

And Now, And Here

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And Now, And Here, Vol 1

Chapter #1

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We become free from that which we have known. We also triumph over that which we have known. Our failure and defeat are only because of our ignorance. Defeat is because of darkness; when there is light, defeat is impossible -- light itself will bring triumph.

The first thing I would like to tell you about death is that there is no bigger lie than death. And yet, death appears to be true. It not only appears to be true but even seems like the cardinal truth of life -- it appears as if the whole of life is surrounded by death. Whether we forget about it, or become oblivious to it, everywhere death remains close to us. Death is even closer to us than our shadow.

We have even structured our lives out of our fear of death. The fear of death has created society, the nation, family and friends. The fear of death has caused us to chase money and has made us ambitious of higher positions. And the biggest surprise is that our gods and our temples have also been raised out of the fear of death. Afraid of death, there are people who pray on their knees. Afraid of death, there are people who pray to God with folded hands raised towards the sky. And nothing is more false than death. That is why whatever system of life we have created, believing death to be true, has become false.

How do we know the falsity of death? How can we know there is no death? Until we know that, our fear of death will not go. Until we know the falsity of death, our lives will also remain false. As long as there is fear of death, there cannot be authentic life. As long as we tremble with the fear of death, we cannot summon the capacity to live our lives. Only those can live for whom the shadow of death has disappeared forever. How can a frightened and trembling mind live? And when death seems to be approaching every second, how is it possible to live? How can we live?

No matter to what extent we may remain oblivious to death, it is never really forgotten. It makes no difference if we put the cemetery outside the town -- death still shows its face. Every day someone or other dies; every day death occurs somewhere, and it shakes the very foundation of our lives.

Whenever we see death happening, we become aware of our own death. When we cry over somebody's death, it is not just for that person's death alone, but also for the hint we get of our own. Our suffering from pain and sorrow is not only over someone else's death but also over the apparent possibility of our own. The occurrence of every death is, at the same time, our own death. And so long as we remain surrounded by death, how can we live? Like that, living is impossible. Like that, we cannot know what life is -- neither its joy, nor its beauty, nor its benediction. Like that, we cannot reach the temple of God, the supreme truth of life.

The temples which have been created out of the fear of death are not the temples of God. The prayers which have been composed out of the fear of death are not prayers to God either. Only one who is filled with the joy of life reaches the temple of God. God's kingdom is filled with joy and beauty, and the bells of God's temple ring only for those who are free from all kinds of fears, for those who have become fearless.

Because we like to live in fear this seems difficult. But this is not possible -- only one of the two things can be right. Remember, if life is true then death cannot be true -- and if death is true then life will be nothing but a dream, a lie; then life cannot be true. These two things cannot exist simultaneously. But we hold on to both together. There is the feeling that we are alive and there is also the feeling that we are dead.

I have heard about a fakir who lived in a faraway valley. Many people would go to him with questions. Once a man came and asked him to explain something about life and death. The fakir said, "You are welcome to know about life; my doors are open. But if you want to know about death then go somewhere else, because I have never died nor will I ever die. I have no experience of death. If you want to know about death men ask those who have died, ask those who are already dead." Then the fakir laughed and he said, "But how will you ask those who are already dead? And if you ask me to give you the address of a dead person, I cannot do it. Because ever since I have come to know that I cannot die, I have also come to know that no one dies, that no one has ever died."

But how can we believe this fakir? Every day we see someone dying; every day death happens. Death is the supreme truth; it makes itself apparent by penetrating the center of our being. You may shut your eyes, but no matter how far away it is from you, it still remains apparent. No matter how much we escape from it, run away from it, it still surrounds us. How can you falsify this truth?

Some people do, of course, try to falsify it. Just because of their fear of death people believe in the immortality of the soul -- just out of fear. They don't know; they simply believe. Every morning, sitting in a temple or a mosque, some people repeat, "No one dies; the soul is immortal." They are wrong in believing that just by repeating this, the soul will become immortal. They are under the impression that death can be falsified by repeating, "The soul is immortal." Death never becomes false by such reiterations -- only by knowing death can it be falsified.

This is very strange, remember: we always accept the opposite of what we go on repeating. When someone says he is immortal, that the soul is immortal -- when he repeats this he is simply indicating that he knows, deep down, he will die, he will have to die. If he knows he will not die then there is no need to go on about immortality; only one who is frightened keeps on repeating it. And you will see that people are more scared of death in those countries, in those societies which talk the most about the immortality of the soul. This country of ours talks untiringly about the immortality of the soul, and yet is there anyone on earth more scared of death than us? There is no one more afraid of death than us! How can we reconcile these two?

Is it ever possible for people who believe in the immortality of the soul to become slaves? They would rather die; they would be ready to die because they know there is no death. Those who know that life is

eternal, that the soul is immortal, would be the first to land on the moon! They would be the first to climb Mount Everest! They would be the first to explore the depths of the Pacific Ocean! But no, we are not among those. We neither climb the peak of Everest nor land on the moon nor explore the depths of the Indian Ocean -- and we are the people who believe in the immortality of the soul! In fact, we are so scared of death, that out of the fear of it we go on repeating, "The soul is immortal." And we are under the illusion that perhaps by repeating it, it will become true. Nothing becomes true by repetition.

Death cannot be denied by repeating that death does not exist. Death will have to be known, it will have to be encountered, it will have to be lived. You will have to become acquainted with it. Instead, we keep running away from death.

How can we see it? We close our eyes when we see death. When a funeral passes by on the road, a mother shuts her child behind closed doors and says, "Don't go out; someone has died." The cremation ground is put outside the town so it rarely meets your eyes, so that death won't be there, right in front of you. And if you ever mention death to somebody, he will forbid you to talk about it.

Once I stayed with a sannyasin. Every day he would talk about the immortality of the soul. I asked him, "Do you ever realize that you are coming closer to death?"

He said, "Don't say such ominous things. It is not good to talk about such things."

I said, "If, on the one hand, a person says that the soul is immortal, but also he finds it ominous to talk about death, then this fouls up the whole thing. He shouldn't see any fear, any omen, anything wrong in talking about death -- because for him there is no death."

He said, "Although the soul is immortal, I nevertheless do not wish to talk about death at all. One should not talk about such meaningless and threatening things." We are all doing the same thing -- turning our backs on death and escaping from it.

I have heard: Once a man went mad in a village. It was a hot afternoon and the man was walking along a lonely road all alone. He was walking rather fast, trying not to be scared: it is possible to be scared when someone is already there, but how can anyone be scared when there is no one around? But we do feel scared when there is no one around. In fact, we are afraid of ourselves, and when we are alone the fear is even greater. There is no one we fear more than ourselves. We are less afraid when accompanied by someone and more afraid when left all by ourselves.

That man was alone. He became scared and began running. Everything was still and quiet -- it was afternoon; there was no one around. As he began to run faster, he sensed the sound of running feet coming from behind. He grew frightened -- maybe someone was following him. Then, afraid, he glanced behind out of the corner of his eye. He saw a long shadow chasing him. It was his own shadow -- but seeing that some long shadow was pursuing him, he ran even faster. Then that man could never stop, because the faster he ran, the faster the shadow ran after him. Finally the man went mad. But there are people who even worship madmen.

When people saw him running like that through their villages, they thought he was engaged in some great ascetic practice. Except in the darkness of night, when the shadow would disappear and he would think there was no one behind him, he never stopped. With daybreak he would start running again. Then he didn't even stop at night -- he figured that in spite of the distance he had covered during the day, while he rested at night the shadow had caught up with him and would follow him in the morning once again. So even at night he continued running.

Then he went completely mad; he neither ate nor drank. Thousands of people watched him run and showered flowers upon him, or someone might hand him a piece of bread or some water. People began worshipping him more and more; thousands paid their respects to him. But the man became more and more crazy, and finally one day, he fell down on the ground and died. The people of the village where he died made his grave under the shade of a tree, and they asked an old fakir of the village what they would inscribe on his gravestone. The fakir wrote one line on it.

In some village, someplace, that grave is still there. It is possible you may pass it by it. Do read the line. The fakir wrote on the gravestone: "Here rests a man who fled from his own shadow all his life, who wasted his whole life escaping from a shadow. And the man did not even know as much as his gravestone does -- because the gravestone is in the shade and does not run, hence no shadow is created."

We also run. We may wonder how a man can run from his shadow, but we too run from shadows. And that which we run away from starts pursuing us itself. The faster we run, the faster it follows because it is our own shadow.

Death is our own shadow. If we keep running away from it we will not be able to stand before it and recognize what it is. If that man had stopped and seen what was behind him, perhaps he would have laughed and said, "What kind of a person am I, running away from a shadow?" No one can ever escape from a shadow; no one can ever win a fight with a shadow. This does not mean, however, that the shadow is stronger than we are and that we can never be victorious; it simply means that there is no shadow, that there is no question of being victorious. You cannot win against that which does not exist. That's why people keep facing defeat by death -- because death is merely a shadow of life.

As life moves forward, its shadow moves along with it too. Death is the shadow that forms behind life, and we never want to look back, to see what it is. We have fallen, exhausted, so many times -- after having run this race again and again. It is not that you have come to this shore for the first time, you must have been here before -- maybe it was not this shore; then some other shore. It may not have been this body; then some other body -- but the race must have been the same. The legs must have been the same; the race must have been the same.

Through many lives we live, carrying the fear of death, and yet we are neither able to recognize it nor to see it. We are so scared and frightened that when death approaches, when its total shadow closes in on us, out of fear we become unconscious. Generally, no one remains conscious at the moment of death. If,

even once, one were to remain conscious, the fear of death would disappear forever. If, just once, a man could see what dying is like, what happens in death, then the next time he would have no fear of death because there would be no death. Not that he would be victorious over death -- we can achieve victory only over something which exists. Just by knowing death, it disappears. Then nothing remains over which to be victorious.

We have died many times before, but whenever death has occurred we have become unconscious. This is similar to when a physician or a surgeon gives anesthesia before an operation so you won't feel the pain. We are so very afraid of dying that at the time of death we become unconscious willingly. We become unconscious just a little before dying. We die unconscious, and then we are reborn in a state of unconsciousness. We neither see death, nor do we see birth -- and hence we are never able to understand that life is eternal. Birth and death are nothing more than stopping places where we change clothes or horses.

In olden times there were no railroads and people traveled in horse-drawn carriages. They traveled from one village to another, and when the horses grew tired they exchanged them for fresh horses at an inn, and they changed them again at the next village. However, the people changing the horses never felt that what they were doing was like dying and being born again, because when they changed horses they were fully conscious.

Sometimes it used to happen that a horseman would travel after drinking. When he would look around in that state, it would make him wonder how everything had changed, how everything appeared so different. I have heard that once a drunk horseman even said, "Could it be that I am changed too? This doesn't seem to be the same horse I was riding. Could it be that I have become a different man?"

Birth and death are simply stations where vehicles are changed -- where the old vehicles are left behind, where tired horses are abandoned and fresh ones are acquired. But both these acts take place in our state of unconsciousness. And one whose birth and death happens in this unconscious state cannot live a conscious life -- he functions in an almost half-conscious state, in an almost half-awakened state of life.

What I wish to say is that it is essential to see death, to understand it, to recognize it. But this is possible only when we die; one can only see it while dying. Then what is the way now? And if one sees death only while dying, then there is no way to understand it -- because at the time of death one will be unconscious.

Yes, there is a way now. We can go through an experiment of entering into death of our own free will. And may I say that meditation or samadhi is nothing else but that. The experience of entering death voluntarily is meditation, samadhi. The phenomenon that will automatically occur one day with the dropping of the body -- we can willingly make that happen by creating a distance, inside, between the self and the body. And so, by leaving the body from the inside, we can experience the event of death, we can experience the occurrence of death. We can experience death today, this evening -- because the occurrence of death simply means that our soul and our body will experience, in that journey, the same distinction between the two of them as when the vehicle is left behind and the traveler moves on ahead.

I have heard that a man went to see a Mohammedan fakir, Sheikh Fareed, and said, "We have heard that when Mansoor's hands and legs were cut off he felt no pain... which is hard to believe. Even a thorn hurts when it pricks the foot. Won't it hurt if one's hands and legs are cut off? It seems that these are all fantastic stories." The man also said, "We hear that when Jesus was hanged on the cross he did not feel any pain. And he was permitted to say his final prayers. What the bleeding, naked Jesus -- hanged on a cross, pierced with thorns, hands stuck with nails -- said in the final moments can hardly be believed!"

Jesus said, "Forgive these people, they don't know what they are doing." You must have heard this sentence. And the people all over the world who believe in Christ repeat it continuously. The sentence is very simple. Jesus said, "O, Lord, please forgive these people, because they know not what they are doing." Reading this sentence, people ordinarily understand Jesus is saying that the poor people didn't know they were killing a good man like him. No, that was not what Jesus meant. What Jesus meant was that "These senseless people do not know that the person they are killing cannot die. Forgive them because they don't know what they are doing. They are doing something which is impossible -- they are committing the act of killing, which is impossible."

The man said, "It is hard to believe that a person about to be killed could show so much compassion. In fact, he will be filled with anger."

Fareed gave a hearty laugh and said, "You have raised a good question, but I will answer it later. First, do me a little favor." He picked up a coconut lying nearby, gave it to him and asked him to break it open, cautioning him not to break the kernel.

But the coconut was unripe, so the man said, "Pardon me, I cannot do this. The coconut is completely raw, and if I break open the shell the kernel will break too."

Fareed asked him to put that coconut away. Then he gave him another coconut, one which was dry, and asked him to break that one open. "Can you save the kernel of this one?" he asked.

And the man replied, "Yes, the kernel can be saved."

Fareed said, "I have given you an answer. Did you understand?"

The man replied, "I didn't understand anything. What relation is there between a coconut and your answer? What relation is there between the coconut and my question?"

Fareed said, "Put this coconut away too. There is no need to break it or anything. I am pointing out to you that there is one raw coconut which still has the kernel and the shell joined together -- if you hit the shell, the kernel will also break. Then there is the dry coconut. Now how is the dry coconut different from the raw coconut? There is a slight difference: the kernel of the dry coconut has shrunk inside and become separated from the shell; a distance has occurred between the kernel and the shell. Now you say, even after breaking open the shell, the kernel can be saved. So I have answered your question!"

The man said, "I still don't get it." The fakir said, "Go, die and understand -- without that you cannot follow what I am saying. But even then you will not be able to follow me because at the time of death you will become unconscious. One day the kernel and the shell will be separated, but at that moment you will become unconscious. If you want to understand, then start learning now how to separate the kernel from the shell -- now, while you are alive."

If the shell, the body, and the kernel, the consciousness, separate at this very instant, death is finished. With the creation of that distance, you come to know that the shell and the kernel are two separate things -- that you will continue to survive in spite of the breaking of the shell, that there is no question of you breaking, of you disappearing. In that state, even though death will occur, it cannot penetrate inside you -- it will occur outside you. It means only that which you are not will die. That which you are will survive.

This is the very meaning of meditation or samadhi: learning how to separate the shell from the kernel. They can be separated because they are separate. They can be known separately because they are separate. That's why I call meditation a voluntary entry into death. And the man who enters death willingly, encounters it and comes to know that, "Death is there, and yet I am still here."

Socrates was about to die. The final moments were approaching; the poison was being ground to kill him. He kept asking, "It is getting late, how long will it take to grind the poison?"

His friends were crying and saying to him, "Are you crazy? We want you to live a little longer. We have bribed the person who is grinding the poison; we have persuaded him to go slowly."

Socrates went out and said to the man who was grinding the poison, "You are taking too long. It seems you are not very skilled. Are you very new to this? Have you never ground it before? Have you never given poison to a condemned person?"

The man replied, "I have been giving poison my whole life, but I have never seen a crazy man like you before. Why are you in so much of a hurry? I am grinding it slowly so that you may breathe a little more, live a little longer, remain in life a little more. You keep talking like a crazy man, saying it is getting late. Why are you in such a hurry to die?"

Socrates said, "I am in a great hurry because I want to see death. I want to see what death is like. And I also want to see, even when death has happened, whether I survive or not. If I don't survive, then the whole affair is finished -- and if I do survive, then death is finished. In fact, I want to see who will die with death -- will death die or will I die? I want to see whether death will survive or whether I will survive. But how can I see this unless I am alive?"

Socrates was given the poison. His friends began to mourn; they were not in their right senses. And what was Socrates doing? He was telling them, "The poison has reached up to my knees. Up to the knees my legs are totally dead -- I will not even know if you cut them off. But my friends, let me tell you, even though my legs are dead, I am still alive. This means one thing is certain -- I was not my legs. I am still

here, I am totally here. Nothing within me has faded yet." Socrates continued, "Now both my legs are gone; up to my thighs everything is finished. I wouldn't feel anything if you cut me right up to the thighs. But I am still here! And here are my friends who go on crying!"

Socrates is saying, "Don't cry. Watch! Here is an opportunity for you: a man is dying and informing you that he is still alive. You may cut off my legs entirely -- even then I won't be dead, even then I will still remain. My hands are also drifting away; my hands will die too. Ah! How many times I identified myself with these hands -- the same hands that are leaving now -- but I am still here."

And, like this, Socrates continues talking while dying. He says, "Slowly, everything is becoming peaceful, everything is sinking, but I am still intact. After a while I may not be able to inform you, but don't let that make you think I am no more. Because, if I am still here, even after losing so much of my body, how then would an end come to me if a little more of the body is lost? I may not be able to inform you -- because that is only possible through the body -- but still I will remain." And at the very last moment he says, "Now, perhaps I am telling you the final thing: my tongue is failing. I won't be able to speak a single word further, but still I am saying, 'I exist'." Until the final moment of death he kept saying, "I am still alive."

In meditation, too, one has to enter slowly within. And gradually, one after another, things begin to drop away. A distance is created with each and every thing, and a moment arrives when it feels as if everything is lying far away at a distance. It will feel as if someone else's corpse is lying on the shore -- and yet you exist. The body is lying there and still you exist -- separate, totally distinct and different.

Once we experience seeing death face-to-face while alive, we will never have anything to do with death again. Death will keep on coming, but then it will be just like a stopover -- it will be like changing clothes, it will be like when we take new horses and ride in new bodies and set out on a new journey, on new paths, into new worlds. But death will never be able to destroy us. This can only be known by encountering death. We will have to know it; we will have to pass through it.

Because we are so very afraid of death, we are not even able to meditate. Many people come to me and say that they are unable to meditate. How shall I tell them that their real problem is something else? Their real problem is the fear of death... and meditation is a process of death. In a state of total meditation we reach the same point a dead man does. The only difference is that the dead man reaches there in an unconscious state, while we reach consciously. This is the only difference. The dead man has no knowledge of what happened, of how the shell broke open and the kernel survived. The meditative seeker knows that the shell and the kernel have become separate.

The fear of death is the basic reason why people cannot go into meditation -- there is no other reason. Those who are afraid of death can never enter into samadhi. Samadhi is a voluntary invitation to death. An invitation is given to death: "Come, I am ready to die. I want to know whether or not I will survive after death. And it is better that I know it consciously, because I won't be able to know anything if this event occurs in an unconscious state."

So, the first thing I say to you is that as long as you keep running away from death you will continue to be defeated by it -- and the day you stand up and encounter death, that very day death will leave you, but you will remain.

These three days, all my talks will be on the techniques of how you can encounter death. I hope that, these three days, many people will come to know how to die, will be able to die. And if you can die here, on this shore.... And this is an incredible seashore. It was on these very sands that Krishna once walked -- the same Krishna who told Arjuna in a certain war, "Don't be worried; have no fear. Don't be afraid of killing or of being killed, because I tell you that neither does anyone die nor does anyone kill." Neither has anyone ever died, nor can anyone ever die and that which dies, that which can die, is already dead. And that which does not die and cannot be killed -- there is no way of its dying. And that is life itself.

Tonight, we have unexpectedly gathered on this seashore where that very Krishna once walked. These sands have seen Krishna walk. People must have believed that Krishna really died -- since we know death as the only truth; for us everyone dies. This sea, these sands, have never felt that Krishna died; this sky, these stars and the moon have never believed in Krishna's death.

In fact, nowhere is there any room for death in life, but we have all believed that Krishna died. We believe so because we are always haunted by the thought of our own death. Why are we so preoccupied with the thought of our death? We are alive right now, then why are we so afraid of death? Why are we so very afraid of dying? Actually, behind this fear, there is a secret which we must understand.

There is a certain mathematics behind it, and this mathematics is very interesting. We have never seen ourselves dying. We have seen others dying, and that reinforces the idea that we will have to die too. For example, a raindrop lives in the ocean with thousands of other drops, and one day the sun's rays fall on it and it turns into vapor, it disappears. The other drops think it is dead, and they are right -- because they had seen the drop just a little while ago, and now it is gone. But the drop still exists in the clouds. Yet how are the other drops to know this until they themselves become the cloud? By now that drop must have fallen into the sea and become a drop again. But how can the other drops know this until they themselves set out on that journey?

When we see somebody dying around us, we think the person is no more, that yet another man has died. We don't realize that the man has simply evaporated, that he has entered the subtle, and then set out on a new journey -- that he is a drop which has evaporated, only to become a drop once again. How are we to see this? All we feel is that one more person is lost, that one more person is dead. Thus, somebody dies every day; every day some drop is lost. And it slowly becomes a certainty for us that we too will have to die, that, "I too will die." Then a fear takes hold: "I will die." This fear grips us because we are looking at others. We live watching others, and that is our problem.

Last night I was telling some friends a story. Once a Jewish fakir became very upset by his troubles -- who doesn't get upset? We are all bothered by our woes, and our greatest bother is seeing others happy. Seeing that others are happy, we continue becoming unhappy. There is more mathematics

behind this, the same kind of mathematics I spoke about in reference to death. We see our misery and we see the faces of others. We don't see the misery in others; we see their smiling eyes, the smiles on their lips. If we look at ourselves, we will see, in spite of being troubled inside, we go on smiling outwardly. In fact, a smile is a way to hide the misery.

No one wants to show he is unhappy. If he cannot really be happy then at least he wants to show that he has become happy, because to show oneself as unhappy is a matter of great humiliation, loss and defeat. That's why we keep a smiling face outwardly, and inside, we remain as we are. On the inside, tears keep collecting; on the outside, we practice our smiles. Then, when someone looks at us from the outside, he finds us smiling; however, when that person looks within himself he finds misery there. And that becomes a problem for him. He thinks the whole world is happy, that he alone is unhappy.

The same thing happened with this fakir. One night, in his prayers to God, he said, "I am not asking you not to give me unhappiness because if I deserve unhappiness then I should certainly get it -- but at least I can pray to you not to give me so much suffering. I see people laughing in the world, and I am the only one crying. Everyone seems to be happy; I am the only one who is unhappy. Everyone appears cheerful; I am the only one who is sad, lost in darkness. After all, what wrong have I done to you? Please do me a favor -- give me some other person's unhappiness in exchange for mine. Change my unhappiness for that of anyone else you like, and I will accept it."

That night, while he slept, he had a strange dream. He saw a huge mansion which had millions of hanging pegs. Millions of people were coming in and every one was carrying a bundle of unhappiness on his back. Seeing so many bundles of unhappiness, he got very scared, he grew puzzled. The bundles brought by other people were very similar to his own. The size and shape of everyone's bundle was exactly the same. He became very confused. He had always seen his neighbor smiling -- and every morning when the fakir asked him how things were, he would say, "Everything is just fine" -- and this same man was now carrying the same amount of unhappiness.

He saw politicians and their followers, gurus and their disciples -- everyone coming with the same size load. The wise and the ignorant, the rich and the poor, the healthy and the sick -- the load in everyone's bundle was the same. The fakir was dumbfounded. He was seeing the bundles for the first time; up to now he had only seen people's faces.

Suddenly a loud voice filled the room: "Hang up your bundles!" Everyone, including the fakir, did as commanded. Everyone hurried to get rid of his troubles; no one wanted to carry his miseries even a second longer and if we were to find such opportunity, we would also hang them up right away.

And then another voice sounded, saying: "Now, each of you should pick up whichever bundle he pleases." We might suspect that the fakir quickly picked up someone else's bundle. No, he did not make such a mistake. In panic, he ran to pick up his own bundle before anyone else could reach it -- otherwise, it could have become a problem for him, because all the bundles looked the same. He thought it was better to have his own bundle -- at least the miseries in it were familiar. Who knows what kinds of miseries were contained in the other peoples' bundles? Familiar misery is still a lesser kind of misery -- it is a known misery, a recognizable misery.

So, in a state of panic, he ran and retrieved his own bundle before anyone else could lay his hands on it. When he looked around, however, he found that everyone else had also run and picked up their own bundles; no one had selected a bundle that was not his own. He asked, "Why are you in such a hurry to collect your own bundles?"

"We became frightened. Up to now we'd believed that everyone else was happy, that only we were miserable," they replied.

In that mansion, whomsoever the fakir asked, the reply was that they'd always believed everyone else was happy. "We even believed that you were happy too. You also walked down the street with a smile on your face. We never imagined that you carried a bundle of miseries inside you too," they said.

With curiosity, the fakir asked, "Why did you collect your own bundle? Why didn't you exchange it for another?"

They said, "Today, each of us had prayed to God, saying we wanted to exchange our bundles of misery. But when we saw that everyone's miseries were just the same, we became scared; we had never imagined such a thing. So we figured it was better to pick up our own bundle. It is familiar and known. Why fall into new miseries? By and by, we get used to the old miseries too."

That night, nobody picked up a bundle that belonged to someone else. The fakir woke up, thanked merciful God for letting him have his own miseries back. And decided never to make such a prayer again.

In fact, the arithmetic behind it is the same. When we look at other people's faces and at our own reality -- that is where we commit a great error. And with regard to our perception of life and death the same kind of wrong arithmetic is at work. You have seen other people die, but you have never seen yourself dying. We see other people's deaths, but we never come to know if anything within these people survives. Since we become unconscious at the time, death remains a stranger to us. Hence it is important we enter death voluntarily. If a person sees death once he becomes free from it, he triumphs over death. In fact, it is meaningless to call him victorious because there is nothing to win -- then death becomes false; then death simply doesn't exist.

If after adding two and two a person writes down five, and the next day he comes to know that two plus two equals four, would he say he'd triumphed over five and made it four? He would say, in fact, that there was no question of triumph -- there was no five. Making it five was his error, it was his illusion -- his calculation was wrong, the total was four; he understood it as five, that was his mistake. Once you see the mistake, the matter is over. Would that man then say, "How can I get rid of five? Now I see two and two are four, but before, I had added them up as five. How can I be free of five?" The man would not ask for such freedom, because as soon as one finds out that two plus two equal four, the matter is over. There is no five any more. Then what does one have to be free of?

One neither has to be free from death nor does one have to triumph over it. One needs to know death. The very knowing it becomes freedom, the knowing itself becomes the victory. That's why I stated

earlier that knowing is power, that knowing is freedom, that knowing is victory. Knowing death causes it to dissolve; then suddenly, for the first time, we become connected with life.

That's why I told you that the first thing about meditation is that it is a voluntary entry into death. The second thing I would like to say is that one who enters into death willingly, finds, all of a sudden, entrance into life. Even though he goes in search of death, instead of meeting death he actually finds ultimate life. Even though, for the purpose of his search he enters the mansion of death, he actually ends up in the temple of life. And one who escapes from the mansion of death never reaches the temple of life.

Allow me to point out to you that the walls of the temple of life are engraved with the shadows of death. May I also point out to you that the maps of death are drawn on the walls of the temple of life, and since we run away from death we are also, in effect, running away from the temple of life! Only when we accept death will we be able to accept these walls. If ever we could enter death, we would reach the temple of life. The deity of life dwells within the walls of death; the images of death are engraved all over the temple of life. We have simply been running away at the very sight of them.

If you have ever been to Khajuraho, you must have noticed a strange thing -- all around its walls scenes of sex have been sculpted. The images look naked and obscene. If, after seeing them, a man simply runs away, then he will not be able to reach the deity of the temple inside. Inside is the image of God, and outside are engravings, images, of sex, passion, and copulation. They must have been a wonderful people who built the temples of Khajuraho. They depicted a profound fact of life: they have conveyed that sex is there, on the outside wall, and if you are to run away from there, then you will never be able to attain to brahmacharya to celibacy -- because brahmacharya is inside. If you are ever able to get beyond these walls, then you will also attain to brahmacharya. Samsara, the mortal world, is displayed on the walls, and running away from it will never bring you to God, because the one who is sitting inside the walls of samsara is God himself.

I am telling you exactly the same thing. Somewhere, someplace, we should build a temple whose walls have death displayed on it and the deity of life would be sitting inside. This is how the truth is. However, since we keep escaping from death, we miss the divinity of life as well.

I say both things simultaneously: meditation is entering voluntarily into death, and the one who enters death voluntarily attains to life. That means: one who encounters death ultimately finds that death has disappeared and he is in life's embrace. This looks quite contrary -- you go in search of death and come across life -- but it is not.

For example, I am wearing clothes. Now if you come in search of me, first you will come across my clothes -- although I am not the clothes. And if you become frightened of my clothes and run away, then you will never be able to know me. However, if you come closer and closer to me, without being frightened of my clothes, then beneath my clothes you will find my body. But the body too, in a deeper sense, is a garment, and if you were to run away from my body, then you would not find the one who is seated inside me. If you were not to become frightened of the body and continued your journey inside,

knowing that the body is a garment too, then you would certainly come across that one who sits inside, that one everyone is desirous of meeting.

How interesting it is that the wall is made of the body and the divine is seated graciously inside. The wall is made of matter and inside is the divine, the consciousness seated in glory. These are contrary things indeed -- the wall of matter and the divinity of life. If you understand rightly, the wall is made of death and the divine is made of life.

When an artist paints a picture he provides a dark background to bring out the white color. The white lines become clearly visible against the dark background. If one were to get scared of the black, he wouldn't be able to reach the white. But he doesn't know that it is the black that brings out the white.

Similarly, there are thorns around the blooming roses. If one becomes frightened of the thorns he won't be able to reach the roses; if he goes on escaping from the thorns he will be deprived of the flowers too. But one who accepts the thorns and approaches them without fear finds to his amazement that the thorns are simply meant to protect the flower; they merely serve the purpose of being the outer wall for the flower -- the wall of protection. The flower is blooming in the middle of the thorns; the thorns are not the flower's enemy. The flowers are part of the thorns and the thorns are part of the flowers -- both have emerged from the same life-giving force of the plant.

What we call life and what we call death -- both are part of one greater life. I am breathing. A breath comes out; a breath goes in. The same breath that comes out goes back in after a while, and the breath that goes in comes out after a while. Breathing in is life, breathing out is death. But both are steps of one greater life -- life and death, walking side by side. Birth is one step, death is another step. But if we could see, if we could penetrate inside, then we would attain the vision of the greater life.

These three days we shall do the meditation of entering into death. And I shall speak to you on many of its dimensions. Tonight we shall do the first day's meditation. Let me explain a few things about it to you.

You must have understood my point of view by now: we have to reach a point within, deep inside, where there is no possibility of dying. We have to drop the whole outer circumference, as happens in death. In death the body drops, feelings drop, thoughts drop, friendship drops, enmity drops -- everything drops. The entire external world departs -- only we remain, only the self remains, only the consciousness remains aloof.

In meditation too, we have to drop everything and die leaving only the observer, the witness within. And this death will happen. Throughout these three days of meditation, if you will show the courage of dying and drop your self a phenomenon can occur which is called samadhi.

Samadhi, remember, is a wonderful word. The state of total meditation is called samadhi and a grave built after a person's death is also called a samadhi. Have you ever thought about this? -- both are called samadhi. In fact, both have a common secret, a common meeting point.

Actually, for a person who attains to the state of samadhi, his body remains just like a grave -- nothing else. Then he comes to realize that there is someone else within; outside there is only darkness.

Following a person's death we make a grave and call it a samadhi. But this samadhi is made by others. If we can make our own samadhi before others make it, then we have created the very phenomenon we are longing for. Others will have the occasion to make our grave for certain, but we may perhaps lose the opportunity of creating our own samadhi. If we can create our own samadhi, then, in that state, only the body will die and there will be no question of our consciousness dying. We have never died, nor can we ever die. No one has ever died, nor can anyone ever die. To know this, however, we will have to descend all the steps of death.

I would like to show you three steps we shall follow. And who knows, that phenomenon might occur on this very seashore and you may have your samadhi -- not the samadhi others make, but the one you create of your own will.

There are three steps. The first step is to relax your body. You have to relax your body so much that you begin to feel as if your body is lying far away from you, as if you have nothing to do with it. You have to withdraw the whole energy from your body and take it inside. We have given the energy to our bodies -- whatever amount of energy we pour into the body goes into it; whatever amount we withdraw gets pulled inward.

Have you ever noticed something? When you get into a fight with somebody, where does your body get the additional energy from? In that state of anger you can lift a rock so big that you couldn't even budge it when you were calm. Although it was your body did you ever wonder where the energy came from? You put the energy in -- it was needed, you were in trouble; there was danger, the enemy was facing you. You knew your life could be in danger unless you picked up the rock, and you put all your energy into the body.

Once it happened: a man was paralyzed for two years and was bedridden. He could not get up; he could not move. The physicians gave up, declaring the paralysis would remain with him for the rest of his life. Then one night his house caught fire and everyone ran out. After coming out, they realized the head of their family was trapped inside he could not even run; what would happen to him? Some people had brought torches with them, and they found that the old man was already out. They asked him if he had walked out of the house. The man said, "How could I have walked? How did it happen?" But he certainly had walked; there was no question.

The house was on fire; everybody was leaving it and for a moment he forgot his paralysis; he put his entire energy back into the body. But when people saw him in the torchlight and asked how he had managed to come out, he exclaimed, "Oh, I am paralyzed!" and fell down. He lost the energy. Now it is beyond him to comprehend how this phenomenon occurred. Now everyone started explaining to him that he was not really paralyzed, that if he could walk that much he could walk the rest of his life. The

man kept saying, "I could not lift my hand; I could not even lift my foot -- then how did it happen?" He couldn't say; he did not even know who had brought him out.

No one had brought him out; he had come out on his own. He did not know, however, that in the face of danger his soul had poured all his energy into his body. And then, because of his feeling of being paralyzed, the soul drew its energy inside again and the man became paralyzed once more.

Such an incident has occurred not with one or two people, on this earth hundreds of instances have happened where a man stricken with paralysis has come out of his condition, where he has forgotten his condition in the event of a fire or in the face of another dangerous situation.

What I am saying is that we have put energy into our body, but we have no idea how to withdraw it. At night we feel rested because the energy is drawn inside and the body lies in a relaxed state, and in the morning we are fresh again. But some people are not even able to draw their energy inwards at night. The energy still remains locked in the body and then it becomes difficult for them to sleep. Insomnia is an indication that the energy put into the body earlier cannot find the way to return to its source. In the first stage of this meditation the entire energy has to be withdrawn from the body.

Now, the interesting thing is that just by feeling it the energy returns. If, for a while, someone can feel that his energy is withdrawing inside and his body is relaxing, he will find that his body is continuing to relax and relax. The body will reach to a point where the person will not be able to lift his hand even if he wants to -- everything will be relaxed. Thus, through feeling it, we can withdraw our energy from the body.

So the first thing is the returning of the vital energy, the prana, back to its source. That will make the body lie still -- just like a shell -- and it will be observed throughout that a distance has been created between the shell and the kernel within the coconut -- that we have become separate and the body is lying outside us, just like a shell, just like cast-off clothes.

Then the next thing is to relax your breath. Deep inside the breath contains the vital energy, the prana, and that's why a man dies when the breath discontinues. Deep down, the breath keeps us connected to the body. Breath is the bridge between the soul and the body; that's where the link is. Hence, we call breath prana. As soon as the breathing stops, the prana leaves. Several techniques are applied in this respect.

What happens when a person relaxes his breath completely, allows it to be still and quiet? Slowly, the breath comes to a point where a man doesn't know whether he is breathing inside or not. He often begins to wonder whether he is alive or dead, whether the breath is happening or not. The breathing becomes so quiet one doesn't know if it is moving at all.

You don't have to control breathing. If you try to do so, the breath will never be controlled -- it will try to force itself out, and if you control it from outside, it will try to force itself in. Hence, I say, you don't have to do anything from your side, just let it be more and more relaxed -- more and more quiet. Slowly, at

one point, the breath comes to rest. Even if it comes to rest just for a moment, then in that moment one can see an infinite distance between the soul and the body -- in that very moment the distance is seen. It's as if lightning were to strike right now and I were to see all your faces in one moment. Afterwards, the lightning might no longer be there, yet I have seen your faces.

When the breath pauses for a moment, exactly right in the middle, then in that moment a lightning strikes within one's entire being and it becomes apparent that the body is separate and that you are separate -- then death has happened. So in the second stage you have to relax your breath.

In the third stage the mind is to be relaxed. Even if the breath is relaxed but the mind is not, the lightning will of course strike, but you won't be able to know what happened because the mind will remain occupied with its thoughts. If lightning should strike right now and I were to remain lost in my thoughts, I would only come to know of it after it had happened. In the meantime, however, the lightning has occurred and I have been lost in my thoughts. The lightning will strike, of course, as soon as the breath pauses, but it will only be noticed if thoughts have ceased; otherwise it won't be noticed and the opportunity will be lost. Hence, the third thing is to relax the mind.

We shall go through these three stages and then, in the fourth stage, we shall sit silently. If you wish, you may either lie down or sit. It will be easier lying down -- this is such a beautiful beach; it can be put to good use. Everyone should make a space around himself and lie down. It is all right if someone wants to sit, but the person should not control himself if his body begins to fall -- because the body may fall once it becomes completely relaxed, and then your controlling it will not allow the body to be totally relaxed.

So we shall follow these three stages and then in the fourth stage we shall remain in silence for ten minutes. These three days, during that silence, there will be an effort on your part to see death, to let it descend. I will give suggestions for you to feel that the body is relaxing, that the breath is relaxing, that the mind is relaxing -- then I will remain quiet, the lights will be turned off, and, lying down quietly, you will remain for ten minutes. You will remain still, in silence, watching whatsoever is going on inside.

Make enough space around you so that in case the body drops, it won't fall on anyone. Those who wish to lie down should make a space around themselves. It would be better if you were to lie down on the sand quietly. Nobody should talk... no one should leave in the middle.

Yes, be seated. Be seated wherever you are or lie down. Close your eyes... close your eyes and relax your body. Let it be loose. Then as I give suggestions, begin to feel with me. As you keep feeling, your body will become more and more relaxed -- then the body will be lying down, totally relaxed, as if there is no life in it.

Begin to feel. The body is relaxing... keep relaxing it... Keep relaxing your body and feel that it is relaxing. The body is relaxing... feel it... relax every part of your body. And feel inside... the body is relaxing. Your energy is returning inside... the energy from your body is withdrawing, turning in... the energy is withdrawing. The body is relaxing... the body is relaxing... the body is relaxing... the body is relaxing. Let go completely, as if you are not alive anymore. Let the body drop as it is... let it be totally

loose. The body has become relaxed... the body has become relaxed... the body has become relaxed. Let go... let go.

The body has become relaxed. The body has become totally relaxed, as if there is no life in it. The entire energy of the body has reached inside. The body has become relaxed... the body has become relaxed. Let go, let go completely, as if the body is no longer there.

We have moved within. The body has become relaxed... the body has become relaxed... the body has become relaxed. The breath is quieting down... relax your breathing also... relax it completely. Let it come and go on its own... let it be loose. No need to stop it or slow it down; just let it be relaxed. Let the breath come in as much as it can... let it come out as much as it can. The breathing is becoming relaxed... the breathing is becoming calm....

Feel it like this: the breathing is becoming calm... the breathing is becoming calm and relaxed... the breathing is relaxing... the breath is calming down. The breath has calmed down... the breath has calmed down... the breath has calmed down. Now let the mind be relaxed and feel that thoughts are calming down... thoughts are calming down... the mind has calmed... the mind has calmed....

And Now, And Here, Vol 1

Chapter #2

Chapter title: Seeing Life as a Dream

29 October 1969 am in Meditation Camp at Dwarka, Gujarat, India

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A few questions have been asked about last night's talk.

Question 1

ONE FRIEND HAS ASKED: ONE CAN DIE FULLY CONSCIOUS, BUT HOW CAN ONE BE IN FULL CONSCIOUSNESS AT BIRTH?

Actually, death and birth are not two events, they are two ends of the same phenomenon -- just like two sides of the same coin. If a man can have one side of a coin in his hand, the other side will be in his hand automatically. It's not possible to have one side of a coin in my hand and then wonder how to get the other side -- the other side becomes available automatically.

Death and birth are two sides of the same phenomenon. If death occurs in a conscious state, then birth inevitably takes place in a conscious state. If death occurs in an unconscious state, then birth happens in a state of unconsciousness too. If a person dies fully conscious at the time of his death, he will be filled with consciousness at the moment of his next birth also.

Since we all die in a state of unconsciousness and are born in a state of unconsciousness, we remember nothing of our past lives. However, the memory of our past lives always remains present in some corner of our minds, and this memory can be revived if we so desire.

With birth we cannot do anything directly; whatsoever we can do is possible only in relation to death. Nothing can be done after death; whatsoever is to be done must be done before death. A person dying in an unconscious state cannot do anything until he is born again -- there is no way; he will continue to remain unconscious. Hence, if you died before in an unconscious state, you will have to be born again in an unconscious state. Whatsoever is to be done must be done before death, because we have lots of opportunities before death, the opportunity of a whole lifetime. With this opportunity an effort can be made towards awakening. So, it will be a great mistake if someone keeps waiting until the moment of death to awaken. You can't awaken at the time of death. The sadhana, the journey towards awakening, will have to begin long before death; a preparation will have to be made for it. Without preparation one is sure to remain unconscious in death. Although, in a way, this unconscious state is for your own good if you are not yet ready to be born in a conscious state.

Around 1915, the ruler of Kashi had an abdominal operation. This was the first such operation ever performed in the world without the use of anesthesia. There were three British physicians who refused to perform the operation without giving anesthesia, saying it was impossible to have a man's stomach open for one-and-a-half to two hours during a major operation without making the patient unconscious. It was dangerous -- the danger was that the patient might scream, move, jump or fall because of the unbearable pain; anything might happen. Hence the doctors were not ready.

But the ruler maintained there was no cause for concern as long as he remained in meditation and said he could easily remain in meditation for one-and-a-half to two hours. He was not willing to take the anesthetic; he said he wished to be operated upon in his conscious state. But the physicians were reluctant; they believed it was dangerous to have someone go through such pain in a conscious state. However, seeing no other alternative, the physicians first asked him, as an experiment, to go into meditation. Then they made a cut in his hand -- there was not even a tremor. Only two hours later did

he complain that his hand hurt; he did not feel anything for two hours. Subsequently, the operation was performed.

That was the first operation to be performed in the world where physicians worked on a patient's open stomach for an hour-and-a-half without giving anesthetic. And the ruler remained fully conscious throughout the operation. Deep meditation is required to be in such awareness. The meditation has to be so deep as to make one totally aware, without an iota of doubt, that the self and the body are separate. Even the slightest identification with the body can be dangerous.

Death is the biggest surgical operation there is. No physician has ever performed an operation as big as this -- because in death there is a mechanism to transplant the entire vital energy, the prana, from one physical body into another physical body. No one has ever performed such a phenomenal operation, nor can it ever be done. We may sever one part of the body or another, or transplant one part or another, but in the case of death, the entire vital energy has to be taken from one body and entered into another.

Nature has kindly seen to it that we become fully unconscious at the occurrence of this phenomenon. It is for our own good; we might not be able to bear that much pain. It is possible that the reason why we become unconscious is because the pain of death is so unbearable. It is in our own interest that we become unconscious; nature does not allow us to remember passing through death.

In every life we repeat almost the same mistakes we have repeated in our past lives. If we could only recall what we did in our past lives, we might not fall into the same ditches again. And if we could only remember what we did throughout our previous lives, we could no longer remain the same as we are now. It is impossible we could remain the same, because time and time again we have amassed wealth and every time death has made all that wealth meaningless. If we could recall this, we might not carry, any longer, the same craze for money within us as we did before. We have fallen in love a thousand times, and time and time again it has ultimately proven to be meaningless. If we could recall this, our craze for falling in love with others and for having others fall in love with us would disappear. Thousands upon thousands of times we have been ambitious, egoistic; we have attained success, high position, and in the end all of it has turned out to be useless, all of it has turned to dust. If we could recall this, perhaps our ambition would lose its steam, and then we would not remain the same people we are now.

Since we do not remember our past lives, we keep moving in almost the same circle. Man does not realize that he has gone through the same circle many times before, and that he is going through it once again in the same hope he carried with him so often before. Then death ruins all hopes, and once again the cycle begins. Man moves in circles like an ox on a water-wheel.

One can save oneself from this harm, but it requires great awareness and continuous experimentation. One cannot start waiting for death all at once, because one cannot become suddenly aware during such a big operation, under such a great trauma. We will have to experiment slowly. We will have to experiment slowly with small miseries to see how we can be aware while going through them.

For example, you have a headache. At one and the same time you become aware and begin to feel that you have a headache, not that the head is in pain. So one will have to experiment on the little headache and learn to feel that, "The pain is in the head and I am aware of it."

When Swami Ram was in America people had great difficulty following him in the beginning. When the president of America paid him a visit, he was puzzled too. He asked, "What language is this?" -- because Ram used to speak in the third person. He would not say, "I am hungry," he would say, "Ram is hungry." He would not say, "I have a headache," he would say, "Ram has a severe headache."

In the beginning people had great difficulty following him. For example, he once said, "Last night Ram was freezing." When asked who he was referring to, he replied that he was referring to Ram. When he was asked, "Which Ram?" he said, pointing to himself, "This Ram -- the poor guy was freezing cold last night. We kept laughing and asked, 'How's the cold Ram?'"

He would say, "Ram was walking on the street and some people began swearing at him. We had a belly laugh and said, 'How do you like the swearing, Ram? If you seek honor, you are bound to meet with insult.'" When people asked, "Who are you talking about, which Ram?" he would point to himself.

You will have to start experimenting with minor kinds of miseries. You encounter them every day in life; they are present every day -- not only miseries, you will have to include happiness in the experiment also, because it is more difficult to be aware in happiness than it is to be in misery. It is not so difficult to experience that your head and the pain in it are two separate things, but it is more difficult to experience that, "The body is separate and the joy of being healthy is separate from me too -- I am not even that." It is difficult to maintain this distance when we are happy because in happiness we like to be close to it. While in misery, we obviously want to feel separate, away from it. Should it become certain that the pain is separate from us, we want it to stay that way so we can be free of it.

You will have to experiment on how to remain aware in misery as well as in happiness. One who carries out such experiments often brings misery upon himself, of his own free will, in order to experience it. This is basically the secret of all asceticism: it is an experiment to undergo voluntary pain. For example, a man is on a fast. By remaining hungry he is trying to find out what effect hunger has on his consciousness. Ordinarily, a person who is on a fast hasn't the slightest notion of what he is doing -- he only knows that he is hungry and looks forward to having his meal the next day.

The fundamental purpose of fasting is to experience that, "Hunger is there, but it is far away from me. The body is hungry, 'I' am not." So by inducing hunger voluntarily, one is trying to know, from within, if hunger is there. Ram is hungry -- 'I' am not hungry. I know hunger is there, and this has to become a continuous knowing until I reach a point where a distance occurs between me and the hunger -- where 'I' no longer remain hungry -- even in hunger I no longer remain hungry. Only the body stays hungry and I know it. I simply remain a knower. Then the meaning of fasting becomes very profound; then it does not mean merely remaining hungry.

Normally, one who goes on a fast keeps repeating twenty-four hours a day that he is hungry, that he has not eaten any food that day. His mind continues to fantasize about the food he will eat the next day and

plans for it. This kind of fasting is meaningless. Then it is merely abstaining from food. The distinction between abstaining from food and fasting, upvasa, is this: fasting means residing closer and closer. Closer to what? It means coming closer to the self by creating a distance from the body.

The word upvasa does not imply going without food. Upvasa means residing closer and closer. Closer to what? It means closer to the self, residing closer to the self and further away from the body. Then it is also possible that a man may eat and yet remain in the state of fasting. If, while eating, he knows from within that eating is taking place elsewhere and the consciousness is totally separate from the act, then it is upvasa. And it is also possible that a man may not really be fasting even though he may have denied himself food; for he may be too conscious of being hungry, that he is dying of hunger. Upvasa is a psychological awareness of the separation of the self and the physical state of hunger.

Other pains of a similar type can also be created voluntarily, but creating such voluntary pain is a very deep experiment. A man may lie on thorns just to experience that the thorns only prick the body and not his self. Thus a misery can be invited in order to experience the disassociation of consciousness from the physical plane.

But there are already enough uninvited miseries in the world -- no need to invite any more. Already much misery is available -- one should start experimenting with it. Miseries come uninvited anyway. If, during the uninvited misery, one can maintain the awareness that "I am separate from my suffering" then the suffering becomes a sadhana, a spiritual discipline.

One will have to continue this sadhana even with happiness which has come on its own. In suffering, it is possible we may succeed in deceiving ourselves because one would like to believe that "I am not pain." But when it comes to happiness, a man wants to identify himself with it because he already believes that "I am happy." Hence the sadhana is even more difficult with happiness.

Nothing, in fact, is more painful than feeling that we are separate from our happiness. Actually, a man wants to drown himself completely in happiness and forget that he is separate from it. Happiness drowns us; misery disconnects us and sets us apart from the self. Somehow, we come to believe that our identification with suffering is only because we have no other choice, but we welcome happiness with our whole being.

Be aware in the pain which comes your way; be aware in the happiness which comes your way -- and occasionally, just as an experiment, be aware in invited pain also, because in it, things are a little different. We can never fully identify ourselves with anything we invite upon ourselves. The very knowledge that it is an invited thing creates the distance. The guest who comes to your home does not belong there -- he is a guest. Similarly, when we invite suffering as our guest, it is already something separate from us.

While walking barefoot a thorn gets into your foot. This is an accident and its pain will be overwhelming. This unfortunate accident is different from when you purposely take a thorn and press it against your foot -- knowing every moment that you are piercing the foot with the thorn and watching the pain. I am not asking you to go ahead and torture yourself; as it is, there is enough suffering already -- what I mean

is: first be alert in going through both suffering and happiness; then later, one day, invite some misery and see how far away from it you can set your consciousness.

Remember, the experiment of inviting misery is of great significance, because everyone wants to invite happiness but no one wants to invite misery. And the interesting thing is that the misery we don't want comes on its own, and the happiness we seek never comes. Even when it comes by chance, it remains outside our door. The happiness we beckon to never comes, while the happiness we never ask for walks right in. When a person gathers enough strength to invite misery, it means he is so happy that he can invite suffering now. He is so blissful that now there is no difficulty for him to invite suffering. Now misery can be asked to come and stay.

But this is a very deep experiment. Until we are prepared to undertake such an experiment, we must try to become aware of whatever suffering comes our way on its own. If we go on becoming more and more aware each time we come across misery, we will gather enough capability to remain conscious even when death arrives. Then nature will allow us to stay awake in death too. Nature, as well, will figure that if the man can stay conscious in pain, he can also remain conscious in death. No one can stay conscious in death all of a sudden, without having had a previous experience of the kind.

A man named P.D. Ouspensky died some years ago. He was a great mathematician from Russia. He is the only person in this century who has done such extensive experiments in relation to death. Three months before his death, he became very ill. The physicians advised him to stay in bed, but in spite of this, he made such an incredible effort it is beyond imagination. He would not sleep at night; he traveled, walked, ran, was always on the move. The physicians were aghast; they said he needed complete rest. Ouspensky called all his close friends near him but did not say anything to them.

The friends who stayed with him for three months, until his death, have said that for the first time they saw, before their eyes, a man accepting death in a conscious state. They asked him why did he not follow the physicians' advice. Ouspensky replied, "I want to experience all kinds of pain, lest the pain of death be so great that I might become unconscious. I want to go through every pain before death; that can create such a stamina in me that I can be totally conscious when death comes." So for three months he made an exemplary effort to go through all kinds of pain.

His friends have written that those who were fit and hearty would get tired, but not Ouspensky. The physicians insisted that he must have complete rest, otherwise it would cause him great harm -- but to no avail. The night he died, Ouspensky kept walking back and forth in his room. The physicians who examined him declared that his legs had no more strength left to walk -- and yet he kept walking the whole night.

He said, "I want to die walking, lest I might die sitting and become unconscious, or I might die sleeping and become unconscious." As he walked, he told his friends, "Just a little bit longer -- ten more steps and all will be over. I am sinking, but I shall keep walking until I have taken the last step. I want to keep on doing something until the very end, otherwise death may catch me unawares. I may relax and go to sleep -- I don't want this to happen at the moment of death."

Ouspensky died while taking his last step. Very few people on this earth have died walking like this. He fell down walking; that is, he fell only when his death occurred. Taking his last step, he said, "That's it; this is my last step. Now I am about to fall. But before departing let me tell you I dropped my body long ago. You will see my body being released now, but I have been seeing for a long time now that the body has dropped and still I exist. The links with the body have all been broken and yet, inside, I still exist. Now only the body will fall -- there is no way for me to fall down."

At the time of his death, his friends saw a kind of light in his eyes. A peace, joy and radiance were visible which shine through when one is standing on the threshold of the world beyond. But one needs to make preparations for this, a continuous preparation. If a person prepares himself fully, then death becomes a wonderful experience. There is no other phenomenon more valuable than this, because what is revealed at the time of death can never be known otherwise. Then death looks like a friend, for only at the occurrence of death can we experience that we are a living organism -- not before that.

Remember, the darker the night, the brighter the stars. The flash of lightning stands out like a silver strand, the darker the clouds are. Similarly, when, in its full form, death surrounds us from all sides, at that moment the very center of life manifests in all its glory -- never before that. Death surrounds us like darkness, and in the middle, that very center of life -- call it atman, the soul, shines in its full splendor; the surrounding darkness makes it luminous. But at that moment we become unconscious. At the very moment of death, which could otherwise become the moment to know our being, we become unconscious. Hence one will have to make preparations towards raising one's consciousness. Meditation is that preparation.

Meditation is an experiment in how one attains to a gradual, voluntary death. It is an experiment in how one moves within and then leaves the body. If one meditates throughout his life, he will attain to total meditation at the moment of death.

When death happens in full consciousness, the soul of the person takes its next birth in full consciousness. Then the very first day of his new life is not a day of ignorance but of full knowledge. Even in the mother's womb he remains fully conscious. Only one more birth is possible for one who has died in a conscious state. There is no other birth possible for him after that -- because one who has experienced what birth is, what death is and what life is, attains liberation.

One who has taken birth in awareness, we have called him avatara, tirthankara, Buddha, Jesus, Krishna. And the thing that distinguishes them from the rest of us is awareness. They are awakened and we are asleep. Having taken conscious birth, this becomes their final journey on earth. They have something we don't have, which, painstakingly, they continue to bring to us. The difference between the awakened ones and us is simply this: their previous death and the birth thereafter happened in a state of awareness -- hence they live their entire life in awareness.

People in Tibet do a little experiment called bardo. It is a very valuable experiment, carried out only at the time of death. When someone is about to die, people who know gather around him and make him do Bardo. But only he who has meditated in his life can be made to go through Bardo -- not otherwise. In the experiment of Bardo, as soon as a person dies, instructions are given from the outside that he

should remain fully awake. He is told to keep watching whatever follows next, because in that state, many times things happen which the dying person can never understand. New phenomena are not so easy to follow right away.

If a person can stay conscious after death, for a while he will not know that he is dead. When people carry his dead body and start burning it at the cremation ground only then will he come to know for certain that he is dead -- because nothing actually dies inside, just a distance is created. In life, this distance has never been experienced before. The experience is so novel it cannot be grasped through conventional definition. The person merely feels that something has separated. But something has died, and that he only understands when people all around him start weeping and crying, falling over his body in grief, getting ready to carry the body away for cremation.

There is a reason why the body is brought for cremation so soon. The reason for burning or cremating the body as soon as possible is to assure the soul that the body is dead, that it is burned to ashes. But this a man can know only if he has died in awareness; a man dying in an unconscious state cannot know this. So in order for a man to see his body burning in Bardo, he is prompted, "Take a good look at your burning body. Don't run or move away in haste. When people bring your body for cremation, make sure you accompany them and be present there. Watch your body being cremated with perfect attention, so that next time you do not get attached to the physical body."

Once you see something burning to ashes, your attachment for it disappears. Others will, of course, see your body being cremated, but if you also see it, you will lose all your attachment for it. Normally, in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand, the man is unconscious at the time of death; he has no knowledge of it. On the one occasion when he is conscious, he moves away from watching his burning body; he escapes from the cremation ground. So in Bardo he is told, "Look, don't miss this opportunity. Watch your body being cremated; just watch it once and for all. Watch that which you have been identifying your self with all along being destroyed totally. Watch it being reduced to ashes for certain, so that you may remember in your next birth who you are."

As soon as a person dies he enters into a new world, one we know nothing about. That world can be scary and frightening to us because it is neither like nor unlike any of our experiences. In fact it has no connection with life on earth whatsoever. Facing this new world is more frightening than it would be if a man were to find himself in a strange country where everyone was a stranger to him, where he was unacquainted with their language, with their ways of living. He would obviously be very perturbed and confused .

The world we live in is a world of physical bodies. As we leave this world the incorporeal world begins -- a world we have never experienced. It is even more frightening, because in our world, no matter how strange the place, how different its people and their ways of living, there is still a bond between us and them: it is a realm of human beings. Entering into the world of bodiless spirits can be an experience frightening beyond imagination.

Ordinarily, we pass through it in an unconscious state, and so we don't notice it. But one who goes through it in a conscious state gets into great difficulty. So in Bardo there is an attempt to explain to the

person what kind of a world it will be, what will happen there, what kind of beings he will come across. Only those who have been through deep meditation can be taken through this experiment -- not otherwise.

Lately, I have often felt that those friends who are practicing meditation can be taken into the Bardo experiment in some form or other. But this is possible only when they have gone through deep meditation; otherwise, they would not even be able to hear what is being said to them. They would not be able to hear what is being said at the moment of death, or follow what is being told to them. In order to follow what is being said, a very silent and empty mind is needed. As the consciousness begins to fade and disappear, and as all earthly ties start being severed, only a very silent mind can hear messages given from this world; they cannot be heard otherwise.

Remember, it can be done only in respect to death, if anything; nothing can be done with respect to birth. But whatsoever we do with death, it consequently affects our birth as well. We are born in the same state in which we die.

An awakened one exercises his choice in selecting the womb. This shows that he never chooses anything blindly, unconsciously. He chooses his parents just as a rich man chooses his house. A poor man cannot have a house of his choice. You need a certain capacity to choose. One needs a capability to buy a house. A poor man never chooses his house. One should say that actually the house chooses the poor man; a poor house chooses a poor man. A millionaire decides where he should reside, what the garden should look like, where the doors and windows should be fixed -- the sunlight should enter from the east or west; how the ventilation should be, how spacious the house should be -- he chooses everything.

An awakened one chooses a womb for himself; that is his choice. Individuals like Mahavira or Buddha are not born anywhere and everywhere. They take birth after considering all possibilities: how the body will be and from which parents it will be conceived; what the energy will be like, how powerful he will be; what kind of facilities will be available to him. They take birth after looking into all of this. They have a clear choice of what to choose, where to go; hence, from the very first day of their birth they live the life of their own choice.

The joy of living a life of one's own choice is altogether different, because freedom begins with having a life of one's own choice. There cannot be the same kind of joy in a life which is given to you because then it becomes servitude. In such cases one is merely pushed into life and then whatever happens, happens -- the person has no role to play in it.

If such an awakening becomes possible then the choice can definitely be made. If the very birth happens out of our choice, then we can live the rest of our lives in choice. Then we can live like a jeevan-mukta. One who dies in an awakened state is born in an awakened state and then he lives his life in a liberated state.

We often hear the word jeevan-mukta, although we may not know what the word means. Jeevan-mukta means: one who is born in an awakened state. Only such a person can be a jeevan-mukta; otherwise he may work his whole life for liberation, yet he can attain freedom only in his next life -- he will not be free

in this life. In order to be a jeevan-mukta in this life a man must have the freedom to choose from the very first day of his birth. And this is possible only if one has attained to full consciousness in the dying moment of one's previous life.

But at this point that is not the question. Life is here, death has not arrived yet. It is sure to come; there is nothing more certain than death. There can be doubt regarding other things, but about death nothing whatsoever is in doubt. There are people who have doubts about God, there are others who have doubts about the soul, but you may never have come across a man who has doubts about death. It is inevitable -- it is sure to come; it is already on its way. It is approaching closer and closer every moment. We can utilize the moments which are available before death for our awakening. Meditation is a technique to that effect. My effort in these three days will be to help you understand that meditation is the technique for that very awakening.

Question 2

A FRIEND HAS ASKED: WHAT IS THE RELATION BETWEEN MEDITATION AND JATI-SMARAN, PAST LIFE REMEMBERING?

