do every work as I say or leave." Whatever the institution or department one is a head of, one's personality should be in accordance with it. Subordinates pick fault with a weak personality, but if the personality is strong, no one will dare to do so. Most things depend on the personality.

If the subordinate knows that a piece of work is being done wrong, even then he should quietly do it?

All these are small things, you should not think about this too much. What will happen? Maybe the dal will be over-salted, a little rice may spill, the door may remain open and the mosquitoes may come in. For how long should a man remain

engaged with these petty things? After all, what would be the loss? Would the house fall down or will it cause someone to die? All these things are very petty. One should not spend much time thinking like that. When an elephant walks, he does not look to see how many frogs died, how many ants died and how many insects died. However, when Jain monks walk, they take care to remove every ant and insect on their way, so it takes them a long time to arrive at their destination.

Do not pay too much attention to small things. A man who has to run a big organization should not think of things like that, but there are also many chiefs and in-charges who become upset over small things. People who are in charge should not deal with issues in such a manner. There is no sense in coming into conflict with the subordinates, for it is they who do all the work, whether they do it right or wrong.

Should one scold sometimes, then?

No. If a dog does his business in the wrong place in the morning, and you call him and punish him in the evening, he will not understand anything. However, if you chastise him right on the spot and stop him from doing it, he will understand after a few times. When a human being makes a mistake, do not point it out at that very moment or he will react, that is human nature. Keep it in your mind, and after ten or fifteen days just mention it in passing, not in an insulting way. This works immediately.

In today's day and age, no man is afraid of anyone. Your servant knows that if he leaves, you will have no one to cook for you. Your driver knows that if he were to leave, there'd be no one to drive you. This is an age where labour wins. Satya Yuga was the age of the brahmins, Treta of the kshatriyas, Dwapara Yuga was the age of the vaishyas and this Kali Yuga is the age of the labourers. The people that labour are now coming into power. See for yourself, the reality is before you. In the present age the power is not with the intellectuals or with the industrialists. The power in society today is in the hands of the labourers. They can shut down mills and

factories, courts and offices. Labour knows its strength today. Earlier there was never an opportunity for them, they would think, 'Where will I go to if I leave my village?' but now they know their strength.

This is the age of labourers and workers. It is even written in the Puranas that shudras will reign in Kali Yuga. Here, *shudra* does not mean a person of low caste, but rather one who labours hard like a farmer, manual labourer or those who run the post-office, railway station, telephone office, the municipality, etc. Today we call them workers or labourers, but the shastras called them shudras. It is said in the *Bhagavad Gita* (18:44):

> *Krishigaurakshyavaanijyam vaishyakarma swvbhaavajam;*
> *Paricharyaatmakam karma shudrasyaapi svabhaavjam.*
>
> Agriculture, cattle rearing and trade are the duties of the Vaishnava, born of (their own) nature, and action consisting of service is the duty of the shudra, born of (their own) nature.

Farming, animal husbandry and commercial activity done by a person belonging to any caste is a vaishya act. Shudra action is service, and if that is done by a person of some other caste it does not make any difference. In the shastras, one who practises contemplation is called a brahmin, one who fights to defend or wage a war is called a kshatriya, a trader is called a vaishya and one who does all kinds of work is called a shudra. In this age, in every country much power lies with labourers and workers.

After all, who makes the atom bomb? It is not the scientists who put it together, they only do the research. Who makes the aeroplanes? Who makes the weaponry? Who prints the books? It is not the engineers and the doctors who do that. They are technicians in the laboratory. They are also the ones who measure to what extent the uranium has been purified. They are the ones who pack it, label it, inventory it and enter it in the computer. They do everything. If there is a little slip-

up, if there is some weakness somewhere, then the uranium can be smuggled out. In Russia, after the fall of Communism, uranium was being smuggled out. Who are the people doing all this? The workers.

Workers are of all kinds. Many people from terrorist groups also infiltrate this class. The US has found that after the fall of the Soviet Union, many terrorist groups have started smuggling enriched uranium out of there. The uranium needed for producing electricity needs to be only 30 to 40 percent pure, but uranium for making bombs must be more refined. Many people in Russia are now unemployed, so what else will they do but make bombs? At first there were basic bombs, then there were plastic bombs and now there are nuclear bombs.

I am talking about the labourers and workers. It is my experience that they are very sharp, energetic people with little patience. Whether something is right or wrong, good or bad, what the consequences for the wife and children may be, these people do not think that, they just go ahead and do it. So many people are dying in Afghanistan, yet these people don't think or worry about it. In Sri Lanka they tie bombs to their waists and blow themselves up. Just a few days ago, some of them got on board a naval vessel and detonated a bomb. They themselves died and sank the vessel. You people will not be able to do this. We think of many things: the parents, siblings, children, house and bank account, but those people do not think of these things. Their minds are not trained in this way. This age is for people like that, the king will remain silent. In our Puranas, democracy is called *mauni raj*, silent rule. After all, what does the President do? He only signs. Is it not a silent rule? This mauni raj will work in India for a hundred years.

Democracy is threatened in many places, so it is not going to last very long. What are the threats and problems? Brigands and dacoits have wheedled their way into the parliament. People who have killed twenty or thirty people are in the parliament. Democracy is under threat all over the

world. In the end, what choice will people have but to discard the system? At first there was theocracy and the brahmins ruled. Then there was monarchy when the king ruled. After that, there was military rule, but that also proved to be a failure. Theocracy was ruled out, as was monarchy, and this marked the entry of democracy. This, however, arrived in an undisciplined, uncontrolled way with no boundaries. What you say is right and what I say is right, too.

Democracy does not end terrorism. They are not able to end it in the US. No country has been able to end terrorism because we are the ones perpetrating it. It does not come from somewhere outside. I do not accept that the system of democracy will live forever. Democracy is a success only in a country where everybody is literate and tolerant. How can everybody be tolerant? It is impossible. Therefore, it is written in the Puranas that democracy will last a hundred years, after which God will incarnate once again and establish a new order.

When the soul wishes to reincarnate into a new body, does it look for the womb of a particular mother or is it given a womb according to its karma?

It enters a womb in accordance with its karmas. Whatever action is performed by man is all stored in a warehouse. For instance, I am seeing you again after ten years and we have not met in between. However, now that we have met we remember each other. This is because in the warehouse there was a seed of that earlier meeting. This is called *smriti*, memory, and it is stored in the form of a seed that becomes a samskara. Whatever a man does, it is stored in the form of a seed inside him. In the shastras this is called the *sukshma sharira*, or subtle body. This body that can be seen by the eyes is *sthoola sharira*, the gross or tangible body, and inside it is the subtle body. This sukshma sharira does not go hither or thither by itself, it is ferried around by yet another body which is called the *karana sharira*, the causal body.

This is a very difficult subject explained in the shastras through many stories. The combination of: sukshma, the

subtle; karana, the causal; and *sakshi*, the witness, is called the *jivatma*, the soul. It is this soul that enters another body.

A jivatma has no appearance and no form; it lives in a formless state. For example, when you plant a grain of wheat, it produces another stalk of wheat, which has branches and leaves, but where did it all come from? The stalk was hiding in the seed, yet it was not manifest. If you grind the wheat, will you be able to see the stalk? No. When you broke open the grain of wheat you did not see anything because the real wheat is unmanifest, formless. The wheat that you see is its gross, manifest body. That which resides in a subtle form inside it, that which you cannot see, is the jivatma.

Jivatama is formless like sound waves. Can you see what I am saying? No, but you can hear it. That is because there is a mechanism in the ear that can catch the sound waves and convert them. Similarly, whatever signal is transmitted from Delhi or London is sent via satellite to your satellite dish and then to your TV, which has another mechanism inside it to translate the signal into sound and form. Jivatma is itself formless, but in tantra, somehow this jivatma can be caught. What kind of a jivatma can be caught? The kind that has not yet been freed. The *mukti*, freedom, referred to here is not the one spoken of in Vedanta.

Apparently there is a Parsi woman who lost both her sons, and their souls come to visit her. They converse and the woman writes it all down.

Parsis do not have the tradition of *shraaddha*, funeral ceremonies or rites, as we do; neither do they cremate their dead. Parsis put their dead into a tower where they are eaten by vultures and kites. It is very difficult to say which atma will wander and which one will be freed from the attachment to the body. Many souls are attached to the old body. They wander in and around the house, and they simply do not leave. Not all souls, but some of them. That is why when a man dies, all the last rites must be performed properly. They help a soul to travel speedily. For example, if I were to tell someone to

go away, firstly I would buy a railway ticket for them, as well as escort them to the train. When you are given a ticket and even put on the train, then the message is clear, isn't it? You should leave. This is the farewell given to the soul. The soul understands that it has been asked to leave, so it must depart.

Is this tradition only in India, or is it found in other countries?

The tradition of shraaddha exists in every religion: amongst the Jews, the Christians, the Muslims and the Sikhs. It is a sort of a reverential homage to the dead. Modern people today may do whatever they like, but they all observe these rites. We do not know much about other religions and sects because our culture is different from theirs. However, if you live with them you will see that every culture has ritual ceremonies, funeral rites and prayers. There were many ceremonies when Princess Diana died. When Mother Teresa died, they took her to the church and the priests performed many rituals. In the Christian religion they read out, "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust" from the Bible and then they bury the dead. In some places the ceremony lasts a week and in some places for ten days. Muslims observe a period of forty days. In every religion there are ceremonies governing every aspect of life from birth to death. It was so in earlier times and it is so now. It is because we do not know that we think that maybe others do not have similar customs.

Does the soul enter the womb as soon as a woman is pregnant or does it enter at a later time?

After three months. At the end of the third month, the jivatma enters the mother's womb. When will you move into your home? Only when the roof is fixed, the doors and windows are in place, and when it is painted, right? Similarly, the body is the jivatma's house. When will it enter its house? When all the limbs and organs of the body are ready in a subtle form; when the seed has sprouted within the womb.

Do a person's emotions go with him after death?

Emotion, *bhavana*, is the background to an action. Emotions have no connection with rebirth. Emotion is the reaction to human life: to a person, to a thought, towards a beautiful object, towards birth or death, to husband or wife, to a woman, to a man, to a son, to a friend or enemy. This reaction in your mind is called an emotion. This emotion is limited to this life. Emotions do not have a rebirth. Emotions are grafted on to human life. They are the gift of the circumstances of home, family and society. They are not a gift of nature. This means that your emotions will be with you up to your death, and not after.

After death, the jivatma takes with it only its karmas. These are graded not by emotion but by Prakriti. Which act is good and which one is bad is all decided by Prakriti. You decided on the basis of your emotion that this act is good and that one is bad, that this person is good and that one is bad, that this is right and that is wrong. This decision was made by your emotions, but this cannot be the decision of Prakriti. Her decisions on whether something is right or wrong is based on natural laws. When Prakriti grades the karmas, to which the circumstance of man's rebirth is dependent, she does not grade them based on on social customs. The act that was wrong in society a hundred years ago is acceptable today. Therefore, the grading of karmas cannot rely on social customs, but is instead based on the laws of nature.

The difference between dharma and adharma is very difficult to decide. The Vedas say one thing, the Puranas another. Even the rishis and munis are not in accord on this matter. So how is it possible to know whether the jivatma's karmas will give an auspicious rebirth or not, or whether the fruit will be auspicious or inauspicious? After all, it is not based on social codes and values. Hence, there has been much debate and discussion on this subject in the annals of law. What is natural justice and what is social justice? Great scholars and wise men have written many books on the subject. One can understand social justice. We have decided that

action is bad, so put him in jail for six months. This is social justice. However, shouldn't social justice be based on natural laws? There have been discussions on this subject in Islam, Christianity and vedic dharma, and also among modern thinkers.

Not everyone is in agreement with the present system of justice. What is the foundation of law and justice? What do you call dharma and what do you call adharma? Someone breaks into my house and rapes my wife, so I shoot him. Is that right or wrong? What does the natural law say and what does the social law say? This is very hard to decide. To decide upon a karma, on right versus wrong, is very difficult. Nobody knows this except God.

When a jivatma enters another body, it takes its karmas along. It is very hard to know the way of karma, but this much is clear: a person does not die with physical death, the seed survives and after a period of time it enters another body. This is definite.

For those who devote their entire lives to music or dance, does this facilitate easy learning of music or dance again in their next birth?

Complete dedication to music or even to science is not an ordinary capability; it is a special quality. A person who is totally devoted to music in this life will be devoted to music in his next life also. This is for sure. The mark of devotion is sacrifice. If you are devoted to music, it does not mean that you just like music or that you practise for three or four hours. No. What does it mean to sacrifice?

Suppose that you love some girl, or you love your parents, or your son and daughter. Now, you have to make a decision about your music. If you decide that the relationship with the girl will be secondary, or the relationship with your parents**,** home and family will be secondary, and that music comes first whether it gives profit or a loss, joy or sorrow, then music will go with you to your next birth. If, on the other hand, you like music very much and are devoted to it, but then you fall in

love with a boy or a girl and music falls by the wayside, this is not devotion. You get married, have a child and then you never have the time for music. Music will not go with a man like that.

There has to be total sacrifice in devotion. One who has such a feeling of devotion is referred to in terms of: *Bhramara keeta nyaaya* – "The law of the wasp and the insect." *Bhramara* is the wasp and *keeta* means insect. Now, there is a kind of wasp that is not differentiated into male and female; they do not have a reproductive function. They make a small round house with a ball of mud. It is said that they catch a small green insect from the grass, any insect, as long as it is small and green. They put the insect inside the mud house and shut it up. After a while the wasp enters the house and makes a vibrating noise. The wasp does this for a few days continuously. When the imprisoned insect emerges, it is another wasp.

The principle of 'bhramara keeta nyaaya' is that the insect can hear only the humming of the wasp, and it becomes so engrossed in the sound that after a period of time it becomes a wasp itself. That is why we say chant *Om*. As you go on chanting, you will transform into *Om*. This law of wasp and insect is applicable in all things, whether you study, play music, dance or sculpt. No matter which subject you take up, the mental modifications should become one with it, not looking here or there. This is called *ekagra vritti*, the one-pointed, focused tendency of the mind. There should be complete absorption, only then can a man attain *siddhi*, complete mastery, in this life and carry over the learning into the next life.

Do people who enter sannyasa life become sannyasins in their next life?

No, not necessarily. It is not certain that a sannyasin will become a sannyasin once again, as there are many reasons for taking sannyasa. When the aim of sannyasa has been completely spiritual, when a person's goal has been self-

knowledge, devotion to God, brahmacharya vidya, when this has been the only goal, then the person will again become a sannyasin.

Of course, this does not mean that he will once again join the *sampradaya*, tradition or community of sannyasins. No, sannyasa does not only mean wearing geru or shaving the head. Sannyasa is a sect – for instance, we belong to the Dashnami sampradaya – and sannyasa is also an *ashrama* or station in life. After seventy-five years of age it is said to an elderly person, "Go and become a sannyasin now." There is also a *vritti*, a mental tendency, a feeling of sannyasa. For instance, Mahatma Gandhi's vritti was that of a sannyasin; he had the attitude of a sannyasin towards service, towards money. Therefore, the sannyasa sampradaya or community, sannyasa ashrama or stage in life, and the sannyasa vritti or mental tendency, are three different things.

After sannyasa, if only the clothes are changed and the head is shaved, then it is not certain that such a person will be born with the vritti of sannyasa. One may not be born with that samskara. I have seen many people who are born with the sannyasa vritti. Since childhood they have a mental tendency towards sacrifice and knowledge. It is certain that they are sannyasins. There are also many people who, when faced with a death in the family or with some disappointment, think to themselves, 'Let me leave everything and go to the ashram.'

Nowadays there is a new fashion. People are now joining sannyasa so they will be able to go overseas. Sannyasins are highly respected in the West. Nobody pays much attention to the priests any more, nobody goes to the church any more, but sannyasins are highly respected because of people like Swami Vivekananda, Swami Ram Tirtha and Swami Sivananda. There is a lot of faith in yoga. People come to the path of sannyasa to reap the benefit of this situation. When such people come to me, I send them away with a slap.

Sannyasa is taken for many selfish reasons. Many brigands and dacoits do it to hide from police warrants. Many people are driven away from their homes because of old age, or because

of being useless for any kind of work, or if a woman becomes a widow and her brother and sister-in-law are unwilling to look after her. Such people also come for sannyasa. Some people think, 'My son is useless, so let me send him to the ashram.' All kinds of people join the sannyasa community.

However, the main aim of sannyasa is that one should contemplate at all times on *Brahmavidya*, on the transcendental reality. One should contemplate on higher things. If this is so, then one will definitely be a sannyasin again in the next life.

It is often said, and it also occurs in some stories, that whatever a man thinks at the time of death will apply in his next birth. Is this true?

Yes, this is true. After all, a man who was a crook all his life will hardly chant the name of God at the time of death. To give you a small example, when you go to bed at night, what do you think of when you rest your head on the pillow? You think in accordance with your character. When a man goes to bed and lies down, then in those moments of peace, the thoughts that come into his mind will depend on his personality. Similarly, when a man is on his deathbed, only such thoughts will come to his mind that are the basis of his character and conduct. It is even written in the *Bhagavad Gita* (8:5):

Antahkaale cha maameva smaranmuktvaa kalevaram;
Yah prayaati sa madbhaavam yaati naastyatra samshaayah.

And whoever, leaving the body, goes forth remembering
Me alone at the time of death, he attains My Being.
There is no doubt about this.

Sri Krishna has said to Arjuna, "Whosoever remembers me at the time of death attains to me," which is absolutely correct.

Swamiji, how can the sannyasa vritti be adopted, and how can it be grown?

There is no way of growing the sannyasa vritti. Sannyasa is the name for maturity of life. Just as when you plant a banana

tree, at first it flowers, then it bears fruit and then you have to wait for the bananas to ripen, which takes time. Similarly, the preparation for life is grihastha ashrama while its maturity is sannyasa. Grihastha ashrama is an experiment, a project; and its fulfilment and ripening is sannyasa. I do not know of any other way of maturing sannyasa.

Satsang, introspection and study develop the qualities of discrimination and detachment, and this is all right, but sannyasa is not exactly a BA or an MA course that you can take. Sannyasa grows and ripens gradually, over time, on its own. Sant Jnaneshwara and Adiguru Shankaracharya were sannyasins from childhood. Lord Buddha became a sannyasin at the age of thirty-six. Sannyasa arises spontaneously from within. One cannot make a sannyasin, no matter how hard you try to beat it into him.

Guru and God are considered to be one and the same, therefore if someone takes sannyasa just to be in the protective shelter of the guru, would this be considered a spiritual thought or something else?

Yes, this is a spiritual thought because in any religion, especially our vedic dharma, a guru is of paramount importance. It has even been said in the Upanishads:

> *Yasya deve paraabhaktih, yathaa deve tathaa gurou,*
> *Tasyaite kathitaa hyaarthaa prakaashante mahaatmanah.*
>
> One who has the highest devotion to God, and to whom God and guru are alike, to such a great one the meaning of the scriptures is revealed.

Every reference of the guru accords him more importance than God. Therefore, it is correct that living with a guru is itself a kind of sannyasa. However, in reality, what is the definition of sannyasa? People do not understand sannyasa. In truth, the greatest sannyasa is that of a mother. She sacrifices so much for her children, her husband and her family. The one who can sacrifice their own interests for the

sake of others is a sannyasin. However, when one begins to act solely in one's own interest and in the interests of one's kin, that is selfishness. There should be no self-interest and selfishness in sannyasa. God is predominant in sannyasa. A sannyasin lives not for himself, but for others. This is the foremost definition of sannyasa.

A mother does not live only for her own sake, after all. I am not talking of every mother of course, but often a mother eats after everyone else has, sleeps after everyone else does, wakes up before everybody else. A mother's sacrifice is very great. The only difference is that she does everything for her own people: her husband, her son, her house and her family. Since it is in her interest, the feeling of complete sannyasa has not yet awakened in her, so she feels both joy and sorrow. Although she has all the requisite qualities, she has sacrificed her 'self', she has given up the *sva*, but she sacrifices only for the sake of her own. This is where she is caught in bondage. This is her limit, her boundary. If a person has the tyaga quality of a mother, but the sacrifice is for strangers, unknown people, then that person is a sannyasin.

To behave with a feeling of oneness towards strangers and unknown people is sannyasa. Imagine that I come to know that someone has fallen sick in your house, but I do not feel the same as you do. I came to know because we are friends, but I do not experience the pain, difficulty, worry and anxiety that you do. Why is that? It is because you feel atmabhava, oneness, with the sick person and I do not. *Atmabhava* means 'like oneself'. When I begin to identify with the sick person, then my feelings will be the same as yours. The basis of the experience is a feeling of unity. If a mother can extend the same caring feelings she has for her son and her husband towards others, then she is a sannyasin. This is the main definition of sannyasa in the shastras.

Taruvara phala naheen khaata hai, naadi na sanchai neera;
Paramaarath ke kaarane saadhuna dharaa sareera.

> Just as rivers do not drink their own water and trees do not eat their own fruit, similarly, sannyasins live for the benefit of others.

A sannyasin lives for two things: the first is *Brahmachintan*, contemplation on God, and the second is *paropakara*, benefiting other people. This has been our definition of a sannyasin from very ancient times, and maybe it is so in other religions too. Some time ago, there had been a decline of faith, but almost everybody in India accepts yoga nowadays. They are accepting it because, after being exported to foreign countries, they are hearing of its glory and becoming interested. Now yoga is taught everywhere in schools and colleges. In the next few years, yoga will be taught in all schools, and even now in Munger, a syllabus is being drawn up.

It is as if yoga has been redeemed by the foreign races. If the Europeans had not accepted yoga, people here would not have done so either. Here, people think of yoga very strangely. They ask, "Are you practising yoga because you want to become a sadhu?" However, the foreigners researched into yoga and accepted its importance. People are coming to hear about yoga's effects on diseases that cannot be treated successfully with modern allopathic medicines, and that yoga is very good for the intellect and memory.

About a hundred, or a hundred and fifty years ago, many sadhus would travel through Afghanistan and Iran and reach Europe. There is a tradition in the Scandinavian countries like Denmark and Sweden that they maintain a visitor's book in their homes, and whenever they have a foreign visitor, they ask them to write a few lines in their native tongue in the book. When I visited, I would write in it, too. In those books, I saw lines written by a yogi from Aligarh, a yogi baba from here, a yogi baba from there. In their homes, I even saw a Danish translation of the *Yoga Sutras* by Maharshi Patanjali. This means that yoga had reached Europe a long time ago.

Before the Soviet Union came into being, letters used to arrive at my guru's ashram from Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia,

Slovenia and Croatia. They are still there today. They had yoga ashrams there. Queen Victoria herself had a yogi called from India to teach her asanas. It's there in her memoirs. So yoga had reached Europe a long time ago, but after Swami Vivekananda's visit, it suddenly acquired momentum. Now the yoga books that are published there are not printed for orders of two thousand copies, but in millions.

The belief in yoga is strong among the westerners, as they really have no religion as such today. There is no religion in Europe today; Christianity is merely an institution. Some form of religion is needed to be the basis of the common man's faith. A person asks, "What is birth, what is rebirth, what is death?" They have no answers. People like me go there and answer them. A man's thirst for spiritual knowledge needs a basis. Only two people can provide the answers: a scientist or a sage.

There is one more subject which needs to be considered: it is not necessary that the current inhabitants of any country are also its original inhabitants. People have always migrated. This happens because of many reasons, political upheaval, epidemics and natural calamities such as earthquakes and floods.

People migrate from one place to another for many reasons. Look at India. In this century, millions have migrated from one place to another. Similarly, there was a great migration out of India after the Mahabharata war. It was a civil war and there is always a migration after a civil war. This is a political fundamental. After the defeat of the Kauravas and the victory of the Pandavas, while those bent upon revenge like Draupadi and Bheema were still alive, where did those thousands of people go who fled the region?

Historians have not thought about this, but I have met those people. There are people in Ireland who say their ancestors went there after the war of Mahabharata. They remember it even today; it is their tradition. Ireland is also called Alastar. It is divided into two now, North and South. The North is Protestant and the South is Catholic.

The second thing is that in the last eight hundred years, thousands of scientists, philosophers, music maestros, dancers and artisans have left this country. During the reign of Ashoka, the government of the day had stopped manufacturing arms and weapons. What would the weapon-makers have done? They all left this place. All of those people who had everything to lose from the Buddhist government, left. India underwent political disarmament, therefore what would all those who made arrows, shields and spears do? Where did they go? Then there are the singers and the dancers, a free-spirited lot for whom social and moral customs do not work. After the coming of the Muslims, those singers and dancers left India in droves, because there was no question of dancing in Muslim India. Those who veil women, how would they allow them to dance? I am talking history. I am not going beyond the bounds of history.

Today, all these people are called gypsies. They are spread all over Europe and Russia, and they are also called Romanies. They do not stay in one place, they are nomadic. They stay in one place for two years or so, put up their tents, park their caravans, light their cooking fires, sing, dance, do odd jobs, earn a little money and then leave. They never get stuck to one place. They are of Indian descent. When I visited these countries, I would meet with these people and they would wash my feet with water. Such a cold country, I would have to remove my socks and shoes and they would bring a bucket of water with a coin in it. It is one of our customs that when you visit your guru you take gold and silver with you. They know that they belong here. They know all our history. This has been studied. Their language has been studied. Of course, their language has been influenced by the lands in which they have lived. The books written today by historians illustrate these facts.

The point that I am trying to make is there are all these reasons for the faith and attraction Europeans today have towards yoga and the sanatana dharma. It is a part of their heritage. For some reason, people migrated out of here,

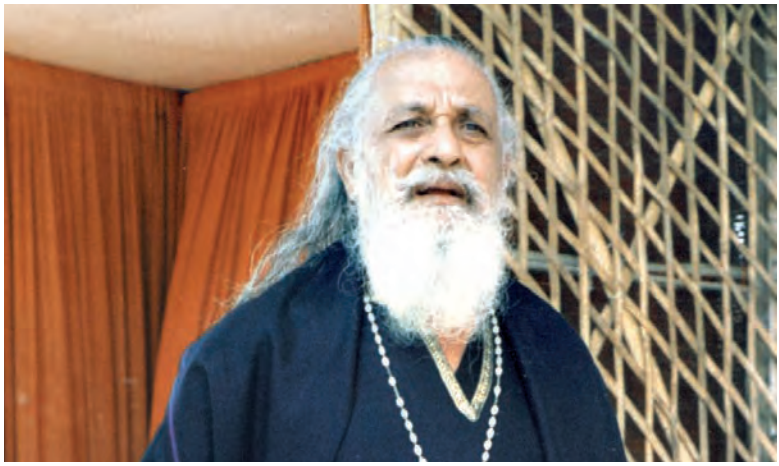
whether it was post-Mahabharata, or during the Buddhist period, or during the Mughal rule, or because of some other political reasons. This is the most important cause.

Think about one thing: when Christianity came to India, it was met with opposition, when Islam came to India it was met with opposition, but vedic dharma was unopposed in the entire western world, especially by the intellectual classes. However, Christianity was met with resistance here, Islam was resisted and Buddhism was resisted to the extent that it was driven right out. Vedic dharma is thriving in the West. People are taking sannyasa, changing their names, doing pooja to Sri Rama, chanting the *Ramacharitamanas*, reading the *Bhagavad Gita*. It is as if the *Gita* has become their Bible. The *Gita* is highly respected there. They believe in the philosophy of the *Gita*. People from there come in thousands to India to live in the ashrams. Non-vegetarian people eating dal and rice, why is that? Why was vedic dharma not opposed? It is because those people, at some time, have carried some archetypes, some long-forgotten conditioning, from here. This will have to be accepted.

Actually, it is very simple to oppose our dharma. To oppose vedic dharma is the simplest thing: just raise the point of the manifest versus the unmanifest, *sakara* versus *nirakara*. It is easy to call God formless. If I say to you that God is formless, you will say, "Yes, that is so." However, what is the form like? God takes birth, gets married, then somebody abducts his wife, all this is hard to accept. The vedic philosophy can be grasped only by the wise. It is beyond the understanding of the immature. What was the necessity for God to incarnate? He could have sent a missile to kill Ravana. Where was the need for Him to take birth, go to the forest and ask for the help of the monkeys? All this is hard to understand. That is why Tulsidas says that the nirakara, the formless God is very pleasant and simple. There is no difficulty in accepting it, while it is difficult to accept form. Despite this peculiarity of the vedic dharma, it has not been resisted or opposed anywhere. This is an achievement in itself, the causes of which I have indicated.

Satsang 11

22 October 1997



Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise. I sleep at 7 pm and wake up at midnight; it has been my habit since childhood. Even in the Munger ashram I would be asleep by 7 pm, at the latest by 8 pm, and wake up at 12 midnight. I would bathe and then do all my work, such as typing, editing, correspondence, etc. I would finish all my work by the time morning broke, because in the day I would have to meet many people. No work could happen in the day, so instead I would work at night and do all the proofreading and checking of accounts then.

As age increases, the requirements for sleep lessens, doesn't it?
No, it is not like that. As a man reaches old age, he sleeps much less because he does not do much physical work. If

a man were to keep active, it would not be so. The most important thing in advanced age is to walk. Without fail, you must go for a stroll every morning and evening. Do you see what old people do? They go to some place in the morning and go somewhere else in the evening, sometimes to a party, or sometimes to a wedding. This is a form of physical activity for them. An old car left standing will certainly rust; some parts will fail. That is why older people must walk more than younger people. Their prana shakti has lessened, the flow of the blood is slower, and if nothing else, the body aches and that is enough to prevent a good sleep. They nap during the day, so naturally there is less sleep at night. Since childhood, it has been my habit to sleep early and only for five hours.

There was a man in Germany who, after being involved in some accident, did not sleep for many years but stayed healthy, so much so that he did not even feel lethargic.

This is a fluke of nature. It is not as if there is no sleep. Sleep is mainly connected with the brain. When the brainwaves reach zero they are called delta waves, and they indicate that the electromagnetic activity in the brain has reduced. When the electromagnetic activity reduces, the heart rate also slows down. Since the speed of the heart has reduced, it needs less oxygen. You may have noticed that sometimes when a man is sleeping he breathes very heavily. It means that his brain has not gone to sleep. A man whose brain is not asleep will snore a lot. Snoring means that oxygen is being taken in under pressure whereas in the actual state of sleep, very little oxygen is needed.

Swamiji, some people say that they do not dream at all.

Everyone dreams. There is no sleep without dreams. Only if the state of sleep deepens to the delta wave stage will sleep be dreamless, but it is a temporary state. If the delta waves stir even a little, there will be consciousness and there will be dreams.

To earn a little more money than one needs is all right, but why do some people, knowing they will die some day without an heir, still drive themselves crazy to accumulate more wealth? The greed for earning more does not stop. Is this a mental disease?

Money is an addiction. Someone is addicted to money. Another is addicted to power. Addiction means that something has become a habit. Just as it is very difficult for an alcoholic to stop drinking, it is also very difficult to let go of power. Nobody will say, "Okay, so I have been a minister for five or ten years, made my money, now I will call it a day." There are many difficulties in letting go of power and politics. Similarly, money is an addiction.

No matter how much money a man makes, he still feels it is not enough. If a millionaire has just a million left he will say, "What is happening here? All my money is gone." It is not as if this attitude is prevalent among the rich alone. Nowadays the rich keep their money in banks in Switzerland or Australia, or they buy gold bars, which they keep in a safe in an underground cellar. However, the poor farmer and labourer is no less. They always keep the old woman of the house indoors. Even if everybody goes out, she is kept at home like a guard dog. They bury their gold under their cooking fireplace. A pit is dug and ash is spread on it. Gold and valuables are put in, and then once again it is covered with ash and mud. Lastly, it is given a smooth finish on the top and a cooking fireplace built on it. This is their safe. These people do not make windows in their houses. When we were building the houses for the people here, they all requested no windows, to keep people from looking in. It was very difficult, we wanted the windows for proper ventilation, but they would not let us put them in. Therefore it is terribly dark as you enter their house, and sitting in the corner will always be an old woman, guarding the house.

In every Indian's house, there will be at least twenty grams of gold. Even the poorest will have some, as it is considered inauspicious if no gold is given at a wedding. The common man

in India has a lot of gold, which he is not ready to give to the government. All governments, whether American, European, German or Japanese, make laws that favour industrialists. After all, it is they who make donations during the elections. That is why the government nominates them for important positions and they are given the licences, etc. Industrialists are generous to governments and, in turn, the governments are generous to the industrialists. It is the same everywhere. The only difference is that the governments in the West have enough money to do something for the larger electorate also.

In the countries that have always been capitalist, it is certain that the industrialists choose the ruler, but in the socialist countries who will be the king? On the face of it, it seems the people choose. When the political leaders are preparing to become members of the parliament, they are enthused to make wells and reservoirs, housing for the poor, this and that, but once they become members of the assembly and ministers, they realize the truth. The truth is that their boss keeps sending them the files of big companies and corporations, and they have to decide which aeroplane to buy, who should be given a certain contracts and from whom bombs should be bought.

All governments are made by industrialists and big corporations. You cast the vote, but the rich make the decision. Only the one they want will come to power. This happens everywhere, it is not something new. To say, "This is my government and I have elected the leader," is madness. The poor will stay poor as long as the government does not have any money, and the government of India has no money.

It is not as if there are no poor in America. They also have poor people. There are enough people sleeping on the streets in both France and England. There are also robbers and thieves. I went to a poor neighbourhood in Los Angeles. Oh God, was I distressed! However, overall, much has been spent on the welfare of the people there.

This is the age of money, and the best way to earn money is to leave the place you grew up in. The Marwaris left their

land, they earned money; the Sindhis left their land, they earned money; the Sikhs left their land, they earned money. The rest cannot even leave their broken-down hovels. Even if the children starve, they will stay at home. They will not leave and go elsewhere to earn some money.

They can go out and earn, but not in their own country or town, why is that?

The reason is that when a man is in his own country, in his own society, in his own home, he feels a sense of security. There is no need to struggle, no need to pit oneself against anything. When he goes abroad, however, he feels insecure. Then all his talents and creativity come to the surface. If he is a thief then he will use that skill, and rob and mug people. In one way or the other, he will express the talent within.

All the people who left their homes and went abroad, went to an environment where there was no family, no one familiar, nobody to borrow from, no one to share one's sorrows with, no one from whom one can seek protection. Then all their hidden skills and talents come to the fore. The English left their homes and went through such terrible times. They would live on ships at sea for six months without their wives or children. When they went to North and South America from Italy, Greece, Germany or Spain, did they take their wives with them? No, they told their wives, "You are independent as am I." Either stay with your family or go out and earn money. You cannot stuff your cheeks and laugh at the same time. A man has to leave his home to earn money.

If you stay in your security zone, your innate capabilities will not develop. When you do not even know about these abilities, how will you develop them? When a man is in an environment where he is not completely secure, then everything manifests from within. Why did India not rise high? Here, everyone is a support for the other. The husband and the wife shelter and protect each other, as do father and son. Everyone holds on to the other; that is why a man is weak here. In western countries, a man lives independently and thinks freely.

In the near future, all businesses and occupations will be institutionalized rather than personalized. This is gradually happening everywhere and this generates a lot of income. All the girls and boys who work for the corporate sector nowadays earn very well. For instance, a manager has to take an MBA and study computers and such like, but after that, he earns comfortably and the clothes on his body cost ten or twenty thousand rupees. Do not even ask about the wife and children! The bill for their clothes alone goes into thousands.

Nowadays, many rich people in America and Canada have enormous homes and their own private airstrip. They have a personal luxury aircraft. These are things that would be of no use to me. I reach Munger in three hours, Dhanbad in four and Patna in five hours. In some countries, though, it takes at least twenty-four hours to get from one village to another by road; the terrain is very hilly, all up and down. For instance in Colombia, to get from Bogota to Medellin takes twenty-four hours by car. It is better to have your own helicopter and reach your destination in half an hour. Many people do just that. In America, some people commute from New York to Washington for work. They own a two-seater or four-seater aircraft in which they fly to Washington where their car is parked in a garage. They drive to work and at 4 pm they drive back, park their car and fly away home.

My gurubhai, Swami Vishnudevananda, also maintained a personal aircraft. Whenever I went to America or Canada, I used that aircraft. I used to fly airplanes myself. Swami Vishnudevananda was from Kerala and lived in Canada, but now he has left the body. He was a great propagator of yoga in Canada. In his aircraft, I could reach New York from Montreal in an hour. It also had an automatic pilot function, or blind navigation, where you can fly an aircraft with your eyes closed. The control panel shows the flight path and simultaneously the air-traffic controller continues to give directions. Blind navigation with your eyes closed!

In India, for one this is not the requirement, and secondly there is far too much poverty here. Money has a lot of

importance here. Everyone can be seen running after money. This is the difficulty here. In western countries, there is no difficulty with money, job, house or wife, while here a father's hair turns white trying to get his daughter married or the children educated. It costs thousands of rupees to educate the children, and there is no organized assistance for any of this. Here a man achieves whatever he can on his own strength and lives by it.

When people contribute and cooperate, things can be organized. In the West, it is not necessary that all girls are well educated, but they know a lot: how to drive a car, how to build a house, painting, carpentry, stitching, knitting, and so on. They learn everything from childhood, but they do not learn it at their parents' home, they do so independently. They do not take money from their parents. It is different if they give it as a present. They do not take alms from their parents after the age of eighteen or nineteen. It is against their self-prestige to live with the parents after that. A child who cannot stand on his feet after the age of eighteen is handicapped, and it is these people who are ruling the world.

Here, all the parents think about is when they will be able to marry off their son or daughter. There are young Australian women who have been here for two years, and they may stay another two years. It may be that they will stay here forever. Or maybe after two years they will want to leave and take up a job. This will be all up to them, not their parents. This is a new thing and not easily understood by Indians. There was a French girl here. She had been here for many years making houses for the villagers. Finally, she thought that she wanted to go and get married so she went away, but this thought occurred to her, not to her mother. In the West, most parents do not tell their children to do this or not to do that. No, after the age of eighteen, a child must think of its own future.

The French sannyasin is twenty-eight years old, so for parents to tell a girl of this age to do this or that is not right. She said that she wanted to be married, so she went away. She will be married in church and send her parents an invitation

to the wedding. Do you know what her parents will give her? A single rose. Not even a fully blossomed rose, but a bud. No gold, silver, saris, bangles, no. They will bring nothing of this kind, only a single rosebud. Gold, silver or jewels cannot symbolize the relationship between a husband and wife; flowers symbolize it. A flower is a symbol of love and beauty. Everybody likes a flower. That is why the parents give the bridal couple a flower instead of gold and silver.

Indians still attach a lot of importance to gold and silver, clothes, money, land and estates. The day these people stop doing this will be the day they realize that there is another way of life. I say to everyone, do not look for work at home only. Everybody must leave home. I left home and became a sannyasin. If I had not left home, I would have met the same fate as everybody else. A man lives only after leaving home and making a life of his own choosing.

Sita Kalyanam

Just like the wedding of tulsi, we perform the wedding of Sita. We use the same statues that we worship all the time because I do not like the idea of immersing the statues in a river or lake after the worship is over. Part of whatever is offered at the wedding as gifts goes to the officiating priests, and the rest is for the unmarried girls of the village, for their marriage. It should be the right of the newly-weds to receive whatever comes as gifts for Sita's wedding. You may pay the officiating priests one or two hundred rupees as fee, but beyond that they have no right to the offerings, neither do the saints and holy people.

I have told everyone clearly: do not make offerings of sweets. Is Sita going to take sweets to her in-laws' house? Offer flowers, tulsi leaves, bael leaves and all these to Shiva and Rama. Sita needs ornaments, good clothes, gold and silver. We will give these things to the girls here. After all, every household has at least a daughter or two. Two or three hundred girls must be getting married in the villages around here every year. If the girl is already married, it does not

matter. We will still give to her if she comes here. Every girl should get the best sari in India. At the very least, she should get a gold bangle, a nose-stud or earrings. When a daughter is married, you do not give tulsi leaves or sweets. You should give gold and jewellery, whether it is your daughter or somebody else's. After all, your daughter is also like a daughter to me. A daughter is everybody's daughter, while a wife is only one's own. This is the only difference I know.

This custom must be started here. What will this custom achieve? If you perform the same pooja in your house, you will collect dowry for two or four girls. If we do it, then enough for four or five hundred girls will be collected. Through this, the girls will begin to earn more respect in society. The status of girls must be improved in our society. This country will never rise until the status of girls is improved. On the one hand, you call the girl *shakti*, divine power, and on the other hand you call her *abala*, weak. How correct is that?

On 4th December, *Sita Vivaha*, Sita's wedding, will be performed here and I want people to understand its significance. We could have also performed Shiva's wedding, but where would we get a two-headed or a one-legged creature for the wedding procession? When Rama's wedding procession arrives, it will bring well-dressed people. On the back wall of the ceremonial marquee is a painting of Shiva and Parvati. This means that Shiva will be a witness. After all, this land belongs to Shiva. All the wealth belongs to him. So Shiva and Parvati have been made to sit in the background. Shiva will watch and Parvati will be the bridesmaid. Who will give away the girl, do the *kanyadaan*? That has also been decided. A couple has been called from Calcutta.

All of you witness it properly once, and then you can copy it. This is a ritual of purity. Once it catches on in these parts, it will become a celebration, a sacred celebration. It will be different from all other celebrations. Do not smoke here, do not eat paan and drink liquor. Do not eat meat and fish and come here. Do not even tease girls. We will make all the rules. In due time, this will become a sacred tradition here.

Satsang 12

23 October 1997

The *Ramacharitamanas* that you read is not historical; it is spiritual. Actually, the *Ramayana* has many different versions and many different stories. One of them says, for example, that during the battle Ahiravana had carried off Sri Rama and Lakshmana to the netherworlds and Hanuman had rescued them, and a few times Hanuman himself was caught in difficulties. The *Kamba Ramayana* from South India is a very different version. It is not historical; it is only a poem. There are many *Ramayanas* in Sanskrit: *Ananda Ramayana*, *Atma Ramayana*, *Bikat Ramayana*, *Adhyatama Ramayana* and *Adbhut Ramayana*. There are *Ramayanas* where Sita is believed to be Ravana's daughter. I have even seen a film like that.

In the *Kamba Ramayana*, the South Indian version written by the poet Kamban, Sita swoons when she first sees Sri Rama. There is a poetic description of Sita's body that has been completely ignored by Tulsidas. Tulsidas did not go beyond the bounds of literature, but Kamban described it in vivid detail. There is another drama named *Prasannaraghava*, which has described scenes in Sri Rama and Sita's cottage beautifully. Then there is *Uttara Ramacharitam* by Bhavabhuti in Sanskrit. The episode regarding Rama and Sita's twins, Luv and Kush, have been taken from that. Sita's exile, her stay at Valmiki's ashram, the birth of Luv and Kush, the slaying of Lavanasura, Shatrughna's participation in the post-birth rituals of Luv and Kush, and Sri Rama's ascension to heaven is all described in the *Uttar Ramacharitam*.

A scholar from South India has written the *Atma Ramayana*, which is based entirely on Vedanta. Rama is the *Paramatma*, the

Supreme Soul; Sita is the *jivatama*, the individual soul; the five *karmendriyas*, motor organs, and the five *jnanendriyas*, sensory organs, make up the ten heads of Ravana; and ignorance is the demonic energy that is within each of us. The whole thing is explained in these terms.

Then there is the *Ranganatha Ramayana* in Bengali and another one in Maharashtra. In Burma and in the Indonesian islands of Bali, Sumatra and Java, there are different stories of Lord Rama. In Thailand, his name is Ramakirti, and Sita and Rama are depicted as siblings. It is the same in Laos. Certainly, there are differences, but there is a new joy in every reading.

Rama was not fair. He was dusky, hued like the blue lotus, like the colour of the sky at dusk, and his eyes were red. Just as our eyes are black, Germans have light eyes, Punjabis have brown eyes, the Italians and Spanish have very black eyes, similarly Sri Rama's eyes were red.

On the basis of colour, Krishna and Rama were alike, weren't they? It seems people then considered black to be beautiful.

Yes, Sri Krishna and Sri Rama were both dark, but Krishna was darker. Black is considered beautiful even today. As a matter of fact, in Europe there are many interracial marriages, and many people prefer a colour different from their own. This is a natural weakness of human beings. Black people are attracted to white people. Those who have little money like to live like the rich. Those who are very wealthy like to live simply, like the poor. This is human nature.

What defines beauty? A red rose? There are black roses too, and a black rose is considered very beautiful. To define beauty is very difficult. When the Miss World beauty pageant takes place, on what basis do they choose the winner? The girl should be pretty, but what if she is a fool? What kind of a Miss World would she make? Beauty means that she must be knowledgeable and wise, as well as being well-proportioned in her height, hands and face. The judges take note of it all, such as whether the head is too big or the feet too small.

Beauty is seen from the perspective of ratio. For example, when building a house, if a big hall is made with only a ten-feet-high roof, it doesn't look good. Everything has to be in proportion, only then does it look good.

They say that Ravana's ears were like a cave. There are other exaggerated descriptions of his physique, so does this mean that people at that time must have been very tall and big.

Maharana Pratap of Rajasthan was born about four or five hundred years ago, and once I visited a museum dedicated to him in Chittor. He had fought a battle with Akbar, and his sword is on display there. That sword was so large that I would not be able to grip it in my hand. To hold that sword, my palm would have to be three times larger, which means that his hand was three times larger than mine. His sword was at least seven feet long. Try to imagine how long his fingers must have been or how big the horse of such a sword-wielder must have been! His helmet was so huge that it could be put on an elephant's head. It is all there; you can go and see it in the museum. His chest armour is so big and heavy that it cannot be moved.

When such a man was born four hundred years ago, then what is written about Ravana can be seen in that light. I do not know if all men were similar though. It is very difficult to say how big a man used to be in earlier times. It is certain, however, that some races are small and some are big. In India, people from Orissa are small, while the Punjabis are tall and well-built. If you go to Afghanistan, you will find stronger people, the Pathans. If you go to Kazakhstan, you will find taller people. Go to Rome and you will find shorter, fatter people. In Denmark also you find tall people; you have to raise your head to look at them. Large people are also found in Germany and Australia.

The point is that at some time in history, there may have been a race like this. However, it cannot be said with certainty that our early ancestors were tall and we have now become short. Such attributes can be found in some people or races.

There is a man in Pakistan who is nine feet tall, and once in a while someone like that is born. Ravana may have been similar. It is also said that Sri Rama was fourteen feet tall. Therefore, it is difficult to speak with certainty about this issue.

Nowadays whenever there is someone tall like that, it is said to be due to a condition of the thyroid gland.

No, that is not the reason. Man has become more comfort-loving now. These days, if you have to go to Deoghar you will take a car or a rickshaw, whereas earlier, a man would walk the distance. He would walk from here to Bhagalpur. To go to the bathroom he would walk, to get water he would walk; his body was suited to this lifestyle. Nowadays, the toilet is in the room next to you, you do not have to gather firewood because you use gas, and all the work is done by a machine. Labour has decreased and diseases have increased. The decrease in physical labour has changed man's complexion and his musculature. The mountain folk who climb and descend routinely do not suffer from cardiac diseases. People who labour physically do not get diabetes. Those who live in villages do not get high blood pressure. Urban dwellers do not get rural diseases and rural dwellers do not get ailments common in the cities. It is all natural. Maharana Pratap's body was like that since childhood, but it cannot be said that everybody was like him. There are always exceptions. After all, is everyone as intelligent as Einstein or Newton? No, they are exceptions.

I saw a science program on TV recently which said that as time goes on, human beings will become smaller and smaller until, by the end of Kali Yuga, they will be no bigger than a thumb. Even a rose bush will need to be climbed by a ladder by these small humans.

In such an event, even a rose bush will not be so big. If man progressively becomes smaller, why would the rose bush remain big? They would need smaller roses, wouldn't they? Don't think about such things, because they are not going to happen.

It is genetics which causes a man's body to be big or small. When the influence of one race is felt on another, the genetic pattern changes. Look at a cow, for example. The domestic cow is smaller than the imported one. When domestic and Jersey cows are bred together, then the resulting shape will be a larger cow. Have you seen the cows in Australia? They are like elephants. The bull is so heavy that it can barely move. The udders of the cow are like sacks of cement and it is not possible to milk them by hand. How can one man milk forty litres alone?

Crossbreeding also occurs amongst plants. When wheat and maize crossbreed, the result is called a hybrid seed. Every seed of maize, every grain of wheat has its own race. Race is related to genes, to DNA. To mix this is called crossbreeding. The hybrid maize has high productivity and the wheat has a fatter grain. The domestic cow gives two or three litres of milk while the crossbred cow gives up to thirty litres of milk.

Crossbreeding is not frequent among humans. Driven by politics, humans usually marry within their own races and castes. Their thinking is along the lines of, 'If I stay within my tribe, then our numbers will increase and we will rule'; this is all politics. That is why many people's physical and mental levels have fallen, and everybody is small, five feet tall and unhealthy. You must always marry outside your caste and never marry within the *gotra*, the clan or family. There are two benefits of marrying outside your caste. Firstly, your society will expand, and secondly, the resulting children will be of good quality. These are the main reasons and they are enough. Caste has its own scientific basis, but it is not like we perceive and practise it here, such as saying this person is untouchable and not to eat food prepared by a certain caste. No, this is wrong.

In this world, everything is classified into species and sub-species. The grain in every country is different. There are so many species of grapes, so many varieties of guava, so many kinds of mango. In laboratories, 'tissue culture' is used to increase production yield. In this process, cells from one single grain of rice is placed in different test tubes and

propagated. Through tissue culture, this single seed can be used to produce thousands of plants. This is a great science today. The Philippines have the best rice produce. They plant in the usual way by preparing beds; however, whenever a scientist from anywhere in the world wants to know more about rice production, he is sent to the Philippines.

In India we are very backward in agricultural practices. Whatever farming is done here is dependent on the mercy of nature. There is no arrangement for water irrigation and no tests are possible for checking the soil quality. Very little is known about which soil would benefit from what kind of fertilizer. For instance, we know that oranges grow very well in Nagpur as opposed to here in Rikhia, but not everyone knows that it is because the mineral content of lime and calcium in the soil is different.

Every soil has a certain quality that is beneficial to some crops like cereals, grains or mangoes. In some places, cauliflowers are good. In another place, the tomatoes are good. Onions grow very well near Nasik, so truckloads are distributed from there. All *parval* (an Indian vegetable like a small cucumber with crunchy seeds) comes from Bariarpur, near Munger, and from there parvals are distributed by trucks all over India. It does not grow anywhere else. The stalk of the parval grows in Assam, but the parval vegetable itself does not grow there. Instead, the stalk is brought to Bariarpur where it is re-planted and grown.

Our scientists have not done the work of ascertaining which soil is best suited for different varieties of crop. What is the disease that strikes the harvest? Is it because of underuse or overuse of fertilizer? Now, if a very rich man's son comes over to live in the village, will he fall sick or not? Similarly, if you plant high grade seed but cannot nourish it, it will die. If I were to give an excellent Jersey cow to someone without the means to care for it, it will fall sick and die. This is the truth.

All the people who study in India do so just to earn money. The eyes of Indians are on money, not on knowledge. The eyes of the westerners are not on money; instead, their eyes

are on knowledge, on information, on travelling, on having fun. In India, there is only one thing on everyone's mind, earning more money. What is the state of our professors and scientists? They get a masters degree in science, join the agriculture department and then get a job paying five or ten thousand rupees. That is the only aim of studying. In Patna, in Bhagalpur, what facilities do they have? The government here has no money.

We started with people like Ravana and Maharana Pratap. They were very well-built, tall and broad, but it is not as if everyone was like that. The ordinary man was within five to six feet in height. All the races that came from the northeast to conquer India, people from Mongolia, Afghanistan, Turkistan and Iran, were all Muslims. The smartest amongst them were the Mughals, who came from Mongolia via Afghanistan. They were very hefty people. Humayun was weak, but Babur and Akbar were tall and well-built.

The Mughals had been attacking India for about a thousand years. Wars were constantly being fought around Punjab, towards Kashmir. Once they got hold of cannons, the scales tipped in their favour. Indians had only swords and spears and fought on elephants, while the invaders came on horses. Elephants are no match for horses. On top of that, Indians fought in dhotis while the invaders wore tight trousers. During a battle, when the dhoti comes undone, what will a man do? One by one all the kings lost, the Rajputs lost.

The Sikhs gave the Mughals a good battle, and some three hundred years ago, Guru Gobind Singh especially gave them a good fight. Patna is the birthplace of Guru Gobind Singh; however, the Sikh religion was founded in Punjab by a great man, Guru Nanak. He was from a Kayastha family in Punjab. From childhood, he was interested in God. Later on, he did not live at home; he wandered here and there. Two disciples lived with him, Bala and Mardana, and he took them with him everywhere he went. The Sikh religion has but one aim, devotion to God. Live as you like, but sing the name of the Lord. You may do business and trade, you may have children,

you may farm, you may do whatever you want to do, only sing the name of the Lord as well. This is their main teaching.

During the time of Guru Nanak, there were others like him, and they carried the same message. Mirabai said it and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu said it, "Sing the name of the Lord, nothing else is needed." Remain engrossed in God, do everything for God. Maybe you are a householder, a farmer, a cobbler, a carpenter, a potter, a tanner or a blacksmith. No matter what work you do, do not forget God. Even if a mother goes out to fill her pot with water, she never forgets her child. She will be constantly aware that her child does not fall down somewhere. Always remain aware of God in the same way.

The foundation of the Sikh religion is vedic dharma. Political people have now begun to call vedic dharma 'Hinduism', but actually 'Hindu' is the name of a race. Our religion is vedic dharma. *Rigveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Sama Veda* and *Atharva Veda*, these are the four Vedas. Just like the Koran is the foundation of Islam and the Bible is the foundation of Christianity, the foundation of our religion is the Vedas. To explain the Vedas we have the Puranas, and to explain the Puranas there is the *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, *Bhagavad Gita*, etc. The religion based on the Vedas is called vedic dharma. The Vedas believe in idol worship, that is, worship of the manifest God. There is, however, no worship of the God with form, *sakara*, in either Islam or Christianity. The Vedas believe in reincarnation, but Islam, Judaism and Christianity do not. This is the difference. Similarly, there are many things in our culture that are part of vedic dharma. Different sects sprang from the vedic dharma: Shaiva, Vaishnava, Shakta, etc. The other sects are lost now, only these three remain.

Our religion is called vedic dharma and our race is Hindu. Why is it called 'Hindu'? This word 'Hindu' comes from the word 'Sindhu'. Our culture was born in the Sindhu river valley, from that we are called 'Hindu'. Guru Nanak was Hindu.

For centuries, however, we have been making a big mistake that still persists in the Hindu society. Our biggest weakness is the caste system, and for this reason we are the most backward

country in the world. This is the reason why we have been beaten by everyone and have not improved even today. The Buddhists were the first to try and bring these backward castes to their side, then the Muslims tried, then the Christians, and nowadays political parties are trying. The backward castes will not gain anything from this, because politicians do not profit anyone but their own pockets.

Seeing this state of society, Guru Gobind Singh said, "No, we Sikhs are one caste." *Sikh* means disciple or acolyte. The word 'sikh' is a distortion of *shishya*, meaning disciple. They became disciples, they were initiated into a mantra and Guru Gobind Singh told them the rules. 'Always wear these five things on your person: *kesha*, hair (the Sikhs do not cut their hair or beard); *kangha*, a comb; *kaccha*, a typical pair of shorts; *kada*, an iron bangle; and *kripan*, a dagger.' Every Sikh has to follow these five rules.

Following the death of their tenth guru, the Sikhs agreed that henceforth their guru would be the *Guru Granth Sahib*, which is a compilation of the wisdom of all the gurus set to ragas. Their marriage rites are vedic, as are their funeral rites. They cremate their dead, while the Muslims and the Christians bury their dead. The last rites of the followers of vedic dharma include the funeral pyre, this is the law of vedic dharma. Whether it is the Sikh dharma, the Shaiva dharma, the Vaishnava dharma or the Shakta dharma, they all spring from vedic dharma. The real, true, authentic name of our religion is vedic dharma. Today's political people do not have this knowledge or information, so they call it Hindu dharma. However, our religion is vedic dharma and our race is Hindu. The Muslims of Pakistan and the Muslims of Bengal are of the same race as us, no matter what their religion is. This is the truth of the matter.

The theory of sacrifice

Remember one thing; nothing belongs to you. When you consider the world to be yours, when you believe wealth, house, family, son, daughter, wife, husband, home, land,

estates, etc., to be yours, you are limiting yourself. When instead you say, "All this is not mine, wife is not mine, son is not mine, money is not mine", and when you say, "It has all come to me so I will keep it, but it does not belong to me", then there is freedom. When a man considers all his wealth, wisdom and emotions as treasures given to him for safekeeping, then his thoughts go to God.

When water flows into a pond, it stagnates and dries up because it is bound and limited; but when water flows in a river, it keeps flowing and flowing, neither drying nor stagnating. Whatever I have acquired or attained in life, I have never used for myself. Since this is a human body, it needs a roof for the night, so there is a roof. When I was younger I ate twice a day, now that I am older I eat once a day. Besides this, whatever there is, it is all for someone else: whether it is for the propagation of yoga, to build a hospital, to build an orphanage, or any other work. We established a trust in Rajkot and then said, "Okay, you can run all this." What difference does it make? In Australia, we bought a farm, we created an ashram, made buildings and a printing press; we formed a committee; we opened other ashrams around Australia and ensured each ashram had its own funds. Yet, what do I care about all this?

The secret of gaining anything in life is sacrifice. If you try to catch a shadow, the shadow will run before you. You will always be running after it as the sun is behind you. When the sun is in front of you, then the shadow is always behind. Wherever you go, it will follow you; you do not have to do anything. Everyone is chasing shadows: this is my son, my daughter, my wife, my house. Everyone turns themselves into a 'limited company', and then they remain entangled in it. If a thousand is earned, a thousand is spent. Even if they earn a million, it gets spent; nothing is saved. A millionaire does not manage to save money and neither does a billionaire, whereas we added ten rupees on ten rupees, and used it in the mission of service.

Our guru used to say, "If you want to take the easy way, it is 'giving up'. If you want to take the hard road, it is 'gathering'." It takes a lot of work to gather, it takes nothing to let go. After

all, how much hard work does it take to leave home? Just pick up your loincloth, and in a flash, you are gone. It takes a long time to gather things, a man becomes old, his teeth fall out.

In 1963, I went to Tryambakeshwar. My ishta devata is Tryambakeshwar Mahadeva, near Nasik. Before establishing the ashram in Munger, I went there. I made a prayer to Him and a promise. I told Him that I would work hard to propagate yoga for twenty years and I prayed for His help. I also promised Him that after twenty years I would return, leaving everything behind. Now if someone builds a big mansion and asks for God's help in making it, and then says after building it, "Okay, now I will leave it and come to You", will you not call this madness? One would wonder why you are building the mansion at all! However, this was the promise I made to God. In 1963, I made the promise, and in 1983, I left. Exactly twenty years.

I have no problem in leaving. I could even leave this place in ten minutes. I am not concerned about my age. Even at this age I bathe two or three times at night. I can live on a single meal a day, I can get up at 12 midnight, and I can live naked, but during the time that I am sitting here, I will not sit like a lazy man. I will do something or the other that can be of some help to someone. God has said to me that as long as you do not 'fall in love', meaning fall into attachment and maya, nothing can affect you. The day that I think, 'This is my wealth, so let me enjoy it a little', that day I would fall into weakness, just like everyone falls into weakness.

Social change

The most important thing is what you do for the daughter. Socially, your daughter is also considered my daughter, therefore I have a certain degree of responsibility towards her. Every person in society ought to feel responsible for others. A girl in a village should be seen not only as the daughter of a particular house, but also as the daughter of the whole village.

Let me tell you something. About a hundred years ago, there was a king. His name was Raja Agrasen. He was the

ancestor of the Agrawals. As a rule, whenever a poor man came to him for alms, he would tell everyone to contribute a rupee each. He would collect money from the whole kingdom and tell the man to go into the trading business. His subjects were all very happy. If everyone in the populace behaves in such a manner, then there is no need to take anything out of one's own pocket.

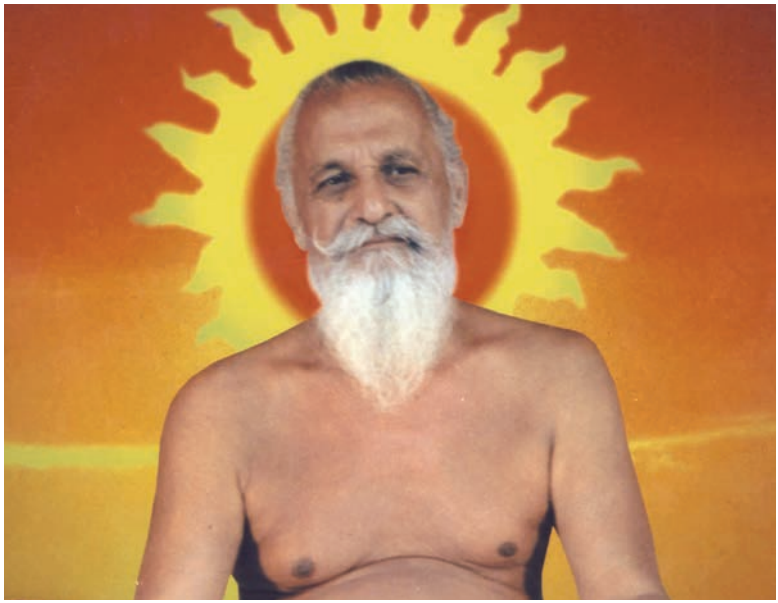
Say, there are fifty houses in my village. If every villager contributes ten grams of gold for my daughter, then I will in turn contribute for your daughter's wedding. You give me, I give you, everyone is happy. After all, you gave ten grams of gold to my daughter and I returned it. There is always give and take in community. It is wrong to say, "You cry for your daughter and I will cry for mine." I want to start this tradition here. For the last two years, we have been following it. Last year, we gave gifts to almost three hundred girls. We even gave to the girls who had got married ten years ago.