Jati-smaran means: a method of recalling past lives. It is a way to remember our previous existences. It is a form of meditation. It is a specific application of meditation. For example, one might ask, "What is a river, and what is a canal? Our answer would be that the canal is a specific application of the river itself - well planned, but controlled and systematic. The river is chaotic, unrestrained; it too will reach somewhere, but its destination is not certain. The destination of the canal is assured.

Meditation is like a big river -- it will reach to the ocean; it is sure to reach. Meditation will surely bring you to God. There are, however, other intermediary applications of meditation also. Like small tributaries these can be directed into canals of meditation. Jati-smaran is one such auxiliary method of meditation. We can channelize the power of meditation towards our past lives also; meditation simply means the focusing of attention. There can be applications where one's attention is focused on a given object, and one such application is jati-smaran -- focusing on the dormant memories of past lives.

Remember, memories are never erased; a memory either remains latent or it arises. But the latent memory appears to be erased. If I ask you what you did on January 1, 1950, you will not be able to answer -- which does not mean that you might not have done anything on that day. But suddenly the day of January 1, 1950 feels like a total blank. It could not have been blank; as it passed, it was filled with activity. But today it feels like a blank. Similarly, today will become blank tomorrow as well. Ten years from now there will be no trace left of today.

So it is not that January 1, 1950 did not exist, or that you did not exist on that day -- what is implied is that since you are unable to recall that day, how can you believe it ever existed? But it did exist and

there is a way to know about it. Meditation can be focused in that direction as well. As soon as the light of meditation falls on that day, to your surprise you will see that it looks more alive than it ever was before.

For example, a person enters a dark room and moves around with a flashlight. When he turns the light to the left, the right side becomes dark -- but nothing disappears on the right side. When he moves the light to the right, the right side becomes alive again, but the left side remains hidden in the dark.

Meditation has a focus, and if one wants to channel it in a particular direction then it has to be used like a flashlight. If, however, one wants to turn it towards the divine, then meditation has to be applied like a lamp. Please understand this carefully.

The lamp has no focus of its own; it is unfocused. A lamp merely burns and its light spreads all around. A lamp has no interest in lighting up one direction or the other; whatsoever falls within the radius of light is lit up. But the form of a flashlight is like a focused lamp.

In a flashlight we keep all the light and shine it in one direction. So it is possible that under a burning lamp things may become visible, but hazy, and in order to see them clearly we concentrate the light on one place -- it becomes a flashlight; then the thing becomes clearly visible. However, the remaining objects are lost to view. In fact, if a man wants to see an object clearly he will have to focus his total meditation in one direction only and turn the rest of the area into darkness.

One who wants to know the truth of life directly will develop his meditation like a lamp -- that will be his sole purpose. And, in fact, the lamp's only objective is to see itself; if it can shine this much it is enough -- that's the end of it. But if some special application of the lamp has to be made -- such as remembering past lives -- then meditation will have to be channeled in one direction.

I will share with you two or three clues as to how meditation can be channelized in that direction. I won't give you all the clues because, most likely, hardly any of you have any intention of using them, and those who have can see me personally. So I will mention two or three clues which, of course, won't really enable you to experiment with remembering past lives, but will give you just an idea. I won't discuss the whole thing because it's not advisable for everyone to experiment with this idea. Also, this experiment can often put you in danger.

Let me tell you of an incident so that what I am saying becomes clear to you. For about two or three years, in respect to meditation, a lady professor stayed in touch with me. She was very insistent on experimenting with jati-smaran, on learning about her past life. I helped her with the experiment; however, I also advised her that it would be better if she didn't do the experiment until her meditation was fully developed, otherwise it could be dangerous.

As it is, a single life's memories are difficult to bear -- should the memories of the past three or four lives break the barrier and flood in, a person can go mad. That's why nature has planned it so we go on forgetting the past. Nature has given us a greater ability to forget more than you can remember, so that your mind does not have a greater burden than it can carry. A heavy burden can be borne only after the

capacity of your mind has increased, and trouble begins when the weight of these memories falls on you before this capacity has been raised. But she remained persistent. She paid no heed to my advice and went into the experiment.

When the flood of her past life's memory finally burst upon her, she came running to me around two o'clock in the morning. She was a real mess; she was in great distress. She said, "Somehow this has got to stop. I don't ever want to look at that side of things." But it is not so easy to stop the tide of memory once it has broken loose. It is very difficult to shut the door once it crashes down -- the door does not simply open, it breaks open. It took about fifteen days -- only then did the wave of memories stop. What was the problem?

This lady used to claim that she was very pious, a woman of impeccable character. When she encountered the memory of her past life, when she was a prostitute, and the scenes of her prostitution began to emerge, her whole being was shaken. Her whole morality of this life was disturbed.

In this sort of revelation, it is not as if the visions belong to someone else -- the same woman who claimed to be chaste now saw herself as a prostitute. It often happens that someone who was a prostitute in a past life becomes deeply virtuous in the next; it is a reaction to the suffering of the past life. It is the memory of the pain and the hurt of the previous life that turns her into a chaste woman.

It often happens that people who were sinners in past lives become saints in this life. Hence there is quite a deep relationship between sinners and saints. Such a reaction often takes place, and the reason is, what we come to know hurts us and so we swing to the opposite extreme.

The pendulum of our minds keeps moving in the opposite direction. No sooner does the pendulum reach the left than it moves back to the right. It barely touches the right when it swings back to the left. When you see the pendulum of a clock moving towards the left, be assured it is gathering energy to move back to the right -- it will go as far to the right as it has gone to the left. Hence, in life it often happens that a virtuous person becomes a sinner, and a sinner becomes virtuous.

This is very common; this sort of oscillation occurs in everyone's life. Do not think, therefore, that it is a general rule that one who has become a holy man in this life must have been a holy man in his past life also. It is not necessarily so. What is necessarily so is the exact reverse of it -- he is laden with the pain of what he went through in his past life and has turned to the opposite.

I have heard...

A holy man and a prostitute once lived opposite each other. Both died on the same day. The soul of the prostitute was to be taken to heaven, and that of the holy man, however, to hell. The envoys who had come to take them away were very puzzled. They kept asking each other, "What went wrong? Is this a mistake? Why are we to take the holy man to hell? Wasn't he a holy man?"

The wisest among them said, "He was a holy man all right, but he envied the prostitute. He always brooded over the parties at her place and the pleasures that went on there. The notes of music which came drifting to his house would jolt him to his very core. No admirer of the prostitute, sitting in front of her, was ever moved as much as he -- listening to the sounds coming from her residence, the sounds of the small dancing bells she wore on her ankles. His whole attention always remained focused on her place. Even while worshipping God, his ears were tuned to the sounds which came from her house.

"And the prostitute? While she languished in the pit of misery, she always wondered what unknown bliss the holy man was in. Whenever she saw him carrying flowers for morning worship, she wondered, 'When will I be worthy to take flowers of worship to the temple? I am so impure that I can hardly even gather enough courage to enter the temple.' The holy man was never as lost in the incense smoke, in the shining lamps, in the sounds of worship as the prostitute was. The prostitute always longed for the life of the holy man, and the holy man always craved for the pleasures of the prostitute."

Their interests and attitudes, so totally opposite each other's, so totally different from each other's, had completely changed. This often happens -- and there are laws at work behind these happenings.

So when the memory of her past life came back to this lady professor, she was very hurt. She felt hurt because her ego was shattered. What she learned about her past life shook her, and now she wanted to forget it. I had warned her in the first place not to recall her past life without sufficient preparation.

Since you have asked, I shall tell you a few basic things so that you can understand the meaning of jati-smaran. But they won't help you to experiment with it. Those who wish to experiment will have to look into it separately.

The first thing is that if the purpose of jati-smaran is simply to know one's past life, then one needs to turn one's mind away from the future. Our mind is future-oriented, not past-oriented. Ordinarily, our mind is centered in the future; it moves toward the future. The stream of our thoughts is future-oriented, and it is in life's interests that the mind be future-oriented, not past-oriented. Why be concerned with the past? It is gone, it is finished -- so we are interested in that which is about to come. That's why we keep asking astrologers what is in store for us in the future. We are interested in finding out what is going to happen in the future. One who wants to remember the past has to give up, absolutely, any interest in the future. Because once the flashlight of the mind is focused on the future; once the stream of thoughts has begun to move towards the future, then it cannot be turned back towards the past.

So the first thing one needs to do is to break oneself completely away from the future for a few months, for a certain specific period of time. One should decide that he will not think of the future for the next six months. If a thought of the future does occur, he will simply salute it and let it go; he will not become identified with and carried away by any feeling of future. So the first thing is that, for six months, he will allow that there is no future and will flow towards the past. And so, as soon as future is dropped, the current of thoughts turns towards the past.

First you will have to go back in this life; it is not possible to return to a past life all at once. And there are techniques for going back in this life. For example, as I said earlier, you don't remember now what you did on January 1, 1950.

There is a technique to find out. If you go into the meditation which I have suggested, after ten minutes -- when the meditation has gone deeper, the body is relaxed, the breathing is relaxed, the mind has become quiet -- then let only one thing remain in your mind: "What took place on January 1, 1950?" Let your entire mind focus on it. If that remains the only note echoing in your mind, in a few days you will all of a sudden find a curtain is raised: the first of January appears and you begin to relive each and every event of that day from dawn to dusk. And you will see the first of January in far more detail than you may have seen it, in actuality, on that very day -- because on that day, you may not have been this aware. So, first, you will need to experiment by regressing in this life.

It is very easy to regress to the age of five; it becomes very difficult to go beyond that age. And so, ordinarily, we cannot recall what happened before the age of five; that is the farthest back we can go. A few people might remember up to the third year, but beyond that it becomes extremely difficult -- as if a barrier comes across the entrance and everything becomes blocked. A person who becomes capable of recalling will be able to fully awaken the memory of any day up to the age of five. The memory starts to be completely revived.

Then one should test it. For example, note down the events of today on a piece of paper and lock it away. Two years later recall this day: open the note and compare your memory with it. You will be amazed to find that you have been able to recall more than what was noted on the paper. The events are certain to return to your memory.

Buddha has called this alaya-vigyan. There exists a corner in our minds which Buddha has named alaya-vigyan. Alaya-vigyan means the storehouse of consciousness. As we store all our junk in the basement of a house, similarly, there is a storehouse of consciousness that collects memories. Birth after birth, everything is stored in it. Nothing is ever removed from there, because a man never knows when he might need those things. The physical body changes, but, in our ongoing existence, that storehouse continues, remains with us. One never knows when it might be needed. And whatsoever we have done in our lives, whatsoever we have experienced, known, lived -- everything is stored there.

One who can remember to the age of five can go beyond that age -- it is not very difficult. The nature of the experiment will be the same. Beyond the age of five there is yet another door which will lead you to the point of your birth, to when you appeared on earth. Then one comes across another difficulty, because the memories of one's stay in the mother's womb never disappear either. One can penetrate these memories too, reaching to the point of conception, to the moment when the genes of the mother and father unite and the soul enters. A man can enter into his past lives only after having reached this point; he cannot move into them directly. One has to undertake this much of the return journey, only then is it possible to move into one's past life as well.

After having entered the past life, the first memory to come up will be of the last event that took place in that life. Remember, however, that this will cause some difficulty and will make little sense. It is as if

we run a film from the end or read a novel backwards -- we feel lost. And so, entering into one's past life for the first time will be quite confusing because the sequence of events will be in the reverse order.

As you go back into your past life, you will come across death first, then old age, youth, childhood, and then birth. It will be in reverse order, and in that order it will be very difficult to figure out what is what. So when the memory surfaces for the first time, you feel tremendously restless and troubled, because it is difficult to make sense; it is as if you are looking at a film or reading a novel from the end. Perhaps you will only make heads or tails of an event after rearranging the order several times. So the greatest effort involved in going back to the memories of one's past life is seeing, in reverse order, events which ordinarily take place in the right order. But, after all, what is the right or reverse order? It is just a question of how we entered the world and how we departed from it.

We sow a seed in the beginning, and the flower appears in the end. However, if one were to take a reverse look at this phenomenon, the flower would come first, followed in sequence by the bud, the plant, the leaves, the saplings and in the end the seed. Since we have no previous knowledge of this reverse order, it takes a lot of time to rearrange memories coherently and to figure out the nature of events clearly. The strangest thing is that death will come first, followed by old age, illness, and then youth; things will occur in the reverse order. Or, if you were married and then divorced, while going down memory lane the divorce will come first, followed by the love and then the marriage.

It will be extremely difficult to follow events in this regressive fashion, because normally we understand things in a one-dimensional way. Our minds are one-dimensional. To look at things in opposite order is very difficult -- we are not used to such an experience; we are accustomed to moving in a linear direction. With effort, however, one can understand the events of a past life by following, in sequence, the reverse order. Surely, it will be an incredible experience.

Going through memories in this reverse order will be a very amazing experience, because seeing the divorce first and then the love and then the marriage, will make it instantly clear that the divorce was inevitable -- the divorce was inherent in the kind of love that happened; the divorce was the only ultimate possible outcome of the kind of marriage that took place. But at the time of that past life marriage we hadn't the faintest idea it would eventually end in divorce. And indeed, the divorce was the result of that marriage. If we could see this whole thing in its entirety, then falling in love today would become a totally different thing -- because now we could see the divorce in it beforehand, now we could see the enmity around the corner even before making the friendship.

The memory of the past life will completely turn this life upside-down, because now you won't be able to live the way you lived in your past life. In your previous life you felt -- and the same feeling exists even now -- that success and great happiness were to be found by making a fortune. What you will see first in your previous life is your state of unhappiness before seeing how you made the fortune. This will clearly show that instead of being a source of happiness, making the fortune led, in fact, to unhappiness -- and friendship led to enmity, what was thought to be love turned into hatred, and what was considered a union resulted in separation. Then, for the first time, you will see things in their right perspective, with

their total import. And this implication will change your life, will change the way you are living now completely -- it will be an entirely different situation.

I have heard that a man went to a monk and said, "I would be much obliged if you would accept me as your disciple." The monk refused. The man asked why he would not make him his disciple.

The monk replied, "In my previous birth I had disciples who later turned into enemies. I have seen the whole thing and now I know that to make disciples means to make enemies, to make friends means to sow the seeds of enmity. Now I don't want to make any enemies, so I don't make any friends. I have known that to be alone is enough. Drawing someone close to you is, in a way, pushing the person away from you."

Buddha has said that the meeting with the beloved brings joy and the parting of the unbeloved also brings joy, that the parting of the beloved brings sorrow and the meeting with the unbeloved brings sorrow as well. This is how it was perceived; this is how it was understood. However, later we come to understand that the one we feel is our beloved can become the unbeloved, and the one we considered the unbeloved can become a beloved. And so, with the recollection of past memories, the existing situations will change radically; they will be seen in an entirely different perspective.

Such recollections are possible, though neither necessary nor inevitable, and sometimes, in meditation, these memories may strike unexpectedly as well. If the memories of past lives ever do come all of a sudden -- without being involved in any experiment, but simply keeping on with one's meditation -- don't take much interest in them. Just look at them; be a witness to them -- because ordinarily the mind is incapable of bearing such vast turbulence all at once. Attempting to cope with it, there is a distinct possibility of going mad.

Once a girl was brought to me. She was about eleven years old. Unexpectedly, she had remembered three of her past lives. She had not experimented with anything; but often, for some reason mistakes do happen all of a sudden. This was an error on the part of nature, not its grace upon her; in some way nature had erred in her case. It is the same as if someone had three eyes, or four arms -- this is an error. Four arms would be much weaker than two arms; four arms couldn't work as effectively as two arms could -- four arms would make the body weaker, not stronger.

So the girl, eleven years old, remembered three past lives, and many inquiries were made into this case. In her previous life she had lived about eighty miles from my present residence, and in that life she died at the age of sixty. The people she lived with then are now the residents of my hometown, and she could recognize all of them. Even in a crowd of thousands, she could recognize her past relatives -- her own brother, her daughters, and her grandchildren -- from the daughters, from the sons-in-law. She could recognize her distant relatives and tell many things about them even they had forgotten.

Her elder brother is still alive. On his head there is a scar from a small injury. I asked the girl if she knew anything about that scar. The girl laughed and said, "Even my brother doesn't know about it. Let him tell you how and when he got that injury." The brother could not recall when the injury occurred; he had no idea at all, he said.

The girl said, "On the day of his wedding, my brother fell while he was mounting the marriage horse. He was ten years old then." The elderly people in the town supported her story, admitting that the brother had, indeed, fallen from the horse. And the man himself had no recollection of this event. Then, as well, the girl displayed a treasure she had buried in the house she had lived in during her previous life.

In her last birth she died at the age of sixty, and previous to that birth she had been born in a village somewhere in Assam. Then she had died at the age of seven. She could not give the village name, nor her address, but she could speak as much of the Assamese language as a seven-year-old child could. Also, she could dance and sing like a seven-year-old girl could. Many inquiries were made, but her family from that life could not be traced.

The girl has a past-life experience of sixty-seven years plus eleven years of this life. You can see in her eyes the resemblance to a seventy-five to seventy-eight-year-old woman, although she is actually eleven years old. She cannot play with children of her own age because she feels too old. Within her she carries the memory of seventy-eight years; she sees herself as a seventy-eight-year-old woman. She cannot go to school because, although she is eleven, she can easily look upon her teacher as her son. So even though her body is eleven years old, her mind and personality are those of a seventy-eight-year-old woman. She cannot play and frolic like a child; she is only interested in the kinds of serious things old women talk about. She is in agony; she is filled with tension. Her body and mind are not in harmony. She is in a very sad and painful state.

I advised her parents to bring the girl to me, and to let me help her forget the memories of her past lives. Just as there is a method to revive memories, there is also a way to forget them. But her parents were enjoying the whole affair! Crowds of people came to see the girl; they began to worship her. The parents were not interested in having her forget the past. I warned them the girl would go mad, but they turned a deaf ear. Today she is on the verge of insanity, because she cannot bear the weight of so many memories. Another problem is, how to get her married? She finds it difficult to conceive of marriage when, in fact, she feels like an old woman of seventy-eight. There is no harmony of any kind within her; her body is young but the mind is old. It is a very difficult situation.

But this was an accident. You can also break open the passage with an experiment. But it is not necessary to go in that direction; however, those who still wish to pursue it, can experiment. But before moving into the experiment it is essential they go through deep meditation so their minds can become so silent and strong that when the flood of memories breaks upon them, they can accept it as a witnessing. When a man grows into being a witness, past lives appear to be no more than dreams to him. Then he is not tormented by the memories; now they mean nothing more than dreams.

When one succeeds in recalling past lives and they begin to appear like dreams, immediately one's present life begins to look like a dream too. Those who have called this world maya have not done so

just to propound a doctrine of philosophy. Jati-smaran -- recalling past lives -- is at the base of it. Whosoever has remembered his past lives, for him the whole affair has suddenly turned into a dream, an illusion. Where are his friends of past lives? Where are his relatives, his wife and children, the houses he lived in? Where is that world? Where is everything he took to be so real? Where are those worries that gave him sleepless nights? Where are those pains and sufferings that seemed so insurmountable, that he carried like a dead weight on his back? And what became of the happiness he longed for? What happened to everything he so toiled and suffered for? If you ever remember your past life, and if you lived for seventy years, then whatever you might have seen in those seventy years, would that look like a dream or a reality? Indeed, it would look like a dream which had come and withered away.

I have heard....

Once a king's only son lay on his deathbed. For eight days he was in a coma -- he couldn't be saved nor would death claim him. On the one hand the king prayed for his life, while on the other hand, aware of so much pain and suffering all around, he felt the futility of life at the same time. The king could not sleep for eight nights, but then, around four o'clock one morning, sleep overtook him and he began to dream.

We generally dream of those things which we have not fulfilled in life, and so the king, sitting by his only son, his dying son, dreamed that he had twelve strong and handsome sons. He saw himself as the emperor of a large kingdom, as the ruler of the whole earth, with large and beautiful palaces. And he saw himself as extremely happy. As he was dreaming all this....

Time runs faster in a dream; in a dream timing is totally different from our day-to-day time. In a moment a dream can cover a span of many years, and after waking up you will find it difficult to figure out how so many years were covered in a dream that lasted just a few moments! Time actually moves very fast in a dream; many years can be spanned in one moment.

So, just as the king was dreaming about his twelve sons and their beautiful wives, about his palaces and the great kingdom, the ill, twelve-year-old prince died. The queen screamed, and the king's sleep came to an abrupt end.

He awoke with a shock. Worriedly, the queen asked, "Why do you look so frightened? Why are there no tears in your eyes? Why don't you say something?"

The king said, "No, I am not frightened, I am confused. I am in a great quandary. I am wondering who I should cry for? Should I cry for the twelve sons I had a moment ago, or should I cry for this son I have just lost? The thing that's bothering me is, who has died? And the strange thing is that when I was with those twelve sons, I had no knowledge of this son. He was nowhere at all; there was no trace of him, or of you. Now that I am out of the dream, this palace is here, you are here, my son is here -- but those palaces and those sons have disappeared. Which is true? Is this true, or was that true? I cannot figure it out."

Once you remember your past lives, you will find it difficult to figure out whether what you are seeing in this life is true or not. You will realize you have seen the same stuff many times before and none of it has endured forever -- everything is lost. Then the question will arise: "Is what I am seeing now just as true as what I saw before? ... Because this will run its course too and fade away like all other previous dreams.

When we watch a movie it appears to be real. After the film has ended, it takes us a few moments to come back to our reality, to acknowledge that what we saw in the theater was merely an illusion. In fact, many people who ordinarily are incapable of giving vent to their feelings are moved to tears in a movie. They feel greatly relieved, because otherwise they would have had to find some other pretext for releasing their feelings. They let themselves cry or laugh in the theater. When we come out of the movie, the first thing that occurs to us is how deeply we let ourselves become identified with the happenings on the screen. If the same movie is seen every day the illusion gradually begins to clear. But then we also forget what happened to us during the last movie, and once again, when we go to a new film, we start believing in its events.

If we could regain the memories of our past lives, our present birth would also begin to look like a dream. How many times before have these winds blown! How many times before have these clouds moved in the sky! They all appeared and then they vanished, and so will the ones here now -- they are already in the process of disappearing! If we can come to realize this, we will experience what is known as maya. Along with this we will also experience that all happenings, all events are quite unreal -- they are never identical, but they are transient. One dream comes, is followed by another dream, and is followed by yet another dream. The pilgrim starts from one moment and enters into the next one. Moment after moment, the moments keep disappearing, but the pilgrim continues moving on.

So two experiences occur simultaneously: one, the objective world is an illusion, maya -- only the observer is real; second, what appears is false -- only the seer, only the witness of it is true. Appearances change every day -- they have always changed -- only the witness, the observer is the same as before, changeless. And remember, as long as appearances seem real, your attention will not focus on the onlooker, on the witness. Only when appearances turn out to be unreal does one become aware of the witness.

Hence, I say, remembering past lives is useful, but only after you have gone deeper into meditation. Go deep into meditation so you may attain the ability to see life as a dream. Becoming a mahatma, a holy man, is as much of a dream as becoming a thief -- you can have good dreams and you can have bad dreams. And the interesting thing is that the dream of being a thief is likely to dissolve soon, whereas the dream of being a mahatma takes a little longer to disappear because it seems so very enjoyable. And so the dream of being a mahatma is more dangerous than the dream of being a thief. We want to prolong our enjoyable dreams, while the painful ones dissolve by themselves. That's why it so often happens that a sinner succeeds in attaining to God while a holy man does not.

I have told you a few things about remembering your past lives, but you will have to go into meditation for this. Let us start to move within from this very day onward; only then can we be prepared for what follows next. Without this preparation, it is difficult to enter into past lives.

For example, there is a big house with underground cellars. If a man, standing outside the house, wants to enter the cellars, he will first have to step inside the house, because the way to the cellar is from inside the house. Our past lives are like cellars. Once upon a time we lived there, and then we abandoned them -- now we are living somewhere else. Nevertheless, we are standing outside the house at this point. In order to uncover the memories of past lives, we shall have to enter the house. There is nothing difficult, bothersome or dangerous about it.

Question 3

ANOTHER FRIEND HAS ASKED: MY FRIEND, WHO IS A YOGI, CLAIMS HE WAS A SPARROW IN HIS PAST LIFE. IS THIS POSSIBLE?

It is possible that in the course of his evolution a man may have once been an animal, but he cannot be born as an animal again. In the process of evolution one cannot fall back; retrogression is impossible. It is possible to move ahead from the previous form of birth, but it is not possible, from an advanced form of birth, to fall back. There is no going back in this world; there is no chance. There are only two ways -- either we move ahead or stay where we are; we cannot go back.

It is just as when a child passes first grade he moves on to the second grade -- but if he fails he remains in the first grade. There is no way, however, to pull him below first grade. Similarly, if he fails in the second grade we can leave him there, but in no way can we bring him back to the first grade. We may either remain in one species for a very long time or move forward into the next species, but we cannot go back to a species lower than where we are.

It is indeed possible for someone to have previously been an animal or a bird; he must have been. But how long he remained in those species is a different matter. If we delve into our past lives, we will be able to recall the species we have passed through so far. We may have been an animal, a bird, a little sparrow... lower and lower. Once we must have been at such a point of inertness where it is difficult to locate any sign of consciousness.

Mountains are alive as well; however, they contain almost no consciousness. They contain ninety-nine percent inertness and one percent consciousness. As life evolves, consciousness keeps on growing and inertness keeps on decreasing. God is one hundred percent consciousness. The difference between God and matter is of percentage. The difference between God and matter is of quantity, not of quality. That's why matter can ultimately become God.

It is neither strange nor difficult to accept that a man may have been an animal in his past life. What is really amazing is that in spite of being human we behave like animals! It is not at all surprising that in some past life we have all been animals, but even as humans our consciousness can be so low that we may appear like humans only on the physical level. If we look into our tendencies, it seems that although we are no longer animals we have not yet become human beings either; it seems we are stuck somewhere in between. As soon as an opportunity arises, we don't lose much time in reverting to the animal level once again.

For example, you are walking along the road like a gentleman and some fellow comes and punches you, swears at you. Instantly, the gentleman in you gives way and you find yourself expressing the same animal in you that you must have been in some past life. Scratch the surface a little and the beast emerges from within -- and it comes out so violently that one wonders if the person was ever a human being at all.

Our state of being now contains all we have ever been before. There is layer upon layer of all the states we have been through in the past. If we dig inside a little, we can reach to the inner layers of our being -- we can even reach the state when we were a rock; that too constitutes a layer inside. Deep down inside we are still rocks; that's why when someone pushes us to that layer we behave like a rock, we can act like a rock. We can also behave like animals -- in fact, we do. What lies ahead of us are merely our potentialities -- they are not layers. Hence, at times, although we take a jump and touch these potentialities, we drop back to earth again.

We can be gods some day, but at present we're not. We have the potential to become divine; however, what we are now consists of what we have been in the past.

So there are these two things: if we dig within we come across our various past states of being; and if we are thrown forward in the chain of births, we experience the states which lie ahead of us. However, just as when someone takes a jump -- for a second he goes off the ground and into the air, but the very next moment he is back on the ground -- at times we jump out of our animal state and become human beings, but then we revert to the same state again. If you observe carefully, you will find that in a twenty-four-hour period, only once in a while, at certain moments, are we truly human beings. And we all know this only too well.

You must have observed beggars. They always come to beg in the morning. They never come in the evening, because by evening the possibility of someone remaining a human being is virtually nonexistent. In the morning, when a man gets up -- refreshed by a good night's rest, fresh and cheerful - - the beggar hopes he will be a little humane. He does not expect any charity in the evening because he knows what the man has gone through the whole day -- the office, the marketplace, the riots and protests, the newspapers and the politicians -- all must have created a mess for him. Everything must have aggravated and activated the animal layers inside him. By evening the man is tired; he has turned into a beast. That's why you see beasts in nightclubs, displaying beastly tendencies. Man, tired of being a human the whole day, craves for alcohol, for noise, for gambling, for dancing, for striptease -- he wants to be among other beasts. The nightclubs cater to the animal in man. This is the reason why mornings

are the best for prayer, why the evening is ill-suited for it. In all the temples the bells toll in the morning; at night the doors open to the nightclubs, the casinos, the bars. Prostitutes are unable to invite anyone in the morning, they invite their customers only at night.

After a hard day's work, man turns into an animal; hence the world of night is different from the world of the day. The mosque gives the call to prayer in the morning, and the temple rings its bells in the morning. There is some hope that the man, up and refreshed in the morning, will turn towards God; there is less hope for this to happen from a man who is tired in the evening.

For the same reason, there is much hope that children will turn towards God, but there is less hope for old people -- they are in the twilight of their lives; life must have taken everything away from them by now. So one should start on the journey as soon as possible, as early in the morning as possible. The evening is sure to descend -- but before it descends, if we have set out on the journey in the morning it is possible that in the evening we may find ourselves in the temple of the divine as well.

So our friend is right in asking whether it is possible that a man may have been an animal or a bird in his past life. What we need to be aware of, though, is not to continue to be a bird or a beast in this life.

Before we move into the meditation, let us understand a few things. First of all, you have to let yourself go completely. If you hold yourself back even a tiny bit, it will become a hurdle in meditation. Let yourself go as if you are dead, as if you have really died. Death has to be accepted as if it has already arrived, as if all else has died and we are sinking deeper and deeper within. Now only that which always survives will survive. We will drop everything else which can die. That's why I have said that this is an experiment with death.

There are three parts to this experiment. The first is, relaxation of the body; second, relaxation of breathing; third, relaxation of thought. Body, breathing and thought -- all these have to be slowly let go of.

Please sit at a distance from each other. It is possible that somebody may fall, so keep a little distance between yourselves. Move a little back or come a little forward, but just see to it that you don't sit too close to each other; otherwise the whole time you will be busy saving yourself from falling over somebody.

When the body becomes loose, it may fall forwards or backwards; one never knows. You can be sure of it only as long as you have a hold over it. Once you give up your hold on the body, it automatically drops. Once you loosen your grip from within, who will hold the body? -- it is bound to fall. And if you remain preoccupied with preventing it from falling, you will stay where you are -- you won't be able to move into meditation. So when your body is about to fall, consider it a blessing. Let go of it at once. Don't hold it back, because if you do you will keep yourself from moving inward. And don't be upset if someone falls on you; let it be so. If someone's head lies in your lap for a while, let it be so; don't be bothered by it.

Now close your eyes. Close them gently. Relax your body. Let it be completely loose, as if there is no life in it. Draw all the energy from your body; take it inside. As the energy moves within, the body will become loose.

Now I will begin my suggestions that the body is becoming loose, that we are becoming silent.... Feel the body becoming loose. Let go. Move within just as a person moves inside his house. Move inside, enter within. The body is relaxing.... Let go completely... let it be lifeless, as if it is dead. The body is relaxing, the body has relaxed, the body has completely relaxed...

I take it that you have totally relaxed your body, that you have given up your hold over it. If the body falls, so be it; if it bends forward, let it bend. Let whatever has to happen, happen -- you relax. See that you are not holding anything back. Take a look inside to be sure that you are not holding your body back. You ought to be able to say, "I am not holding back anything. I have let myself go completely."

The body is relaxed, the body is loose. The breath is calming down, the breath is slowing down. Feel it... the breathing has slowed down... let it go completely. Let your breathing go too, just give up your hold on it completely. The breath is slowing down, the breath is calming down.... The breathing has calmed down, the breathing has slowed down....

The breathing has calmed down... thoughts are calming down too. Feel it. Thoughts are becoming silent... let go.... You have let the body go, you have let the breathing go, now let thoughts go as well. Move away... move within totally, move away from thoughts also.

Everything has become silent, as if everything outside is dead. Everything is dead... everything has become silent... only consciousness is left within... a burning lamp of consciousness -- the rest is all dead. Let go... let go completely -- as if you are no more. Let go totally... as if your body is dead, as if your body is no more. Your breathing is still, your thoughts are still -- as if death has occurred. And move within, move totally within. Let go... let everything go. Let go totally, don't keep anything. You are dead.

Feel as if everything is dead, as if all is dead -- only a burning lamp is left inside; the rest is all dead. Everything else is dead, erased. Be lost in emptiness for ten minutes. Be a witness. Keep watching this death. Everything else around you has disappeared. The body is also left, left far behind, far away -- we are just watching it. Keep watching, remain a witness. For ten minutes keep looking within.

Keep looking inside... everything else will be dead outside. Let go... be totally dead. Keep watching, remain a witness.... Let everything go as if you are dead and the body on the outside is dead. The body is still, thoughts are still, only the lamp of consciousness is left watching, only the seer is left, only the witness is left. Let go... let go... let go totally...

Whatever is happening, let it happen. Let go completely, just keep watching inside and let the rest go. Give up your hold completely....

The mind has become silent and empty, the mind has become totally empty.... The mind has become empty, the mind has become totally empty. If you are still holding back a little, let that go also. Let go

totally, disappear -- as if you are no more. The mind has become empty... the mind has become silent and empty... the mind has become totally empty...

Keep looking inside, keep looking inside with awareness -- everything has become silent. The body is left behind, left far away; the mind is left far away, only a lamp is burning, a lamp of consciousness, only the light is left burning....

Now slowly take a few breaths. Keep watching your breath.... With each breath the silence will go deeper. Take a few breaths slowly and keep looking within; remain a witness to the breathing also. The mind will become even more silent.... Take a few breaths slowly, then gently open your eyes. If anyone has fallen, take a deep breath first and then get up slowly. Don't rush if you are unable to rise, don't rush if you find it difficult to open your eyes.... First take a deep breath, then open your eyes slowly... rise very softly. Don't do anything with a sudden movement -- neither rising nor opening your eyes....

Our morning session of meditation is now over.

And Now, And Here, Vol 1

Chapter #3

Chapter title: The Whole Universe is a Temple

29 October 1969 pm in Meditation Camp at Dwarka, Gujarat, India

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Question 1

A FRIEND HAS ASKED: YOU HAVE SHOWN US THE METHOD OF NEGATION FOR REALIZING THE TRUTH OR THE DIVINE BEING -- THE METHOD OF EXCLUDING EVERYTHING ELSE IN ORDER TO KNOW THE SELF. IS IT POSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE THE SAME RESULT BY DOING THE OPPOSITE? CAN WE NOT TRY TO SEE GOD IN EVERYTHING? CAN WE NOT FEEL HIM IN ALL?

It will be helpful to understand this.

One who cannot realize God within himself can never realize him in all. One who has not yet recognized God within himself can never recognize him in others. The self means that which is nearest to you; then anyone who is at a little distance from you will have to be considered as being farther away. And if you cannot see God in yourself, which is nearest you, you cannot possibly see him in those far from you. First you will have to know God in yourself; first the knower will have to know the divine -- that is the nearest door.

But remember, it is very interesting that the individual who enters his self suddenly finds the entrance to all. The door to one's self is the door to all. No sooner does a man enter his self than he finds he has entered all, because although we are outwardly different, inwardly we are not.

Outwardly, all leaves are different from each other. But if a person could penetrate just one leaf, he would reach to the source of the tree where all the leaves are in unison. Seen individually, each leaf is different -- but once you have known a leaf in its interiority, you will have reached to the source from which all leaves emanate and into which all leaves dissolve. One who enters himself simultaneously enters all.

The distinction between 'I' and 'you' remains only so long as we have not entered within ourselves. The day we enter our I, the I disappears and so does the you -- what remains then is all.

Actually, 'all' does not mean the sum of I and you. All means where I and you have both disappeared, and what subsequently remains is all. If 'I' has not yet dissolved, then one can certainly add I's and you's, but the sum will not equal truth. Even if one adds all the leaves, a tree does not come into being -- even though it has had all the leaves added to it. A tree is more than the sum of all the leaves. In fact, it has nothing to do with addition; it is erroneous to add. Adding one leaf to another, we assume each one is separate. A tree is not made of separate leaves at all.

So, as soon as we enter the I, it ceases to exist. The first thing that disappears when we enter within is the sense of being a separate entity. And when that I-ness disappears, you-ness and the other-ness both disappear. Then what remains is all.

It's not even right to call it all, because 'all' also has the connotation of the same old I. Hence those who know would not even call it all; they would ask, "The sum of what? What are we adding?" Furthermore, they would declare that only one remains. Although they would perhaps even hesitate to say that, because the assertion of one gives the impression that there are two -- it gives the idea that alone one has no meaning without the corresponding notion of two. One exists only in the context of two. Therefore, those who have a deeper understanding do not even say that one remains, they say advaita, nonduality, remains.

Now this is very interesting. These people say that "Two are not left." They are not saying "One remains," they are saying "Two are not left." Advaita means there are not two.

One might ask, "Why do you talk in such roundabout ways? Simply say there is only one!" The danger in saying 'one' is that it gives rise to the idea of two. And when we say there are not two, it follows that there are not three either; it implies that there is neither one, nor many, nor all. Actually, this division resulted from the perception based on the existence of 'I'. So with the cessation of I, that which is whole, the indivisible, remains.

But to realize this, can we do what our friend is suggesting -- can we not visualize God in everyone? To do so would be nothing more than fantasizing and fantasizing is not the same as perceiving the truth.

Long ago some people brought a holy man to me. They told me this man saw God everywhere, that for the last thirty years he had been seeing God in everything -- in flowers, plants, rocks, in everything. I asked the man if he had been seeing God in everything through practice because if that were so then his visions were false. He couldn't follow me. I asked him again, "Did you ever fantasize about or desire to see God in everything?" He replied, "Yes indeed. Thirty years ago I started this sadhana in which I would attempt to see God in rocks, plants, mountains, in everything. And I began to see God everywhere." I asked him to stay with me for three days and, during that period, to stop seeing God everywhere.

He agreed. But the very next day he told me, "You have done me great harm. Only twelve hours have passed since I gave up my usual practice and I have already begun to see a rock as a rock and a mountain as a mountain. You have snatched my God away from me! What sort of a person are you?"

I said, "If God can be lost by not practicing for just twelve hours, then what you saw was not God -- it was merely a consequence of your regular exercise." It is similar to when a person repeats something incessantly and creates an illusion. No, God has not to be seen in a rock; rather, one needs to reach a state in which there is nothing left to be seen in a rock except God. These are two different things.

Through your efforts to see him there, you will begin to see God in a rock, but that God will be no more than a mental projection. That will be a God superimposed by you on the rock; it will be the work of your imagination. That God will be purely your creation; he will be a complete figment of your imagination. Such a God is nothing more than your dream -- a dream which you have consolidated by reinforcing it again and again. There is no problem seeing God like this, but it is living in an illusion, it is not entering truth.

One day, of course, it happens that the individual himself disappears and, consequently, he sees nothing but God. Then one doesn't feel that God is in the rock, then the feeling is "Where is the rock? Only God is!" Do you follow the distinction I am making? Then one doesn't feel that God exists in the plant or that he exists in the rock; that the plant exists and, in the plant, so does God -- no, nothing of the kind. What one comes to feel is "Where is the plant? Where is the rock? Where is the mountain?"... because all around, whatever is seen, whatever exists is only God. Then seeing God does not depend upon your exercise, it depends upon your experience.

The greatest danger in the realm of sadhana, of spiritual practice, is the danger of imagination. We can fantasize truths which must otherwise become our own experience. There is a difference between experiencing and fantasizing. A person who has been hungry the whole day eats at night in his dream

and feels greatly satisfied. Perhaps he does not find as much joy in eating when he is awake as he does when he is dreaming -- in the dream he can eat any dish he wants. Nevertheless, his stomach still remains empty in the morning, and the food he has consumed in his dream gives him no nourishment. If a man decides to stay alive on the food he eats in dreams, then he is sure to die sooner or later. No matter how satisfying the food eaten in the dream may be, in reality it is not food. It can neither become part of your blood, nor your flesh, nor your bones or marrow. A dream can only cause deception.

Not only are meals made of dreams, God is also made of dreams. And so is moksha, liberation, made of dreams. There is a silence made of dreams, and there are truths made of dreams. The greatest capacity of the human mind is the capacity to deceive itself. However, by falling into this kind of deception, no one can attain joy and liberation.

So I am not asking you to start seeing God in everything. I am only asking you to start looking within and seeing what is there. When, to see what is there, you begin to look inside, the first person to disappear will be you -- you will cease to exist inside. You will find for the first time that your I was an illusion, and that it has disappeared, vanished. As soon as you take a look inside, first the I, the ego, goes. In fact, the sense that "I am" only persists until we have looked inside ourselves. And the reason we don't look inside is perhaps because of the fear that, if we did, we might be lost.

You may have seen a man holding a burning torch and swinging it round and round until it forms a circle of fire. In reality there is no such circle, it is just that when the torch is swinging round with great speed, it gives the appearance of a circle from a distance. If you see it close up, you will find that it is just a fast-moving torch, that the circle of fire is false. Similarly, if we go within and look carefully, we will find that the I is absolutely false. Just as the fast-moving torch gives the illusion of a circle of fire, the fast-moving consciousness gives the illusion of I. This is a scientific truth and it needs to be understood.

You may not have noticed, but all life's illusions are caused by things revolving at great speed. The wall looks very solid; the rock under your feet feels clearly solid, but according to scientists there is nothing like a solid rock. It is now a well-known fact that the closer scientists observed matter, the more it disappeared. As long as the scientist was distant from matter, he believed in it. Mostly it was the scientist who used to declare that matter alone is truth, but now that very scientist is saying there is nothing like matter. Scientists say that the fast movement of particles of electricity creates the illusion of density. Density, as such, exists nowhere.

For example, when an electric fan moves with speed, we cannot see the three moving blades; one cannot actually count how many there are. If it moves even faster, it will appear as if a piece of circular metal is moving. It can be moved so fast that even if you sat on top of it, you wouldn't feel the gap between the blades; you would feel as if you were sitting on top of solid metal.

The particles in matter are moving with similar speed -- and the particles are not matter, they are fast-moving electric energy. Matter appears dense because of fast-moving particles of electricity. The whole of matter is a product of fast-moving energy -- even though it appears to exist, it is actually nonexistent. Similarly, the energy of consciousness is moving so fast that, because of it, the illusion of I is created.

There are two kinds of illusions in this world: one, the illusion of matter; second, the illusion of I, the ego. Both are basically false, but only by coming closer to them does one become aware they don't exist. As science draws closer to matter, matter disappears; as religion draws nearer I the I disappears. Religion has discovered that the I is nonexistent, and science has discovered that matter is nonexistent. The closer we come, the more we become disillusioned.

That's why I say: go within; look closely -- is there any I inside? I am not asking you to believe that you are not the I. If you do, it will turn into a false belief. If you take my word for it and think, "I am not; the ego is false. I am atman, I am brahman; the ego is false," you will throw yourself into confusion. If this merely becomes a repetitive thing, then you will only be repeating the false. I am not asking you for this sort of repetition. I am saying: go within, look, recognize who you are. One who looks within and recognizes himself discovers that "I am not." Then who is within? If I am not, then someone else must be there. Just because "I am not," doesn't mean no one is there, because even to recognize the illusion, someone has to be there.

If I am not, then who is there? The experience of what remains after the disappearance of I is the experience of God. The experience becomes at once expansive -- dropping I, you also drops, 'he' also drops, and only an ocean of consciousness remains. In that state you will see that only God is. Then it may seem erroneous to say that God is, because it sounds redundant.

It is redundant to say "God is," because God is the other name of "that which is." Is-ness is God -- hence to say "God is" is a tautology; it isn't correct. What does it mean to say "God is"? We identify something as "is" which can also become "is not". We say "the table is," because it is quite possible the table may not exist tomorrow, or that the table did not exist yesterday. Something which did not exist before may become nonexistent again; then what is the sense in saying "it is"? God is not something which did not exist before, nor is it possible that he will never be again; therefore, to say "God is" is meaningless. He is. In fact, another name for God is "that which is." God means existence.

In my view, if we impose our God on "that which is," we are pushing ourselves into falsehood and deception. And remember, the Gods we have created are made differently; each has his respective trademark. A Hindu has made his own God, a Mohammedan has his own. The Christian, the Jaina, the Buddhist -- each has his own God. All have coined their own respective words; all have created their own respective Gods. A whole great God-manufacturing industry abounds! In their respective homes people manufacture their God; they produce their own God. And then these God-manufacturers fight among themselves in the marketplace the same way the people who manufacture goods at home do. Everyone's God is different from the other's.

Actually, as long as "I am," whatsoever I create will be different from yours. As long as "I am," my religion, my God will be different from other people's because they will be the creation of I, of the ego. Since we consider ourselves separate entities, whatever we create will have a separate character. If, to create religion, the appropriate freedom could be granted, there would be as many religions in the world as there are people -- not less than that. It is because of the lack of the right kind of freedom that there are so few religions in the world.

A Hindu father takes certain care to make his son a Hindu before he becomes independent. A Mohammedan father makes his son a Mohammedan before he becomes intelligent, because once intelligence is attained, a person won't want to become either a Hindu or a Mohammedan. And so there is the need to fill a child with all these stupidities before he achieves intelligence.

All parents are anxious to teach their children religion right from childhood, because once a child grows up he will start to think and to cause trouble. He will raise all sorts of questions -- and not finding any satisfactory answers, will do things difficult for the parents to face. This is why parents are keen to teach their children religion right from infancy -- when the child is unaware of many things, when he is vulnerable to learning any kind of stupidity. This is how people become Mohammedans, Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, Christians -- whatsoever you teach them to become.

And so, those we call religious people are often found to be unintelligent. They lack intelligence, because what we call religion is something which has poisoned us before intelligence has arisen -- and even afterwards it continues its inner hold. No wonder Hindus and Mohammedans fight with each other in the name of God, in the name of their temples and their mosques.

Does God come in many varieties? Is the God Hindus worship of one kind, and the God the Mohammedans worship of another? Is that why Hindus feel their God is desecrated if an idol is destroyed. Or Mohammedans feel their God is dishonored if a mosque is destroyed or burned?

Actually, God is "that which is." He exists as much in a mosque as he does in a temple. He exists as much in a slaughterhouse as he does in a place of worship. He exists as much in a tavern as he does in a mosque. He is as present in a thief as he is in a holy man -- not one iota less; that can never be. Who else is dwelling in a thief if not the divine? He is as present in Rama as he is in Ravana -- he is not one iota less in Ravana. He exists as much within a Hindu as he does within a Mohammedan.

But the problem is: if we come to believe that the same divinity exists in everyone, our God-manufacturing industry will suffer heavily. So in order to prevent this from happening, we keep on imposing our respective Gods. If a Hindu looks at a flower he will project his own God on it, see his God in it, whereas a Mohammedan will project, visualize his God. They can even pick a fight over this, although perhaps such a Hindu-Mohammedan conflict is a little far-fetched.

Their establishments are at a little distance from each other -- but there are even quarrels between the closely related "divinity shops." For example, there is quite a distance between Benares and Mecca, but there is not much distance in Benares between the temples of Rama and Krishna. And yet the same degree of trouble exists there.

I have heard about a great saint... I am calling him great because people used to call him great, and I am calling him a saint only because people used to call him a saint.

He was a devotee of Rama. Once he was taken to the temple of Krishna. When he saw the idol of Krishna holding a flute in his hands, he refused to bow down to the image. Standing before the image, he said, "If you would take up the bow and arrow, only then could I bow down to you, for then you

would be my Lord." How strange! We place conditions on God also -- how and in which manner or position he should present himself. We prescribe the setting; we make our requirements -- only then are we prepared to worship.

It is so strange we determine what our God should be like. But that's how it has been all along. What, up to now, we have been identifying as 'God', is a product based on our own specifications. As long as this man-made God is standing in the way, we will not be able to know that God who is not determined by us. We will never be able to know the one who determines us. And so we need to get rid of the man-made God if we wish to know the God which is. But that's tough; it's difficult even for the most kind-hearted person. Even for someone we otherwise consider a man of understanding, it's hard to get rid of this man-made God. He too clings firmly to the basic foolishness as much as a stupid man does. A stupid man can be forgiven, but it is difficult to forgive a man of understanding.

Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan arrived in India recently. He is preaching Hindu-Mohammedan unity all over the country, but he himself is a staunch Mohammedan; about this, there is not the slightest doubt. It doesn't bother him that he prays in the mosque like a loyal Mohammedan, yet he is going about preaching Hindu-Mohammedan unity. Gandhi was a staunch Hindu, and he also used to preach Hindu-Mohammedan unity. As the guru, so is the disciple: the guru was a confirmed Hindu; the disciple is a confirmed Mohammedan. And so long as there are confirmed Hindus and confirmed Mohammedans in the world, how can such unity come about? They need to relax a little, only then unity is possible. These zealous Hindus and Mohammedans are at the root of all the trouble between the two religions, although the roots of these troubles are not really visible. Those who preach Hindu-Mohammedan unity do not have the vaguest idea how to bring it about.

As long as God is different things to different people, as long as there are different places of worship for different people, as long as prayers are different and scriptures are different -- Koran being father for some and Gita being mother for others -- the vexing troubles between religions will never come to an end. We cling to the Koran and the Gita. We say, "Read the Koran and teach people to drop enmity and to become one. Read the Gita and teach people to drop enmity and to become one." We don't realize, however, that the very words of Koran and Gita are the root cause of all the trouble.

If a cow's tail gets cut off, a Hindu-Mohammedan riot will break out, and we will blame ruffians for causing the fight. And the funny thing is that no hoodlum has ever preached that the cow is our sacred mother. This is actually taught by our mahatmas, our holy men, who put the blame for creating riots on 'hoodlums'. ... Because when the tail does get cut off, then for the mahatmas' purpose, it is not the tail of the cow, it is the tail of the holy mother! When they bring this to people's attention, the riots begin, in which the hoodlums get involved and are later blamed for starting them.

So the people we call mahatmas are in fact at the root of all such troubles. Were they to step aside, the hoodlums would be harmless, they would have no power to fight. They get strength from the mahatmas. But the mahatmas remain so well hidden underground that we never ever realize they could be at the root of the problem.

What is the root of the problem, really? The root cause of all the trouble is your God -- the God manufactured in your homes. Try to save yourselves from the gods you create in your respective homes. You cannot manufacture God in your homes; the existence of such a God will be pure deception.

I am not asking you to project God. After all, in the name of God, what will you project? A devotee of Krishna will say he sees God hiding behind a bush holding a flute in his hand, while a devotee of Rama will see God holding a bow and arrow. Everyone will see God differently. This kind of seeing is nothing but projecting our desires and concepts. God is not like this. We cannot find him by projecting our desires and our concepts -- to find him we will have to disappear altogether. We will have to disappear -- along with all our concepts and all our projections. Both things cannot go hand in hand. As long as you exist as an ego, the experience of God is absolutely impossible. You as an ego will have to go; only then is it possible to experience him. I cannot enter the door of the divine as long as my I, my ego, exists.

I have heard a story that a man renounced everything and reached the door of the divine. He had renounced wealth, wife, house, children, society, everything, and having renounced all, he approached the door of the divine. But the guard stopped him and said, "You cannot enter yet. First go and leave everything behind."

"But I have left everything," pleaded the man. "You have obviously brought your 'I' along with you. We are not interested in the rest; we are only concerned with your 'I'. We don't care about whatever you say you have left behind, we are concerned with your 'I'," The guard explained. "Go, drop it, and then come back."

The man said, "I have nothing. My bag is empty -- it contains no money, no wife, no children. I possess nothing."

"Your 'I' is still in the bag -- go and drop it. These doors are closed to those who bring their 'I' along; for them the doors have always been closed," said the guard.

But how do we drop the I? The I will never drop by our attempts to do so. How can 'I' drop the very 'I' itself? This is impossible. It will be like someone trying to lift himself up by his shoelaces. How do I drop the I? Even after dropping everything, I will still remain. At the most one might say, "I have dropped the ego," and yet this shows he is still carrying his 'I'. One becomes egoistic even about dropping the ego. Then what should a man do? It's quite a difficult situation.

I say to you: there is nothing difficult about it -- because I don't ask you to drop anything. In fact, I don't ask you to do anything. The I, the ego, becomes stronger because of all the doing. I am merely asking you to go within and look for the I. If you find it, then there is no way to drop it. If it always exists there, what is there left to be dropped? And if you don't find it, then too, there is no way to drop it. How can you drop something which doesn't exist?

So go within and see if the I is there or not. I am simply saying that one who looks inside himself begins to laugh uproariously, because he cannot find his I anywhere within himself. Then what does remain? What remains then is God. That which remains with the disappearance of the I -- could that ever be separate from you? When the I itself ceases to exist, who is going to create the separation? It is the I alone which separates me from you and you from me.

Here is the wall of this house. Under the illusion that they divide space into two, walls stand -- although space never becomes divided in half; space is indivisible. No matter how thick a wall you erect, the space inside the house and the space outside are not two different things; they are one. No matter how tall you raise the wall, the space inside and outside the house is never divided. The man living inside the house, however, feels that he has divided the space into two -- one space inside his house and another outside it. But if the wall were to fall, how would the man differentiate the space within the house from the space without? How would he figure it out? Then, only space would remain.

In the same way, we have divided consciousness into fragments by raising the walls of I. When this wall of I falls, then it is not that I will begin to see God in you. No, then I won't be seeing you, I'll only be seeing God. Please understand this subtle distinction carefully.

It will be wrong to say I would begin to see God in you -- I won't be seeing you any more, I will only be seeing the divine. It's not that I would see God in a tree -- I would no longer see a tree, only the divine. When somebody says God exists in each and every atom he is absolutely wrong, because he is seeing both the atom and God. Both cannot be seen simultaneously. The truth of the matter is that each and every atom is God, not that God exists in each and every atom. It is not that some God is sitting enclosed inside an atom -- whatever is, is God.

God is the name given out of love to "that which is." "That which is," is truth -- in love we call it God. But it makes no difference by which name we call it. I do not ask, therefore, that you begin to see God in everyone, I am saying: start looking inside. As soon as you look within, you will disappear. And with your disappearance what you'll see is God.

Question 2

ANOTHER FRIEND HAS ASKED: IF MEDITATION LEADS TO SAMADHI AND SAMADHI LEADS TO GOD, THEN WHAT NEED IS THERE TO GO TO THE TEMPLES? SHOULDN'T WE DO AWAY WITH THEM?

It is useless to go to temples, but it is equally useless to do away with them. Why should one bother to do away with something in which God doesn't exist anyway? Let temples be where they are. What question is there of getting rid of them? But every so often this trouble comes up.

For example, Mohammed said that God is not to be found in idols, so the Mohammedans thought it meant idols should be destroyed. And then a very funny thing started happening in the world: there

were already people crazy about making idols; now another bunch of crazy people cropped up to destroy the idols. Now the idol-makers are zealously busy making idols, while the idol-destroyers are occupied day and night figuring out ways to destroy the idols. Someone should ask when Mohammed said that God is to be found in destroying idols? God may not be present in an idol, but who said God is present in destroying idols? And if God is present in destroying idols, then what's the problem with God being present in the idol? God can be present in the idol too. And if he is not present in the idol, how can he be present in its destruction?

I am not saying we should do away with temples. What I am saying is that we must realize the truth that God is everywhere. Once we have realized this truth, everything becomes his temple -- then it's difficult to distinguish between a temple and a non-temple. Then wherever we stand, that will be his temple; whatever we look at, that will be his temple; wherever we sit, that will be his temple. Then there will no longer be any sacred places of pilgrimage -- the entire world will be a holy place. Then it will be meaningless to create separate idols, because then whatever is will be his image.

I am not advocating that you should get involved in doing away with temples, or that you should dissuade people from going to temples. I have never said that God is not present in the temple. What I am simply saying is that one who sees God only in a temple and nowhere else, has no knowledge whatsoever of God.

One who has realized God will feel God's presence everywhere -- in a temple as well as in a place which is not a temple. Then how will he distinguish what is a temple and what is not a temple? We identify a temple as a place which has God's presence in it, but if one feels his presence everywhere then every place is his temple. Then there will no longer be any need to build separate temples, or, by the same token, to do away with temples either.

I have observed that instead of making sense out of what I am saying, people very often make the mistake of understanding something totally opposite to what I may have said. People become interested more in what is to be done away with, what is to be destroyed, what is to be eliminated -- they don't try to understand what is. Such mistakes happen continuously.

One of the fundamental errors committed by man is that he hears something totally different from what is communicated to him. Now, some of you may take me as an enemy of temples, but you will rarely find a person more in love with temples than me. Why do I mention this? For the simple reason that I would like the whole earth to be seen as a temple; my concern is that everything be turned into a temple. But after listening to me, someone may come to understand that things would be better if we did away with temples. No purpose will be served by getting rid of these temples. Things will only work out well when the whole of life is made into a temple.

Those who see God in temples and those who destroy temples -- both are wrong. One who only sees God in the temple is mistaken. His mistake is: who else does he see outside the temple? Obviously, his mistake is that he does not see God except in the temple. Your temple is very puny; God is very vast -- you cannot confine God to your puny little temples. The other person's error is: he wants to get into doing away with temples, into destroying them -- only then, he thinks, can he see God. Your temples are

too small to serve as dwelling places of God or to prevent anyone from seeing God. Remember, your temples are so ridiculously small they cannot become God's residence, nor can they become his prison, which, when destroyed, would supposedly make him free. You need to understand exactly what I am saying.

What I am saying is: only when we have entered meditation do we ever enter a temple. Meditation is the only temple with no walls; meditation is the only temple where, as soon as you enter, you really enter a temple. And one who begins to live in meditation begins living in the temple twenty-four hours a day.

What's the point in a man visiting the temple if he does not live in meditation? What's the sense in his going to someplace we generally identify as a 'temple'? It's not so easy that, while sitting in your shop, you may suddenly find your way to the temple. Of course, it's easy to carry your body to the temple; the body is such a poor thing you can bring it along with you anywhere you like. The mind is not that simple. A shopkeeper counting money in his shop can in fact get up suddenly, if he wants to, and bring his body to the temple. Just because his body is in the temple, the man may foolishly think that he is in the temple. However, if he ever looked into his mind a little, he would find, to his astonishment, that he was still sitting in his shop counting money.

I have heard....

A man was terribly harassed by his wife. All men are, but he was harassed a little too much. He was a religious man, but the wife was not at all religious. Ordinarily the opposite is the case -- the wife is religious, the husband is not -- but then, everything is possible! My understanding is that only one of the two can become religious. Both husband and wife can never become religious together; one will always be opposite the other. In this case the husband had become religious first, while the wife did not care to; however, every day the husband tried to make her religious.

A religious person carries a fundamental weakness: he wants to make others like himself. This is very dangerous; this is being violent. It is ugly to try to make others like oneself. It is enough to state our point of view to others, but to get on their case and force them to believe what we believe amounts to what we might call a kind of spiritual violence.

All gurus indulge in this kind of activity. You can rarely find a person more violent than a guru. With his hands around the disciple's neck, a guru attempts to dictate what clothes to wear, how to keep his hair, what to eat, what to drink, when to sleep, when to get up -- this, that, and all kinds of things are thrust upon him. With impositions like these, the gurus just about kill people.

So the husband was very keen to make his wife religious. Actually, people find great pleasure in making other people religious. To become religious, as such, is a matter of great revolution, but people find tremendous satisfaction in pestering others to become religious, because in doing so they have already

assumed they are religious people. But the wife would not listen to her husband. In despair, the husband approached his guru and begged him to come to his house and persuade his wife.

Early one morning, at about five o'clock, the guru arrived. The husband was already in the room of worship. The wife was sweeping the courtyard. The guru stopped her right then and there and said, "I have heard from your husband that you are not a religious person. You never worship God, you never pray, you never enter the temple your husband has made in your house. Look at your husband -- it is five o'clock and already he is in the temple."

The wife replied, "I don't recall my husband ever going to the temple."

The husband, sitting in his temple, overheard what his wife said and grew red with rage. A religious person gets angry very easily, and this is true beyond one's imaginings about one who is sitting in a temple. Heaven knows whether people sit in the temple to hide the flames of their anger or for something else. If one person becomes religious, he creates hell for the rest of the household.

The husband was totally outraged. He was halfway through his prayers when he overheard his wife. He couldn't believe his ears; what she said was total rubbish. Here he is, sitting in the temple, and she is telling his guru she doesn't know if he ever goes in there! He hurried to finish his prayer so he could come out and repair such a lie.

The guru began scolding the wife, "What are you talking about? Your husband goes to the temple regularly." Hearing this, the husband began reciting his prayer even more loudly. The guru said, "See how vigorously he is praying!"

Laughing, the wife said, "I can hardly believe you are taken in by this loud recitation too! Of course he is chanting God's name loudly, but as far as I can see he is not in the temple, he is at the shoemaker's, haggling over the price."

Now this was too much! The husband could hold himself back no longer. He dropped his worship and came running out of the temple. "What are all these lies? Didn't you see I was praying in the temple?" he shouted.

The wife said, "Look within yourself a little more closely. Were you really praying? Were you not bargaining with the shoemaker? And didn't you get into a fight with him?" The husband was taken aback, because what she was saying was true.

"But how did you know this?" he asked.

"Last night, before going to bed, you told me the first thing you would do this morning was go and buy a pair of shoes you badly needed. You also said you felt the shoemaker was asking too much for the shoes. It's my experience that the last thought before going to bed at night becomes the first thought the next morning. So I merely guessed you must be at the shoestore," the wife answered.