We will have to change the way society thinks. The backward castes will have to increase the standard of their education so that they can stand on their own feet. There is no other remedy. In this day and age, there is no wealth greater than education. Even if the poorest of the poor is educated today, what is the problem? After all, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar was destitute. There were no lights in his house, so he would study under a street lamp. The examples of Lal Bahadur Shastri and Ambedkar are also before you. Our president today, K.R. Narayanan, was a very poor man, but he is a respected scholar today. He made his own life.

Why are the so-called backward castes called 'backward'? After all, the scholar amongst us is called a brahmin, one who can fight is called a kshatriya, the grocer is called a vaishya, and the one who does all the work is called a shudra. Shudra does not mean something bad. Shudra means factory workers, farm workers and manual labourers. If you call me a shudra, then I am. The Vedas actually say that at birth everyone is a shudra: *Janmana jayate shudrah* – "At birth everyone is born a shudra."

Satsang 13

24 October 1997



Man's greatest problem is not his body; it is his mind. In all the diseases of the body, such as hypertension, stomach ailments, colds, coughs or fever, the mind is eighty percent of the cause. For some ailments, the mind is one hundred percent of the cause. This is the case with everybody's mind. Generally, we only think about ourselves, but if you were to ask someone else, you will find it is a similar case with them. Up to today, all those who have come to me have said the same thing. Nobody has said to me, "Swamiji, my mind is okay." Everyone says, "Swamiji, my mind is disturbed."

The nature of the mind is to be fickle. Just as the nature of wind and water is to flow, the nature of fire is to burn, the nature of the moon is coolness and the nature of the sun is heat, the nature of the mind is to be fickle and changeable. If there is no movement, there is no mind. It is almost impossible for the mind to become unmoving and peaceful. It is a very arduous task to concentrate the mind on one point. That is why Kabirdas says: *Mai una santana ka dasa jinhone mana mara liya* – "I am the servant of the saints who have killed the mind."

Those who have brought their minds under control become gods. That is why Rama and Krishna are gods. To bring the mind under control is the goal of yoga, the goal of bhakti, and the goal of man's life. However, it is not so simple. Therefore, do not think much about the mind. The more you think about the mind, the more troubled you will be. Those who think too much of the character, behaviour and workings of their mind suffer greatly. Think less about the mind.

To ensure that there is less time to think about the mind, God created action. In doing things, in acting, the mind becomes extroverted, it moves outward. The mind is extroverted when buying flour, making rotis, buying vegetables, washing clothes and going to the doctor. When the mind is extroverted, there is a feeling of wellbeing. Even though the ultimate goal is to introvert the mind, if this happens in the earlier stages, depression occurs. An introverted person becomes full of anguish due to the activities of the mind. There is distress if the mind is vacillating and there is distress if the mind is peaceful, as it feels unfamiliar. Therefore, remain extroverted. Be interested in the world, be interested in the children and the household, be interested in the kitchen. Do fewer things that enhance introversion. When we take sannyasa, twelve years of karma yoga is prescribed, so that there is no chance of introversion. In karma yoga, a man keeps his mind and faculties extroverted.

The mind alone cannot do anything. It is like electricity. If there is electricity, but no bulb or wires, what can you do? You

cannot do anything. Similarly, the senses are the medium to express the mind. You are looking at me, but who is actually doing the looking? The mind is looking. If you are listening, then who is actually listening? The mind is listening. Who is eating, who is sleeping, who is sitting, who is standing and who is running? It is only the mind. The mind experiences the world through the five *jnanendriyas*, sense organs, and the five *karmendriyas*, motor organs. By themselves, the senses are inert. The telephone does not speak, does it? The man speaks. What is the use of a tape recorder unless there is a tape in it? That is why the senses are called the accessories of the mind. To keep these ten indriyas occupied, it is necessary to involve them in karma yoga.

It is written in the Vedas: *Om bhadram karnebhih shrinuyama devah*, *bhadram pashyemakshabhiryajatraha* – "Let my ears hear good things, let my eyes see good things." Chant this mantra every day and say, "Please, let my senses perform their karma yoga well." What is karma yoga? It is to perform physical tasks with all your heart and mind, whether it is digging in the garden, cutting vegetables, sewing clothes, cleaning, sweeping, cleaning the house, or bathing. If you have no work of your own, go to someone else's house to help them, or serve your guru. This is called karma yoga.

In the beginning of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sri Krishna told Arjuna about karma yoga. Jnana yoga was revealed to him later. Jnana yoga, bhakti yoga and raja yoga occur in the later chapters of the *Bhagavad Gita*, and sannyasa comes in the eighteenth chapter. The first chapter is 'Vishada Yoga' and the second is 'Samkhya Yoga'. What is vishada yoga? The yoga of depression or despondency. Unless there was some sorrow, some distress in the mind, how would there even be a desire in you to care for the mind? If the mind was not disturbed, would you even think about the mind? A man tries to balance his mind when it is afflicted by *vishada*, depression. If there was no vishada, no dejection in the mind, you would not even think about it. When does a man try to control his mind? When the mind troubles him. Therefore, yoga begins with vishada.

The first chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* is 'Vishada Yoga' and the first chapter of our lives is vishada yoga.

There are two kinds of vishada: one is low and the other is high. Two kinds of air pressure can be seen in the weather: high pressure and low pressure. Just as there is lesser and greater air pressures in the atmosphere, there is also lesser and greater pressure in the mind. Where does the pressure come from? From the pressure of children, the pressure of a job, the pressure of sorrow, desire, anger. If your daughter is not getting married, that creates pressure. If there is not enough money, and every day the son keeps asking for more, that creates pressure. When there is pressure in the air, it rains. Similarly, when there is pressure in the mind, all kinds of thoughts occur. On the other hand, if you enjoy something, it does not create any pressure in the mind.

What are the indications of low or high vishada in the mind?

When the brain is all heated up, when one gets angry and the feeling of revenge or violence arises and there are thoughts such as, 'Kill him!' or 'Let them die!', then there is high pressure. These thoughts are usually fleeting and normally there is only a low pressure in the mind; however, if the high pressure lasts for a long period, a man may even go mad.

In the brain there are thousands of *nadis*, subtle channels, through which electricity flows. This energy has a current and voltage that can be measured through a machine called an electroencephalogram or EEG. This machine indicates what waves are present in the brain at a given point in time. It can determine whether there is depression in the brain, or whether the mind is hot or cool. Suppose that I walk into a room and you are there pretending to be asleep. Using an encephalogram I am able to ascertain whether you are truly asleep, as the electric voltage emitted by the brain during sleep is different from that when the mind is awake. Similarly, the electricity in the brain works differently when a man is meditating, as opposed to when a man is greatly worried or anxious. The voltage of the mind varies according to different

states of mind, such as thinking mundane thoughts, worrying, thinking less or not thinking at all.

This mind is not some trifling power; it is the greatest energy in the world. All the great miracles performed by rishis and munis worldwide were not performed by sorcery or magic, but by the power of the mind. Magic and sorcery are nothing. All the gods and goddesses are a form of the mind. The problem is that if you stop the mind, a man goes mad and if you forcibly turn the mind towards object gratification, a man still goes mad. If you get him married and settled in a household, he goes mad. If you send him to Badrinath and make him sit in padmasana all night long, he still goes mad. If you stop the mind you go mad and if you let it free you go mad. What can you do? If you beat a boy every day he will turn out for the worse, and if you let him run free he may still turn out bad. It is the same situation with the mind. Kabirdas has written:

Mana! Tohe kehi vidha kara samajhaau;
Ghora hoya to lagaama lagaaun oopar jeena kasaaun;
Hoya savaara tere para baithoon, chaabuka deke chalaaun;
Haathee hoya to janjeera gadaaun, chaaron paira bandhaaun;
Hoya mahaavata tere para baithoon, ankusha leke chalaau.

> Mind, how shall I make you understand better? I do not see the way. I would bridle you if you were a horse, but you are not a horse. Were you an elephant, I would bind you in chains. O God, now save me from this mind, it does not listen to me.

Kabirdas probably had the same problem as everyone else. If he did not have a problem, why would he write this verse? Ultimately, what is the mind? The rishis and munis say that it is a tremendous power of God. I will explain this to you through an example. Imagine there is a big room that is lit by a 200-watt bulb. The room is sealed, except for a tiny crack in the door, through which a gleam of bright light is shining out. This is the mind. The tremendous power of God that

is available to you and which shines out of the senses, is the mind. It is God who has illumined the mind. However, that which you experience through the medium of the brain is only a small glimpse of the power of God.

Nobody has a solution to this problem of the mind. I have told you all this, but I have not been able to tell you a remedy. Everybody has a little mental pressure. The difficulty is that you are all so educated now and know so much that it is a problem in itself. The best thing is to get interested in the home and household. While you are in the world, remain involved in making money, family and society. You should not allow introversion of the mind. A man should become introverted only after a certain age. I was interested in *vairagya*, renunciation, since childhood. When I came to Swami Sivananda, I was already inclined in that direction. However, in 1947, Swamiji told me, "Wait for at least another forty years. Do not do anything now. Only do five malas of japa with the mantra given to you. Other than this, do whatever work is required at the ashram: build, type, teach yoga, read the *Bhagavad Gita*, read the *Ramayana*, read the Upanishads. Do everything, but do not practise any serious sadhana. Wait for forty years, and after that you can become steady, not earlier."

That is why for forty years all I did was repeat the mantra given to me by guru. I would not even go to a temple. All I did was sleep at seven in the evening and wake up at twelve midnight. I would bathe, make my own tea and sit at the typewriter. Then I would deal with the accounts, look over magazine articles, do translations, and sort out the correspondence and bank work. By three-thirty all the work would be done. Then I would wake everyone up, meet people, manage the ashram organization, go out on errands, and so on. I would do all these things. It is only now that I do other things. I do not see any notes or letters and it has been years since I touched a pen. Now, whenever my mind is so inclined, I repeat the name of God as my guru has instructed. Other than that, I do no other work.

A man should live in such a way that his mind is constantly engaged. The mind should not be left empty, because an idle mind is the devil's workshop.

Joy, sorrow and contentment

The poor people of India always strive and struggle for money. They are unhappy with their lack of money and wealth. The people of Europe and America get everything easily: money, a job, a spouse, a house, yet they are unhappy. The one who does not have anything is unhappy and the one who has everything is also unhappy.

What then is the secret of happiness? Does happiness lie in wealth or poverty? People say that happiness lies in contentment, but then what is the definition of contentment? Is contentment simply an attitude of 'everything goes', or is there is a centre of contentment in the mind? One does not see contentment even in holy men or the intellectuals. It has even been observed that the rate of progress is higher in races that feel discontent. Those who have not been content with their social, political or economic order have progressed, but the growth stopped for those who were content. All the great discoveries of the last two or three hundred years point at this, and we are not talking only of scientific discoveries here, but also of human rights. We are talking of the rights of women, prisoners and prostitutes. We are talking of the rights of the orphans that roam the railway stations. We are talking of the rights of an unwanted child that has been abandoned by an unwed mother.

In contentment there is happiness but no growth, while in discontentment there is unhappiness, yet there is also growth. How much these discontented countries have progressed! Satellites have gone into space, and people have stayed on those satellites for a year or so at a time. Drinking water is sent to them from here. The US has recently sent out a satellite called Cassini, which will reach Saturn in approximately seven years time. When it reaches Saturn, the satellite will lower a machine on to a balloon, which will take photographs that will

be relayed to earth. A few days ago, the spacecraft Pathfinder landed on the surface of Mars. Man has accomplished all this. Is this not incredible?

Man always wants knowledge, be it knowledge of God or of His creation. Holy men practise austerities to gain knowledge of God, and scientists practise austerities to gain knowledge of God's creation. There are only two things: God and His creation. In his book, *Satayartha Prakash*, Swami Dayananda Saraswati wrote that there are three truths told of in the Vedas: *Ishwara*, God; *jiva*, the sentient being; and *jagat*, the manifest world. The world is inert but this jiva, this sentient creature, can see both the world and God. When the jiva is oriented towards God, tries to know God and contemplates God, it is called a spiritual being. The same jiva, when it tries to know the manifest world and contemplates upon it, is called a scientist.

Scientists do not contemplate upon God. They say it is very difficult, as you cannot see Him. They say, "The one you seek to know should have a form, a name, a virtue or a character. God has no definite form, no colour, and is beyond time and space. Therefore, how can I contemplate upon Him? The world can be seen: the wind, fire, stones, water, and so on. Let us contemplate upon these." A scientist is the philosopher of materialism.

There are four kinds of people. Some people are dynamic, some are emotional, some are enquirers, and some are intellectual. Swami Vivekananda was a very dynamic and active man. He enjoyed working. Those who are sensitive or emotional are inclined towards art, dance, music, drama, bhakti and bhajan. The third is the enquiring tendency; such people are always exploring the yamas, niyamas, asana, pranayama, dharana, dhyana, samadhi, visiting holy men and pilgrimages, and so on. Others are intellectual; they ask with the help of the intellect, "What is God?" They try to define and explain the world, sentience, God, reincarnation, this world and the next, through the intellect. They do not have any experience. In this manner, everyone has their own character.

Which career should a child choose?

Let him think for himself. You are the gardener and the child is a flowering plant. What kind of a flower do you wish to grow? The flower will depend on the plant. If the plant is a rose, then so is the flower. He will be as his *samskaras*, archetypes, make him. In India, we have a terrible habit of wanting to cast our children in our own mould, according to our wishes, and because of this, our children do nothing new. It is his life. Let him think for himself.

Is the intellect mature enough at a young age?

This has nothing to do with intelligence. A rose is a rose from the very beginning. Even in the seed form, wheat is still wheat. Does planting it turn it into another grain? No, it will become a stalk of wheat. The only difference is the quality. If the seed is good, the grain will be a better quality. Of course, a child is made up of your DNA, but when it comes to the question of becoming something, choosing a career, let the child decide its future for itself. This is not the job of either the mother or the father. The job of the father is to earn money and provide for the family, and the job of the mother is to feed, care for the child and teach it good habits for ten or twelve years. Parents cannot make their children into something that they are not. I have seen virtuous children in bad homes and rascally children in the homes of saintly people. If I had stayed with my parents, what would I have become? I would have become an inspector of police, what else?

The job of the parents is to provide material conveniences like food and clothing. This is the message from all the countries that are ruling the world today. The children in these countries stand on their own feet by the age of fifteen or sixteen years. The children are told, "Son, we have looked after you for many years, now try to live on your own and allow us to live in solitude in our old age." In India, children remain with their parents for a long time, and the parents continue to worry about their children. That is why it is a good idea to introduce a culture where one works hard on

the children for a few years, and then relaxes. When a child is fourteen or fifteen years old, he does not remain a son, he becomes a friend:

Laalayet panchavaarshani dashavaarshani taadayet,
Praapte tu shodavaarshe putra mitramivaacharet.

Nurture a child at the age of five; chastise him at the age of ten; when he attains the age of sixteen, behave with him as a friend.

In reality, how do parents behave with their children? Like authoritarian officials. I am telling you this because we have forgotten many things that belong to our ancient civilization. I have seen modern civilizations where girls are as courageous as boys. Do you know about the civil war going on in Afghanistan? Tanks and aeroplanes are being used. Do you know who the reporters are? Women. Women send news reports from the battlefield. In the Bosnian war, a female reporter was hit by a bullet and she was flown to London at once. She received treatment and then immediately returned! The girls there are so courageous and so capable. Such a race rules the world.

Until your children bring India to glory, there is no use in their becoming lecturers, doctors, professors, bureaucrats, and so on. If your son becomes a bureaucrat, what will happen? He will earn ten or twenty thousand rupees. What is so great about earning money? Human life is not only for money. God provides adequate sustenance for the animate and inanimate, for the whole world and everyone in it.

Jaana ko deta, ajaana ko deta,
jahaan ko deta, tumhe vahee daihen,
Kaahe ko socha kare mana moorakha,
jina choncha diye vahee choona bhi daihen.

The One who gives to the known and to the stranger will give to you too; why do you worry, O fool, the One who has given the beak will also give the food.

The one who has given you a mouth, will also give you food. That is why a man should not work for money alone. He should not study only with the goal of making money; instead, he should try to achieve something in this life.

Generally, in Europe and North America, a child studies up to matriculation or high school graduation. Then he gets a small job somewhere. It is not necessary that the job be at a good office. Even though a boy's father might be a doctor and his mother might be a lecturer, a boy may get a job cleaning the chicken coop at the local butcher's. It is difficult for wealthy Indians of the higher classes to understand this. In the West, young people work like this for a year or two after completing school. A few boys and girls live together, sharing the cooking and other household chores, until they earn enough money to go travelling. Then they travel the world, seeing sights like the Great Wall of China or the city on the water, Venice. After travelling for a few years, they return home, choose a subject and enter university. The universities of the West are not like the ones here. The university that they go to depends on whether they want to study birds, butterflies or foxes. There, the purpose of studying is not to make money; it is for knowledge. Knowledge is acquired for its own sake.

In India, the aim of acquiring knowledge has been reduced to making money. Nobody studies to acquire knowledge. The goal is to get a certificate and then a job. This way of thinking will have to change. You do not need to worry about your children at all. Children today are very sharp and are creating their own culture. Their thoughts are different, their ideals are different, but they are afraid to speak up before you. They have their own thoughts about marriage, religion and God. They have their own opinions on everything, but they cannot express them, and by the time they can, they have already been trapped in marriage.

It is the day of love marriages. Children say, "It is my life, I will marry the person of my choice. Why should I marry someone of your choice?" I agree. I say, "Do as you wish."

Whether or not you agree, in the changing India of today, many social beliefs will have to change. One of these is whether marriage should be for love or it should be a socially-arranged match. In the coming age, children will raise the question of choice, "It is I who am marrying, not you. Why are you so concerned about it?" This is one matter.

Premarital sexual relations is another matter. Today, there is freedom in everything, and girls and boys discuss the matter of premarital relationships freely. There is yet another subject: the unwed mother. In the social conditions of today, there is no choice given to an unwed mother except abortion. However, abortion is not good for women's health. Abortion can cause tumours, cancer and infections of the uterus. How can this be stopped? Either accept abortion or accept the status of unwed mothers. Children have their own thoughts and views about many things. They have opinions about clothes, about food.

Society has to change with the times. In India, many centuries exist simultaneously. The twenty-first century has arrived in Delhi and Bombay, and here in Rikhia, we live in the seventeenth century. Look at the world around you and you will realize that you cannot function in isolation. A simple calculation illustrates the point. What is the population of the world? Five billion. Out of that five billion, ninety crore, or nearly one billion, are in India. Out of these ninety crore, twelve crore are Muslim, and the remainder is seventy-eight crore. Out of that, two crore are Christians, which leaves seventy-six crore. From that number there are twenty crore of *adivasis*, or tribal people. That leaves fifty-six crore. From the fifty-six crore, subtract the number of the *shudras*, or lower caste people, and the remainder is only twenty crore. This remaining minority represents the number of brahmins, kshatriyas and vaishyas. The ones who are called shudras, the service class consisting of the washer-men, potters, cobblers and sweepers, constitute about forty percent of the population

of India. These people are the workers. They do the manual work in the mills and in the farms. Today, if they united politically, they would overpower you.

Only the twenty crore of brahmins, kshatriyas and vaishyas believe in caste, and they also handcuff their girls. There is no such thing as caste anywhere else in the world. The Muslims do not believe in it, the Christians do not believe in it, nor do the Jews, the Parsis, the Chinese, the Japanese or the Russians. However, you all say that the tradition of caste and creed is written in the Vedas. No, it is not written anywhere. To say, "This person should not eat in the house of that person", and "That person should not marry into the family of this person", is wrong. Nothing of the sort is said anywhere in the Vedas. When you look at the whole world, you will see the truth of it.

Every individual must decide upon their own future. Parents will always be parents. After all, the tree that one comes from has to be acknowledged. Yet, the child must look after its own future, and one needs to think about this. It does not matter if you have no interest in a serious subject like science. The famous poet Rabindranath Tagore did not study science, but he received the Nobel Prize. The author Arundhati Roy is not a scientist, yet she was awarded the Booker Prize. There are many people like these who are doing excellent work in the fields of literature, art and music. One can excel in any sphere today.

The field of sannyasa, however, remains restricted. It has remained very limited. Any community that has too many rules does not progress much. Rules should be flexible. One has to face many obstacles in a society that has excessive rules and regulations. Maybe one or two like me can overcome them and attain their goal, but the rest perish in between. This is not such an easy road. The field of sannyasa has many possibilities. Still, there are some rules and prohibitions that not everybody would be able to withstand. Suppose a person takes sannyasa, and after a few years he has an urge to drink liquor or eat meat, what will he do? Society will not tolerate this.

In the future, after ten or twenty years, relaxed rules within sannyasa may be possible. I have given birth to a tradition where even a married person can live like a sannyasin; two married sannyasins can live together and do the work. If society were to accept this, it would indicate progress. There is some possibility of introducing this change among educated people, but the common man would just say, "What kind of a sadhu is that, living with a woman?" In olden times, no one commented on such a thing. At that time, it was a civilization of *rishis*, realized sages, who were married. Arundhati and Vasishtha were married, Agastya and Lopamudra were married. Rishi Vishwamitra had a relationship with the celestial damsel, Menaka, but nobody objected to all this.

There has been much conflict on this point in Christianity. Catholic priests are not allowed to marry and Martin Luther King objected to this. As a result, Christianity split into two, Catholic and Protestant. Catholic priests are forbidden to marry. If they do, they are excommunicated, ostracized and not given a grave. On the other hand, Protestant priests can marry, have children, and continue to preach and give sermons. If everyone agrees that married life does not destroy the spirituality of a person, then why forbid marriage? Celibacy is not possible for everyone. However, our society is not mature enough to accept this flexible perspective. It will take at least another twenty years to mature in this direction. In the same way, everybody condemns alcohol socially, yet it is taken in the Juna Akhara. The sannyasins at Juna Akhara drink brandy and people make them an offering of it too.

What is wrong with drinking alcohol?

Your personal views and those of society are different. What an individual believes is right and what society believes to be right are two different things. Social beliefs are based on social values, and those fundamental values of society were introduced a few thousand years ago. There was a time when these social rules were by broken by Buddhists and Jains; however, in the vedic society, rishis and munis lived with their

wives. God married, so why not rishis and munis? Did Rama not marry? Did Krishna not marry? Shiva married twice!

Why is alcohol considered bad by society?

It is a fact that alcohol consumption damages the body. In India, it is especially harmful if rural people drink. They contract tuberculosis and other diseases because they do not have anything to eat except dry rice. They do not receive enough nutrients and vitamins, and then they drink whole bottles of liquor. This causes an increase of bile in the gall bladder, which affects the liver, resulting in cirrhosis. That is why our ancestors have forbidden us from drinking alcohol.

There is a whole chapter called 'Soma Stuti' in the *Rigveda* on somarasa. From the literary point of view, it is probably the most beautiful chapter in the *Rigveda*. What was this somarasa? Soma is a vine and its main characteristic is that its leaves come out on the full moon of *shukla paksha*, the bright fortnight, and on *amavasya*, or the dark moon, all the leaves drop off. People would pick these leaves, put them in a pot and then bury the pot. After fifteen days, the pot would be unearthed and the rotten leaves taken out and boiled. The alcohol distilled from this would be drunk during rituals. It would be offered to *agni*, the fire, and only the four kinds of brahmins who represented the four Vedas: ritvija, adhvaryu, brahma and hota, could drink it.

At that time, alcohol was forbidden even to the kshatriyas. The kshatriyas, however, gradually grew in political power. One who has political power has all the other powers, so they started partaking of soma. Kshatriyas are violent by nature. Drinking accentuates this nature and gradually society degenerated. After that, rules regarding drinking were created. For instance, drinking alcohol was forbidden among the traders.

Today, in society, a person is chided for drinking. It should not be so. Nevertheless, this is the way of the world. One man says to another, "Oh, you are a gambler," whereas he is a gambler himself. A thief berates another, calling the

other a thief. Similarly, one alcohol drinker chides another. This is human nature. There is nothing special about it. The simplest thing for a man to do is to criticize another. There is nothing to it. On the other hand, it is very difficult to praise another, as one's own ego has to be restrained.

What is your view on eating non-vegetarian food?

Eating vegetarian or non-vegetarian food affects both the body and the nature, but it does not affect your spiritual progress. Which is better, eating fruit and robbing people all your life, or being a meat-eater and serving the poor? Only one who performs good deeds is better. Only one who speaks the truth is better. Only one who thinks good thoughts is the better person, even if he is a non-vegetarian. A dog is a non-vegetarian, but he is so devoted to his master. Is that not a virtue?

Do not be confused by these things. I am not telling you to eat meat or not to eat meat. These matters have to be thought about carefully. India is a hot country and if you are careless, you will suffer. Due to carelessness, meat can spoil easily. In the meat-eating nations, animals are given antibiotic injections at the slaughterhouse so the meat remains fresh for a longer time. Those countries are often so cold that even milk does not curdle. Milk remains fresh for a much longer time. The cold also helps preserve the meat. In this country, the way the meat is cut and stored allows flies to gather on it. It is unhygienic and unhealthy.

It is also important to know whether the animal had any disease before it was slaughtered, as diseased meat affects human health. There are also diseases in vegetables and grain, but they do not affect your health. The Santhal tribal people are an example. Whenever a male goat dies, they buy it for ten rupees and eat it. As a result, they all fall sick. The chance of getting a disease is greater with non-vegetarian food. It can cause ailments such as cardiac problems, high blood pressure and depression. Scientists say that there is no danger from vegetarianism, but there is much danger in a non-vegetarian diet.

Diet, however, has no bearing on spirituality. Spirituality is the way to knowledge, the way to liberation. Diet is a social matter. Do not confuse one with the other. Look at it practically. If it is good then eat it; if it is not good then give it up. Look at alcohol and celibacy in the same way. Practical things should be looked at from a practical point of view. Look at only one thing from a spiritual viewpoint: do you love God as much as you love your wife and child? Tuslidas says:

> *Kaamihi naari piaari jimi, lobhihi priya jimi daama,*
> *Timi Raghunaatha nirantara priya laagahu mohi Raama.*
>
> May you ever be so dear to me, O Rama, as a woman is dear to a lustful man and as lucre is dear to the greedy, O Lord of the Raghus.

God should be remembered in the same way. Then it does not matter whether or not you eat meat, onion, garlic, or whether you remain celibate or get married. These are practical things. Do not confuse the two. Keep bhakti separate. Keep it absolutely free. Do not mix it with caste, marriage or diet. Bhakti is above religion, it is above social norms, above culture, beyond male-female relationships. Bhakti is a matter of the heart. Bhakti may be present in a cobbler, in a butcher and in a prostitute.

There is a story about a holy man who lived on one side of a road and a prostitute lived on the other. Much kirtan and bhajan went on in the holy man's house. The dancing girl would wake up early, bathe and come to the window to hear the kirtans, which she enjoyed very much. All day long the holy man judged her from the other side, berating her and calling her names. After death, when both went to God, she passed and he failed.

The way you perceive things is very important in bhakti. The bhakta always sees God, never the world. Whether you have talked to a cobbler, touched a sweeper or conversed with a Muslim, all these are social matters. It is the worldly vision. Bhakti is not a matter for the brain and the intellect;

it is only for the heart. It is only from the heart that faith and trust blossom. How do you know that your father is really your father? You just accept it. This is faith and trust. When children are young, they are innocent. Therefore, they have faith and trust. They believe whatever you say.

Swamiji, how does one get to know more about one's ishta?
Knowledge about the ishta is spontaneous and easy; it happens by itself. Mirabai did not have to look for her ishta. When she was a little girl, a sadhu came to visit her father and stayed in the palace. He had a statue of Sri Krishna with him that Mira spontaneously accepted. She never felt anything other than acceptance: *Mero to Giridhara Gopala doosaro na koi* – "To me, only Krishna is dear, and no one else." Why did she not go toward Rama or Shiva?

First understand what is meant by ishta. *Ishta* means 'desired'; that which I desire mentally is ishta. In the same vein, a desired person is an ishta person or a desired god is an ishta devata. The one you desire is your ishta. You should know what you wish for. How would anyone else know? If you want many things, if you want Rama, but you also want Krishna, and you also wish for Devi, then it is difficult to fix the ishta. I faced this problem, too. Since childhood, Sri Rama has naturally been my ishta. Later, I joined a Shaiva community – after all, sannyasins are all Shaiva – and what mantra did I receive? That of Shiva! Now, who is my ishta? I thought to myself, 'I will keep Sri Rama as my ishta, but my ishta mantra will be panchakshari.' So, my ishta mantra and my ishta devata are different. This is no loss to me, but a profit. Here, ishta devata means that devata through whom you are trying to reach God. Ishta devata is that ladder by which you are trying to reach the roof; it is the road by which you are trying to reach your goal. Which road you take is something that each person must decide for themselves. Guru only gives you a mantra. He does not tell you of your ishta. Guru will not tell you to worship Shiva, Rama or Devi. No, he only gives mantra. The mantra may be *Om Namah*

Shivaya, *Sri Rama*, *Namo Narayana* or *Hrim Krim*, it can be anything.

Ishta mantra is the name and ishta devata is the form. Name and form are the two appellations of God. A form is necessary in choosing an ishta. Which is the form that appeals to you and what is your relationship with it? Is it a relationship of lover and beloved like Mirabai, a master-servant relationship like Hanuman, a mother and son relationship like Yashoda, or a friendship like Radha and Krishna? These are only examples that I am giving you. You have to see the relationship you have. Ishta mantra and devata can be the same or different.

There are not two Gods, though the form of God that is chosen may be different. You have chosen to believe in one form, I have chosen to believe in another, and somebody else has chosen yet another form. In our minds and brains there can be different portraits of God. Just as the light of the sun appears to be red through red glass, blue through blue glass, yellow through yellow glass, green through green glass and white through white glass, the fact is that the sun is none of these. Similarly, there is a different picture or form of God in every person's mind: *Jaki rahi bhavana jaisi*, *prabhu murata tina dekhi taisi* – "As is one's sentiment, so is one's perception of the form of divinity."

When God incarnates, He takes some form. Whenever God has granted someone a vision of Himself, it has been in some form. Whenever a rishi has written a song of praise, it has been of some particular form and figure. This does not mean that God is many. You made rabadi from milk, I made peda and she made rasagulla, but the milk is the same. The forms of milk are many. The clothes that you are wearing all come from cotton. Many things have come out of cotton: a kurta, trousers, a sari or a bedspread, but the cotton remains cotton. Similarly, God is not many; He is one. Rama and Shiva are both one. Meditate on Rama and repeat the mantra *Om Namah Shivaya*; there is no conflict between the two. The stories may have differences, Shiva lives in

Kailash while Rama lives in Ayodhya. However, when you are meditating on the truth, there should not be confusion of this kind.

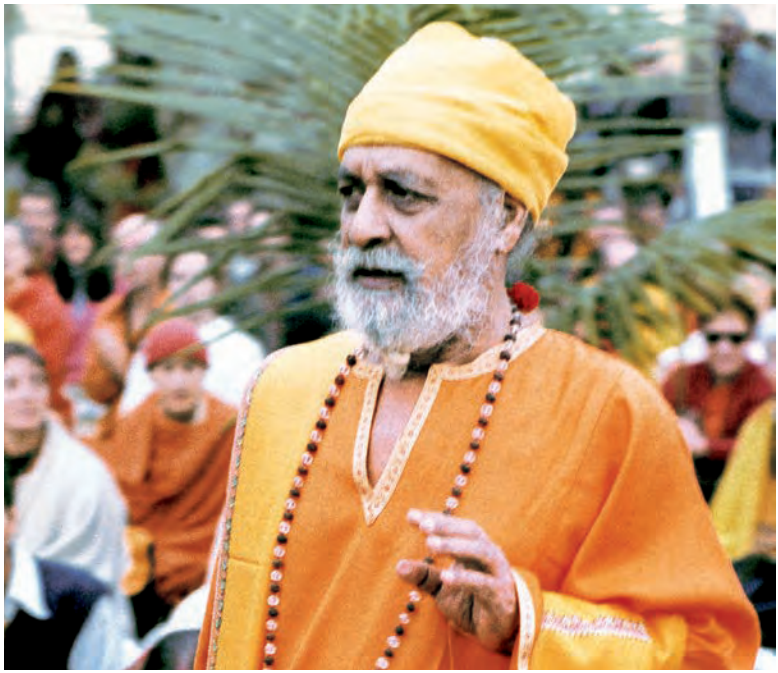
I believed in Sri Rama because I was born into the same clan as Sri Rama. I was born into the Ikshvaku clan, and Sri Rama was worshipped in our home. Shiva was also worshipped, and in Kumaon it is common practice to worship Devi. In Almora, Garhwal and Nainital all the people are worshippers of Devi. All of Uttarakhand worships Devi, and it is said that She took birth there as an avatara. As I was born into a kshatriya family of the Ikshvaku clan, I naturally liked the bow-bearing Sri Rama. Since childhood he has captivated me. He always carried a bow and arrow, and was a symbol of courage and bravery. To all, he was the model of beauty and decorum, an example of appropriate behaviour. However, I came into Shiva's community. I liked Shiva too and then I came to understand that they are admirers of each other. Shiva praises Rama and Rama prays to Shiva. No problem!

For Sita's wedding, which is going to happen here this year, a picture of Shiva and Parvati will be painted on the back wall of the wedding pandal. People will think, 'Oh, how has Shiva come to be at a Vaishnava wedding?' Actually, it is very important for Shiva to be present at the wedding of Sita and Rama. Shiva has even said to Sri Rama, "Whenever you are married, I will certainly be there." It is even written in the Puranas that he had attended the wedding of Rama.

Do not become confused about ishta devata and mantra. Whatever form of God appeals to you, make it your own. Eat whatever sweet you like. After all, they are both made from milk; it does not matter. It is okay to repeat the mantra of Rama and worship the same form. Also, it is not essential that the form is worshipped; worship of only the name may be done. It has been emphasized in the *Ramacharitamanas* that the repetition of the name of Rama alone is enough, whether you worship the form of Shiva or Rama.

Satsang 14

25 October 1997



The Indian civilization has five bases: the Indus Valley, the Gangetic Valley, the Narmada Valley, the Kaveri Delta and the Brahmaputra Valley. What you recognize as Indian culture today, whether dance forms like Kathak and Bharat Natyam, or the regions from Kashmir in the north to Kanya Kumari in the south, is an amalgamation of these five civilizations.

The Indus Valley civilization gave India business, politics and a dynamic culture. It is this same Indus from which the

word 'Hindu' originated. The Gangetic Valley civilization gave India the Vedas, the Upanishads and other such spiritual literature. All the rishis and munis were born there; nowhere else. Even today, if someone wants to take sannyasa he will go to Haridwar, not to Rameshwaram. If a person from Madras desires to take sannyasa, he will go to Uttarakhand. If people want to go on a pilgrimage, they would also go to Uttarakhand. This is the culture of the Gangetic Valley. The civilization of the Narmada Valley gave birth to the occult: sorcery, magic, tantra, etc. The Kaveri Delta civilization gave birth to dance, music, fine arts and sculpture, everything that you call cultural today. The India of today is an amalgamation of these five cultures.

The most important influence has been the Indus Valley civilization, which gave India trade and business, politics, and the art of war. It is from this influence that we are called 'Hindus'. Hindu is our race. Even the Muslims here are racially Hindu, although their religion is Islam. The Christians here are also racially Hindu. After all, what race are the people of Pakistan? Are they different? Are they Mongols? Are they Huns? No, they are Hindus who originated from the Indus Valley civilization; only their faith is different.

Understand the difference between the definition of *jati*, or race, and that of religion. Race is connected with the place where a person is born, and nowadays, this can be determined by the genes or DNA. A gene is a kind of life element, which forms the basis of race. Scientists have discovered and classified thousands of genes. It is the jnati or identity of the element of life in the body. *Jnati* means one's identity, and from it the word 'jati', which means caste, is derived. How is a man recognized? By his description. For instance, he may be tall, broad, with a thick moustache and beard. This is how you could identify a man. Similarly, there are many identities based on human genes, which have been explained by scientists. All these different identities are called 'race' in English, and 'jati' or 'nasla' in Hindi.

It is well known that India has the largest number of sadhus and saints in the whole world. Then why are we such a backward country?

The first thing is that India is not backward or behind the times. What is the yardstick of modern or old-fashioned? Suppose I live in a hut, yet I am very healthy, I live well, my relationship with people around me is good and I do not steal, gamble or have any other vice. Would I be called backward? I do not have a bathroom. I do not even have a kitchen. I put two stones down, light a fire between them and cook my food. Would I be called poor and backward?

There is another man who has a nice big house, a car, a cell phone and a fax machine. However, he is always ill; he has cardiac problems and diabetes. He fights with his wife every day and his son has run away from home. He gambles, steals, earns money through ill means, commits perjury and also keeps a few pistols handy. Is he very modern and cultured? Within human society, the definitions of decent and indecent, modern and backward, are made according to human sentiment. It is your personal definition that someone who dresses well and wears a tie is cultured and one who is dressed in torn clothes is uncouth.

We are not backward people. With regard to spiritual development, the western countries are backward. The people of India were the first to know the nature of the transcendental reality; they discovered the laws of reincarnation, and whether there can be marriage between brother and sister. It were our people who first discovered whether there could be marriage within a family, and then explained why not. This is a very old country.

Scientific researchers from India would certainly be very happy going to the West, but remember, Bhasmasura burnt himself through the very boon he acquired from Shiva. Nobody killed Bhasmasura, rather he burnt himself to ashes through his boon. Similarly, countries that are suppressing the rest of the world through their false economy and chemical weaponry are going to be destroyed by these very things. This is not

only happening today; it has already happened repeatedly in previous ages. The great empires of Egypt, Greece and Rome were destroyed like this. However, people from the so-called backward countries will survive. They will manage to eat, even if only dal and roti, and they will have fun, even if only a little. Maybe they will not fly in an aeroplane, but they will ride in a bullock cart. One day, the western civilization will die due to the weapons they themselves have made. They will fall prey to the false economy that they themselves have created. The economic model that we have today, which includes the stock and shares market, is a false economy. It is untruthful. They are making a fool of the world. Those in India who understand say nothing. They are also gamblers, and how can one gambler admonish another gambler? I am not a gambler, so I can say it. I can speak truthfully, as I am not afraid of anyone.

The empirical science that has developed relatively recently in the western world was a science well known to this country. There is an in-depth exposition of it in the ancient books. Vaisheshika philosophy is a science of *kana*, or subtle atoms, that was expounded by a sage, aptly named Sage Kanada. Today, Europe has presented the atomic theory to the world and it is studied in schools and colleges. Even so, the atomic principles and theory had already been presented to the world many thousands of years ago with the Indian Vaisheshika philosophy. They had further divided the atom, *kana*, into anu, parmanu and trisharenu. This science was known to our rishis and munis; however, they also knew that if this knowledge entered man's practical sciences, the world would become a lost cause. People would pull out guns and begin shooting, and soon there would be chemical warfare, which is happening now. For that reason, in India the knowledge had been concealed.

The Indian people also had knowledge of aeronautics and rocket science. I have read ancient books on these subjects, not only in India. I have been to the Rocket Foundation in Germany and read the books there. I am a well-educated man,

but I am not saying this proudly. I can hypothesize, infer, debate and have a discussion on any science. I can argue about the economy and finance. I have read a lot. In fact, I have spent my whole life studying. I have been to various libraries to read, and whatever money I received from people I have spent on books, not on myself.

I read the *Bharadwaja Samhita* at the Rocket Foundation. Rishi Bharadwaja possessed the knowledge regarding the science of aeronautics, and how a large object can be lifted into the air. Yet, our rishis and munis kept this knowledge secret. They did not allow it to become common. They knew that the demon lurking behind the science would raise its head one day. The rishis and munis knew that *tamoguni* humans, sunk in negativity, will use a gun to shoot and kill. Therefore, they decided to wait until such a time that man became *sattwaguni*, balanced and benevolent, to hand over such knowledge.

Science is of two kinds: spiritual and material. Spiritual science tries to understand and study the senses, the mind, the soul, the ego and the subtle world. The sages of India experimented with and researched this science, while the western world moved towards the material sciences, and dissected matter.

What is matter? What is the definition of matter? When time and space come together, matter is formed. A table and chair is a form of matter. They are symbols of space and time. Just as in electricity, there is positivity and negativity, similarly, space and time are two opposing poles. Imagine a line with space at one end and time at the other. They are absolutely opposite each other. When space and time approach each other, at some point they will meet. At this meeting point, there is a tremendous explosion, an atomic explosion. It is also called realization. You can give it any other name: Prakriti-Purusha, giver-receiver, female-male. These are the symbols of space and time. As long as they are separated, there is no creation. When they meet, there is creation.

The people of the West have made many good machines. You can reach Bhagalpur from here in an hour. In two hours

you can reach Patna and in four hours you can reach Delhi. You can go anywhere in a matter of hours. I recognize that and we are all taking advantage of it. However, this cannot be the only indicator of man's development. Real human development is the development of human life. On one side is a good yet poor man and on the other side is a rich rascal; who among the two would you call civilized?

When Tulsidas composed the *Ramacharitamanas*, he wrote that he was composing it as it gave him pleasure. Is this also not an example of ego?

No, it was not Tulsidas who wrote the *Ramachritamanas;* it was written through him. The *Ramacharitamanas* is not poetry but *shruti*, that which is heard in meditation. The Vedas are not poetry, nor literature; they are shruti. If I tell you to take dictation and you do, then you will have written the essay; however, I am the one making you write it. Tulsidas was made to write the *Ramacharitamanas* in the same way. I have never read another book like the *Ramacharitamanas*. I have read a wide range of books. I have read the Bible many times and the Koran. I have read Plato and all kinds of philosophical and spiritual literature. However, I get such joy from reading the *Ramacharitamanas*, like a child running to its mother's lap, or the joy of a husband and wife embracing, or the joy a dusty and worn traveller gets in an air-conditioned room. One does not have to understand it to feel such joy.

Tulsidas had an extremely difficult life. His mother died giving birth and, soon after, the nurse who cared for him died. There was no one to look after him. Like the urchins on Sealdah station, he roamed here and there until a sadhu took him under his wing.

Tulsidas was a great Sanskrit scholar. He would write a poem in the evening; however, it would disappear by the morning. God did not want him to write in Sanskrit, He wanted him to write in his own language so that everyone could read it. Why did Swami Vivekananda not write in Bengali? Who would have read it? Why did Swami Sivananda

not write in Tamil? Who would have read it? Similarly, I did not write in Hindi, I wrote in English and today, everyone is reading it. God makes you write in the language of the age.

Sri Aurobindo knew Greek, Latin, Bengali and Sanskrit, but he was made to write in English so that the educated people could read it and could question it. Only then, the knowledge could be spread and propagated. If he had written in Bengali, what would have been achieved? Similarly, God said to Tulsidas, "What can you achieve by writing in Sanskrit?" and so, He had him write in Hindi, the same Hindi that was spoken in the villages. The dialects of Hindi are stronger and more widely spoken than the language itself. Brajabhasha, Maithili, Avadhi, Bhojpuri, Angika, Bundelkhandi are all dialects of Hindi, and more widespread than Hindi. This is why the *Ramacharitamanas* has been so widely popular.

Saints are those who experience the innermost, unknowable and unmanifest principle, that which is beyond vision, which is beyond normal thoughts and experiences, that which you cannot see and you cannot touch. It is an experience which happens only in a certain state and it does not last very long. It is like lightning. It is also called God-experience, having the vision of God, or *nirvikalpa samadhi*. This does not last for an hour or two, no, it comes and goes in the wink of an eye. It is the same experience that Kakabhushundi had in Rama's stomach and what Yashoda experienced in Sri Krishna's mouth. Sri Krishna gave Arjuna the experience of aeons and ages while sitting on the chariot in the battlefield, yet Arjuna felt it happened in the blink of an eye. A person who has an experience like that is a saint. The rest of us are wise intellectuals, but not saints. Our rishis and munis have been trying for this fleeting experience for thousands of years. Some died, some had the experience, and many did not.

The question remains of backwardness and poverty. Yes, there are poor people in India, but it is not as if there are no poor in America and England. They have people who would be in the same state as our poor if they stopped receiving the dole. Here, at least something can be scratched from the

fields, but in England, there are no farms any more. It is not as if natural calamities such as earthquakes and cyclones only come upon India; they occur all over the world. Cyclones and typhoons hit Europe, America and Japan, earthquakes occur, houses and roads break.

Even from a material perspective, we are not backward. The material perspective is not only about food. In India, the institution of marriage, for instance, is scientific. It is in agreement with modern genetic science. We are largely vegetarian in diet. Although some people do eat meat, Indian civilization is generally considered vegetarian. It is a universally known truth that vegetarianism is the best for health. Everyone agrees that if you do not want to be sick, do not eat meat. Even those who eat meat say it. Great wrestlers and boxers are vegetarians. Mohammed Ali is a vegetarian. He has written in his autobiography that he does not even eat eggs.

Traditions and feats of achievement have been greater in India. The West has given only one thing, comfort and conveniences; to the right is the bathroom, to the left is the kitchen, walk a little and there is the car, pick up the telephone and talk to someone miles away. There are many such conveniences, but what are the effects? Twenty-five or thirty years ago, you had to walk half a mile for the toilet, you had to walk half a mile to bathe, and you had to carry your own load on your shoulders. What was the effect of this? The arteries did not weaken; they did not get clogged with cholesterol. If you make an honest comparison, what is the priority: health or comfort?

What does a lady do all day long if she does not have a job? If she is bored she will read a novel or watch programs on TV from noon until five in the evening. She has gas for cooking, so it does not take long to cook food. Then there is nothing to do. An empty mind is the devil's workshop. The thoughts in such minds are always tamasic or rajasic in quality. Inauspicious, negative thoughts come to such minds. In spite of having a good-looking husband or wife, there is no happiness in the

house. In spite of having married such a nice wife, there is bickering in the house every day. You may have a good son and a good daughter, but still there is no contentment. That is because your mind is empty and only the devil lives in an empty mind. Bad thoughts live there, nothing else. Sadhus and holy men do not live in idle minds. It would be better if she had to pick up cow dung from morning until evening, if she had to go to the market, do the cooking, clean the dishes and wash the clothes. This would occupy her mind and tire her out physically.

Nowadays, the problem is that rich people do not tire themselves. Whenever you see them, they are dressed beautifully in clean starched saris. Such soaps they use! I am offered so many kinds of soaps and shampoos! I say, "No, neem is good enough for me." It is foolish to spend good money on these soaps and then suffer from allergies due to them. We have neem trees in our garden, and the leaves from these are boiled in water, and that water is used for bathing once a week. Do not become a blind votary of this modern materialism; become a critic. If you do a critique on today's culture, then you can improve the culture of tomorrow. Reform is born out of criticism. It is the criticism of any civilization, culture or political structure that definitely leads to its ascendance. However, the criticism should be constructive.

In India, the civic infrastructure is so flawed that a lot time is wasted waiting for a train or a bus and, as a result, so much work is left undone. What can be done in such circumstances?

The civic organization that you desire took three hundred years to evolve in Europe, while here we want to establish it in twenty-five to fifty years. It will come; I can visualize an auspicious and reformed India. I also know that when a building goes up, a lot of dust flies. The situation during the Industrial Revolution was similar to here: civic order breakdown, violence, killing, conflicts, rape, robbery and

dacoity. Stories have been written about this and films have been made. Currently, we are in a period of transition between one culture and another, so all of this is bound to happen. In these circumstances, each one will have to analyze their own situation and find a solution.

After the Industrial Revolution, western scientists rejected God. Which idea of God did they reject? It was not the God of the Vedas, but the God of the Bible. It was the God of the New Testament, who was defined and preached about by Jesus Christ; the God over whom the church had sole rights. It was the same God that they had held on to for such a long time saying, "This is God. This is the one God. This is the only God." They did not reject the God of the Vedas, because the perspective held in the Vedas is, "God is this, and also that." As for the soul and the fundamental principle of all creation, great scientists and thinkers such as Newton, Einstein, Eddington and Max Planck have all expressed their own thoughts about it. Everyone has put forth their thoughts about the Absolute, and those thoughts are close to vedic thought. When the United States first tested the atomic bomb, a scientist called Oppenheimer was monitoring it from his cubicle far away. When the atomic bomb detonated, he spontaneously uttered a verse from the *Bhagavad Gita* (11:12):

Divi suryasahasrasya bhavedyugapaduthitaa;
Yadi bhaah sadrishee saa syaadbhaasastasya mahaatmanah.

> Even the brilliance of a thousand suns alight at once perhaps would not match the light of God's cosmic form.

He wrote this verse in his diary at the time of the explosion. Why did such a great nuclear scientist recall this verse of the *Gita* at that time and place? Why did he not write down something from the Bible? It is because the subtle science expounded in the Vedas and the *Gita* is knowledge born of experience. It is not knowledge related to a specific sect or

order, it is knowledge related to experience. That is why it is called vedic dharma, dharma that has come from the Vedas. *Veda* means 'knowledge', 'to know'.

It is said that inside every grain and every atom is God. In that case, can those who believe in the manifest Brahman consider things like slippers and brooms also to be gods and goddesses?

Yes, I have kept my guru's slippers and I could also keep the broom. It is very easy to say that God is formless, but how will you experience it? What will you think of, what will you see, whom will you worship? In reality, although people speak of a formless God, they do not understand it and are not able to experience it. When the formless God realized this, He felt great compassion. He said to the Goddess, "This is big problem. These people keep saying, 'God this, and God that', but actually they do not understand anything at all." Devi said, "Let us both go there and make some video cassettes for the people", and so they both embodied in different forms. God became Rama and the Goddess became Sita, God became Krishna and the Goddess became Radha, God became Shiva and the Goddess became Girija.

Kesava ke kamalaa havai baithee, Shiva ke bhavana bhavaanee,
Maayaa mahaa thaginee hama jaanee.

> Near Keshava sits Kamala; Bhavani resides in the house of Shiva; Maya is a great trickster, I know.

Both came and enacted a play, a play that would be useful to the people. Whatever film you make should be relevant to the viewers, shouldn't it? Krishna came and he played a part suited to the age. Rama lived according to his time. Everyone agreed that he was a very good person, an avatara.

By contemplating on God, Rama, Sita or Shiva and by worshipping them, the mind gradually becomes clean and purified; it becomes silent and clear. When the inner mirror starts becoming clean, then the formless begins to reveal

itself. Eyes are needed even to see the formless, the *nirakara*; however, you do not have those eyes, no one does. You say that there are germs in the water, but where are they? I do not see them. First, we need a microscope to look through. Just as germs and microbes can be seen only through a microscope, similarly, the eye of knowledge is needed for the experience of God.

Guru pada raja mridu manjula anjan.
Nayana amia diga dosha bibhanjana.

> The dust of the guru's feet is like the soft, beautiful kohl; if you wear it in your eye, all defects of the vision will be destroyed.

Tulsidas says that everyone has cataracts or faulty vision, and that is why it is not possible to see anything. Therefore, the cataracts have to be removed. How can they be removed? First comes the guru, and then, more importantly, the dust of the guru's feet. That cures the malady of the eyes so that even the formless God may be seen.

There are many descriptions of rishis and munis such as Markandeya, Sanak, Sanandan, Sanat Kumar and Shukadeva who had this vision, this eye of knowledge. Shukadeva was a brahmarishi, the son of Vyasdeva. He left home at the age of five and was a person who experienced the formless God. Yet what did he teach people? He taught Krishna bhakti, devotion to Krishna. The *Srimad Bhagavatam* was recited by Shukadeva. Why would a graduate or professor of the subtle knowledge of the formless teach about the *saguna*, the manifest God? Maybe you have a PhD, but if you have to teach students of the seventh grade then you will have to teach according to their level. The teacher has to teach not according to how much he knows, but according to the capacity of his student. Yes, Shukadeva was a *Brahmajnani*, a knower of God. He had a degree in the knowledge of the Absolute, but he taught people Krishna bhakti. What else can a simple man learn but Krishna bhakti? A person is taught

according to his capacity. Worshipping a form of God is the link, the thread to reach the formless. One has to hold the thread and move forward slowly.

Tulsidas has said it clearly, "Why are you eagerly awaiting the formless with a garland in your hands? Remain only with the form." He even said that the formless God is very simple and easy, because what is there to ask about? The difficult thing to deal with is the *sakara*, the God with form. As soon as you talk about sakara God, people will ask a hundred questions, while if you talk about the nirakara God, everyone falls silent. The formless is very simple. It is the form that is very difficult, because it hard to understand and to believe. Even Sati doubted that Rama was an avatara. If Sati doubted, then what chance do you or I have? Despite Shiva's explanations, she still went to test Rama. Everyone doubts; that is why sakara is very difficult. Nevertheless, worship has to begin with sakara and while worshipping the form, remember one thing: *shraddha*, faith, and *vishwasa*, trust.

Many people worship Devi, Shiva and Rama. Is this right?
What difference does it make? I eat a rasgulla one day, another day I eat a peda, sometimes I eat chamcham, sometimes yoghurt, sometimes kheer and if there is no sweet available, I drink milk. It is the same thing. You can name Him Rama or Rahim. There is no difference between soap or *sabun*, and water or *pani*. They refer to the same thing, only the name is different. I believe in this principle. I believe in the vedic dharma. I have both an ishta devata and an ishta mantra. I believe that all the forms of God are only different personal interpretations or expressions of the one and same element, or *tattwa*. God attracts us to Himself through all forms. From time to time God takes birth and incarnates for the sake of his devotees, so that devotees can hear about his play and remember Him.

The question of why there are so many gods and goddesses should never arise in the mind. Never think that there are different kinds of electricity because there are so many bulbs,

or that because there are so many countries there are also many kinds of earth. No, the sky is one, the earth is one, the cosmos is one and God is one. However, this oneness is made up of the completion, the wholeness of many. This 'one' is not singular; it is made up of many. Infinity is the ultimate one.

Purusha and Prakriti, Shiva and Shakti, man and woman, positive and negative, are these two elements or not?

Yes, certainly they are two. I am also two, the right side is masculine, the left side is feminine. You are also two; everyone is two.

The Vedas say there are three: God, the jiva and the world. One is *Ishwara*, God; the second is *jagat*, the world that He made; and the third is the *jiva*, the one who experiences both. This is the theory of three, *traitvada*, and this is also what I see. Jagat, the world, means creation, whatever we see and also that which we do not see. We are the jivas, the incarnated souls who experience God and the world. Many jivas are engaged in experiencing the world, and some go towards God and the soul.

The feeling that God is one and there is no place for Devi is incorrect, as is the feeling that Devi is supreme and there is no place for God. Always remember, as it is written in the *Srimad Devi Bhagvatam*, that the primal feminine force, *Adi Shakti*, was the fundamental, basic energy. Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh were born of Her. Iccha shakti, kriya shakti and jnana shakti are believed to be the three energies of the Devi. Does that mean that Devi is one, two or three? Do you have intelligence inside you or not? That is a kind of energy, a power inside you. If you are a body builder, or a strong man, that strength too is another kind of power in you. Shakti is an inseparable part of God, but She is also accepted to be operating independently of Him. You can call it *dvaita*, the principle of duality and plurality, or *advaita*, the principle of one, singularity. It is one, but also many. It does not matter.

About fifty years ago, scientists did some experiments on the atom and subatomic particles. The result of this experiment was the knowledge that the atom is a smaller version of, and symbolizes, the entire solar system. Just as the planets orbit the sun, the electrons in an atom orbit its nucleus. In a sense, there is no difference between the macrocosm and the microcosm, the gross world and the subtle world. The only difference is that the subtle world is beyond thought and cannot be seen by the naked eye, while the gross universe can be seen and experienced empirically, and can even be mapped to in terms of thousands and millions of kilometres. This theory is called *Yatha pinde tatha brahmande* – "As it is in the macrocosmos, so it is in the microcosm." *Brahmanda* means the 'big world', the entire cosmos, which comprises not only the sun and the moon, the stars and the Milky Way, but millions of suns beyond that. *Pinda* means 'small world'. If you look at the human body, the body of any insect, a stone or a plant scientifically, you will see that the same thing is happening.

Two words are relevant here: 'virat' and 'hiranyagarbha'. *Virat* is that which can be seen, and *hiranyagarbha* is that which cannot be seen. Our rishis and munis saw the entire creation in terms of virat and hiranyagarbha. Virat is gross and tangible, and hiranyagarbha is subtle and intangible. The part of creation that can be experienced through the senses is called virat, and the part that cannot be experienced thought the physical senses is called hiranyagarbha. One should have knowledge of these things. Man was not born merely to enjoy life, but to learn and to acquire knowledge. The pleasures of life should be used towards yoga, towards further evolution. If you are living a good life, if you have a lovely home, a beautiful wife, loving children, good parents, enough money and a car, then these assets should be used to gain more knowledge, rather than only being used in trivial pursuits.

Satsang 15

27 October 1997

Is the mantra *Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya* for Sri Krishna or for Bhagavan Narayana? In some places, this mantra is written under a picture of Sri Narayana.

Paramatma is actionless, He does not do anything. He has all the power; however, He does not act. When He incarnates with the help of Prakriti then He can do everything. A cartridge contains all the power, but it is of no use without action. Petrol contains all the energy, but it lies inert underground. For action to take place, one thing has to be connected to another. When petrol is connected to the ignition, then at once electricity is born. Connect the cartridge of a gun to a hammer, and a killing power is born.

Similarly, Adi Purusha Paramatma pervades the entire universe, but is a non-doer. Only when He meets with Prakriti does He act, and as soon as He meets Prakriti He becomes *Ishwara*, God. The word 'Ishwara' or 'Bhagavan' is used to describe the state after Paramatma meets Prakriti. Just as a girl becomes a woman after marriage, and a mother after bearing children, Paramatma is called Bhagavan after joining with Prakriti. *Bhaga* means glory or wealth. *Bhagavan* is an entity with six kinds of wealth. *Ishwara* is one who rules and governs. As Prakriti begins to manifest in Him, He becomes active. For instance, Sri Rama and Sri Krishna were dynamic and accomplished many things that they could not have done in the formless state.

If Paramatma wants to do something, he has to incarnate as an avatara. Without assuming an avatara, He cannot do anything. Paramatma created the cosmos after joining with

Prakriti. He contains the powers of creation, sustenance and destruction, but these are latent and resting in seed form. Just as a grain of wheat will not grow until it meets earth, similarly, Paramatma is without attributes and form until He meets Prakriti. Although containing all powers, it is essential for Paramatma to join with Prakriti to activate them. We call this Prakriti by the names of Mahamaya, Bhagavati and Devi.

This mantra is for Sri Krishna because the word 'bhagavate' has been used. 'Bhaga' means wealth; wealth equalling strength and power. He who is replete with six kinds of wealth is Bhagavan. It is said:

Aishwarasya samagrasya dharmasya yashsaha shriyaha;
Vairagasya mokshasya shannaam bhaga itimgataah.

Wealth, virtue, glory, prosperity, dispassion, freedom – these are the six attributes of God.

Whenever Paramatma desires to do something He must join with Prakriti; He has to enter into bondage. Then He incarnates as an avatara, takes birth from a mother, grows up, does His work, and upon finishing it, He becomes absorbed in the Self once again. That is all it means.

Garuda could not recognize Sri Rama while in the thrall of maya. Narada also was enthralled by maya when he cursed Vishnu. Does this mean that, at that time, maya was separated from God?

Here, 'maya' indicates a state of mind. For instance, a crook comes to an honest man and says, "There is much poverty in my house, please help me." The good man gives four or five hundred rupees. Later, his wife chastises him by saying, "Were you blind? Could you not see that he was dishonest?" Now, this man was not blind literally; the word 'blind' was only used to indicate someone who cannot see a situation for what it is. You have to interpret maya in the same way. Under the spell of maya, one is not able to comprehend the real facts. If someone's foot has touched a piece of rope that they have

mistaken for a snake, they will scream, "Snake, snake!" Maya is a similar kind of illusion.

This episode of Garuda in the *Ramacharitamanas* is applicable to everyone; Garuda is just an example. There are thousands of people from different sects worldwide who attack Sri Rama and other avataras and criticize them by saying, "If they were gods, why then did they run after women? What is the need for God to be married? If He was the all-powerful God, how could He be affected by Meghanad's power?" To refute this criticism, this episode of Garuda has been taken from the *Kakabhushundi Ramayana* and included in the *Ramacharitamanas*. Garuda was Bhagavan's vehicle, so he lived very close to Him. If even he could be fooled by maya's illusions, then who are we?