The husband said, "There is nothing left for me to say, because you are right. I was indeed at the shoemaker's and we fought over the price of the shoes. And the more heated the argument became, the louder I repeated the name of God. I may have been chanting God's name outwardly, but inside I was involved in a fight with the shoemaker. You are right; perhaps I have never really been in the temple."

Entering a temple is not so easy -- it is not that you can enter any place and say that you are in a temple. Your body may have entered the temple, but what about your mind? How can you trust where your mind will be the next moment? And once your mind has entered the temple, why bother if the body is in the temple or not? The mind which has found the entrance into the temple suddenly discovers that it is surrounded on all sides by the vast temple, that now it is impossible to step out of the temple. Wherever you go, you will still be within his temple. You may go to the moon.... Recently Armstrong landed on it. Does that mean he left God's temple? There is no way you can step out of God's temple. Do you imagine there is any place left where one can be outside his temple?

So those who think the temple they have made is the only temple of God, and that no temple of God exists outside of it, they are wrong. And those who think that this temple should be destroyed because God is not present here -- they are equally wrong as well.

Why blame the poor temples? If we could step out of our illusion that God exists only in temples, our temples could become very beautiful, very loving, very blissful. A village, in fact, looks incomplete without a temple. It can be a very joyful thing to have a temple. But a Hindu temple can never be a source of joy, nor, for that matter, can a Mohammedan or a Christian temple be a source of joy. Only God's temple can be a source of joy.

But Hindu, Mohammedan and Christian politics are so deep that they never allow a temple to represent the divine being. That's the reason Hindu shrines and Mohammedan mosques look so ugly. An honest man hesitates to even look on them. They have turned into hotbeds of scoundrels; all kinds of mischief is planned there. And those who plan this mischief do not necessarily know what they are doing. It is my understanding that no one plans mischief with much understanding; mischief is always planned in unawareness. And the whole earth is caught up in this mess.

If temples ever do disappear from the face of the earth, it will not be because of the atheists, but because of the so-called theists. Temples are already disappearing; they have almost disappeared. If we want to save temples on this earth, first we will have to see the vast temple around us -- existence itself. Then the smaller temples will automatically be saved; then they will survive as symbols of the divine presence. It's as if I gave you a handkerchief as a gift... the gift may be worth a few paisa, but you preserve it safely in a treasure chest.

Once I visited a village. People came to see me off at the railway station and someone put a garland around my neck. I took it off and handed it to a girl standing nearby. I visited the same village after six years, and the same girl came up to me and said, "I have saved the garland you gave me last time."

Although the flowers have faded and people say there is no fragrance left in them, yet they are as fresh and fragrant as they were the first day. After all, you gave them to me."

I visited her house and she brought out a lovely wooden box in which the garland was carefully placed. The flowers had withered and were all dry; they had lost their fragrance. Anyone seeing it might have asked, "Why have you left this rubbish in such a beautiful box? What's the need? The box is valuable and the rubbish is worthless." The girl could throw the box away but not the rubbish. She could see something else in the rubbish -- for her it was a symbol; it contained someone's loving memory. It might be rubbish to the rest of the world, but not to her.

If the temples, the mosques, the churches could just remain the reminders of man's longing to ascend toward God.... And this is the truth. Take a look at the rising steeple of a church, the rising minaret of a mosque, the sky-high dome of a temple. They are nothing but symbols of man's desire to rise, symbols of his journey in search of God. They are symbols of the fact that man is not happy with only a house, he wants to build a temple as well. Man is not happy only being on the earth, he wants to ascend towards the sky as well.

Have you ever noticed the earthen lamps burning in the temples? Have you ever wondered why these lamps, containing ghee, containing purified butter, are kept burning in the temple? Have you ever realized that these lamps are the only things on earth whose flame never goes downwards? -- it always moves upwards. Even if you turn the lamp upside down, the flame still moves upwards. The flame, which always moves upwards, is a symbol of human aspirations. We may be living on the earth, but we would also like to make our abode in the sky. We may remain tied to the earth below, but we also long to move freely in the open skies.

And have you ever noticed how fast a flame rises and disappears? Also, have you ever observed that once the flame has risen and disappeared, you can never find a trace of it? This is symbolic too -- of the fact that the one who ascends, disappears. The earthen lamp is solid matter, while the flame is very fluid -- no sooner does it rise than it disappears. So the flame of the lamp contains the message. It is a symbol of the fact that whosoever rises above the gross will disappear.

It is purely out of love that a man chooses to burn ghee in his lamp. Although there is nothing wrong in using kerosene oil in a lamp -- God is not going to prevent you from doing so -- we feel that only one who has become pure like ghee can move upwards. The flame of a kerosene lamp will move upwards too -- kerosene is no less than ghee -- but ghee is a symbol of our feeling that one who has become pure will be able to rise higher.

Temples, mosques, and churches are also symbols of a similar type. They can be very lovely. They are beautiful symbols -- incredible illustrations created by man. But they have become ugly because so much nonsense has entered them. Now a temple no longer remains a temple -- it has become the temple of the Hindus. And not only of the Hindus but of the vaishnavas. And not only of the Vaishnavas but the temple of such and such a person. And so, with such continuous disintegration, all temples have turned into hotbeds of politics. They nurture the groupism and bigotry that lead everyone to disaster. By

and by, they have all turned into establishments which continue to exploit and maintain their vested interests.

I am not asking you to do away with temples, I am asking you to get rid of all that is worthless and has become part of the temples. Their vested interests have to be destroyed. Temples have to be saved from turning into establishments; they have to be saved from groupism and bigotry. A temple is a very beautiful place if it remains just a reminder of God, if it remains his symbol, if it reflects a phenomenon rising towards the sky.

What I am saying is that as long as temples remain the mainspring of politics, they will continue to cause misfortune. And, indeed, now the temples are nothing but the mainsprings of politics. When a temple is built for the Hindus, it automatically becomes a hotbed of politics, because politics means groupism. And religion is something which has absolutely nothing to do with groupism. Religion means a sadhana, an individual commitment to spirituality, and politics means groupism. Always be aware that religion can be related to a sadhana, but it can have no relation to groupism. Politics survives on groupism, groupism survives on hatred, and hatred survives on blood -- and the whole mischief goes on....

As a symbol of God the temple has become impure. That impurity has to be removed; then it will be a symbol of great beauty. If a village has a temple which belongs neither to the Hindus nor to the Mohammedans nor to the Christians, the village will look beautiful. The temple will become an adornment of the village. The temple will become a reminder of the infinite. Then those who enter the temple will not feel that, by doing so, they have come near God, that outside they were away from him; people will simply feel that the temple is a place which makes it easy to enter within themselves, that the temple is only meant to be a place where one experiences beauty, peace and solitude. Then the temple will simply be an appropriate place for meditation. And meditation is the path leading to God.

Everyone cannot find it easy to make his house so peaceful that it can be used for meditation, but together a whole village can certainly build such a peaceful house. Everyone cannot afford to hire a tutor for his children and provide them with a separate school building, garden and playground. If each and every person started doing this, it would create a problem -- only a limited number of children would get educated -- so we build a school in the village and provide all that is necessary for the children of the entire village. Similarly, each village should have a place for sadhana, for meditation. That is all a temple and a mosque mean, nothing more. At present, they are no longer places for sadhana, they have become centers for spreading trouble and mischief.

So we don't need to do away with the temples. We must, however, take care that a temple does not continue to be a center for causing trouble. We must also take care that the temple returns to the hands of religion, and does not remain in the hands of Hindus or Mohammedans.

If the children of a town can go as freely to the mosque as they can to the temple, as freely to the church as they can to the temple of Shiva, then such a town is truly a religious town. Then the people of this town are good people. Then the parents of this town are not the enemies of their children. One can see that the parents of this town love their children, and are laying a foundation so that their children do not fight amongst themselves. The parents of this town would tell their children, "A mosque is your

house as much as a temple is. Go wherever you find peace. Sit there, seek God there. All houses are God's, but to have a glimpse of him is what matters. And for this, go within yourself. Or go wherever you feel." The day this will become a reality, the right kind of temple will be created in the world. We have not been able to build it as yet.

I am not among those who wish to get rid of temples. On the contrary, I am saying that our temples have already been destroyed by the very people who claim to be their guardians. But when we will be able to see this is hard to say. And then people misunderstand, they get the idea that I am among the destroyers of temples. What would I gain by destroying a temple? Whatsoever is unlike a temple, which has gathered around the temple, must, of course, be eliminated. It is quite all right to involve oneself in an effort to do so.

One last question, and we will begin our meditation. One friend has asked after the morning discussion:

Question 3

DO SOULS SOMETIMES WANDER AFTER LEAVING THE BODY?

Some souls do find it difficult to take on a new body right after death. There is a reason for this, and perhaps you may not have thought that this could be the reason. All souls, if divided, would fall into three categories. One is the lowest -- people with the most inferior type of consciousness; another is of the very highest kind, very superior, the purest kind of consciousness; and the third consists of people in between -- a combination of something of both.

Let's take the example of a damroo, a small drum. It is broad at the ends and thin in the center. Were we to reverse it so that it was broad in the center and narrow at the ends, we would understand the situation of disembodied souls. At the narrow ends there are very few souls. The most lowly souls find it as difficult to take a new body as the superior ones do. Those in between do not face the slightest delay -- they attain a new body as soon as they leave the previous one. The reason is that for the mediocre souls, the middle ones, a suitable womb is always available.

As soon as a person dies, the soul sees hundreds of people, hundreds of couples, copulating -- and whichever couple it becomes attracted to, it enters the womb. Many superior souls, however, cannot enter ordinary wombs; they require extraordinary wombs. The superior soul requires the union of a couple with an exceptionally high level of consciousness so that the highest degree of possibilities becomes available for their birth. And so, a superior soul has to wait for the right womb. Similarly, inferior souls have to wait also, because they cannot easily find a couple either, they cannot easily find a womb of an inferior type. Thus, both the highest and the lowest types are not easily born, while the mediocre types have no difficulty. There are wombs continuously available to receive them -- the mediocre soul is immediately attracted to any one of them.

I talked about Bardo in the morning. In this method the dying man is told, "You will see hundreds of couples copulating. Don't be in a hurry. Think a little, take a little time, remain there for a while before you enter a womb. Don't immediately enter whichever womb attracts you. It is as if a person goes downtown and buys whatsoever catches his fancy in a showroom. Whichever shop comes into view first, he is pulled to it; he enters the shop immediately. But an intelligent customer goes to several shops, checks and rechecks the items, makes enquiries, confirms the prices, and then decides.

So in the Bardo method the dying man is warned, "Beware! Don't rush, don't hurry, keep searching; give it thought, take everything into consideration." This is told to him because, continuously, hundreds of people are copulating. The person clearly sees hundreds of couples making love, and among them he is only attracted to that couple capable of giving him a suitable womb.

Both superior and inferior souls have to wait until they find a suitable womb. The inferior souls do not easily find a womb of such an inferior character that through it they can attain their possibilities. Also, superior souls do not readily find a womb of a superior character. The inferior souls, stranded without bodies, are what we call evil spirits, and the superior souls waiting to take birth, we call them devatas, gods. Superior souls waiting for the right womb are gods. Ghosts and evil spirits are the lowest kind of souls -- stranded because of their inferior quality. For the ordinary soul a womb is always available. No sooner does death occur than the soul instantly enters a womb.

Question 4

THE SAME FRIEND HAS ALSO ASKED: CAN THESE SOULS WHO ARE WAITING TO BE BORN ENTER INTO SOMEONE'S BODY AND HARASS THAT PERSON?

This, too, is possible -- because the inferior souls, those who have not yet found a body, remain very tormented; while, without bodies, the superior souls are happy. You should keep this distinction in mind. Higher souls always look upon the body as a kind of bondage of one sort or another. They wish to remain so light they even prefer not to carry the weight of a body. And, ultimately, they want to be free from the body, because they find even the body is nothing but a prison. Eventually, they feel the body makes them do certain things which are not worth doing. And so these souls are not very attracted to the body. The inferior souls cannot live for a moment without a body; their interest, their happiness is tethered to the body.

Certain pleasures can be attained without being in a body. For example, there is the soul of a thinker. Now, one can have the pleasure of thinking without being in a body, because thought has nothing to do with the body. So if the soul of a thinker begins to wander and does not attain a body, it never shows any hurry to be in the body again because it can enjoy the pleasure of thinking even in the state it is in. But, let's say someone enjoys food with a passion. That pleasure is not possible without being in a body, so in such a case, the soul becomes tremendously restless to find a way to enter a body. And if it fails to

find a suitable womb, then it can enter a body which has a weak soul. A weak soul means one which is not the master of its body. And this happens when the weak soul is in a state of fear.

Remember, fear has a very deep meaning. Fear means that which causes you to shrink. When you are in fear you shrink; when you are happy you expand. When a person is in a state of fear his soul shrinks, and consequently a large space is left vacant in his body for another soul to enter and occupy. Not only one, many souls can enter and occupy that space at once. So when a man is in a state of fear, a soul can enter his body. And the only reason a soul would do that is because all its cravings are tethered to the body; it attempts to satisfy its cravings by entering someone's body. This is totally possible. Complete facts are available to support it; it is totally based on reality.

What this means is that a fearful person is always in danger; he is always in a shrunken state. He lives, as it were, in one room of his house, while the rest of the rooms remain vacant and can be occupied by other guests.

Occasionally higher souls also enter a human body, but they do so for very different reasons. There are some acts of compassion which cannot be carried out without being in a body. Say, for example, that a house catches fire and no one steps forward to save it from burning down. The crowd stands there, powerless; no one dares enter the burning house. Suddenly a man steps forward, puts out the fire and manages to save somebody trapped inside. Later on, when everything is over, the man himself wonders how he did it. He feels quite sure he moved and acted under the influence of some unknown power -- that it was not his doing, that someone else did it. In such instances, where man is unable to muster the courage for some good cause, some higher soul can enter a human body and accomplish the task. But these are rare happenings.

Since it is difficult for superior souls to find suitable wombs, they sometimes have to wait for hundreds of years before their next birth. And surprisingly enough, these souls appear on the earth almost at the same time. For example, Buddha and Mahavira were both born in India 2,500 years ago. Both were born in Bihar, and during the same period six other enlightened beings were present in the same state, in Bihar. Their names are not known to us because they did not initiate any disciples, because they had no followings -- that is the only reason -- but they were of the same caliber as Buddha and Mahavira. And they conducted a very daring experiment: none of them initiated any followers. One of these people was Prabuddha Katyayana, another was Ajit Keshkambal, and yet another was Sanjay Vilethiputra. Then there was Makhali Gosal, and there were others. In that period of time, eight people of the same genius and the same potential were born simultaneously, in that very state of Bihar. With all the world available, these eight souls waited for a long time to be born in that small area of Bihar. And when the opportunity came, it came all at once.

Often it happens, as well as for evil souls, that a chain of births comes to pass for the good. At the same time as Buddha and Mahavira, Socrates was born in Greece, followed after a time by Plato and Aristotle. At about the same time in China, Confucius, Lao Tzu, Chuang Tzu and Mencius, Meng Tzu, were born. Some incredible people took birth all at once in different parts of the world at approximately the same time. The whole world was filled with some fascinating people. It seems as if the souls of all these

people were waiting for some time. Then an opportunity came their way; wombs became available to them.

When, by chance, wombs do become available, many wombs become available all at once. It is just like the blooming of a flower. When the season arrives, you find one flower has blossomed, and then you see the second flower, and then the third. The flowers were just waiting to bloom. Dawn arrives, and it is just a question of the sun rising above the horizon and the flowers begin to bloom. The buds burst open and the flower blooms. The flowers were waiting the entire night, and as the sun arose, they bloomed.

Exactly the same thing happens with inferior souls. When a suitable environment develops on earth, they take birth in a chain. For example, in our time, people like Hitler, Stalin and Mao were all born during the same period. Such horrible people must have waited for thousands of years to take birth; they can't find wombs that easily. Stalin alone killed about six million people in the Soviet Union, and Hitler killed about ten million people all by himself.

The death contraptions devised by Hitler were unique in the history of mankind. He carried out mass murder in a way no one had ever done before; next to him, Tamerlane and Genghis Khan seem novices. Hitler devised gas chambers for mass murder. He found it too cumbersome and costly to kill people one by one and then dispose of their bodies, so he devised ingenious methods of mass murder. There are other means of mass murder too -- for example, as happened in the recent communal riots at Ahmedabad, or at other places -- but these are all very expensive methods.

Also, it is such an effort to kill people one by one -- and it takes a lot of time as well. Killing people one by one doesn't work: you kill one here, and another is born somewhere else. So Hitler would have five thousand people put in a gas chamber together, and with the flick of a button these five thousand people were virtually turned into vapor; they would simply evaporate. The chamber would be empty; no sign of them would be left. Not a drop of blood was spilled, not a single grave was dug. It was all very neat.

No one can accuse Hitler of bloodshed. If God is still dispensing justice by the old standards, he will find Hitler totally innocent. He did not spill a drop of blood; he pierced no breast with his sword, he simply devised an ingenious method of killing, a means beyond description. He placed people in a gas chamber, switched on a high-voltage button and the people simply evaporated. Not a sign was left to prove they had ever existed. Hitler, for the first time, got rid of people as one boils water and turns it into vapor. He turned ten million people into gas!

It is very difficult for a soul like Hitler's to find a new body quickly. And it is good it is so difficult, otherwise the earth would be in great trouble. Hitler will have to wait for a very long time, because it is extremely difficult for a conception of such a low quality to take place again.

What does it mean to be born through an inferior conception? It means that generations of the parents' ancestors have a long chain of evil deeds to their credit. In a single lifetime one cannot accumulate enough evil to account for the conception of a person like Hitler. To produce a son like Hitler, how much

evil, how many murders can one man commit in one lifetime? For a son like Hitler to choose his parents, a long chain of evil deeds is required, deeds performed by the parents for hundreds, thousands, millions of years. This means that if a person were to work in a slaughterhouse continuously for thousands of years, only then could his genes, his breed, become capable of attracting a soul like Hitler's.

The same holds true for a good soul. For an average, ordinary soul there is no difficulty taking birth; there are wombs all over ready to receive such souls. And besides, its demands are very ordinary. There are the same cravings: eating, drinking, making money, enjoying sex, seeking honor and position -- such ordinary longings. Everyone longs for these things, and so the soul has no problem finding a womb. All parents can give any soul the opportunity to achieve all these ordinary things. However, if, in a human body, a soul wants to live a life so pure that he will even hesitate to press the earth with his feet, he will live in such total love that he won't want anyone to be troubled by his love or his love to become a burden on anyone, then we will have to wait a long time for such souls to take birth.

Now let's get ready for the evening meditation. Let me first make a few things clear. I have observed that you sit very close to each other, and this doesn't allow you to sit without worrying you might fall on somebody else. This situation won't allow you to go deep. So the first thing you need to do is: be at a distance from each other. Those who feel like lying down may do so. Even later, during the meditation, if you feel your body is going to fall on the ground, then don't hold yourself back. Let go completely; allow the body to drop.

Now, turn off the lights.

The first thing: close your eyes. Relax your body.... Relax your body totally, as if there is no body left any more. Feel that all the energy of your body is moving in... feel that you are moving inside the body. You have to withdraw all your energy inside.

For three minutes I will give suggestions that your body is relaxing, and you have to feel it. You have to keep feeling your body and relaxing it. Slowly you will feel that you have lost your hold over the body -- then if the body begins to fall, let it fall; don't hold it. If it falls forward, let it fall; if it falls backwards, let it fall. From your side, don't maintain any hold on the body. Let your hold over the body go. This is the first stage.

Now I will give suggestions for three minutes. Similarly, I will give suggestions for your breathing, and then for your thoughts. At the end, for ten minutes, we will be lost in silence.

Your body is relaxing. Feel it: your body is relaxing... your body is relaxing... your body is relaxing.... Let go, as if the body is no more. Give up your hold. Your body is relaxing... drop all control over the body, as if your body is dead.

You have moved inside; the energy has been sucked inside -- now the body is left behind like a shell. The body is relaxing... the body is totally relaxed.... Let go. You will feel that it has gone, gone, gone. Let it fall

if it will. The body is relaxed, as if you are dead now, as if the body is no more, as if the body has disappeared....

Relax your breathing also. Your breathing is relaxing... feel that your breathing is relaxing... your breathing has totally relaxed.... Let go... let the body go; let the breathing go too. Your breathing has relaxed.

Your thoughts are also becoming silent... thoughts are becoming silent.... Feel your thoughts becoming totally silent... feel inside, thoughts are calming down. The body is relaxed, the breathing is relaxed, thoughts are silent....

Everything is silent within you. We are sinking into this silence; we are sinking, we are falling deeper and deeper as one falls into a well, keeps on falling deeper and deeper... just like this, we are falling deeper and deeper into emptiness, into shunya. Let go, let go your hold completely.... Keep drowning in emptiness, keep drowning.... Inside, only consciousness will remain, burning like a flame, watching, just a witness.

Just remain a witness. Keep watching inside.... Outside everything is dead; the body has become totally inert. Breathing has slowed down, thoughts have slowed down; inside, we are falling into silence. Keep watching, keep watching, watching continuously -- a much deeper silence, a much more profound silence will grow. In that watching state, 'I' will also disappear -- only a shining light, a burning flame will remain.

Now I will be still for ten minutes, and you keep on disappearing within, deeper and deeper. Give up your hold, let go. Just keep watching. For ten minutes, just be an onlooker, be a witness.

Everything is silent.... Look within, keep looking within.... Inside, let there be just watching. The mind is becoming more and more silent.... At a distance you will see your body lying -- as if it is someone else's body. You will move away from the body, as if you have left the body. It seems someone else is breathing....

Go even further within, go deeper inside.... Keep watching, keep looking inside, and the mind will totally sink into nothingness. Go deeper, go deeper down within... keep watching... the mind has become totally silent.

The body is left behind, the body is as if dead. We have moved away from the body. Let go, let go totally; do not hold back at all, as if you are dead inside. The mind is becoming even more silent... the body is lying far away; we have moved far away from the body.... The mind has become totally silent....

Look inside. The 'I' has disappeared totally, only consciousness is left, only knowing is left. Everything else has disappeared....

Slowly, take a few deep breaths. The mind is now totally silent. Watch each and every breath, and you will feel the mind becoming even more silent. Your breathing will also seem separate from you, far away

from you. Breathe softly and slowly. Watch how far away the breath is... watch how distant it is from you.

Slowly, take a few deep breaths. Then open your eyes slowly. There is no need to hurry to get up. If you are unable to open your eyes, there is no need to hurry. Open your eyes slowly and softly, and then look outside for a moment....

Our evening meditation is now over.

And Now, And Here, Vol 1

Chapter #4

Chapter title: Returning to the Source

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Question 1

A FRIEND HAS ASKED: ACCORDING TO WHAT YOU HAVE SAID, ONE CAN TRIUMPH OVER DEATH THROUGH MEDITATION OR SADHANA. BUT THEN, DOESN'T THE SAME STATE EXIST WHEN WE ARE IN SLEEP? AND IF IT DOES, THEN WHY CAN'T DEATH BE CONQUERED THROUGH SLEEP?

The first thing that needs to be understood is that triumph over death does not mean there is something like death to conquer. To triumph over death simply means you will come to know there is no death. To know that death is not is to conquer it. There is nothing like death to be conquered. As soon as one knows there is no death, our ongoing and losing battle with death ceases. Some enemies exist, and

there are others that in reality do not exist but only seem to exist. Death is one of those enemies with no real existence; it only seems to exist.

And so, do not take the triumph to mean that somewhere death exists and that we shall conquer it. This would be like a man going crazy fighting with his shadow, until someone points out to him, "Look closely, the shadow has no substance. It is merely an appearance." If the man looked at the shadow and realized what he was doing, he would laugh at himself; only then could he know he has conquered the shadow. Conquering the shadow simply means there was not even the tiniest shadow to be fought with; anyone attempting to do so would go crazy. One who fights with death will lose; one who knows death will triumph over it.

This also means that if death is not, then in reality we never ever die -- whether we are aware of it or not. The world does not consist of those people who die and those who do not die -- no, it's not like that. In this world no one ever dies. There are two kinds of people, however: those who know this as a fact, and those who don't -- this is the only difference.

In sleep we reach the same place we do in meditation. The only difference is that in sleep we are unconscious, while in meditation we are fully conscious. If someone were to become fully aware, even in his sleep, he would have the same experience as in meditation.

For example, if we were to put a person under anesthetic, and in his unconscious state bring him on a stretcher to a garden where flowers are in full bloom, where fragrance is in the air, where the sun is shining and the birds are singing, the man would be completely unaware of all this. After we brought him back and he was out of the anesthesia, if we asked him how he liked the garden, he would not be able to tell us anything. Then, if you were to take him to the same garden when he was fully conscious, he would experience everything present there when he had been brought in before. In both cases, although the man was brought to the same place, he was unaware of the beautiful surroundings in the first instance, while in the second instance he would be fully aware of the flowers, the fragrance, the song of the birds, the rising sun. So although you will undoubtedly reach as far in an unconscious state as you will reach in a conscious state, to reach some place in an unconscious state is as good as not reaching there at all.

In sleep we reach the same paradise we reach in meditation, but we are unaware of it. Each night we travel to this paradise, and then we come back -- unaware. Although the fresh breeze and the lovely fragrance of the place touch us, and the songs of the birds ring in our ears, we are never aware of it. And yet, in spite of returning from this paradise totally unaware of it, one might say, "I feel very good this morning. I feel very peaceful. I slept well last night."

What do you feel so good about? Having slept well, what good happened? It cannot be only because you slept -- surely you must have been somewhere; something must have happened to you. But in the morning you have no knowledge of it, except for a vague idea of feeling good. One who has had a deep sleep at night gets up refreshed in the morning. This shows the person has reached a rejuvenating source in sleep -- but in an unconscious state.

One who is unable to sleep well at night finds himself more tired in the morning than he was the previous evening. And if a person does not sleep well for a few days it becomes difficult for him to survive, because his connection with the source of life is broken. He is unable to reach the place it is essential he should.

The worst punishment in the world is not death -- as a punishment death is easy; it occurs in a few moments. The worst punishment ever devised on earth is not letting a person go to sleep. Even to this day, there are countries like China and Russia where prisoners are made to go without sleep. The torture a prisoner goes through, if he is not allowed to sleep for fifteen days, is beyond our imagination -- he almost goes mad. He begins to divulge all the information he otherwise would not have let the enemy know. He begins to blabber, totally unaware of its implications.

In China, systematic methods have been devised. For six months prisoners are not allowed to sleep. Consequently, they become totally insane. They completely forget who they are, what their names are, what their religion is, which town or city they come from, what their country is -- they forget everything. Lack of sleep throws their consciousness into complete disorder, into chaos. In that condition they can be made to learn anything.

When the American soldiers captured in Korea returned from the prison camps of Russia and China, denial of sleep had left them in such terrible shape that when they came out they were openly antagonistic to America and in favor of communism. First these soldiers were not allowed to sleep, and when their consciousnesses became disordered, they were indoctrinated into communism. Once their identities were thrown into chaos, through repeated suggestions they were told they were communists. So before their release they were completely brainwashed. Looking at these soldiers, American psychologists were dumbfounded.

If a person is denied sleep, he becomes cut off from the very source of life. Atheism will continue to grow in the world in the same ratio as sleep continues to get lighter. In countries where people have lighter sleep, atheism will be more on the increase there. And in countries where people have deeper sleep, the more theism will be on the increase. But this theism and atheism are a totally strange thing for man, because they grow out of an unconscious state. A person who has a deep sleep spends the next day in peace, while the one who does not have a deep sleep remains restless and troubled the following day. How in the world can a restless and troubled mind be receptive to God? A mind which is disturbed, dissatisfied, tense and angry, refuses to accept God, denies his existence.

Science is not at the bottom of the increasing atheism in the West; the disorderly, chaotic condition of sleep is at the root of it. In New York, at least thirty percent of the people cannot sleep without tranquilizers. Psychologists believe that if this condition prevails for the next hundred years, not a single person will be able to sleep without medication.

People have completely lost sleep. If a man who has lost sleep were to ask you how you go to sleep, and your answer were, "All I do is put my head on the pillow and fall asleep," he will not believe you. He will find this impossible and suspect there must be some trick he doesn't know to it -- because he lays his head on the pillow too, and nothing happens.

God forbid, but a time may come, after a thousand or two thousand years, when everyone will have lost natural sleep, and people will refuse to believe that a thousand or two thousand years before their time, people simply rested their heads on their pillows and fell asleep. They will take this as fiction, a mythical story from the Puranas. They will not believe it to be true. They will say, "This is not possible, because if that isn't true about us, how can it be true about anyone else?"

I am drawing your attention to all of this because three or four thousand years ago people would close their eyes and go into meditation as easily as you go to sleep today. Two thousand years from now it will be difficult to sleep in New York -- it is difficult even today. It is becoming difficult to sleep in Bombay, and soon it will become difficult in Dwarka as well -- it is just a matter of time. Today it is hard to believe there was a time when a man could close his eyes and go into meditation -- because now, when you sit with your eyes closed, you reach nowhere; inside, thoughts keep hovering around and you remain where you are.

In the past, meditation was as easy for those who were close to nature as sleep is for those who live close to nature. First meditation disappeared; now sleep is on its way out. Those things are first lost which are conscious; after that, those things are lost which are unconscious. With the disappearance of meditation the world has almost become irreligious, and when sleep disappears the world will become totally irreligious. There is no hope for religion in a sleepless world.

You will not believe how closely, how deeply, we are connected to sleep. How a person will live his life depends totally on how he sleeps. If he does not sleep well, his entire life will be a chaos: all his relationships will become entangled, everything will become poisonous, filled with rage. If, on the contrary, a person sleeps deeply, there will be freshness in his life -- peace and joy will continuously flow in his life. Underlying his relationships, his love, everything else, there will be serenity. But if he loses sleep, all his relationships will go haywire. He will have a messed-up life with his family, his wife, his son, his mother, his father, his teacher, his students -- all of them. Sleep brings us to a point in our unconscious where we are immersed in God -- although not for too long. Even the healthiest person only reaches to his deeper level for ten minutes of his nightly eight hours' sleep. For these ten minutes he is so completely lost, drowned in sleep, that not even a dream exists.

Sleep is not total as long as one is dreaming -- one keeps moving between the states of sleep and wakefulness. Dreaming is a state in which one is half-asleep and half-awake. To be in a dream means that even though your eyes are closed, you are not asleep; external influences are still affecting you. The people you met during the day, you are still with them at night in your dreams. Dreams occupy the middle state between sleep and wakefulness. And there are many people who have lost sleep -- they merely remain in the dreaming state, without ever reaching the state of sleep. And that you don't remember in the morning that you dreamt all night is beside the point. Much research on sleep is being carried out in America. Some ten big laboratories have been experimenting on thousands of people for about eight to ten years.

Americans are showing interest in meditation because they have lost sleep. They think that perhaps meditation may bring their sleep back, that it may bring some peace into their lives. That's why they

look upon meditation as nothing more than a tranquilizer. When Vivekananda first introduced meditation in America, a physician came to him and said, "I enjoyed your meditation immensely. It is absolutely a non-medicinal tranquilizer. It's not a medicine and yet it puts one to sleep -- it's great." Yogis are not the reason their influence is growing so much in America -- the lack of sleep is the real cause. Their sleep is in a mess, and consequently life in America is filled with heaviness, depression, tension. So in America we see the growing need for tranquilizers -- somehow, to bring sleep to people.

Every year, millions of dollars are being spent on tranquilizers in America. Ten big laboratories are conducting research on thousands of people who are being paid to undergo nights of rather uncomfortable, painful sleep. All kinds of electrodes and thousands of wires are attached to people's bodies, and they are examined from all angles to find out what is happening inside them.

One incredible discovery these experiments have revealed is that man dreams almost the whole night. Waking up, some people said they didn't dream, while some said they did. But in fact, all of them dreamt. The only difference was that those with better memories remembered dreaming, while those with weaker memories could not recall dreaming. It was found, however, that a completely healthy person was able to slip into a deep, dreamless sleep for ten minutes.

Dreams can be scanned through machines. Nerves in the brain remain active during our dreaming state, but as the dream stops, the nerves cease to be active as well, and the machine indicates a gap has occurred. The gap shows that at that time the man was neither dreaming nor thinking -- he was lost somewhere.

It is interesting that the machines keep recording movement inside the man while he is in the dreaming state, but as soon as he falls into dreamless sleep, the machine shows a gap. They don't know where the man disappeared in that gap. So dreamless sleep means the man has reached a place beyond the machine's range. It is in this gap that man enters the divine.

The machine is unable to detect this space in between, this gap. The machine records the internal activity as long as the man is dreaming -- then comes the gap and the man disappears somewhere. And then, after ten minutes, the machine starts recording again. It is difficult to say where the man was during that ten-minute interval. American psychologists are very intrigued by this gap; hence they consider sleep the biggest mystery. The fact is that next to God, sleep is the only mystery. There is no other mystery.

You sleep every day, yet you have no idea what sleep is. A man sleeps all through his life, and yet nothing changes -- he knows nothing about sleep. The reason you don't know anything about sleep is that when sleep is there, you are not. Remember, you are only as long as sleep is not. And so, you come to know only as much as the machine knows. Just as in the face of the gap the machine stops and is unable to reach where the man has been transported, you cannot reach there either -- because you are no more than a machine as well.

Since you do not come across that gap either, sleep remains a mystery; it remains beyond your reach. This is so because a man falls into wakeless sleep only when he ceases to exist in his "I-am-ness." And

therefore, as the ego keeps growing, sleep becomes less and less. An egoistic person loses his capacity to sleep because his ego, the I, keeps asserting itself twenty-four hours a day. It is the I that wakes up, the same I that walks on the street. The I remains so present the entire twenty-four hours that at the moment of falling asleep, when the time approaches to drop the I, one is unable to get rid of it. Obviously, it becomes difficult to fall asleep. As long as the I exists, sleep is impossible. And, as I told you yesterday, as long as the I exists, entering into God is impossible.

Entering into sleep and entering into God are exactly one and the same thing; the only difference is that through sleep one enters into God in an unconscious state, while through meditation one enters into God in a conscious state. But this is a very big difference. You may enter God through sleep for thousands of lives, yet you will never come to know God. But if, even for a moment, you enter meditation you will have reached the same place you have reached in deep sleep for thousands and millions of lives -- although always in an unconscious state -- and it will transform your life totally.

The interesting thing is that once a person enters meditation, enters that emptiness where deep sleep takes him, he never remains unconscious -- even when he is asleep. When Krishna says in the Gita that the yogi stays awake when everyone else is asleep, he does not mean the yogi never sleeps at all. In fact, no one sleeps as beautifully as a yogi does. But even in his deepest sleep, that element in him which has entered into meditation remains awake. And every night the yogi enters sleep in this awakened state. Then for him meditation and sleep become one and the same thing -- no difference between the two remains. Then he always enters sleep in full consciousness. Once a person moves within himself through meditation, he can never be in an unconscious state in his sleep.

Ananda lived with Buddha for many years. For years he slept near Buddha. One morning he asked Buddha, "For years I have been watching you sleep. Not once do you ever change sides; you sleep the whole night in the same position. Your limbs stay where they were when you lay down at night; there is not the slightest movement. Many times I have got up at night to check whether you have moved. I have stayed up nights watching you -- your hands, your feet, rest in the same position; you never ever change sides. Do you keep some kind of a record of your sleep the whole night?"

"I don't need to keep any record," Buddha replied. "I sleep in a conscious state, so I find no need to change sides. I can if I want to. Turning from one side to another is not a requirement of sleep, it's a requirement of your restless mind." A restless mind cannot even rest in one place for a single night, let alone during the day. Even sleeping at night, the whole time the body shows its restlessness.

If you watch a person asleep at night, you will see he is continuously restless the whole time. You will find him moving his hands in much the same way he does when he is awake during the day. In his dream at night, you will find him running and panting in much the same way it happens with someone during the day -- he feels out of breath, tired. At night, in dreams, he fights in much the same way he fights during the day. He is as angry at night as he is during the day. He is filled with passion during the day; at night as well. There is no fundamental difference between the day and the night of such a person, except that at night he lies down exhausted, unconscious; everything else continues to function as usual. So Buddha said, "I can change sides if I want to, but there is no need."

But we don't realize.... A man sitting in a chair keeps jiggling his legs. Ask him: "Why are your legs jiggling like that? It's understandable if they move when you walk, but why are they moving when you are sitting in a chair?" No sooner do you say this than the man will stop immediately. Then he won't even move for a second, but he will have no explanation as to why he was doing it. It shows how the restlessness within causes agitation in the entire body. Inside is the restless mind; it cannot be still, in one position, even for a moment. It will keep the whole body fidgeting -- the legs will move, the head will shake; even sitting, the body will change sides.

That's why, even for ten minutes, you find it so difficult to sit still in meditation. And from a thousand different spots the body urges you to twitch and turn. We do not notice this until we sit with awareness in meditation. We realize then what sort of a body this is; it doesn't want to remain still in one position even for a second. The confusion, the tension, and the excitement of the mind stir up the entire body.

For about ten minutes everything disappears in wakeless sleep -- although these ten minutes are available only to one who is completely healthy and peaceful, not to everyone. Others get this kind of sleep anywhere from one to five minutes; most people get only two, or one minute of deep sleep. The little juice we receive in that one minute of reaching to the source of life, we apply to making our next twenty-four hours work. Whatever little amount of oil the lamp receives in that short period, we utilize it to carry on our lives for a full twenty-four hours. The lamp of one's life burns on whatsoever amount of oil it receives then. This is the reason the lamp burns so slow: not enough oil is collected to make the lamp of life burn brightly so it can become a flaming torch.

Meditation brings you slowly to the source of life. Then it is not that you keep taking a handful of nourishment out of it, you are simply in the source itself. Then it is not that you refill your lamp with more oil -- then the entire ocean of oil becomes available to you. Then you begin to live in that very ocean. With that kind of living, sleep disappears -- not in the sense that one doesn't sleep any more, but in the sense that even when one is asleep, someone within remains wide awake. Then dreams exist no more. A yogi stays awake; he sleeps, but he never dreams -- his dreams disappear totally. And when dreams disappear, thoughts disappear. What we know as thoughts in the wakeful state are called dreams in the sleeping state. There is only a slight difference between thoughts and dreams: thoughts are slightly more civilized dreams, while dreams are a little primitive in nature. Of the two, one is the original thought.

In fact, children, or the aboriginal tribes, can think only in pictures, not in words. Man's first thoughts are always in pictures. For example, when a child is hungry he does not think in words, "I am hungry." A child can visualize the mother's breast; he can imagine himself sucking the breast. He can be filled with the desire to go to the breast, but he cannot form the words. The word formation starts much later; pictures appear first.

When we don't know a particular language, we use pictures to express ourselves as well. If you happen to go to a foreign country and you don't know the language, and you want to drink water, you can cup your palms to your mouth and the stranger will understand that you are thirsty -- because when words are not at hand, the need for pictures arises. And the interesting thing is that languages of words are

different in different places, but the language of pictures is universal -- because every man's picture language is the same.

We have invented different words, but pictures are not our invention. Pictures are the universal language of the human mind. A painting, therefore, is understood anywhere in the world. There is no need to change your language to understand a sculpture at Khajuraho or a painting by Leonardo. A sculpture at Khajuraho will be as understood by a Chinese, a Frenchman and a German, as it is by you. And if you visit the museum of the Louvre in France, you will have no difficulty in following the paintings either. You may not understand the titles, because they are in French, but you will have no problem following the painting. The language of pictures is everyone's language.

The language of words is useful during the day, but it is not useful at night. We again become primitive at night. We disappear in sleep as we are. We lose our degrees, our university educations, everything. We are transported to a point where the original man once stood. That's why pictures emerge at night in sleep, and words appear during the day. If we want to make love during the day, we can think in terms of words, but at night there is no way to express love except through images.

Thoughts do not seem as alive as dreams. In dreams the whole image appears before you. That's why we enjoy watching a movie based on a novel more than reading the novel itself. The only reason for this is that the novel is in the language of words while the movie is in the language of images. In the same manner, you feel greater joy being here and listening to me live. You would not feel the same joy listening to this talk on a tape, because here the image is present, on tape there are only words. The language of images is nearer to us, more natural. At night words turn into pictures; that's all the difference there is.

The day dreams disappear, thoughts disappear too; the day thoughts disappear, dreams disappear as well. If the day is empty of thoughts, the night will be empty of dreams. And remember, dreams don't allow you to sleep, and thoughts don't allow you to awaken. Make sure you understand both things: dreams do not let you sleep, and thoughts do not let you awaken. If dreams disappear, sleep will be total; if thoughts disappear, awakening will be total. If the awakening is total and the sleep is total, then not much difference exists between the two. The only difference is in keeping the eyes open or closed, and in the body being at work or at rest. One who is totally awakened sleeps totally, but in both states his consciousness remains exactly the same. Consciousness is one, unchangeable; only the body changes. Awake, the body is at work; asleep, the body is at rest.

To the friend who has asked why God is not attained in sleep, my answer is: he can be attained if you can remain awake even in your sleep. So my method of meditation is a sleeping method -- sleeping in awareness, entering into sleep with awareness. That's why I ask you to relax your body, to relax your breathing, to calm down your thoughts. All this is a preparation for sleep. Therefore, it often happens that some friends go to sleep during meditation -- obviously; this is a preparation for sleep. And, while preparing for it, they don't know when they go to sleep. That's why I repeat the third suggestion: stay awake inside, remain conscious within; let the body be totally relaxed, let the breathing be totally

relaxed, more relaxed than it normally is while sleeping. But stay awake within. Within, let your awareness burn like a lamp so you don't fall asleep.

The initial conditions of meditation and sleep are the same, but there is a difference in the final condition. The first condition is that the body should be relaxed. If you suffer from insomnia, the first thing a doctor will teach you is relaxation. He will ask you to do the same thing I am asking: relax your body, don't let any tension remain in your body; let your body be totally loose, just like a fluff of cotton. Have you ever noticed how a dog or a cat sleeps? They sleep as if they are not. Have you ever noticed a baby sleeping? There is no tension anywhere -- its arms and legs remain unbelievably loose. Watch a youth and an old man -- you will find everything tense in them. So the doctor would ask you to relax totally.

The same condition applies to sleep: the breathing should be relaxed, deep and slow. You must have noticed that jogging, the breathing becomes faster. Similarly, when the body exerts itself at work, the breathing becomes faster and the blood circulation increases. For sleeping, the blood circulation should slow down -- the situation should be just the opposite to jogging -- and then the breathing will relax. So the second condition is: relax your breathing.

When thoughts run faster, the blood has to circulate rapidly in the brain -- and when this happens, sleep becomes impossible. The condition of sleep requires a slower flow of blood to the brain. That's why we use pillows -- to reduce the flow of blood to the brain. Without a pillow, the head lies at the same level as the body, and consequently, the blood flows at the same rate from head to toe. When the head is raised, the blood has difficulty moving upwards; its flow is reduced in the brain and moves throughout the rest of the body. So the greater the difficulty one has in falling asleep, the more pillows he will need to put under his head to raise it. As the flow of blood is reduced, the brain relaxes and one finds it easy to fall asleep.

With fast-moving thoughts, the blood has to run faster too -- because for its movement a thought has to rely on blood as the vehicle. The veins in the brain begin to work faster. You must have noticed that when a person is angry his veins swell. This is so because the veins have to make more space to let extra blood run through them. When the head cools down, the blood pressure also decreases.

In anger, the face and the eyes turn red. This is due to the extra blood that runs through the veins. In that state, thoughts move so fast that the blood has to flow faster. And breathing also becomes faster. When sex takes hold of the mind, the breathing becomes very heavy and the blood flows faster -- because thoughts move so rapidly, the mind begins to function so fast, that all the veins in the brain start rushing with blood at great speed.

So the conditions for meditation are primarily the same as those applicable to sleep: relax your body, relax your breathing, let go of thoughts. And so, for sleep as well as for meditation, the initial conditions are equally true. The difference is in the final condition. In the former you remain deep in sleep; in meditation you remain fully awake, that's all.

So this friend is right in asking the question. There is a deep relationship between sleep and meditation, between samadhi and sushupti, deep sleep. However, there is one very significant difference between the two: the difference between a conscious and an unconscious state. Sleep is unawareness, meditation is awakening.

Question 2

ANOTHER FRIEND HAS ASKED: WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHAT YOU CALL MEDITATION, AND AUTOHYPNOSIS?

The difference is the same as that which exists between sleep and meditation. This also needs to be understood.

Sleep is that which comes naturally, while the sleep induced through effort is self-hypnosis. This is the only difference. The word hypnos also means sleep. Hypnosis means tandra, sleepiness. One is the kind of sleep which comes on its own, the other kind is cultivated, induced. If someone has difficulty sleeping, then he will have to do something about it. If a man lies down and begins to think continuously that he is falling asleep, and should this thought enter his being and take hold of his mind, the body will begin to respond accordingly too. The body will begin to relax, the breathing will begin to slow down, the mind will begin to quiet down.

If an environment for sleep is created within the body, the body will start functioning accordingly. The body is not concerned with facts, the body is very obedient. If you feel hungry every day at eleven o'clock, and if your clock stopped at eleven o'clock the previous night, one look at the clock and your stomach would say, "Time to eat" -- even though it might be only eight o'clock in the morning. It is not eleven o'clock yet -- there are still three more hours before eleven -- but if the clock shows eleven o'clock the stomach will complain of hunger because the stomach works mechanically. If you are used to going to bed at midnight, and if by chance your clock is two hours ahead, you will begin to feel drowsy as soon as the clock strikes twelve, even though it may be only ten o'clock. The body will immediately say, "It is twelve o'clock. Time to go to bed!"

The body is very obedient. The healthier the body, the more obedient it is. A healthy body means an obedient body. A sick body is one which has stopped obeying: you feel sleepy and the body refuses to sleep; you feel hungry and the body doesn't want to eat. A body which stops obeying is an ill body, and the body which is obedient is a healthy body -- because the body follows us like a shadow. Difficulty arises when the body stops being obedient. So hypnosis simply means that the body has to be ordered, that it has to be made to follow commands.

Most of our illnesses are just pseudo. Almost fifty percent of our ailments are false. The reason behind the growing illness in the world is not that there is an increase in disease, it is because man's pretense is on the increase. Make sure you understand this well. With increased knowledge and better economic

conditions there should be a decline in the number of diseases. But that has not happened, because man's capacity to lie has kept on growing. Man not only lies to others, he lies to himself too. He creates new diseases as well.

For example, if a man has suffered heavily in business and is on the verge of bankruptcy, he may not want to accept that he is bankrupt and so he is afraid to go into the marketplace; he knows he will have to face his creditors. All of a sudden he finds he has been overpowered by an illness that has made him bedridden. This is an illness created by his mind. It has a double advantage. Now he can tell others his illness prevents him from attending to his business -- he has already convinced himself about this and now he can convince others as well -- and now this illness is incurable. In the first place, it is not an illness at all, and the more treatment he is given, the sicker he will become.

If medicine fails to cure you, know well your illness is not curable through medication -- the cause of the illness lies somewhere else; it has nothing to do with medication. You may curse the medicine and call the doctors stupid for not finding the right treatment for you; you may try ayurvedic medicine or naturopathic treatment; you may turn to allopathy or homeopathy -- nothing will work. No doctor can be of any use to you, simply because a doctor can only treat an authentic illness -- he has no control over something pseudo. And the interesting thing is that you keep busy creating illnesses like that, and you want them to remain.

More than fifty percent of female sicknesses are false. Women have learned a formula from childhood: they get love only when they are sick, otherwise not. Whenever the wife is ill, the husband takes time off work, pulls up a chair and sits by her bedside. He may curse himself for doing so, but he does it. So whenever a woman wants attention from her man, she promptly falls ill. That's why we find women sick almost all the time. They know that by being ill they can hold sway over the entire household.

An ill person becomes a dictator, a tyrant. If the person says, "Turn off the radio!" it is immediately turned off. If the person says, "Put off the lights and go to sleep," or "Everyone stays home; no one is to go out," the members of the household do as he says. The more there is a dictatorial tendency in a person, the more he will get sick -- because who wants to hurt the feelings of someone ill? But this is dangerous. This way, we actually contribute to his sickness. It is good if a husband sits beside his wife when she is well; it is understandable. But absolutely he should not stop going to the office when she is sick and thus contribute to her sickness. It is too costly a bargain.

A mother should not pay too much attention when her child gets sick; otherwise, whenever the child wants attention, he will fall ill. When a child gets ill, be less worried about him so that no association between illness and love becomes established in his mind. The child should not get the impression that whenever he is ill the mother will pat his head and tell him stories. Instead, the mother should pamper the child when he is happy, so that love becomes associated with joy and happiness.

We have associated love with misery, and that is very dangerous because it means that whenever one needs love, he will invite misery so love can follow. And so whosoever longs for love will fall sick, because he knows sickness brings love. But love is never to be found through sickness. Remember,

illness brings pity, not love, and to be an object of pity is insulting, very degrading. Love is a totally different thing. But we have no awareness of love.

What I am saying is that the body follows our suggestions -- if we want to be ill, the poor body gets ill. Hypnosis is useful in curing such illnesses. What this means is that for a fake illness, fake medicine will work -- not real medicine. If we can make ourselves believe we are ill, we can also make ourselves believe we are not ill and rid ourselves of the illness. To this end, hypnosis is of great value. Today, there is hardly a hospital in a developed country without a hypnotist on its staff. In the West, the physician is accompanied by the hypnotist, because there are a number of illnesses for which a doctor is totally useless, for which only a hypnotist is of use. He puts the patient under hypnosis and then gives suggestions that he is feeling well.

Do you know that only three percent of all snakes are poisonous? But generally, a man dies even from the bite of a non-poisonous snake if he believes a snake bite can kill a man. This is the reason why mantras and exorcism are also able to work on a snake bite. Mantra chanting and exorcism are in other words pseudo-techniques. A man is bitten by a poisonous snake. All that is needed now is to convince him that the poison of the snake has been nullified. This will be enough: the poison will not now have any effect. It is as though the poison was never there. And if he were to be fully convinced that a snake had actually bitten him, he would die. He would die not because of the snake bite, but because of the belief that a snake had bitten him.

I have heard....

Once it happened that a man stayed overnight in an inn. He ate dinner at night and left early the next morning. A year later he returned to the same inn. The innkeeper was shocked to see him. "Are you all right?" he asked the traveler.

"I am all right. Why, what's the matter?"

"We were quite frightened," said the innkeeper. "You see, the last night you stayed here, a snake fell into the pot and was cooked with the food served to you. Four other people who ate the food died soon after. We couldn't figure out what happened to you because you left quite early. We were so worried about you."

When the traveler heard this, he said, "What? A snake in my food?" and dropped dead. A year later! He died of fear.

For such ailments, hypnosis is very useful. Hypnosis only means that the falsehood we have created around ourselves can be neutralized by another falsehood. Remember, if an imaginary thorn has pricked your foot, don't try to remove it with the help of a real thorn; it would be dangerous. First of all, the

imaginary one will never be removed, and furthermore, the real one will hurt your foot. A false thorn has to be pulled out with the help of a false thorn.

So, what is the relation between meditation and hypnosis? Only this: hypnosis is required to pull out the false thorns stuck in your body.

An example of hypnosis is when I tell you to feel that the body is relaxing. This is hypnosis. Actually you yourself have assumed that the body cannot relax. In order to nullify this assumption, hypnosis is necessary -- otherwise not. Were it not for your false assumption, feeling just once that the body is relaxed, it will relax. The suggestions I give you are not really to relax your bodies, but to take away your belief that the body can never relax. This cannot be done without creating a counter-belief in you that the body is relaxing. Your false concept will be neutralized by this false concept, and when your body relaxes, you will know it is relaxed. Relaxation is a very natural quality of the body, but you have filled yourselves with so much tension that now you have to do something to get rid of it.

This is as far as hypnosis goes. When you begin to feel the body is relaxing, the breathing is relaxing, the mind is calming down -- this is hypnosis. But only up to this point. What follows afterwards is meditation -- up to this point there is no meditation. Meditation begins after this, when you are in the state of awareness. When you become aware within, when you begin to witness that the body is relaxed, that the breathing is relaxed, that thoughts have either ceased or are still moving -- when you begin to watch, just watch -- this watching, this state of witnessing is meditation. Whatever is before that is only hypnosis.

So hypnosis means a cultivated sleep. When we are not sleepy, we induce sleep; we make an effort, we invite sleep. Sleep can also be invited if we prepare for it and move into a state of let-go. But meditation and hypnosis are not one and the same thing. Please understand this. As long as you are feeling according to my suggestions, that is hypnosis. Once you feel my suggestions stopping and awareness beginning, that is the start of meditation. Meditation begins with the advent of the state of witnessing.

Hypnosis is needed because you have got yourselves into a reverse kind of hypnosis. In scientific terms, this is not hypnosis, it is dehypnosis. We are already hypnotized, although we are not aware how we became hypnotized and what kind of tricks we have used to create this hypnosis. We have lived the major part of our lives under the influence of hypnosis. And when we want to be hypnotized, we don't realize what we are doing. We live throughout our lives like this. If this becomes clear, the hypnotic spell will break -- and once this hypnosis breaks, entering within will become possible, because hypnosis, basically, is a world of non-reality.

For example, a man is learning to ride a bicycle. To practice, he starts out on a wide road. The road is sixty feet wide, and there is a milestone on the edge. Even if the man decided to ride blindfolded on that wide road, there is very little chance of his hitting the milestone. But the man doesn't yet know how to ride a bicycle.

He never looks at the road; his eyes spot the milestone first and the fear that he might hit the milestone grips him. That's it. As soon as this fear of hitting the stone grips him, he is hypnotized. To say he

becomes hypnotized means he no longer sees the road, he begins to see the stone alone. He becomes afraid, and the handle of his bicycle starts turning toward the stone. The more the handle turns, the more afraid he gets. The handle, of course, will turn where his attention is, and his attention is on the stone because he is afraid to hit it. So the road disappears from his vision and only the stone remains. Hypnotized by the stone, he is pulled towards it. The more pulled he is, the more he is scared; the more he is scared, the more he is pulled. Finally he hits the milestone.

Watching this, any intelligent person might wonder how, on such a wide road, the man hit the milestone. How come he couldn't keep himself away from it? Obviously, he was hypnotized. He concentrated on the stone in order to save himself from landing on top of it, and this made him see nothing but the stone. When his mind became fixed on the stone, his hands automatically turned the bicycle in that direction, because the body follows your attention. The more scared he grew, the more he had to concentrate on the stone. He became hypnotized by the stone; his fear drew him toward the stone, and he finally crashed into it.

In life, we often make those very mistakes we would rather avoid. We become hypnotized by them. For example, a man is afraid he may lose his peace of mind and get angry. In this situation, he will find himself getting angry twenty-four times in twenty-four hours. The more afraid he is of getting angry, the more he will be hypnotized by anger. Then he will look for excuses to be angry the whole twenty-four hours.

Another man who is afraid to look at beautiful women because they might excite him sexually, will see beautiful women the whole twenty-four hours. By and by, even ugly women will appear beautiful to him; even men will begin to look like women to him. If from behind he sees a sadhu with long hair, he will make sure which it is, a man or a woman. Eventually women in pictures and on posters will begin to attract him, to hypnotize him. He will hide pictures of nude women in the Gita and the Koran, and will look at them without even wondering how he can be so hypnotized by mere lines and colors. He has always wanted to save himself from women and now he is afraid of them; now he sees women everywhere. Whether he goes to a temple or to a mosque, or anywhere else, he sees nothing but women. This is hypnosis too.

A society which is against sex eventually becomes sexual. A society which is anti-sex, which denounces sex -- its whole mind will become sexual, because it will be hypnotized by the very thing it criticizes; all its attention will be concentrated on it. The more a society talks of celibacy, the more dirty-minded and lecherous the people will be who are born into it. The reason is that too much talk of celibacy focuses the mind on sexuality. All this is hypnosis -- created by us -- and we are living in it. The whole world is entangled in this hypnosis. And it is difficult to break, because the hypnosis grows right along with whatsoever attempts we make to break it.

In this fashion, God knows how many kinds of hypnoses we have already created, and are still continuing to create for ourselves. And then we live with them. They need to be broken so we can wake up. But to cut through this false web, we need to discover false means.

In a way, all sadhana, all spiritual practice, is meant to remove the falsehood from around us. And so, all sadhana is false. Methods devised all over the world to help us reach God are false, because we have never been away from him. Only in thought have we been away from him.

It is just as if a man were to sleep in Dwarka and dream that he is in Calcutta. Now, in his dream he begins to worry: his wife is ill and here he is in Calcutta; he must get back to Dwarka. He goes around asking people, checking the railway timetable, inquiring about plane flights, to get back to Dwarka as soon as he can. But any suggestion he might take on how to reach Dwarka will be wrong, will get him into trouble, because he is not in Calcutta in the first place. He never went to Calcutta -- it was only a dream, a hypnosis. Whatever way someone might show him for returning to Dwarka will only put him into trouble.

No path has any meaning; all paths are false. Even if the man returns to Dwarka, the route he would take would be false. He cannot find the right way back because there can never be one: he never went to Calcutta in the first place. What does it mean for him to find a way back? The train he will ride to Dwarka will be as false as Calcutta was. If he goes to Howrah Station, buys a ticket and catches a train to Dwarka -- all of this will be false. All the stations he will pass on his way back will be false. Then he would arrive in Dwarka and wake up happy. But he would be surprised to find that he had never gone anywhere, that he had been in his bed all along. Then how did he come back? His going was false and so was his return.

No one has ever gone outside God. One cannot, because, all over, only he is -- there is no way one can step out of him. And so, all going is false, all returning is false. However, since we have already left on an imaginary journey, we will have to return; there is no other way. We will have to find the means to return. But once you have returned, you will find that all methods were false, all sadhana was false. The sadhana was necessary to bring us back from the dream. Once we have understood this, perhaps nothing will have to be done then, and you will suddenly find that you have returned. But this is difficult to understand because you are already in Calcutta. You may say, "What you are saying is right but I am already in Calcutta. Show me the way back!"

Question 3

ANOTHER FRIEND HAS ASKED: HAVE YOU FOUND GOD?

This is just the kind of question the traveler to Calcutta would ask. I would like to ask this friend, "Did you ever lose God?" -- because, if I say I have found God, it means I had assumed him lost. He is already found. Even when we feel we have lost him, he is still with us. It is simply that we are under hypnosis and therefore feel we have lost him. So, if a man says, "Yes, I have found God", he is mistaken. He still

doesn't understand that he had never lost him in the first place. Therefore, those who come to know God will never say they have found God. They will say, "He was never lost."

The day Buddha became enlightened, people gathered around him and asked, "What have you attained?"

Buddha replied, "I have attained nothing. I have simply come to see that which I had never lost. I have found what I already had. "

So, in sympathy, the people of the village said, "Too bad. You labored in vain."

"Yes," said Buddha, "in that sense it is true I labored in vain. But now there is no need for me to labor any more -- this much advantage I have gained. Now I won't go out seeking, now I won't wander to attain anything, now I won't set out on any journey -- that is my gain. Now I know that I am where I already was."

We only go away in our dreams. We never actually reach the places we feel we have. Hence, in a sense, all religions are false; all sadhanas, all yogas are false. They are false in the sense that they are all methods of returning. And yet, they are very useful.

A village shaman who shakes off snake poison with the help of mantras is very useful for those who are bitten by a snake -- even if they are bitten by a false snake. Otherwise, without him people would die of the bite from a snake which was not there.

Such a man once lived in my neighborhood. He is now dead. People came to him from far and wide to draw snake venom out. He was a very clever man; he had tamed a few snakes. When a person bitten by a snake came to him he would use his shaman skills and ask what kind of snake it was, where it had bitten, whether the snake was dead or alive. After obtaining all the information, he would apply his trick and call the snake. He had everything worked out -- which snake was to be set loose, on which signal, etcetera. Within an hour or so, a snake that matched the description would come through the door, hissing. The whole thing would create a sensation; the bitten man would feel dumbfounded.

Someone bitten by a snake can rarely see or figure anything out right: What bit him? What did it look like? Where was it? -- he is so overwhelmed by being bitten that the snake disappears in the meantime. If the snake had been killed, the shaman would call its soul to accompany his snake. Then he would scold and rebuke the snake for biting this man. The snake would then hit its head on the ground and beg forgiveness. In the meantime the poison in the man would start wearing off. Then the snake would be told to draw out the poison. The snake would promptly go up to the man who had been bitten and put its mouth to the wound, and the man would recover.

Unfortunately, it once happened a snake bit this man's son. He got into trouble because none of his treatments worked. He came running to me and said, "Please help. I am in trouble. Please tell me what I should do. A snake has bitten my son and he knows about my pet snakes. I am so unfortunate, please tell me what shall I do? I am helpless. My son won't survive!"

I was surprised. I asked, "But what about your treatment? People come to you from afar for this cure!"

"That's all fine," he said, "but even I would be in trouble if a snake were to bite me; I wouldn't even be able to save myself. I know the tricks of the trade; I wouldn't trust anybody to treat me the way I do." The boy died. He could not save his son.

False means are needed to remove the falsehood. And they have their own meaningfulness. They are meaningful because we have gone into falsehoods. So never bother to ask; in the beginning it is indeed hypnosis. The initial stages are of hypnosis, of sleep; only the final stage is of meditation -- and that is the precious one. Before you can attain to that stage, this background is quite necessary -- necessary so you can come out of the falsehood you have strayed into.

Never ask, "Have you or have you not found God?" This is all wrong. Who is going to find? What is going to be found? That which is, is. The day you come to know this, you will see that you have never lost anything, nor have you ever gone anywhere; nothing has ever been destroyed, nothing has ever died. What is, is. That day, all journeys, all going anywhere, will stop.

Question 4

AND NOW THIS QUESTION: WHAT IS THE MEANING OF LIBERATION FROM THE CYCLE OF BIRTH AND DEATH?

Liberation from the cycle of birth and death does not mean that you will not be born here again. It means that now there is neither coming nor going -- nowhere, not on any plane. Then you remain rooted where you are. The day this happens, the springs of joy burst forth on all sides. We cannot experience joy being in an imaginary place, we can only find joy being where we really are. We can only be happy being what we are, we can never be happy being what we are not. So moving through the cycle of birth and death means we are wandering through illusory places -- we are lost somewhere we have never ever been. We are wandering through some place where we are never ever supposed to be, while the place where we actually are, we have lost sight of it. So freedom from birth and death means coming back to where we are, coming back home.

Moving into God means being exactly what we actually are. It is not as if someday you will come across God standing somewhere and you will salute him and say, "Thank heaven I met you!" There is no such God as this, and if you happen to come across one, know well it is all hypnosis. Such a God will be your own creation, and meeting him will be as false as losing him was. This is not the way you will ever find God.

Our language often proves misleading, because the expression "to find God" or "to attain God" gives the impression one will be able to see God face-to-face. Such words are very misleading. Listening to them one gets the idea that somebody will reveal himself, that one will have an eye-to-eye contact with him,

that one will be able to embrace him. This is all wrong. If you ever do come across such a God, beware! Such a God will be totally a creation of your mind -- it will be hypnosis.

We have to get out of all hypnosis and retrace our steps back to the point where there is no sleep, no hypnosis, where we are fully aware, rooted in our own beings. The experience one will have then will be the experience of the unity of life; it will be the experience of existence being one, indivisible. The name of that experience is God.

Now let us prepare for the morning meditation. I will discuss some more during our night meditation. Move to a little distance from each other. And do not talk, quietly move to a distance. Make some empty space around you. Those who want to lie down, do so; they should create space enough for lying down. And even in the middle, if someone comes to the point of falling down, one should fall down, one should not stop oneself from it.

Yes, go to the verandah upstairs, but make room for yourself. ... Because later if you fall over somebody you will feel bad, and the other will get distracted too. Therefore, move apart. Yes, come down here.

Close the eyes.... No children will talk, they will sit quietly for ten minutes. Close the eyes... leave the body relaxed... leave the body relaxed. Leave the body completely relaxed, as if there is no life in the body. Let the whole energy move inside. The whole energy of the body is moving inwards... flowing inwards... we are getting shrunken inside, and the body will remain like a shell hanging outside. Whether it falls down, or remains tethered, it will remain external like clothing. Slip within... and leave the body relaxed. Now, I will give suggestions. Experience them along with me.

Experience that the body is relaxing... the body is relaxing... the body is relaxing. Feel it and leave the body totally relaxed. The body is very obedient. When you feel it wholeheartedly it will become almost a corpse. Feel that the body is relaxing... the body is relaxing... the body is relaxing... the body is relaxing... the body is going on relaxing. Let go, let go of all grip... do not keep holding on to the body from inside, let go completely... take away all control over it, as if the body is not one's own; now whatever will happen to it will happen. If it falls down it falls down, if one loses it one loses it. Move back away from it completely... remove your feelings from it.

The body is relaxing. The body is relaxing... the body is relaxing... the body is relaxing... the body is relaxing... the body is relaxing. The body has relaxed. Drop, drop all grip over the body... if it falls, let it fall. The body has relaxed... as if it has completely become a corpse... as if the body is gone... the body is no more... we have become separate from it... we have moved away from it.

The breathing is relaxing. Feel that the breathing is going on relaxing... the breathing is going on relaxing... the breathing is going on relaxing. Let go... let go of the breathing as well... move further within. The breathing has relaxed... the breathing has relaxed... the breathing has relaxed... the breathing has relaxed. You have moved even further behind the breathing... the breathing has relaxed.

The thoughts are also relaxing. The thoughts are also relaxing... the thoughts are also relaxing. Move away from the thoughts also... let go of the thoughts also. The thoughts are also relaxing... the thoughts are also relaxing. Let go of the thoughts also. Thoughts are relaxing... thoughts are relaxing... thoughts are relaxing... thoughts are relaxing.

The body has relaxed, the thoughts have relaxed, for ten minutes now just remain awake inside... for ten minutes now just remain awake inside. For ten minutes everything has died; inside we have remained awake like a flame. The body is lying far away... the breathing is heard in the far distance... the thoughts have quietened... inside our consciousness is awake watching it all. Do not fall asleep, remain awake inside.

Keep awake within... keep watching within... keep watching... become a watcher and a sudden depth will begin... a quietness will begin... a void will begin. Now for ten minutes just go on watching within quietly.

Mind has become silent... mind has become completely silent.

Drown deeper into the depths... as if falling into a deep well. Go on falling... go on falling. Stay awake inside and go on becoming an emptiness. Remain conscious inside, remain awake and keep watching. And everything has died... the body has remained far away, the breathing is left far behind, the thoughts have disappeared -- only we have remained. Just keep watching wakefully... keep watching... the mind will go on becoming emptier.

Slowly take a few deep breaths and come back from the meditation. Open your eyes slowly and very gently. Our morning session is now over.

And Now, And Here, Vol 1

Chapter #5

Chapter title: Find Your Own Way

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Question 1

A FRIEND HAS ASKED: YOU MENTIONED ONCE THAT THERE IS NO OTHER TRUTH GREATER THAN DEATH. YOU HAVE ALSO SAID SOMEWHERE THAT THERE IS NOTHING LIKE DEATH. WHICH OF THE TWO STATEMENTS IS TRUE?

Both are true. When I say there is no other truth greater than death, I am drawing your attention to the fact that the phenomenon of death is an enormous reality in this life -- in what we call 'life' and understand as 'life'; in terms of one's personality, which consists of what I describe as 'I'. This personality will die; what we call 'life' will die too. Death is inevitable. Certainly, you will die and I will die, and this life will also be destroyed, turned into dust, erased.

When I say there is no other greater truth than death, I want to remind you of the fact that we are all going to die. And when I say that death is totally false, I want to remind you that within this 'I', within 'you', there is someone else who will never die. And there is also a life that is different from what you believe to be life, a life without death. Both these things are true; they are simultaneously true. If you take only one of them to be true, you will not be able to comprehend the whole truth.

If someone says that the shadow is a reality, that darkness is a reality, he is right. Darkness exists and so does the shadow. And if someone else says there is no darkness, he is right too. What he is saying is that darkness does not have a positive existence. If I ask you to bring me a couple of bags of darkness, you won't be able to. A room is filled with darkness, and if you are asked to throw the darkness out, you won't be able to. Or, if I say, "If darkness is in there, then please bring it out," you will be unable to. Why? It is because darkness has a negative existence; darkness is merely the absence of light.

Although darkness exists, nevertheless it is only the absence of light. And so if someone were to say there is no darkness, he is right. There is the presence of light and there is the absence of light, but there is nothing like darkness as such. That's why we can do whatsoever we want with light, but with darkness we can do nothing. If you want to remove darkness, you will have to bring in light; if you want to bring in darkness, you will have to put out the light. With darkness, nothing can be done directly.

You are jogging along the road. Your shadow appears behind you; it also runs with you. Everyone can see the shadow; no one can deny it. And yet it can be said that there is no shadow because it has no entity of its own. The shadow exists because your body obstructs the sunlight. When the light is covered by your body, a shadow is formed; when the sun comes above your head, no shadow is formed because

the sunrays are not obstructed. If we were to make a human figure of glass, no shadow would ever appear because the rays would pass through the glass.

When light is hindered, a shadow is formed; a shadow is merely an absence of light. So if a person says the shadow exists, he is not wrong. But this is a half-truth. He should further add that the shadow does not exist. Then the truth becomes complete. This means a shadow is something which exists and yet does not exist. But with our way of thinking, we cannot see anything unless it is divided into two independent parts.

Once a man was tried for murder. He had killed a man, and those who had seen the crime being committed had come forward as witnesses. One witness said, "The crime was committed in the open and there were stars shining in the sky. I saw the stars as well as the murder." He was followed by another eyewitness who said, "The crime was committed inside the house, near the door, close to a wall. There are bloodstains on the wall, and since I was standing beside the wall, my clothes were also stained with blood. This murder took place inside the house."

The judge was puzzled. How could both be telling the truth? Obviously, one of them was lying. The murderer began to laugh. The judge asked what was so funny. The man said, "Let me tell you that both of them are right. The house was incomplete; the roof had not yet been laid -- the stars could be seen above. The murder took place under the open sky, but close to the door, close to the wall which bears the bloodstains. The house was almost ready; the walls had been raised, only the roofing was not yet done. So both are right."

Life is so complicated that even the things we find contradictory in it turn out to be right. Life is highly complex. Life is not the way we think it is -- it contains many contradictions; it is very vast.

In one sense, death is the greatest truth -- because the way we are living will come to an end; we will die the way we are, and the framework we have created will also be destroyed. Those we see as constituting our whole world -- wife, husband, son, father, friend -- they will all die. And yet death is a falsehood, because there is someone who dwells inside the son who is not the son and who will never die. There is someone who dwells inside the father who is not the father and who will never die. The father, of course, will die, but there is someone within him besides -- different from the father, separate, more than any relative -- who will never die. The body will die but there is someone within the body who never dies. Both these things are simultaneously true. So both these things need to be kept in mind to understand the nature of death.

Question 2

ANOTHER FRIEND HAS ASKED: THE THINGS WE WANT TO DESTROY -- SUCH AS THE CHAINS OF BLIND FAITH OR SUPERSTITION -- FIND EVEN MORE CONFIRMATION IN YOUR TALKS. IT SEEMS, ACCORDING TO WHAT YOU ARE SAYING, THAT THERE IS LIFE AFTER DEATH, THAT THERE ARE GODS AND THERE ARE

GHOSTS, THAT THERE IS TRANSMIGRATION OF THE SOUL. IN THAT CASE, IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO GET RID OF SUPERSTITIONS, WON'T THEY BECOME EVEN STRONGER?

Two things need to be understood here. One is: if something is accepted as a superstition without researching and investigating it properly, then that is tantamount to creating an even greater superstition; it shows a highly superstitious mind. One man believes there are ghosts and evil spirits and you call him superstitious; you believe there are none and that makes you feel that you are very knowledgeable. But the question is: what is superstition? If someone believes there are ghosts and evil spirits without any investigation, that is superstition; and if someone else believes there are no such things, without investigation, then that is superstition too. Superstition means believing something without knowing it to be true. Just because someone holds beliefs contrary to yours does not mean he is superstitious.

A believer in God can be as gullible as a nonbeliever. We must understand the definition of superstition. It means to believe in something blindly without verification. The Russians are superstitious atheists; the Indians are superstitious theists -- both suffer from blind faith. The Russians have never cared to discover there is no God and then believed it to be so, nor have the Indians tried to ascertain that God is before believing it to be so. So do not be mistaken in thinking that theists alone are superstitious; atheists have their own superstitions too. And the strange thing is that there is also a scientific superstition. It sounds contradictory: how can there be a scientific superstition?

If you have studied geometry, you must have come across Euclid's definition where he says a line has length but no breadth. Now, what can be more superstitious than this? There has never been a line with no breadth. Children are taught that a point has neither length nor breadth, and even the greatest scientist works on the assumption that a point has no length or breadth. Can a point exist without length and breadth?

We are all used to the digits one through nine. One may well ask: is this any less than superstition? Why nine digits? No scientist can explain why nine digits. Why not seven? What's wrong with seven? Why not three? There are mathematicians -- Leibnitz was one of them -- who got along with three digits. He said: one, two, three is followed by ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen; then twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three. His numbering system was such; he got along very well with it, and he challenged those who disagreed with him to prove him wrong. He questioned the need for nine digits.

Later on, Einstein said that even three digits are also unnecessary, that one can even get along with two; it will be difficult with only one digit, but one can manage with two. That there should be nine digits in mathematics is a scientific superstition. But the mathematician is not ready to give up either. He says, "How can you work with less than nine digits?" So this is just a belief too; it has no more significance than that.

From a scientific point of view we believe thousands of things to be right, but they are actually superstitions. Scientists are also superstitious, and in this age religious superstitions are fading while

scientific superstitions are growing. The difference between the two is simply that if you ask a religious person how he came to know about God he will say it is written in the Gita, and if you ask him how he came to know there are nine digits in arithmetic, he will say it is written in such-and-such a mathematician's book.

What is the difference between the two? One kind of answer is found in the Gita, in the Koran; another kind of answer is found in a book of mathematics. What is the difference? This shows we have to understand what is really meant by superstition. Superstition means that which we believe in without having knowledge of it. We accept many things and we reject many things without knowing anything about them -- this is superstitious too.

Suppose a man in a village is possessed by a ghost. Educated people will say it is superstition. Let us assume the uneducated people are superstitious; we have already branded them as superstitious because, being uneducated, these simple people are unable to offer any argument in favor of their belief. So all the educated people of the village maintain that the story of this man being possessed by an evil spirit is fake, but they don't know that at a university like Harvard, in America, there is a department conducting research into ghosts and spirits. The department has even circulated photographs of them. They have no idea that, currently, some highly recognized scientists are deeply involved in research into ghosts and spirits, and have attained so many results that sooner or later they will come to see that it was they, the educated men, who were superstitious, and that those they called superstitious may not have known anything about what they believed in, although what they were saying was right.

If you read Ryon or Oliver Lodge, you will be amazed. Oliver Lodge was a Nobel prizewinning scientist. Throughout his life he was involved in investigating ghosts and spirits. Before his death, he left a document in which he said, "All the truths of science I have discovered are not half as true as ghosts and spirits. But we have no knowledge of them because the superstitious educated do not care to find out about the discoveries happening in the world."

If one man says he can read another's mind, we will call it superstition. In Russia, where there are what we may call 'rigorous' scientists, there is a man by the name of Fiodev. He is a great Russian scientist. Sitting in Moscow, he has communicated his thoughts, without any visible means, to the mind of a person sitting a thousand miles away in Tiflis. This was examined scientifically and found to be correct. Scientists are engaged in this kind of research because sooner or later it will be useful in space travel. In the event of a mechanical failure in a spaceship, which is always possible, through these means scientists can establish contact with the travelers. Otherwise the spaceship may be lost forever. It is out of this concern that Russian scientists are conducting intensive research into telepathy and have achieved some astounding results.

Fiodev carried out his research with the help of a friend. A thousand miles away in Tiflis, his friend hid himself behind a bush in a garden with a wireless set in his hand, and he and Fiodev stayed in touch with each other. After a while he informed Fiodev that a man had arrived and sat on bench number ten. He asked Fiodev to send this man a message to go to sleep within three minutes. The man was wide awake;

he was smoking and humming away to himself. Fiodev began sending him suggestions -- the same as I do -- that "You are relaxing, you are relaxing." From a distance of a thousand miles, for three minutes Fiodev suggested intensely, "Go to sleep, go to sleep," and, concentrating on bench number ten, he continued suggesting the same thought, "Go to sleep, go to sleep." In exactly three minutes the man sitting on the bench was asleep, the cigarette fallen from his hands.

But this could have been a coincidence. Perhaps the man sitting on the bench was tired and so he had fallen asleep. And so the friend told Fiodev that the man had indeed fallen asleep, but that it could be a coincidence, so he asked Fiodev to wake him up in exactly seven minutes. Fiodev kept suggesting to that man to wake up, and in seven minutes precisely the man opened his eyes and got up. The man on the bench was a total stranger; he had no idea what was happening, and Fiodev's friend approached him and asked if he'd felt anything unusual.

The man said, "Yes, I certainly did. I was very puzzled. I came here to wait for somebody, and suddenly I felt that my body was about to fall asleep. I lost control and went to sleep. And then I felt strongly as if someone was telling me 'Get up, get up. Get up in seven minutes!' I can't figure any of this out." The man had no idea what had happened.

Communication of thought without any medium has become a scientific truth, but an educated man would call it superstition. It is possible that a sick man in one town can be cured from a faraway town; it's not too difficult. It's also possible that a snakebite can be healed from a distance of thousands of miles; there's not much difficulty to it. But there are many different kinds of superstitions. And remember, the superstition of an educated man is always more dangerous than that of an uneducated man, because the educated man does not consider his superstition to be superstition. For him it is a result arrived at after great deliberation.

Now this friend says we have to break the chains of superstition. First make sure there are any chains, otherwise you may break somebody's arms and legs in the process. Chains can only be broken if there are any. What if there are none? You must also make sure that what you believe is a chain that needs to be broken does not happen to be an ornament you may have to remake. All these things require very careful consideration.

I am absolutely against superstition; all kinds of superstitions must be destroyed -- but this does not mean that I am superstitious about this destruction. It does not mean one should go about destroying them without a clear understanding of them, that without due consideration one should simply be bent upon breaking them. Then such arbitrary destruction will also become superstition.

Every age has its own superstitions. Remember, superstitions have their fashion too. In every age superstitions take on a new form. Man drops old superstitions and takes on new ones, but he never gets rid of them forever; he alters them and he changes them. But we never realize this.

For example, once upon a time there was a superstition that the man who applied tilak, the forehead mark, was considered religious. What has applying tilak to do with being religious? But that's the way it was understood. And someone who didn't apply the tilak was looked down upon as irreligious. This old

superstition is no longer in vogue. Now we have new superstitions, equally as foolish. If a man wears a tie he is considered distinguished; otherwise he is considered ordinary. It is the same thing, there is no difference at all. The tie has replaced the tilak, while the man has remained the same. Where is there any difference?

The tie is no better than the tilak. Perhaps it's even worse, because at least there was a meaning to applying the tilak. The tie has absolutely no meaning in this country, although it may have a meaning in some other country. A tie is useful in cold countries where it helps protect the throat against cold. In those countries, a man who cannot afford to cover his throat against the cold must obviously be a poor man. A man of means is able to cover his throat with the help of a necktie; however, when somebody puts a tie around his neck in a hot country such as this, then it seems a little scary -- one wonders whether such a man is affluent or insane!

To be affluent does not mean one has to suffer from heat or wear this noose around his neck. A tie means a noose; a tie means a knot. Using it in a cold country makes sense, but in a hot country it is totally meaningless. And yet, a man who has an idea of dignity -- the magistrate, the attorney, the politician -- is out there with this noose around his neck! And these very people denounce the tilak wearers as superstitious! One can well ask them, "Isn't wearing a necktie a superstition too? Which scientific system are you applying, that you have tied this tie around your neck?" But since the tie is a superstition of this age it is acceptable, and since the tilak is a superstition of the past, it is unacceptable.

As I said earlier, as the tie has some meaning for people in cold countries, applying a tilak can also have meaning, but without first looking into it, it is utterly dangerous and wrong to call it a superstition right away -- you may not have given any thought as to why a tilak is applied. People mostly apply it out of superstition; however, there was some scientific reason when people applied it for the first time. Actually, tilak is applied on the forehead at the spot between the two eyes where the agya chakra, the third-eye chakra, is located. Even with a little meditation this spot gets hot; however, it cools down with the application of sandalwood. The application of sandalwood is a highly scientific technique, but now it is lost; people are not concerned with that science anymore. Now anybody goes on applying sandalwood whether he has any knowledge of the agya chakra or has ever done any meditation or not.

It is strange to find people wearing ties in hot countries. Wearing a tie can have a scientific basis in cold countries, and similarly, a tilak has a scientific meaning for one who meditates on the agya chakra because sandalwood cools that spot. Meditating on the agya chakra, stimulation occurs and heat is created in that area -- and it needs cooling down or else it will harm the brain. But were we determined to remove the tilak altogether, we would of course take it away from those who are wearing it pointlessly, but we would also be removing it from the forehead of the poor guy who may have applied it for his own reason. And if he won't remove it, we will call him superstitious.

What I am saying is that there is no way you can determine what is superstitious and what is not. Actually, the same thing can be a superstition under one condition and scientific under different conditions. Something which might appear to be scientific under a certain condition may appear unscientific under a different set of conditions.

For example, in Tibet there is a practice of taking a bath once a year -- which is quite scientific, because there is no dust in Tibet and, being in a cold climate, people do not sweat. So they don't need to bathe. Taking a bath every day would simply harm their bodies; it would cause them to lose much body heat. And how are they going to replace that heat? It could prove very costly to stay uncovered in Tibet. If a man were to keep his body uncovered for a whole day, he would need forty percent more food to replace the calories lost. In a place like India, if a man goes about without clothes he is revered as a renunciate. Mahavira was sensible: he remained naked -- and in a hot country like this, the more the heat leaves the body, the cooler it feels inside. But if a follower of Mahavira were to arrive in Tibet naked, he would deserve to be admitted to a mental asylum. To appear in Tibet like this would be absolutely unscientific, stupid. But that's how it always happens.

When a Tibetan lama comes to India, he never bathes. Once I stayed with Tibetan lamas in Bodh Gaya. They were stinking so badly it was a torture to sit near them. When I asked why they were like that, they replied, "We follow the rule of bathing only once a year." This is where I make the distinction between superstition and science. That which is a science in Tibet is a superstition in India. Here, these lamas are stinking without realizing their bodies are perspiring heavily and that there is much dust all around.

We have no idea, but there are some countries where there is no dust at all. When Khrushchev first came to India he was taken to Agra to see the Taj Mahal, and on the way he saw a whirlwind of dust taking shape. He had the car stopped, got out and stood right in the middle of the whirlwind. He was so happy. He said, "I am so lucky, I have never had such an experience before." We wouldn't feel lucky to be caught in so much dust. But where he comes from there are piles of snow, not dust. It was a fascinating experience for him, as it is for us when we are in snow. How excited we feel when we walk on snow in the Himalayas. So don't get into breaking things simply believing them to be chains, without first taking into consideration the age, the conditions, and their usefulness.

A scientific mind is that which always hesitates. A man with a scientific mind never makes a decision in haste, saying, "This is right and that is wrong." Rather he always says, "Perhaps this may be right, but let me search more and more." Even at the end of his search he never comes to a decision and says with finality, "Okay, this is wrong, so destroy it." Life is so mysterious that nothing can be said in such definite terms. All we can say is, "So far, we have known this much, and based upon this knowledge such-and-such a thing appears to be wrong" -- that's all. A man with a scientific attitude will say, "Based on the information available so far, such-and-such a thing does not seem to be right today; however, with added information it may appear right tomorrow. Something which is right today may prove to be wrong tomorrow." Such a man never makes a hasty decision about what is right and what is wrong. He always keeps on searching with an inquiring and humble mind.

There is fun in holding on to a superstition, and there is also fun in breaking it. The fun in holding on to a superstition is that it spares us the trouble of thinking -- we believe what everyone else believes. We don't even want to ask the reason behind it, or why it's so. Who wants to bother? One simply follows the crowd. It's convenient to have superstitions.

And then there are people who are out to crack superstitions -- that too is very convenient. The man who cracks them appears to be rational, without actually being rational. It's not easy to be rational; to see things rationally is to strain every nerve. This man looks into things so closely it becomes difficult for him to make any categorical statement. And so his statements are always conditional. He will say, "Under such conditions it is valid not to bathe in Tibet, while under other conditions it is utterly superstitious not to bathe in India." The man who thinks rationally will speak this kind of language.

On the other hand, a social reformer shows no concern for what he is saying: he is concerned with destroying things; he wants to destroy certain things. I say: go ahead and destroy -- there are many things which have to be destroyed -- but the first thing that has to be destroyed, however, is thoughtlessness. The tendency to act without first giving something rational thought is the primary thing that needs to be destroyed. So what it means is: if you destroy something without first giving it proper thought, then such destruction has no value. The tendency to think rationally has to be created, and the tendency to believe thoughtlessly has to be destroyed. This will lead us to see different contexts, deeper meanings. Then we will make an intensive search; we will think and reason. Then we will consider all the possibilities.

Psychoanalysis is very popular in the West, and the interesting thing is that psychoanalysis is doing exactly the same kind of work as the good old witch doctor did in the villages. Nowadays, in France, there is an active sect created by Cuvier. Cuvier works on the same principles as the witch doctor did, except that Cuvier is a scientist and he uses scientific terminology -- other than that everything is the same; there is no difference.

You will be amazed to know that when a sadhu, a mendicant, an ordinary man of the village, with no knowledge of medicine, gives a pinch of ash to a sick man in the name of God, we call it superstition. And yet, it works as effectively, and people are cured in the same proportion as with allopathic treatment. It is very interesting -- the same ratio. Many experiments are being carried out in this area.

A unique experiment was conducted in a London hospital. A hundred patients with the same illness were divided into two groups. Fifty were given the regular injection, while the other fifty were injected with water. And the amazing thing is that the ratio of cured patients in both cases was the same. So the question was raised: what's going on?

In view of this experiment, it became necessary to examine the issue more closely. And what became clear was that the idea, the feeling that medicine is being given, works more than the medicine itself. Also, even the medicine, the dispensing of the medicine itself, does not work so much as does the idea of how expensive the medicine is and how well known the doctor is. A lesser known doctor fails in his treatment not because he does not know his profession, but only because he is not very well known. A well recognized doctor impresses a patient at once. With his impressive attire, the overbearing set up, his fees, his big car, the long wait for an appointment, the crowd, the standing in line -- you are already so impressed that whether he knows what he is giving you or not has very little effect.

The truth is that to be a good doctor you don't need a first class knowledge of medicine, what you need is an excellent knowledge of advertising. The question is how well you can publicize yourself. Publicity pays more, not the medicine.

Recently, a medical survey revealed that in France there are about eighty thousand physicians and about one hundred and sixty thousand quacks. When the patient gets tired of the practicing physicians, he is cured by those who have no knowledge of medicine. But they know the trick of how to treat a patient. That's why you see so many kinds of 'pathies' prevalent. Can you imagine -- all these different kinds of 'pathies' abounding in this age of science? Even naturopathy works -- a bandaging of mud on the stomach works; an enema with water works; the witch doctor's charms work. Even homeopathy, which consists of nothing but tiny sugar pills, works. These all work, and so does allopathy.

So the question arises: how does a patient get well? If a village quack prescribes a little dust and cures his patients, then we will have to think carefully; we will have to be concerned about whether to break such superstitions or not. The man with a stethoscope around his neck and a big car is also able to cure patients through his scientific means. But a magic is working there too -- the magic of the car, of the stethoscope.

I know one quack. He has no degree from any university, and yet he has cured many patients I sent to him, patients who had otherwise been pronounced incurable by other doctors. The man is smart; he has a remarkable understanding of human nature. Actually, that's how one happens to be a professional physician! So if you go to his clinic for treatment, your diagnosis will be conducted in such a way that half your illness will go away while you are still being diagnosed. He is an extremely clever doctor; all other doctors feel quite intimidated by him.

He has a large, impressive and serious-looking consulting room with a big table on which he makes the patient lie down. Above the patient's chest hangs a thing which looks like a stethoscope. This contraption is connected to two transparent tubes containing colored water. When he applies the stethoscope-like contraption to the patient's chest, the heartbeat causes the water in the tube to jump. The patient looks at the jumping water and is convinced he has come to a great doctor indeed; he has never seen such a doctor before. The thing he uses is a sort of stethoscope, except that he doesn't connect it to his ears, he watches the rising and falling of the water in the tubes, and this assures the patient that he is no ordinary doctor.

Do you know why an allopathic doctor writes prescriptions in such illegible handwriting? The reason is that if you could read it, you would find it is such an ordinary thing that you could even go and buy it in the market -- and so it is deliberately written with such skill that you are unable to read it. The truth is, if you were to take this same prescription back to the doctor, he himself wouldn't be able to figure out what he'd written. Another interesting thing is that the names of all medicines have to be written in Latin and Greek. The reason is simple: if he were to write in English, Hindi or Gujarati, you would never pay him ten or fifteen rupees for an injection; you would know it is nothing but a concoction of caraway seeds.

These are all magical tricks. It is the same as the villager who gives his patients a pinch of ash. But this will not be effective either if he looks like an ordinary man. If he is dressed, however, in an ochre robe, it will have more effect. And if the man is known to be honest, virtuous, kind and truthful, the pinch of ash will be far more effective. If it is known that he does not charge money, that he does not even touch money, the ash will have an electrifying effect. So it is not the ash that works, it is the other factors which are at work. It needs careful consideration whether or not such cures be allowed to continue, because, if you ban this type of cure, others equally as false will have to be found to replace them. It never ends.

Man must be made to think so that he does not fall sick out of ignorance, so that he does not bring pseudo illnesses upon himself. As long as fake illnesses keep happening, fake doctors will keep on appearing as well. If you remove the old, pseudo methods, new ones will crop up -- and if you then remove these, new ones will be born. There are so many types of treatment in the world, but there is no way to decide which one is right; they all claim to be successful in curing illnesses. And their claims are valid -- they do cure illnesses.

The more we probe into the human psyche, the more it becomes clear that the disease exists somewhere in the human mind. As long as the disease exists in the human mind, the pseudo treatments will also continue to exist. Hence, I am not so much concerned with doing away with pseudo methods, I am more concerned with putting an end to the disease in the human mind. If the disease in the human mind disappears, if man's consciousness awakens, if he becomes discriminating, he will not be surrounded by annoying troubles. It is not that you go and collect ash because a man distributes it in a village -- no, it is because you are eager to collect the ash; that's why someone has to distribute it.

No one becomes your leader on his own -- but you cannot live for a second without one; that's why somebody has to become the leader. If you remove one leader, you will find another -- and if he is removed you will find a third. And, in fact, while you are removing one leader you will have first made sure who you want for your next. And so leaders all over the world know very well the need for leading opposition parties. They know, with confidence, that when the people get fed up with one leader they will automatically elect the second, and when they get tired of the second they will replace him with the first. That's why two-party politics goes on all over the world. Everywhere, people are the same.

I was in Raipur during the last elections. A friend of mine, an old resident of Raipur, had been successively elected several times as a member of parliament, but this time he was defeated. Another friend of mine who was totally unknown and had recently settled in Raipur was elected in his place. I asked my friend how this happened. How did he lose and a total newcomer win the election?

He said, "It's very clear. People have become too used to me. This man is a new face; people don't know him yet. Don't worry, let him become a familiar figure and he will be defeated too. I will have to bide my time until then. By then I will be unfamiliar once again, and then I will have the upper hand."

Deep down, it is not a question of whether to remove this leader or that leader, whether to do away with this superstition or that superstition -- that is not the issue. The question is to bring about a fundamental change in man. A scientific mind will not care much about superstition, but superstition

will continue to exist as long as man is content with his blindness. If a man is not ready to open his eyes, then blindness is bound to exist.

And let me ask: who among us is really willing to open his eyes? None of us is willing to see with our eyes open, because with our eyes open we may see truths we don't want to see. That's why we close our eyes and see whatsoever we fancy. Have you ever opened your eyes and observed closely what life is like? Have you ever seen yourself with your eyes open? That you never want to do, because then you will see horrifying things.

Everyone considers himself to be absolutely pious, a mahatma. If he were to open his eyes and look closely, he would find, to his horror, the greatest sinner of all hidden within himself. He doesn't want to see that, of course, because then it will be difficult for him to be a mahatma. And so he shuts his eyes to himself. And not only that, in doing so he uses those people who can help him shut his eyes -- around him he gathers all those people who come and tell him what a great mahatma he is. Thus he goes on gathering followers. Around him, he gathers all those people who cooperate in keeping him blind.

And there are many wonderful tricks for collecting people; incredible deceptions are practiced in this respect. One of the tricks for gathering people is to keep on shouting, "Don't come near me! I don't want anyone around me!" People are terribly impressed with this trick. They flock to such a man. The more he drives them away, the greater the mahatma they think he is. An ordinary mahatma would welcome people, but this one swings his staff and sends them away. He shows no concern for anyone.

I have heard about a man who had wandered a beach in California for years. He had become a kind of attraction. The story that went around about him was that he was such a simple man that if you offered him a ten-dollar bill and a dime, he would pick up the dime cheerfully. That's how innocent he was. Out of curiosity, a man visited him five or six times and always found him surrounded by a crowd. People would ask, "Baba, what do you want -- this or that?" and he would pick up the dime at once, saying he liked it, he liked the shine of it. People found him such an innocent man.

The curious man found it hard to believe that even after so many years this fellow could not recognize a ten-dollar bill! That was too much innocence! One evening, after the crowd had disappeared, this curious man approached the fellow and said, "I have been watching you for the last twenty years, and I am astonished to find this game going on for so long. Do you still not recognize a ten-dollar bill?"

The fellow laughed, and said, "I knew it was a ten-dollar bill from the very first day, but if I had shown I recognized it the game would have stopped right then and there. By not recognizing the bill, I have collected dimes from thousands of spectators. If I recognize it once, then that will be the only bill I'll ever have in my hand -- no other bill will come from these people afterwards. So if I really want to make money, then I must spurn riches -- and the bills will start piling up on their own. I have a good understanding of the whole thing; my job is going very well. During the day, I collect up to five hundred dollars from the crowd. The game will continue for sure."

The so-called mahatma also knows the value of money, although if you talk to him about money, he will say he never even touches it. But his disciple, sitting nearby, will pick up the offerings and put them in the safe -- because the mahatma never touches money!

What can anyone do if a man wants to remain blind? Who will be stupid enough to do anything about it? That fellow on the beach is not the cause of mischief. The mischief-mongers are those people who approach him. It is because of their mischief the poor fellow has to put on the act. Let me tell you that if he had not done it, somebody else would have done the same thing. And people are stupid: wherever they can, they will continue to do what they did with this fellow; they want somebody to snatch their money away from them. Hence, such acts will continue. They can only be brought to an end when we begin to destroy the stupidity of man.

So don't worry too much about breaking the chains of superstition, because if the man who is wearing the chain remains the same he will make new ones. He cannot live without chains. The kind of man he is, he will create new chains.

All religions strive to break these chains, and every religion creates a new chain -- so things remain the same. The world has seen so many religions. They were all founded to bring about reforms; they all proclaimed their intent to eradicate all prevailing superstitions, but in the process of destroying superstitions nothing ever really gets destroyed. Of course, those who are fed up with the old superstitions replace them with new ones and are very happy, feeling they have brought about change.

In fact, an intelligent man never holds on to anything -- not even to any belief, let alone to superstition. He lives intelligently; he doesn't hang on to anything. He never creates any chain because he knows there is immense joy in living in freedom. Don't create any chains.

So the real question is to awaken enough consciousness in each individual that will create a desire in him to become free, to become intelligent, to become self-realized, to be filled with awareness. If the tendency to live blindly -- to become a follower, a pursuer, a believer in somebody -- could be reduced, all superstitions would crumble. But in that case it would not be that one kind of superstition would break down and another would survive -- all would collapse; they would leave all at once. Otherwise, they will remain forever.

Actually, what needs to be understood is that nothing happens by merely changing clothes. Let anyone wear whatsoever he pleases. If someone wants to wear ochre-colored clothes, let him do so, why stop him? If someone wants to wear black clothes, let him do so. What one needs to realize is that a change in clothes does not equal a change in one's life. Once this is realized, then there is no need to change clothes, because the man who will make you change your clothes will immediately replace them with clothes of a new kind.

A sannyasin, wearing ochre clothes, went to see Gandhi and told him he was very impressed with his ideas and would also like to serve the country. What Gandhi told him was highly significant. He said, "That's fine, but first you will have to give up your ochre clothes, because they will come in the way of your service. Generally, people serve those who wear ochre clothes rather than being served by them."

This was very true. But then Gandhi, having made him drop the ochre clothes, made him wear clothes of khadi, of handspun cotton.

Now those who are wearing khadi are doing things even the people wearing ochre clothes never did before. What difference has it made? Now the khadi people are accepting service. The poor ochre people never accepted as much service as those who are wearing khadi are doing now. So khadi has proven to be very costly for this country. The sannyasin was very happy that his superstition about ochre clothing had dropped -- but now he wears khadi; now he is holding on to the superstition of khadi. What's the difference?

The real question is not of letting people drop one thing and making them take on another. The question is to come to understand that very mentality which holds on to things. Gandhi did not sharpen that man's intelligence; he remained as stupid as ever. He simply made him change his clothes, and the man felt very happy to do so. But what difference did it make? This is how it has always been.

For the last five thousand years the story of humanity has been one of great misfortune. By an effort to break down a superstition we never change the man, we simply do away with the superstition -- but then he creates a new superstition. Whatever we offer, he seizes upon it. "All right," he says, "let it be this. I'll drop the other superstition and hold on to this one!" And we feel very happy because he has accepted our superstition.

A young man used to visit me. Day and night he used to talk about the scriptures. He knew the Upanishads, the Gita, the Vedas, by heart. I told him, "Stop all this nonsense. You will gain nothing from it!" He became very angry with me, but nevertheless he continued to visit me. Someone who gets angry with you never stops visiting you, because anger also brings you into a relationship. He was certainly angry at me, yet he still kept coming. As the days went by and as he heard me more and more, something touched him. One day he came to me and said, "I bundled up the Gita, the Upanishads, the Vedas, and threw them all in a well."

"When did I tell you to throw them away?" I asked.

"I had to empty my shelf in order to make room for your books. Now I fully agree with your books," he said.

I said, "But this has made things more difficult. Nothing has changed. I was merely telling you not to agree with a book. I never asked you to throw that book away and grab on to my book. What difference has your doing so made?"

The so-called gurus feel very happy if their kind of superstition is held by people. This is how, even though superstitions keep changing, man himself continues to remain superstitious.

So I told the young man to throw my books into the same well too. He said, "How can that be possible?" He could never do that, he asserted. So I said, "Then the whole thing has remained as it was. Now my book has become your Gita. What was wrong with poor Krishna's Gita? If you needed to carry something, his Gita was sufficient -- it served your purpose; it was much thicker than my book; it added

enough weight to you. How are things different now? When did I ever blame Krishna? When did I ever say that Krishna was at fault?

This is how it has always been -- and still is. What simply happens is that man remains the same, only his toys change. I feel very happy if someone takes my toy; I feel delighted that at last someone has taken my idea. My ego finds satisfaction in seeing that someone has started to believe more in me than in Krishna. But this does not bring about a change in humanity; humanity can never be benefited by this. What we need to be concerned about is how to break, from within, this human mentality that grabs on to things. How can man overcome his blindness?

I suggest to this friend: don't set about breaking down superstitions; instead, change the superstitious mind. Change that mind which breeds superstition, so that a new man can take birth. But it is an arduous task; it will require a great deal of effort. It is not an easy job. To be accomplished, it will require very scientific thought.

Don't be in such a hurry to deny the existence of ghosts and evil spirits. They are far more real than you. There is no falsity about their existence, but you will have to explore. And it so often happens that those who are scared of ghosts also begin to deny their existence. They say so, not because they have become very knowledgeable, the only reason is wish-fulfillment -- they don't want ghosts to exist, because if there are ghosts it will be difficult to walk down a dark alley. So in a loud voice they keep repeating, "There are no ghosts. Absolutely! It is all superstition; we will destroy the superstition!" What they are saying is they are very scared of ghosts. If there really are ghosts it will cause a lot of trouble, so they should not exist in the first place -- that's the wish. Such a mind can never make ghosts nonexistent.

If ghosts are, then they are. Whether you believe it or not, it makes no difference. What is, is, and it's better we investigate it -- because whatever exists is related to us in one way or another; it is bound to be so. Hence it is more appropriate to understand them, to recognize them, and to find ways to establish contact with them, to figure out how to interact with them. It's not an easy matter.

The empty space you see between you and someone else may not necessarily be empty. There may be someone sitting there. You may not be able to see him; that's a different matter. But the idea that somebody might be sitting there can frighten you, so we don't leave an empty space, we stick together. We are always afraid of an empty space; that's why we fill our room with furniture, calendars, pictures of gods and goddesses, anything. Being in an empty space, being in an empty house, we are frightened. We fill them with people, with furnishings, so no empty space is left. Even then, there is plenty of empty space which is not altogether empty. And it has its own science.

If one wants to work in this direction, it can be done. One can systematically work on this -- it is an independent science; it has its own laws and methods. However, before you begin working in this area, never say whether these things exist or do not exist. It is better to suspend your judgment, to keep your conclusions in abeyance for a while -- just say you don't know.

If asked whether there are ghosts or not, it will be characteristic of the scientific mind to answer, "I don't know, because I haven't looked into it yet. Also, I haven't even looked into myself yet. How can I find out

whether or not there are ghosts? I am not even able to find myself as yet!" So never be in a hurry to answer yes or no. Someone who gives a quick answer is superstitious. Keep thinking, keep searching. An intelligent man, in fact, will answer with great reluctance.

Once somebody asked Einstein how he differentiated between a scientist and a superstitious man. Einstein replied, "If you ask one hundred questions to a man of superstition, he will be prepared to offer a hundred and one answers. And if you ask one hundred questions to a scientist, he will claim absolute ignorance about ninety-eight of them. About the remaining two he will say, 'I know a little, but that knowledge is not ultimate; it can change tomorrow.'"

Remember, a scientific mind is the only artless mind. A superstitious mind is not. But in appearance, it looks the opposite. It looks as if a superstitious mind is very simple, but it is not; it is very complex and cunning. The greatest cunning of the superstitious mind is that it affirms things it has no knowledge of. A person with such a mind doesn't even know anything about a rock lying at his doorstep, but in his frenzy to prove his God is right and your God is wrong, he will go out and kill people. If, as yet, he cannot even explain what a rock is.... And when he cannot prove that a rock is Mohammedan or Hindu, how will he be able to easily prove that God is Hindu or Mohammedan? But he will go ahead and kill people! And remember, resorting to violence shows that those things such acts are committed for must all be rooted in superstition.

People never come to blows over matters pertaining to knowledge; it is impossible. Wherever there is conflict, rest assured superstition is there -- because a superstitious man wants to prove through conflict that he is right; he has no other means. If a man were to jump on me and put a sword to my throat saying, "Tell me I am right or I'll chop your head off" -- he can chop my head off, of course, but that doesn't prove him right. No one has ever been proven right by chopping off somebody's head.

Even if all the Mohammedans get together and massacre all the Hindus, they will never be proven right - just as the Hindus will never be proven right if they all join together to slaughter all the Mohammedans. They will merely prove themselves stupid, nothing else. Has the sword ever proven anything right? But that's the only means available to the superstitious man. With what other means can he say that such and such a thing is right? He has no concept, he has never probed; he has no proof, he has no direction. He knows only one thing: might is right.

All over the world everyone is doing this. I am not saying that only religious leaders are involved in such acts of violence, the politicians are no different. Whether Russia or America is right will be settled through the use of hydrogen bombs -- obviously; there is no other means. It is exactly the same sort of foolishness. Is this how it can be resolved as to which of the two is right? How can it be determined whether Marx is right or wrong? Will it be by the use of the sword? Or by dropping the hydrogen bomb? Which will it be? It will have to be determined through the application of thought -- but man is not yet free to think; he is still beset by superstition.

So remember, my emphasis is not on breaking the chains, my emphasis is on doing away with the superstitious mind that creates these chains. If that mind persists, then no matter how many chains you break it will create new ones. And remember, new fetters are far more attractive, more lovable, more

worth holding on to. And remember this too: the new chain is always stronger than the old one, because by now our knowledge of how to make chains is also more developed, more advanced. It often occurs to me that those in the business of breaking down superstitions only succeed in providing much tougher superstitions as substitutes for the worn-out ones -- they do nothing more than that.

The superstitious mind has to be discarded, or else it will keep on breeding superstition. Be cogitative, and make others cogitative also. "Be cogitative" means: think, search, be inquisitive. Speak only after you have the right experience, and still admit readily that your experience is not necessarily right. People may have other experiences tomorrow. You may even have to go through different experiences, and it is not certain that what you experienced was not an hallucination.

So until that experience has been verified by scores of experiences more, it is better not to say anything about it. That's why a scientist conducts an experiment, repeats it a thousand times, makes a thousand other people do it, and only then does he arrive at some kind of a conclusion. And even then he never reaches a final conclusion. One who wants to reach a conclusion in a hurry can never think. A man in a hurry to reach a final conclusion inevitably fills himself with superstition. And we are all in a great hurry.

A friend, in his question, has asked everything the whole of humanity is searching for and has not yet been able to find! He asks:

Question 3

DOES GOD EXIST OR NOT? WHAT IS JEEVATMAN, THE INDIVIDUAL SOUL? WHERE IS MOKSHA? WHO CREATED HEAVEN? IS THERE A HELL? WHY HAS MAN APPEARED ON THE EARTH? WHAT IS THE GOAL OF LIFE?

He is in such a hurry he wants to know about all of this instantly. A man in such a hurry will undoubtedly become superstitious. Search requires great patience, tremendous patience: it doesn't matter if we don't find what we are looking for in one lifetime, but we will continue to search. In fact, for one who is cogitative, attaining is not important -- searching is. For a man of superstition, attaining is important, seeking is totally unimportant.

A superstitious man is anxious to know how he can attain. "Where is God?" he asks. He is not much concerned with first finding out whether there is a God or not. He is not interested in the pursuit of God; that is not his cup of tea. He says, "You seek him and then show me." That's why he is out looking for a guru.

Whosoever is looking for a guru is bound to end up being superstitious -- he can't stop short of that. In fact, looking for a guru implies, "You have found, now please show us. Since you have already found, what is the point in our searching now? We bow down to your feet. Please give us what you have attained." The idea is for someone else to place his hand on your head and have you realize God. So

people are wandering around accepting mantras, becoming initiates, paying fees, massaging feet, serving, in the hope that what someone has already attained can become their own. This can never happen. This shows clearly the hold of the superstitious mind.

Someone else's achievement can never become yours. That poor fellow went in search and found, and you want to have it free? And remember, if he has searched, then while searching he must also have realized that one attains through seeking, not by asking. And so he will not even create any disciples. Only those are after disciples who have themselves not yet attained. They are hanging on to some other guru above them. There is a long series of gurus, all hoping to gain from the other.

Many gurus are already dead, and yet people hang on to them in the hope they will give them something. There is a long chain of dead gurus, going back thousands and millions of years, and they are all hanging on to each other hoping someone may give something. This is the mark of a superstitious mind.

The characteristic of a searching mind, the indication of a reflective mind is, "If there is God, then I will search for him. If I succeed in finding him, then it will be because of my merit, my birthright. If I ever find him, then it will be because of my lifelong dedication, my sacrifice, my meditation. It will be the fruit of my effort."

And remember, if God does become available free, a cogitative individual will turn him down. He will say, "It is not right to accept something that has not come out of my own effort. I will attain through my own effort." And bear in mind there are certain things which can only be attained through one's own effort. God is not one of those things sold in the market, a piece of merchandise available anywhere. Truth is not one of those articles sold in a department store where you can go and purchase it. But such stores are open.

There are stores, there are bazaars, where a signboard hangs, saying "Real Truth Available Here." Even truth is of the real and artificial kind! On every shop the sign says, "The real Master lives here. The rest are all fake masters; they live somewhere else. This is the only authentic shop. Buy from us! Give us the chance to serve you!" And once you have entered one of these shops, the owner won't want you to leave that easily. All this mischief is the creation of the superstitious mind.

I would like to say to you: have faith in seeking, not in begging. You will attain to God not by begging but by knowing. Also, never believe what others say. Someone may have attained -- it is possible of course -- so don't disbelieve either, because that is superstition too. Neither believe nor disbelieve. If someone comes along and says he has attained God, say, "Congratulations. God has been very compassionate to you, allowing you to find him. But kindly don't show me. Let me find him also; otherwise I will remain a cripple."

If you are carried to a destination someone has already walked to, you will arrive as a cripple. Feet grow stronger by walking. Reaching a destination is not so important, the really important thing is that the traveler becomes stronger in the pursuit. Attaining something is not as important as the transformation of the one who attained.

God, knowledge, or moksha are not readymade things. They are the fruit of the offering of one's life, of a lifetime of effort and sadhana. It is like the ultimate flower which comes on its own. But if you go to the market you will find plastic flowers. They last longer. You just need to dust them -- they last longer and create deception too. But whom do they deceive? Plastic flowers can deceive others -- those walking on the street can be fooled; they may think the flowers in your window are real -- but you can't be deceived because you bought them yourself.

For real flowers one has to sow the seeds, one has to put in effort, one has to raise the plants. Then, on their own, flowers bloom -- they are not brought in. The experience of God is like the flower, one's sadhana is like the plant. Care for the plant and the flower will come by itself. But we are in a hurry. We say, "Forget the plant; just give us the flower!"

Sometimes when children go to school for an examination, they don't solve the arithmetic problem, they look up the answer in the back of the arithmetic book and write it down. Even though the answer given is absolutely right, it is totally wrong. How can the answer of one who has not followed the method be right? His answer is absolutely right -- he has written 'five' -- and those who followed the method have also written 'five'. But do you see the difference in the answer given by those who followed the method and those who stole it from the back of the book? And what difference does it make whether they have stolen it from the back of the Gita or the Koran?

Even though the answer given by both is the same, it is not the same; there is a fundamental difference. The real question is not finding the answer, the real question is not arriving at 'five', the real question is learning how to arrive at the sum. And the one who looked in the back of the book didn't learn that. He didn't learn the arithmetic, he only got the answer.

And so, if you have learned something from somewhere, if you have received something from somebody, if you have heard something from someone and grabbed on to it -- then such a God is stolen from the back of the book. Then such a God is lifeless, dead, useless, good for nothing, not alive. An alive religion comes into being by living it, not by stealing answers from the back of some book.

But we are all thieves. We scold little children and warn them not to steal. The teacher also makes it clear that his students must not look for answers in the back of the book, that they should not steal their answers from somewhere -- but if he were to ask himself whether all his answers were stolen or not, it would seem all his answers were stolen as well.

The guru is a thief, the disciple is a thief, the teacher is a thief. All life's answers are stolen. From stolen answers one can never find peace or joy. Joy is attained by going through the same process by which flowers of answers bloom on their own. They are not borrowed.

Chapter #6

Chapter title: Love is Dangerous

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Question 1

A FRIEND HAS ASKED: WHY SHOULD WE THINK OF DEATH AT ALL? WE HAVE LIFE, LET US LIVE IT. LET US LIVE IN THE PRESENT. WHY DO WE BRING IN THE THOUGHT OF DEATH?

He has asked the right thing. But his very asking, "Why bring in the idea of death?" or "Let's just live and not even think of death" shows in itself that even he cannot escape thinking about death. Death is such an enormous fact it cannot be ignored; although throughout our lives we try not to think of death -- not because death is not worth thinking about, but because the very thought of it is terrifying. The very idea that "I will die" sends chills up our spines. Of course, it will shake you up while dying; but even before that, if this idea takes hold of your mind, it will shake you to your very roots.

Man has always tried to forget about death, he has tried not to think about it. We have managed our entire system of life in such a way that death should not become visible. All man's efforts and plans towards falsifying death seem to be succeeding, but they never are successful -- because death is there. How will you escape from it? Where will you escape? Even running away from it, you are ultimately going to run into it. No matter where you escape, no matter which direction you take, eventually you are going to end up there. Every day it approaches nearer -- whether you think about it or not, whether you escape from it or not. One can never run away from a fact.

It is not that death is something which will happen in the future, so why think about it now? This too is a misapprehension. Death will not happen in the future -- death is already happening every moment. Although it will come to its completion in the future, it is actually taking place every moment. We are dying this very moment. If we sit here for an hour, we will be dead one hour. It may take seventy years for us to die completely, nevertheless this one hour will be a part of it. During this one hour we will be

dying too. It is not that after seventy years one dies all of a sudden; death never occurs instantaneously. It is not a sudden event; it is a growth that begins with birth.

In fact, birth constitutes one end of death, and death constitutes the other end. This journey begins with birth. What we call the birthday is actually the first day of death. It will take time, but the journey will continue.

For example, a man sets out from Dwarka for Calcutta. The very first step he takes will be as much to reach Calcutta as his last step. The final step will be as instrumental in bringing him to Calcutta as the initial step. And if the initial step can't bring him to Calcutta, the last step cannot either. This means that when he took his first step towards Calcutta, he began to reach Calcutta. With each step Calcutta drew nearer and nearer. You may perhaps say he took six months to arrive at Calcutta, but the fact is that it is only because he had started to arrive six months ago that he could arrive six months later.

The second thing I would like to say to you is: don't think that death is somewhere in the future, death is present every moment. And what is future? It is the sum total of all of our presents. We keep on adding to it. It is just like when we heat water. At the first degree the water warms up, but it hasn't turned into steam yet. And the same is the case when it heats up two degrees. The water will turn into steam when it heats to a hundred degrees; however, it started moving closer to becoming steam at the first degree, and then at the second, and the third and so on. But even when it's at ninety-nine degrees the water does not turn into steam; that will only happen when it reaches one hundred.

Has it ever occurred to you that the hundredth degree is also a degree, just as the first degree is also a degree? The journey from the ninety-ninth degree to the hundredth degree is the same as from the first to the second degree; there is no difference. So the one who knows will warn you at the very first degree that the water will turn into steam -- although you never see water turning into steam anywhere. Of course, he may say the water is heating up, but where is it turning into steam? We can delude ourselves up to the ninety-ninth degree that the water is still not turning into steam, but at the hundredth degree it is bound to become steam. Each degree will keep bringing the boiling point closer.

Hence, it is meaningless to try to save yourself from death, or to postpone it by saying that death is in the future. Death is happening every moment; we are dying every day. In fact, there is virtually no difference between what we call living, and dying. What we call living is just another name for dying gradually. I don't say think about the future, I say watch what is already happening now. I am not asking you to think, even.

This friend has asked, "Why think of death?" I don't say to think. Thinking will lead you nowhere. Remember this: no fact can ever be known by thinking. Actually, thinking is a tactful means of falsifying facts. Looking at a flower, if you begin thinking about it you will never know the flower, because the more you move into thinking about it, the further it will be removed from you. You will move ahead in your thoughts while the flower will remain lying there. What has the flower to do with what you are thinking? A flower is a fact. If you want to know a flower, don't think about it -- look at the flower.

There is a difference between thinking and seeing -- and the difference is significant. The West puts great emphasis on thinking. That's why they have named their science of thinking philosophy. Philosophy means conceptual thinking. We have named the same science darshan. Darshan means to see; darshan does not mean thinking. This needs to be understood a little. We have called it darshan while they have called it philosophy, and there is a fundamental difference between the two. Those who take philosophy and darshan to be synonymous know nothing. They are not synonymous. That's why there's nothing like Indian philosophy and nothing like Western darshan.

The West has a science of thinking -- it consists of investigation, logic, analysis. The East cared for something else. The East has experienced that there are certain facts which can never be known by thinking about them. These facts will have to be seen, will have to be lived. And there is an enormous difference between living and thinking.

A man who thinks about love may perhaps write a thesis on it, but a lover lives it, sees it; it's possible he may not be able to write a thesis. And if someone asks a lover to say something about love, he may close his eyes, tears may start rolling down his cheeks, and he might say, "Please don't ask. What can I say about love?" One who has thought about love will explain it for hours, but he may not even know one iota of love.

Thinking and seeing are two altogether different processes. So I am not saying you should think about death. You can never know death by thinking about it. You will have to see it. What I am saying is: here is death, right now within you, and you have to see it. What I call the 'I' is dying all the time. This phenomenon of death will have to be seen, this phenomenon of death will have to be lived, this phenomenon of death, that "I am dying, I am dying," will have to be accepted.

We try our best to falsify death; we have invented a thousand ways to falsify it. Of course we can dye our white hair, but that does not prove death a lie -- it invariably comes. Even underneath the dyed color the hair is still white. They are the indications that death has started approaching, that it is sure to come. How can we falsify it? No matter how much we go on falsifying it, it makes no difference -- it is approaching, non-stop. The only difference is that we can fail to know it.

What I am asking is: how will one who hasn't even known death yet know what life is? My point is: death is on the circumference; life is at the center. If we don't even know the circumference, how will we ever know the center? And if we run away from the circumference, we will never reach closer to the center. If you become frightened of the walls that make up the outer limits of a house, and escape, how will you ever enter the inner dwelling? Death is the periphery and life is the temple at the center of it. By running away from the periphery, we also run away from life. One who comes to know death will, by and by, uncover it and begin to understand life as well.

Death is the gateway to knowing life. Eluding death is eluding life as well. So when I say "Know death," recognize the facts -- I am not asking you to think.

There is one more interesting thing that needs to be understood. Thinking means to repeat, in the mind, what we already know. Thinking is never original -- although we ordinarily say that such-and-such a

person's thoughts are highly original. No, thought is never original. Thoughts can never be original. Darshan, seeing, can be original.

Thoughts are always stale. If I ask you to think about this roseflower, what will you think? You will simply reiterate what you already know about a rose. What else would you do? What else can you do with thinking? Could even one single unheard-of and original viewpoint about a rose ever appear in your thoughts? How can it?

Thinking is nothing but reiterating a thought. You may say, "The roseflower is very beautiful," but how many times have you heard this before? How many times have you read this before? Or you may say, "The roseflower is just as beautiful as the face of my beloved." How many times have you heard this before too? How many times have you read it before? Or you may say, "The flower is very fresh" -- but this too, how many times have you heard or read it before? What good are thoughts? How will you be able to enter the being of that roseflower by thinking about it? Thinking can only lead you into whatsoever is in your memory about a rose. That's why thinking is never original. There can never be an original thinker -- only seers are original.

The first condition in looking at a roseflower is that the person looking at it should not think. He should remove thoughts from his memory; he should become empty, and live in that moment with the flower. Let the roseflower be on one side and you be on the other, and let there be no one between you -- nothing you've ever heard, nothing you've ever read, nothing you've ever known. Nothing you've ever experienced should be in between. No one should be between you two. Only then, the unknown seated within the rose will begin to enter your being. Finding no hindrance in between, it will enter, and then you won't feel you want to know the rose, you will feel you are one with the rose. Then you will know the flower from its interiority.

A seer penetrates inside an object, while a thinker hovers around it on the outside -- and therefore a thinker has no achievement of his own; only a seer enjoys achievement. A seer penetrates within because there remains no wall between him and the object before him -- the wall crumbles, disappears.

Once Kabir asked his son Kamal to go to the forest and bring some hay for their cattle. Kamal went as he was told. It was morning when he left, but when the sun was overhead and Kamal had not yet returned, Kabir became worried. And even by the waning hours of afternoon there was no sign of Kamal. Kabir grew even more worried. Soon it was evening and the sun was about to set, so finally, accompanied by a few of his devotees, Kabir set out in search of Kamal.

When they reached the forest they found Kamal standing in the middle of the thick grass, his eyes closed, swaying like a blade of grass in the breeze. Kabir went over, shook him, and asked, "What are you doing here?" Kamal opened his eyes. He came to himself, realized what had happened, and immediately apologized. Kabir said, "But what have you been doing for so long? It's so late!"

Kamal answered, "I am sorry, but when I came here, instead of cutting the grass I began to look at it. And just looking at it continuously, I don't know when, but I also became a blade of grass. Soon it was evening, and here I was, completely oblivious that 'I am Kamal who has come here to cut grass.' I

became the grass itself. There was so much joy in being the grass, joy that, being Kamal, I never had before. It's good you came, because I didn't know what was happening. The breeze was not moving the grass, the breeze was moving me -- the cutter and that which was to be cut had both disappeared."

Have you ever seen your wife, your son, with whom you have lived for so many years? Have you ever seen them? The things your wife did yesterday flash through your mind -- and a thought comes in between you and her. You recall how she quarreled when you were about to leave for the office in the morning -- and again the thought is present between you. What she said at the dinner table comes back to you -- and the thought stands between you. You have always thought, you have never seen. And that's the reason there is no relationship between husband and wife, between father and son, between mother and son. Relationship happens where thought is no more and where darshan, seeing, has begun. That is really when a relationship takes place, because then no one exists to disrupt it.

Remember, a relationship does not mean there is a third factor binding the two. As long as there is something in between to bind the two, the disrupter is also present. That which binds also breaks. The day nothing exists to bind, when only two remain, when nothing remains in between, that day what actually remains is only one; then there are not two.

A relationship does not mean we are joined with somebody, a relationship means that now nothing exists between you and the other person, there is no one in between -- not even to join you. There, the two streams disappear and merge into each other. This is love. Seeing leads you into love; seeing is the source of love. And one who has not loved has never known anything. No matter what a man may have set out to know, he has only known it through love.