Many people wonder, 'Why does a yogi need to eat?' or 'Why does God arrive through a mother's womb? Why doesn't He just appear?' Many people make such disparaging remarks. The educated people of society, the followers of Arya Samaj, and many others criticize Rama and Krishna, or other avataras. These people do not think for themselves and nor do they contemplate on Ishwara or Paramatma. They spend twenty-four hours a day thinking about money, their wives and children, or about honesty or dishonesty. However, nobody thinks about Paramatma, about what He is and why He has to incarnate. They never even think about Him, yet they say things like, "God shouldn't have to take birth to kill Ravana if He is all-powerful. Why did He not kill Ravana from wherever He was?" Who can answer this? Answers can only be given to those who can understand.

Suppose you have ten cartridges and you quarrel with somebody. You run to me and say, "Swamiji, save me!" Later someone says to you, "When you had the cartridges, why did you go to Swamiji?" You came because you did not have a gun. Paramatma contains power, but not action. To bring about action, He has to take the help of Prakriti and incarnate as an avatara. He has to become Brahma, he has to become Shiva: sometimes one thing, sometimes another. You already have

the example of a grain of wheat. The wheat grain contains the potential, the power, but it cannot act. To become a plant the seed will have to take the help of the earth. The same thing applies to Paramatma.

This very thing has been explained in the shastras, that Paramatma is a non-doer. He cannot act. He has no qualities, because He is above everything. He is beyond name and form. He lives in every creature. He lives in a stone, a saint and a rogue. There is no place where He is not. Like the grain of wheat, until it comes in touch with the ground, until it connects with Prakriti, how can He manifest?

Prakriti has three shaktis: kriya shakti, iccha shakti and jnana shakti. If there is no *iccha*, desire, no *kriya*, or action, will be taken. Until you have *jnana*, knowledge, these two will not happen. First, a thought came to your mind, knowledge dawned, then you desired and then you acted. Action, desire and knowledge, these are the forms of Devi. That is why they are called Shakti: Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati. During Navaratri they are worshipped for three days each. When Paramatma comes in contact with these, the world is created: the stars, the sun, the five elements, the three gunas, the sentient creatures and their species come into being, life and death occurs, everything is created.

Even then, however, Paramatma is not fully active. To become fully active He must incarnate as an avatara. He has to enter a mother's womb, become an infant like you and me, He must marry and live in joy and sorrow. This is called *lila*, the divine play. That is why the word 'Ramalila' or 'Krishnalila' is used. This is all lila, play acting. Joy and sorrow has to be brought into the play of life. The life of Sri Rama is such a good example for us all. If you suppose for a moment that he is not God, that he is just an exemplary human being, even so, he has placed such an excellent ideal before us. Without questioning his father, he accepted his command and left the kingdom. He did not even think of the hardships he would have to face. He did not say even one cross word to his stepmother. He did not accept the kingdom, despite Bharata

urging him to do so. This is *maryada*, decorum. Even as an avatara, he observed every decorum of society.

Mahatma Gandhi was an avatara, too. He understood the decorum of the times, the conditions of the times, the poverty of India, the caste discrimination that existed, the powerlessness of India and the dominant power of the British. Mahatma Gandhi banned the use of weapons for freedom. He was a wise man. He thought, 'How can we fight a country that can fight Germany? We do not manufacture either guns or gunpowder here and neither do our people know how to use these. They only know how to wield staffs. While there, every child can fire a gun, use a wireless and drive a car.' Therefore, he started the non-violence movement.

The point of the matter is that the lila manifested by the *shakti*, power, of Paramatma is in accordance with each age. The age of Rama was that of practising the highest principles in one's behaviour. Krishna's times were different. Gandhiji's times were different. It is these small things that create doubts about God in people's minds. These doubts have been addressed in many places in the *Ramacharitamanas*. For example, Sati was the first to doubt. She said, "How can this be God? He is crying over a woman!" Ravana, however, had no doubts. He thought, 'If this is indeed an avatara of God, then it is an honour to die at his hands. If he is not an avatara, then we will have a good fight.' He had these two thoughts. Garuda doubted, 'How can this be an avatara of Narayana if I was summoned to cure him of the effects of the *naga bana*, the snake arrow? What kind of a God is he?' Hanuman had no doubt, nor did Shabari. Their faith was clear.

Sugriva doubted a little, didn't he? Did he not say to Hanuman that Rama should be told of Vali's great strength?

Yes, Sugriva also doubted a little. Belief in God is on one side and doubt is on the other side. One doubts, but on the other side, one does not simply believe, one comes to trust. Trust is a spontaneous, simple thing.

Swamiji, it is said that when Moses was taking the Jews to the Promised Land there was a sea on the way. He commanded the sea to part and it did so. It made a path in the centre through which they crossed and, as they passed, the sea closed up behind them. Why did Sri Rama not command the sea to part and make way?

Moses was the guru of the Jewish religion. He was not the founder of Judaism; the Jewish religion is older than him. The Jews were the inhabitants of Kashmir. There was once a sea in Kashmir called the Nilanchala Sea, which also has a Purana in its name, the *Nilanchala Purana*. Scientists and historians now agree that there was a sea once in the place of the Himalayas. Proof has been found. When the sea rose, it could not have happened in a day or two, there must have been turmoil and upheaval for thousands of years. Storms must have raged and many earthquakes must have shaken the earth. During that time, the Jews fled to Iraq and then to Israel. God had told the chieftain of their tribe to go there, and so they did.

The Jews are very staunch about their religion. In the vedic dharma, we do not change anybody's religion or convert them; in the same way, no one can become a Jew or convert to Judaism. They worship ritually as we do and are a very talented people. The famous scientist Newton was a Jew; Einstein was a Jew; the propagator of Communism, Karl Marx, was a Jew, and the world-renowned violinist Yehudi Menuhin is a Jew. The people taking our vedic dharma abroad are almost all Jews. Most of the Hare Krishnas are Jews.

When the Americans were fighting Vietnam, a law was made in America stipulating that everyone over eighteen would have to take military training. The Jews who live in large numbers in America thought, 'Why should we be involved in this futile war?' They were mostly against the war in Vietnam, but the rule stated that it was mandatory for everyone over eighteen to join the defence forces. There was a loophole in the rule, however, stating that if any one belonged to a sect that expressly forbade killing, then an exception could be made. Therefore, many Jews promptly joined the Hare

Krishna Mission. That is the also the reason why many people joined our yoga movement; they were saved from the war.

The Jews are an influential race. They were killed in devastating numbers during World War II in Germany, which history has named the Holocaust. The Jewish people are prosperous like the Marwaris, and they are very good at business. At the time of World War II, all their gold, silver and money was banked in Switzerland, and the United Nations has raised the question about what Switzerland will do with all that wealth. The accounts will have to be looked into and the inheritors found, because the wealth runs into billions.

During World War II, the Germans would drag the Jews from their homes and send them by train to concentration camps, where they would be put into a room and gassed to death. The place where they were killed in Austria is called Auschwitz. I have been there. Hundreds of millions of Jews were killed in that war. The Nazis would take all their shoes and clothes and give these to their own army. Many books have been written on this and many films have been made.

It was to these Jews that four thousand years ago a prophet was born, whose name was Moses. At that time the Jews were enslaved by the Egyptians. The Jews were simple and meek people, just like the villagers here who take a beating and keep quiet. At that time the king of Egypt had a dream that the emperor of the Jews had taken birth and that he would be their saviour. Even the astrologers said this was true, therefore it was decided that all infants born the previous week would be killed. Hearing this, Moses' mother wrapped her infant son in a blanket, put him in a basket and floated him down the river. Many people must have done this to save their children. By chance, the basket floated down to a place where the king's niece was bathing. She found the baby adorable and took him home with her.

This Jewish baby was raised in the Egyptian palace with none the wiser. He grew up and was about to marry the king's sister and become heir to the throne when something went wrong. The Jews can be recognized by a particular kind of

a blanket that they keep, and Moses' mother had wrapped him in such a blanket when she had sent him downstream. Somehow a servant found the blanket in Moses' room, and the story quickly spread throughout the palace that he was a child of the Jews. Moses was exiled. He went to Arabia where he married two women and learnt many things such as occult sorcery, yantra, mantra, yoga and tantra. Later, he returned to Egypt and asked that his Jewish brethren be released from slavery. His request was refused and so, through the power of mantra, he spread an epidemic throughout the country. History says that Egypt was a vast empire, as powerful as America is today. Moses destroyed it overnight. The king died and his second son, who was a rascal, arrogant and wild, eventually agreed to release the Jews. Moses then led the Jewish people out of the country. However, how did he cross the Red Sea from Egypt to Arabia? It is said that Moses shook his staff and commanded the Red Sea to part. In this way, all the Jews crossed over and entered Arabia.

You had asked why Rama did not do the same thing. Rama wanted to dry up the ocean and had said, *Lachimana bana sarasana anu*, *sohoun baridhi bisikha krisanu* – "Lakshmana, bring me my bow and arrows. I may as well dry up the ocean with a missile presided over by the god of fire." The Ocean then said to him, "Lord, why are you breaking the laws of nature? Every place has its decorum, every place has its rules. It is you who has made these rules, not us. There is something else we can do so that we do not have to break these rules." Rama asked what could be done instead, and to this the Ocean replied that Nala and Neela could build a bridge:

Naatha Neela Nala kapi dwau bhaai, *larikaai rishi aasisha paai; Tinha ke parasa kiyen giri bhaare*, *tarihahin jaladhi prataapa tumhaare*.

> My Lord, the two monkey brothers, Neela and Nala, got a boon in their childhood from a saint. Touched by them even huge mountains will float on the ocean by your glory.

How long ago did this happen?

It is very hard to say when Rama was born and when the *Ramayana* was written. Mahatma Gandhi was born in the last century; however, his story can be written after two hundred years or even after two thousand years. The time of a person's existence and the time when he is written about may be different. It is said that the *Valmiki Ramayana* was written during Sri Rama's time, but this is a view based on puranic folklore; it is not a historical point of view. These dates were never clearly written down, as in India historical dates are recorded differently. For instance, a solar eclipse marked the day that Jayadratha was killed during the Mahabharata, so that day must have been an *Amavasya*, a moonless night.

When did this happen? The Mahabharata started on the *Ekadashi* of the *Shuklapaksha*, the eleventh day of the bright fortnight, in the month of Margashirisha. It was on this day that the *Bhagavad Gita* was heard for the first time, so we also call it Gita Jayanti. Eighteen or nineteen days after Shukla Ekadashi is Amavasya. It is all very complicated. All the dates found in our epics like the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* or the Puranas are all similarly complicated and hard for the common man to understand. In some places, the context is planetary and in other places, it is relative to eclipses.

It is said that Rama ruled for eleven thousand years. It is hard to understand how he could have lived for so many years.

In earlier times and even today, the royal tradition is that succeeding kings rule under one name, such as George V or Nicholas II. In India, the Jagadgurus are still called Shankaracharya; they are not called by their individual names. If asked who has arrived, a person would say, "The Shankaracharya of Puri." Earlier, it was also traditional for kings to be known by the same name. Therefore, it may be that Sri Rama's descendants ruled for eleven thousand years. Furthermore, literature is limited to some degree; a writer has a certain style to his writing that limits the

reader's understanding and the reader himself has his own limitations, too.

I have read that our consciousness has the dual personality of both the male and the female, and that whichever is stronger will express more.

This is correct. Medical science and religion agree that the left side of a human being represents femininity while the right side represents masculinity. Half is hot and half is cold. The brain is also known to have two hemispheres. In yoga this concept is described very clearly by saying, "This is ida and that is pingala; this is Ganga and that is Yamuna; this is the sympathetic nervous system and that is the parasympathetic nervous system." The Shaivites, too, speak of *Ardhanarishwara*, one who is half male and half woman; one side is Parvati and the other is Shiva.

It is absolutely correct to say that both are a part of human consciousness and body, like a seed of gram that has two halves. That is why you sometimes see a woman with a masculine character. You can see masculinity in the behaviour of many women, just as you can see femininity in many men. Modesty, discrimination, restraint, softness, courage, sweet speech, these are feminine qualities. Strength, virility, bravery, etc., are masculine qualities. Since a human being contains both sensibilities, it does affect the body and nature of the person if one of these is dominant.

Compared to a man, a woman exhibits more discrimination, softness, restraint, courage and nurturing love. It is for this reason that women suffer less from heart attacks than men do. A woman may die of uterine cancer or something else, but the probability of dying of a heart attack is low. A woman's heart is not as stressed as that of a man. It has discrimination; if there is death in the house, the women cry a lot, the men do not. The loud wailing and grieving heard all over the house comes from them, not from the men. All the tension and stress from the heart flows out with the tears. They do not keep the heart under stress.

In the same vein, the load upon the brain is not the same in a man and a woman. A woman has a far greater capacity for endurance as compared to a man, and that is the reason why men have been exploiting women for thousands of years. The wretched condition of women, at least in Asia today, is the result of the conduct of men.

Women have important qualities which prevent them from being unfaithful. Observe it in your mother and sisters at home. For example, a woman craves stability and safety. A man, on the other hand, does not want to be stable and he does not need to be safe. He can use his fists. However, a woman wants stability and security. She prefers to settle in one place; she does not want to be displaced. A woman never desires to be uprooted. Therefore, the notion of fidelity and chastity is natural to women. If she is not faithful, then the fault is yours. I am saying this clearly. Chastity is not something that is taught to a woman; it is her natural need. No woman will give up her virtue, because it is necessary to her. Of course, if you mistreat her then that is a different story.

We have done womankind such wrong by doubting them. We have cast doubts on woman's basic character. A woman never likes to leave one man and go to another. There is insecurity and instability in this. However, when you harass her, trouble her, keep her away from her natural rights, from her fundamental civic rights, then what other way is open to her?

That is why people ought to pay attention to the women of Asia. Women must be taken care of: your sister, daughter and daughter-in-law. They must be educated and given their legal rights. They should have a right to property and family wealth. You do not know the rights that women have in Europe and America; they can go anywhere, they are not afraid of anybody. Their governments have given them this right and protection.

The easiest way of making a society stronger is to enforce the fundamental rights of women. People here should be able to work, earn and prosper. Their children should have the opportunity to be well-educated, to get good jobs, to travel to

the US, Germany or Bangalore to work if they wish. All this would be possible if the girls here were educated. Otherwise, this is not possible. Even if the government were to put the entire Indian treasury here, the people of Rikhia would remain destitute, because no race is able to progress without its women. Look at our ashram. We have many departments, and they are all run by women. Yes, men also live here, but all the administration is done by the women. Everything is done by the women because I trust them. The other name for honesty, good conduct, restraint, tapas and seva is 'woman'.

Here in India, women have been kept weak, yet they are the main foundation of a house. Indian society is trying to build a fine superstructure with a weak foundation. To build a fine structure of society, give your daughter a good education, and give her more social opportunities than you have given your son. Her rights have to be protected. Then money will come to your house, for a girl is the medium of Lakshmi. Whenever Lakshmi sends money, she sends it to women, as they belong to the same category. In Rikhia, everything is run by Swami Satsangi. Is she any less than a man? No.

A girl will never take the wrong road unless she is forced to do so. If forced, what can she do? If someone harasses her, she will pick up her slipper and beat him up. It is not as if she can kick him and break his teeth. Have you taught her self-defence? If someone tries to molest her, instead of her slipper, she ought to be able to kick him and break his teeth. Protect the girls in your house and make them useful. A girl can never bring dishonour to the family. Only the girl whose family does not look after her properly blemishes her family honour. The fault lies with the parents, the elders and the family, not the girl. I have spoken clearly. Do not ever forget this. A women's basic nature is to stay in one place. Call it her weakness or peculiarity, but a woman hates to be uprooted. This is her most important quality. Once she is rooted in one place, then she will rule happily.

It is Asia's greatest weakness that the women here are not very well-educated. The women are uneducated and

uncultured, and that is why there is so much poverty here. All of Asia is poor. It is hard to realize the extent of the poverty here, or to explain it.

But there is a little progress happening, isn't there?

From your point of view, not mine. A mason from the West comes here every year to travel and learn yoga. However, a mason from here cannot even travel to Bhagalpur because he does not have enough money.

Could one of the reasons for that can be that one dollar translates into so many rupees?

Yes, but what is the reason for the inflated value of the dollar? The economy of today is a false economy. The foundation of a false economy is the stock market. The entire commerce of the western civilization works on this illusory financial structure. That is why the value of the dollar always remains higher, yet they all buy their grain from here. Europe is not an agricultural country. For six months, there is snow in Europe. All types of grains, fruits and vegetables are exported from here. However, in spite of having all this, we are still poor people. This is because our masons, carpenters, artisans and labourers are all uneducated, and cannot be active members of society. They have not been formally trained to be a mason. They do not have a degree or diploma. The painter here is self-taught, whereas in the West the painter is professionally trained, he has a diploma. Why does a mason earn so much there? It is because he is educated and he can fight for his rights. He is not cheated out of his earnings; he earns by the hour. He is sure of his monetary and personal security.

Who are the rich in our country? The industrialists. Their children have two cars each and they go every other month to England, America or Switzerland just to have fun. The money they spend is our money, and every Indian should get a share of this money. A worker in a factory is being paid two thousand rupees, but why can he not be paid four thousand instead? Who can live on two thousand rupees? The daily expenditure

of the rich can be up to twenty thousand; I have lived with such people and have seen this. I do not like it. I used to say that straight, and I still do. I tell them that if they want to come, then do so properly. The ashram gives ornaments to the girls, therefore we want gold and silver, not sweets and puris. Every person has a debt to pay to society. I am paying it, too. If the society did not exist, how would you survive? Society has provided for you and you have to repay that debt. How can that debt be repaid? The one who has money should give money; the one who has knowledge should disseminate it; and the one who has the law in his hands should dispense justice. I have indicated a way, now you all have to think about it. First of all, begin with education in your home. Education should come first.

The government must also be active in the field of education, mustn't it? The standard of education is falling so fast.

We will have to impart three or four kinds of education here. There will have to be a different syllabus for each category. The education given to the people in the villages should be different from those living in Patna, which will again be different from the kind of education imparted to those in Bombay.

In a village, a girl goes to school until the age of fifteen or sixteen. Where does she go after that? She goes to her in-laws' house. What does she have to do there? You all know the answer to that; she must take care of the entire household. In the course of her education, is there anything in the syllabus that will help her practically in her daily life? Will the dates of Akbar's birth and Aurangzeb's death be of any use to her? No.

There must be a change. If a child falls sick, if the younger brother-in-law gets polio, if the father-in-law is sick, will she know what kind of diet should be given or what first-aid is required? If a cow is sick, if a goat is sick, what will be done? Has she been given an education that deals with all these things? Knowledge of the alphabet and some mathematics is necessary, I agree with that. However, the teachings of

Rabindranath Tagore, Sumitranandan Pant and Subhadra Devi Chauhan are unnecessary for a village girl. On the other hand, these teachings are required in an urban place like Patna.

Villagers need a village education. Mahatma Gandhi developed and started a basic system of education called Foundational Studies. Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narain were involved in it, as were many other people. In the beginning, I would go to these teaching centres, but now they are mostly nonexistent. What were the boys taught there? They studied the occupations available in a village, such as farming, animal husbandry, horticulture and vegetable growing. They were taught all this because these are the kinds of work available in the village. The main occupation of India is agriculture; the backbone of the Indian economy and its main base is the farmer. Sixty to seventy percent of the people here are dependent on the strength of the farmer. They have no other support. Despite this, the government does not give as much importance to the farmer and his needs as it does to industry and business houses, the defence forces, sports and cinema.

The other kind of education is for higher learning. It is important too, in its own place. However, students should not go for higher education unless their marks are more than eighty percent, otherwise they will fall behind. Nowadays people go in for higher education even with forty to fifty percent marks. This gives rise to unemployment and does not help the situation. In the West, students with low marks establish themselves first and only then study further.

Many people worship the Sun as God. Is there any basis for this?

In the cosmos, there are millions of suns like the one that you see. Scientists also accept this. This sun belongs to our family. What is our family? It is the moon, the nine planets, etc. These orbit the sun. There is also another sun and his family, and yet a third and his family, and so on. In this way,

there are millions, an infinite number of suns, each with his little family. In the centre of all these suns is a great sun, around which these hundreds of families orbit. This is a subject of such depth and complexity that it is hard to talk about it and even to think about it. This is a subject beyond thought, unique and splendid.

Any subject or thing can be looked at from two points of view. The first point of view is scientific and the second is spiritual. Spirituality looks upon the sun as a god who rides the chariot drawn by seven horses and has two wives, Sandhya and Chayya. The spiritual viewpoint has prose, poetry and emotion. The other perspective is the scientific one.

Science looks upon the sun as the storehouse of hydrogen that emits heat and light which can reach the remote planet of Saturn. In the scientific model it is as if the sun has gathered everything around itself by its gravitational force. Nobody can move from its place within the sun's family. Now, what is there in this viewpoint? This sentiment belongs to materialism; it is materialistic knowledge. Our rishis and munis looked at the sun from both the spiritual and material point of view. From the spiritual point of view they saw the Sun as God Himself; and from the material viewpoint the sun was seen as the centre of the solar system which was divided into twelve sections. The sun has a different name in each sign: Surya, Mitra, Ravi, Bhaskar, Arka, Savita, Hiranyagarbha, etc. When the earth orbits the sun once in 365 days, this makes one year, which we call the solar year.

In India, just as in the Arab countries, a year is also counted based on the relationship between the earth and the moon. I just said, in the context of the sun, that 365 days makes a year. In a solar year there are two *ayans*, or equinoxes, and twelve months, and there is never any increase or decrease in the number of months or equinoxes. Makar Sankranti, winter solstice in the Indian system, will fall exactly on 14th January, and Karka Sankranti, summer solstice in the Indian system, on 16th July. There will be no change in that because these occurrences are in relation to the sun.

We have many auspicious days connected with the sun, but there are more connected with the moon and the earth. The moon orbits the earth once a month and the month is divided into two parts: *Shuklapaksha*, the bright fortnight and *Krishnapaksha*, the dark fortnight. In this system, a *paksha* is made up of fourteen or fifteen days. This means there can be up to a difference of ten days in a year, as compared to the solar year. This year, Agahan Shukla Panchami, the date of Sita's wedding, is 4th December. Last year it was celebrated on 14th December. This year winter will come earlier, too.

The dates of all our auspicious days and festivals, such as Diwali, Sivaratri, Holi and Navaratri, are decided based on the relationship of the moon and the earth. The moon is given so much importance in this country because, although the sun is the giver of life, the moon is the king of the plants, and we are farmers, after all. When do we cut bamboo, in Shuklapaksha? No, bamboo is never cut during Shuklapaksha. Bamboo is cut during Krishnapaksha. At this time, the life force of plants becomes dormant and less active; it rests as though it is night, and then during Shuklapaksha the life force within the vegetation awakens. The moon affects the vegetable kingdom deeply. Farmers sow their crops depending on the planets and the planets are connected with the moon. Therefore, the dates of all the festivals associated with farming are determined based on the phase of the moon.

To view the sun as a god is a gift unique to mankind. Man used the Sun perhaps to symbolize some natural occurrence, some natural event. We know that the sun does not have a chariot; there is no doubt about this. However, there is an enormous temple to the Sun in Konark, Orissa, and the chariot of the Sun there has twenty-four wheels. This symbolizes twenty-four hours. The point is that most visions and ideas that come from the imagination are based on reality.

All the philosophers have said, "Things are never what they seem to be." Now even the scientists are saying it. The world is not as you see it, and maybe the sun is not as you see it either. Indeed, it is possible that the sun is just as the rishis

and the munis imagined it to be. There cannot be a final word on any subject. Of course, since we do not see any chariot with the sun, we say there is no chariot. We do not see any gods or goddesses on the moon, so we do not accept the moon to be a god. We do not accept Brihaspati and Shukra to be any rishi or muni; we believe them to be only planets. All that is fine in its place, but human sentiment is also a point of view. Everything is not seen only by the eyes. At least compare it to what your emotion shows you. If you do not see it from an emotional point of view, then your mother is not your mother, your brother is not your brother. It is emotion that makes another individual your mother, brother, daughter or guru.

The physical eyes are one way to see the world and the emotions are another. There is also another vision, that of the soul, but I am not talking about that now. The question was whether the Sun is God or not. The answer, in a nutshell, is that it depends on the viewpoint. One person sees through the emotional perspective and sees God. You are unnecessarily trying to overrule that. Someone uses physical sight, uses scientific rationale and sees a ball of hydrogen. That is all right, too. In the *Ramacharitamanas* it says: *Jinha ken rahi bhavana jaisi prabhu murati tinha dekhi taisi* – "As is one's sentiment, so is one's perception of the form of divinity."

The words 'drishti' and 'srishti' occur in Vedanta, and they are interrelated. *Drishti* means 'sight', 'viewpoint' and 'to look', and *srishti* means 'creation'. After all, what is the definition of creation? That which is seen, that which has manifested. You see that woman as your mother, or you see her as your daughter, that is all. That is the definition. Creation will exist for you as you perceive it, and sight is of three kinds: material sight, emotional sight and divine sight. Through these three viewpoints, the same thing is seen in three different ways. Now tell me what is the truth? Better to accept all three as valid and save yourself a headache!

Satsang 16

28 October 1997

In my childhood, some sixty, seventy years ago, money did not mean much. A man did not work for money. People were fewer, less than one third of today. The villages were small and so were the towns. Houses had ordinary doors. Some people did not even lock their doors. Our village was five or six miles away from Almora, which had a population of five thousand. It would take five or six hours to reach there; climb one mountain, then cross a river, then climb up another mountain and then climb down. The mountains were not small either; they were big.

Our family possessed around one thousand acres of farmland and one and a half thousand acres of forest. Deer and monkeys roamed the forest and ate the crops in the fields, the monkeys by day and the deer by night. The deer would come in herds of four or five hundred. The birds would come three or four thousand at a time. If it was left to them, all the fields would be finished in a day. In our villages, night watchmen were appointed to watch the fields. They were given a four-anna gold coin per year as salary and they would not spend it. When they had collected nine coins, their women would make them into a necklace and wear it. When our harvest was gathered in, the grain would not go straight to the granary. At the time of Diwali, the barber, the carpenter, the ironmonger, the cobbler, the brahmin and the tailor would come, and each would take a share of the harvest. Only then would the grain be sent to storage.

The village of the brahmins was separate from the village of the Thakurs, the *kshatriyas* or warrior caste. The Thakurs

were very wealthy. When they went into battle, they were given everything: *jagirs*, estates, swords, horses, land to farm, etc. However, money was only given to the night watchmen. Nobody else was given cash, only a share of the grain. When you wanted a shirt stitched, you just gave the tailor the cloth and it was made. If you needed a plough, you gave the carpenter the wood and it was made. If a son was born, the pandit would be called. Everyone worked like that.

We did not plough our thousand acres of land ourselves. It was given to people in lots of four acres, ten acres, etc., to farm. We were the *zamindars*, the landlords, and they were our *praja*, our tenants. They paid us taxes. In those days, the tax was only a few paise. Not the new paisa. In our time, one rupee was made up of sixty-four paise and there were three pai to a paisa. At first came the pai, then the paisa, then the anna, then the rupee. The rupee was not a note; it was a big, heavy silver coin. There was nothing above that. The four-anna coin and the eight-anna coin were pure gold. Women would make necklaces and ornaments with these.

Winters were very cold at our place. Once the harvest was cut and stored, around the time of Diwali, it would begin to snow. Then people would travel down the mountain with their cows and horses to Haldwani, Kathgodam or Bareilly. They would also have farmlands in the plains. After Diwali, once the storage of the harvest was complete, all farming in the mountains would come to an end. There, everyone has a horse or a mule. They would pile their luggage on their horse or mule, take some grain to sell and make their way to the plains. On reaching the plains, some would till their land, some would open a shop, some would sell pakoras and others would get employment. Later, after Akshaya Tritiya, in the month of Vaishakh, they would return home.

In those days, my father earned a salary of eighteen rupees a month. School tuition fees were one anna, schoolbooks were available for two or three annas, and a pencil cost one paisa. There was no robbery then, for where would they take the stolen goods? There were no motorcars, no roads, no

electricity anywhere. Goods were transported either by horse or else carried on the shoulders. It was like that here, too. This place where you are sitting, it was a complete jungle in 1956. I came here in 1956 and it was all jungle, only trees. There were many Harda trees here, but now they have all been cut down.

When the western culture came here, it brought money with it, currency. Today man is running after money. The man who would get paid eight annas a month as salary, now gets three and half thousand rupees for doing the same job. Yet, he still says that it is insufficient to run a household. Times have changed and man has to change with the times. The funny thing is, in the western countries like America, England and Europe you do not have to carry money in currency any more, everything works on credit cards. Just show your credit card and you can buy whatever you want to.

While using a credit card one does not see the money go. Doesn't this increase spending?

A country where people spend more is also a country with a higher earning per capita. The incomes of a country where people are stingy in spending are also lower. This is the fundamental principle of business. If you spend more, you earn more. Why are incomes low in India? It is because people buy less; they save their money to buy gold and then make ornaments and put them in a bank safe. This does not profit anyone. It was all right in the past, but in this day and age, the five or ten grams of gold kept in the house is pointless. If, instead of ten tolas of gold you keep fifty thousand rupees in the bank, it will become one hundred thousand rupees in four or five years. You will have earned fifty thousand rupees. However, keeping your gold in the house does not earn you anything.

Every household in India keeps gold. The women are uneducated and cannot go to the bank, so they make gold ornaments, rings, bangles, etc., and hide them. If you have two thousand rupees and spend it, it becomes an income of

two thousand for someone else. If you spend two hundred, it is an income of two hundred for someone. The money that is spent is money earned by society. Income means profit, and profit enables the employment of more people.

Western people do not keep much money with them. When they need money, they take it out of the bank and spend it. They travel the world and visit unusual places. They even travel to the desert in Rajasthan where there is no vegetation for miles. There is only arid hot sand for mile upon mile, where no vehicle or horses can go. Only camels can travel there. Spending is the reason these people are so prosperous and Indians so poor.

Is it possible that Indians are content with earning a little money and so do not wish to work hard?

No, that is not so. Do Indians not want money? It is not contentment with poverty, it is because they do not have an option. It is the same in Bihar, Bengal, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, wherever you go. People do not make the effort. They are not ready to take a risk. For a man to progress, some risk must be taken, and that risk must be taken when one is young.

In very poor countries, how do people earn their livelihoods?

There are many countries where people subsist on hunting. In many countries, they stay alive by eating flowers and leaves. Then there are small islands towards the West Indies where tourists go on holiday to eat, drink and have fun. They are not interested in God, satsang or knowledge. There are many countries where there are no festivals of worship or auspicious days. All they have to do is to enjoy sensory pleasures, which is why nothing is considered 'wrong' there.

There are already many races in the world whose goal in life is just to eat, drink and have fun. It is not part of their normal thinking to contemplate upon God, or to sing bhajan and kirtans. Forget the world and look at India. India is a very spiritual country, but ninety percent of the songs on

the radio or television are romantic songs. This has become the predominant state of mind. That is why those songs are playing. Even during religious festivals such as Navaratri, romantic songs from films are played. No one objects to it. What is the content of the films? It is generally violence, song and dance. It shows the mental inclination of the current population.