So when I say death has to be known, I mean we will have to love death as well. We will have to see death. But the man who is afraid of death, who is eluding it -- how can he love death, how can he have its darshan, how can he ever see death? When death appears before him, he turns his back on it. He shuts his eyes; he never lets death appear before him, face-to-face. He is afraid, he is frightened; that's why he is unable to see death at all, nor is he able to love it. And the man who hasn't been able to love death yet, how will he ever love life? -- because death is a very superficial event and life is a far deeper phenomenon. One who turned away from the very first step, how will he ever reach the deep waters of the well?

That's why I say death will have to be lived, it will have to be known, it will have to be seen. You will have to fall in love with it; you will have to look into its eyes. And as soon as a man looks into death's eyes, begins to watch it, penetrate into it, he feels astounded. To his great amazement, he realizes, "What a great mystery lies hidden in death! What I knew as death and kept running away from, actually conceals within itself the source of supreme life." Hence I say to you: enter into death willingly so that you may reach life.

There is an incredible saying of Jesus. Jesus has said, "The one who will save himself will perish; and the one who will efface himself -- no one can ever destroy him. One who will lose himself shall find, and one who will save himself shall be lost." If a seed wishes to save itself, it will rot -- what else? And if a seed annihilates itself in the earth, disappears, it will become a tree. The death of the seed becomes life for

the tree. If the seed were to protect itself by saying, "I am scared. I could die. I don't want to disappear. Why should I disappear?" then the seed is bound to rot. In that case, it will not even remain a seed, let alone grow into a tree. We shrink with fear of death.

I would like to say one more thing that may not have occurred to you before. Only one who is afraid of death has ego, because ego means a constricted personality, a solid knot. One who has fear of death shrinks within. Anyone in fear has to shrink inside, and whatever shrinks turns into a knot. A complex is created inside the person.

The feeling of 'I' is the feeling of a man afraid of death. The man who penetrates death, who is not afraid of death, who does not run away from it, who begins to live it -- his 'I' disappears, his ego disappears. And when the ego disappears only life remains. We can put it this way: only the ego dies, not the soul. But since we continue to remain egos, a great difficulty is created. In fact, only the ego can die; only the ego has a death -- because it is false. It will have to die. But we are holding on to it.

For example, a wave rises in an ocean. If the wave wants to survive as a wave, it cannot; it is bound to die. How can a wave survive as a wave? It will die. Unless, of course, it becomes ice. If it contracts, becomes solid, then it can survive. But still, in that sort of survival the wave is no more and the ice remains -- ice which is a wave, closed, broken away from the ocean. Remember, as a wave it is not apart from the ocean, it is one with the ocean. As ice, it parts from the ocean, it separates, it becomes solid. In it, the wave has contracted; it has become frozen.

As a wave it was one with the ocean; however, if it becomes a chunk of ice it will survive, of course, but then it will be cut off from the ocean. And how long will it survive in that state? Whatsoever is frozen will undoubtedly melt. A poor wave will melt a little sooner, while a rich wave will take a little longer -- what else? The sunrays will take a little longer to melt a big wave, while a smaller wave will melt sooner. It is only a question of time, but melting is bound to happen. The wave will melt and it will make a big hue and cry, because as soon as it melts it will disappear. But if the wave, by falling back into the ocean, were to make itself cease to exist as separate, if it were to come to know that it is in fact the ocean, then there wouldn't be any question of the wave's disappearing. Then whether it disappears or remains, it still exists -- because it knows that "I am not a wave, I am the ocean." When it disappears as a wave, it still exists -- in a state of rest. When it rises, it is in a state of activity. And resting is no less enjoyable than being active. In fact, it is even more enjoyable.

There is a state of activity and there is a state of rest. What we call samsara, the world, is the state of activity, and what we call moksha, liberation, is the state of rest. It is like a restless wave which crashes against the wind and wrestles with it, and then it falls back into the ocean and disappears. It still exists. Whatever it was before in the ocean, it is now still the same, but it is at rest. However, if a wave were to assert itself as a wave, it would be filled with ego, and then it would want to break itself away from the ocean.

Once you get the idea that "I am," then how can you be with the rest of the all? If you choose to be with the all, then the 'I' is lost. That's why the 'I' insists, "Break away from the all." And how interesting it is, that breaking away from the whole makes you miserable. And then, once again, the "I" says, "Relate

with the all" -- such is the tortuous way of the "I". First the "I" says, "Break yourself away from the all, isolate yourself; you are different from the whole. How can you remain connected?" So the "I" snaps itself away; but then it gets into trouble -- because, as soon as the "I" separates from the all, it becomes miserable; its end approaches. As soon as the wave comes to believe it is separate from the ocean, it begins to die, its death comes nearer. Now it will fall into the struggle to protect itself from death.

As long as it was one with the ocean, there was no death at all -- because the ocean never dies.

Remember, an ocean can be without a wave but a wave cannot exist without the ocean. You cannot conceive of a wave without the ocean -- the ocean will be present in the wave. The ocean, however, can exist without a wave. When they are an integral part of the ocean, all waves exist in peace and rest. But the moment a wave strives to save itself from the ocean, difficulties arise -- it cuts itself off from the ocean and its death begins.

This is the reason one who is to die wants to love. The reason all of us, who are going to die, are so eager to love is that love is the obvious means to connect. That's why no one wants to live without love and be miserable. Everyone is seeking love: somebody wants to receive your love, somebody wants to give you love. And for the man who does not find love it becomes a problem. But have we ever wondered what the meaning of love is?

Love means an attempt to reconstruct, once again, by putting different parts together, the relationship we have broken off with the whole. So one kind of love is the one where we attempt to rebuild our lost relationship with the whole by adding parts. This is what we call love. And there is another kind of love where we have stopped our attempts to break away from the whole. That is called prayer. Hence, prayer is absolute love. And this carries a totally different meaning. It does not mean that we are attempting to integrate the fragments; it means we have stopped breaking ourselves away from the whole. The wave has declared, "I am the ocean," and now it is not attempting to connect itself with each and every other wave.

Remember, the wave itself is dying, and the other waves nearby are dying too. If this wave tries to relate with other waves, it will get into trouble. That's why our so-called love is very painful, because it is a wave trying to relate with another wave. This wave and the other wave are both dying, and yet they get into a relationship with each other in the hope that by joining with each other they perhaps may save themselves. That's why we turn love into security. So man is afraid to live alone. One wants a wife, a husband, a son, a mother, a brother, a friend, a society, an organization, a nation. These are all endeavors of the ego; these are attempts by one who has broken himself away from it, to unite once again with the whole.

But all these efforts to unite are invitations to death -- because the one with whom you are forming a union is as much surrounded by death, as much surrounded by the ego.... The funny thing is that the other wants to become immortal by uniting with you, and you want to become immortal by uniting with the other. And the fact is that both of you are going to die. How can you become immortal? Such a union will double death; it will certainly not turn it into an elixir.

Two lovers long so much for their love to become immortal -- they sing songs day and night. For eternity poems have been written about love becoming immortal. How can two people who are going to die desire immortality together? A union of two such people only makes death twice as real and nothing else. What else can it be? And both are melting, sinking, fading away; that's why they are frightened, worried.

The wave has created its own organization. It says, "I have to survive." It has created nations; it has created Hindu-Mohammedan sects -- waves creating their own organizations. And the fact of the matter is that all these organizations are going to disappear -- the ocean below is the only organization. And the organization of the ocean is a totally different thing. Belonging to it does not mean the wave joins itself with the ocean; rather, it means the wave knows that "I am not at all different from the ocean." And so I say that a religious man does not belong to any organization -- he neither holds to a family, nor does he own a friend, a father or a brother.

Jesus has spoken some very strong words. In fact, only those who have attained to love can speak such strong words; people weak in love cannot utter them. One day Jesus was standing in the market surrounded by a crowd. His mother, Mary, came to see him. People began to make way for her. Somebody from the crowd shouted, "Make way, make room for Jesus' mother. Let her come." When Jesus heard him, he said in a loud voice, "If you are giving way to Jesus' mother, then don't do it, because Jesus doesn't have a mother." Mary stopped, stood there in shock.

Addressing the crowd, Jesus said, "As long as you have a mother, a father, a brother, you won't be able to come close to me." This is being very harsh. We can't even imagine a person like Jesus, so full of love, can utter such words as, "I have no mother. Who is my mother?" So Mary stood there in shock. Jesus went on, "Do you call this woman my mother? I have no mother. And remember, if you still have a mother, then you won't be able to come near me."

What seems to be the matter? The question is that if a wave is attempting to unite with another wave, it won't be able to come close to the ocean. Waves, in fact, unite with each other and create an organization mainly to save themselves from the ocean. On its own a wave feels more frightened that it may disappear, that it may really disappear. But the truth is, it is already disappearing.

Yet when a few waves gather together they feel more reassured -- some sort of organization is created; a crowd is created. That's why man likes to live in a crowd; he feels afraid if he is left alone. In its loneliness a wave is left totally by itself -- slipping away, falling away, vanishing, close to disappearing, feeling alienated on both sides -- the ocean on one, the rest of the waves on the other. Hence it creates an organization, it creates a chain.

The father says, "I will disappear, but it doesn't matter -- I will leave my son behind." The wave says, "I'll disappear, but I'll leave a little wave -- it will survive after me, the chain will continue, my name shall remain." That's why a father feels unhappy if he doesn't have a son -- it means he couldn't arrange his immortality. He will of course be gone, but he wants to create another wave which will continue further on, which will at least identify the wave it came from. So it's all right for the former wave to disappear -- it leaves another one behind.

You may or may not have noticed that people who are engaged in a creative activity -- a painter, a musician, a poet, a writer -- are not too concerned with having sons, simply because they have found a substitute. Their paintings will survive, their poetry will survive, their sculptures will survive; they don't care about having a son. That's why scientists, painters, sculptors, writers and poets are not overly concerned with having sons. There is no other reason except that they have found a different kind of son. They have created a wave which will remain long after they are gone. Actually, they have found a son that will last even longer than yours, because even when your son has disappeared, the writer's book will still remain.

A writer doesn't care much about having a son, about having an offspring. This does not mean, however, that he is carefree; it simply means he has found a long-lasting wave; he stops worrying about smaller waves. Hence he is not interested in having a family; he has created a different kind of family. He is also striving for the same degree of immortality. So he will say, "Money will be lost, wealth will be lost, but my work, my scripture will survive" -- and that is precisely what he wants.

But scriptures also become lost. No scripture lasts forever, although of course it lasts a little longer. Who knows how many scriptures have already been lost, and how many get lost everyday. Everything will be lost. In fact, in the world of waves, no matter to what extent a wave may prolong itself, ultimately it is bound to be lost. To be a wave means to face extinction -- prolonging makes no difference.

So if you look upon yourself as a wave you will want to avoid death -- you will remain afraid, scared. I say to you: look at death -- neither should you avoid it nor be afraid of it, nor run away from it. Look at it. And just by looking at it you will find that what seemed like death from this end, as you enter into it a little, the same thing turns out to be life.

Then the wave becomes the ocean; its fear of extinction disappears. Then it doesn't want to become frozen ice. Then, for whatever time it has, it dances in the sky, rejoices under the rays of the sun, is happy. And when it falls back into the ocean, it is equally happy in its state of rest. Thus it is happy in life, it is happy in death -- because it knows that "that which is" is never born nor does it ever die. That which is, is; only forms keep changing.

We are all waves risen above the ocean of consciousness. Some of us have turned into ice -- most of us have. The ego is like ice, as hard as a rock. How amazing it is that a fluid like water can become hard like ice and rock. If a desire to freeze arises in us, the consciousness, otherwise so simple and fluid, freezes and becomes an ego. We are all filled with desire to freeze, and so we employ many kinds of means to see how we can become frozen, solidified.

There are laws under which water turns into ice, and there are also laws which cause the formation of the ego. Water has to cool in order to become ice, it has to lose its heat, it has to turn cold. The colder it gets, the harder it becomes. The man who wants to create ego has to become cold as well; he has to lose his warmth. That's why we say "a warm welcome." A welcome is always warm; a cold welcome has no meaning.

Love means warmth; a cold love carries no meaning. Love is never cold, it contains warmth. Actually, life is sustained by warmth; death is cold, below zero. That's why the sun is the symbol of life, the sun is the symbol of warmth. When it rises in the morning, death departs; everything becomes warm and hot. The flowers bloom and the birds begin to sing. Warmth is the symbol of life, cold is the symbol of death. So one who wants to create an ego has to become cold, and in order to become cold he has to lose all those things which give warmth. He has to lose everything that gives warmth to his being. For example, love gives warmth, hatred brings coldness. So for the sake of the ego, one has to give up love and cling to hatred. Mercy and sympathy bring warmth; cruelty and ruthlessness bring cold.

Just as there are laws for the freezing of water, there are laws for the freezing of human consciousness. The same law works: keep on becoming cold. Sometimes we say that such-and-such a person is very cold -- there is no warmth in him; he becomes hard like a rock. And remember, the warmer a person is the more simple he is. Then his life has a liquidity that enables him to flow into others and allows others to flow into him. A cold person becomes hard, unable to flow, closed from all sides. No one can enter into him, nor can he enter into anyone. The ego is like frozen ice and love is like water, fluid, flowing. The man who is afraid of death will run away from it. He will go on freezing, because that fear that he may die, that he may disappear, will make him contract -- and his ego will remain, growing harder, stronger.

I was a guest at a friend's house for a few days. He is quite rich, with a great deal of property. But I was puzzled about one thing: he would never speak kindly to anyone; otherwise he was a good man. I was very puzzled to see that inwardly he was very soft, but very hard on the outside. The servant trembled before him, his son trembled before him, his wife was scared to face him. People thought about it a good deal before they called on him. Even when they came to his door they hesitated to ring the bell, wondering whether they should go in or not.

When I stayed with him and came to know him closely, I asked him what all this was about. I said, "As such, you are a very simple man." He said, "I am very scared. It is dangerous to form a relationship, because if you form a relationship with somebody then sooner or later he starts asking for money. If you remain courteous and loving to your wife, the expenditures shoot up. If you don't remain stiff with your son, his pocket money goes on increasing. If you talk to your servant gently, he also tries to behave like a boss."

So a solid wall of coldness had to be erected all around -- that would scare the wife, that would scare the son. How many fathers have done this?

The truth of the matter is that there is hardly any home where the father and the son meet each other lovingly. The son goes to the father when he needs money, the father goes to the son when he wants to give him a sermon; otherwise the two don't meet, the meeting never happens. There is no meeting point between a father and a son. The father is afraid, and he has surrounded himself with a solid wall. The son is also afraid; he sneaks by his father. There is no harmony anywhere between the two. The more a person is afraid, the more he worries about his security, the more solid he becomes. There is great danger in being fluid, there is insecurity in it.

This is the reason we are afraid of falling in love. Only after we have scrutinized the person and become totally reassured do we ever fall in love. That means, first we make sure there is no cause for danger from the person, then we fall in love. That's why we invented marriages -- first we marry, first we take all the necessary measures, then we fall in love -- because love is dangerous. Love is fluid, a man might find his way into anyone. It is dangerous to fall in love with a stranger; he may sneak off at night with all your valuables! So first we make absolutely certain who the man is, what he does, where his parents are from, how his character is, what his qualities are. We take all the measures, we take the full social precautions; only then do we accept the individual in marriage.

We are a frightened people; we want to make everything secure first. The more we secure ourselves, the harder and colder the wall of ice is all around us, and it shrinks our entire being. Our separation from God has happened because of one reason alone: we are not liquid, we have become solid. This is the only cause of separation: we are not flowing, we have become like blocks; we are not like water, we are like frozen ice. Once we become fluid-like, the separation will no longer exist; but we will only become fluid-like when we agree to see and to live death, when we accept that death exists.

Once we have seen and recognized that death exists, why should there be any fear? When death is surely there, when the wave knows for certain she is bound to disappear; if the wave has found out that birth itself contains death, if the wave has come to know that its disintegration began the very moment it was created, the matter is finished. Now why turn into ice? Then it will accept being a wave as long as it has to be, and it will accept being the ocean as long as it has to be. That's it! The matter is over! Then everything is accepted. In that acceptance the wave becomes the ocean. Then all worry over its disappearance is gone, because then the wave knows it existed before its extinction and it will continue to exist even after it has vanished -- not as the 'I', but as the boundless ocean.

When Lao Tzu was about to die, somebody asked him to reveal a few secrets of his life. Lao Tzu said, "The first secret is: no one has ever defeated me in my life."

Hearing this, the disciples became very excited. They said, "You never told us this before! We also wish to be victorious. Please show us the trick."

Lao Tzu answered, "You made a mistake. You heard something different. I said no one could ever defeat me, and you are saying you too want to be victorious. The two things are totally opposite, although they look similar in meaning. In the dictionary, in the world of language, it has one meaning -- that a person who has not faced defeat is victorious. I simply said no one could defeat me, while you are talking about becoming victorious. Get out of here! You will never understand what I am saying."

The disciples pleaded, "Even so, please explain to us. Please show us the technique. How were you never defeated?"

Lao Tzu said, "No one could defeat me because I always remained defeated. There is no way to defeat a defeated man. I was never defeated because I never wished for victory. In fact, no one could pick a fight with me. If anyone ever came to challenge me he found me already defeated, so he couldn't have any

fun defeating me. The joy is in defeating one who desires to be victorious. What fun can there be in defeating someone who doesn't even want to win?"

Actually, it gives us pleasure to destroy somebody's ego because doing so strengthens our own. But if a man has already effaced himself, what fun can there be in destroying such a person? Our ego wouldn't get any kick out of it. The more we succeed in breaking the other's ego, the stronger ours becomes. The other's broken ego becomes the strength of our own. But the ego of this man we are talking about is already broken.

For example, you go out to defeat a man, and before you knock him down he lays himself down on the ground; and before you sit on him he invites you and lets you sit on him. What will your state be then? You would want to run away from there! What else could you do? People watching would laugh and say, "Go on, sit on him; sit comfortably. Why are you running away?" Who would look stupid, the one who sat on the man, or the man who kept laughing and whose laughter resounded throughout your life?

So whenever somebody went to challenge this man, he would immediately lie down on the ground and say, "Come on, sit on me. You have come for that, haven't you? So go ahead. Don't take too much trouble, don't bother too much; there's no need to exert yourself -- just come and sit on me."

Lao Tzu went on to say, "But you are asking something else. You want me to tell you the technique of winning. If you think of winning, you will lose. One who harbors the thought of winning is always the loser. In fact, defeat begins with the very idea of victory." And Lao Tzu said further, "And no one has ever been able to insult me."

"Please tell us its secret also, because we do not like to be insulted either," a disciple said.

"Once again you are making a mistake. No one could insult me because I never desired honor. You will always be insulted because you are filled with the desire for recognition. I was never kicked out from any place, because I always sat near the entrance where people remove their shoes. I was never asked to move from a place because I always stood at the end, where no one could push me further back. I was very happy to be at the end; it saved me from all sorts of trouble. No one ever forced me out of there or pushed me aside; nor did anyone say, 'Get lost!' because that was the last place. There was no place beyond that. No one ever wanted to be in that spot. I was the lord of my own place; I have always been the lord of my own place. Where I stood, no one ever came to throw me out."

Jesus also says, "Blessed are those who are ready to stand in the last row." What does this mean?

For example, Jesus says, "If a man slaps your right cheek, offer him the left." What this means is: don't even give him the trouble of turning your other cheek -- you do it for him. Jesus says, "When someone comes to defeat you, be defeated readily. If he makes you lose one round, lose two instead." And Jesus says, "If a man snatches your coat, also give him your shirt immediately." Why? -- because it is possible the man may feel embarrassed taking the shirt away from you. And Jesus says, "If someone asks you to carry his load for a mile, at the end of the mile ask him if he would like you to carry it further."

What does this mean? This means that by accepting the facts of life totally concerning insecurity, failure, defeat, and finally death, we conquer them all. Otherwise, these facts eventually lead us nowhere but to death. In the final analysis, death is our total defeat. Even in the biggest defeats, you still survive; although defeated, you continue to exist. But in death even you are annihilated as well.

Death is the biggest defeat of all; that's why we want to kill our enemy -- there is no other reason. Death is the ultimate defeat; after that there is no possibility for the enemy to win, ever. The urge to kill an enemy comes from our desire to inflict on him the ultimate defeat. After that there is no way he can ever be a winner, because then he exists no more.

Death is the final defeat, and we all want to run away from it. And remember also, the man who attempts to escape his own death will continue to work towards the killing of others. The more he succeeds in killing others, the more alive he will feel. Hence, the reason for all the violence in the world is totally different from what people ordinarily take it to be. The reason for this violence is not that it is caused because people don't drink unstrained water or they eat after sunset, no, it is nothing of that sort.

The fundamental reason for violence is that man kills others to forget about his own death. Killing others, he believes no one can kill him, because now he himself has the power to kill. Hitler, Genghis Khan, and other such people, killed millions in order to assure themselves that "No one can kill me, since I kill millions myself." By killing others we try to be free of our own death, we want to confirm our independence. The assumption is that, when we ourselves are capable of killing people, who can kill us?

Deep down, this is avoiding death. Deep down, a violent man is an escapist from death. And one who wants to save himself from death can never be nonviolent. Only he who declares, "I accept death, for death is one of the facts of life -- it is a reality," can be a nonviolent person. One can never deny death. Where will you run from it? Where will you go?

The sun begins to set the moment it rises. A sunset is as much a reality as the sunrise -- the difference is only of direction. At sunset, the sun reaches exactly where it was at sunrise -- but at sunrise it is in the east, whereas at sunset it is in the west. Birth is on one side, death is on the other. That which is ascending on one side is declining on the other. The rising and the setting go together -- the setting, in fact, lies hidden in the rising. Death lies hidden in birth. There is no way that one who knows that such is the case can ever deny it. Then he accepts everything. Then he lives this truth. He knows it, he sees it, and he accepts it.

With acceptance comes transformation. When I say "triumph over death," I mean that as soon as a person accepts death he laughs, because he comes to know there is no death. Only the outer sheath is formed and unformed. The ocean has always been; it is only the wave which has taken form and then disintegrated. Beauty was always around -- the flowers bloomed and withered away. Light always shone -- the sun rose and set. And that which shone with the rising and setting of the sun was forever present, before sunrise and after sunset. But this we will come to see only when we have seen death, when we have had the vision of death, when we have encountered death face-to-face -- never before.

So the friend asks: "Why should we think about death? Why not forget it? Why not just live?" I would like to say to him that, forgetting death, no one has ever lived, nor can anyone ever live. And one who ignores death also ignores life.

It is just as if I have a coin in my hand and I say, "Why bother about the reverse side of the coin? Why not just forget it?" If I give up the reverse side, then I will lose the front side of the coin too, because both make two sides of the same coin. It isn't possible to save one side of the coin and throw the other side on the street. How can this be possible? With the one I keep, the other side will automatically be saved. If I throw away one, both will be thrown away; if I save one, both will be saved. Actually, both are aspects of the same thing. Birth and death are two aspects of the same life. The day one realizes this, not only does the sting of death depart, the thought of not dying disappears as well. Then one comes to know that birth is there and so is death. Both comprise bliss.

We get up every morning and go to work. Somebody goes and digs ditches.... Different people do different jobs -- people sweat the whole day. There is a joy in getting up in the morning, but isn't it equally joyful to sleep at night? If a few madmen were to start convincing people not to sleep at night, then getting up in the morning would also stop, because the man who wouldn't sleep wouldn't be able to wake up in the morning either. The whole of life would come to a halt. One might feel afraid to go to bed, arguing, "It is such a joy to wake up in the morning, it is better not to fall asleep or else it will spoil the whole charm of waking up." But we know this is ridiculous: sleeping is the other side of waking up.

One who sleeps right will wake up right. One who wakes up right will sleep right. One who lives properly will die properly. One who dies properly will take the right steps in his future life. One who does not die in a right manner will not live rightly. One who does not live rightly will not die rightly. It will be a mess; everything will become ugly and distorted. The fear of death is responsible for creating the ugliness and the distortion.

If a fear of falling asleep were to overtake somebody, it would make life difficult. An old lady was brought to me by her son. He said his mother was too afraid to fall asleep. I asked him, "How did this happen?"

He said, "She has been ill lately, and she feels she may die in her sleep, so she is afraid of falling asleep. She fears she won't wake up once she goes to sleep, so she keeps trying to stay up the whole night. We are in big trouble. She isn't recovering from her illness because she stays up all night, afraid she may not wake up alive. Please do something and save her from this fear; otherwise I am in great trouble."

In a way, sleeping is like dying every day. The whole day we are alive; the whole night we are dead. This is like dying in parts, dying a bit every day. We dive within ourselves at night and come out refreshed in the morning. By the time we are seventy or eighty, the body is worn out. Then death takes over. And with that, this body goes through a complete change. But we are very scared of death, although it is nothing more than a deep sleep.

Do you know that the body undergoes change overnight and comes out different every morning? The change is so minimal you don't notice it. The change is not total, it is a partial transformation. When you

go to bed at night, tired and weary, your body is in one state, and when you wake up in the morning it is in a different state. In the morning the body feels fresh and rejuvenated; it is filled with energy, ready to face another day of activity. Now, once again, you can sing new songs, something you couldn't do the previous evening. Then you were tired, broken, worn out. You have never wondered however, why there is so much fear of death.

When you wake up in the morning you feel happy, because only a part of your body changes in sleep -- but death, on the other hand, brings about a complete change. The whole body becomes useless and the need arises to acquire a new body. But we are scared of death and so our whole life has become totally crippled. Every moment is filled with fear of death. Because of this fear we have created a life, a society, a family which lives the least but fears death the most. And one who fears death can never live - - both things cannot exist together. The man who is ready to meet death with absolute spontaneity, he alone is ready to live as well. Life and death are both aspects of the same phenomenon. That's why I say: look at death. I am not asking you to think about death, because such thinking will mislead you. Thinking about death, what will you do?

A sick and miserable man may find it gratifying to think that everything ends in death. The thought is gratifying to this man not because it is right. Remember, never believe that what seems pleasing to you is necessarily true, because what feels pleasing does not depend on what is true, it depends on what you think of as convenient. A person who is miserable, troubled, sick and in pain feels he should meet a total death, that nothing should be left behind -- because if any part of him does survive, then it would obviously mean he would survive... he, the miserable, sick individual.

Question 2

A FRIEND HAS ASKED: SOME PEOPLE COMMIT SUICIDE. WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THEM? ARE THESE PEOPLE NOT AFRAID OF DEATH?

They are afraid of death too. But they are more afraid of life than of death. Life seems more painful to them than death; hence they want to finish it. Putting an end to their lives does not mean they find any joy in death, but since life appears worse than death to them, they prefer death. One who is miserable, living in pain, will readily believe that death takes everything away -- including the soul -- that death leaves nothing behind. He obviously does not want to save any part of himself, because if he does he will be saving nothing but his misery and pain.

One who is afraid of death and wants to save himself, readily accepts the belief in the immortality of the soul. These are all conveniences. It does not show understanding, it merely shows our concern for convenience. This sort of acceptance feels comfortable, that's all. That's why we change our beliefs many times. A man who was an atheist in his youth becomes a theist in his old age. In fact, the truth is that beliefs change with headaches.

When the head has no pain we follow one set of beliefs; with a headache these beliefs are replaced by another set. It is hard to say how much the scriptures affect your belief system and how much your liver does! One can't be sure whether gurus or the liver affect it more! What goes on inside the body has a greater effect. When the stomach is upset one feels like becoming an atheist, and when the stomach is okay one feels like believing in God! How can a man possibly believe that there is a God when he has a headache? If God exists and so does the headache, how can you connect the two?

We can run an experiment. Take fifty men and infect them with chronic diseases, and keep the other fifty in good health. Let the first fifty live in misery and let the other fifty live happy lives. You will find that atheism will increase in the former group and theism will increase in the latter group. It is not that happiness is caused by believing in God; a miserable mind inevitably becomes atheistic. So remember, if you see atheism increasing around the world, know well that misery must be on the increase too. If you see an increasing number of people believing in God, you should know that more and more people are becoming happy.

I say to you, therefore, that in the next fifty years there is a great possibility that Russia will become theistic and India will become even more atheistic. Beliefs don't mean anything. In Russia people read Marx, while in India you read Mahavira -- this makes no difference. The works of Mahavira and Marx cannot make the least difference. If people were to go on becoming happier in Russia, then in the next fifty years theism would revive there and the bells would begin to ring in Russian temples. Lamps would be lit and prayers would be chanted. Only a happy mind rings bells in the temple, kindles lamps and chants prayers. People would begin to thank God. Only a happy mind wishes to thank somebody, and who else should one thank? -- because a man can find no reasons for the presence of inner happiness, so he thanks the unknown; it must be because of it.

An unhappy mind wants to express its anger. And when the person finds no cause for being unhappy, then who should he be angry at? He obviously becomes filled with bitterness towards the unknown. He says, "The whole mess is because of that unknown one, because of God. Either he does not exist, or he has gone mad." What I am saying is that our theism and our atheism, our beliefs -- all of them are the products of conveniences that suit our conditions.

One who wants to escape from death will inevitably grab hold of some belief. Similarly, someone who wishes to die will also grab on to some belief. But neither of them is eager, anxious to know death. There is a vast difference between convenience and truth. Never think too much about convenience. A thought is always about convenience. A vision is always of truth; a thought is always of convenience.

One man is a communist. He makes a lot of noise -- there should be a revolution, the poor should be poor no longer, property must be divided, and so on. Now just give him a car, a big bungalow and a beautiful girl to marry, and in fifteen days you will see a totally different man. You will hear him say, "Communism, etcetera -- it's all nonsense!" What happened to this man? What was convenient to him shaped his thinking.

The other day it was convenient for him to think that the property be divided; now it is inconvenient to think that property be divided. Now the division of property would mean dividing his car, dividing his bungalow.

The man who doesn't have a beautiful woman can very well say that women should also be socialized. Why should some men have a monopoly over beautiful women? Women should belong to all. There are people who think this way. There are people on this earth who propound, "Today property, tomorrow women." And there is nothing wrong in it, because all along you have been treating women as your property anyway.

If one says, "It is wrong that one man should live in a big house and the other in a shanty," then what is the problem in questioning, "Why should one man have a pretty woman and another man not? The division should be equal." These are danger signals. Sooner or later such questions will surely come up. The day property is distributed, the question of sharing women is bound to arise. But the man who has a beautiful woman will certainly protest. He will say, "How can this be possible? What nonsense are you talking about? This is all wrong!"

So convenience shapes our thinking; our thoughts are formed out of convenience. All our thoughts either foster our convenience or remove our inconvenience. A vision is something else. A vision has nothing to do with convenience. Remember, therefore, that having a vision is a tapascharya, a deep personal commitment to knowing the truth. Tapascharya means one is not concerned with conveniences; instead, one has to know whatever is, whichever way it is.

So the fact of death has to be seen, not thought about. You will think according to your convenience; your convenience determines your thinking. It is not a question of convenience. We have to know what death is, see it as it is. Your conveniences and inconveniences make no difference. Whatsoever is, that has to be known. As soon as you come to know it a transformation happens in your life -- because death is not. The moment you know death, you come to realize that it is not. You believe in its existence only as long as you have not known it. The experience of ignorance is death; the experience of awareness is immortality.

There are a few more questions which we will be able to discuss during the night session. Now we will sit for the morning meditation. Meditation means death. Meditation means to move into what is, where we are. Therefore one moves into meditation only when one is ready for dying, not otherwise.

Be seated with a little distance from each other. Be seated making a little space around yourself. Those who want to lie down, do so beforehand. Also, if someone feels like lying down during the experiment he should do so. And sit at a little distance from each other so that no one falls over you if someone lies down, or falls over.

Close your eyes... leave your eyes relaxed and close the eyelids... leave your eyes relaxed and close the eyelids. Relax your body... relax your body... relax your body.... Leave the body completely relaxed as if there is no life in it. One day life will leave you, so feel it by dropping it now. One day life will leave you

totally; even if you want to keep it, it won't stay. So pull the same life deep within... ask the life to retreat within, and leave the body relaxed.

Go on relaxing the body completely. Now I will give some suggestions, and you feel them along with me. The body is relaxing... feel it, the body is relaxing... the body is relaxing... the body is relaxing. Go on loosening it, feel that the body is relaxing... the body is relaxing... the body is relaxing. The body goes on relaxing... goes on dying... goes on dying. We are going on slipping inside, there where life is. Let go... let go... let go of the wave, be one with the ocean. Let go of the body completely, let it fall if it wants to, don't worry about it. Do not prevent it... do not keep any hold over it... let go...

The body is relaxing... the body is relaxing... the body is relaxing... the body is relaxing... the body is going on relaxing... the body is relaxing... the body is relaxing. Let go... as if it is dead, as if the body has become completely lifeless. We have slipped withinwards... the consciousness has slipped withinwards... the body has remained just like a shell... if it falls it falls. The body has relaxed... the body has relaxed... the body has completely relaxed.

The breathing is calming down... the breathing is calming down. Leave the breathing also relaxed. The breathing is going on calming down... the breathing is calming down. Retreat back even from the breathing, call your energy back from there too. The breathing is going on calming down... the breathing is calming down, is calming down. Leave it relaxed... leave the breathing relaxed... the breathing is going on calming down... the breathing is going on calming down... the breathing has relaxed.

Leave the thoughts also... move back from them too... move further back from them. The thoughts are relaxing... the thoughts are relaxing. Go on feeling... the thoughts are relaxing... the thoughts are relaxing... the thoughts are going on relaxing. The thoughts are also dropping... you have moved further back... you have moved further back. The thoughts are going on calming down... the thoughts are going on calming down... the thoughts are going on calming down... the thoughts have calmed down.

Now, for ten minutes just remain awake within, remain conscious within. Look within wakefully. On the outside, death has happened. The body is lying down, almost dead, away... we have retreated back... the consciousness has remained lit like a flame. You are only knowing... only seeing. Remain just a watcher... settle in the seeing. For ten minutes only go on looking within, do not do anything else, only go on looking. Inside... more inside... go on looking inside... slowly, slowly you would have slipped into depths... as if one goes on falling in a deep well... goes on falling... goes on falling. Look... for ten minutes just remain looking.

(A deep silence prevails... after few minutes, Osho starts giving suggestions again.)

Drop your grip completely... and go deeper within... go deeper within. Only go on looking wakefully... slowly, slowly... slowly, slowly, everything will turn into a void. Only a flame of knowing will go on burning in the void, that "I am knowing"... am knowing... am seeing... am seeing. Drop it completely, drop all your control... drown in the depths and go on looking... the mind will go on quietening.

Mind is becoming empty... mind is becoming empty... let go totally... disappear... just die. Disappear completely from outside... let go completely from outside... as if a wave may disappear and become the ocean. Let go completely... do not keep even the least grip. Mind is becoming empty... mind is becoming empty... mind is becoming empty.

Mind has become completely empty... mind has become empty... mind has become empty. Only a flame has remained burning... a flame of knowing... of seeing. For all the rest, as if death has happened... the body will be seen lying at a distance... your own body will be seen so far away... your own breathing will seem to be so far away. Inside... more inside... drown... let go completely... do not keep any grip... let go... let go... let go completely.

Let go totally. If the body wants to drop, let it drop... let go completely... become a void... become a void completely. Mind has become a void... mind has become a void... only a flame of knowing has remained inside... everything else has become a void... everything has disappeared.

Let go... let go completely... show the courage to die... die completely from outside. The body has become lifeless... we have slipped completely inside... we have slipped completely inside... only a flame near the heart has remained burning. We are seeing... we are knowing... And everything has disappeared... we have remained only a watcher. The mind has become completely a void.

Look intently into this void... inside, look at this void. A great spectrum of bliss will unfold within that very void... a great light of bliss will fill that very void. A waterfall may emerge and only bliss flows all around, which spreads all over you, in your every fiber, in your each particle. Look intently in that void... and just as a flower blossoms when the sun rises, similarly the spring of bliss bursts forth looking at the void within. Only the bliss prevails all over, all around. Look... look within... let that spring burst forth... look within... as if a fountain of bliss opens up and bliss abounds all over.

Now, slowly take a few deep breaths. The breath will appear to be far away. Slowly take a deep breath... keep watching the breath. The mind will become even calmer. Slowly take a few deep breaths... slowly take a few deep breaths... slowly take a few deep breaths. The mind will become even calmer... the mind will become even calmer. Then open the eyes slowly... open the eyes slowly... come back from meditation.

Those who are lying down or have fallen down, take a deep breath slowly... then open your eyes... and get up very slowly and gently.

And Now, And Here, Vol 1

Chapter #7

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Question 1

A FRIEND HAS ASKED: ARE YOU TEACHING PEOPLE HOW TO DIE? ARE YOU TEACHING DEATH? YOU SHOULD TEACH LIFE INSTEAD.

He is right, I am indeed teaching people how to die. I am teaching the art of dying, because one who learns the art of dying becomes an expert in the art of living as well. One who agrees to die becomes worthy of living the supreme life. Only those who have known how to erase themselves also come to know how to be.

These may seem like opposite things because we have taken life and death to be opposing each other, contradictory, but they are not. We have created a false contradiction between the two, and that has produced fatal results. Perhaps nothing has caused so much harm to the human race as this contradiction. Subsequently, this contradiction has had ramifications on many levels. If we divide things which are essentially one into separate parts -- not only separate but contradictory parts -- the ultimate result can be nothing but the creation of a schizophrenic, insane man.

Let's assume there is a place where mad people live. Great difficulty and trouble would arise if these people were to believe that cold and hot were not only separate but contradictory things -- for the simple reason that cold and hot are not contradictory, they are different degrees of qualifying the same thing. Our experience of cold and hot is not absolute, it is very relative. A little experiment will make this clear.

We always find things which are hot and things which are cold. We also see that something which is hot is hot, and something which is cold is cold -- we cannot believe the same thing can be hot and cold at the same time. Now, when you go back home do a little experiment. Take a pot containing hot water, a pot containing cold water, and a pot containing water at room temperature. Put one hand in the hot water and another hand in cold water. Now take both hands out and place them in the water at room temperature. One hand will feel the water is cold and the other will feel the same water is hot. Is that water hot or cold? One hand will say it is hot, the other will say it is cold. Then what is the nature of the

water really? If, simultaneously, one hand feels it is hot and the other feels the same water is cold, then we will have to realize the water is neither hot nor cold -- its feeling hot or cold is relative to our hands.

Hot and cold are degrees of the same thing -- they are not two different things. The distinction between them is of quantity, not of quality.

Have you ever thought about the distinction between childhood and old age? Ordinarily we think they are opposite to each other -- childhood on the one hand, old age on the other. But what is the distinction between childhood and old age really? The difference is only of years, the difference is only of days; the difference is not qualitative, it is only quantitative.

For example, there is a child aged five. We can call him "an old man of five" -- what's wrong with that? It is simply linguistic usage that we say "a child five years of age." If we want to we can call him -- as is done in English -- "five years old," which can also mean "an old man of five." One is just an old man of seventy, while there is someone who is five years old. What is the difference? If we want, we can call a seventy -- year-old man a seventy-year-old child -- after all, a child grows into an old man. But when we look at them separately they seem like two contradictory things. It seems like childhood and old age are contrary to each other, but if they are, then no child can ever become old. How can he? How can two contrary things be the same? Have you ever been able to note the day a child turned into an old man? or which night? Can you note on a calendar that on such-and-such a day this man was a child and then on such-and -- such a day he became old?

In fact, the problem is.... For example, there are steps leading to the terrace. You can see the lower steps and you can see the steps on the top as well, but you may not be able to see the steps in the middle section. It may look as if the lower steps and the steps on top are separate, far away from each other. But one who can see the whole staircase will deny such a distinction. He will say, "The difference between the steps below and the steps above only appears because of the steps in between. The very step at the bottom is connected with the step on the top."

The difference between hell and heaven is not of quality, the difference is only of quantity. Don't think hell and heaven are contrary, diametrically opposite to each other. The difference between hell and heaven is the same as between cold and hot, between the lower rung and the higher rung, between a child and an old man.

The same sort of difference exists between birth and death; otherwise one who is born will never be able to die. If birth and death were contrary to each other, how could birth end in death? We can only reach to a point of our natural growth. Birth grows into death -- this means birth and death are two ends of the same thing. We sow a seed, it grows into a plant, and then it becomes a flower. Have you ever believed there was any opposition between the seed and the flower? The flower grows out of the seed itself and becomes a flower. Growth is in the seed.

Birth turns into death. God knows from what kind of foolishness and during what unfortunate times the idea became fixed in the human mind that birth and death are dichotomous, that life and death are two separate things. We want to live; we don't want to die -- but we don't know that death is already part of

life. Once we decide we don't want to die, it becomes a certainty, that very moment, that our lives will be filled with problems and difficulties.

The whole of mankind has become schizophrenic. Man's mind is split into parts, into fragments, and there is a reason for this. We have taken the totality of life as if it were made up of parts, and we have pitted each part against the other. Man is the same, but we have created divisions inside him and have also determined that these divisions are contrary to each other. We have done this in all spheres. We tell a person, "Don't be angry, be forgiving," without realizing that the difference between anger and forgiveness is again only of degrees -- as it is between cold and hot, between childhood and old age. We can say that anger, reduced to the lowest, is forgiveness -- there is no dichotomy between them. But all the age-old precepts of mankind teach us, "Get rid of anger and adopt forgiveness" -- as if anger and forgiveness are such opposite things that you can drop anger and retain forgiveness. Such a thing can only result in splitting man into fragments and in bringing him trouble.

All of our past belief systems say that sex and brahmacharya, celibacy, are contrary to each other. Nothing can be more erroneous than this. The lowest point of sex is brahmacharya. Sex, dropping downward, decreasing, is brahmacharya. The distance between the two is not one of enmity and contradiction. Remember, in this world there is nothing at all like contradiction. In fact, there can never be anything like contradiction in the world, because if there were, there would be no way to unite the opposites. If birth and death were separate entities, birth would move along its own course and death on its own -- nowhere would they meet. Just as two parallel lines don't meet anywhere, no meeting would ever take place between birth and death.

Birth and death are intertwined, they are two ends of a continuum. When I say this, what I am actually saying is that if man is to be saved from going insane in the near future, we will have to accept life in its totality. We can't afford any longer to create divisions and to pit one part against the other.

It is so strange that one who says, "Sex is contrary to brahmacharya, so let's get rid of sex," will himself be ultimately destroyed in his attempts to get rid of sex. Such a person can never attain brahmacharya. Striving to cut off sex from his life, his mind will remain fixed on sex alone -- there is no way he can ever attain brahmacharya. His mind will be in great tension and trouble forever -- right there, that's his death. His life will become too onerous. He will become heavy and won't be able to live at all -- not even for a moment. He will be in great trouble.

If you look at it this way -- and this is the fact -- then what I am saying is that sex and brahmacharya are related to each other, just as the lowest and the highest rungs are. As man moves up the ladder of sex, he enters into brahmacharya. Brahmacharya is nothing but sex reduced to its lowest degree. One reaches to a point where it almost feels as if everything has become empty -- it is reaching to the ultimate end. Then there is no contradiction in life, no tension. Then there is no restlessness in life. Then we can live a natural life.

What I am talking about is how to live a most natural life, in all its aspects. We don't live naturally at any level, because we have learned the ways of living life unnaturally. If you were to tell a person, "Walk only with your left foot, because the left foot stands for religion, righteousness. Don't walk on your right

foot because the right foot represents unrighteousness...." If the man were to believe this -- and there are lots of people who would believe this; people to believe in such stupid ideas have always been found. So you would come across people who would agree that to walk on the left foot is righteous, and to walk on the right foot is unrighteous. Then they would begin cutting their right foot off and trying to walk on the left foot. They would never be able to walk.

We can only walk with the combined movement of both legs. A leg never walks alone, by itself, although only one leg moves forward at a time. Walking, you only lift one leg at a time, which may create the wrong impression that you walk on one foot. But don't forget that the one at a standstill, the one in repose, is as important as the one in motion. The day one attains brahmacharya, the sex in repose is instrumental in that attainment -- in the same way as the stationary right leg is instrumental in the left leg's moving forward. The left leg would not be able to move without the help of the right one.

Sex which has become still becomes the foothold for the arising of brahmacharya. One can take the step of brahmacharya only when sex has ceased to move. Uprooting the foothold of sex, breaking it, will certainly result in cutting off sex, but that won't help in achieving brahmacharya. Instead, man will remain hanging in limbo -- in the same way all the age-old teachings have left humanity hanging in limbo. What we see around us in life is nothing but the movement of the left and the right step, of the left and the right foot.

In life everything is integrated. The apparent diversity is like the notes of a great symphony. If you cut anything out, you will find yourself in difficulty. Someone may say the color black signifies evil. That's why no one is allowed to wear black at marriages; black is allowed at somebody's death. There are people who believe black is a sign of evil, and there are people who believe white is a sign of purity. In a symbolic sense, it is alright to have such distinctions, but if someone were to say, "Let's get rid of black, let's remove black from the face of the earth," then remember, with the removal of black, very little white will be left behind -- because the whiteness of white stands out in all its sharpness only against a black background.

The teacher writes on a blackboard with white chalk. Is he out of his mind? Why doesn't he write on the white wall? Of course one can write on a white wall, but the letters won't stand out. White manifests because of the black background; black is in fact causing the white to stand out. Remember, the white of the man who invites enmity with black will inevitably grow dull, insipid.

One who is against showing anger, his forgiveness will be impotent. The strength of forgiveness lies in anger; only one who can be angry has the power to be forgiving. The more fierce the anger, that much greater will be the magnanimity of forgiveness. The power of anger itself will lend luster to the act of forgiveness. In the absence of anger, the forgiveness will appear totally lackluster, absolutely lifeless, dead.

If a person's sex is destroyed -- and there are means to destroy sex -- then remember, that will not make him a brahmacharya, a celibate, he will simply turn into an impotent person. And there is a fundamental difference between these two things. There are ways to do away with sex, but a man cannot become a brahmacharya by doing away with sex, he can only become impotent. By transforming sex, by accepting

it, by moving its energy towards a higher level, one can certainly attain brahmacharya. But remember, the brilliance you see in the eyes of a brahmachari, a celibate, is the brilliance of sex energy itself. The energy is the same, but transformed.

What I am saying is that what we call opposites are not opposites -- life consists of a very mysterious order. In this mysterious order opposites have been created so that things can exist. You must have seen a heap of bricks piled up in front of a house under construction. All the bricks are the same. Then the architect, the engineer, in order to make an arch for a doorway in the house, lays the bricks in opposing order. The bricks are the same, but making the doorway he places them opposite each other so they can hold each other. He wouldn't be able to make the arch if he placed them in the same order -- the doorway would fall immediately.

Bricks laid in the same order carry no strength; there is no resistance in them. Wherever resistance occurs a strength is created. All strength comes with opposition; all energy is produced from friction. In life, the principle of polarity is behind the creation of energy, power. The bricks are all alike, but they are placed in opposite order.

God, the divine architect of life, is very intelligent. He knows that life will become cold immediately, will dissolve right away if the bricks are not laid in opposition to each other. So he has placed anger opposite forgiveness, sex opposite brahmacharya, and because of the resistance present between them, an energy is created. And that energy is life. He has put the bricks of birth and death together, facing each other, and thus of both a gateway to life is created. There are people who say, "We will only accept the brick of life, we won't accept the brick of death." That's fine. Suit yourself. But if you don't accept death you will die that very moment, because then all the bricks that are left will be alike. Only the bricks of life will be left -- and they will collapse right away.

This mistake has been repeated many a time. For the last ten thousand years man has been badly afflicted with and troubled by this mistake. He insists on placing bricks that are all alike; he doesn't want opposing bricks. "Remove the polarity," he says. He says, "If we believe in God, then that's all we'll believe in. Then we won't believe in samsara, in the mundane world.

If God is, then there is no samsara; then we can never accept the mundane life. We can't be in the marketplace, we can't attend to our businesses; because we believe in God we'll become monks and retire to the forests." That man would like to create his world with the bricks of God. Can you imagine what the consequences would be if, by mistake, worldly people were to go crazy and become monks? From that very day things wouldn't move an inch; from that day the whole world would be in ruins.

In fact, the man who is a monk has no idea that he is surviving, that his left foot moves forward, because someone, a worldly man, is running a store in the marketplace out there. One foot is rooted there; that's why the monk's foot is free to move. The monk's very life-breath comes from the worldly man. He is under the illusion that he is living on his own, but the fact is, all his nourishment comes from the mundane world. And yet he goes about cursing the worldly man; he goes on telling him, "Renounce the world and become a monk." He doesn't realize he is creating a situation for universal suicide this way -- a situation even he can't escape from: he will die as well. He is thinking of using bricks that are all alike.

There are also people who say the opposite. They say, "There's no God, there's just this world and nothing else. We only believe in matter." And, believing only in matter, they also tried to create a world of their own. They too have landed in trouble. Where they have arrived, suicide will happen there as well -- because if there is only matter and no God, then everything that lends savor to life, that makes life charming, that gives movement to life, that creates the desire to rise, will be gone.

If one were to believe there is no God, that there is nothing but matter, then what meaning is there in life? Then life becomes totally useless. That's why people like Sartre, Camus, Kafka and others talk so much about meaninglessness in the West. Today, with one voice, all Western philosophers are saying that life is meaningless. What Shakespeare once said has become relevant all of a sudden, and Western thinkers are now reiterating it in the context of life itself: "A tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." There cannot be any significance, any meaning, because you have put together only bricks of matter, and of matter alone. Meaning is bound to disappear absolutely. Just as there being only monks would take meaning away from the world, there being worldly people alone would also take meaning away.

It is interesting that the worldly man survives with the help of the renunciate and the renunciate survives with the help of the worldly man -- in the same way the left foot is dependent on the right foot and the right foot is dependent on the left foot. On the surface this dependence appears as a contradiction, but deep down it is not. Both feet are part of the same being: one keeps it rooted; the other causes it to move.

No one can experience the whole truth of life without understanding this contradiction correctly. A person who, in his opposition, insists on cutting out the half of it has not yet attained enough intelligence. You can do away with the half, of course, but as soon as that happens the remaining half will die as well -- because, unquestionably, the latter half received its life energy from the first half and from nowhere else.

I have heard.... Two monks were involved in an ongoing dispute. One believed it is good to have some money on you, that it can be useful in emergencies. His friend, the other monk, used to argue, "Why do we need money? We are renunciates, what do we need money for? Only worldly people keep money." Both used to put forward arguments in support of their respective views, and it seemed like their arguments were correct.

The great mystery of this universe is that you can present an equal number of arguments in support of any of the opposing bricks used in its creation, and the dispute can never end because both bricks are used equally. Anyone can point out, "Look, the universe is created of my bricks," while someone else can argue against this, saying, "No, the universe is made of my bricks."

And life is so vast that very few people evolve enough to see that the whole doorway is made of opposing bricks. The rest merely see the bricks that fall within the range of their view. They say, "You are right, the universe is a creation of sannyas. You are right, Brahman is the source of the universe. You are

right, the universe is made of atman." Other people say, "The universe is made of matter, it is made of nothing but dust. Everything will eventually turn into dust -- 'Dust unto dust.'" These people can also show only the bricks that fall within their particular view. In this whole affair neither the theist nor the atheist wins the argument; neither the materialist nor the spiritualist wins. They cannot. Their statements are coming from a dichotomized view of life.

So there was a great dispute between these monks. One maintained it is necessary to have money, while the other disagreed. One evening, in a great hurry, they arrived at a river. It was close to nightfall. One of the monks approached the boatman, who was tying up his boat for the night, and said, "Please don't tie your boat up yet, bring us across the river. Night is approaching and we must reach the other side."

The boatman said, "Sorry, I am finished for the day and now I have to go back to my village. I'll take you across in the morning."

The monks said, "No, we can't wait until morning. Our guru, with whom we lived, who taught us what life is all about, is close to dying. The news is, he will be dead by morning. He has summoned us. We can't stay overnight."

The boatman said, "Okay, I'll take you over for five rupees." The monk who had argued in favor of carrying money laughed and, looking at the other monk, said, "What do you think, my friend? Is carrying money worthless or meaningful?" The other monk simply kept laughing. The monk paid five rupees to the boatman -- he had won. After reaching the other shore, the monk said again, "What do you say, my friend? We would have been unable to cross the river if we hadn't had the money."

The second monk laughed uproariously. He said, "We crossed the river not because you had money, but because you could part with it! We were able to cross the river not because you had money but because you could let go of it." So the argument remained. The second monk continued, "I always said a monk must have the courage to let go of money. We could give it up; that's why we could cross the river. If you had kept holding on to it, if you had not let it go, how could we have crossed the river?"

So the problem remained. The first monk also joined in the laughter. They came to their guru. They asked him, "What shall we do? This has become quite a problem. What happened today illustrates our differences succinctly. One of us believes we crossed the river because we had money on us, while the other says we were able to cross because we let money go. We are firm in our beliefs, and we both seem to be right."

The guru laughed a belly laugh. He said, "You are both crazy. You are committing the same kind of foolishness mankind has done for ages."

"What is that foolishness?" the monks asked.

The guru said, "Each one of you is looking at one side of the truth. It is true you could hire the boat and cross the river only because you let go of money -- but the other side is equally true: you could part with your money because you had money to part with. It is true, of course, that you were able to cross the

river because you had money on you. But the other part is equally true. Had you not had any money you wouldn't have been able to cross. You crossed because you let go of money. So both things are right. There is no contradiction between them."

But we have created such dichotomies in all levels of our lives. And a belief in either of the two parts can provide a convincing argument in its support. It is not difficult, because after all, a man has at least half of life to draw upon -- he is living half his life; that's not a small matter. It is more than enough to argue for. So nothing will be solved by arguing. Life will have to be investigated, known in its totality.

I certainly teach death, but that does not mean I am against life. What it means is: death is the gateway to know life, to recognize life as well. What it means is: I don't see life and death as contrary to each other. Whether I call it the art of dying or whether I call it the art of living -- both mean the same thing. It depends on how we look at it. You may ask, "Why don't you call it the art of living?" There are reasons for it.

The first thing is, we have become extremely attached to life. And this attachment has become very unbalanced. I can call it the art of living too, but I won't, because you are too attached to life. If I should say, "Come learn the art of living," you would come running because you would want to strengthen your attachment to life. I call it the art of dying so you can regain your balance. If you learn how to die, then life and death will stand before you equally; they will become your left and right foot. Then you will attain to the ultimate life. In its ultimate state life contains neither birth nor death, but it is made of the two aspects we call birth and death.

Of course, if there is a town where people are suicidal, where no one wants to live, I won't go there and talk about the art of dying. There I will say, "Learn the art of living." And as I tell you, "Meditation is the gateway to death," I would tell the people of that town, "Meditation is the gateway to life." I would tell them, "Come, learn how to live, because unless you have learned how to live, you won't know how to die. If you wish to die, then let me teach you how to live -- because once you have learned how to live you will have learned how to die as well." Only then would the people of that town come to me. Your town is just the opposite: you are residents of a town where no one wants to die, where everyone wants to live, where people want to cling to life so hard they can keep death away forever. Therefore, I am compelled to talk to you about death. It has nothing to do with me; because of you I am calling it the art of dying. I have been saying the same thing all along.

Once Buddha entered a village. It was early morning and the sun was just about to appear on the horizon. A man came to him and said, "I am an atheist, I don't believe in God. What do you think? Is there God?"

Buddha said, "God alone is. There is nothing but God everywhere."

The man said, "But I was told that you are an atheist."

"You must have heard wrongly," said Buddha. "I am a theist. Now you have heard it from my own lips. I am the greatest theist ever. There is God, and nothing but God." The man stood there under the tree with an uneasy feeling. Buddha moved on.

Another man came at noon and said, "I am a theist. I am an absolute believer in God. I am an enemy of atheists. I have come to ask you, what do you think about God's existence?"

Buddha said, "God? Neither is there one, nor can there ever be one. There is absolutely no God."

The man couldn't believe his ears. "What are you talking about?" he exclaimed. "I heard a religious man had come to this village, so I came to ask whether God is. And what's this you are saying?"

Buddha said, "A religious man? A believer in God? I am the greatest atheist ever."

The man stood there utterly confused. We can understand this man's confusion -- but Ananda, a disciple of Buddha's, was in a terrible suspense; he had heard both conversations. He became very restless; he couldn't figure out what was going on. It was all right in the morning, but by afternoon it became a problem. "What has happened to Buddha?" Ananda wondered to himself. "In the morning he said he was the greatest theist, while in the afternoon he said he was the greatest atheist." He made up his mind to ask Buddha in the evening, when he would be alone. But by evening Ananda was in for yet another surprise.

By the time it was evening another person came to Buddha and said, "I don't understand whether there is God or not." The man must have been an agnostic, one who says he doesn't know whether God is or not. No one knows, and no one can ever know. So he said, "I don't know whether there is God or not. What do you say? What do you think?"

Buddha replied, "If you don't know, then I don't know either. And it would be good if we both remained silent."

Listening to Buddha's answer, this man was confounded as well. He said, "I had heard you are enlightened, so I thought you must have known."

Buddha said, "You must have heard wrong. I am an absolutely ignorant man. What knowledge can I have?"

Just try to feel what Ananda must have gone through. Put yourself in his shoes. Can you see his difficulty? When it was night and everyone had left, he touched Buddha's feet and said, "Are you trying to kill me? What are you doing? I almost lost my life! Never have I been so upset and restless as I have been today. What is this you have been saying and doing the whole day? Are you in your right mind? Are you sure you know what you said today? In the morning you said one thing, in the afternoon another, and in the evening you gave an entirely different answer to the same question."

Buddha said, "I did not give these answers to you. I gave my answers to the people concerned. Why did you listen to them? Do you think it is right to hear what I say to others?"

Ananda said, "Now this tops it all! How in the world could I not hear? I was present, right there; my ears were not blocked! And could it ever be possible I wouldn't want to hear you speak? I love to hear you speak, no matter who you talk to."

Buddha said, "But why are you upset? I didn't answer you!"

Ananda said, "Maybe not, but I am in a quandary. Please answer me, right now. What is the truth? Why did you give three different answers?"

Buddha explained, "I had to bring the three of them to a point of balance. The man who came in the morning was an atheist. Being an atheist only he was incomplete, because life is made of opposites."

Keep this in mind: a truly religious person is both -- an atheist on one hand, and a believer in God on the other hand. His life contains both aspects, but he brings harmony between the two opposites. Religion is in that very harmony. And one who is only a believer in God lacks religious maturity. He has not yet attained a balance in his life.

So Buddha said, "I had to bring a balance to his life. One side of him had become very heavy, so I had to put some rocks on the other scale. And besides, I also wanted to unsettle him, because somehow he had become convinced there is no God. His conviction needed to be shaken up, because one who becomes certain, dies. The journey must go on; the search must continue.

"The man who came in the afternoon was a theist. I had to tell him I was an atheist because he had become lopsided too; he had also lost his balance. Life is a balance. One who attains this balance attains the truth."

The reason I say to you, you should learn the art of dying is because your life has become lopsided. You are sitting very solidly on the scale of life, and so everything has turned to rock. Life has become solidified; the balance is gone.

Go ahead. Invite death as well. Say, "Come and be my guest too. We'll stay together." The day life agrees to live with death, it is transformed into life supreme. The day one welcomes death, gives it a hug, embraces it, the matter is over! That day the sting of death departs. The sting lay in our running away from death, in our being afraid of it. When a person comes forward and embraces death, death loses, death is conquered, because the man who embraces death becomes immortal. Now death can't do anything to him. What can death do when the man himself is ready to disappear?

There are two types of people -- one whom death seeks and the other who seeks death. Death seeks those who run away from it. And there are those who seek death, but it keeps eluding them. They search endlessly but can't find death. What kind of a person would you like to be -- the one who runs away from death or the one who embraces it? A person eluding death will continue to be defeated; his entire life will be a lifelong story of defeat. One who embraces death will instantly triumph over it; defeat will no longer exist in his life. Then his life becomes a triumphant journey.

Yes, I teach the very art of dying. I am teaching you how to die so you may attain life. Do you know a secret? The man who learns how to live in darkness -- the moment he accepts the totality of darkness, the darkness turns into light for him. Do you know that the man who takes poison lovingly, joyfully, as if he were taking nectar -- the poison becomes nectar for him? If you don't, then you must find out. One of the most profound truths of life is that the man who accepts poison lovingly, the poison no longer remains poison for him -- it turns into nectar. And the man who has accepted darkness itself, wholeheartedly, finds to his astonishment that darkness has become light. And one who greets pain with open arms, finds there is no pain at all -- only happiness remains for him.

For one who accepts his state of agitation and agrees to live with it, the doors of peace and tranquility are thrown open. This seems contradictory. Remember, however, that one who says he wants to attain peace can never become peaceful, because to say "I want to attain peace," is, in fact, looking for disturbance. Man is restless as he is, and yet there are some who create a new restlessness by saying, "We want to be peaceful."

Once a man came to me. He said, "I have been to the Ramana ashram, to Pondicherry, and to the Ramakrishna ashram -- they are all full of hypocrisy. I couldn't find anything else there. I am looking for peace, which I find nowhere. I have been wandering in search of it for the last two years. In Pondicherry someone mentioned your name. I have come straight from there. I want peace."