In the world of today, everybody exists only for today and tomorrow. Who thinks about the next life? Like the tourists who go to the islands of the West Indies, Sicily or Spain, people amuse themselves all day long. They have nothing else to do. They eat barbecued chicken or rabbit at the hotel, drink alcohol and laze by the swimming pool. This tendency is on the rise in the world.

Girls of modern India

Nowadays, girls have started going to school and they are getting good marks too. Earlier, marriage was the only possible future for a girl. Now, there is one more future possible for girls: to study and get a job. The state of Kerala has the highest literacy rate in India; every man and woman there is educated. Kerala, which was once called Malabar, is the same land that Sri Rama traversed in his search for Sita. When Sita was abducted, Sri Rama went to Shabari's ashram in search for her. There is a mountain in Kerala called Shabari Malaya, *malaya* meaning 'mountain', where people go to worship.

People of the three predominant religions, Hindus, Muslims and Jews, live in Kerala. The girls there are very sharp. In any hospital in India, you will find a slender Keralite nurse wearing a sari and earning two or three thousand rupees a month. They manage to live on that salary. They go home to visit their parents once a year. The family tradition is very good there. Their conduct and way of life is very good, and includes ritual worship, religion, and a balanced and restrained lifestyle. They marry only after the age of twenty-five and not before that.

The most courageous girls of India are from Kerala. Punjab ranks after Kerala. The girls of Punjab, too, are very brave. They occupy very high posts. For example, Kiran Bedi is a well-known Indian police officer from Punjab. She has received great awards from all over the world and such awards are not given to ordinary people. The Tihar jail in Delhi houses some three or four thousand men and well-known criminals are jailed there. When she was the Inspector-General of Tihar jail, she arranged to start asana, pranayama, surya namaskara, meditation and prayer for the inmates. She started literacy classes in the prison. She brought about a lot of reform.

The point of the story is that there is nothing difficult for girls to achieve if they have faith in themselves, the trust of their parents, and if they are sensible, discriminating and able to distinguish good from bad. Every boy and girl should know the right way from the wrong way. It is not hard to understand this. The way that leads to downfall, degradation, in which you can be hurt, is the wrong road. The road that leads to growth, respect, in which there is happiness, is the good road. This is called *viveka*, discrimination, knowing the difference between good and bad. When you clean rice, what do you choose to throw out? Would you not be called mad if you throw out the rice and keep the stones and the worms? Seeing the difference between the rice and the stones is discrimination. It is all right if there is a lack of discrimination in a boy, but in a girl, viveka is essential. If she lacks discrimination, she will be annihilated.

A husband and wife are the two wheels of the bullock cart representing the family. One runs the household while the other manages the work in the world outside. In an educated family it is not necessary that everyone works. However, what if such a need arises? One's daughter and one's wife should know all about worldly affairs so they are never subject to injustice or harassment. When a girl is widowed, how difficult life is for her. The brothers-in-law cast her aside, she cannot return to her parents, and so she has to take to the wrong

road. If she was educated, she could take up a job. Society will stay pure and she will be happy too. That is why some old ways, which were appropriate for their times, will have to be given up now.

It is not our dharma to keep girls confined within the four walls of the home, to keep them behind veils or to keep them uneducated and illiterate. This way of thinking came with Islamic culture and was forced upon us. The Islamic culture was born in the desert, and many of their customs and traditions were born due to the prevailing circumstances. Our culture is not like that. We had highly educated women like Madalsa, Gargi, Sulabha, Maitreyi and Anasuya. They would speak and debate in court. After all, was the Chandi Devi to whom you pray illiterate? A girl who wielded the sword and spear, who could fight demons, would she be an uneducated girl? No, she was strong, and a strong person is always educated.

Now, times have changed, it is not the old rule any more. In present times, girls can roam bareheaded, they can wear saris or they can wear salwar kameez and skirts. They can keep their hair short or long. They can drive a car and fly an aircraft. They can do everything. They have to be aware of only one thing: knowing the difference between the paths of *dharma* and *adharma*, truth and untruth. Whether you keep the hair short or long, or whether you wear jeans or a salwar kameez, it does not affect your dharma. The important point is that a person's conduct and way of life should be appropriate. It is necessary to understand this one thing.

These days, girls can enter into all kinds of competitions. The government, society and the holy men are all saying that girls must be uplifted and educated to become doctors and lawyers, lecturers and chancellors, business women and politicians. Women have now entered the police and the defence forces; they fly aircrafts. Swami Satsangi used to work aboard aircrafts. She would go abroad and live in countries overseas for six months at a time. She is highly educated and has travelled everywhere. There is no country in the world

that she has not seen. Girls should not be shy, timid, modest or hesitant about doing things like that. Shame is felt for doing the wrong thing. What shame is there in doing the right thing? So, pray to God and say, "Give me strength, give me intelligence and give me some opportunity."

In the history of India, who was the first to become a great woman?

In modern history, it was the Queen of Jhansi, Maharani Laxmibai, who became great and, before her, the Marathi Maharani of Indore, Ahilyabai Holkar. She was a very strong queen. She restored all the temples in India that had been destroyed by the Muslims. She gave gold and silver to temples such as Kashi Vishwanath and served the sadhus, holy men and the brahmins. Ahilyabai Holkar was considered a very great woman. If you go further back in history, you come across the name of Shivaji's mother, Jijabai. Every day, she would teach her son to ride and to use weapons so that he could free India of the Mughal rule.

The first name to be mentioned in history is Amrapali, a woman who lived two thousand five hundred years ago, at the time of Lord Buddha. Lord Buddha wandered and roamed all over Bihar to places such as Munger, Darbhanga, Samastipur, Rajgir, Sravasti, Muzzafarpur and Vaishali. Amrapali was the court dancer, and in those days a court dancer was a highly respected person. She is very famous in history.

If you leave history and come to the puranic times, there is Draupadi, there is Kunti, and before them there was Sita. Sita is very ancient. In every household today, she is worshipped as a mother goddess. She lived in Mithila and was the adopted daughter of Raja Janaka. She was not born to his wife. She was found while the land was being ploughed, and so she came to be called Sita. *Sita* means the iron part at the front of the plough, the ploughshare.

She also has other names. Being the daughter of the king of Videha, she was called Vaidehi. She lived in Mithila so she was called Maithili. She was Janaka's daughter so she was

also called Janaki or Janakanandini. There are various stories about her birth. Once there was a famine in Mithila, and the priests told the king to plough the land himself. In the field that he went to plough, he saw a baby girl. Being childless himself, he took the child into his care. From a young age, unusual things happened. The most extraordinary incident occurred while she was playing. She casually shifted Shiva's great bow, which even a congregation of people could not move.

Now the stories are all different; some say one thing, some say another. Some people even say that she was King Dasharatha's daughter, but this is incorrect, Sita was his daughter-in-law. Besides four sons, King Dasharatha had a daughter, Shanta. She was adopted by King Romapada who ruled the neighbouring kingdom. Once, due to a drought, there was a famine in King Romapada's kingdom. To bring the rain, the priests advised him that a yajna would have to be performed by a celibate in mind and body. At that time there lived only one such celibate, Shringi Rishi. He had never seen a woman in his life; he did not even know that such a creature as a woman existed! Somehow, Shringi Rishi was brought to the kingdom. He performed the yajna and the rains came. When Shringi Rishi's father Vibhandaka arrived, with his permission, Raja Dasharatha's daughter Shanta was wedded to Shringi Rishi. Sita was not Dasharatha's daughter, but his daughter-in-law, his eldest daughter-in-law, and she was the princess of Mithila. Three things were served at her wedding: rice, dal and ghee. This was the menu of that day, served on a leaf plate, with a leaf bowl. There was betel leaf, or *paan*, after lunch. When King Dasharatha was leaving, Janaka sent with him pitchers full of curd and beaten rice, *chura*, as gifts: *Dadhi chiura upahara apara*, *bhari bhari kanvari chale kahara* – "A train of porters marched with their loads of curd, beaten rice and presents of endless variety slung across their shoulders."

Yoghurt and beaten rice is the food of the people of Mithila, and it is the best of all Indian food. It is the best from

the point of view of health. South Indian people eat rasam and rice, but that is acid-forming. Bengalis eat rice with fish curry, but they have learnt to eat beaten rice and curd as well from here. Sattu is eaten as a staple in East Bihar and East Uttar Pradesh, which includes Bhojpur. Magadha, Bhojpur, Mithila and Angika, these were the four cultures flourishing here. There is nothing really called a separate 'Bihari' culture.

Sita is held to be the earthly manifestation of Vishnu's shakti. When Lord Narayana is personified as Rama then Lakshmi, Vishnu's consort or shakti, is personified as Sita. Rama and Sita are believed to be a god and goddess in our culture. In the puranic times, Sita's name is the first amongst women. However, if it is the modern times that you are talking about, then the names that occur are Amrapali, Jijabai, Ahilyabai Holkar and the Rani of Jhansi. Who was the greatest woman of our times? It was Indira Gandhi. She was very forceful, very strong. By liberating Bangladesh, she cut away a part of Pakistan. It is as though she was an avatara of Chandi.

In today's day and age, if a girl wants to become a sannyasin, let her. What does it matter? However, it has to be seen that she will not be a burden. I am not prepared to take on a burden. No one should stay here expecting that they will be looked after. My age is now seventy-five years. Should I be looking after someone and taking responsibility for them, or should I be looking after myself? I can give sannyasa to anyone, but that person should be able to stand on their own two feet. The person should be wise, intelligent and have good qualities. There should be some capability, some talent. Whether she drives a car, runs a printing press, gives discourses on the *Ramayana*, writes books or teaches asana and pranayama, there should be some capability. There is no use just being a member. Is she an electrician, an engineer, a carpenter or a nurse? A sannyasi should have some talent.

Satsang 17

29 October, 1997

Path of sannyasa

Man thinks more about the past than he does of the future. Man is connected very deeply with the past. The things that mostly play on his mind are happiness and sorrow, hope and disappointment, birth and death, poverty and affluence, sickness and health. This is called *raga*. All the joys and sorrows that a man has experienced in the past keep playing in his mind: 'For fifteen years I had such a big house or such a small house; mother's health was better or worse; sister died, she had TB; we were such big *zamindars*, landowners; we had so many cars, and so on. This is rooted very strongly, and people even dream about it. This is the definition and explanation of raga.

If you can take the mind away from these things, then that is *vairagya*. Vairagya means to do away with the longing to re-experience the experiences of the past. The past is not the truth, truth is the present, truth is the tomorrow. Love is not the truth and neither is hope or disappointment, optimism or pessimism; however, that which is before you today is the truth. If there is stomach ache today, that is the truth. Take medicine for it. If the stomach ached yesterday, it is not the truth or the reality of today. It is very difficult to be free of raga.

Sannyasa is easy for one who is free of raga, otherwise it is very difficult. Sannyasa is very easy, yet it is also very difficult. It has a different effect on each individual psychology. Many people remember their birthday very well. If no one wishes them a happy birthday on that day, they feel very bad. It is these small things that can become impediments in sannyasa.

If it is a big hurdle then it is no worry, but it is these small things that become a problem.

To go to Delhi you would have to consult the railway timetable first or ask someone which train to take, the time it departs and the fare. You need all this information beforehand. Similarly, if a man wants to take to the spiritual path, shouldn't he have some information about it? People think what they want, like 'The spiritual path will be like this and my kundalini will awaken and rise up', though in reality, what is the spiritual path? How have the rishis and munis defined the spiritual path?

There has been a lot of contemplation about the spiritual path within vedic dharma. Each individual has given their own definition. The definition of the spiritual path in the *Bhagavad Gita* is different from the way the *Yoga Vasishtha* presents its definition. The Upanishads have their own definition. Kundalini yoga and hatha yoga both have their own definitions. Sometimes one definition is not compatible with another. You want to reach Delhi, which train will you take? There will be one train going from Deoghar to Delhi, a second going from Bombay to Delhi, a third going from Madras to Delhi. The train going to Delhi depends upon your present location. In the same way, spirituality is defined according to a man's birth. There is not one definition for all. Your road is different from mine. How can everybody travel on the same road? Everyone can travel on the same road if everyone lives in the same town, but everybody does not live in the same town. In one, sattwaguna is predominant, in another, tamoguna. In one, it is greed that is dominant, in another it is desire. How can one travel the same road as another?

At first, the shastras such as the Upanishads and the *Bhagavad Gita* would have to be consulted to determine the suitable path. Sannyasa is a railway track on which a train runs. A train cannot run without tracks. The tracks, however, run between Deoghar and Delhi as well as between Mumbai and Delhi. The railway tracks are everywhere; the path of sannyasa is that track. It is no use just becoming a sannyasin,

you must also find out which train will run on the track, which train will be of use to you.

Many mahatmas like Swami Sivananda and Swami Chinmayananda have written commentaries on the Upanishads. The definitions and explanations written in English are usually better than the ones in Hindi. There are many explanations of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Men of great wisdom, such as Swami Sivananda, Sri Aurobindo, Bhaktivedanta, Swami Chinmayanada, Mahatma Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave, have all written discourses on the *Bhagavad Gita*. While working at your job or occupation, devote some time to reading these books.

Sannyasa is the simplest thing. Sannyasa means leave your spouse, leave your children, leave this, leave that, leave everything. Whereas *grihastha*, the householder's stage of life, is a very hard one: connect with this and also relate with that. Although it takes a lot of effort, it is more fun to connect with people than to leave them. However, to give up everything immediately on the spur of the moment and to move away is wrong. You should keep on doing your job, keep on studying and reading, and during your period of leave or on your holidays come to the ashram and do karma yoga here. Without karma yoga, your yoga practice will not reach fruition. Karma yoga is a scientific process. The performance of karma yoga brings about a balance between the body and the mind.

One should come to the ashram during holidays, do some karma yoga, participate in satsang and then return home. Not because you have to return to the world; rather, until the person desirous of taking sannyasa feels the lack of satisfaction with the world, sannyasa will not succeed. Until you feel that the world has unnecessary problems and people strive for things that do not give lasting happiness, do not take sannyasa.

In the material world, people earn money and then they spend it. They eat a lot, fall sick, take medicine and cry day and night. After all, how much happiness is there in the world? I have been wandering for the last seventy years and I have been watching people. Observe each person and you will see for yourself, you will find out how much pleasure there really

is. People take on sorrow so as to attain happiness, and cry so they may laugh. They always worry.

There is only one difference between sannyasa and the *grihastha ashrama*, householder life. In sannyasa, there is no *mamata*, the feeling of attachment and 'mine-ness', whereas it is the main thing in grihastha life. 'My father', 'my mother', 'my brother', 'my wealth', 'my lover', 'my wife', 'my husband'. There is 'my' in everything. There is no 'my' in sannyasa. Along with that, a sannyasin has to be wise, virtuous and intelligent as well. It is said about Hanuman: *Vidyavana gunee ati chatura* – "He was knowledgeable, virtuous, capable and extremely intelligent." A man who is knowledgeable, capable and intelligent also does the guru's work very well. That is why it said about him: *Ramachandra ke kaja sanvare* – "He performed Rama's tasks beautifully."

Anybody can look like a sannyasin if he wears geru clothes, but that is not enough. Society wants the sannyasin to contribute to it. This is the age of utilitarianism. If you are of some use to society, then well and good, but if you are of no use then you are worthless. It is the same everywhere in the world today. Why did Christianity weaken? It weakened because it lost its usefulness to society. When Christianity took root, Europe was poor. Before the Industrial Revolution, Europe was in the same condition as India finds itself in now. It were the Christian priests who would then open and run hospitals, schools, orphanages, and serve the poor. They were useful to society, thus they were well-respected. There were many people like St Francis and St Xavier who were the supports of the Church, and they were highly respected people.

As their countries began to grow rich, the governments took over institutions such as schools and hospitals and they took social welfare into their own hands. The role of the priests was over. What hospitals and orphanages did they need to run now? The government had its own social welfare schemes. The Church became meaningless; society simply did not need it any more. If sannyasins want to survive, they have to be useful to society, otherwise they cannot survive.

A sannyasin cannot survive by wearing geru clothes, singing a few bhajans and retelling the sacred stories alone. A sannyasin should be either like Shankaracharya, who could redefine knowledge and explain it, or he should be like Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, or Mahatma Gandhi. This is the rule of the world today: whatever is useful is all right, and what becomes useless will be thrown out. A sannyasin has to be of use to society in some sphere, be it music, dance, literature or medicine. He has to be of use somewhere or else he cannot survive.

Today, society needs a new kind of sannyasin, a sannyasin with new, fresh thinking. Thought dating back to five thousand years ago will not work now. Self-knowledge is eternal, it does not date. I accept that. Social customs, social order and tradition, however, are not eternal. They change according to the epoch. You can see this in the age in which we live. I was born at a time when kerosene was used to light lanterns and I had to walk six miles to school. In the time it would take me to reach the town from my village, I can now reach London from Bombay. In those days, news took so long to arrive, while today I can just pick up the telephone and within a moment I can be speaking to anyone. Earlier, girls would not step out of the house. You could not see their faces. Today, girls go to schools and colleges, they play sports and speak freely. In a changing society, a sannyasin has to change his social code and move ahead.

There are three aspects of sannyasa: a sannyasa *sampradaya*, sect or community; the stage of sannyasa or *sannyasa ashrama*, and *sannyasa vritti*, the natural inclination towards sannyasa. These are three different things.

When you join the sannyasa sampradaya, the community, you shave the head, do mantra japa and wear geru clothes. From that day you become a sannyasin; henceforth you do not talk of marriage. This is the sannyasa community.

What is the sannyasa ashrama or station in life? It is the stage when you have reached the age of sixty or seventy. Your children have grown up, you probably have grandchildren,

now you want to go and live peacefully in an ashram somewhere and wear geru clothes. As you get older, even eating once a day is enough. You eat once and then sing the name of the Lord, and then one day you die.

The third is the sannyasa vritti, the inclination towards sannyasa, where a person's psychological makeup is that of sannyasa. If he marries he is a sannyasin, if he has children he remains a sannyasin, and if he does neither of these he is still a sannyasin. If someone is a professor in a college or works in the government office or runs his small factory, he is a sannyasin if his mental patterns are such. The question then arises, what is the sannyasa vritti? A person can work at anything, but whatever the fruit, he should be able to accept it without a fuss, without laughing or crying. It is said in the *Bhagavad Gita* (2:47):

> *Karmanyevaadhikaaraste maa phaleshu kadaachana;*
> *Maa karmaphalahetur bhoor maa te sango'stwakarmani.*
>
> Your right is to work only, but never with its fruits; let not the fruits of actions be your motive, nor let your attachment be to inaction.

This sloka means that it is your right to work, and you will have to do it, no one can stop you. You want to be a teacher, you can; you want to join the army, you can. It is your right; however, you have no right to the fruit of that labour. You have planted the seed, now it is out of your hands whether the tree grows or not, if it blooms plentifully or not. That depends on the quality of the soil, the quality of the manure, how it was watered and the quality of the seed.

A person's every action is a seed, the fruit of which depends on time, the action itself and one's innate nature. A sannyasin does his work. If he receives its fruit he accepts it, if he does not he also accepts that. He manages with the least possible material. This attitude could also be there in a householder. A grihastha does not necessarily mean one who gives birth to six daughters. People wish for a girl to become pregnant

after marriage or else they get frightened. Procreation has become a pastime for people. They cannot look after a child, cannot feed it, cannot educate it properly, cannot even provide decent medical care for it, yet they must have a child.

A sannyasin will not do this. If a sannyasin does not have the means, he will not marry. What does it matter? The clothes on the wife's back will be twice as expensive as the clothes for the husband. A man manages with wearing just a watch, but a wife would at least have to wear a mangalsutra, bangles and a ring. A wife can be expensive. Then together, you produce a child and more expense. Think well before you marry. Do not do so only because your parents say you should. Do not do it simply in imitation of someone else. There should be a question mark before marriage.

Are the men of today any less? They wear a suit costing twenty thousand rupees and they wear gold rings on every finger.

No one is being criticized here. Only sannyasins are being spoken about and why they should not be married. Marriage is like a *Mathura ka peda*, a sweet from Mathura, you will regret eating it, but you will also regret not eating it. That is why you should put a question mark before marriage: 'Shall I marry or not?' Whenever the thought of marriage crosses the mind of a sannyasa aspirant, either by looking at someone else's situation or by some emotion within, then he should take to the middle way. All kinds of clouds pass through the sky: clouds of wishes and carnal desire, clouds of anger, clouds of attachment, clouds of ambition. Are they ever static in the sky? They stay only for a while. They stay longer during the months of monsoon, but not during the months of autumn and winter.

The human heart, man's *antahkarana*, the inner space, is like the sky. Those wishing to take sannyasa have very clean hearts, but even to them these thoughts come, like clouds across the sky. It is not as if the clouds immediately overcome a man. Anger, desire and greed are not the natural characteristics of the soul, the *atma*, in the same way that this

ochre-coloured pillar in front of us is not its real colour, the colour has been put on it, and the sky looks blue, yet it is colourless. Similarly, the nature of the antahkarana, man's inner self, is not based on anger and desire, at least not for a sannyasin. They are but shadows that come and go. They come not only in youth, but also in old age. A man is counting his last breaths; however, the feeling of 'mine' still clings to his heart: 'my son', 'my daughter', 'my brother', 'my wife'. Where did this 'mine' and 'yours' come from?

Rishis and munis say that your enemy from a past life takes birth as your son to take his revenge on you. Who causes the most trouble to a mother? Her son. All of you who are here have taken birth to revenge yourself on each other. From the day a girl is born, anxiety takes root in the mother's head. Giving birth to children is happiness for a little while, but a lifelong worry; it is like a grain of sugar in a mound of sand.

That is why the path of sannyasa is good, although it must be entered into properly. First you must study. If your father can afford good tuition for you, then study in a good school, an English medium school. All the saints in this century have written in English: Swami Vivekananda, Swami Sivananda, Sri Aurobindo, Swami Ramatirtha, Swami Chinmayananda, Prabhupada Bhaktivedanta, Mahatma Gandhi. They have all written in English because the coming culture is one of English speakers. In the last fifty years, since India's independence, the number of people speaking English has increased, not decreased. Man always likes to take a shortcut. The English language is very easy; it has only twenty-six letters, all of which stay on one line. In Hindi you have a hat on top and a tail below!

Certainly, you will find vast amounts written in English on subjects like philosophy, dance, science, religion, sex and economics. Swami Vivekananda could have written in Bengali, but he did not. Swami Sivananda could have written in Tamil, but he did not. I could have written in Hindi or Sanskrit, I know Sanskrit very well and speak it fluently, but I did not; I wrote in English. I did so because the people running society

in the future will all be comfortable with English. All those educated people sitting in Delhi know English. Therefore, a little English as well as computer operation must be learnt.

You should come to the ashrams, do some self-study for two or three months, and then return home. In this way you should keep on coming and going. Then, if you feel good staying here, stay on. Nowadays more girls are joining the path of sannyasa as grihastha ashrama has become very difficult for them.

The female species is naturally prone to bhakti, but a girl was not independent until now. She had to do whatever her parents said. Now that a girl is educated, she can think for herself and she wonders what will happen after marriage. What is the happiness in being married? Girls are often mistreated. The son leaves his plate after eating, the mother washes it. Although religion says that a son should wash his mother's plate, he will not do so; either the wife will wash the dirty plate or the mother will. This is wrong. Men do as they wish and behave very badly towards women, to the point of tormenting them. There is no law, no restraint against them, while a woman has not even a little latitude in movement. This is the reason hysteria is so common among women.

Kartik snana and women's health

To wake up early and bathe is considered good for the health. This does not necessarily mean that you have to bathe very early in the morning, you may also bathe after sunrise. The water in the tap is cold, but the water from the well is warm and you can bathe in that. It is the custom to bathe early in the morning, preferably in a river, during the month of *Kartik*, roughly October or November. This Kartik *snana*, bath, although good for young people, is not for older people. It is written in the shastras that Kartik snana is most significant for unmarried girls from the ages of twelve to eighteen. Up to the age of twelve, girls and boys are alike. After the age of twelve or thirteen, or once she enters puberty, Kartik snana is important for her up until the age of eighteen.

Once she reaches eighteen, the teenage years are over and a girl is a young adult. The rule is that a girl should not be married before eighteen. In a girl's body, the uterus and the reproductive organs strengthen and mature during this time. These organs are immature at an earlier age, and this is the reason why offspring of child-brides would often die in the olden days.

To produce good, healthy offspring, it is necessary to delay the girls marriage a little. Among the Kayastha sub-caste, the girls and boys are well-educated. Kayasthas do not marry before the age of twenty-five. Marriage is late even among Punjabis. Sindhis also do not marry before the age of twenty. If a girl becomes a mother before the age of twenty, her child will be weak. You have to think about this for the future of your community. A girl should be married only when she is capable of becoming a mother, not before that. Girls stay at home in the villages, but what kind of a home is it? It does not even have windows, and as a result everybody's lungs are affected; the girls keep coughing. It is neither cold nor hot in the month of Kartik. If they go out in the fresh, open air for a month, their lungs will get some pure air and they can walk for at least half an hour to go to the river and back.

The menstrual period of a woman, her hormonal cycle, should be healthy. A woman should have her period during *Shuklapaksha*, the bright fortnight of the moon. If the period occurs during Shuklapaksha, then you know that the girl is healthy; if it occurs during *Krishnapaksha*, the dark fortnight, then the girl is unhealthy. This is the first rule and the shastras call a menstruating woman *rajaswala stri*. When she bathes on the fifth day of her period, she is called *ritumati*. The thirteen-day period after the fifth day is called *ritukala*. This is written in the smritis. The shastras say that sexual relations between a man and woman should take place only during the ritukala, otherwise it will cause disease both in the man and the woman. You can see in animals that they mate only during ritukala. It is the law of nature. Man has broken this law because he does not understand it.

Women should exercise, live in places with clean air and take daily walks to keep their menstruation cycle healthy. When this is so, the uterus grows and develops into the correct shape. It is cleaned every month. Just as dirt is gathered when you sweep the house, similarly every month the lining of the uterus wall is cleaned. This monthly cleansing is essential.

A girl should not be forbidden from going out, talking to people or playing just because she is grown up. Instead, she should be encouraged to play, skip rope, play football and if she goes to school, she should be encouraged to run and jump. All these things are necessary for a girl's health. A girl should never think that she cannot do certain things because she is a female. A girl can do the same exercises as a boy. One should not make a distinction between a girl and a boy. It is by making these distinctions that society has reached this condition. Your daughter is weak, cannot defend herself and cannot earn for herself.

The Kartik snana is for a girl's menstrual health. A girl starts menstruating around the age of twelve or thirteen and Kartik snana is for making it regular and healthy. This ritual of bathing is observed until the age of eighteen and after that it is brought to a close. It is considered ritually finished on the girl's wedding day. Of course, other people can also follow this tradition if they like, but not those who are sixty or seventy years of age. If you bathe so early at that age you will catch a cold.

Swamiji, what is the significance of Chhat pooja?

Chhat pooja is observed only in Bihar, not all over India. This is worship of the sun. This is not an ordinary pooja; it is a powerfully effective pooja. It is a kind of a spiritual discipline. It has to be followed very strictly for three days. Offerings are made to the rising and the setting sun. A fast is observed; not even water is drunk until after sunset. The last day is observed completely without food or water. An acquaintance of mine had leucoderma, white patches everywhere. I told him to

observe Chhat pooja and he became all right. Skin diseases are cured by Chhat pooja.

Is there a scientific or psychological reason behind this?

There is a scientific reason and also a psychological one. Whatever disease befalls you, it is the outcome of some fault in your diet or lifestyle. People correct this through the observation of fasts and *pooja*, worship. What happens when a man does not eat or drink all day long? There will be fire in his body, a heat will arise. That heat will destroy the disease in his body. That is why we fast during sickness; we do not feed a fever.

During the month of Magha, people go to Prayag or to some place of pilgrimage where they bathe in the river, pray and worship. What is the importance of this?

Many people go to Prayag in *Magha*, which corresponds to January or February. They make a small hut on the banks of the Ganges and live there for a month. That one month is called *kalpavas*, residing somewhere for a period of time. The month of Magha is very cold; people go at that time, build their hut and live there. The rich go as well as the poor. Everyone lives in the hut they have built; they cook for themselves, sleep on straw pallets, and bathe in the river early in the morning. There, you will find people with long-standing, incurable diseases, cases that even doctors have given up on. If you go in the month of Magha you will find the whole area of the Triveni, the confluence of three rivers, all booked up. One year I wanted to go there; however, the whole area was reserved and occupied, and I could not find a place. I was not sick, but felt that a month's retreat would be good. This is the kalpavas of the month of Magha. A man is liberated from his sins, sorrows and disease by observing kalpavas.

It is of no use observing each and every ritual fast, spiritual discipline, auspicious day and festival. Some are good for one person; something else is better suited to another. You do not

have the same strength today as you did in your childhood. You do not have the same needs today as you did as a child of twelve or fourteen years. Today your needs are different, so fasts and festivals have to be observed to suit current needs.

All those at our age, older than fifty or sixty years, should take the name of God. Worship God and restrain yourself from saying 'yes' or 'no' to your children. Let them do as they wish. Say to them, "Deal with your own joys and sorrows, do not pass them on to me. I have done my duty for fifty years: raised you, educated you, fed and clothed you; now leave me alone. Look after yourself." This is the rule after fifty.

Brahmacharya ashrama lasts until age twenty-five, followed by twenty-five years of grihastha ashram. Vanaprastha is from the age of fifty to seventy-five, and at this time you may stay at home, but stay detached and aloof from the household affairs. If absolutely needed, say only a 'yes' or a 'no'. If a man remains alive past seventy-five years of age then it is sannyasa ashrama for him. He has nothing to do with anybody. The funeral rites of a sannyasin are different from those done for a householder. A shraaddha is not performed for a sannyasin. All these rules have already been made. Now, when I die I will not be burnt on a pyre, no, I will be buried in the ground. A *shraaddha*, ritual funeral ceremony, is not performed for a sannyasin.

By living a vanaprastha and sannyasa lifestyle, you will feel less worry and anxiety. Your son's hair has also turned white. If you still worry about him, you are a fool. There is a limit to concern and worry. If my daughter is a child, I have to get her married one day; it is all right to worry until then. Now, your son has a job, and regardless of whether his performance at the job is good or not good, it is none of your business.

When children are grown up, parents need to live separately and devote themselves to God and worship. If there is satsang in their vicinity, they should attend. If there is a Satya Narayana pooja nearby, they should go. If they have the money, they should go on a pilgrimage. If they have more money, they should have the name of Rama sung twenty-four

hours a day in their home. The point is, they should live only in the company of God, take refuge in Him. At that time do not wonder if your son managed to get a job or not, whether he has money or not, if he has been able to build his house or not, whether he has been able to get his daughter married or not. If you think it is your duty to get your grandchildren married, that is wrong; it is too much. This will make your children weak. They will always look to you, thinking their parents will do everything for them. They should know that the parents will do nothing, as they are engrossed in God. Now they have to fend for themselves, then they will become strong.