I said, "Get up and walk out that door right this moment, otherwise I shall be proven to be a hypocrite as well."

He said, "What do you mean?"

I said, "Simply get out. And don't ever look back in this direction again. It is better I save myself before I am called a hypocrite as well."

"But I have come to find peace," the man said.

"Simply get lost," I said. "And let me ask you this: who did you go to and ask how to be in agony? Which guru has initiated you into agitation? Which ashram did you go to, to learn how to be restless?"

"I went nowhere," the man replied.

Then I said, "You are such a clever fellow, you can even create mental disturbance for yourself. Then what is there for me to teach you?" The way you have created your agitation, take an opposite route and you will find peace. What do you want from me? Don't tell anyone you came to see me too, even by mistake. I have nothing to do with what's happening to you!"

The man said, "Please show me the way to find peace."

I told him, "You are looking for ways of becoming agitated. There is only one way to attain peace: be at peace with restlessness."

One who accepts restlessness in its totality, one who says, "Come, stay with me. Be my guest in this very home," suddenly finds the restlessness has left him. With the change in our state of mind the restlessness departs. One who accepts even the restlessness itself, his mind quiets down. How can restlessness last if the mind is attuned to peace?

Even though it may be a nonacceptance of restlessness, the very restlessness itself is the product of our attitude of nonacceptance. One who says he will not accept being restless will continue to be restless, because this very non-acceptance is itself the root of restlessness. A man says, "I won't accept restlessness, I can't accept suffering, I can't accept death, I can't accept darkness." That's just fine, don't accept them -- but you will continue to be surrounded by what you will not accept. Instead, see what happens by accepting, by agreeing to something no one else wants to agree to. And to your great surprise you will find what you considered your enemy became your friend. If you invite your enemy to be your guest, what other course is there for him but to become your friend?

The reason for my discussing these issues with you for three days was because I saw you came here with the desire to conquer death. You must have thought I would let you in on some trick so you would never die.

A friend has written a letter in which he says:

Question 2

ARE YOU GOING TO SHOW US HOW TO REJUVENATE OUR BODIES? ARE YOU GOING TO SHOW SOME ALCHEMICAL METHOD TO BECOME YOUNG AGAIN? IF THAT'S THE CASE THEN IT'S WORTH SPENDING OUR MONEY TO COME THERE.

Maybe you have come here with the same idea too. If so, you will be disappointed, because I am teaching the art of dying here. I say unto you: Die! Learn how to die. Why run away from death? Accept it, welcome it. And remember, I am giving you the very key to be victorious over death. Rejuvenation is not the key for attaining victory over death. No matter how much you go through a process of rejuvenation, you will still have to die. The body is sure to die.

Rejuvenation can only push death a little further away; death can be avoided a little longer. It only means your problems will be extended over a longer period -- instead of dying in seventy years, you might be able to die in seven hundred years. The suffering you could have otherwise finished with in seventy years will be prolonged for seven hundred years -- what else? The troubles of seventy years will extend to seven hundred. The quarrels of seventy years will continue up to seven hundred. The problems of seventy years will spread over seven hundred years -- they will be stretched that much, multiplied. What else do you think will happen?

This may not have occurred to you, but if you really should come across someone who could give you a potion and say, "Take this and you will live for seven hundred years," you would tell him, "Wait a minute, let me think it over." I don't believe any one of you would agree to take a potion that would extend life for seven hundred years. So what does that mean? That means "I will continue to be as I am. This very 'I' will now have to live for seven hundred years." And that would prove to be very costly; it would have very grave consequences.

Should scientists someday discover how man can live infinitely -- and such a discovery is possible; it is not difficult -- remember, people will start looking for a guru to teach them how to die quickly. Just as now people are looking for gurus who can rejuvenate their bodies, people then will look for someone who will show them the secret, the technique of dying, so that even scientists will not be able to save them. They will try to cheat the government so they can ease themselves out of life.

We have absolutely no idea that an extended life has no meaning. The meaning of life comes with living. An individual can live so totally in one moment -- more totally than another man could even in an infinite number of lives. It's a matter of living, and only a man who has no fear of death can live -- otherwise how can he live? The fear of death keeps man trembling -- he never stands still; he keeps running all the time.

Have you noticed that speed is continuously on the increase in the world? Everything is speedy. In one respect a rocket is better than a bullock cart -- because a rocket can take us places faster -- but why so much insistence on speed? You may not have realized this, but all man's attempts at speed are attempts to escape where he is. Where he is, he is so scared, he is so afraid, he wants to get away. He feels he would be better off anywhere except where he is.

All over Europe and America weekends and holidays have become a great nuisance. People get more tired on these days than ever. The idea is to jump into the car and dash off -- fifty miles, a hundred miles, two hundred miles -- to escape to a picnic spot, to a mountain, to a hill resort, to the beach. The motivation for rushing off so fast is because others are running off, are in a hurry too -- they might reach first. If one asks where they want to reach, they don't know. One thing is certain, however: they want to get away from where they are -- away from the house, away from the wife, away from their work.

Man is unable to live; that's why there is so much running about. He wants to go on putting more power into his vehicles so he can run faster. Ask where he is going, where he wants to reach, and his answer will be, "I can't tell you right now; I don't have time. I have to get there soon. We have to land on the moon; we have to land on Mars." All our lives we are running. What are we running from? What is the fear? The fear is that on the one hand we are unable to live fully, and on the other hand the fear of death is imminent, present. Both things are interconnected. The man who is afraid of death will not be able to live his life; he will remain terrified of death. Then what is the answer?

You ask me, "What's the answer? What's the solution?" I say: accept death. Invite death and say, "Come on, I'll worry about living later -- first you come. Let me first be finished with you so the matter is over once and for all. After that I'll live at leisure. Let me take care of you first, then I'll settle down and live comfortably." Meditation is the means to accept death with this attitude. To extend such an invitation

to death, meditation is the means, meditation is the answer. One who accepts death in this way comes to a halt immediately. His speed disappears.

Have you ever watched? When you are angry and you are cycling, you pedal faster. When you are angry and driving a car, you press the accelerator harder. Psychologists say car accidents happen, not because of bad roads but because of the man on the accelerator -- there is something wrong with the man. His teeth are clenched in anger and he is pressing the accelerator harder, and somehow or other he is wishing to have an accident. He is filled with the desire to crash into something. Life seems so dull and useless to him that he wants to bring some excitement, some juice into it -- at least by crashing against something, if nothing else. He thinks he'll get some thrill out of it, will feel good about it. He feels he'll have the satisfaction that something happened in his life, that it was not a total waste.

Many criminals in Europe and America have given statements in court, saying they had nothing against the person they killed -- they just wanted to see their names in print, and that was the only way. A good man's name never appears in the papers; you only see names of murderers and criminals. There are two types of murderers: those who commit a single murder for personal reasons, and those who commit collective murder -- the politicians. Only their names are printed in the newspapers, the rest are ignored. Although you may be a good citizen, your name will not be in the papers -- but stab a person and it will create headlines.

A criminal confesses in the court, "I had no enmity with the person, I had never seen the man before. I just looked at his back and plunged a knife into it. When the blood gushed out of the victim I felt satisfied that finally I had done something people would talk about, that my life had not passed in vain. The newspapers are filled with the story. The courts, the big judges and lawyers in their black gowns are discussing my case with great seriousness. Looking at all this, I feel I have also done something, I am not an ordinary man."

A man who is evading death, who is scared of death, has become so frustrated, so sad and bored that he is ready to indulge in anything. The one thing he is not doing, however, is welcoming death. As soon as a man welcomes death, accepts death, a new door opens in his life -- a door that leads him to the divine.

The word "Die" is inscribed on the temple of God, whereas inside the stream of life is overflowing. Looking at the signboard -- "Die" -- people turn back. No one goes inside. It's a very smart idea, a very clever idea, otherwise there would be a crowd inside and it would be difficult to live -- so the temple of life has the signboard "Die" hanging outside. Those who become frightened looking at it, run away. That's why I said one has to learn how to die.

The biggest secret of life is to learn how to die, how to accept death. Let the past die every day. Let us die every day. We don't let the yesterday's past die. A seventy-year-old man keeps the happy memories of his childhood alive. His childhood is not yet dead. He still carries the desire to return to his childhood. The man is too old to move about, he is bedridden, but his youth is not yet dead. He is still thinking about the same things. He is still dreaming of the female movie stars of his youth, although none of them are the same now. The pictures are still moving before his eyes; nothing has died. In fact, our yesterday never dies. We never gather the courage to die; we never let anything die, and consequently

everything piles up. We don't let the dead be dead; instead, we amass it like a heavy load. And then it becomes impossible to live under its weight. So one of the keys to the art of dying is: let the dead be dead.

As Jesus was passing by a lake, a wonderful incident took place. It was early morning -- the sun was about to rise; the horizon had just turned red. A fisherman had thrown his net in the lake to catch fish. As he began pulling the net out, Jesus placed his hand on the fisherman's shoulder and said, "My friend, would you spend all your life catching fish?"

The same question had crossed the fisherman's mind many times before. Is there any mind in which it doesn't? Of course, the fish may be different, the net may be different, the lake may be different, but nevertheless, the question arises, "Am I supposed to spend the whole of my life catching fish?"

The fisherman turned around to see who the man was who was raising the same question he had in his mind. He looked at Jesus. He saw his serene, laughing eyes, his personality. He said, "There is no other way. Where else can I find a lake? Where else can I find fish and throw my net to catch them? I also ask myself, 'Will I go on catching fish the rest of my life?'"

Then Jesus said, "I am a fisherman too, but I throw my net in some other ocean. Come, follow me if you wish, but remember, only a man can throw a new net who has the courage to give up his old net. Leave the old net behind."

The fisherman must have really been a courageous man. There are very few courageous people like him. Right there, he dropped the net filled with fish. A desire must have occurred in his mind to at least pull out the net that was already filled, but Jesus said, "Only they can throw the new net into the new ocean who have the courage to leave the old net behind. Drop your net right there." The fisherman let go of his net and asked, "Tell me where I have to go."

Jesus said, "You seem to be a man of courage. You have the potential to go some place. Come with me!" As they reached the outskirts of the village, a man came running. He caught hold of the fisherman and said, "You madman, where are you going? Your father, who was ill, has died. Where were you? We went looking for you at the lake and found your net lying there. Where are you going?"

The fisherman said, "Please let me take leave for a few days to perform my father's last rites. Then I'll come back."

Jesus' words in reply to the fisherman are tremendously wonderful. He said, "You fool, let the dead bury the dead! What need is there for you to go? Come. Follow me. Now one who is dead is already dead, why even bother to bury him? These are all tricks to keep him alive. So one who is now dead, is dead forever. And there are many dead people in the village. They will bury the dead. You come with me."

The fisherman hesitated for a moment. Watching him, Jesus said, "Perhaps I wrongly understood you could leave your old net behind." The fisherman paused for a moment and then followed Jesus. Jesus said, "You are a courageous man. If you can leave the dead behind, you can indeed attain to life."

Actually, that which has died in the past should be dropped. You sit in meditation but then you always come and tell me it never happens, that thoughts keep coming. Thoughts don't come like that. The question is, have you ever left them? You always keep holding on to them, how can they be at fault? If a man keeps a dog, feeds him, ties him in his house and then suddenly one day sets him loose, turns him out; if the poor dog comes back to the man again and again, would the dog be at fault?

All these days you fed the dog, petted him, loved him, played with him, tied a collar around his neck, kept him in your home. And then all of a sudden you decide to meditate and tell the dog to get lost. How can that be? The poor dog has no idea what has happened to you so suddenly, so he wanders around for a while and then comes back to you. He thinks maybe you are having some kind of fun with him, hence the more you drive him out the more playful he becomes, the more he keeps coming back to you. He feels something new is happening, that maybe the master is in a good mood, so he takes more and more interest in the game.

You come and tell me thoughts won't leave you. How can they? You have nourished them with your own blood. You have tied them to yourself; you have put a collar around their necks with your name on it. Just tell someone that what he thinks is wrong -- he will jump back at you saying, "What do you mean, what I think is wrong? My thoughts can never be wrong!" So the thought with a collar with your name on it comes back to you. How is your thought supposed to know you are meditating? Now you say to your thought, "Get out! Scram!" The thought is not going to go away like this.

We nourish thoughts. We nourish thoughts of the past, we keep tying them to ourselves. And then, one day, you want them to leave you all of a sudden. They won't leave you in one day. You will have to stop feeding them; you will have to stop rearing them.

Remember, if you want to drop thoughts, stop saying, "My thoughts." How can you leave something you claim as yours? If you want to get rid of thoughts, then stop taking interest in them. How will they depart unless you stop taking interest in them? Otherwise, how will they know you have changed, that you are no longer interested in them?

All our memories of the past are thoughts. There is a whole network of them we are holding on to. We don't allow them to die. Let your thoughts die. Let the dead remain dead; don't try to keep it alive. But we are keeping it alive.

This is also a part of the art of dying. Keep this key in mind too: if you want to learn the art of dying then let the dead be dead. Let the past be past. It no longer exists, let it go. There is no need even to preserve it in your memory. Say goodbye to it, let it depart. Yesterday was finished yesterday; now it is no more -- and yet it keeps its hold over us.

There is another small question. A friend has asked:

Question 3

WHAT IS A MIND FILLED WITH ILLUSIONS? WHAT IS A VERY CONFUSED MIND? WHAT IS CLARITY OF MIND?

This needs to be understood, because it will be useful for meditation as well as in learning the art of dying. He has asked a very significant question. He asks, "What is a confused mind?" But here we make a mistake. We say, "disturbed mind," "confused mind." This is where the mistake is. What is the mistake? The mistake is we are using two words -- confused and mind -- and the truth of the matter is that there is no such thing as a confused mind. Rather, the very state of confusion itself is mind. There is nothing like a confused mind.

Mind is confusion. Mind is another name for confusion. And when there is no confusion does not mean that the mind has become peaceful; then there is no more mind at all.

For example, there is a storm at sea, the sea is restless. Would you call it a "restless storm"? Would anyone call it a "restless storm"? You would simply call it a storm, because a storm is just another name for restlessness. And when the storm dies down, do you now say the storm has become peaceful? You simply say the storm no longer exists.

In understanding the mind, remember too, mind is just another name for confusion. When peace descends it does not mean the mind becomes peaceful; rather, the mind does not exist at all. A state of no-mind appears. And when the mind is no more, then what remains is called the atman. The sea exists even when there is no storm. When the storm disappears, the sea remains. When the confused mind ceases to exist, then what remains is atman, soul.

Mind is not a thing, it is a state of disorder, a state of chaos. Mind is not a faculty, it is not a substance. The body is a substance, the atman is a substance -- and existing as a state of confusion that becomes a link between the two, is mind. In a state of peace, the body remains, the atman remains, but the mind is no more.

There is no such thing as a peaceful mind. This error in expression is because of the language we have created. We say an "unhealthy body," a "healthy body." This is okay. There is an unhealthy body, of course, and there is a healthy body as well. With the disappearance of unhealthiness, a healthy body remains. But this is not true in the case of the mind. There is no such thing as a "healthy mind," an "unhealthy mind." Mind by itself is unhealthy. Its very being is confusion. Its very being is unhealthy. Its very being is a disease.

So don't ask how you can save the mind from becoming confused, ask how you can get rid of this mind. Ask how this mind can die. Ask how you can do away with this mind. Ask how you can let go of this mind. Ask what can be done so that the mind will exist no more.

Meditation is a way to be finished with the mind, to part with the mind. Meditation means to step out of the mind. Meditation means to move away from the mind. Meditation means cessation of the mind.

Meditation means to stay away from where the confusion is. By moving away from the confusion, the confusion stills -- because it is our very presence that creates it. If we move away, it ceases to be.

Say, for instance, two people are having a fight. You have come to fight with me and the fight is on. If I were to step aside, how would the fight continue? It would stop, because it can only continue if I make myself a part of it. We live on a mental plane; we are present right where the disorder, where the trouble is going on. We don't want to get away from there, and yet we want to bring peace there. Peace cannot be there. Just be kind enough to step aside, that's all.

As soon as you step aside, the turmoil will come to an end. Meditation is not a technique to bring peace to your mind; rather, it is a technique to move away from the mind. Meditation is a means to slip away, to turn away from the waves of confusion.

Yet another friend has asked a question which is related to the previous one. It would be good to understand that as well. He has asked:

Question 4

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TO BE IN MEDITATION, AND TO DO MEDITATION?

It is the same difference I am already explaining to you. If a person is doing meditation, he is trying to make a confused mind peaceful. What will he do? He will attempt to make his mind quiet. When an individual is being in meditation, he is not trying to quiet down his mind; instead he is slipping away from it.

If it is sunny outside, you may see a man trying to open his umbrella -- and umbrellas can be opened outside in the sun; one may stand under its shade, or any other shade -- but such umbrellas, however, can never be opened within the mind. The only kind of umbrella there can be in the mind is of thoughts -- but they make no difference. It is as if a man were to stand in the sun with his eyes closed, thinking that an umbrella is over his head and that he is not feeling hot now. But he is bound to feel hot. This man is trying to cool down the sun. He is trying to "do" meditation. Now there is another man. When it is sunny outside, he merely gets up, walks inside the house and relaxes. He is making no effort to cool down the sun, he is merely moving away from the sun.

Doing meditation means making an effort, an effort to change the mind. And to be in meditation means not making any effort to change the mind but instead moving within without a sound.

You must take into account the distinction between the two. If you make an effort to meditate, meditation will never happen. If you try to make a conscious effort, if you sit down, strain your muscles, force yourself, become determined to calm your mind no matter what, it won't work -- because, after all, who will be doing all this? Who will be showing determination? Who else but you?

As it is, you are already confused, restless. Now you try to calm yourself down -- that means you will be adding one more headache. You are sitting uptight, ready, disregarding everything. The more stiff you become, the further you get into difficulty, the more you go on becoming tense. This is not the way. I ask you to meditate because meditation is relaxation. You have not to do anything, just be relaxed.

Make sure you understand. Let me explain a little further through one small principle. Keep it in mind finally. A man is swimming in the river. He says he wants to reach the other side. The current of the river is swift, and he flaps his arms and legs trying to swim across. He is getting tired, worn out, broken, but he keeps on swimming. This man is making an effort to swim. To swim is an effort for him. Doing meditation is an effort too. Then there is another man. Instead of swimming he just keeps floating. He has let himself go in the river. He does not throw his arms and legs about; he is simply lying in the river. The river is flowing and, along with the river, so is he. He is not swimming at all, he is just floating. An effort is not required to float; floating is merely no-effort.

The meditation I am talking about is like floating, it's not like swimming. Watch a man swimming and a leaf floating in the river. The delight and the joy of the floating leaf is simply out of this world. There is no trouble, no hindrance, no quarrel, no bother for the leaf. The leaf is very smart. And what's its smartness? The smartness of the leaf is that it has made the river its boat and is now riding on it. The leaf is ready and willing to go wherever the river takes it. The leaf has broken all the strength of the river. The river can do it no harm because the leaf is not fighting against the river. The leaf doesn't want to create any resistance, it's just floating.

So the leaf is in complete accord. Why is that so? It is because now, it is not trying to fall in accord with the river, it is simply floating; that's all. Wherever the river wants to take it, so be it. So keep the floating leaf in mind. Can you float like this in the river? There should not be even a thought of swimming, not even the feeling of it; there should be no mind at all.

Have you ever observed that a living man can drown in a river whereas a dead man floats on the surface? Have you ever wondered what this is about? A living man drowns, but never a dead man. He comes to the surface right away. What's the difference? The dead body enters into a state of no-effort. The dead body does nothing; it cannot even if it wished to. The body comes to the surface and floats. A living man can drown because a living man makes an effort to stay alive. Attempting to do that, he gets tired -- and as he gets tired he drowns. His fighting drowns him, not the river. The river can't drown the dead man because he doesn't put up any fight. Since he doesn't fight, losing his strength is out of the question. The river can do no harm to him. So he floats in the river.

The meditation I am talking about is like floating, not like swimming. You just have to float. When I say relax your body, I mean you should let the body float. Now one does not maintain any hold over the body; now one does not tether oneself to the shore of the body -- you let it go, you float. When I say to let go of the breath as well, then do not cling to the shore of breathing. Then leave that too, then float with it also. Then where will one go? If you let go of the body you will move within; if you hold on to the body you will come out.

How can one enter the river if he holds on to the shore? He can only be back on the shore. If one leaves the shore, he will go straight into the river. So a stream of life, a stream of divine consciousness is flowing within us, but we are grabbing on to the shore, on to the shore of the body.

Let go of it. Let go of breathing too. Let go of thoughts as well. Now all the shores are left behind. Where will you go now? Now you will begin to float in that stream which flows within. One who allows himself to float in that stream reaches the ocean.

The stream within is like a river, and one who starts floating in it reaches the ocean. Meditation is a kind of floating. One who learns how to float reaches the divine. Do not swim. One who swims will go astray. One who swims will, at the most, leave this shore and reach the other. What else will he do? What more can a swimmer do? He will go from one shore to the other. This shore brings you out of the river, and so does the other shore. A poor man, after a great deal of swimming, may become a rich man at most -- what more? After swimming a great deal, a man occupying a small chair may sit on a high chair in Delhi - what more will happen?

This shore takes you out of the river, the same as that shore does. The shore of Dwarka is as outside the river as the shore of Delhi is -- it makes no difference. A swimmer can only reach the shore. But what about the one who is floating? No shore can prevent a floater, because he has let himself go in the stream. The stream will carry him. It is sure to carry him and bring him to the ocean.

The very goal is to reach the ocean -- the river becomes the ocean and the individual consciousness becomes the divine. When a drop is lost in the vast ocean, the absolute meaning of life, the supreme bliss of life, the paramount beauty of life is attained.

The ultimate thing is: the art of dying is the art of floating. One who is prepared to die never swims. He says, "Take me where you will. I am ready!"

What I have talked about these four days has pertained to this. Some friends, however, believed I was merely answering questions. They have written over and over again, "Please say something of your own. Don't simply answer questions" -- as if someone else were giving the answers!

The problem is that pegs become more important than the clothes hanging on them. What they are saying is, "Just show us the clothes. Why are you bothering to hang them on pegs?" But what am I hanging on the pegs anyway? Whatever I have to say, I will be hanging it on the pegs of your questions. But that's how our minds are.

I have heard.... There was a circus. Every day, the owner of the circus used to give four bananas to the monkeys in the morning and three in the evening. One morning it happened there weren't enough bananas in the market, so he gave them three bananas. The monkeys went on strike. They said, "This is impossible, we want four bananas in the morning."

The owner said, "I'll give you four in the evening, take three now."

The monkeys insisted, "This has never happened before. We have always had four bananas in the morning. We want four bananas now!"

The owner said, "Have you gone crazy? You'll have seven bananas altogether anyway."

The monkeys persisted, "We don't care about your arithmetic. All we care about is that we have been getting four bananas every morning. We want four bananas right now!"

On and on friends write to me, "Please say something of your own. Don't answer questions." Indeed I will speak, but the question is, what will I speak? The questions merely serve as pegs; whatever I have to say, I hang on them. Whether I speak or whether I answer questions, what difference does it make? Who is it that will be answering? Who is it that will be speaking? But they feel I must speak my own stuff because they have been getting four bananas every morning.

In each meditation camp there used to be four discourses and four question-and-answer sessions. This time it has happened that you have turned all the meetings into question-and-answer sessions. But this makes no difference. Keep the arithmetic of seven bananas in mind. Add them together. There is no need to count one by one that there are four in the morning and three in the evening, or vice versa. I have given you all seven bananas. If you get mixed up counting, you might miss the point. That's why, at the end, I have said there are seven bananas. What I had to say, I have said it all.

And Now, And Here, Vol 2

Chapter #8

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Man doesn't even know what life is. And if we can't know what life is, then there is no possibility of our knowing death either. As long as life itself remains unfamiliar, as long as it remains an enigma, there is no way one can be familiar with death, no way one can ever know what death is. The truth is, death seems to occur because we have no idea of what life is. For those who know life, death is an impossible word. It is something which has never occurred, never occurs, can never occur.

There are certain words which are absolutely false; they contain not even an iota of truth. The word death is one of them. It is a totally false word. No event like death occurs anywhere. But we see people dying every day. Every day, death seems to be happening all around us.

Every village has a cremation ground. And if we understand rightly, we will come to realize that wherever we may be standing on the earth, the dead bodies of countless people have been cremated on that very spot. The very piece of land on which we may have built our houses has been a cemetery at some time or other. Millions upon millions of people have died, and are dying every day. And yet, you will be surprised if I say there is no other word in the entire human language more false than 'death'.

There was a mystic in Tibet by the name of Marpa. Someone once came to him and said, "I have come to ask you about life and death." Marpa gave a big laugh and said, "If you want to know about life you are most welcome, because I know what life is. As far as death is concerned, I have not had any meeting with death, I am not acquainted with it. If you want to know death, go and ask those who are as good as dead, or those who are already dead. I am familiar with life, I can talk about life. I can show you what life is. I am not familiar with death."

This story is similar to the tale of darkness and light. Perhaps you may have heard it. Once darkness went to see God and implored, "Lord, this sun of yours is out to get me. I am exhausted. He starts chasing me at dawn and only after much trouble leaves me alone in the evening. What wrong have I done? What kind of enmity is this? Why is this sun following me and harassing me? I barely manage to rest after a hectic day when once again I find him standing at my door at dawn. Again I have to run for my life, again I have to escape -- this has been going on since eternity. I have run out of patience. I can't take it any more. I beg you, please make him understand."

It is said that God called the sun and said, "Why are you after darkness? What wrong has he done you? Why the enmity? What grievance do you have against him?"

"Darkness?" asked the sun. "I have been wandering the universe since time immemorial, but I have never come across darkness. I don't know who darkness is. Where is he? Please bring him before me so that I may ask his forgiveness, come to know him, and stay out of his way."

Infinite time has passed since this incident took place. The matter is still pending in God's files; he has still not been able to bring darkness before the sun. He never can, and this matter is never going to be resolved. How can you bring darkness before the sun? Darkness has no positive existence of its own at all. Darkness is merely the absence of light. How can the absence of the sun be brought into the presence of the sun? No, darkness can never be brought before the sun. It is even difficult to bring darkness before a little lamp, let alone the sun, which is so vast. It is difficult for darkness to penetrate

the radius of light around a lamp; it is difficult for darkness to have an encounter with a lamp. How can darkness be where there is light? How can death be where there is life? Either there is no life at all, or else there is no death. Both cannot be true together.

We are alive, but we don't know what life is. And this ignorance makes us believe in the certainty of death. Ignorance is death. The ignorance of life itself becomes the phenomenon of death. If, God willing, we could come to know the life that is within, a single ray of that knowing would destroy forever this ignorance that one can die, or that one has died at some time in the past, or that one will die at some time in the future. We don't know the light that we are, and we become scared of the darkness that we are not. We fail to become acquainted with the light that is our vital energy, our life, our existence, and we are frightened of the darkness that we are not.

Man is not mortal, he is immortal. The whole of life is immortal, but we never look at the immortality. We never search in the direction of life; we don't even take one step towards it. And since we remain unfamiliar with life, we seem frightened of death. So the question is not one of life and death, the question is only of life.

I have been asked to speak on life and death, but this is impossible. The question is only of life, there is nothing like death at all. When one knows what life is, only then does life exist, but when life remains unknown there is only death. As a problem, life and death do not both exist simultaneously. Either we know we are life, then there is no death -- or we do not know we are life, and in that case death alone is, there is no life. They don't both exist together -- they can't. But we are all afraid of death.

The fear itself shows we are unfamiliar with death. The fear of death has only one meaning, unfamiliarity with life. And the fact is, life is flowing within us every moment. It is flowing in every breath, in every particle, all around, within and without -- and yet it is unknown to us? This can mean only one thing, that man is in a deep sleep. Only in sleep is it possible a man could remain unfamiliar with who he is. It boils down to the fact that man is deeply unconscious. It can only mean that the whole vital energy of man is not conscious, not awake.

When a man is asleep he doesn't know who he is, what he is, where he is from -- everything is lost in the darkness of sleep. He does not even know whether he exists or not. He becomes aware of his sleep only after waking up; only then he comes to know that he has been asleep. In sleep a man doesn't know he is asleep. When he was not asleep he knew he was about to sleep. And as long as he was awake he knew he was still awake and not asleep. But as soon as he falls asleep he doesn't know he is asleep, because if he were to notice that he is asleep then that would mean he is still awake, not asleep. When a man is no longer asleep, only then does he know he was asleep before. In sleep one doesn't know whether one really is or not.

Obviously, man has no idea whether he is or not, or who he is. This can only mean one thing, that some deep spiritual hypnotic sleep is surrounding him. That's why he doesn't know life itself, what life is. But we won't accept this. We'll say, "We know very well what life is. We breathe, we walk, we rise, we sit, we sleep." A drunkard also walks, breathes, moves, talks, and so does a madman. But that does not prove the drunkard is in his right senses or that the madman is conscious.

Once, while a royal procession was passing, a man stood in the main square and began throwing stones and shouting abuse at the emperor. It was, after all, a royal pageant, so the man was immediately arrested and thrown into prison. But while the man was hurling stones and abuse at the emperor, the emperor himself was laughing. His soldiers were puzzled. His prime minister asked. "Why do you laugh, my lord?"

The emperor replied, "As far as I can see, the man doesn't know what he is doing. I believe he is drunk. Nevertheless, bring him before me tomorrow morning."

Next morning the man was brought before the emperor. The king asked, "Why did you shout abuse at me? Why did you swear at me yesterday? What was the reason?"

The man said, "Me? Swearing at you? No, your majesty, I must not have been myself; that's why I must have said such things. I was drunk, I was unconscious, I wasn't there. I have no idea what I said."

We too exist as if we are not. We walk and talk and love and hate, wage war -- all in sleep. If anyone from a distant planet were to watch us, he would think the entire human race is behaving as one behaves in sleep, in a state of unconsciousness. In the last three thousand years man has fought fifteen thousand wars. This shows the human race is not awake.

From birth to death it is one long story of anxiety, misery, pain and death. Man doesn't find a single moment of bliss, a single spot of joy in his life. He remains completely ignorant of what joy is. Life passes and he has not a single glimpse of joy. Obviously, one cannot say man is living in awareness. Misery, pain, anxiety, sadness and insanity make up our lives, but we never notice it because people around us are also as asleep as we are.

Once in a while, when an awakened one takes birth, we who are asleep become so angry at this awakened person that we immediately kill him. We don't tolerate him for long. The reason we give for crucifying Jesus is "... because you are an awakened man, and that is your fault. Seeing you awake, we who are asleep feel very insulted. For people like us who are asleep, you become a symbol of disgrace. You are awake; your presence disturbs our sleep. We'll kill you." So we give poison to Socrates, we execute Mansoor. We treat the awakened ones in the same manner the inmates of a madhouse would treat someone who is not mad.

A friend of mine once went mad. He was put in a lunatic asylum. In his insanity, one day, he accidentally drank a bucket of phenyl that had been left for cleaning toilets. For fifteen days he was violently sick. He suffered from continuous vomiting and diarrhea. This brought about such a drastic change in his body that he became well -- as if all the excess heat were expelled from his body. Actually he was to stay in the asylum for six months, but his stay was extended for three more months even after he became well.

These three additional months in that asylum, he told me later, were worse than hell for him. He said, "As long as I was mad, there was no problem, because everyone else was the same as I was. But when I recovered, I couldn't figure out where I was. I was fast asleep and two men jumped on me; I was going my way and someone started pushing me. I never noticed these things before because I was mad too.

When I was mad I never could recognize that everyone around me was mad as well. Only when I came out of my madness did I realize that all those people were mad.

"As I ceased to be mad, I became the target of everyone there. My problem was that I knew I was quite well, but I wondered and worried what would happen to me now. How would I get out of there? My screaming 'I am not mad,' was of no avail because all madmen scream they are not mad. No doctor was ready to believe me."

We are surrounded by people who are asleep, hence we don't realize we are asleep too. We immediately kill the one who is awakened because he appears very troublesome, very disturbing to us.

A British scholar, Kenneth Walker, has dedicated a book of his to a mystic, Gurdjieff. The wording of his dedication is tremendous, wonderful. He has written, "To George Gurdjieff, the disturber of my sleep."

There have been very few people in the world who have tried to break man's sleep. But if you attempt to break anybody's sleep, he will take revenge on you. Don't ever try to waken a sleeping man, he will be at your throat. Up to now, whosoever has tried to shake man out of his spiritual sleep, we have been at his throat as well. We don't notice it because we are all sleeping too.

I have heard: A magician once entered a city. He threw some powder into a well and declared that whosoever would drink water from that well would go mad. This was the only well in the city. There was one more, but that was inside the king's palace. By the time it was evening everyone in that city became thirsty, so even at the cost of turning mad, people drank the water. How long could they hold out? They were helpless. And so by evening the entire city had gone mad.

The king and his queens were happy that they didn't have to drink the water from that well and become mad. His ministers were happy to be saved from madness as well. The palace was filled with music and celebration, but by evening they realized they were wrong. The people had surrounded the palace; they had all gone mad. The palace guards and the soldiers of the king's army had gone mad as well. Surrounding the palace, they shouted, "It seems our king has gone mad. We cannot tolerate a mad king sitting on the throne."

From the tower of his palace the king saw there was no way to escape, that he was completely surrounded by the mad crowd. The king was terrified. He asked his prime minister what he should do. "What will happen now?" he worriedly asked. "We thought we were fortunate that we had our own well. Now we have to pay very dearly for it." Sooner or later, all kings have to pay dearly for owning an exclusive well. This is true all over the world. One who has recently become a king will certainly find his separate well proves costly tomorrow. Owning an exclusive well is dangerous.

But, until then, the king had not realized the consequences of having his own separate well. So he turned to the prime minister for advice. The prime minister said, "Now there is nothing left for which to seek advice. Just escape by the back door, drink the water of the well outside and hurry back; otherwise this palace is in grave danger."

The king asked in horror, "You want me to drink water from that well? You want me to go mad?"

"There is no other way you can save yourself except by becoming mad," replied the prime minister.

The king and his queens rushed to the city well and drank its water. That night a great celebration took place in the city. The people expressed their joy, singing and dancing the whole night. They thanked God for restoring the king's mental state, because now the king was also dancing in the crowd and shouting abuse. Mentally, the king had become normal.

Since our state of sleep is so common, so universal, and because we have been asleep since birth, we remain unaware. In this state of sleep what do we understand about life? We understand only that the body itself is life and that one is unable to penetrate the body. This kind of understanding is similar to a man mistaking the outer wall of a palace for the palace itself, or a man walking on the parapet and thinking he is in the palace, or a man sleeping, leaning on the outer wall, thinking he is resting in the palace. One whose understanding revolves around the body is like this fool who imagines himself to be the palace's guest while standing outside its walls.

We have no access inside the body. We live outside the body. We are familiar only with the outer layer of the body; we never come to know its inner layers. We don't even know the inner sides of the palace walls, let alone the palace itself. We consider the outside of the wall to be the palace, we remain ignorant of the inside of the wall.

We know our bodies externally; we have never gone inside and seen the body from within. For example, we are all seated in this room; we can see this room from within. A man, wandering around outside, sees this house from the outside; he can't see it from within as we do. Man is not even able to see his own body, his own house from within -- he knows it only from the outside. And this gives rise to the idea of death.

That which we know from without is only the sheath, it is only the outer covering. It is only the outer wall of a house, it is not the master of the house. The master of the house is within, and we never get to meet him. When we don't even know the wall from the inside, how will we come to know the master seated within?

This experiencing of life from outside becomes the experience of death. When this experience slips away from one's hands... the day one's vital energy contracts within -- leaving the house, the body behind, and the consciousness moves inside, away from the outer wall -- people looking on from outside feel the man is dead. The man also feels he is dying. He is dying, because his consciousness begins to move within, away from what he had understood as life.

The consciousness begins to move within, away from the plane where he knew life to be. On its way to the new, unknown journey, his soul starts screaming in agony, "I am dying! I am gone! Everything is sinking!" -- because what he had considered as life up to now begins to sink, to drop away. People outside think the man is dead, and in this moment of death, in this moment of change, the person also feels, "I am dying! Dying! Dying! I am gone!"

This body of ours does not really represent our authentic being. Deep inside we have a kind of being which is entirely different from the body. It is totally opposite, reverse to the body. Look at a seed. It has a very hard shell which protects the tender, delicate seedling of life hidden inside it. Inside lies the very delicate sprout, and a tough wall, an enclosure, a sheath covers the seed in order to protect it. But the sheath, the enclosure itself, is not the seed. If a man takes the sheath for the seed, he won't be able to know the sprout hidden within it. He will just cling to the sheath and the sprout will never come out.

No, the sheath, the cover is not the seed. On the contrary, the truth is that when the seed is born the sheath has to efface itself, has to burst, has to diffuse itself, has to dissolve in the earth. When the sheath is dissolved, the seed inside manifests itself.

Our physical body is the sheath containing the seed, and inside there is a sprout consisting of life, of consciousness, of being. But, taking this sheath for the seed, we ruin ourselves and the sprout is never born, the seed never sprouts. One experiences life when the seed sprouts. When it sprouts, man ceases to be a seed and grows into a tree. As long as man is a seed, he is only a potentiality, and when the tree of life is born in him, he becomes authentic. Some call this authenticity the soul, some call it God.

Man is the seed of God. He is only a seed. It's the tree that will have the experience of the wholeness of life. How can the seed have such an experience? How can a seed ever know the blissful state of the tree? How can a seed ever know that green leaves will appear someday, and that the sun's rays will dance on them? How can a seed ever know the winds will pass through the leaves and the branches, and a resounding music will emerge from their beings? How can a seed ever know that flowers will bloom, eclipsing the beauty of the stars? How can the seed ever know that, sitting on top, birds will sing and that travelers will rest in the shade? How can a seed ever know the experience a tree has? The seed has no idea. The seed can't even dream of the possibilities awaiting when it grows into a tree. It can only realize them by being a tree.

Man doesn't know what life is because he has believed his fulfillment is in being a seed alone. He will know it only when his inner tree of life has manifested itself totally. But this is a far cry when, in the first place, we don't even realize there is something existing within that is different and separate from the body. We are never able to remember, to realize there is something different and separate from the body as well. Hence, the real issue in life is experiencing that which is within, but we believe life to be that which pervades outside.

Once I asked a tree, "Where is your life source?"

The tree replied, "In the roots, which are not visible." The life of the tree springs from those invisible roots; the tree which is visible draws life from the roots that are invisible.

Mao Zedong has written an anecdote from his childhood. He tells that there was a little garden close to the hut he and his mother lived in. All her life his mother had tended the garden with great love and care. People used to come from faraway just to see the large, beautiful and lovely flowers of that garden. There was never so hard-hearted a person who, passing by the garden, would not stop for a moment or two and admire such appealing flowers. In her old age his mother fell ill. Mao was very

young then. There wasn't any grown-up around, but Mao told his mother not to worry about the plants and flowers. He said he would take good care of them.

Day and night, from dawn till dark, Mao would toil in the garden. Assured, the mother rested. In fifteen days the mother recovered from her illness and came out in the garden. What she saw was awful. The entire garden had withered away. Not only were the flowers long gone but the leaves were dead too. Even the trees had become sad. The old woman must have felt the same way anyone with eyes would feel looking at the garden of humanity today. All the flowers had fallen off, all the leaves had dropped, all the trees were sad. The old woman cried out, "What have you done? What were you doing from dawn till dusk?" she wailed.

Mao also burst into tears. He said, "I did the best I could. I used to dust each and every flower, I used to dust each and every leaf. I used to kiss each flower and spray water on each flower. I don't know what happened! I put in so much effort, and the whole garden has withered away!"

Even though she was crying, his mother couldn't hold back her laughter. "You foolish child!" she said. "Don't you know trees never have their life-energy in their flowers and leaves? It lies in their roots, which are not visible. Your watering the flowers and leaves, your kissing them, your pouring love on them was all meaningless. Never worry about the flowers and the leaves. If the invisible roots begin to gain strength, the flowers and leaves come on their own -- you don't have to worry about them."

But man has understood life in terms of the outer expanse of the flower and has neglected the roots completely. Man's inner roots are lying there, totally neglected. He doesn't even remember that he is something inner as well. And actually, whatsoever is, is within. The truth is within, the energy is within, all potentialities are within -- they manifest from there. Being is within, becoming takes place outside.

That which is authentic is within. That which expands and manifests is without. Manifestation is all outside. Being is within. Those who take the outer manifestation as life, their entire life is threatened with the fear of death. They live as if almost dead. They are afraid they may die some day, any moment. And those very people who are frightened of death, weep and are troubled over someone else's death. Although, in fact, they don't really cry and feel troubled over anyone's death -- each death reminds them of their own, and the closer the dying person, the stronger the reminder. And then a chill goes up one's spine, fear grips one, one begins to tremble. In this state a man thinks nice things. He thinks, "The soul is immortal, we are part of the divine, we are the form of Brahman." This is all rubbish, it is nothing more than self-deception.

To boost his strength, one who is scared of death repeats, "The soul is immortal...." What he is saying in effect is, "No, I won't have to die, the soul is immortal." Although his being shakes with fear, yet outwardly he says that the soul is immortal. If a man knows the soul is immortal, he doesn't have to repeat it even once. He knows. The matter is over.

These people who are scared of death continue to fear it. Meanwhile, they fail to know life and invent a new trick, a new deception that the soul is immortal. That's why it is difficult to find a nation more afraid of death than the one which talks about the immortality of the soul. That misfortune has occurred in this

very country. Of all the people in the world who believe in the immortality of the soul, most are in this country. And in this country the number of cowards afraid of death is the greatest as well. How did these two things happen together?

There is no more death for those who know the soul is immortal. The fear of death has disappeared for them; now no one can kill them. You should also keep another thing in mind: neither can anyone kill them, nor can they be now under the illusion that they can kill anyone -- because now, for them, the very phenomenon of death is finished forever. This secret needs to be understood.

Those who believe the soul is immortal are people afraid of death. They are merely repeating, "The soul is immortal." Afraid of death, such people will also talk a great deal about non-violence -- not because they wouldn't want to kill anyone, but because, very deep down, they don't want anyone to kill them. They believe the world should become non-violent. But why? Their answer will be, "It is bad to kill anyone." But deep down they are saying, "Lest we are killed by someone." To kill is evil indeed, but if these people know there is no death at all, then there is neither room for the fear of dying nor of killing. Then such matters become irrelevant.

On the battlefield, Krishna says to Arjuna, "Do not be afraid, because those you see standing in front of you have existed many times before. You have certainly existed before, and I have too. We have all been here many times in the past and will be here many more times again." Nothing is ever destroyed in this world; hence, there is no place for the fear of dying or of killing. The question is of living life. Those who are afraid to kill or to be killed become impotent in the eyes of life. One who can neither die nor kill has absolutely no idea that that-which-is can neither be killed by anyone nor can it ever die.

How exciting the world will be when, as a whole, it will come to know from within that the soul is immortal! That day the whole fear of death will disappear. The fear of dying will vanish as well, and the threat of killing will be gone for good. That is when wars will disappear -- not before.

Wars cannot disappear from the world as long as it appears to man that he can be killed, that he can die. Regardless of how much Gandhi may teach non-violence, or Buddha and Mahavira may teach it; no matter how many lessons of non-violence are given in the world, as long as man does not experience from within that whatsoever is, is eternal, war cannot cease. Don't think those who wield swords are brave people. A sword is proof that the man is a coward. Statues in the city square of those holding swords are statues of cowards. The brave man needs no sword in his hand because he knows it is childish to kill and to be killed.

But man creates a strange deception. He pretends he knows things he is ignorant about -- all because of fear. Deep down he is fraught with fear, deep down he knows he will have to die -- people are dying every day. He sees his body growing weaker inside -- youth has passed, old age is approaching. He sees the body is on its way out, but inside he keeps reiterating, "The soul is immortal." He tries to muster up his belief, his courage by doing so, and tells himself, "Don't be afraid. Of course death is there, but the sages, the wise men say the soul is immortal." Around such wise men who talk about the immortality of the soul, people afraid of death gather in big crowds.

I am not saying the soul is not immortal. What I am saying is that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is a doctrine of those who fear death. Knowing the immortality of the soul is a totally different thing. And remember, only they can know the immortality of the soul who experiment with death while being alive -- there is no other way of knowing it. This needs to be understood.

What happens in death really? The entire vital energy that is diffused, spread all around, it contracts, returns to its center. This essential energy that is reaching out to every nook and corner of our bodies, withdraws, comes back to its core. For example, if we go on dimming a diffused light, it will begin to shrink and darkness will gather. At some point the light will be reduced to the point where it comes close to the lamp itself. And were we to dim it even further, the light would be lodged in seed form and darkness would surround you.

So the vital energy of our life shrinks, returns to its own center. Again it becomes a seed, an atom, ready for a new journey. Because of this very contraction, this very shrinkage of the essential energy, one feels, "I am dying! I am dying!" What one had taken to be life until then begins to slip away; everything begins to drop. A man's limbs start losing their strength, he begins to become short of breath, his eyesight becomes poorer, his ears become hard of hearing.

In fact, all these senses were alive, and the whole body too, because of the connection with some energy. And once the energy begins to recede, the body, which was essentially lifeless, becomes lifeless once again. The master prepares to leave and the house becomes depressed, desolate. And the man feels, "Here I go!" At the moment of death he comes to feel, "I am going. I am sinking, the end is near."

The nervous feeling that he is dying -- the worried and melancholy state, the anguish and anxiety of dying, the feeling that his end is approaching -- brings such terrible suffering to a man's mind that he fails to be aware of the very experience of death. To know death one needs to be peaceful. Instead, a man becomes so restless he never knows what death is.

We have died many times before, an infinite number of times, but we have never known what death is. Each time the moment of death has arrived, we have become so perturbed, so restless, so troubled -- how can we have known anything in that state? What knowledge can one have had? Each time death has come -- and yet we have remained unfamiliar with it.

No, death can't be known at the moment of dying, but one can certainly have a planned death. A planned death is meditation, yoga, samadhi. Samadhi means only one thing: bringing about the event that, otherwise, occurs by itself in death. In samadhi, the seeker brings it about with effort by knowingly drawing his entire life energy within. Obviously, there is no need for him to feel restless, because he is experimenting with pulling, drawing the consciousness in. With a cool mind he contracts the consciousness within. What death does anyway, he does himself. And in that silent state he finds that the life energy and the body are two separate things. The bulb that emanates electricity is one thing, and the electricity that is emanated from it is another. When the electricity contracts totally, the bulb lies there, lifeless.

The body is nothing more than an electric bulb. Life is the electricity, the energy, the vital force that keeps the body alive, warm, excited.

In samadhi, the seeker himself meets death. And because he enters death himself, he comes to know the truth that he is separate from his body. Once it is known that "I am separate from the body," death is finished. And once the separation between the body and the being is known, the experience of life has begun. The end of death and the experience of life take place at the same point, simultaneously. Know life, death is gone; know death, there is life. If understood correctly, these are just two ways of expressing the same thing. They are two pointers in the same direction.

Hence, I say religion is the art of dying. You might say, however, that I have often said religion is the art of living. I certainly talk about both things, for only one who knows how to die is able to know what life is. Religion is the art of living and dying. If you wish to know what life is, what death is, you will have to learn the art of withdrawing energy from your body voluntarily. Only then can you know, not otherwise. This energy can be withdrawn; it is not difficult. It's easy to pull this energy inside. This energy is diffused at will and withdrawn at will. This energy is simply an expanse of the will. It is merely a matter of will. One just needs a determined resolve to go within.

If you resolve that for half an hour you want to turn within, you want to die, you want to drown within yourself, you want to withdraw all your energy, then within days you will come close to experiencing the contraction of energy. It will be a state in which the body will lie separate from you. A deep three-month long experiment will make you see your body lying separate from you; you can see your own body lying distant from you. First you will see from within that inside, you are standing separate -- radiating, like a flame. You will see the entire body from within as you see this building. With a little more courage you can even bring this inner living flame outside, and from outside you can see the body lying there, removed from you.

Let me tell you an incredible experience I had. It has just occurred to me; I have never told it before. About seventeen or eighteen years ago I used to meditate until late at night sitting in the top of a tree. I have often felt the body has a greater influence over you if you meditate sitting on the ground. The body is made of earth, and the forces of the body work very powerfully if one meditates sitting on the ground.

All this talk of the yogis moving up to the higher elevations -- to the mountains, to the Himalayas -- is not without reason; it's very scientific. The greater the distance between the body and the earth, the lesser the pull of the earthly element on the body. So I used to meditate every night sitting in a tree. One night... I don't know when I became immersed in deep meditation, and I don't know at what point my body fell from the tree, but when it did, I looked with a start to see what had happened.

I was still in the tree, but the body had fallen below. It's difficult to say how I felt at that time. I was still sitting in the tree and the body was below. Only a single silver cord connected me with the navel of my body -- a very shiny silver cord. What would happen next was beyond my comprehension. How would I return to my body?

I don't know how long this state lasted, but it was an exceptional experience. For the first time I saw my body from outside, and from that very day on the body ceased to exist. Since then I am finished with death, because I came to see another body different from this one -- I came to experience the subtle body. It's difficult to say how long this experience lasted.

With the breaking of dawn, two women from the nearby village passed, carrying milk pots on their heads. As they approached the tree they saw my body lying there. They came and sat next to the body. I was watching all this from above. It seems the women took the body to be dead. They placed their hands on my head, and in a moment, as if by a powerful force of attraction, I came back into the body and my eyes opened.

At that point I experienced something else too. I felt that a woman can create a chemical change in a man's body, and so can a man in a woman's body. I also wondered how the touch of that woman caused my return to the body. Subsequently, I had many more experiences of this kind. They explained why the tantrikas of India, who experimented extensively with samadhi and death, had linked themselves with women too.

During intensive experiences of samadhi, man's luminous body, his subtle body, cannot return without a woman's help if it has come out of the physical body. Similarly, a woman's luminous, subtle body, cannot be brought back without a man's assistance. As the male and female bodies connect, an electrical circuit is completed and the consciousness that has gone out returns swiftly to the body.

Following this event, I consistently had the same kind of experience about six times in six months. And in those six months I felt I had lost at least ten years off my life. If I were to live up to seventy, now I can only live up to sixty. I went through some strange experiences in six months -- even the hair on my chest turned white. I couldn't comprehend what was happening.

It occurred to me, however, that the connection between this body and that body had ruptured, had been interrupted, that the adjustment, the harmony that had existed between the two, had broken down. What also occurred to me was that the reason for Shankaracharya dying at the age of thirty-three and Vivekananda dying at the age of thirty-six was something else. It becomes difficult to live once the connection between the two bodies breaks abruptly. This explained why Ramakrishna was besieged with illnesses and Ramana died of cancer. The cause was not physical; rather, the breaking of the adjustment between their physical and subtle bodies was responsible for it.

It is generally believed that yogis are healthy people, but the truth is completely the opposite. The truth is, yogis have always been ill, and have died at early ages. The sole reason for this is that the necessary adjustment between the two bodies becomes interrupted. Once the subtle body comes out of the physical body it never reenters fully and the adjustment is never completely restored. But then it is not needed. There is no reason for it; it has no meaning.

With the use of will power, simply with will power, the energy can be drawn inside -- just the thought, the feeling, "I want to turn in, I want to go back in, I want to return within, I want to come back in." Were you to have such an intense longing, such a powerful emotion; if your whole being were to fill with

a passionate, intense desire to return to your center; if your entire body were to pulsate with this feeling, someday it can happen -- you will instantly return to your core and, for the first time, see your body from within.

When yoga talks about thousands of arteries and veins, it is not from the point of view of physiology. Yogis have nothing to do with physiology. These have been known from within; hence, when one looks today one wonders where these arteries and veins are. Where are the seven chakras, the centers within the body that yoga talks about? They are nowhere in the body. We can't find them because we are looking at the body from outside.

There is one other way to observe the body -- from within, through the inner physiology. That's a subtle physiology. The nerves, veins and centers of the body known through that inner physiology are all totally different. You won't find them anywhere in this physical body. These centers are the contact fields between this body and the inner soul, the meeting points for both.

The biggest meeting point is the navel. You may have noticed, if you suddenly get into an accident driving a car, the navel will be the first to feel the impact. The navel will become disordered at once, because here the contact field between the body and the soul is the deepest of all. Seeing death, this center will be the first to become disturbed. As soon as death appears, the navel will be disrupted in relation to the body's center. There is an internal arrangement of the body which has resulted from the contact between this body and the inner body. The chakras are their contact fields.

So obviously, to know the body from within is to know a totally different kind of world altogether, a world we know absolutely nothing about. Medical science knows nothing about it, and won't for some time. Once you experience that the body is separate from you, you are finished with death. You come to know there is no death. And then you can actually come out of the body and look at it yourself from outside.

Questions relating to life and death are not matters of philosophical or metaphysical thought. Those who think about these things never accomplish anything. What I am talking about is an existential approach. It can be known that "I am life;" it can be known that "I am not going to die." One can live this experience, one can enter into it. But those who only think, who say, "We'll think about what death is, what life is," may think about it a million times, may think about it life after life, but they won't know anything. What on earth is there to think about?

We can only think about something which is known to us. About something which is unknown nothing can be thought. You can only think about that which is known to you. Has it ever occurred to you that you can't think what you don't know? How can you think, how can you conceive that which you know nothing about? We don't know what life is; we don't know what death is. What are we to think? That's why I say that whatsoever the philosophers have said about life and death is totally worthless.

Whatsoever is written about life and death in the philosophy books is worth nothing, because those people have written it after a lot of thinking. It is not a question of thinking and then writing about it.

Except for what yoga has said about life and death, everything else that has been said is only playing with words. What yoga is concerned with has to do with an existential, living experience.

That the soul is immortal is not a theory; it is not an ideology. It is the experience of certain individuals. Only when experience is what you want can experience alone solve the riddle, "What is life? What is death?" And as soon as you have the experience you will come to know that life is, that death is not -- that only life is, that there is no death at all. Then we will be in a position to say that death just happens. And what this simply means is that we leave the house, the body we were living in, and a journey towards a new home begins. We set out, leaving one house for another. This house has a limited capability. This house is a machine. It wears out, it gets tired, and we have to go beyond it.

If science would have it so, it would be possible to keep the human body alive for one hundred, two hundred, three hundred years. But that would not prove there is no soul. It would only prove that the soul won't need to change homes anymore, that science had now worked out a way to fix the old house. Nevertheless, scientists should not remain under the illusion that by increasing the longevity of man to five hundred years, to a thousand years, they would have proved there is no soul in man. It wouldn't prove anything. It would only demonstrate that because the mechanism of the body used to wear out, the soul had to change it. Now, if the parts of the body could be replaced -- the heart, the eyes, the limbs -- if they could be replaced, then the soul would have no reason to change bodies. In that case the old house would do -- it is now repaired. But this doesn't even remotely prove there is no soul in the body.

It is also possible that in the near future science may succeed in creating a child in a test tube, in producing life. And then, perhaps, scientists may fall under the illusion they have created life. But that would also be wrong. Let me say this too: such an achievement won't prove anything either.

What happens when a union between a man and a woman takes place? Together, they don't create a soul in the mother's womb, they just create a situation where the soul can enter. When the two elements of man and woman meet, an opportunity is created for the soul to enter the womb. It may be that soon scientists may create a similar situation in a test tube, but that is not the same as creating a soul.

The mother's womb is a mechanical system too; it's a test tube. It is a natural system. Soon, with full discovery and knowledge of those chemical elements which make up the male sperm and the female egg, a scientist in his laboratory may succeed in producing the same chemical organization in a test tube. In that case, souls, which before had entered the mother's womb, would now enter test tubes. But even so, it would not be the soul taking birth, it would be the body -- the soul would still just be arriving. The phenomenon of birth is a double event -- the formation of the body and the arrival of the soul, the descending of the soul.

The future looks very dangerous and dark as far as the soul is concerned, because with each new discovery science will convince man there is no soul. But the existence of the soul will not be disproved by it, it will only weaken the will of man to turn within himself. If, because of increased longevity and the creation of test tube babies, man should come to believe there is no soul, even then the existence of the

soul will not be disproved, only the continuing inner search of man will come to an end. And this unfortunate circumstance is sure to occur in the next fifty years. In the last fifty years, the ground has already been prepared for it.

There have always been poor, wretched, miserable, sick people in the world. Their lifespan was short: they neither had good food to eat nor proper clothes to wear. But from the point of view of the soul, the number of poor has never been so great as it is today. This is only because man has come to believe there is nothing within, and so, for him, the question of turning in doesn't arise. Once humanity believes there is nothing within, the whole idea of reaching inside is finished.

The future may turn out to be terribly bleak and dangerous. Therefore, experiments must be carried out in all corners of the world so that a few individuals may stand up and assert -- not merely an assertion of words and doctrines, not just a reiteration of the Geeta, the Koran, The Bible, but a living affirmation, "I know I am not the body." And this should not be just a verbal declaration, it should be reflected through their entire way of living. Only then may we succeed in saving humanity -- otherwise, the whole of scientific development will turn man into a machine, an automaton. The day man comes to believe he is nothing more than a body, that there is nothing within him, perhaps all doors leading inwards will be shut. What will happen after that is hard to say.

Even to this day, the inner doors of the majority of people have remained shut. But once in a while a courageous person breaks through the inner walls. A Mahavira, a Buddha, a Christ, a Lao Tzu breaks through the wall and enters within. But the possibility of such a phenomenon happening again is decreasing every day.

I say: Only life is, death is not. But it may be that in the next one hundred or two hundred years man might say, "Only death is, life is not." The ground is ready for it. People asserting it have already come forward. After all, what is Marx saying? According to Marx, "Matter is, God is not. And what looks like God to you is nothing but a byproduct of matter." Marx says, "There is no life, only death is." Now if the soul is not and only the body is, then obviously there is no life, only death is.

You may not be aware of it, but what Marx has said is gaining ground. There have always been people in the world who have denied the soul, but up to now a religion was never born of these people. Up to now there never has been an organization of atheists. Charvaka, Brihaspati, Epicurus and many other such remarkable people in the world denied the existence of the soul, but they never formed any church, any organization. Marx is the first atheist in the world who created an organized church. Today, half the world is already within its fold, and the remaining half will join it in the next fifty years.

The soul exists, of course, but all the avenues through which it can be known, recognized, are closing down one by one. Life is there, but all the possibilities of connecting with it are fading away. Before all the doors and avenues close down, those who have even a little bit of ability and courage should experiment on themselves and make an effort to turn within so they can have the experience.

If even one hundred, two hundred individuals could experience the inner flame, we will be out of danger. The darkness of millions of people can be dispelled with the inner flame of the few. Even a tiny

lamp cuts through a long darkness. With the presence in a village of a single man who has known the immortality of the soul, the whole atmosphere, the whole vibe, the entire life of the village will change. A single flower blooms and its fragrance spreads to faraway places. The very presence of a person who has known the immortality of the soul can bring about the purification of the spirit of an entire village.

This country is full of sadhus, monks and other people who make themselves hoarse shouting "The soul is immortal" -- there is a whole line of them, a huge crowd. And yet, such a low moral character! Such a downfall of the country! This degradation proves they are all involved in a double-dealing business. None of these people know anything about the soul. Look at the crowd, at this queue, at this platoon of sadhus, at this whole great circus of sadhus all over the country. Some clown with bandages over their mouths, some perform acrobatics with a staff in their hands, others present yet another type of circus! Such a crowd of people know the soul and this country is in such a decline! It's hard to believe.

There are people who blame the common man for causing the moral decline in the world. I would like to say they are wrong. The common man has always been the same. In the past, around the world, the moral character was high because of a few self-realized individuals. The common man always remained the same; he has remained unchanged. There have been a few beings, of course, who always raised, always uplifted human consciousness. Their very presence has always worked as a catalytic agent and has always elevated human life.

The responsibility for the present low state of human character lies with these sadhus, with the so-called holy men, with the hypocrites and charlatans who talk about religion. The common man bears no responsibility for it whatsoever. Neither did he before, nor does he now.

If you want to change the world, stop talking nonsense about improving the moral conduct of each and every person, about teaching moral education to everyone. If you want to change the world, a few individuals will have to be willing to go through very intense inner experiments. Those who are ready to undergo the experiment deep within themselves.... Not too many, just a hundred people. If a hundred individuals in a country reach a point of knowing what the soul is, the life of that entire country will be automatically uplifted. With the presence of a hundred shining lamps the whole country can be uplifted.

I agreed to speak on this subject only because I felt that in case some courageous man came forward, I would invite him, "Come on! If you are ready to go on an inward journey, I am willing to take you. There, it can be shown what life is and what death is."

And Now, And Here, Vol 2

Chapter #9

Chapter title: The Ultimate Freedom

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A few questions have been asked, seeking clarification of certain points I discussed in last night's talk.

Question 1

A FRIEND HAS ASKED: IF A MAN AND A WOMAN CREATE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE SOUL TO TAKE BIRTH, THEN DOES IT MEAN THERE ARE MANY SEPARATE SOULS AND NOT ONE UNIVERSAL SOUL? ALSO, ON MANY OCCASIONS YOU HAVE SAID THERE IS ONLY ONE TRUTH, ONE GOD, ONE SOUL. AREN'T THESE STATEMENTS CONTRADICTIONARY?