Children should tell their parents to put a full stop to grihastha ashrama after the age of fifty. If someone survives past the age of seventy-five, he should live in a small hut somewhere. What will this achieve? This life is almost over, one way or another, but what about the future? After all, there is the next birth. Wheat has been harvested this season, some of it has been eaten and some has been set aside to be the seed for next season. Next year, the wheat will sprout once again. If the seed was good, the crop will be good, but if weevils got into the seed, the crop will die. It all depends on the seed.

As age advances there are two things a person needs to do: first, devote yourself to God and second, begin to detach your mind from the household and its affairs, because now you have to spend time preparing for the next birth. You have prepared for this life for fifty years; after fifty, every person should begin preparations for the onward journey. Everybody has to go one day, no one is going to remain here. Rama did not remain, nor did Krishna. No man has remained forever in this world. Since departure is unavoidable, what are the earnings a man may take with him? You all have to prepare for that. Say to your children, "Now, take care of things yourself. I have done a lot, and surely, I cannot keep on looking after things until my last breath."

Satsang 18

30 October 1997

Introspection

When there is high atmospheric pressure, it rains. Similarly, when there is high pressure in man's mind, it rains there, too. When the pressure of the thoughts in the mind increases, when too many thoughts crowd into the mind at once, it results in depression. Just as you cannot understand what a person is saying due to the different noises on a railway platform in Bombay, it is the same in the mind when a lot of thoughts come together. It is called *kshubdha avastha*, a numb condition. Fewer thoughts come in a distracted state of mind, but many thoughts come under pressure. The funny thing is that one does not realize it. This is man's greatest weakness. If you ask him, "Are there many thoughts in your mind?" he will say, "No, there are no thoughts."

There is no man in the world that can see himself. Yes, everyone can see the other person. I know how your face looks and how you wear your hair, how your nose is shaped, how you speak, sweetly or harshly, whether or not you sing well. I can know all this, but you will never know it. Everybody is in the same boat. All the creatures in the world are ignorant in this aspect. What a man is like is something others know. Just as one can know one's face by looking in a mirror, similarly one may know one's own nature by listening to criticism: the one who gossips about you and criticizes you tells the actual colour of your face and nature. That is why when someone criticizes something you are doing, you should not react immediately, nor offer a justification. Just agree that it is so, contemplate upon it, and then do some soul-searching.

During self-introspection, a man makes his *viveka*, discriminative faculty, the judge; it does not side with him. An advocate or lawyer will argue on your behalf, but not the judge. You should not be partial to yourself. This is called *swa-alochana*, self-criticism. Christianity says that you must critically inspect yourself. Tulsidas has also said: *Mo sama kauna kutila khala kami* – "Who is as crooked, devious and lustful as me!" This indicates that he has accepted the need for self-criticism.

It is very difficult to truly see your own face. When others praise you, saying how beautiful you are, how humble you are, that you sing very well, you write very well, you are very good-natured, you are a very good worker, very decent, then you accept this as your nature. Yet, when you are being criticized you develop a long face. You try to save yourself by saying, "No, no, I do not behave like that, I do not backbite, it is not my habit to gossip about anyone." A man will justify himself when he is being criticized, and he will puff up when he is being praised; his ego will come into play.

A human being has two major problems: the tendency to justify oneself upon being criticized and developing egoism when being praised. Say, a girl is a good singer. She receives a letter of recognition for her talent, gets an award of fifteen thousand rupees, and her name also appears in the newspaper. All this causes arrogance and pride. After that, when she hears any criticism, she tries to justify herself. Both are faults. One has to maintain an appropriate attitude on both occasions.

The most helpful thing here is contemplation and *atma-nirikshan*, self-inspection. If someone says that you speak very well, write very well, or you are a very good leader, say to yourself, 'Yes, if they believe it, it must be so. However, look at the quality of Gandhiji's leadership, at the kind of singer Tansen was, what a warrior Rana Pratap was, the keen political strategy of Shivaji; there is nothing like this in me, I will have to improve.'

A man should be modest and humble when praised. He may say whatever he likes, but on the inside, he must feel

differently. Also, there should be acceptance in your mind when you are being spoken ill of or criticized: 'Yes, this is right.' However, when you are being praised, there should be no tacit acceptance. On the other hand, think, 'Okay, I have won a prize at school, but the world is such big place.' Just as a tree laden with fruit is bowed, a virtuous person is humble because of his good qualities. A man who knows how to take pressure will rule the world. A person who wins under pressure has endurance. What I am saying is not easy. This is a very difficult thing. Kabirdas says:

Nindaka niyare raakhiye, aangan kutee chavaaya,
Bina saabun paanee binaa, nirmala kare subhaaya.

Keep those who criticize you in your room, so that your clothes can be cleaned without soap and water.

If you kept your critics near you, then you would not need detergent and water, because the dirt will be churned up by the critics instead. However, this does not happen. Tulsidas continues, saying that a person always ignores his critics, but keeps those who praise him close by. It is the same all over the world.

Socrates said, "Know thyself." It is said in the Upanishads: *Atmanam vijnanimahi* – "Know the atman." Ramana Maharshi used to say only one thing. He did not even know Hindi, but when someone came to him for instruction he would say, *Nana yara*, meaning "Ask yourself, 'Who am I?'" Think about this.

Know yourself, recognize yourself. Without recognizing yourself for what you are, these things are difficult in life. Many times you will be tested. In the family, in society and in institutions you will be presented with testing times. Wherever you go, you will find tests and challenges.

How can one become more tolerant towards the shortcomings of others?

To become more tolerant of other people's faults, one should first be able to see one's own shortcomings. When you can

see your own weaknesses, then you will understand. If you see a fault in someone else, also look for it within yourself.

Buraa jo dekhana maina chalaa, buraa na milyaa koee,
Jo dila dekhaa aapnaa, mujha saa buraa na koee.

When I tried to search for bad people, I did not find anyone who was bad; when I looked into my own heart, I found that no one was as bad as me.

Saints and holy men use this technique; instead of looking at another's faults, one should look for faults within oneself, but this does not often happen. If you see too many faults in yourself, then your self-confidence goes down. You will feel as if you are unworthy. That is why self-introspection is not a natural law. It is nature's law that one cannot see one's own face. Nature has made this law for everyone. People are unable to find their own faults and negative qualities even after searching for them within. At first, you see the fault in another: that person is lazy, talks too much, is very egotistic. Then you analyze those faults, ask what is arrogance and what is jealousy. At first, study these things in others, you will not find them within no matter how hard you try. I can openly say to all of you sitting here that no matter how hard you try, you will not find any fault in yourself. You will find faults only in others.

This is the law of nature. First study another, and then you will know about yourself. How do you know that eyes are supposed to be a certain way? It is because you saw another person's eyes; you saw their nose, lips, hair, forehead, and only then did you know that your own must be similar. Nature has created others as mirrors for us to know ourselves. The other person is your mirror. He shows you what anger is. What do you know about anger? You know about it when another person gets very angry in front of you. Then you say to yourself, 'Oh, this man is very angry, so this is called anger.' Looking at your parents you will think, 'My parents love me very much. So this is love.' The people around you

are the textbooks from which you learn about love, anger and hatred. This learning allows you to search for the same fault within yourself.

It is a mistake to look for bad qualities within yourself from the start. That is why at first you gossip about and criticize other people. It is natural to criticize another. It is a law of nature in the process of expansion and evolution of the human mind. How can you state at the start that you are unworthy when you do not know what being unworthy is? That is just forming an opinion, an opinion that you are worthless and of no use at all, without really knowing what it means. This hurts the individual personality. It is the same situation when you praise yourself, 'I am very beautiful, I sing very well, I am very good.' However, do you know what beauty is? What a tuneful voice is? What goodness is? First get to know beauty, music and goodness, and then you will find them within yourself. Otherwise, stating "I am good" will be full of egoism. That is why we have to understand the laws that nature has made while creating life. If someone criticizes you, speaks ill of you, let him. Keep quiet. Do not react. Then, when you are criticizing someone else, look within yourself to see if you can find the same fault there.

The hardest thing in the world is to know oneself. A man can know all things in life yet not know himself. To know one's self is self-realization. This is not an ordinary achievement, but a very high achievement. We say, "You are very good, very wise", but to know one's own self is the greatest achievement in life. The Upanishads call this *atmajnana*, self-knowledge; someone else has called it God-realization. Swami Sivananda used to say that both are the same, to know God or to know yourself is the same.

That is the aim of all our lives, isn't it?

No. Do not look for the aim of life, instead look for the milestones in life. A man has to think about the milestones. By thinking of the ultimate goal, he will make mistakes. There are various milestones to get to a goal. There are different

milestones on the way from Jabalpur to Bombay, different ones for the person going to Deoghar and different ones for the person travelling to Madras. The distance between them may be the same, but the stations on the way do not occur at the same intervals. The goal of life should be thought about only after you reach Calcutta and catch a flight for Bombay. In whatever way you define life today, it will not be the ultimate truth.

A boy studying in school will not understand it if you tell him that self-realization is the goal of life. Even a boy who is getting married will not understand it. This will be understood, however, by older people. Knowledge comes when you reach a mature state of mind. If you tell a boy of six about the emotions which are felt by an eighteen-year-old boy, he will not understand anything at all. If you tell a seventy-five-year-old about the eighteen-year-old's emotions, he will tell you tell you to drop it, for he has experienced them and now it does not interest him. A man understands any given thing according to the maturity of his mind.

Although the goal is to know oneself and to know God, before that, all the spheres of life must be experienced. The sphere of life is vast. The continuity between birth and death is called life, and in this life there are many experiences that are helpful to the development of the human being. There is joy in it and also sorrow, there is hope and there is disappointment. There is desire, ambition and action. These aspects of life exist in everyone.

Man is like a flowering plant. At first, he is a sapling. Then he grows, sprouts branches and leaves, then he bears flowers and fruit, and then dies. This is his life. Human life is very developed. From childhood, he has a desire to undergo joys and sorrows. Even a child knows heat and cold; it knows its mother, it has all the knowledge it needs and it also has emotions. As a man's power of speech, thinking and the physical body develops, his emotions develop too. A nurturing love towards the young, friendliness towards equals, and a respectful attitude towards the older, are sentiments which exist in everybody.

Animals have emotions too, but they are limited. A horse has feelings, does he not recognize his master? Of course he does. A cow has feelings. Maybe she does not recognize you, but certainly she recognizes and has feelings for her calf. A dog has warm sentiments towards his beloved master and different feelings for those it dislikes.

The development of *bhavana*, emotion, is necessary to life. All emotions and sentiments are classified as *bhava* in our culture. Bhava is a *rasa*, the sap of life. There are nine rasas, such as shringara rasa and vibhatsa rasa. These rasas are born of emotions. In other words, the effect of emotions on the human mind is called rasa. If there is *vatsalya rasa* or parental emotions in you, then it will give rise to a certain rasa, a certain influence, a certain sentiment and a certain kind of action. When there is *shringara rasa* or romantic feelings towards a girl or boy, a certain rasa is born. When you are afraid, yet another rasa is produced. Modern science has translated these rasas to mean hormones that are produced at that time. These nine rasas enhance our emotional and mental health.

Everybody has seen a mango or an apple falling from a tree. Throw anything up in the air and it falls down. This has been happening for thousands of years and thousands of people have seen it; however, only Newton realized the reason why this happens. His brain was so developed that he was able to see the falling apple with concentrated, one-pointed attention. Many things happen around us, but we do not notice them or pay attention to them. Why does smoke rise upwards? Why does water fall downwards? This attentiveness is called philosophical insight. Newton had an insight into gravity. Similarly, there was a scientist who once had a fever when he was travelling, and he rested by a well nearby. He was thirsty, so he drank from the well and then slept under the shade of a tree. When he awoke, he was bathed in sweat and the fever had broken. In this way, quinine was discovered. There was a Cinchona tree by the well and its leaves were falling into the well. The quinine in them affected the water and it was as if he took medicine when he drank the water.

The quinine caused him to sweat as he slept and to break the malarial fever. We do not have such insights. To acquire this quality, emotions must be expressed and not repressed.

What is the reason that people are not progressing in India today? Why are people in South-East Asia not progressing? Why is it that only the Europeans progressed? Why did they progress so much scientifically? With the help of minimal resources, how did they make so many bombs and satellites? What principle did they discover so that without using any wires someone who is dancing in Delhi can be seen in Deoghar? You can be certain that the men who discovered this must have had no repressed emotions.

Whatever your emotions are, you must express them. There are many emotions such as fear, maternal love, romance, revulsion and affection. Every time you see something it evokes an emotion, there is an emotional reaction. An emotional reaction must be expressed. It is only after doing this that Europe progressed. In other ways, theirs was also a very repressive society. There are many prohibitions in Christianity. When society broke free from the shackles of religion and society, many emotions were expressed. They came out into the open, and then their society produced many great scientists. We criticize them today for starting wars so they can sell their arms and tanks to become rich; nevertheless, we have to acknowledge their achievements.

There were two decisive moments in the development of man: first, when man learnt the use of fire and next, when man discovered electricity. In both cases, human civilization took a quantum leap. Today, everything depends on electricity. The world that you see today is the outcome of that decisive leap. The man who discovered all this, who connected chemistry and electricity, must have been a terrific man. He put chemicals into a box, made a battery and produced electricity. The battery was then put into a box and a button attached to it, and then, lo and behold, you had a torch. This is an achievement. Electricity marked a historical change for mankind.

Electricity transformed the whole world, but the biggest discovery yet has been remote control. You press a button here and it starts a machine on Mars, which can then be controlled from earth and made to move to the left and to the right. Press a switch here and a program from Delhi is uploaded to a satellite, from where it feeds into your satellite dish, and from the dish it is transmitted to your television. These are certainly the achievements of people who were completely free to express all their emotions.

Kalidasa was a great scholar of Sanskrit. Read the *Raghuvansham* by Kalidasa, or *Kumarasambhavam* and *Abhijnana Shakuntalam*; it is wonderful poetry. Kalidasa has a standing in Sanskrit, just as Tulsidas has in Hindi. However, do you know where he died? He died in a prostitute's house. He used to go there a lot. The point is that man progresses and grows through his emotional personality.

After all, what is bhakti? Bhakti is also an emotion. It was through the feelings of devotion that you conceived of God. If there had been no devotion in you, then it would not matter to you whether there was a God or not. If not for the feeling of fear, then a snake and a necklace would be the same to you as it is to a baby. Discrimination is born of emotion. This is how one recognizes and differentiates. It is because of emotion that you make the distinction whether or not there is a God, and you try to understand the mystery. This is a play of nature, a game played by maya. I understand this now, at this age. It would have been better to have understood it a little earlier.

When there are emotions in the mind, should there be a reaction or should one merely be a witness to these emotions?

When a man wants to go to the toilet, what will he do? He will go to the toilet. Will he do it in the kitchen, or on the verandah, or on the road? No, he will do it in the proper place, in the correct way. Similarly, when an emotion is born inside it should be expressed, but in the right way. Whether it is the emotion of fear, revulsion, jealousy, love, pity, or compassion,

there is a way to express it. You must express your emotions, but you should not do so indiscriminately.

Vedic dharma and the Hindu race

There is no such thing as Hindu religion. There is a Hindu race, but not a Hindu religion. The religion is called vedic dharma. The religion born on the basis of the Koran is called Islam, the religion founded on the basis of the Bible is called Christianity, the one founded on the basis of the Torah is called Judaism, and the one founded upon the Tripitaka is Buddhism. Similarly, the religion founded on the basis of the Vedas is called vedic dharma. This vedic dharma was accepted by the Hindus. Hindu is the name of the race, not the religion. When did this mistake begin? It began when Swami Vivekananda went to America and an article in the newspaper referred to him as a Hindu monk. It is since then that the discussion of Hinduism started in the West.

Hindu is the name of a race, and race is related to DNA, to the genes. There are many races in Europe: Anglo-Saxon, Danish, Slav, etc., and all these races accepted Christianity. Similarly, Islam was accepted by the Mongol, Arab and Persian races. Race and religion are two different things; however, nobody is paying any attention to that today and no one is able to explain it. Not even the leaders of people understand it.

Our religion is the vedic dharma; idol worship and reincarnation are its two main beliefs. The other religions believe God is one, non-dual and formless. We believe that too, but we also have the concept of worship of the manifest, *sakara*, God with form, which no other religion has. Although Christians worship Christ and Mary, sakara worship is the mainstay of vedic dharma. The second essential aspect is rebirth. Other religions do not accept or believe in reincarnation. It is not accepted in Christianity or Islam, whereas we have a whole theory on reincarnation.

As people kept coming from outside India, we continued to accept their gods and goddesses into the pantheon of our existing gods. In this way, different sects began to form

in vedic dharma. Shiva came and we made a place for him. Krishna, Devi and Ganesha came, so we made a place for them, too. The relationship between them is explained in the Puranas. Many people came to India and settled here, and whatever their mode of worship to their gods or goddesses was, we accepted it.

For a while there was a problem between the Shaivites and Vaishnavites. Appaya Dikshitar, an ancestor of Swami Sivananda, was not allowed into the Tirupati temple as he was a Shaivite. Shankaracharya put an end to this futile conflict on a philosophical level. He elected a Shaivite priest to look after the worship at the Narayana temple at Badrinath. There the deity wears a *tilak*, a vertical mark on the forehead, the sign of the Vaishnavite, and the priest doing the pooja is a *tripundadhari*, wearing the three horizontal lines on the forehead, the sign of the Shaivites. The greatest achievement, however, was that of Tulsidas. He had Shiva himself tell the story of Rama. This ended all conflict.

Christianity and Islam, however, have not yet found a place in the assembly of vedic gods. When the Industrial Revolution took place in Europe, standards of education improved and employment increased, and people stopped joining the Church to become priests. In earlier times, due to the high rate of unemployment, men would opt for priesthood; they knew that they would at least be fed by the Church, as it received its money from the government. These men would live in the Church and preach its religion. When people started to find employment after the Industrial Revolution, they were no longer interested in embracing priesthood.

The young today are unwilling to accept anything about the Church. They are slowly turning towards vedic dharma, as it is conducive to the circumstances of today. There were circumstances that led to the Hare Krishna movement in America. I came to know about it when I visited America in 1968.

After some time Christianity, like the other religions, will also become a member of the pantheon of vedic gods.

In India, arati and other rituals will be performed to Christ, some Sanskrit pandit will write a Purana on the Bible, and gradually it will become integrated.

It is political theory that the very weapon that helped you to win shall be the cause of your downfall. For instance, civil disobedience, in the form of strike, won the war of independence for Mahatma Gandhi. Today, the very same tool is hindering the progress of the country. Mahatma Gandhi had even said, "If the war for independence is won with guns, then the gun will be here to stay. That is why we do not want guns. We do not want violence. I will win the war through non-violence." Buddhism adopted politics and therefore perished in India after Ashoka. Christianity sat in the Parliament and was ultimately destroyed. Whenever a religion is used as political power, the downfall of that religion is certain. One who has come in by the sword will exit by the sword.

Politics must stay away from religion. Religion does not vote for any political order. I am a Hindu and a follower of vedic dharma. Today, as Swami Satyananda Saraswati, in my individual capacity, I can vote for BJP, Congress or Janata Dal, but I will not tell all my disciples to vote en masse for any one political party. When Ashoka converted to Buddhism, it became India's state religion, just as Islam is the state religion of Pakistan. Religion has to be kept out of the Parliament; it has to be kept out of the reach of politicians.

We were talking of the Hindu race and vedic dharma. There is a word in the Vedas, *sapta sindhavaha*, which means the seven rivers: the Ganga, Yamuna, Godavari, Saraswati, Narmada, Sindhu and Kaveri. These seven rivers are called *sapta sindhu*. 'Sapta sindhu' was distorted to 'hapta hindu'. When Alexander came, he mispronounced the name of the river Sindhu and made it 'Indus'. In Greek the 'h' is dropped, and the sound 'a' is made instead. Therefore, he called the Sindhu 'Indus' and from Indus came the name 'India'. The etymological root of the words 'Sindhu', 'Hindu', 'Indus' and 'India' is the same: Sindhu. The civilization of the seven *sindhus*, or rivers, is called the Hindu race.

Now some of these are Shaivites. Some are Christians and some are Muslims. There is no Parsi among them, because there is no provision for conversion in the Parsi religion. There is no conversion in the Jewish religion either. That is why the Jews lived for so long in India. There were no new Jews, because the Jews would not make a new convert. The Parsis have lived for so long in India, but there have been no new Parsis. They do not let anyone from another religion enter their Fire Temple. I have very good friends among the Parsi community, but they did not take me to the Fire Temple. They are straightforward about saying that no one except a Parsi is allowed entry. Also, those who marry non-Parsis are not allowed the traditional funeral rites.

All those living in North Ireland are of the Hindu race. They all fled there after the Mahabharata war. The Mahabharata was a great civil war and after a civil war there is displacement of people. During the time of Independence, there were Hindu-Muslim riots. Twenty million Hindus came to India and twenty million Muslims went to Pakistan. This is natural after a political fallout. The Irish are Christians. In Northern Ireland, the majority is Protestant and in the South, the Catholics are in the majority. Their religion is not vedic dharma, but their race is Hindu and they know it. They said this to me, "Our ancestors were those people who left India after the Mahabharata civil war. We are their descendants."

Similarly, the gypsies of Europe are all racially Hindu. They are all descendants of the artists who fled from here: singers, dancers, actors and craftsmen. About seven or eight hundred years ago they fled, not just ten or fifteen thousand of them, hundreds of thousands. They fled when the Muslim invasion began from the North-East. At that time there was a great massacre, genocide of Hindus, and they died in great numbers. The place where this happened is called the Hindukush Mountain. The word *kush* in Pashto means 'killing', like the word *khudkushi* means to kill oneself. In the same vein, *Hindukush* means the slaughter of Hindus.

At that time, these gypsies fled from here in hundreds of thousands. They went to Russia, Romania, Albania and France. Even today, they have not been able to settle in any one place. All their traditions are like ours. Whenever I go to see them, they wash my feet. This does not happen with the Christians or with the Muslims. In all the countries that I visited during Guru Poornima, no one ever washed my feet. They would offer flowers, touch my clothes, touch my hand or kiss my hand, whatever was their particular tradition. It is not our tradition to kiss the hands or feet of the guru. Here, the tradition is to bow down in worship and wash the feet, which these gypsy folk do.

Your ashram is a very clean place. It feels very nice to be here.

I received this samskara of cleanliness at Sabarmati ashram. In early childhood, I had lived in Sabarmati ashram for three months. My mother was a follower of the Congress. She may have wanted me to go in that direction, so she sent me to the Sabarmati ashram for three months. There one had to do everything on one's own. Gandhiji cleaned his own toilet, cleaned his own room, spun the cotton for his own clothes, cut vegetables for himself and fed his goat. Eating onions was allowed in his ashram, so I never had a problem with eating onions. Otherwise, as a rule, onions are not allowed in ashrams. Go to any ashram in India and you will not find an onion.

Gandhiji did not wear geru-coloured clothes, but he was a true sannyasin. He had all the characteristics of a sannyasin: his lifestyle, his hard work, his way of thinking, his boldness. Every resident in his ashram had to work. There was no question of servants. I have perpetuated this samskara in the Bihar School of Yoga. It is not the same at my guru's ashram in Rishikesh. There, a servant comes to clean the room every day and a sweeper cleans the toilet. In all the ashrams, none of the sadhus, brahmacharis, devotees or residents living there ever do any manual work. However, manual work was my childhood conditioning and I liked it. If this is your house, then you must

clean it. If it is not yours, then someone else can clean it. A hotel room is not a personal space, so the service staff cleans it. Mahatma Gandhi said that every individual should do as much of his own work as he can, and if he cannot do it by himself, then it can be done together with other people.

After Sabarmati, I also went to Sevagram in Wardha. There they had farms where girls of fourteen and fifteen and young women of twenty or twenty-one wielded pickaxes, wearing knee-length pyjamas and kurtas. I liked this too. Even today, I believe a sannyasin should do as much of his daily personal chores as he can and have as few servants as possible. This kind of self-reliance is modern thinking. You will see that no European family has servants. They drive the car, cook and clean themselves. I am talking about the ordinary people, not the millionaires.

Perhaps the ordinary people there cannot afford the cost of keeping servants?

No, even those who can afford servants prefer to do their own work. If you do nothing, the mind becomes empty and idle. Physical or mental work, or *karma*, is a kind of rope that ties the mind. The mind has to be tied; otherwise, a lot of energy builds up in it. Nature demands the liberation of such energy so that emotions such as jealousy, desire and anger can be released. That is why the mind always has to be kept tied up in work.

Sweeping, cleaning the room, cleaning the toilet, washing clothes, washing dishes, cooking, gathering wood, all these physical chores are yoga. In all the villages around us, you will not find anyone suffering from cardiac disease, hypertension, high blood pressure or diabetes. Why? It is because a person here works all day long, picks up cow dung, sweeps, cooks, cleans, walks a kilometre for his toilet and walks a kilometre for a bath. In the city this is not so. Turn a little and there is a toilet. Descend a little and there is the car or an autorickshaw to bring back all the shopping from the market. Physical work in the city is much less compared to the village. That is why there are more diseases in cities. Furthermore, the urban

diseases are complicated, only a specialist can treat them, while here the ailments are only eczema, diarrhoea, fever, coughs and colds, and at the worst, tuberculosis.

Gandhiji worked very hard. He worked hard physically and ate very little. Every day he ate chutney made of bitter neem leaves. Without this, his meal was not complete.

Neem chutney is eaten during the month of Chaita in our community. Can it be eaten the whole year round?

Yes, why not? If green chillies can be eaten throughout the year, then why not neem chutney? Neem is full of goodness. All the chemicals in neem are beneficial for the human body. Now contraceptive pills are being made from neem in America. They have bought thousands of acres of land in Arizona and planted neem. There are many species and subspecies of neem, some of which have been planted there and are being used to make medicines.

There will be a problem of patents with that in the coming years. The question will be that if India also makes a contraceptive pill using neem, can they challenge us? We will have to prove that in our country we have known about the beneficial properties of neem since very long ago. Although we have not done any formal research into this, the qualities of neem are known to everyone in India. Everyone eats neem and we use the residue of pressed neem seeds to enrich the soil whether we plant mango or roses. The beneficial properties of neem cannot be praised enough.

Is the holy day of Diwali the day that Sri Rama returned home from exile in the forest, or does it have any other significance?

Diwali is a multi-purpose festival. It was on the day of Diwali that Sri Krishna killed Narkasura in Assam. Assam was known as Pragyajyotishpur in the days of the Puranas. On this day, Sri Rama returned to Ayodhya and Diwali is the celebration of his homecoming. It is on this day that businesses open new ledgers and the new financial year begins. In earlier times,

it was on this day that the contracts of the senior servants in big houses, such as the cook and the accountant, would be renewed. If they had been receiving fifty rupees that year, it would be increased to sixty rupees in the new year. Servants in the big houses worked on annual contracts and, on the day of Diwali, the contracts would be renewed.

Around this time the darkness is very dense. You may have noticed that sometimes darkness is very dense and sometimes it is lighter. On the day of Diwali, the night is very dark. Many other things also happen at the time of Diwali. For example, grain and water are plentiful in every community and society. That is why this is a multi-faceted festival.

It is said in the *Ananda Ramayana* that every Diwali, King Dasharatha would go with the entire royal family to visit King Janaka at Mithila. Does this mean that Diwali was being celebrated even before Sri Rama's time?

The festival of Diwali is very old; it has even been mentioned in the Vedas. Diwali was probably always celebrated, and then some other event occurred on the day of Diwali and was added to it. It was on this day that Narkasura was killed, and it was on this day that some other memorable events happened. In this way, many historical events have been grouped together.

On the day of Diwali day all the shops earn a lot. People buy new clothes for the celebration and they buy new pots and pans, gold, silver and many other things. In my childhood they used to say that Diwali is a festival of the vaishyas, Rakshabandhan is a festival of the brahmins, Dussehra and Rama Navami are festivals of the kshatriyas and Holi is a festival of the shudras. Earlier, Diwali was also believed to be the festival of gambling. Even today, people gamble on this day, but it was far more popular in earlier times.

Why did they gamble? Was it because it is the day of Lakshmi?

Of the sixty-four arts described in our shastras, one is the art of gambling. Deceit is always used in gambling. It is an

art to deceive; not everybody can do it. Similarly, stealing is an art; not everybody can do it. All these arts are the arts of God. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (10:36), Sri Krishna says, *Dyutam chhalayatamasmi* – "In the art of deception, I am gambling." Nowadays, gambling goes on everywhere. What is the stock market other than gambling? Gambling goes on in the casinos and the big hotels. Gambling is the test of destiny.

It is God's grace that I cannot play cards. I have never even touched cards; there never has been an inclination towards gambling. I believe in effort: *Udyoginam purushasinham upaiti Lakshmi daivam deyam kapurushahah vadanti.* The sloka means that the udyogi man acquires Lakshmi's wealth. *Udyogi* means enthusiastic, courageous. Only a courageous man acquires Lakshmi. Such a man is called *purusha-sinha*, a lion-man, a man filled with self-confidence. Many people are enthusiastic, they work, but they do not always have the self-confidence that they will be to tackle the unexpected. The lion-man thinks that he will deal with whatever comes his way. It is the cowards who wait for destiny to hand them their due. "If it is in my fate I will get it", is what the cowardly say.

A man must have courage. He must have faith in himself. Along with that, he must also be clever. If I tell you my story, you will be perplexed. Many people would ask me, "Swamiji, please come and conduct a yoga program." I would go, but no one would be there to receive me at the railway station. Somehow, I would make my way to the place. When it was time to leave, they would ask me in which class I wanted to travel, and then I was expected to pay for the train ticket myself. So many times, I would be alone in the yoga class and nobody would come. I felt tired, defeated. I thought all this was useless.

When I reached America in 1968, I saw the environment there and thought to myself, "Yes, this is the way. Be fearless. Do not be a coward." If someone said, "Swamiji, I would like a mantra", I would say, "Yes, I will initiate you. I gave the mantra *Om Namah Shivaya* or *Sri Rama Jaya Rama Jaya Jaya Rama*. All at once, everything was very clear to me.

I have never studied yoga. I have not read any ancient text on yoga, not *Gheranda Samhita*, *Goraksha Samhita*, or *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*; whereas I have read all the books on Vedanta, all the expositions on the *Brahma Sutras* by Ramanuja and Shankaracharya. I remember all of it; I can repeat it verbatim. I have read the critiques and commentaries by Vidyapati Mishra and Vigyanbhikshu. If someone were to tell me to talk on the mantra *So-Ham*, I would take not less than a month. However, I did not do all that. When the market says it wants yoga, why would you keep Vedanta in your shop? Who will buy it? If a shopkeeper stocks his shop according to his wishes and not those of his customers, then his shop will not run.