There is no contradiction. Of course, God is one. The soul is essentially one too, but the body is of two types. One is the gross body which we can see, and the other is the subtle body which we cannot see. At the moment of death, the gross body falls away, but the subtle body remains intact.

The soul resides within two bodies -- the subtle body and the gross body. At the time of death the gross body dies. The body which is made of earth and water, the body which consists of flesh, bones and marrow, drops, dies. Subsequently, the body comprised of subtle thoughts, subtle feelings, subtle vibrations, subtle filaments, remains. This body, formed of all these subtle things, along with the soul, once again proceeds on a journey, and again enters a gross body for a new birth. When a new soul enters the mother's womb, it means this subtle body enters.

In the event of death only the gross body disintegrates, not the subtle body. But with the occurrence of the ultimate death, what we call moksha, the subtle body disintegrates along with the gross body as well. Then there is no more birth for the soul. Then the soul becomes one with the whole. This happens only once. It is like a drop merging into the ocean.

Three things have to be understood. First, there is the element of the soul. When the two types of bodies -- the gross and the subtle -- come in contact with this element of the soul, both become active. We are familiar with the gross, the physical body; a yogi is familiar with the subtle body, and those who go beyond yoga are familiar with the soul.

Ordinary eyes are able to see the gross body. The yogic eye is able to see the subtle body. But that which is beyond yoga, that which exists beyond the subtle body, is experienced only in samadhi. One who goes beyond meditation attains samadhi, and it is in the state of samadhi that one experiences the divine. The ordinary man has the experience of the physical body, the ordinary yogi has the experience of the subtle body, the enlightened yogi has the experience of the divine. God is one, but there are countless subtle bodies and there are countless gross bodies.

The subtle body is the causal body; it is this body that takes on the new physical body. You see many light bulbs around here. The electricity is one, that energy is one, but it is manifesting through different bulbs. The bulbs have different bodies, but their soul is one. Similarly, the consciousness manifesting through us is one, but in the manifestation of this consciousness, two vehicles are applied. One is the subtle vehicle, the subtle body; the other is the gross vehicle, the gross body.

Our experience is limited to the gross, to the physical body. This restricted experience is the cause of all human misery and ignorance. But there are people who, even after going beyond the physical body, may stop at the subtle body. They will say, "There are an infinite number of souls." But those who go beyond even the subtle body will say, "God is one, the soul is one, Brahman is one."

There is no contradiction in my statements. When I referred to the entering of the soul, I meant that soul which is still associated with the subtle body. It means the subtle body the soul is enveloped in has not disintegrated yet. That's why we say that the soul which attains to the ultimate freedom steps out of the cycle of birth and death. There is indeed no birth and death for the soul -- it was never born, nor will it ever die. The cycle of birth and death stops with the end of the subtle body, because it is the subtle body that causes a new birth.

The subtle body is an integrated seed consisting of our thoughts, desires, lusts, longings, experiences, knowledge. This body is instrumental in taking us on our continuing journey. However, one whose thoughts are all annihilated, whose passions have all vanished, whose desires have all disappeared, who has no desire left within him, there is no place for him to go, there is no reason left for him to go anywhere. Then there is no reason for him to take birth again.

There is a wonderful story in the life of Ramakrishna. Those who were close to him, who knew him to be a paramhansa, an enlightened one, used to be deeply troubled about one thing. It bothered them greatly to see an enlightened person such as Ramakrishna -- one who had attained samadhi -- craving food so much. Ramakrishna used to become very anxious about food. He would often enter the kitchen, asking his wife Sharada Devi, "What's cooking today? It's getting so late!" Right in the middle of a serious talk on spiritual matters he would get up abruptly and rush towards the kitchen asking what was being cooked, start looking for food.

Feeling embarrassed, Sharada would politely chide him, "What are you doing? What must people think - dropping the talk on Brahman so suddenly and starting to talk about food!" Ramakrishna would laugh and remain silent. Even his close disciples remonstrated with him. They would say, "It's giving you a bad name. People say, 'How can such a person have attained knowledge when his desire for food is so overwhelming?'"

One day his wife Sharada got very upset and reproached him. Ramakrishna told her, "You have no idea, but the day I show aversion to food, know that I shall not live more than three days afterwards."

Sharada asked, "What do you mean?"

Ramakrishna said, "All my desires and passions have disappeared, all my thoughts are gone -- but for the good of mankind I am deliberately holding on to this one desire for food. It's like a boat tied down with one last rope. Once that rope is cut loose the boat will move on to its endless journey. I am staying on with effort."

Perhaps those around him did not give much thought to this at the time. But three days before Ramakrishna's death, when Sharada entered with a dish of food, Ramakrishna looked at it, shut his eyes, and lay with his back turned towards her. In a flash she remembered Ramakrishna's words about his death. The dish fell from her hands and she began to weep bitterly. Ramakrishna said, "Don't cry. You wished I should not crave for food -- your wish has come true." Exactly three days after this incident Ramakrishna died. He was holding on with effort to just a little bit of desire. That little desire had become the support for the continuation of his life-journey. With the disappearance of that desire, the entire support ceased to exist.

Those whom we call the tirthankaras, those whom we call the buddhas, the sons of God, the avatars -- they hold on to only one desire. They keep the desire solely out of compassion, for the good and wellbeing of all mankind. The day this desire is lost they cease to live in the body, and an endless journey towards the infinite begins. After that there is no more birth, no more death. After that there is neither one nor many. What remains after that cannot, in any way, be counted in numbers; hence those who know don't even say, "Brahman is one, the divine is one." To call it 'one' is meaningless when there is no way to follow it with 'two', when one can't count any further in the sequence of two and three. Saying 'one' is meaningful only as long as two, three and four are also there. 'One' is significant only in the context of other numbers. That's why those who know don't even say Brahmanan is one; they say Brahman is non-dual, he is not two.

They are saying something quite remarkable. They are saying, "God is not two; there is no way you can count God in terms of numbers." Even calling him one we are attempting to count him in terms of numbers, which is wrong. But to experience that one is still a long way. Right now we are still at the level of the gross body, of the body which endlessly takes multiple forms. When we enter this body we find another body -- the subtle body. Going beyond this subtle body, we attain that which is not a body, that which is bodiless -- the soul.

What I said yesterday is not contradictory, is not paradoxical.

Question 2

A FRIEND HAS ASKED: ONCE THE SOUL HAS LEFT A BODY, CAN IT ENTER INTO ANOTHER DEAD BODY?

Yes it can. But there no longer remains any meaning, any purpose in entering another dead body: the other body was dead because the soul had found it unsuitable to reside in. The body was discarded because it had become useless, hence there is no point in entering that body. Nevertheless, it is indeed possible to enter another body.

It's no use asking, however, how one can enter another body when we don't even know how we exist in the body we are already in. What can be gained by thinking about such worthless things as entering another body? We don't even know how we entered the body we have now. We don't even know how we are living in our body. We have never had the experience of seeing our own body separate from us.

In any case, there is no reason for entering another body; however, in scientific terms, it can be said that it is possible to enter another body -- because, basically, a body cannot be seen in terms of yours and mine. All bodies are external. When a soul enters a mother's womb it is actually entering a body -- a very small body, an atomic body, but entering a body nevertheless. The cell that is created on the first day in a mother's womb contains the whole inbuilt program in itself. For example, the possibility that one's hair may turn gray fifty years from the time of conception is hidden in that tiny little seed. Potentially, the seed contains within itself what the color of your eyes will be, how long your hands will be, whether you'll have a healthy body or a sick body, whether you'll be white or black, whether or not you'll have curly hair. It is a tiny body, an atomic body. The soul enters this atomic body. It enters in accordance with the structure of the atomic body, with the situation the atomic body is in.

The sole reason human consciousness has been declining daily is because married couples are not creating suitable opportunities for superior souls to take birth. Whatever opportunities are being created are for the birth of inferior souls. It is not necessarily so that, following a man's death, his soul may soon find the opportunity to take birth. Ordinary souls, which are neither very superior nor very inferior, find new bodies within thirteen days from the death of the body; however, very inferior souls are stopped from taking birth because it is very difficult to find a suitable opportunity, a womb that low in quality. We call these inferior souls ghosts and evil spirits. Very superior souls are prevented from taking birth too, because they don't find suitable opportunities, wombs that high in quality, either. We call these superior souls, gods.

In the past, the number of evil spirits was very large while the number of gods was very small. In the present day, the number of ghosts and evil spirits has greatly decreased and the number of gods has increased, because the opportunity for the birth of godlike people has diminished whereas the opportunity for the birth of evil souls has increased rapidly. By entering human bodies, ghosts and evil spirits, which otherwise used to be held back from taking birth, have now all joined the human race! That's why it's so difficult to see ghosts and evil spirits nowadays. One need not see them, however. Just look at man and you have seen them!

Our belief in gods obviously declined, because how can one believe in them when they are so hard to find? There was a time when gods were as real as any other actuality of our lives. If you read the Vedic rishis, the sages, it doesn't seem as if they are talking about some imaginary gods. No, they are talking

about gods who speak to them, who sing and laugh with them. They are talking about gods who walk very closely with them, on this very earth.

We have lost our contact with the world of gods because we don't have men among us who can become links, who can become bridges between gods and men and let men know what gods are. And the entire responsibility for this lies with mankind's marital system. The whole marital system of the human race is ugly and perverted.

The most important thing is that we have stopped marriages resulting from love, that marriages are happening without love. A marriage devoid of love does not create a spiritual bond -- a bond which is only possible with the presence of love. A harmony, a rapport, a music necessary to give birth to a great soul is not created between the man and the woman. The love between them is merely a consequence of companionship. There is no meeting of souls in their love, none of the movement that brings two beings together into oneness.

Children born of a marriage without love can never be loving, can never be godlike. They will be more like ghosts and evil spirits; their lives will be filled with anger, hatred, and violence. Even a little thing makes the difference, an incredible difference, if there is no harmony, no rapport between the man and the woman.

Perhaps it may not have occurred to you why women look more beautiful than men, why there is such roundness, such shapeliness in women. Why isn't the same seen in men? It may not have occurred to you why there is a music, an inner dance apparent in the being of a woman, and which is not seen in man. The reason is very simple, not very big really. The reason is so small you can't even imagine that the enormous difference between man and woman is based on something so tiny.

The first cell in the mother's womb contains twenty-four chromosomes of the man and twenty-four chromosomes of the woman. With the meeting of two cells, each containing twenty-four chromosomes, the first cell of forty-eight chromosomes is created. With the union of forty-eight chromosomes a female body is formed -- both sides of its scale containing twenty-four chromosomes each, balanced. But the first cell of a male child consists of only forty-seven chromosomes -- twenty-four on one side and twenty-three on the other. Right here the imbalance is created, the harmony is broken. Both sides of a woman's being are well balanced; hence the whole beauty of a woman -- her shapeliness, her art, the juice of her personality, the poetry of her personality.

There is a slight deficiency in the personality of man. One side of his scale is made up of twenty-four chromosomes. The cell he receives from the mother contains twenty-four chromosomes and the cell received from the father consists of twenty-three chromosomes. Thus, when the twenty-four chromosomes of the mother meet the twenty-three of the father, the male body is formed. This is the reason why man remains so restless, so intensely discontented throughout his life. He is always anxious, always worried about what to do and what not to do, whether to do this or to do that. All this restlessness begins with a very small incident, having one chromosome less on one side of the scale. Man is imbalanced. A woman is fully balanced. The harmony, the rhythm is complete in her.

Such a small occurrence brings such an enormous difference, although because of it the woman could become beautiful but she could not grow. An even personality does not grow, it remains stagnant. The personality of man is uneven, hence you see him racing ahead, growing. He climbs Everest, crosses mountains, lands on the moon, reaches the stars. He searches and investigates. He thinks, writes books, gives birth to religion. A woman does nothing of this kind. She won't climb Everest, land on the moon or stars; nor will she search for religions, write books or make discoveries in science. She won't do anything. The balance in her personality does not fill her with the passion to transcend.

It is man who has given rise to human civilizations -- and all because of one small matter: he lacks one chromosome. Woman has not developed civilizations because her personality is complete; there is no chromosome lacking. Such a small phenomenon can cause such an enormous difference in personality! I am pointing this out because this is just a biological occurrence, because one can biologically see how such a little difference gives birth to personalities so different in character. But there are other, more profound inner differences as well.

The child born out of the union of a man and a woman shows how deeply they are in love with each other, how much spirituality exists between them, and with how much purity and prayerfulness they have come together. On this depends how superior, how great the soul is which is attracted towards them, how great the divine consciousness is which makes that body its place of residence. The human race is becoming increasingly miserable and unhappy. Deep down, the distortion of the marital relationship is the cause. Until we have redefined the meaning of marital life and brought it to a healthy state; until we have refined it, spiritualized it, we cannot improve the future of mankind.

In this unfortunate state of affairs, those who have denounced the householder's life and those who have made a great fuss over the life of renunciation are equally responsible. Once the householder's life was condemned, we stopped thinking in that direction altogether. This is not right. I would like to say to you that very few people can reach God through the path of renunciation. A very small number of people, some special type, a few individuals of a totally different kind, reach through the path of renunciation. Most people reach God through the path of the householder and through marital relationship.

The strange thing is that even though it is simple and easy to reach through the householder's path, no attention has yet been paid to it. Up to now, religion has suffered from the extreme influence of those who have renounced the world. Religion could not evolve for the benefit of the householder. Had it been evolved for the sake of the householder, before the very first moment of birth we would have considered what kind of soul we wanted to invite, what kind of soul we wanted to beckon, what type of soul we wanted to allow to enter life.

If religion could be taught rightly, and if every individual could be given right thought, right concept and vision, within twenty years we can create a totally new generation of men. One who enters into sex without first extending a loving invitation to the incoming soul is a sinner. He is a criminal, and his children are illegitimate even though they may be born in wedlock. That man who has not given birth to

his children with an utterly prayerful and reverent heart is a criminal -- and he will remain a criminal before all generations.

Our entire future depends upon what kind of soul enters the womb. We care about children's education, about their clothes, about their health and nutrition, but we have completely given up on caring about what kind of soul a child would have. We cannot hope for a better human race this way. So there is no need to worry much about how to enter another body; rather, be concerned about how you have entered this very body of yours.

In this respect, a friend has asked:

Question 3

CAN WE KNOW ABOUT PAST LIVES?

We can certainly know about our past lives, but at present you know nothing even about this life. Knowing past lives is far more difficult. Man can, of course, know about his past lives, because once something is imprinted in the form of a memory on our minds, it is never destroyed. It always remains in our deep unconscious levels. Whatsoever we have known, we never forget.

If I ask you what you did on January 1, 1950, perhaps you won't be able to answer. You might say, "I don't remember anything. I have absolutely no idea what I did on January 1, 1950." But if you could be hypnotized... and it can be done easily. Thus, by making you unconscious, were I to ask what you did on January 1, 1950, you would give me the whole day's account as if the first of January were passing before your eyes right at that moment. Also you would be able to tell me that on the first of January your morning tea contained a little less sugar. You would even be able to say that the man who brought you tea stank with perspiration. You would be able to point out such minor details -- like the shoe you were wearing was hurting your foot.

In the state of hypnosis your deeply embedded memories can be brought out. I am telling you this because I have done many experiments along this line. Anyone who wishes can be taken into his past lives; however, he will first have to regress in this life. He will have to walk the memory lane of his present life. He will have to go as far back as the point when he was conceived in the mother's womb. Only after reaching that point can he step into the memories of past lives.

Remember, however, it is not without reason that nature has arranged for us to forget our past lives. And the reason is very significant. Recalling the memories of one month can drive you crazy, let alone those of past lives. Even your recollection of the memories of a single day will not allow you to survive. The whole arrangement of nature is such that it only permits as many memories as your mind can bear. The rest are thrown into a dark abyss. It's like a storehouse where we throw things that are no longer needed and shut the door. Similarly, there is a collective house of memories, a house of

unconsciousness where all unwanted memories -- memories no longer needed in the mind -- are stored. But were a man to enter this storehouse unwittingly, without understanding, he would instantly go mad -- so overwhelming are the memories.

One lady used to experiment under my guidance. She was very keen to know her past lives. I said, "It is possible; however, you must realize the consequences -- because perhaps by knowing your past lives you may become terribly worried and upset."

She said, "No. Why would I get upset? The past life is already gone. What's there to worry about now?"

She began the experiment. She was a professor in a college, intelligent, wise and courageous. Following my instructions exactly, she went into deep meditation. Slowly, she began to dig into the deeper levels of her memory, and the day she entered her past life for the first time, she came running to me. She was trembling all over, in tears. She began to cry bitterly and said, "I want to forget what I have remembered. I don't want to go any further into my past life."

I said, "It is difficult. It will take time to forget what has returned to your mind. But why are you so nervous?"

She said, "Please don't ask me. I used to think I was very pure and chaste, but in my previous birth I was a prostitute in a temple in the south. I was a devadasi. I made love with thousands of people. I sold my body. No, I want to forget all that. I don't even want to remember it for a second."

So anyone can enter his past life. There are ways of doing it; there is a methodology for it. The greatest contribution to mankind made by Mahavira and Buddha is not the doctrine of nonviolence, their greatest contribution is the doctrine of remembering past lives. They were the first on earth to make it clear to seekers that until they had entered their past lives, they would not be able to know what the soul is. And they helped every seeker to go back into his previous life.

Should a man gather enough courage to recall the memories of his past life, he will become a different man altogether -- because he will come to see he is repeating things he has already done thousands of times before. He will see his foolishness. He will come to see how many times he has amassed wealth, how many mansions he has built, how many times he has run after prestige, honor, status, how many times he has traveled to Delhi and attained high position. He will realize the innumerable times he has done all this, and that once again he is doing the same thing. And each time, in the final analysis, the journey has proven unsuccessful.

And the journey will be unsuccessful this time as well. With the revival of this memory, his chase after wealth will instantly end, his attachment to position will disappear. The man will come to know how many women he has had relations with in the course of thousands of years, and the woman will come to know how many men she has had relations with -- and that no man was ever satisfied by a woman, nor was any woman ever satisfied by a man. And yet, a man still wonders whether he should enjoy this or that woman and a woman still wonders whether she should enjoy this or that man. This has happened millions of times.

If all this is recalled even once, a person will never repeat it again -- because having repeated an act so many times, its worthlessness becomes self-evident; the whole thing becomes meaningless. Both Buddha and Mahavira conducted intensive experiments in jati-smaran, in recalling the memories of past lives. The seeker who passed through these memories even once, was transformed. He became a different man.

I can assure the friend who has asked the question that he can be taken into past life memories if he so desires. Before getting into the experiment, one needs to give it very careful consideration, however. As it is, there are already enough worries and troubles in one's present life. Obviously, it is to forget all this, to forget his days, that a man drinks, watches movies, plays cards, gambles. When a man finds it so hard to live with the memories of a single day, when he is not brave enough to face this life, how will he be able to gather the courage to recall previous lives?

You may find it strange, but all religions of the world have been opposed to alcohol. However, giving their reasons for opposing alcohol, these ordinary, absolutely stupid politicians explain to the whole world they are against it because it destroys moral character, ruins wealth and property, makes man violent. This is all nonsense. Religions have opposed alcohol only because one who drinks does so to forget himself. And one who is trying to forget himself can never become acquainted with the soul. The very purpose of knowing oneself is to know the soul. That's why alcohol and samadhi became two opposing things. It has nothing to do with what the politicians are saying.

The truth of the matter is... and this needs careful consideration: Ordinarily, people think an alcoholic is a bad person. I know people who drink, and I also know people who do not drink. Based on thousands of experiences, I have found that the man who drinks is in many ways far better than the one who does not. The degree of pity and compassion I have come across in those who drink, I have not seen in the non-drinkers. The sense of humility I have found in people who drink, I haven't seen in those who don't drink. The kind of arrogance I have seen in non-drinkers I have never come across in those who drink.

But these are not the reasons, normally advocated by the politicians, why religion has opposed alcohol. The reason has been that, in trying to forget himself, man gives up the courage to remember. How can one who is busy forgetting his present life remember his past ones? And how can one who cannot remember his past lives change his present one?

Consequently, a blind repetition goes on. What we have done many times before, we keep doing over and over again. It's an unending process. And until we have remembered our past lives, we will be born again and again -- and will repeat the same stupidities over and over, endlessly. This boredom, this continuous chain, is meaningless -- because we'll die again and again, keep forgetting our actions, and the same thing will start all over again. We will keep moving in circles like an ox at a water wheel.

Those who have called this life samsara.... Do you know what samsara means? Samsara means a wheel, the spokes of which keep revolving, keep moving up and down. I don't know why the experts in India have placed the wheel on the national flag. Perhaps they don't know, and one wonders what they think about it. Ashoka had engraved it on his stupas, on his Buddhist shrines, in order to remind people that

life is a revolving wheel, that it is like an ox moving in circles at a water wheel, that things go around and around in a circle, coming back again and again to where they were before.

So the wheel is a symbol of samsara; it does not represent any victory march. It symbolizes life being defeated daily. It shows, symbolically, that life is a repetitive boredom, a revolving wheel. But each time we forget this fact and start repeating ourselves with great interest and enthusiasm.

A man falls in love with a woman and begins courting her. He doesn't realize, however, how many times he has fallen in love before, how many women he has chased before. And yet, once again he approaches them and thinks that this wonderful event is happening for the first time in his life. But that sort of wonderful event has occurred to him many times before. If he were to come to know this fact, he would be like a man who has seen a movie ten or twenty times.

When you see a movie for the first time you may enjoy it. If you are shown the movie the next day you may tolerate it. On the third day you will say, "Thank you, I don't wish to see the movie any more." But if you are compelled, threatened -- "If you don't see the movie the police will take you away, the police will be after you" -- and like this you are forced to see the same movie for fifteen days, on the sixteenth day you will surely attempt suicide. The whole thing will have gone beyond all limits. You will cry out, "But I have seen it for fifteen days, how much longer can I see it?" And the police are on your back, forcing you to see the movie! However, if you are drugged after you have watched the movie and you consequently forget you ever saw it, the next day you can be seen purchasing a ticket for the same movie and enjoying it greatly.

Each time a man drops one body and acquires another, the door to the memories of his previous body closes. With the new body, a new play starts once again -- the same act, the same story. Once again everything is the same; everything has happened many times before. Remembering the past one comes to see that the same act has been played many times before, that the same story has occurred many times before, that the same songs have been sung many times before. Now the whole thing is beyond endurance.

Nonattachment, freedom from worldly desires, comes with remembering the past. There is no other way for one to feel aversion towards the kind of life he now leads. Nonattachment is created by reviving the memories of previous births. The reason nonattachment has declined in today's world is that there is no means available for remembering past lives.

Let me tell those friends who have raised this question that, from my side, I am fully prepared. What I am saying is not just theoretical. I am ready, with conviction, to put each and every word I've said to the test. And I'll be happy to see anyone who is ready. Yesterday, I invited those with courage to experiment with me. I was delighted to receive a few letters saying, "We are very eager to begin the experiment. We were waiting for someone to call us. You have beckoned us; we are ready." I am happy to know they are ready. My doors are open to them. I can take them as far as I would like them to go, and as far as they are willing to go. Now is the time the world needs at least a few people to attain enlightenment. Even if a few people can become enlightened, we can destroy the entire darkness engulfing the human race.

You may not have noted it, but within the last fifty years, two experiments of an opposite nature prevailed in India. One experiment was conducted by Gandhi, while the other was carried out by Aurobindo. Gandhi's experiment was to raise the moral character of each individual. Gandhi's experiment seemed successful, but it turned out to be a total failure. Those whose character he thought he had improved turned out to be made of clay: a slight drizzle and, in the last twenty years, all the paint wore off. We are all witness to it. Their bodies stand naked in New Delhi. All the paint and color has washed off; not a bit is left anywhere. Whatsoever Gandhi had painted on them washed away in the rain. So long as power didn't shower down upon them their faces looked very impressive, their clothes of khadi looked very bright, and their caps seemed to assure people they would lift the country to greater heights. The same caps have now become worthy to be tossed into holy fires of each and every village; they have now become symbols of the bourgeoisie, of the corruption in the country. So Gandhi seemed to be succeeding but ended as a total failure. Experiments similar to Gandhi's were conducted many times before and each time, failed.

Aurobindo carried out an experiment which did not appear to be successful. He could not succeed, but he was moving in the right direction. He was experimenting to see if it was possible for a few souls to rise so high that their very presence would begin to uplift other souls, would call out to other souls and they would start rising. Is it possible, with the rising of one man's soul, for mankind's entire spirit to be uplifted? It is not only possible, it is the only thing possible. There is nothing else which can succeed today.

Today, man has fallen so low that if we remain concerned with changing every individual, it will never happen. On the contrary, the greater possibility is that anyone attempting to bring about such a change might himself become like those he wants to change. It is highly possible he might become corrupt like the others. You can see for yourselves that those who set out to serve the masses turn out, in a few days, to be their deceivers. Those who had gone out to serve others, to reform others, in no time you find that people have begun to reform them. No, that idea of changing each individual is not feasible.

The history of human consciousness shows there were times when the whole consciousness of mankind soared to such heights you can hardly imagine. Twenty-five hundred years ago India saw the advent of Buddha, Mahavira, Prabuddha Katyayana, Makkhali Gosal, Sanjaya Vilethiputta. In Greece, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus were born. Lao Tzu, Confucius and Chuang Tzu appeared in China. Twenty-five hundred years ago ten or fifteen people of such precious quality happened that, during the span of a hundred years, man's consciousness touched the heavens. A golden age seemed to have arrived all around the world. Never before was the human soul so powerfully in evidence.

Mahavira lit the divine flame within the hearts of fifty thousand people who accompanied him from place to place. Thousands of Buddha's disciples were awakened, and their light, their flame began stirring village after village. In the village where Buddha would arrive with his ten thousand bhikkhus, within three days the whole vibe of that place would change. Where ten thousand bhikkhus assembled and prayed, it was as if the darkness was dispelled from the village, as if the prayer was spread over the entire village, as if hearts began to bloom and were filled with fragrance for the first time.

A few people rose, and with that the eyes of those who were below were uplifted. People only look up when there is something above to see. In the present world there is nothing to see above, but there is much to see below. The lower a person falls, the bigger his bank balance, the larger his mansion, the fancier his Cadillac -- so there is much to see below. Today, Delhi is way down, absolutely in the pit. If you look below you will see Delhi in the lowest region of the earth, in the lowest hell. Whoever wants to reach Delhi should descend to the netherworld, lower and lower.

There is nothing above worth seeing today. Who would you look at? Who is up there? What greater misfortune can there be than that there are no longer any souls above worth seeing -- such souls that just seeing them creates a deep longing in our hearts, such souls that just looking at them brings a cry from our whole being, such souls that just looking at them fills us with self-reproach, make us feel: "I could have been a lamp like this. The same flower could have blossomed in me too. I could have also sung the same song. I could also have been a Buddha, a Mahavira, a Krishna, a Christ."

Should it even once occur to you that "I could have been the same too" -- of course you need someone to look up to for such an inspiration -- your vital energy would embark on a higher journey. And remember, your vital energy is always moving -- if it is not journeying upward, it is journeying downward. The vital energy is never static. In the world of consciousness there is no stopping, no waiting. There is no station where you can get off and rest, whether you are moving up or down. Every moment life is in motion. The time has come for the raising of consciousness, and for having these consciousnesses remain there aloft so that others may look up to them.

I would like to start a movement throughout the world, not of many people -- I only need a few courageous individuals ready to experiment. If a hundred people in India agree to experiment and are determined to raise their consciousnesses as high as humanly possible, the entire face of India can be changed in the next twenty years.

At the time of his death Vivekananda said, "I kept calling for a hundred people to come, but they never did. I am now dying a disheartened man. If only a hundred people had come, I could have changed the whole country."

Vivekananda went on calling but the people didn't come. I have decided I won't call people. I'll search in each and every village. I'll look into the eyes of each and every man to make sure who he is. And that man who will not come in response to the call will have to be physically brought. If only a hundred people could be assembled like this, I assure you their souls will rise like Mount Everest. On that journey, the spirit, the life energy of the whole country can move ahead.

Those friends who find my challenge worth accepting, who feel they have enough courage and strength to tread a path which is absolutely unknown, unfamiliar, to cross a totally uncharted ocean, should know within themselves that such courage and daring only exists in them because deep down a divine call must have come -- otherwise such courage and daring is not possible. It was said in Egypt, "A person who calls for God should know that God must have called him long before, otherwise the call could not have arisen in him."

Those who feel the call from within have a great responsibility towards mankind. The need of the hour is for a few people to come forward and, in order to experience the heights of consciousness, offer their lives totally. All the truths of life, all the experiences up to this point are becoming falsities. All the heights attained so far are being taken as fantasies, are becoming myths.

One or two hundred years from now, children will refuse to believe there ever were people like Buddha, Mahavira and Christ. They will call them all merely fictitious characters. In the West, in fact, one man has written a book in which he says a man like Christ never existed. He says it's just an old play which, in the course of time, people forgot and began to look upon as history.

We enact Ramleela because we believe a person like Rama did exist before -- and so we perform Ramleela. A hundred years from now children will say, "They played Ramleela and people got the wrong impression that Rama had lived at some time in the past." So Ramleela, the enactment of Rama's adventures, would precede Rama. Ramleela will be seen as nothing but a play which went on for a long time, and Rama will simply be remembered as an upshot of it. Obviously, when people like Rama, Buddha and Christ cease to be recognized, how will it be possible to believe they ever existed before?

The human mind is never ready to believe there can be people with higher minds. It refuses to accept there can be someone greater. A man always wants to believe he is the greatest. He accepts someone's superiority only when compelled to, otherwise never at all. He makes a thousand attempts to find some fault, some defect in the other in order to prove he is inferior too. He is always on the lookout so that someday he can tell everyone his old image of the person is shattered, that he no longer gives him any credence because he has discovered a blemish. Essentially, the search is to find something wrong with the person. If none is found, a new wrong is invented so a man can feel comfortable in his own stupidity and feel he is doing fine.

By and by, man will deny all the great souls because their symbols, their signs, are nowhere visible. How long will images of stone convince us that Buddha and Mahavira really did exist? How long will the words of The Bible assure us of the existence of Christ? And how long will the Bhagavadgita be able to show that Krishna lived? Not for long. We need people like Jesus, Krishna, Buddha, Mahavira. If we do not produce men of such caliber in the next fifty years, the human race is about to enter a very dark age. Then there is no future for mankind.

This is a great challenge for those who feel they can do something for humanity. I will move from town to town giving this clarion call. Wherever I come across eyes which I feel can become burning lamps, can be lit with the divine flame, I am ready to put my whole effort into making this a reality. From my side I am fully prepared. Let us see if at the time of my death I also have to say, "I was looking for a hundred people, but couldn't find them."

Chapter #10

Chapter title: Religion is a Search for Meditation

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Question 1

BEFORE DISCUSSING THE PROCESS OF ENTERING DEATH CONSCIOUSLY, I WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU: WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE STATE OF UNCONSCIOUSNESS AND THE STATE OF AWARENESS? WHAT STATE OF MIND IS CALLED THE UNCONSCIOUS STATE? IN OTHER WORDS, WHAT IS THE INDIVIDUAL SOUL'S CONSCIOUSNESS LIKE IN ITS CONSCIOUS AND UNCONSCIOUS STATES?

In order to understand the states of consciousness and unconsciousness, the first thing that needs to be understood is that they are not opposite states, although normally they are seen as opposites. Actually, we are used to seeing life in terms of duality. First we create a division between darkness and light and then think they are two separate things. As soon as we take darkness and light to be two different things we commit a fundamental mistake. Any thought that follows this mistake is bound to be wrong; it can never be right.

Darkness and light are variations of the same thing. They are different aspects, different stages of the same thing. It would be appropriate to call darkness a deficiency of light. Light which our eyes cannot catch, light which our eyes cannot detect, looks like darkness. Similarly, we should call light a shortage of darkness -- darkness which our eyes can catch. So darkness and light are not two separate things, they are varying degrees of the same phenomenon.

What is true of darkness and light is true of all other dualities of life. The same thing is true regarding the unconscious and the conscious states. You may consider unconsciousness as darkness, and consciousness as light. In fact, even the most unconscious of all objects is not completely unconscious. A rock is not all unconscious -- it exists in a state of consciousness too, but the consciousness is so small it is hard to grasp.

A man is asleep, a man is awake. Sleep and wakefulness are not two different things. The same man is floating between sleep and wakefulness. What we call being asleep is also not really being asleep. For example, five hundred people are asleep in a room and you call the name "Rama" aloud. Only the person named Rama opens his eyes to find out who is disturbing his sleep, who has called him. The remaining four hundred and ninety-nine people stay asleep. Had this man been really asleep, he could not have heard anyone calling him; he could not have recognized that his name was Rama. His sleep was actually one of the lesser states of wakefulness, or his state of wakefulness had become a little hazy, a little fuzzy.

You see a man running on the street. He has heard that his house is on fire. You greet him. He sees you and yet he does not see you. He hears you and yet he does not hear you. You ask him the next day why he didn't return your greeting and he replies, "My house was on fire. At that time I couldn't see anything except my house, I couldn't hear anything except the noise, the sound around the house, people shouting 'The house is on fire!' I am sure you must have seen me, greeted me, but I couldn't see you, I couldn't hear you." Now, was this man awake or asleep? In every sense he was awake, of course, and yet, as far as the man who met him on the street was concerned, he was almost asleep. He was more asleep than the other man, the one who heard "Rama" being called in his sleep.

So what is being asleep and being awake? The first thing I would like to say is: they are not two opposite things. Matter and God are not two opposite things. Sleep and wakefulness, light and darkness, devil and divine, good and bad, are not opposite things. But the human mind immediately divides things into two. In fact, no sooner does the mind raise a question than it divides the thing into two. The moment mind thinks, it divides into two.

To think and to divide into two constitute one and the same thing. The moment you think, you divide. Thinking is a process of division -- you immediately divide into two. The more a man is used to thinking, the more he will keep on dividing. Ultimately, he will end up with fragments and the whole will be completely lost. And the answer to every question lies in this wholeness, in this totality.

The mind is unable to find the answer to any question. In fact, it raises a number of questions from each answer it finds. No matter how significant the answer is, the mind will immediately raise dozens of questions -- but it can never find an answer to anything. There is a reason for this: the answer lies in the wholeness. But the mind is helpless. It can't function without making divisions.

For example, I am sitting here talking to you. You are listening to me and you are also looking at me. The one you are looking at and the one you are listening to are not two different individuals. However, as far as you are concerned, you are looking with your eyes and hearing with your ears. You have divided me into two parts. If you were to sit close to me and smell my body, you would have divided me into three. Then you will put these three parts together and create an image of me. But that won't be my image, it will be your addition of the parts. It will be misleading. You can never create the whole by adding up the parts, because the whole is that which was before the parts were made.

No sooner do we ask about consciousness and unconsciousness than we have begun to divide. In my view, they are one. But when I say they are one, I do not mean they are one and the same. I am not

saying consciousness itself is unconsciousness. When I say darkness and light are one, I don't mean you can walk in the dark as you do when there is light. When I say darkness and light are one, I mean existence is made of varying degrees of the same manifesting reality. The difference consists in being a little more or a little less, in being present or not present.

Now it will be easier for you to follow me. What is this thing which appears as consciousness when it is present in a greater degree and becomes unconsciousness when it exists in a lesser degree? The name of this very element is attention. The deeper and sharper the attention, the same is the state of consciousness. Unconsciousness and consciousness are but different densities of attention. The more profound the state of attention, the same will be the consciousness. The more tenuous the attention, the same will be the state of unconsciousness. In fact, the difference between a rock and a human is that the rock does not have density of attention at any level of consciousness. At whatever level the attention becomes condensed, consciousness takes place, and at whatever level the density of attention decreases, unconsciousness occurs.

If you let the sun's rays pass through a lens, fire is immediately produced. A condensed light creates fire. When it loses its density, when it becomes tenuous, light remains. There is fire in an ember because it contains highly condensed light. Whenever light is condensed, fire is produced. When the light becomes tenuous -- that is, when its density is reduced -- then even fire remains just light.

As density decreases darkness increases. With an increase in density, light increases. If we travel towards the sun, the light will keep on increasing, because the rays are very dense on the sun. As we move farther and farther away from the sun, the light will go on decreasing. At the farthest distance from the sun there will be nothing but darkness, because of the reduced density of light.

I apply the same principle to the states of unconsciousness and consciousness. The basic principle is attention. Its fluidity, density, tenuity, solidity, determine whether to call one awake or asleep, whether to call one unconscious or conscious. We must remember, however, that all these words are used in a relative sense. For example, when we say there is light in this room, it only means there is more light inside the room than there is outside. There is light in this room because it is dark outside. Were there bright sunshine outside, this room would look darker. So when we say somebody is awake or asleep, we simply mean, in comparison to someone else.

Language has its own difficulty; it would be a problem to continually express things in such comparative terms. That's why we use words in the absolute sense -- which is not right. The right way is always to express in relative terms. For instance, we are all sitting here and in a way we are all awake. But that's not really true. Each one present here is awake to a respective degree. Not every one sitting here is awake uniformly. Hence it is possible that, compared to you, the person to your left is less awake, or the person to your right is more awake.

The element that moves between consciousness and unconsciousness is attention. So if we understand what attention, dhyana is, we'll understand what consciousness and unconsciousness means. Attention means: awareness of something. It means reflection of something in the consciousness. It is not that every moment, twenty-four hours a day, one is equally awake -- it is never like that either.

As an example, it would be good to know a few things about the pupil of the eye. When you go out in the sun, the pupil contracts because there is no need for so much light to go in. Less light is enough for you to see; hence the pupil contracts and the focus is narrowed. When you come out of bright light into a dark place, the pupils dilate and the focus is enlarged, because in order to see in the dark, more light needs to go within. So according to the degree of darkness and light it is exposed to, the pupil of the eye keeps changing its focus -- the same way we keep adjusting the focus of the camera lens while shooting pictures.

Just as every moment one's eye is flexible, so is one's attention. You walk along a street. If the street is familiar your attention will be tenuous; if the street is unfamiliar your attention will be dense. You need not be alert if it is a street you cross every day, because in an unconscious state you are sure to make it. If the street is totally unfamiliar, one you have never crossed before, you will cross it with awareness. Because of the unfamiliarity of the street, great attention will be needed.

Hence, the more a man lives in security, the more unconscious he will be. In security everything is known, familiar. The more one lives in insecurity, the more aware he will be. So ordinarily, except for the moments of danger, we are never aware, we are always asleep. If I suddenly point a dagger at your chest, you will become alert at once. You will become conscious, awake, quite different from what you are now. Seeing the dagger pointed at you will create such an emergency, such a critical situation, that at that moment you can't afford to be asleep. That means you can't be sleepy in such a moment. If you stay sleepy in such a dangerous situation you will be near death.

In that threatening moment your whole being will come to the point of crystallization, your whole attention will become condensed. Your whole attention will remain fixed on the dagger and you will become fully aware of it. It is possible this situation may last only for a second; nevertheless, the fact is, your attention ordinarily becomes dense only in critical moments. Once the danger is over, you go back to your previous state, you go to sleep once again.

That seems to be the reason danger attracts. We love to take risks. A man gambles, for example. You may have hardly given a thought as to what makes him gamble. It is the element of danger that draws him to gambling. At the moment of placing his bet, he is more aware than ever. A gambler has placed a hundred thousand dollars on a bet and is about to throw the dice. It's a very critical moment. In a blink, a hundred thousand dollars can go this way or that. At this moment he cannot afford to be asleep; he will have to be aware. That moment of betting is certain to crystallize his attention. Now this may intrigue you, but in my view a gambler is also in search of meditation. Whether he knows it or not is another matter.

A man brings a wife home. Then, as the days go by and she becomes more and more familiar, he becomes less and less attentive towards her. She becomes as well known to him as the street he crosses every day -- and suddenly the woman next door looks more attractive. The reason is nothing more than the fact that her unfamiliarity excites his attention. Looking at her, his attention has to become condensed; the focus of his eye changes immediately. Actually, the eyes of husbands and wives don't change focus when they look at each other. In fact, a husband hardly ever looks at his wife; he avoids

her. The way he lives and moves around her doesn't require him to pay any attention to her. Hence, in my view, the attraction for another woman or another man is really the attraction of attention. In that one moment, in that moment of thrill, the mind becomes fully aware. It has to -- because only then is it possible to see somebody.

There is a chase going on -- to have a new house instead of the old, new clothes instead of the old, new positions instead of the old. Deep down, all this chasing indicates a profound desire to experience a crystallized attention -- meditation. And all the joys in one's life depend on how crystallized the meditation is. The moments of bliss are the moments of crystallized meditation. Hence, those who wish to attain joy must awaken. You cannot attain joy by staying asleep.

Religion is a search for meditation, and so is gambling. One who goes to battle, sword in hand, is in search of meditation too. One who goes hunting a tiger in the forest is also searching for meditation. And the one who is sitting in the cave with his eyes closed, working hard on his agya chakra, his third eye center, is searching for meditation as well. The search can be both good or bad, desirable or undesirable, but the search is one and the same. A search may be successful or unsuccessful, but the desire for searching is one and the same. Meditation means: the power of knowing that lies within you becomes manifest in its entirety. No part of it should remain potent within you, in seed form. Whatsoever capability of knowing you have should not remain just a potential, it should become actual.

Only in that moment a person becomes fully aware does he really flower as a being. Both events occur simultaneously. For example, a tree is hidden in a seed, but potentially. It is just a potentiality: the seed can die without materializing into the tree. It is not necessary that the tree has to come out of the seed, it is simply a possibility. It is only a potentiality, not yet an actuality.

The later turning of the seed into a tree is yet another state of its being, the manifest state. It would not be wrong to say that the seed is the unmanifest state of the tree, because what appears in the form of a tree is the same as was hidden within the seed. Following the same analogy, it would not be incorrect to say that unconsciousness is the potential state of awareness, or that awareness is the manifest state of unconsciousness.

What is it that moves between these states? What was present in the seed and also exists in the tree? There must be a connecting link between the seed and the tree. There must be something that makes the journey from the seed to the tree, that exists in both. How else can there be a connection between the seed and the tree? What was hidden in the seed and has manifested in the tree? It can neither be the seed nor can it be the tree. This needs to be understood.

The third power that was hidden in the seed and which became manifest in the tree could not have been the seed alone. Then it could never have become the tree. And if it were the tree alone, how could it have been in the seed? It existed in both. That third power is the vital energy.

Awakening and unconsciousness are two states. The element that travels between the two is meditation. That's the third force, the vital energy. So, the more meditative you are, the more aware; the less meditative, the more asleep. A rock is a sleeping God -- totally asleep, absolutely like a seed, no

sprouting anywhere. Man is not a tree, he is a broken seed with a tiny sprout. He has not yet become a tree, but he is no longer like a rock either. He is on a journey somewhere in between. Man is on a journey -- or it would be even better to say that man is in transit, at a halting place on a journey. Man is a seed on its way to becoming a tree. He is also a sprout in between. That's all man is -- a sprout, a sprouted seed. What we ordinarily know as being awake is also just a sprouting. What we call being awake is also a very blurry state.

What we call being awake is still a very sleepy state. The wakeful state in which we go about our daily routine is not very different from the state of somnambulism. In a dream, a man gets up, goes to the kitchen and drinks a glass of water, or sits at his table and writes a letter, and then goes back to sleep. He remembers nothing of this in the morning, he did it all in the dream. His eyes were open, he followed the right path, opened the door without difficulty, wrote the letter, but still he was asleep. This means that, except for a tiny little corner, his entire mind was asleep, and hence could not register his actions in its memory. So the man is at a loss in the morning to explain what happened at night.

What we call being awake is a state similar to somnambulism. If I ask what you did on January 1, 1950, you will be at a loss to answer. You may simply say. "There was a first of January indeed, and I must have done something on that day, but I have no idea what exactly." You will be surprised to know, however, that if you were hypnotized and asked the same question you could easily give a detailed account of that very day.

What occurred on that day was recorded in some corner of your mind, a corner of which even you are not fully aware. It was recorded and left unused. Similarly, the memories of our past lives are also lying there undisturbed. We are not fully cognizant of them. In the previous life some part of our being was awake, and that part had done the recording. Now the same part is inactive, asleep; the other part is awake, active. The part which is awake in this life has no knowledge of the immense amount of work already accomplished by another part in a previous life. It is ignorant of the fact that a seed had already sprouted in the previous life and subsequently died. It has no idea at all that such an attempt was already made once before. As a matter of fact, infinite attempts have been made before.

Should you ever enter into the memories of your past lives, you will be in for a great surprise. The memories of past lives are not restricted to human lives alone. Entering these memories is very easy; one can do so without much difficulty. However, prior to many human lives, we have passed through animal lives as well. It is difficult to penetrate them because they are hidden under even deeper layers. And even prior to our animal lives, we have lived through many lives as trees as well. Penetrating them is even more difficult because they are buried even further, at deeper levels. Prior to having lived as trees, we have gone through many lives as rocks and minerals. Memories of these lie at even lower levels. Access to them is even more difficult.

Up to now, experiments in remembering past lives have not gone beyond the level of animal life. Even the experiments carried on by Buddha and Mahavira did not go beyond the level of animal life. The memory of being a tree is yet to be revived. As for the memory of being rocks and minerals, it is still further down the road. But the memories of all these past lives are clearly recorded. This recording,

however, must have taken place in a state of somnolence, otherwise one's entire mind would be aware of it.

It may not have occurred to you, but there are certain things we never forget. Why is it so? For example, let's assume someone slapped you when you were five years old. Even after so many years the incident is still fresh in your mind, and you will never forget it for the rest of your life. What seems to be the matter? At the moment you were slapped, your attention must have been very sharp. That's why the incident made such a deep impression on you. It is only natural that at the moment one is slapped, one's attention would be at its highest point. This is the reason man can never forget the moments of insult, the moments of pain, the moments of happiness. These are all intense moments. In these moments he is so filled with awareness that their memory pervades his entire consciousness, while the ordinary run-of-the-mill happenings are forgotten by him.

How are we to understand what attention is, what meditation is? Because it is an experience, to understand it is a bit difficult. If I were to stick a pin in your body what would happen inside? All your attention would at once begin to rush to the point where the pin had stuck you. All of a sudden that point in the body would become significant. One should say, rather, your whole being would converge upon it. At that moment you would only remain aware of that part of the body where the pin was hurting.

So what really did occur in your body? Even without the pin that part of your body was there, but you were not aware of it, not cognizant of it; you didn't even know such a part existed. And then, suddenly, the pain caused by the pin created a crisis and your whole attention rushed to where the pin was hurting.

What is it that rushed towards that point? What happened inside you? How are things different now? What is it that was not present at that point a moment ago, but now is? It is the consciousness, the awareness, that was absent from this point a moment ago. Its absence made you so oblivious to that part of the body that whether it existed or not was all the same. You had no knowledge of it; it made little difference whether it was there or not. Suddenly you became aware that part also exists in your body. Suddenly it makes a lot of difference whether it exists or not. Now its existential awareness becomes apparent to you. So, attention means awareness.

There can be two kinds of attention. This also needs to be understood, because it will be useful in following your question. There are two kinds of attention. One, we may call concentration. In order to understand what concentration is, it is necessary to know that when your attention is centered on one point, you become oblivious to all other points. As I mentioned earlier, if a pin is thrust into your body, your entire attention will go to the point where the pin is hurting. You will become unaware of the rest of the body.

In fact, a sick person remains aware only of those parts of his body which are not well. He begins to live only in and around the afflicted parts of his body; the rest of the body does not exist for him any more. One who suffers from a headache becomes identified with the head alone; the rest of his body ceases to

be. One whose stomach hurts, his whole attention centers only on the stomach. If a thorn pricks your foot, the foot becomes everything. This is concentration of attention. This is how you bring all your consciousness to one point.

When the entire consciousness converges on one point and rests there, obviously all other points become negated, disappear into darkness. As I pointed out earlier, when someone's house is on fire, he becomes oblivious to everything but the fire. He only knows his house is on fire; everything else is dead as far as he is concerned. The only thing he remains aware of is that his house is on fire. He becomes unconscious towards the rest of the world.

So, concentration is one form of attention. In concentration you become centered on one point while remaining unconscious of the infinite number of other areas. Hence, although concentration is the density of attention, at the same time it is the expansion of unconsciousness too. Both things happen simultaneously.

The other form of attention is awareness -- not concentration. Awareness means attention which is not centered on any particular point. This is a little difficult to understand, because we only know the pointed attention. A man knows about the thorn hurting his foot, the headache, the house on fire, the taking of an examination and so on, so we know attention directed towards a particular point; we know what concentration is. But there is one other kind of attention which is not focused on a given point. As long as a man's attention is narrowed down to a particular point, he will be unconscious of the remaining areas.

If we believe God is, then he must indeed be an awakened God, fully aware. But what would he be aware of? And should there be a point of which he is aware, then he would obviously have to be unconscious of all the rest. So there can't be any object, any center of awareness as far as God is concerned. It's an awareness without a center. In such a case, awareness becomes infinite, all pervading.

This all-pervading awareness is the ultimate state, the highest possible. That's why, when we define God as sat-chit-anand, the word chit means this state of being. Ordinarily, people take chit to mean chetana, consciousness, which is not really its meaning, because consciousness is always about something. If you say, "I am conscious," then it can be asked, "Conscious about what?" Chit means objectless consciousness. It is not consciousness aimed at something, it is just a pure state of being conscious. Consciousness will always be object-centered, while the state of being conscious is centrifugal, radiating into infinity. It does not rest on anything; it does not stop at anything, it pervades all over.

In this state, which extends to infinity, there is no single point where unconsciousness can gain a foothold. This is the ultimate state. We may call it the state of total awareness. There is a state exactly opposite to this which we call sushupti, the state of total, dreamless sleep. And this needs to be understood too.

In concentration, one's consciousness is centered on one object, unconscious of the rest. Awareness is centered on one point only. In the state of total awareness, however, there is no particular point to be aware of -- the awareness is all-permeating. One should say there is just awareness, not an awareness of

a particular object. In the state of total awareness the object disappears, only the subject remains. Only the knower remains; that which is to be known remains no more. The knower alone remains. The energy to know spreads into infinity and no longer is there anything left to know.

There is always a price for whatsoever knowledge one wishes to attain. If you want to know about something, you will have to be ignorant of something else. Remember, it is with ignorance that one always pays the price of knowing. As man goes on becoming knowledgeable of many things, he has to remain equally ignorant of many others. Now, for example, a scientist is quite a knowledgeable person, but if he is a chemist he will know nothing about physics, if he is a mathematician he will know nothing about chemistry. If he wants to know a great deal about mathematics, he will have to be content with not knowing about many other things. He will have to make this choice. If you want to be an expert in a particular field, you will have to have the courage to remain ignorant about many other things.

That's why Mahavira and Buddha were not men of knowledge in this sense. They did not have any specialized knowledge; they were not experts in any field. Hence, on the one hand we say Mahavira was omniscient, but the fact is he didn't even know how to fix a puncture in a bicycle tire. He was not a specialist. One who needs to know how to fix a puncture in a bicycle tire will have to keep himself from knowing about many other things. His consciousness will have to become object-centered and allow many things to be left in the dark.

The very meaning of science is knowing more and more about less and less. As the amount of knowledge grows, the area of knowledge becomes more and more narrow. Finally, only one point remains to be known and the rest of the areas are filled with ignorance. That's the reason a scientist who may be able to produce a hydrogen bomb can be easily fooled by an ordinary shopkeeper -- because whatsoever he knows is in such a limited sphere that he knows nothing about the rest. About the rest he is as dull as a villager, even worse. A villager knows about a good many things; he is not a specialist. That's why an old-fashioned man knows about many things while a modern man does not. The modern man has had to make a choice. In order to know a lot about one thing he has had to give up knowing about many other things.

Concentration is bound to end up like this. One particular object will gain importance while all remaining objects will fall into neglect. Yet another result of concentration is that the more an object grows in importance, the more the one who knows about it becomes secondary. A scientist knows a great deal, but he has no knowledge of the knower, of the knowing element within himself. He becomes object-centered. If you ask him about an object he will explain it to you, but if you ask him to say something about himself, you will often times find him at a loss.

There is an interesting episode in the life of Edison, who made a thousand discoveries. Perhaps no one else has made so many discoveries. In the first world war, when rationing was introduced in America, Edison had to bring his ration card to the shop and stand in the queue as well. When his name, Thomas Edison, was called out, he looked around with indifference, as if someone else's name was being called. Somebody in the queue happened to recognize him. He came up to him and said. "Pardon me, I have seen your photograph in the newspapers. You yourself seem to be Edison."

Edison gave a start. He thanked the man for reminding him who he was. He said, "In the last thirty years I have had little free time or leisure to meet myself." For thirty years this man had been so busy in his laboratory that he had no time for himself. He was such an important figure that in thirty years no one had ever called him by his given name. Obviously, he had forgotten it.

Concentration happens when the arrow of consciousness strikes an object with great intensity. With that, however, the entire world, including one's own self, falls into darkness. In the ultimate state that I am speaking to you about the particular object will have vanished; instead, everything will be illuminated, including yourself, including that which you are. It will be an unfocused light. Instead of calling it light, we should rather call it luminosity.

Light and luminosity are not synonymous; there is a slight distinction between the two. What appears with the sunrise is light, but when the night is past and the sun is yet to rise, what then appears is luminosity. It is unfocused, uncentered, just luminosity. So, God is just luminosity -- or, luminosity is the state of ultimate awakening. Exactly opposite to this is the state of darkness or of dreamless sleep.

Let's put it this way. In the state of total awareness neither the subject nor the object remains. What remains is just infinite luminosity. In a manner of speaking, this luminosity is a state of knowing all, but in another sense, it is a state of knowing nothing at all. It is all-knowing, because now nothing remains that falls outside the radius of its light. And it knows nothing, because now there is nothing left which needs to be known. If one attempts to know something in particular, many other things will obviously be left unknown. So this is not the kind of knowledge that is acquired by a scientist, it is knowledge in the sense a poet is known to have it.

The second common state of awareness is that of concentration, where you know about one thing and forget about all the rest, including yourself. And there is yet another state which comes before this. It is the primary state in which you know neither the object nor yourself. It is the state of total darkness. Neither do you know about anything -- it is not even concentration; nor do you know about everything -- it is not even awareness. Nor do you know yourself. The knowing is still in the embryo state. It is still in seed form; it is still unmanifest, hidden in the roots.

So there is sushupti, the state of dreamless sleep, and there is the state of total awareness. In between these infinite points of attention we oscillate. When you are aware in the day, the pendulum of your attention swings a little towards awareness. At night, when you are asleep, it swings towards sushupti.

The fact is, in sleep we come nearer to matter. When we are awake we come closer to the divine, just a little closer. We swing towards God. Should we continue to lean towards awareness like this, should this journey continue, then a moment comes when even in sleep you are not really completely asleep. Then you begin to remain aware even in your sleep. Then sleep becomes merely a physical relaxation, not a state of spiritual darkness. Then you sleep and also remain aware of the fact that you are asleep. You turn in your sleep and know that you are doing so. Then the current of awareness keeps flowing within. The reverse happens too.

For example, a man falls into a coma or becomes unconscious or gets drunk. In all these cases the man is unaware of what is going on outside or inside himself. The knower, as well as that which is to be known, are both lost, lost in darkness. Similarly, both disappear in the state of ultimate consciousness as well, but they disappear in infinite light.

If you understand what I am saying, then, in brief, it means that the journey of attention extends from total sleep to total awareness. In between, it is divided at many levels.

A tree knows something too. For a long time we had no knowledge of this fact. When some people brought this to our attention for the first time, it seemed as if they were talking fiction; what they said sounded like a story from the Puranas. But now, even scientists are providing proof that a tree knows as well, that a tree listens too. The bark of some trees also has eyes -- not like ours of course, but nevertheless, trees have the ability to see, to listen, to experience.

Recently, I was reading about some experiments conducted at the de la Warr Laboratory of Oxford University. Through scientific means they have brought certain astonishing experiences to our attention. One of the most amazing experiences was that seeds from one packet were divided equally and sown in two separate flower pots. Both pots were given equal care and attention. Then a holy man, a monk, was asked to pray before one of the two pots so its seeds should sprout early, so they should bear flowers and fruit and attain to their ultimate potential. The same prayer was not made before the second pot.

To everyone's great surprise the seeds in the other pot sprouted very late in spite of the fact that all arrangements for both pots were the same; there was not the slightest difference. The gardeners were neither informed of the difference nor given any instructions to treat them differently. Nevertheless, the pot which had been prayed over looked very distinguished. The seeds in it grew early, bore flowers and fruit early. All its seeds sprouted, while all the seeds of the other pot did not. Whatever seeds grew in the second pot took the normal time; their growth was slower. And there was a marked difference in the quality of flowers and fruit.

This experiment and many others were conducted in this laboratory, and to everyone's surprise it was felt that plants are able to sense prayer too, that they are receptive to prayer too. An even more surprising experiment took place, one which caused great excitement. The holy man who was asked to pray was a Christian and he wore a cross around his neck. As he prayed for a particular seed with his eyes closed and his arms raised, the seed was photographed. And the photograph turned out to be spectacular, far beyond anyone's comprehension. In the photograph of that seed the holy man's cross and raised arms were clearly visible.

What does this mean? There are very wide implications. I believe these experiments will prove much more useful to mankind than the discovery of atomic energy. The seed is accepting, the seed is receiving something too. The seed has a consciousness too. Indeed, it is asleep. Compared to man it looks even more asleep. And yet, there is a certain awareness in its state of sleep.

A rock looks even more asleep, but even its state of sleep contains a kind of awareness. Not all rocks are absolutely rocks, and not all rocks are equally asleep. Rocks have their respective individuality too. It

was the search for their respective singularity that led to the discovery of precious stones; otherwise they would not have been found. Not just any stone is taken to be a precious stone. Also, don't be under the wrong impression, normally created by applying the law of economics, that certain things become valuable because of their rarity. This is not how these stones are valued.

It is as if a buddha is standing somewhere and an ordinary man stands near him. If someone from Mars were to land on earth and come across these two men, how would he differentiate between them? He neither knows our language nor our culture nor our manners. He will only judge by appearances. If the Martian were to spend an hour or so watching these two men, would he ever observe any distinction between the two? Returning to his planet, he would not be wrong if he told his fellow Martians he had seen two people who looked very much alike. He had seen them both breathing, walking, talking, resting -- and all alike. So when we see two pieces of stone, our understanding is similar because we are unaware of their individualities.

Precious stones are a great discovery of man. Those who were able to read the stones in depth, able to go deep in their research, to connect with them, found out that. even with stones, there are some which are awake. Certain stones are more awake; certain others, more asleep. People also came to know that certain stones are awake in a particular direction and can therefore be used only for particular reasons.

Some unprecedented events will start taking place in your life if you carry certain kinds of stones, make a charm of them, wear them in a necklace or mount one in your ring -- because such stones have their own lives too. With the ownership of a stone of that kind incidents will inevitably occur, because now you are in a symbiotic relationship with the stone. Without it such incidents would not happen.

There are stones which have a long history of misfortune. Whosoever possessed such a stone found himself in difficulty, found it hard to get out of it. And whenever the stone passed to someone else, he got into trouble too. There are stones which have a history of hundreds of years, and some of thousands of years, showing that whosoever possessed them was besieged by trouble. These stones are still very much alive, still doing their job; they will cause trouble to anyone who possesses them. Then there are other stones that have brought good fortune to those who owned them, and became more and more costly. So stones have their own individuality, as do plants. In this world everything has individuality, and this individuality depends on the degree to which a thing is awake or asleep. In other words, to what extent the attention is active or inactive determines the individuality of a particular thing. You can look at it this way too: a dynamic attention means awareness, while a passive attention means sleep, unconsciousness. The ultimate passivity of attention is matter, the ultimate dynamism of attention is God.

Question 2

YOU HAVE DESCRIBED TWO STATES, ONE OF COMPLETE UNCONSCIOUSNESS AND THE OTHER OF ABSOLUTE AWARENESS. ONE TRAVELS FROM COMPLETE UNCONSCIOUSNESS TO ABSOLUTE AWARENESS. THE QUESTION IS, WHERE DO WE REACH AFTER ATTAINING THE STATE OF ABSOLUTE

AWARENESS? ALSO, FROM WHICH POINT DOES THE COMPLETE UNCONSCIOUSNESS BEGIN, AND WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

Actually, as soon as we use the words absolute or whole we need to take a few conditions that go with it into account. For instance, it is wrong to ask "Where does wholeness end?" because wholeness means that which can never come to an end. Should it ever end somewhere it will not be whole. It will remain confined at that very point; right there it will cease to be whole.