Many people depend on their fate. I do not believe that a man could become a millionaire by gambling on the day of Diwali. I believe that many millionaires are wiped out and many people lose money. Racing horses, the lottery, it is all gambling. I do not believe in these things. What is the need to do these things in the first place? A man should work hard and make an effort. If you do not have the capacity or capability to work hard, then build a hut and live contentedly.

To be courageous also depends on fate, doesn't it?

No, courage is a unique characteristic that is not innate; it needs some experience. I have had experience since childhood. I looked after my entire family wealth from the age of eight. Farms, forest, animals, money, I looked after it all. To have courage it is important to be intelligent.

I had no trouble at all during the building of Ganga Darshan. I have had rooms and small houses built since childhood. I was used to having other people work for me. It became part of my character. From that young age, I looked after fifty servants, twenty to twenty-five cows, two hundred sheep and six or seven dogs. I know how a man thinks. He always looks at another man's personality and wishes to stay with one who has an impressive personality. Since then my attitude has been, "Stay if you like it, otherwise leave." I do not ever try to please anyone. This attitude helped me later in life.

Along with this, I know how to look after money and financial affairs extremely well. Although I have never studied economics or commerce, I know about the give and take of money, and how to keep accounts properly. When I left Rishikesh ashram, I had 108 rupees. I still have it; I have not spent it. It is kept in the cupboard as a memory of my guru. I have told Niranjan, "Worship it. This was given to me by my guru as prasad when I was leaving." Although 108 rupees was a large sum in 1956, I never spent it. I have it kept carefully to this day. I know when money should be spent, and when it should not.

It is very difficult to run an institution, and five or ten thousand rupees is not enough to run an ashram. Initially, *Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha* was printed as just a small book; however, three or four million copies must have been printed by now. Today, if the Bihar School of Yoga were to receive no donations and the students did not pay fees, the ashram could run on the sale of books alone.

Along with courage, some experience is also required. It is not necessary to read a book on yoga and memorize it to teach yoga. I knew a little anatomy and physiology. Near my village, at a place called Mukteshwar, was the Indian Research Institute of Veterinary Science. At that time, there were only two such institutes in India. Whenever they held a seminar, I would participate. In these seminars, I learnt everything about serum, bacteria, etc. After that, I stayed with Dr Adhvaryu in Gujarat. He was the Chief Medical Officer there. I would go to the hospital with him every day, and I learnt from him how to operate on cataract. Gradually, I learnt a lot. Later, I connected that knowledge to yoga. It is not necessary to acquire knowledge from books alone; common sense and perceptiveness have their own importance.

Swamiji, surely you must have faced some difficulties in your sannyasa life?

No, I had no difficulty in my sannyasa life. What difficulty could I have? Maybe the thought of a woman crossed the

mind, it happens to everyone. What is the need to be afraid of that? A man who walks will tire and a man who walks will sometimes stub his toe. One who eats will sometimes have constipation, sometimes indigestion and sometimes loose motions. This is the law of nature. Why react more than is necessary to all this? People pay a lot of attention to such things and overreact to them, thinking, 'Oh God, there are too many thoughts in the mind! Why are these thoughts coming? What shall I do?' This is nothing! It is the nature of the mind to flow. The mind cannot stay static at one place. This is the first rule of yoga. It is all right if the thought of a girl comes for a while and then it is gone. After that thought, there will be something else, then the mind will find something else. If you stop the mind forcibly, it suffers. I never had any trouble in my sannyasa, not physical, mental, emotional, economic, social, or political. My life has passed happily, not only in sannyasa; I had no problems at home, either.

When a sannyasin lives with householders, should he be restrained in his conduct or should he be spontaneous?

A sannyasin should do something that will give happiness to others. There is only one mantra for attracting people, give up harsh words. A stone or a hammer is a hard thing, but a flower is not. A sannyasin should not speak hard words; his speech should be as soft as a flower.

There is conduct other than speech, no? Should that be natural?

What is natural? If you want to be completely natural then get rid of your clothes. That is being completely natural. A man has to also pretend a little. A sannyasin has to speak sweetly, this much is certain. He should say good things. He should say things that give people happiness. The most important dharma of a sannyasin is to give peace to people. Can harsh words bring peace to anyone?

It happens, however, that when a sannyasin attains a *siddhi*, a psychic power or ability, his behaviour changes. He

says all kinds of things to keep people away. Just like one who hides and counts his money secretly, a sannyasin hides to try and save his power, for the world will rob him. As soon as people come to know that a sadhu has attained some power, they flock to rob him. Therefore, quite often sadhus abuse people and chase them away in an effort to save their siddhi. Otherwise, an ordinary sadhu should speak good things and be soft-spoken. Swami Sivananda was very soft-spoken. This depends on each individual nature.

Swami Nityananda used to throw stones at people, no?

Yes, but when I went to Vajreshwari he blessed me; however, normally he would throw stones at people.

If a stone hits someone, should it be accepted as a blessing?

Yes. As far as blessings go, go to the Kumbha Mela. There is going to be a big Kumbha Mela held at Haridwar this year. At the mela, people go to the place where the Naga sadhus urinate, pick up the urine-soaked mud and smear it all over their bodies. Many people go and there is a big queue.

Is it sensible to do this?

Whether you call it sensible or foolish, it cannot be stopped. This happens all over the world. There are some sadhus who are *nityasiddha*, born with God-realization, and others who are *swayamsiddha*, enlightened through their own effort. The person who is born with innate realization radiates it in lifestyle, conduct and thinking. He is not even aware of it. The one who attains a siddhi through sadhana is a swayamsiddha. The difference can be compared to learning a language: an English person does not have to learn the language, it comes to him naturally, while a foreigner will have to learn the language.

If you put even a little effort into yoga, you will certainly gain something. Kundalini awakening is not needed for that, neither is pooraka-rechaka-kumbhaka necessary. The Naga sadhus have a particular siddhi: they stay naked in the

mountains; they do not sleep on a bed, they sleep on a sack or some straw on the ground; they fear neither mosquitoes nor scorpions, neither the cold nor the heat. This means their mind is very strong. They have no knowledge. They cannot talk on Vedanta and they may not even speak civilly. Nevertheless, their minds are very strong and a strong mind is the basis for all siddhis, psychic powers, and all *vibhutis*, attainments.

At the Kumbha Mela, when the Naga sadhus urinate here and there, everyone runs to pick up some of that sand and rub it all over the body like bhasma. Who will stop this? Is this written in some Veda or shastra? Has some guru preached this? No, this is one's own faith. That which is inborn is called faith and that which is given by another is called knowledge. This faith has been born within oneself. People go and smear themselves with urine-soaked sand. Why they do it is something only they know. Such things do not happen only here, it happens in all religions.

The main support of human life is faith, not the intellect. Have you ever wondered in your childhood if your father was indeed your father? Did you ever ask for proof? Why did you not ask? You did not ask because the thought never entered your mind. One never thinks about that which is clear. This is faith. Faith and trust are deep and mysterious. A child believes in God naturally, as Mirabai did. Some saint gave her a wooden statue of Krishna and Mirabai fell in love with it. She must have been a small girl at the time. To the little girl, that small statue of Gopal became her husband. When she grew up, she saw Gopal as an adult, like herself.

Mirabai was either insane or she was completely natural. The thought just did not occur to her as to how a wooden statue could be a man or her husband. This thought just never entered her mind. So many people tried to reason with her, but she had just the one thing on her mind:

Mere to Giradhara Gopaala doosaro na koyee
Jaake sira mora mukuta mero pati soyee.

Only Krishna is mine, nobody else; the one who wears
a peacock feather on his head is my husband.

The point is that faith needs no explanation. You may feel devotion or respect towards someone after seeing them; you might feel that they are very wise or beautiful. However, faith is experienced without ever seeing the object of the faith. There is not a thought about it; it is spontaneous and simple. You believed that your father was your father, therefore you did not think about it. This is trust. It is the same with God. Those who have this kind of faith, they attain. Such trusting people are straightforward and simple.

When I reached Munger, Nandkishore Goenka was twelve or thirteen years of age. He had the white patches of leucoderma on his lips. One day he asked me for a cure and I said to him, "Practise Chhat pooja." He performed Chhat pooja during the festival that celebrates and worships the sun, and the patches disappeared. Why did they go? They disappeared because of trust. Children are spontaneously and naturally trusting. They believe whatever you tell them. Whenever you accept something without contesting it, that is *vishwasa*, trust. *Vishwasah siddhidayakah vishvassah phaldayakah* – "The fruit is attained only by trust." In this world, at least ninety percent of the population lives on trust. Such people can be found everywhere, not only at the Kumbha Mela.

All the great holy men have big bellies even if they are thin otherwise. Is this because of the prana shakti at manipura chakra or is there some other reason behind it?

It is not like that. Nowadays, I am more sedentary, whereas earlier I used to sit very little. It is a natural law that if a man is sedentary his stomach will enlarge. Too much sitting causes the digestion to slow down and fat to accumulate. Tomorrow, if I begin to exert as much as I used to earlier, I will lose weight once again. It is not only true for me, this law of nature applies to everyone. In Japan, Lord Buddha is depicted as being very fat. Sitting decreases the digestive fire

in the abdomen; this is one reason. The other is that when a man's mind becomes tranquil, when it is not distracted, then the production of hormones in the body due to the stimulus of the mind is stopped. That is also a reason why the digestive process in the body slows down.

Does this trouble them?

No. All holy men eat once a day, so this does not trouble them. If they were to eat twice a day, it would trouble them. After the age of sixty, a man should eat once a day. To eat twice puts a lot of strain on the body and the digestive system. It is a different matter if it is recommended by a doctor for medical reasons, but otherwise a man should eat only once a day. This is beneficial for hypertension, cardiac disease and in many other ailments. Some mahatmas eat in the evening and do not eat in the day; some eat in the day and do not eat in the evening; and there are some who eat in the day and have something light, like milk, at night.

If food is cooked with only salt and turmeric, and is not fried, then a man will never have cardiac disease. Even if a man has already had a heart attack, he can live for another twenty or twenty-five years. Salt is not excluded from this diet, but if it can be given up then that is very good. There is already natural salt in everything, which is good enough for those who do not exert much physically, for those who do not sweat. Those who work hard manually and sweat should take extra salt.

Swami Sivananda never ate rice. I never saw him eating rice or drinking tea or coffee. All his normal meal consisted of was two rotis and a small bowl of tempered green legumes, and a small cup of cow's milk. That was all Swamiji ate. He was South Indian, but he never ate things like idli-dosa, sambhar or kheer. However, he did sit a lot. He would sit and write from morning to evening. Sitting increases the fat in the abdomen.

Satsang 19

31 October 1997

Nath sampradaya

Guru Gorakhnath, who propagated the Nath tradition, was a hatha yogi. His guru, Guru Matsyendranath, was a tantric adept. Guru Gorakhnath never discriminated on the basis of caste and creed. There are many sadhus and sannyasins who discriminate on this basis, but those belonging to the Nath tradition never cared about it. They did not pay attention to the occupation of a person either. If they came across a snake charmer, they would initiate him and tell him to carry on charming snakes. The only thing was that he was given was a cloth bag containing some holy ash, earrings, a mala and a few medicines. That was all that was given during Guru Gorakhnath's 'jholi diksha'. Even today, the Kanphata yogis do the same.

In their tradition, sannyasa is interpreted differently compared to our tradition. We understand sannyasa to be observation of celibacy: no wife and no children. In their tradition, however, anyone can be a sannyasin. They believe that if a man longs for God or is desirous of samadhi and moksha even while living in the world, then he is not a householder. He is a sannyasin. A *grihastha*, or householder, is one who is involved in maya twenty-fours of the day. A householder is one who is involved in lies and truth, who is crazy about money and totally attached to his wife and his children. However, in spite of being married and having children, if the mind is drawn to the higher reality, then what type of a householder is he? Whether a cobbler or a barber, he would be initiated into the Nath *pantha*, way. That is why

the Nath Pantha spread widely. Nath Pantha is very active in Gujarat and in Baluchistan, which is now a part of Pakistan. I have travelled to Baluchistan, where the followers of the Nath Pantha have big establishments. I have visited all of them.

The hatha yoga taught by Guru Gorakhnath includes asana and pranayama, but only asana and pranayama is not hatha yoga. Asana and pranayama constitute only a part of hatha yoga. The shatkarmas come first in hatha yoga: neti, dhauti, basti, kapalbhati, trataka and nauli. Asana and pranayama are learnt after the shatkarmas. In the sequence of raja yoga, yama and niyama come first, followed by asana and pranayama, pratyahara and dharana, and finally dhyana and samadhi. However, it is not like that in hatha yoga. Shatkarmas come first in hatha yoga, after that come asana, pranayama, dharana, dhyana and samadhi. There is no talk of yama and niyama. Hatha yoga says that there is no need to enforce yama and niyama, they manifest spontaneously.

This is something to be contemplated. A person who wants to practise *satya* or truth, *ahimsa* or non-violence, *brahmacharya* or celibacy, has to force himself to do so. He has to put in great effort. The Nath Panthis say that there is no need for effort, when a man is mature enough, these qualities manifest spontaneously. When your body is impure, then how could you possibly observe these rules of conduct, these qualities? This was their way of thinking. They did not lay stress on conduct and thinking. They said, "If your whole life is spent in trying to realize satya, ahimsa, brahmacharya, what would you achieve at the end?" Therefore, they believe that it is better to purify your body right from the beginning with shatkarmas; they call it *ghatashuddhi*. Then practise asana and pranayama, and then finally sit down to meditate. The yama and niyama will occur spontaneously.

This is a good thought. In their view, man's life is very short; a man becomes old and dies after sixty or seventy years. He has strength until fifty or sixty years at the most. In today's day and age, you may expect that a man is ready to go after fifty: he takes medicine for this and medicine for that, and he

needs to go to the hospital for operation. Man has become weak. What can he do under such circumstances? That is why hatha yogis say that the lifespan should be extended a little. The Nath sampradaya has a practice for this, the use of mercury, the basis of which is Ayurveda. It is called *para shodhana*, and it is said that it extends the lifespan to some degree.

Have you seen this use of mercury?

Yes, in the Himalayas there are sadhus who are still living at the age of one hundred and fifty or two hundred years. I know it. I have met many of them. Yes, you do not meet them here in Delhi and Calcutta. Here a man suffers a heart attack at the age of sixty or seventy, and at that age most people die. There is a lot of smoke in the big cities, and that makes a man sick. He goes to the hospital, and becomes the income generator for doctors.

The followers of the Nath Pantha are a big community. They are also called *Kanphata yogis*, yogis who have their ears pierced. There is a book in the library in Munger that details the research on Kanphata yogis. I bought that book and kept it in the library. The complete history of the Kanphata yogis is given in it; when, where and how their tradition began. It is believed that the originator of the Nath Panth is Shiva himself.

Emperor Alexander also visited a Kanphata yogi to learn something from him.

No, it was not like that. About two or two and a half thousand years ago, many good philosophers were born in Greece. Among them was a great philosopher called Socrates, who is known as Sukrat in India. He was a very wise householder who told the people, "Know thyself." Socrates had a disciple, Plato, and Plato's disciple was Aristotle, known in India as Aristu. During Aristotle's time there was a young man of twenty or twenty-two in Macedonia who had a dream of conquering the world. His name was Alexander. He set off for India with a

huge army from Greece. He had heard that a large number of knowledgeable rishis and munis lived in India. He arrived here with not only his army, but also a group of philosophers. He crossed the whole of Iran, all of Afghanistan, and all of Baluchistan. Then, on the banks of the Jhelum, he crossed swords with King Porus. It was a terrible war.

At the time of Alexander's war with Porus, there was a vast empire in Bihar ruled by Maharaj Mahananda. It was called the Magadha empire and its capital was Pataliputra. During his reign, Mahananda misbehaved with a brahmin in his employ. That brahmin was the father of Chanakya. Actually, the father's name was Chanakya, and the actual name of the son, whom we know as Chanakya today, was Vishnugupta. The king behaved very badly with Chanakya and got him killed. Soon after, Vishnugupta left Magadha and went to Takshashila.

Takshashila is part of Pakistan today, and is situated on the border. There was a huge international university in Takshashila that taught Ayurveda, the art of warfare, politics, the Vedas and Vedanta. Great scholars lived there. At Takshashila, Vishnugupta became a scholar of economics and began to teach it at the university. When Vishnugupta Chanakya heard that a king had come from Greece to capture India, he prepared a boy. The boy, Chandragupta, was the son of a slave and an unwed mother. He prepared and schooled Chandragupta and finally pitted him against the Greek armies.

There was mutiny in Alexander's ranks and Alexander had to return home, taking a Jain *muni*, or sage, with him. This is a documented fact. His name was Kalyana Muni. Alexander took him to Babylonia, which is modern-day Iraq, and wanted to build an ashram for him there. However, Alexander died, or perhaps was killed, on the way. On reading the letters between Aristotle and Alexander, it seems they did not see eye to eye on some ongoing matter. It is probable that Alexander was killed on the way.

After his death, one of Alexander's generals returned with the army to India. His name was Seleucus. He met

Chandragupta in battle at Pataliputra. Seleucus lost and he gave his daughter, Helena, in marriage to Chandragupta. In this way, India and Greece became related by marriage. Chandragupta's grandson was Ashoka. He was a big, strong man who conquered all the way down to Golconda in South India. He started a war in Kalinga in which thousands died. However, in the end, seeing the copious bloodshed and the terrible killing, he experienced a change of heart and converted to Buddhism. Chandragupta had already given up his kingdom, accepted initiation into the Jain religion and gone to live in a *math*, or monastery, in Mysore.

Ashoka's daughter, Sanghamitra, and his son, Mahendra, propagated Buddhism overseas. They took a branch of the tree under which Lord Buddha had become enlightened, and planted it in Sri Lanka. From there they travelled to Baluchistan, Afghanistan and Iran, preaching Buddhism. I have been to Afghanistan. Although their religion is Islam now, there are Buddhist maths in every little village. Not just in a village or two, but in every single village. There are no Buddhist *bhikshus*, monks or sadhus, any more, only the ruins. Just as a church, a mosque and a temple have characteristic architecture, so does a Buddhist monastery. This can be seen in Afghanistan. However, Buddhism did not survive for long in India after Ashoka. After him came the line of the Gupta kings.

There is a big Buddhist temple in Japan where, it is said, a branch from the same tree under which Lord Buddha attained enlightenment is planted.

No, this is untrue. Let me tell you a historical fact: Buddhism did not go to Japan straight from India; it went straight to China from India. There was regular contact between the two countries. Acharya Padmasambhava went to China and Deepankara went to Tibet. In China, Padmasambhava had a seat at the Imperial Court. Sanskrit and Pali were studied there and bhikshus were maintained. From China, Buddhism went to Korea, and from Korea, it went to Japan.

When Buddhism reached Japan, the people there liked its philosophy. A bhikshu tried to make the journey from Japan to India; however, his ship sank on the way. A trader tried to go to India and died during the preparations. People from Japan tried their best to reach India, but they were unsuccessful. They had to cross the South China Sea and this is the most formidable sea in the world. Typhoons occur there every day. They could not come to India by sea, nor could they come through China and the desert, as they were in conflict with the Chinese and had no diplomatic relations with them. The Japanese had already received some knowledge indirectly from the Koreans, and they tried to reach India for many years. They wanted direct knowledge, but it was not to be. Finally, Japan established political ties with China, and sent their people to China to study. From China, Buddhism went to Japan. Remember, this is history. Buddhism did not go straight from here to Japan. All the travellers who came from East Asia, such as Fa Hien and Hiuen Tsang, were all Chinese.

Hiuen Tsang is very famous; he had even visited Munger. It is written in the *Gazette* that he had also visited Deoghar. He has written about the temple in Deoghar, stating that it belonged to the Adivasis, that they worshipped the primal Mother Goddess there, and that later, other people stole the temple from them. Hiuen Tsang travelled all over India. All the kings and emperors helped him considerably. He took with him many books and palm leaf scripts. On the way back to China, a typhoon struck at sea. The ship was heavily laden and someone suggested throwing some books overboard. Hiuen Tsang said, "No, we will not throw the books. You throw some men overboard instead. After all, men can be born again, but how can these books be replaced?" He was that kind of a man.

Four thousand years ago, people in nations that call themselves developed today, such as America, England or Germany, lived naked. They did not know how to clothe themselves or how to build proper houses. India and China are the oldest countries in the world. They discovered paper, coal, sugar and tea. The gunpowder that is used by the West

to make bombs came from here. When Marco Polo travelled here, he took gunpowder back with him. Now they are making bombs and teaching us.

China and India are very old countries, and it is they who found God. After all, God is a very big thing, isn't it? Someone discovered Him too. Does a dog know that God exists? A dog, an elephant, a horse or a cat do not know that God exists. Only humans have discovered that God exists and that knowledge went out to humanity from here. Once upon a time, China, India, Tibet and Burma were the big nations of the world, but they spoilt everything by fighting among themselves.

India used to be called the 'golden bird'. This is a country where there is water, dry land, forests and deserts. There are black people and white people, there are short people and tall people. Sadhus and mahatmas live here as do thieves and brigands. All kinds of people live here. In India we have six seasons. In Europe, they barely have two seasons. In fact, they have one-and-a-half seasons: extremely cold and a little less cold. How can they plant wheat there, or corn, or tomatoes? They have no remedy. Here, a man can gather a few sticks, and with the help of dried cow dung, cook the evening meal.

India is a very ancient country. Her history is thousands of years old and her civilization is very good. The only problem is that we have a little poverty here. However, remember one thing: when money comes, it brings many vices along with it. Sewage carries a foul smell wherever it goes; similarly, wherever money goes it carries bad qualities with it. Now, in Delhi, there are crimes committed every day. None are committed here because there is no money to be had.

God's command

A householder is born in one place and dies in the same place. We sannyasins, however, do not die in the same place where we are born. This is our first principle. I have not come here thinking that I will live here forever. I did not go to Rishikesh thinking that I would stay there forever. Nor did I live in

Munger thinking, 'Here, in this big ashram, I can spend my life very comfortably.' This thought never crossed my mind.

I am of the view that whenever a sadhu or sannyasin is commanded by God, he should pick up his bag and staff and be prepared to move. I do not even guarantee that I will live here forever. If I am commanded today, I will leave today. I have not come here to make money and build an estate. If I had wanted to do that, I would also have had a wife and family. Our way is different. I have left so many places in my life. I have left my parents' home, my guru's place and I could leave this place, too.

Women's rights

There are rights and responsibilities in human life. Is anyone born without rights and duties? It is illogical that if a man dies, his wife is left without any rights. You cannot take away her rights to wear new clothes, to wear ornaments, to work, to earn money, to participate in auspicious occasions, or to remarry. If she does not have to and if she does not wish it, then it should not matter. Many women are very sensitive and they do not remarry. It is very good. If a widow does not wish to remarry then that is her wish, you cannot force her to do so.

It has become extremely necessary to educate girls. There was a report published a few days ago saying that Kerala is the only state to have a zero population growth rate in all of India. The family planning program is not the reason; it is because every girl there is educated. In the hospitals everywhere, most of the nurses are from Kerala. Go anywhere, Germany, America, or Australia, you will find girls from Kerala everywhere. They get an education and become teachers, nurses and telephone operators.

To control the population growth in India, the only remedy is to educate girls, and this education should certainly continue until matriculation, the school-leaving age. If a girl gets good grades, then her parents or society, or an individual or institution, should help her to study further. Marriage is for everyone ultimately, there is no doubt or argument about

that. However, to say that marriage is the only samskara for a girl is not right. Earlier, there was a time when there was no other option but marriage. Today, a girl has two other options: *shiksha*, education, and *swabalambana*, independence, meaning a job and a career. Then, automatically, the parents are relieved from the anxiety of providing a dowry.

If your daughter is a schoolteacher and earns three thousand rupees a month, she can save two thousand rupees. In one year, that is a saving of twenty-four thousand rupees, and in three years it will become seventy thousand rupees. In this way, she can take her own dowry with her. It is her money, who can stop her? Why should she be a burden to her parents? It is not as if you will keep her income for yourself. It is hers; she has earned it.

By God's grace, girls today are very clever in the villages and rural areas. I have also seen the girls in the villages of South India; theirs is a new brain, they work very well with computers and machines. Today, new doors have opened up for girls. Up until now, our elders had shut all the doors. Our bike was running on one wheel. The man is one wheel and the woman is the other. The second wheel has been helpless. That is why there has been no progress or growth in society.

What is it that a woman cannot do? She can be a mother, she can be a sister, she can even be an advisor. A woman has great power. That is why we must educate our girls up to at least matriculation. After that, she can be trained in primary school education and work at the local school. She should be told by her parents, "Daughter, tell us when you are ready to marry, and we will also tell you when we think that you should." In this day and age, to force a girl into marriage is against the principle of democracy. Girls are an independent entity; they have the right to an opinion.

The second thing is that if the girl has a very bright brain, and scores between 80 and 85 percent marks, then her marriage should be delayed. Say to her, "Look here child, you are good at your studies. We will try to get assistance through some institution, maybe get you a place to stay in a student's

hostel so you can study further." At such time, if necessary, even the family gold should be sold to ensure her continued education.

A girl is never dishonest. A girl has two weaknesses, and those very weaknesses are also her strengths. A girl wants permanence or stability and security. For the sake of permanence, for the sake of maintaining stability, she will not leave home irrespective of the circumstances. A woman is predominantly discriminating, while a man is predominantly physical prowess-oriented.

A woman knows right from wrong; it is called maturity, instinctive understanding. That is why you should educate your girls well. While I am here, I will certainly help needy children. If I cannot do it, I will tell someone else to do so. I am not timid about telling anyone, "From now on, think that you have one more daughter to look after."

Girls should not be too restricted. She should not be told, "Oh you, keep quiet." God has made only one difference between animals and humans; an animal cannot speak, but a human being can. What he sees, he can explain. Why wouldn't a girl use this ability? She must speak. Girls are naturally talkative. They may say the wrong things when they are young, but they will learn as they mature.

The twenty-first century

The new century will begin after three years, and this coming century will belong to the computer. There is no official in the villages of America who keeps manual records; all the records are stored in a computer. I have the whole map and information of Rikhia in my computer. I have to keep information about each household, who was born and who died in whose house. We give clothes and things every year, so of course we have to keep a proper list.

The coming of computers has changed the whole way of working. Information from one department or office automatically reaches other departments or offices, not through an office boy but through a computer, the internet.

Suppose you buy land and have it registered at the land registry office. This information will be shared automatically with the other government departments through the internet. The area of the land, the number of flats, and all relevant information is in the computer.

In the West, surveys are also done through the satellite. That facility will take some time to come to India. Through the satellite, we have been able to discover that two rivers once ran through Rajasthan. There are impressions of those rivers on the photographs taken by satellite. There is even a mention in the Vedas of the Saraswati and the Drishadavati, the two rivers that used to flow through Rajasthan and Gujarat into the Arabian Sea. There is no sign of these rivers now, their names survive only in books, but the satellite pictures have given credence to this. It is a historical fact that these two rivers once flowed there. The paths these rivers took have also been found.

Hanuman

Hanuman was very intelligent, very clever: *Vidyavana guni ati chatura* – "Knowledgeable, virtuous and very clever." That is why he could work for Sri Rama. He was a Sanskrit scholar, a lover of poetry, literature and music; he could dance, wrestle, and debate like a lawyer with Ravana. He was very capable and talented.

Sri Rama got an executive assistant like Hanuman because Rama himself was very clever. In *Ramacharitamanas*, Tulsidas has called Sri Rama *chatura shiromani.* It means 'the cleverest of the clever'. So, the executive assistant of the cleverest of the clever was very clever. *Rama kaja karibe ko atura* – "Eager to perform Rama's tasks." He was able to execute any work of Rama very fast. If he had not been so clever, he would have asked, "Lord, what should I do if I meet anyone on my way to the Himalayas?" No, he was so intelligent that he dealt with Kalanemi on the way. He straightened out the ruler in Dronachal. Close to Ayodhya, too, he dealt with Bharata; he did not need to consult Sri Rama.



Swami Satyananda was born in Almora (Uttaranchal) in 1923. Drawn to spiritual life from an early age, he left home at the age of eighteen, and in 1943 surrendered himself to Swami Sivananda in Rishikesh who initiated him into Dashnami sannyasa in 1947. He served his guru for twelve years, perfecting every aspect of spiritual life. Thereafter, he travelled throughout the Indian subcontinent as a wandering ascetic.

Realizing the need of the times as scientific rendition of the ancient system of yoga, he founded the International Yoga Fellowship in 1956 and the Bihar School of Yoga in 1963. During the next twenty years, Swami Satyananda hoisted the flag of yoga in every corner of the world, consolidated BSY into a foremost institution of yoga, and authored over eighty major texts on yoga, tantra and spiritual life.

'Satyananda Yoga' became a tradition which combines classical knowledge with experiential understanding and a modern outlook. In 1984 he founded the Yoga Research Foundation to synchronize scientific research and yoga, and Sivananda Math to assist the underprivileged. In 1988, at the peak of his achievements, he renounced everything and adopted kshetra sannyasa, living as a paramahamsa ascetic. In 1989 Rikhia was revealed to him, where he came to live and performed higher vedic sadhanas in seclusion. Receiving the command to provide for his neighbours in 1991, he allowed the ashram to help the underprivileged villages in the region. From 1995 onwards, he performed a twelve-year Rajasooya Yajna with the sankalpa of peace, plenty and prosperity for all, and in 2007 he announced the establishment of Rikhiapeeth with its mandate to 'serve, love, give'.

Swami Satyananda attained mahasamadhi, a yogic accomplishment of discarding the body at will to become one with the universal consciousness, in 2009, in the presence of his disciples.



Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati came to the remote village of Rikhia (Jharkhand) in 1989 after entering a new phase of spiritual life. Here he performed intense austerities, exemplifying the highest principles of the sannyasa tradition. The fruit of his sadhana was distributed to the local villagers in the form of economic, social and spiritual prosperity. Sri Swamiji established Rikhiapeeth in 2007 with the mandate from his guru Swami Sivananda, to 'Serve, Love, Give'. He entered into mahasamadhi at midnight on 5th December 2009, epitomizing the highest accomplishment of yoga.

Rikhiapeeth Satsangs 4 is a collection of talks given by Sri Swamiji in 1997 to an Indian audience. He speaks on a wide range of subjects, including the sannyasa tradition, bhakti, yoga, dhyana, mind management, seva, health, village development, education, emancipation of women, ancient and modern history, science, social systems and economics. Translated from the original Hindi, Sri Swamiji's liberal, compassionate and practical views provide inspiration and fresh insights to all individuals seeking expansion of mind.