When we ask, "From where does wholeness begin?" we are asking a wrong question, because the whole means that which has no beginning. If it has a beginning then it cannot be whole. The whole, the absolute is beginningless and endless. It neither has a beginning before nor an end afterwards. If there were 'ends' on any side it would not be the whole. Therefore, we can't ask any questions about the beginning or the end of the absolute. If one needs to ask a question at all, then one should only ask before he comes to the question, "What is whole?" As such, the very meaning of 'whole' is something about which all questions are meaningless.

Questions occur in our minds: "Where did this unconsciousness come from? Why did it come? When did it come? Where will it end? Why will it end? When will it end? Where in existence is this state of consciousness located? And where in existence could the state of complete unconsciousness be?" It is natural that questions such as these should arise. The questions are perfectly consistent, yet totally meaningless.

One should not be under the illusion that just because a thing is consistent it is also meaningful. A thing can be consistent and yet meaningless. So the questions are absolutely pertinent but the answers will have no meaning, will solve nothing. Whatsoever answer there may be can only give rise to more questions of this nature. So what do I intend to tell you?

There are certain questions you never ask a scientist. Why not show the same attitude towards a religious man? There are certain things a scientist is never asked to explain. Why are they asked of a religious man? A scientist refuses to answer such questions, while the silly religious man makes the mistake of answering them. All religions make this error. By answering such questions -- questions which cannot be answered in the first place -- they get themselves into trouble.

For example, if you ask a scientist, "Why is a tree green?" he will answer, "Because the tree contains chlorophyll." And if you ask, "Why does the tree contain chlorophyll?" the scientist will disregard the question -- it is a fact; that's the way it is. He will point out, "The tree is green because it contains chlorophyll!" If you continue to ask, "Why can't the tree be without chlorophyll?" the scientist will state frankly, "I am not the creator, and there is no answer to this question!"

In this way, science escapes falling into stupidities. It leaves everything to the facts. "This is how it is; these are the facts." The scientist says, "When we mix hydrogen with oxygen, water is created." No one goes on asking him, "Why is it so? Why is water created by mixing hydrogen and oxygen?" He will simply

make it clear. "The question doesn't arise," he will say. "We know this much, that by mixing both, water is created; by not mixing them, water is not created. This is a fact. Beyond this, fiction begins."

If we could give an explanation as to why such-and-such a thing happens, then I would like to say that, in this world, there is unconsciousness and there is awareness. This is a fact and as yet no way has been found to go beyond them. And I don't think a way can ever be found. This is the ultimate fact.

There is darkness at one end and light at the other. Eventually darkness disappears into infinity, and one never knows where it began, where its point of initiation was. Light eventually disappears into infinity too, and one never knows the point of its disappearance. And we are always in the middle; we can only see a short distance in either direction. As we look backward we find darkness increasing, becoming more and more dense. As we look forward we find darkness decreasing and light growing, becoming increasingly dense. But we never see either the end of darkness or of light. Nor do we see any beginning of darkness, nor any termination of light. This is how we are situated -- in the middle. No matter how far we look, this is all we see.

Even the most farsighted man has not seen farther than this. What causes the difficulty? When we form a question, some fool turns up to answer it. Once a question is formulated, someone or other is bound to come up with an answer for it. This is how philosophy has come about. Philosophy is made of foolish answers to foolish questions. And the questions remain, right where they always were.

There can be different answers to each question, because each answer reflects an individual's perception. In answer to the question, "Who created man?" someone can say, "God created man." But so what? We can ask, "Why did God create man? Why did he create him the way he did? Why did God create man in the first place?" This would leave the matter right where it is. Finally one might say, "Well, this is the way he does it!"

If this is the answer we are going to get ultimately.... Someone might say, "It is all maya; it is beyond comprehension." On the one hand this man is saying that everything is beyond comprehension, that it is all an illusion, maya; however, when he is talking about everything being an illusion, he is saying something which is actually coming out of his understanding. He appears to have fully understood that everything is maya, that everything is beyond comprehension. If everything is indeed beyond comprehension, then he needs to shut up; then he need not say all is maya. How can there be an answer if it is really beyond comprehension? So one must keep quiet; there is no need to answer.

Some people say God created man so man can attain God. What foolishness! If this were really true then why didn't he create man as a god in the first place? Where was the need to go through all this trouble? Someone else declares, "This whole thing goes on to fulfill the unfinished karmas of previous lives." But then it can be asked, "There must have been a first life without any other life preceding it. Then what fruits were we reaping in that initial birth?" Obviously it was without cause.

In my view, no philosophy has ever provided any answer to the ultimate questions. All philosophies are fundamentally dishonest. But the dishonesty is hidden very deep. And once this basic dishonesty escapes your notice, the remaining structure will look very convincing; you won't find any difficulty.

Once you have accepted a lie -- the first lie -- all the following lies will appear as truths. Once a person believes that God is the creator, the matter ends right there. But how do we know God is the creator? If this question arises even once, it means the matter has remained right where it is -- it has neither begun nor ended. In my view, religion should also be perceived as a science.

Some time before his death Einstein was asked, "How do you differentiate between a scientist and a philosopher?" Einstein replied, "I call that man a scientist who, when asked one hundred questions, answers one and shows his ignorance about the remaining ninety-nine. And about the one he answers, he will make clear that it is all that is known at this point. It may change with a new discovery in the future. It is not the final statement."

Science never makes any final statement. That's why there's a kind of honesty in science. So Einstein said, "If you ask a philosopher a hundred questions, he will give one hundred and fifty answers. He will consider each answer absolute, as if no change can ever occur." Whatsoever a philosopher says is to be taken as conclusive; anyone doubting it can suffer the fires of hell. For a philosopher, his theory is irrefutable.

The way I look at it, we should be able to create minds that are both scientific and religious at the same time. This is my approach. Although I talk all along on religion, my outlook is always scientific. Therefore, I have no answers to the ultimate questions; there cannot be any. If an answer does come, then know well the question is no longer the ultimate question -- it must be a question somewhere in between, a question for which the answer has been found. The matter will be argued, carried further.

The ultimate question is one which remains in spite of all answers. The ultimate question means that no matter how many questions are raised, after you are through answering them, you will find the same question awaiting you, the question mark still staring you in the face. You may just succeed in pushing the question a little further back -- that's all.

You may have seen a Japanese doll. No matter how you toss it, it always stands upright. The doll is called Daruma. It is named after an Indian mystic, Bodhidharma. From India, Bodhidharma went to China, and in Japanese the name Bodhidharma became Daruma, and that's how the doll came to be known as the Daruma doll. No matter what anyone did to Bodhidharma, he remained as he was. This doll is modeled after him. Regardless of how you throw it, toss it, it stands erect, in place.

The ultimate questions are like the Daruma doll. like Bodhidharma. Do what you will, they stay right where they are. At the most, depending on how and where you throw them, their positions may change. You may keep tossing the doll for the rest of your life: you will be tired, not the doll. It will keep standing upright, in place.

These are ultimate questions. When we ask what existed before the absolute, the whole, and what exists beyond, the question becomes meaningless. I can tell you only this much: darkness, unconsciousness extends to the rear, while there is an expanse of light, of consciousness ahead of us. I can tell you this also: as darkness decreases, bliss increases. And I can mention this as well: with the increase in darkness, misery grows. These are facts. If you wish to choose misery you can go back

towards darkness and unconsciousness. If you wish to choose bliss, you can move ahead towards light, towards the ultimate light. And if you wish for neither, you can stand in between and indulge in thinking about what was before and what is ahead.

Question 3

AT THE DWARKA MEDITATION CAMP YOU SAID MEDITATION AND SAMADHI CONSTITUTE A VOLUNTARY, CONSCIOUS ENTERING INTO DEATH, AND IN DOING SO THE DELUSION OF DEATH DISAPPEARS. NOW THE QUESTION IS, WHO IS DELUDED? IS IT THE BODY OR IS IT THE CONSCIOUSNESS? SINCE THE BODY IS MERELY A MECHANICAL DEVICE, IT CANNOT EXPERIENCE SUCH DELUSION. AND THERE IS NO QUESTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS BEING DELUDED. THEN WHAT IS THE CAUSE, THE BASIS OF THIS DELUSION?

The awareness of death.... If a man can die in the state of consciousness, for him death exists no more. In other words, if a man can manage to remain conscious at the time of death, he finds he never died at all: death appears just a delusion to him. Death proving to be a delusion does not mean, however, that death remains in some form as a delusion. Rather, when a person dies fully conscious, he finds there is no death at all. Then death becomes a falsehood.

But it is natural for you to ask, "Who is deluded?" You are right in saying it cannot be the body, because how can the body feel delusion? It cannot be the soul either, because the soul never dies. Then who goes through the delusion? It is of course, neither the soul nor the body. As a matter of fact, the individual never feels the delusion of death, the illusion of death is a social phenomenon. This needs to be understood in a little detail.

You see a man dying, and then you think he is dead. Since you are not dead you have no right to think this way. It is very foolish on your part to conclude that the man is dead. All you ought to say is, "I am not able to determine whether he is the same person in the way I knew him before." To say anything more than this is dangerous, is crossing the limits of propriety.

All one ought to say is, "Up to yesterday the man was talking, now he no longer talks. Before he used to walk, now he walks no more. Up to yesterday, what I had understood as his life exists no more. The life he lived up to yesterday is no more. If there is any life beyond that, then so be it; if there isn't, then be that as it may." But to say "The man is dead" is going a little too far; it is going beyond limits. One ought to simply say, "The man is no longer alive." As one knew someone to have life, he no longer has it.

This much of a negative statement is fine, that what we knew as his life -- his fighting, his loving, his eating, his drinking -- is no more, but to say the man is dead is making a very positive assertion. We are not just saying whatsoever was present in the man exists no more, we are saying something has happened over and above this -- the man is dead. We are saying the phenomenon of death has also occurred. It might be fine if we said that the things that were happening around this man before are no

longer happening. We are not only saying that, but also that a new phenomenon has been added: the man is dead too.

We who are not dead, we who have no knowledge of death, crowd around the person and pronounce him dead. The crowd determines the man's death without even asking him, without even letting him vouch for it! It is like a one-party decision in court; the other side is absent. The poor fellow has not even had a chance to say whether he is indeed dead or not. Do you follow what I mean? Death is a social illusion. It is not that man's illusion; his illusion is altogether different.

His illusion is not of dying. His illusion is how he can expect to remain awake at the moment of death when he has lived all his life in the state of sleep? It is obvious. How can one who is used to spending his whole day in a state of sleep, stay awake when he is actually asleep? This means that one who is already asleep even when he is awake, will most certainly be fast asleep in his sleep. How can one who cannot see in the bright daylight see in the darkness of night?

Do you suppose one who failed to see what life is like even in his wakeful state, will be able to see what death is? In fact, as soon as life slips through his hands, at that moment he will be lost in deep sleep. The fact of the matter is that, outwardly, we feel he is dead, but this is a social determination, which is wrong. Here the phenomenon of death is being determined by those who are not qualified. No one in the crowd is a right witness because no one really saw the person dying. No one has ever seen a person dying! Never has an act of dying been witnessed by anyone. All we have known is that until a given moment a person was alive, and then he was no longer alive. That's it; beyond this there is a wall. So far, no one has ever seen the phenomenon of death.

Actually, the problem is that once things are accepted for a long time, we stop thinking them over. For example, you will immediately take exception if I say that no man has ever seen light. But I maintain that no one has ever seen light. We have, of course, seen lighted objects, but never light itself. We say there is light in this room because the wall is visible, because you are visible. An object shines in the light, but light itself is never seen.

Light is always an unknown source. Certain things shine in it, and because of that we say there is light. When objects do not shine we say there is darkness. We have never seen darkness either. Obviously, how could one who has never seen light have ever seen darkness? If light were visible one could understand, but how can darkness be seen?

Darkness simply means, now nothing is visible. The deeper meaning of darkness is, now nothing is visible to us. It would be better to say, "We cannot see anything." This would be a statement of fact. But to say "There is darkness" is absolutely wrong. This way, we are turning darkness into an object. So the right thing to say about darkness is, "I cannot see anything." However, just because I am unable to see anything does not mean there is darkness. Saying "I can't see anything" means the source that made everything shine has become dull. Now, since things are not visible, it is therefore dark.

A person who has, all along, taken his life to be nothing but eating, drinking, sleeping, moving about, quarreling, loving, making friends, creating enmity, all of a sudden, at the moment of death, even he

finds life slipping away through his fingers. What he had understood as life was not life at all. They were just acts, visible in the light of life. Just as objects are seen in the presence of light, the person, in the same way, had seen certain things when the light within him was present. He had eaten food, made friends, created enmity, built homes, earned money, risen to high position -- all these were things seen in the light of life. Now, at the moment of death, he finds them slipping away.

So now the person thinks he is gone, he is dying, that life is lost forever. He has seen other people dying before and the social illusion that man dies is stuck in his mind as well. So he feels he is dying. His conclusion is also part of that social illusion. He comes to feel he is dying just as others before him have died.

He sees himself surrounded by his loved ones, his family and relatives crying bitterly. Now his illusion begins to become confirmed. All this creates a hypnotic effect on him. All these people... the situation is just ideal -- the doctor at his side, the oxygen ready, the whole atmosphere of the house changed, people in tears. Now the man seems certain of his death. The social illusion that he is dying grips his mind. His friends and relatives around him begin to cast a hypnotic spell on the man that he is just about to die. Someone feels his pulse. Someone else recites the Bhagavadgita or whispers the namokar mantra in his ear. All of them thoroughly convince the man he is about to die -- that whatsoever has been done before with a dying man, they are now doing the same with him.

This is social hypnotism. The man is now fully convinced he is about to die, that he is dying, that he is gone. This hypnosis of death will cause him to become unconscious, frightened, horrified; it will make him shrink, feeling "I am about to die, I am about to die. What shall I do?" Overcome with fear he will shut his eyes, and in that state of fear he will become unconscious.

In fact, falling unconscious is a device we use against things we are afraid of. You have a stomach ache, for example, and if the pain becomes unbearable you will fall unconscious. That is just a trick on your part to switch off your mind, to forget the pain. When the pain is too much, falling unconscious is a mental trick -- you don't want to suffer the pain any longer. When the pain doesn't go away, the only other alternative is to switch off one's mind. One 'turns off' so one remains unaware of the pain.

So, falling unconscious is our unique way of dealing with unbearable pain. Remember, however, there is nothing like unbearable pain: you only feel pain as long as it is bearable. As soon as the pain reaches the point of becoming unbearable, you are gone; hence you never feel unbearable pain. Never believe a word of it if someone says he is suffering from unbearable pain, because the person talking to you is still conscious. Had the pain been unbearable he would have been unconscious. The natural trick would have worked and he would have lost consciousness. As soon as a person crosses the limit of endurance he falls unconscious.

Even minor illnesses frighten us and we become unconscious -- what to say about the terrifying thought of death. The very idea of death kills us. We lose consciousness, and in that unconscious state death occurs. Hence, when I say death is an illusion I do not mean it is an illusion that happens either to the body or to the soul. I call it a social illusion -- one which we cultivate in every child. We indoctrinate every child with the idea, "You are going to die, and this is how death occurs." So by the time a child

grows up he has learned all the symptoms of death, and when these symptoms apply to him he just closes his eyes and becomes unconscious. He becomes hypnotized.

Contrary to this is the technique of active meditation -- a technique of how to enter death consciously. In Tibet this technique is known as bardo. Just as people hypnotize a man in his dying moment, similarly, people involved in Bardo give anti-hypnotic suggestions to a dying man. In Bardo, people gather around a man in his dying moments and tell him, "You are not dying, because no one has ever died." They give him anti-hypnotic suggestions. There will be no weeping, no wailing; nothing else will be done. People will gather around him and a village priest or monk will come and say, "You are not dying, because no one has ever died. You will depart relaxed and fully conscious. You will not die, because no one ever dies."

The person closes his eyes and the entire process is narrated to him: now his life-energy has left his legs, now it has left his hands, now he cannot speak, and so on -- and yet, the man is told, he still is, he will still remain. And all around him these suggestions are given. The suggestions are simply anti-hypnotic. That means, they are meant to make sure the person does not grab on to the social illusion that he is on the verge of dying. In order to prevent him from doing that, people use Bardo as an antidote.

The day this world has a healthier attitude towards death, there will be no need for Bardo. But we are a very unhealthy people; we live in a great illusion, and because of this illusion the antidote becomes essential. I believe there should be a wide application of Bardo in this country as well. Whenever anyone dies, all his loved ones should make an attempt to shatter his illusion that he is dying. If they could keep the person awake, if they could remind him at each and every point....

Then the consciousness withdraws from the body, it does not leave all at once; all of the body does not die at the same time. The consciousness shrinks inside and, bit by bit, leaves each part of the body. Through various stages it withdraws, and all stages of this contraction can be recounted to the dying man as a means of keeping him conscious.

There can be many ways of keeping a dying person awake. For example, special kinds of aromas can help a person stay conscious, just as certain kinds of aromas, odors, can make a person unconscious. Incense and benzoin were discovered mainly because they help to keep one awake. A kind of music can be created around a person to make him stay conscious. And there can be music which can make a person fall asleep. You come across music which can put you to sleep -- there can be music which can keep you awake as well! Certain words, certain mantras can be uttered which can help the person stay awake and not go to sleep. Certain parts of a dying man's body can be tapped in order to stop him from falling asleep and keep his consciousness alive. He can be made to sit in a certain posture to prevent him from falling asleep, to let him stay conscious.

A Zen master was dying. He gathered other monks around him and said, "I want to ask you something. My time has come, but I feel there is no use dying the way everyone dies. Many have died like that before. It's no fun. My question is: have you ever seen anyone die walking?"

The monks replied, "We haven't seen anyone do it, but we have heard of a certain mystic who died walking."

The master said, "All right, forget it! Let me ask you this: have you seen any mystic dying while standing on his head?"

The people around him said, "We never conceived or dreamed of such a thing, let alone saw someone dying like that."

"All right then," said the master, "that's the way it will be." He stood on his head and died.

The crowd around the master became very scared. The sight of an unknown corpse is frightening enough, but to bring down a corpse standing on its head was even more scary. The master was a dangerous man. The way he had positioned himself.... Dead, no one dared bring him down and lay him on a bier. Then someone suggested calling his elder sister, a nun living in a monastery nearby. She was known to have set him right whenever he was mischievous as a young boy.

The sister was approached and made aware of the whole situation. She became very annoyed. She said, "He has always been mischievous like that. He hasn't given up his habits even in his old age. So even while dying he couldn't refrain from playing a trick!" The ninety-year-old woman grabbed her staff and came. Striking her staff hard on the ground, she exclaimed, "Now stop this naughtiness! If you have to die, die properly."

The master quickly came down and laughed. "I was just having fun," he said. "I was curious to see what these people were going to do. Now I shall lie down and die in the conventional way." So he promptly lay down and died.

His sister walked away. "Now, that's more like it," she said. "Dispose of him." She didn't look back. "There is a way of doing things," she said. "Whatever you do, do it properly."

So our illusion of death is a social illusion. The illusion can be removed. There is a technique to remove it; there is a systematic way to get rid of it. If no one else removes it, then anyone who has practiced even a little meditation can come out of it himself at the time of death. If you have even had a little experience of meditation: if you have even had a glimpse of the truth that you are separate from your body; if the feeling of disidentification with the body should even for a moment ever go deep within you, you won't be unconscious at the time of death. In fact, by then your state of unconsciousness would already be broken. You would be able to die knowingly.

To be able to die knowingly is a contradiction in terms. No one can ever die knowingly, consciously, because he remains aware all the time that he is not dying, that something is dying in him but he is not. He keeps watching this separation and ultimately finds that his body is lying away from him, at a distance. Then death turns out to be merely a separation; it amounts to the breaking of a connection. It is as if I were to step out of this house, and the members of this household, unaware of the world outside these walls, were to come to the door and bid me a tearful goodbye, feeling that the man they had come to say goodbye to had died.

The separation of the body and the consciousness is death. Because there is this separation, it is meaningless to call it death -- it is merely a loosening, a breaking of a connection. It is nothing more than changing clothes. So, one who dies with awareness never really dies, hence the question of death never arises for him. He won't even call death an illusion. He won't even say who dies and who does not die. He will simply state that what we called life up to yesterday was merely an association. That association has broken. Now a new life has begun which, in the former sense, is not an association. Perhaps it is a new connection, a new journey.

Do you now follow what I mean when I say death proves to be an illusion for one who dies with awareness? Illusion means death never was. It was just a social belief created by those who did not know how to die, who were not dead, who had no knowledge of death. And this belief has prevailed since eternity, and will continue to exist in the future, because those who are not dead will forever pass judgment on those who are. The dead never return with news.

The truth is that a meditative person, one who may have made a little headway in meditation, does not realize for a long time that he is dead. He sees people around him and wonders why they are weeping. The arrangements for taking his body for cremation, or the arrangements to bury him, are significant only to remind him he is no longer alive, that he is no longer the same person.

This is the reason why in this country we burn all bodies except those of sannyasins. The sole reason for this was that, if the dead body were to be saved, the spirit might hover around it for several months under the false idea that the body was not dead, and try to find ways to reenter it. Saving the body meant creating a little impediment for its new journey. The spirit would have to hang around unnecessarily; hence the custom of immediate cremation -- so, at the cremation ground, the spirit could see that the affair is all over, that what it had taken to be its body no longer exists. The spirit realizes it no longer has any link with the body, that the bridge is broken. The matter is over, the whole thing is finished.

So keep in mind that the system of burning the body is not just a way of vacating the house. There are other important reasons behind it. Actually the departing person finds it hard to believe he is dead. How can he? He sees himself the same as before, without the slightest difference. Only a sannyasin's body was never cremated because a sannyasin already knows he is not the body. That's why we could build a tomb over his body. This was possible because the sannyasin had already realized he and his body were separate. So there is no difficulty in preserving the body of a realized sannyasin. But the same is not true with regard to an ordinary man, for his spirit can keep wandering a long time. It can still try to figure out a way to reenter the body.

It is possible to die in a state of awareness only if you have lived with awareness. If you have learned how to live consciously, you will certainly be able to die consciously -- because dying is a phenomenon of life; it takes place in life. In other words, death is the final happening of what you understand life to be. It is not an event that occurs outside of life.

Ordinarily, we look upon death as something which happens outside of life, or as some kind of phenomenon opposite to life. No, in fact, it is the final occurrence in the series of events which take

place in life. It is like a tree that bears fruit. First the fruit is green, then it starts turning yellow. It turns more and more yellow until finally it becomes completely yellow and falls from the tree. That falling from the tree is not an event outside of the yellowing process of the fruit; rather, it is the eventual fulfillment of the yellowing itself.

The falling of the fruit from the tree is not an external event; rather it is the culmination of the yellowing, of the ripening it has already gone through. And what was going on when the fruit was green? It was getting ready to face the same final event. And the same process was going on when it had not even blossomed on the branch as yet, when it was still hidden inside the branch. Even in that state it was preparing for the final event as well. And what about when the tree had not been manifested yet, when it was still within the seed? The same preparation was going on then as well. And how about when this seed had not even been born and was still hidden in some other tree? The same process was going on.

So the event of death is but a part of the chain of events belonging to the same phenomenon. The final event is not the end, it is just a separation. One relationship, one order, is replaced by another relationship, another order.

Question 4

HOW DO YOU SEE DEATH IN RELATION TO NIRVANA?

Nirvana means, firstly, that one has realized totally there is no death at all. Secondly, it means one has also come to know that, in what we call life, nothing is attained. Nirvana means awareness of the reality that what we understand as death is no death at all, and that what we mean by life is not really life. Do you follow what I am saying? One thing: nirvana means that when a person knows death he will find there is no death. There is another phenomenon connected with this, and that is that one who sees life with full awareness will find that what everyone calls life is not life either -- just as death is a social illusion, that is a social illusion too. Nirvana means the total realization of both realities.

If you only know there is no such thing as death, then you will continue to take new births. Life, in a sense, will go on. In that case you will have known only half the truth. The desire to live again, to have another body, to take a new birth will remain. The day you come to know the other half of the truth, the day you come to know the truth in its entirety -- that life is not life, that death is not death -- that day you will have reached the point of no return. Then there will be no question of returning. Do you follow me?

It is like saying farewell to a person who has died. We see the body as his final resting place. As long as he was in the body the man believed it to be his final abode as well. So, from the outside, he will knock on the door to find entry. If the steps of this house are broken, if there is no remaining link, then he will knock on the door of another house, of another body -- because life can only be experienced by being in

the body. So he will eventually enter into one or another house, another body. This is how, as soon as the person dies, his spirit becomes restless and begins wandering in search of another body immediately -- because it has always identified life with having a physical body.

It may not have occurred to you, but your last thought as you fall asleep at night becomes the first thought when you wake up in the morning. Watch it a little. The last thought of the previous night will become your first thought next morning -- seven hours later. The thought will wait for you to wake up. It will wait overnight on the doorstep of your consciousness in order to begin work as soon as you get up in the morning. If you have had a fight with somebody the previous night, then the very first thought the next morning will be about that fight. If you slept with a prayer on your lips, then you will wake up in the morning with the same prayer in your thoughts. What occurred last night will be the starting point of the next morning.

The last thought, the last wish, the last desire of a dying man will become his first desire after death. He will immediately set out on the journey. If he felt at the moment of dying that his body was being destroyed -- that he is dying, that he is losing his body -- then his spirit will frantically run all over looking for a passage for an instant birth. So whatever is your last desire at the dying moment -- the very last desire, remember -- that will be the essence of your entire life. Actually, even the last thought before going to sleep is the abstract of your whole day's happenings, the sum total of the entire day, the digest of it. For example, a man runs a shop all day long, and at night he makes a summary of his day's accounts and then goes to sleep. Similarly, the last thought before falling asleep is the summary of your whole day's account.

If a person were to note his last thought before going to sleep at night -- the very last thought -- he would be able to write a wonderful autobiography, incomparable. That would be the short, abstract story of your life. It would contain everything that is essential, and all that is nonessential would drop away. If you were to note the very first thought each morning, looking at fifteen thoughts collected over fifteen days would enable you to know everything about your life -- what you were, what you are, what you want to be.

The last thought in your dying moments is the quintessence of your entire life of seventy, eighty years. The same will become your potential for the next life. That will be your asset to carry into the next birth. You may call it karma, you may call it desire or whatsoever else you will; you may call it samskara, conditioning, it won't make any difference. Rather, you should call it a built-in program of your life, applicable in the future.

It is amazing, but when you sow a particular little seed, why does it only give rise to the banyan tree? The seed must have had a built-in program, otherwise this would not be possible. It must have contained a blueprint. How else could it grow leaves and branches, and why would they all be of a banyan tree? The seed must have been programmed. In it, that little seed must have had the entire plan. If one could draw a horoscope of that seed, one could forecast how many leaves it would grow, how much fruit it would bear, how many seeds it would contain, how tall and wide it would be, how long its branches would be, how many bullock carts could find rest and shelter under it. All these things

can be looked into in detail, because all of it is hidden in that tiny seed. It's like the blueprint of a building; it contains all that it will be someday.

At the time of death we gather the essence of our entire life. We save whatsoever we consider significant, and whatsoever we find useless we drop. A man who has earned one hundred thousand rupees and donated a thousand rupees to the building of a temple, will not remember the temple in his dying moments -- but the safe containing ninety-nine thousand rupees, that he will undoubtedly remember.

In one's dying moments the significant will be saved, the nonsignificant will be thrown away. The essential and the nonessential will be sorted. At the time of departure all that is worthless will drop, and that which is meaningful will be packed up, carried over by you. That will become the basis of your journey; it will instantly become your built-in program. Now you will set out on a new journey, and your future birth will take place according to this future program. It will be a new voyage, a new body. It will be a whole new set-up. And this happens as scientifically as anything else.

So nirvana means that a person has come to know that death is not really death, nor is life, life. Once he has come to the realization of both, there is no longer any built-in program left. He lets go of the program. He lets go of both the essential and the unessential. Now he is ready to go all by himself, like the lonely flight of a bird. He goes all alone, leaving everything behind. He leaves behind the treasure as well as the temple. He clears himself of the debts he owes to others as well as the debts others owe to him. He foregoes good deeds as well as bad deeds. In fact, he foregoes everything.

Kabir says, "I leave behind my cloak intact." He says he wore it with such care that no accounts were left pending. He took it off so totally that he did not have to review, to reevaluate his understanding of the real and the unreal, of the essential and the unessential.

Kabir says, "I wore my cloak with great care and then put it aside as I found it, without impairing it in any way." In such a situation there cannot be any built-in program for the future, because the person leaves everything in its virgin state. He will not choose anything; he will not save anything, he will transcend all. Without harboring a single desire for anything, he will let go of whatsoever he has earned in life. That's why Kabir says, "O swan, take off on the flight alone." Now the swan, his soul, is leaving all alone, accompanied by no one -- neither friend nor foe, neither good deeds nor bad deeds, neither scriptures nor doctrines -- nothing.

So nirvana means one who has known that neither was life indeed life, nor was death really death. And when we know all that is not, we begin to see that which is.

And Now, And Here, Vol 2

Chapter #11

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Question 1

AT THE DWARKA MEDITATION CAMP YOU MENTIONED THAT ALL SADHANAS, ALL SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES ARE FALSE, BECAUSE WE HAVE NEVER BEEN SEPARATE FROM GOD. DOES THAT MEAN THE STATE OF UNCONSCIOUSNESS IS FALSE? IS THE GROWTH OF BODY AND MIND FALSE? IS THE CESSATION OF CONDITIONING FALSE? IS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF MOVING FROM THE GROSS TO THE SUBTLE FALSE? IS ALL THE PREPARATION FOR THE JOURNEY FROM THE FIRST BODY TO THE SEVENTH BODY FALSE? IS THE LONG PROCESS OF THE DISCIPLINE OF KUNDALINI ALL A SHAM? KINDLY EXPLAIN.

First of all, when I refer to something as false, as untruth, it does not mean it is nonexistent. Even a falsehood has its own existence. One could not call it a falsehood if that were not true. A falsehood has its own existence and so does a dream. When we say a dream is false, it does not mean a dream has no existence. It only means that the existence of a dream is psychological, not real. It is a whim of the mind, not a fact.

When we say the world is maya, illusion, it does not mean the world is nonexistent, because if the world does not exist then whom are you addressing? Who is talking? Why? When one calls this world an illusion, he at least assumes that the speaker exists and so does the listener. He also assumes that somebody needs to explain, and someone needs to understand. At least this much truth is established. So when we call this world an illusion, it does not mean the world does not exist. It means the world appears to have an existence. Calling this world maya simply means the world is not what it looks like; rather, it is merely an appearance. It does not look the way it actually is, it appears like what it really is not.

For example, a man is walking down the street when it is almost dark. He sees a piece of rope lying there and, mistaking it for a snake, runs for his life. Someone tells him it wasn't a snake, that what he saw was all false, that he ran for no reason. Now what does this mean? To say the snake was false does not mean

the man did not see the snake. He would not have escaped had he not seen it -- he did see the snake. As far as the question of his seeing the snake is concerned, the snake was there.

Since he saw.... And, had the rope not been there, he could not have seen the snake in an empty space. So the rope undoubtedly gave credence to his illusion. What he saw inwardly was different from what existed outside. A rope was lying there and he thought it was a snake. He did not see the rope as a rope -- which it was; the rope appeared to him like a snake, which it was not. So he did not see that which was, he saw that which was not. Actually, that which did not exist was superimposed on that which did.

So when you apply words such as falsehood, untruth, illusion, appearance, do keep one thing in mind: it does not mean something is nonexistent. Take, for instance, this man who fled, believing he had seen a snake. If you try and convince him there is no snake on the street he will refuse to believe you; he will insist he has seen the snake. You may persuade him to go back and look once again, but he won't agree unless you lend him a stick for his safety. You know very well there is no snake and carrying a stick is meaningless, but the man is sure of the snake and finds the stick useful. So when you offer him a stick for his safety someone may ask, "If the snake is not really there, then why do you give him the stick? That shows you believe the snake is there as well." Nevertheless, you reiterate, "There is no snake, the snake is false. However, the man has seen it and is scared to go there again. For him the snake is real." So you give him the stick and tell him, "If there is a snake, kill it." If there is none, then there is no question.

What man sees in life is not the truth of life. Only when one is fully aware can one see the truth of life. Truth is adulterated with falsehood in the same proportion to which one is unconscious. Things appear distorted, perverted, to the same degree one is asleep. For one thing, what appears to us is not the reality. So when one points out to a person who is asleep that everything is false, that it is illusion, he refuses to believe you. He says, "How can I believe everything is illusion? My son is sick -- how can that be an illusion? I am hungry -- how can I take it as an illusion? I need a house. How can I believe all these things are illusion? I have a body. When someone hits me with a stone I hurt, my body bleeds and I feel pain."

Then what shall be done about it? Some device will have to be found to awaken this man. And all these devices will be similar in nature to the stick. The day he will wake up he will do the same thing with these devices that the other man did with the stick you gave him. He went to where he had spotted the snake, found a rope lying there, laughed at himself and threw away the stick. He said, "The snake was indeed false. Now it is useless even to carry the stick." He may come back and be amazed at you for having had him carry the stick all that way unnecessarily -- the snake was not there.

What I call meditation, or kundalini, or the technique of spiritual discipline are essentially means of searching for that which does not exist. The day you find, for certain, that what you saw did not even exist, is the day all techniques become meaningless, all means become useless. That day you will realize the illness was false and so was the cure for it. Actually, there cannot be a cure for a pseudo illness -- or can there be? If the illness is false the cure can never be right. A pseudo illness requires a pseudo treatment; that is the only way it can be cured. Two falsehoods negate each other. That's why, when I

say all techniques of spiritual discipline are false I mean it in the sense that what we are seeking was never lost in the first place.

The rope, in our example, was always a rope; not for a second did it ever turn into a snake. The rope was lying there all along. What did happen, however, was that the man lost sight of the rope. Not even for a moment did the rope change into a snake, but for the man it became a snake -- a snake which did not exist even for a second.

Now this obviously creates a stalemate, a rather complicated situation. It is indeed a rope but it looks like a snake. The snake has to be killed and the rope has to be found -- without killing the snake the rope cannot be found. Without finding the rope the snake will not be killed. So something has to be done.

And yet, in a case like this what do you think will result from doing anything about it? At the most we will come to see that that which never was, was not there; and that which is, will be visible right before us. And the day this realization dawns on us, will we say we attained something? Will we be able to say we lost the snake and found the rope? Not in the least -- because there was no possibility of losing the snake; the rope was there all the time. There was no question of finding it, it was there all along. The rope was always present, right there.

When Buddha attained enlightenment people came to him and asked, "What did you attain?"

Buddha said, "The question is meaningless, I attained nothing."

"Does that mean your labor, all these years, was all in vain?" they asked. "Your years of penance, years of seeking, did they not yield any results?"

"If you ask me in terms of attainment -- my efforts have certainly been in vain, because I gained nothing. And yet I say to you: follow the same path I did, do what I did."

They said, "Are you out of your mind? Why should we do something which was so fruitless?"

Buddha replied, "I didn't achieve anything, of course, but I lost for certain, I lost something that was not really there. I lost something which was not there at all, something I had believed to be there. What I found was something I always had, which was already found, something which did not have to be found. Being surrounded by lies, what I had assumed to be nonexistent -- that's what I found."

Now what does this mean? How to convey that that which was already present was found again, that that which was already attained was found, that that which was never attained was lost?

So when I say all methods of spiritual discipline are false, it does not mean that you don't have to do them. I am merely saying that you are so deeply steeped in falsehoods that there is no other alternative but to use equally false methods in order to neutralize them. You have moved so much on the side of falsehood that even while coming back, this much ground -- the distance you have traveled going into lies -- will have to be covered.

For example, I walk ten steps into this room. If I wish to get out of this room I will have to walk back at least ten steps -- in this very room. Now if someone were to persuade me to walk ten steps more in order to get out of it, I would find it very confusing, for in the first place I got inside the room because I walked ten steps. Now if I were to take ten steps more, I would have walked twenty steps inside the room. Actually, what someone needs to show me is the way to get out of the room without proceeding further inside the room. Regardless, I will surely have to walk ten steps; although now my attitude will be different, my course will not be the same, I will not be facing the same direction -- my back will be towards what I was facing before, and vice versa.

We are living in lies. In following a spiritual discipline, only the direction you face will change. We will have to live in lies, that is unavoidable. Your back will be towards what you were facing before, and your face will be where your back was. The fact remains, we will have to retrace the same route to the same extent we have walked ourselves forward into lies. The day we return on the same path, the whole thing will look very amusing.

It is like giving an antidote to someone who has taken a wrong medicine. The antidote was not needed; it was only used because the man took the wrong medicine. Since the poison, the wrong medicine, has already entered his body, it is necessary to give the man another poison to counteract the former one. Remember, however, the antidote is a poison too. Only a poison can act against another poison. The second potion is a poison too, except that it is meant to work in the opposite direction. You would be horrified if a physician were to tell you your body is poisoned and that he is giving you more poison. You might cry out, "As it is, I am dying of poison. Now you are adding more to it!" The doctor explains, "This is an antidote. It is indeed a poison, but antithetical to the former one."

So when I say this world is a lie, then a sadhana, a spiritual discipline, cannot be true. How can a true sadhana be applied to counter a false world? You cannot use a real sword in order to kill an imaginary ghost -- you will hurt yourself if you do. Make sure you have a false sword to kill an imaginary ghost. You will obviously create a problem for yourself if you go to kill a nonexistent ghost with a real gun. The real gun can cause you harm. So if you need to drive out a ghost it would be good to wear a talisman; it is neither a sword nor a gun. It is a false cure, it is an antidote too. It is perfect, an exact antithetical lie meant to counter another lie.

All spiritual disciplines are nothing but ways of getting out of the samsara, the mundane world. And since I call this mundane world an illusion -- illusion in the sense that it is not what we understand it to be....

So the question is: What can we do to remove this illusion? We need to retrace our steps to the same extent we have gone deeply into the illusion. Why do I feel like reminding you of this? -- because a seeker constantly faces a danger. And the danger is: he may use a talisman in order to keep the ghost away; however, in doing so, although he succeeds in saving himself from the ghost, he holds on to the charm tightly. He finds the talisman the savior of his life. Now he is as afraid of losing the charm as he was of the ghost. Naturally. How can he afford to lose something that saved his life? So he is freed from

the ghost but gets hooked to the talisman. That's why he needs to be reminded that just as the ghost was unreal so is the talisman. Now that the ghost is gone, he had better throw the charm away as well.

Again and again, I would like to remind every seeker that, whatever sadhana he may be following, basically it is an antidote for his getting himself into a falsehood. And an antidote for a lie will inevitably have to be a lie. Only a poison can counter another poison -- for it works in the opposite direction. It is essential to bring this point home to a seeker, otherwise he may succeed in dropping the samsara, but grab on to sannyas, to renunciation. He may drop the marketplace but seize upon the temple. He may give up money but latch onto meditation. It is dangerous to cling to anything, because whatsoever one hangs on to becomes a bondage -- regardless of whether it is money or meditation. The day meditation is not needed, the day it becomes meaningless, that is when the sadhana becomes real.

Obviously, one who has reached the roof should find the ladder useless. If he still insists the ladder is useful to him and clings to it, then understand he has not yet reached the roof, he must still be standing somewhere on the ladder. It is conceivable one may reach the top rung of the ladder and yet hold tight to it. Should this be the case, then remember the man is still as far away from the roof as he was when he was standing on the first rung of the ladder. He has not reached the roof yet. In both cases he is far away from the roof.

You may climb almost the entire ladder, but if you stop at the last rung, it doesn't mean you have reached the roof -- you are still on the ladder. And that makes the difference. Initially you were on the first rung, now you are on the hundredth rung, but you are on the ladder nevertheless. And one who is on the ladder is definitely not on the roof. If you want to be on the roof, you will have to do two things: you will have to climb the ladder, and after reaching the roof, get rid of it.

That's why I say, on the one hand, that meditation is useful. And at the same time I also say that meditation is nothing more than an antidote. Hence, I maintain, follow a spiritual discipline, and then drop it too. So when I say both things simultaneously it obviously creates a difficulty. It is natural you feel that on the one hand I say, do this, do that, and then I declare all sadhanas are false.

"If this is so then why should we follow them?" you naturally ask. Your logic says, "If one has to get off the ladder eventually, then why climb it in the first place?"

Remember, however, that one who doesn't climb the ladder stays off it, and one who has climbed it and stepped out on the roof is also off the ladder -- but both exist on totally different planes. One will be on the roof while the other will be on the ground below. Although neither is on the ladder, there is a fundamental difference between the two. One is off the ladder because he didn't climb it, while the other is off because he did climb the ladder and then got off.

Life is a great mystery wherein one needs to climb up certain things and climb down other things; wherein one needs to cling to certain things and drop certain other things. But the human mind says, "If you want to hold on to something then hold to it completely; if you want to drop it then drop it absolutely."

This kind of reasoning is dangerous. It cannot help bring about any dynamism in life. I am aware of both things, and I can see the problem. Some people are holding on to their riches while others are holding on to their religion. Some are clinging to the samsara, while some are holding tight to the idea of moksha -- but basically the holding remains.

Only he is liberated who hangs on to nothing. One who is free from all clinging, attachments, blocks, demands, he alone knows the truth. Only he can know the truth who makes no conditions. Even this much of a condition -- that you would rather be in the temple worshipping than attending to your store - - can prevent you from knowing the truth. In such a case you will end up knowing only the truth that is born out of a lie -- such as the temple itself. Even this much of a condition on your part -- that you would live only in a particular way, that you wish to live like a sannyasin -- if this too became a condition, you would never come to know the truth. This would amount to holding on to the ladder after having climbed to the top rung.

Often it may have even occurred to you that "How can the very ladder which helped me climb so high be thrown away all of a sudden?" So you want to hold fast to the ladder. We find this happening all around us. For example, a man begins to earn money so that he can live a comfortable life later on. It takes him years to make money, and in the process he misses his rest and recreation. How could he have succeeded in creating his wealth otherwise? He had assumed at that moment he would earn a great deal and live in comfort and ease later. His aim was to live in comfort which, without having money, was naturally impossible. So the man was busy making money. And when you have to make money you can't afford to relax. The only way to make money is to give up rest and relaxation for years at a time.

So let's assume this man gives up his holidays and vacations for the next twenty to twenty-five years and earns a lot of money. No doubt he creates wealth, but he loses the habit of relaxing. Not relaxing at all becomes a habit to him, and that creates the problem. A practice of twenty-five years is behind him. Now if you ask him to stay home and relax, he can't do it. He arrives at his office an hour earlier than his secretary; his staff quits at five o'clock, he leaves at seven. Apparently the man has forgotten that the ladder he climbed was for getting off one day. The objective was to get off at some level, and relax. The idea was to earn enough so that someday he could quietly slip off. His sole aim was to make money so he could retire.

Now he finds himself in a very difficult situation. In the pursuit of earning money he has lost his ability to relax, he got hooked to the habit of not relaxing. He thinks, how can he relax? So he goes on piling up money. He keeps on climbing the ladder, refuses to get off the ladder. His roof never comes closer. He goes on climbing -- raising one ladder on top of another. No matter how much you persuade him, "It's enough, now it's time to get off," he persists by saying, "How can that be possible? I will have to build the ladder before I sit down and relax." So he goes on building his ladder and keeps climbing. It would not have mattered much had this been true only in regard to money. The same thing happens with regard to religion as well. Our mind functions exactly the same way -- regardless.

A man enters the world of religion, and begins to renounce things. He gives things up so he can arrive at a point where his mind will be free of all attachments. His assumption is that as long as there is attachment, there will be bondage. So he says, "Leave everything, renounce everything that creates bondage!" He starts disowning his home, his business, his family, his wealth, his clothes -- he goes on dropping things.

In twenty to twenty-five years his habit becomes so solid that now he can't give up the habit of renouncing. The habit hangs around his neck like a rock. He continues to find ways and means -- what to drop next? -- and his ladder goes on rising. He begins to try to figure out whether to drop food, water, salt, butter, sugar, whatever. He goes on playing with ideas as to what he should renounce next -- whether he should give up sleep, or stop bathing. He is continuously looking for ways to renounce things. Ultimately he even arrives at a point where he talks of giving up his life, begins to think in terms of committing suicide. He gets ready to do santhara, the religious practice of embracing death voluntarily.

One who renounces and one who clings are of the same kind. One is holding on to the ladder meant for renouncing things, while the other has seized upon the ladder meant for latching on to things. But none of them is willing to get off the ladder. And in my view, truth lies where ladders cease to exist and you land on plain ground, where there is no longer the need to climb up or down. Truth lies where you drop your attachment, where you drop your conditions, where you stop seeing things through your conditioned mind, where you begin to perceive things with a mind free of all conditioning -- that's where the truth lies.

Perhaps that's precisely what Jesus means.... When Jesus was asked who would inherit the truth, he replied, "Those who are like children." Now what can this mean, "like children"? What it means is: the one who looks at things without any preconditioning. You will be amazed if you watch how children look at things. There is a difference between how we see things and how children do. When we see, we are looking at something, we are looking for something, while a child just looks. He doesn't look for something in particular; his eyes simply move. Whatsoever is, whatsoever is visible, he just looks at it. He is not attached to seeing a particular thing. He is not fixed on the idea that what he sees should only appear in a particular way. He sees whatsoever there is. To put it rightly, his seeing is purposeless.

A child does not look with a purpose. That's why in the eyes of an adult you don't see the innocence you see in the eyes of a child. An adult sees things with a reason. If you have money in your pocket, he looks at you in a particular way; if your pocket is empty, he looks at you differently. If you happen to be beautiful, the man has a look of one kind; if you are not beautiful, he has a different look in his eyes. He looks at you in a special way if he is interested in you; otherwise he looks differently, or doesn't look at you at all. His seeing is purposive. For an adult even the simple act of looking is not without purpose.

When a purpose enters your view, a rope begins to look like a snake; the rope ceases to exist. Actually, just reflect, if you will, as to why a rope appears to someone like a snake. It is simply his projection -- the man is scared. There is fear in his look. That means, whenever he looks at things, he looks out of fear. He is walking down the street in the dark, and there is fear in his eyes. He spots something lying on the

road, it looks like something is moving. He immediately believes it to be a snake, because he is looking out of fear. He is guided by a purpose, he is looking through his unconscious mind to see if there is any snake on the street -- and that makes him see a snake instead of a rope.

A child won't see a snake superimposed on a rope. Often, what is possible is that if a snake stays still, a child may take it to be a rope; he may not see it as a snake and may actually pick it up. If there is any purpose, any expectation, any fear in what we see.... Understand well, if you are seeing through the mind, you will distort the object of your perception. So the question is, can we see without the use of mind? Seeing without the mind is the ultimate state. All our motives, our fears, our desires, our passions are stored in the mind.

Chekhov has written a short story. Two policemen were patrolling a street. They saw a crowd gathered near a tea stall. One man was holding a dog by his leg. He was saying he would kill the dog because it had bitten him. Everyone in the crowd was having fun and encouraging the man to kill the dog who was a menace and had bitten many people before. The policemen also stood in the crowd. Dogs harass policemen too, they pay special attention to them!

So the policemen were pleased to see someone taking care of the dog. "You are doing the right thing. Kill this dog; he is a great trouble to us at night," one policeman said. Right then the other policeman took his partner aside and said, "Watch it, I think it looks like that's our boss's dog." At once the first policeman, who had been urging that the dog be killed, went up to the man holding the dog, grabbed his collar and said, "You rogue! What do you mean by drawing a crowd in the middle of the street and holding up traffic? What do you mean by creating this nuisance? Come with us to the police station!" He immediately picked up the dog in his arms and began petting him. As the policeman started showing affection to the dog, and as the man holding the dog was apprehended, the entire crowd grew very puzzled.

The crowd could not figure out what was going on -- the policeman was ready to kill the dog just a while ago. The next moment, the second policeman looked at the dog a little more closely and said, "No, this doesn't look like our boss's dog!" Right away the first policeman got rid of the dog and yelled at the man, "Take hold of this dog and kill him. He is extremely dangerous." However, by the time the man got hold of the dog the second policeman once again expressed his doubt by saying, "I can't be sure, but he does look like our boss's dog."

The story continues like this. The attitude towards the dog changes many times because many times a change in purpose occurs. The dog is the same, the man is the same, the policemen are the same -- everything is the same. The characters remain unchanged, but the story takes turns a few times because each time there is a change in motive. Sometimes he is perceived as the boss's dog, and sometimes not. The policemen changed their attitude at once when the dog was seen not to belong to their boss. And they began petting it with a totally different attitude once it was perceived that the dog was owned by the boss.

This is the way we all live. As long as the mind exists, we shall continue to live like this. So what I am saying is that sadhana....

What is sadhana, spiritual discipline really? Sadhana means becoming free from this mind. But once you have become free, of what use will the sadhana be? You will need to bury it along with your mind. You will have to let go of the spiritual discipline as well, along with the mind. You will have to tell your mind, "Take this sadhana with you. I was following it because of you. Now that you are leaving, kindly take this sadhana with you too!"

When a person is free from both the mind and the sadhana, free from the disease as well as the cure.... Remember, if one is free from the illness alone but still continues the cure then one is not really free. Very often the illness does not prove to be as dangerous as getting hooked on the cure. It feels rather easy getting rid of illness because the illness is painful. One feels good about going through the cure, hence one never wants to drop it. But does that make the cure something worth hanging on to?

A cure is desirable indeed for a man who is ill, but what meaning can it have for a person who is healthy? For a healthy person, a cure is totally worthless. Since you are so determined to embrace illness, you are forced to accept the cure too. But if you stop insisting on falling sick, the cure will become totally meaningless.

The illness and the cure belong to the same plane, there is no difference between the two. There cannot be, otherwise they would cease to function. The cure exists on the same plane as the illness: the germs present in the drugs are opposite to the germs that cause illness. It is true that the disease and the cure stand with their backs to each other; however, the plane on which they exist is the same.

I am not only talking against the disease, I am talking against the cure as well, because my experience is that, for the last thousands of years, a great deal has been said against the disease. Consequently, although people got rid of the disease, they latched on to the cure.

Those who got attached to the cure turned out to be even more dangerous than the ones who were ill. Hence, both things need to be considered. The illness and the cure both need to be dropped. Mind and meditation both have to be given up. Samsara and religion are both to be renounced. One needs to arrive at a point where nothing is left -- either to hold on to or to drop. Then, only that which is, remains.

So when I talk about all these techniques -- whether it is about kundalini, chakras, the seven bodies -- they are all part of a dream. The fact is, you are already dreaming, and you won't be able to come out of it until you have rightly understood what the dream is all about.

It is necessary we have a right understanding of the dream in order to come out of it. A dream, a lie, has its own existence too. It has its own place in this world, and there are means to get rid of it. But ultimately, both are worth giving up. Hence I say to you, both are false, the samsara as well as the sadhana. If I were to say one of them is true, how will you drop it? Then you will hold fast to it. "How can truth be dropped? Truth has to be embraced," you might say.

So you may not hold on to anything, so you may not have any clinging, so you may not become subject to any complexes, so you may not become attached, I say to you: neither the samsara is true nor is the

sadhana. The falsity of sadhana is for the purpose of negating the untruth of samsara. When both falsehoods attain parity and neutralize each other, then what remains is the truth. That truth is neither of this world, the samsara, nor of the sadhana. That truth is outside of both, or before both, or beyond both, or transcending both. It exists when both are not.

That's why I am talking about a third type of man who is neither worldly nor a renunciate. When somebody asks me, "Are you a sannyasin?" I find myself in great difficulty, because if I say I am a sannyasin, I see myself caught in the same duality which exists between a worldly man and a monk. Similarly, when someone asks, "Are you a worldly man?" then too I face the same difficulty, because if I say I am a worldly man, I once again find myself facing the duality that exists between a worldly man and a renunciate.

So either I should say I am both simultaneously -- which is meaningless... because if, at the same time, I am worldly and a renunciate both then the whole meaning is lost. The meaning existed because of the duality: the meaning was in the dichotomy. Leaving the world meant becoming a sannyasin; not accepting the life of a renunciate meant being a worldly man. So if I say I am both, the words lose their meaning. The same difficulty arises if I say I am not both, because we have no idea there is something beyond the two, that there can be a third. People say, "Either you belong here, or there. Either affirm that you are alive, or admit that you are dead. How can you say both are not true? That won't be acceptable."

The only way we live is by dividing things into two -- either this or that. We either see darkness or light -- there is no room in our lives for dusk, which is neither. Grey has no place in our lives. We divide things either into black or white, while the reality consists mostly of grey. When grey becomes a little dense it turns into darkness; when it becomes sparse it turns into white -- but there is no room for grey. Either you have a friend or an enemy -- there is no third place in between. As a matter of fact, the third place is the really true place -- but it has no room in our language, our way of thinking, our way of life.

Suppose you were to ask me, "Are you my friend, or an enemy?" If I answer, "I am both," you will have difficulty in following me. How could I be both? If I say I am neither, even then it turns out to be meaningless, because my answer carries no sense. And the truth of the matter is that a healthy man will either be both or neither.

These are just two ways of expressing the same thing. In such a case the man will neither be a foe nor a friend. And in my view, it is only then that he will be a human being in the true sense of the word. He will neither have enmity with anyone, nor friendship; he will neither follow any act of renunciation, nor will he have any attachment to samsara.

I am looking for this third type of man. What I am talking to you about is only for the purpose of breaking your dream. And if the dream is already broken, then what I am saying has no meaning.

Let me tell you a story. Once a Zen master got up from his sleep. He was a great believer in analyzing dreams. Dreams are, of course, very useful; they give much information about man. And since man is a liar, only a lie such as the dream can tell us about his lies. When you see a man in the marketplace, in

the middle of the day, he is not as authentic as he is in his dream -- in a dream which is totally a lie. If you come across a man telling his wife, with folded hands, that she is the most beautiful woman in the world -- just look into his dreams. His wife hardly ever comes into his dreams -- other women you will find most certainly. His dream will tell you more exactly about him. A dream, which is essentially a lie.

Since man himself is a lie, a lie will have to be used to find out the truth about him. Had the man been authentic, his life itself would have revealed who he is. Then there would be no need to go into his dreams; his face would show it. An authentic man would tell his wife, "You don't look too beautiful to me, the woman next door looks very beautiful." That such a man does not exist among us is beside the point, but if there were to be such a person, dreams would stop coming to him. A husband who can tell his wife, "I feel no love for you today. I am attracted to the woman walking down the street" -- a man who can be so simple and direct -- will stop dreaming. The other woman no longer need come in his dream, he has taken care of the business during the day. The matter is over, the dream is no more.

A dream is a lingering phenomenon. Whatsoever did not happen during the day, what you couldn't say, couldn't do, remains dormant within and then attempts to revive itself at night. Since the man lived all day long in lies, the very lies will keep appearing as realities at night in his dreams. That's why the entire field of today's psychology -- whether it be of Freud, Jung or Adler -- is the psychology of analyzing dreams.

It is strange we have to resort to analyzing dreams in order to understand man. Dream analysis has become the means to know a man. Just think: what does this mean? If you visit a psychoanalyst, he doesn't show much concern about you, he becomes interested in your dreams -- because, as you are, you are a lie. It is useless to ask anything about you, hence the need to consult your dreams. Your reflection comes through clearly, your picture emerges sharply in the dreams -- which are false. So the psychoanalyst wants to peek into your dreams. The whole discipline of psychology is based on the analysis of dreams.

The Zen master was very keenly interested in dreams too. He used to ask his disciples, the seekers, about their dreams, because it was possible a seeker might come and say he wished to find God, but instead might dream of finding a diamond mine. In reality he might have nothing to do with God. It is also possible he might be seeking God so that some day he might ask him the whereabouts of the diamond mine. This is how his dream tells what his real search is all about.

The master would ask his disciples to keep a diary of their dreams. If people were to write honestly in their biographies only about what happened when they were asleep and leave out the time they were awake, the world would become a much better place to live in, and we would come to know much truer facts about men.

The daytime world is full of lies. The phony man plans it very well. At least in the dream a kind of truth exists, because the dream is unplanned: it happens on its own, it has its own reality. If we were to uncover the dreams of all the holy men, we would find a great many of these holy men of no worth. Most of them would appear to be criminals -- of course, criminals of the kind which do not commit crimes in the marketplace, but in their minds.

One morning the master had just got up when a disciple of his happened to pass by. The master called him and said, "Last night I had a dream. Interpret it for me, will you?"

The disciple said, "Please wait, let me go and bring the interpretation!"

The master asked, "You'll go and bring the interpretation?" But he waited.

The disciple went inside, brought a jug of water, and said, "Here, just wash your face. Now that the dream is broken, what's the sense in interpreting it? Please wash your face so that whatsoever little illusion, whatsoever little trace of your dream that may still be left can be cleaned away."

The master said, "Sit beside me. I like your interpretation."

Then another disciple passed by and the master called him and said, "Last night I had a dream. This fellow has given a little interpretation. Here is a jug filled with water. Would you give any further interpretation?"

The disciple said, "If you will wait for just one minute I will be back soon." He went running and brought a cup of tea. Addressing the master he said, "Please have this cup of tea and the whole matter will be over. Now that you are up from your sleep and have washed your face, why do you want to get me into the trap?"

The master asked him to sit beside him and said, "I liked what you said. But had you tried to give an interpretation to my dream, I would have thrown you out of the ashram. You saved yourself, you saved yourself by a hair's breadth. When the dream is broken anyway, then what's the point in interpreting it? The interpretation is valid only as long as the dream is happening."

So all my explanations are explanations of dreams, and the explanations of a dream can never be true. Do you follow what I am saying? How can an explanation of a dream have any real meaning whatsoever when the dream itself is never true? An explanation of a dream, however, can be helpful in putting an end to the dream -- and should that ever happen, you will wake up. And the day you wake up, you won't say the dream was true; you won't say the explanation was right, you will say it was just a play which ended. And you will say there were two sides to the game: one of indulging in the dream, the other of destroying it. Indulgence in the dream is samsara; explanations that break the dream make up sannyas -- although, basically, both are happenings of the dream state.

Samsara signifies indulgence in the dream, while sannyas is an effort to destroy the dream -- but both happenings are of the dream. When the dream is over, there will be neither samsara nor sannyas. Then whatsoever will be, will be the truth.

Question 2

IS SADHANA A NATURAL GROWTH, OR IS IT A JUMP OUTSIDE THE EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS OF NATURE? IF SADHANA IS NOT A JUMP AND TRANSCENDENCE OF THE NATURAL EVOLUTION, THEN IS IT

POSSIBLE THAT THE ENTIRE HUMAN RACE CAN REACH SPIRITUAL HEIGHTS ALL BY ITSELF? IF IT IS TRUE THAT THE COURSE OF EVOLUTION CONTINUES TO MOVE AHEAD, WHY WERE THE GREATEST SPIRITUAL CULTURES OF THE PAST LEFT BEHIND IN THE WHOLE EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS?

There are many things that need to be taken into account.

The first thing. As soon as we see man separate from the universe, questions such as these begin to come up. For example, if we heat water to a hundred degrees, on the hundredth degree the water takes a jump and turns into vapor. The heating of water, as well as the water turning into vapor by taking a jump, are natural phenomena. This is not an unnatural event.

Had there not been a natural law for the water to take a leap and turn into vapor, by itself the water hadn't the means to become vapor. If nature had not been equipped to make the water heat up to a hundred degrees, the water itself did not have the capacity to heat up to a hundred degrees. However, if water has consciousness it can either save itself from heating or it can give itself up to the fire -- and in either case it would be a natural phenomenon. What I mean to say is, nothing unnatural can ever happen in this universe. In fact, that which can never happen is the unnatural.

Only what is natural takes place in this universe. There is no way for anything unnatural to happen; whatsoever happens is natural. If man is evolving spiritually, it is because of his natural potential. If he is jumping out, then that too is his natural potential. His choice whether to jump or not to jump is a natural possibility too. This means there are multi-potentialities in nature. Actually, our mistake is that we use the word nature in the sense of a single potentiality.

Nature is a cumulation of infinite possibilities. Within these possibilities the heating of water to a hundred degrees is a natural happening, and the freezing of water at zero is also a natural happening. A natural phenomenon such as the freezing of water at zero does not negate the natural phenomenon of water turning into vapor at a hundred degrees. It is not that one event is natural while the other is not -- both are natural.

Darkness is natural and so is light. Falling down is natural and so is rising up. There are infinite possibilities in nature. We are always standing on the crossroads from where an infinite number of paths emerge. And the interesting thing is that whatsoever we choose, the capability to choose will itself be a gift from nature. Even if we were to choose a wrong path, nature will bring us to the very end of it.

Nature is very cooperative. If we choose the road to hell, it begins to clear the way and invites us to proceed. It will not stop you. Why would nature stop you from turning water into ice, if you wish to do so, and have you rather turn it into vapor? Nature will be happy to clear your way if you wish to go to hell, or heaven: whether you wish to live or die, nature will always be willing to cooperate. To live is natural, to die is natural, and your ability to choose either of the two is natural too. If you can grasp this multidimensionality of nature, you will have no difficulty in understanding what I am saying.

Suffering is natural, and so is happiness. To live like a blind man is natural, and to live with open eyes is natural too. To be awake is natural, and to stay asleep is natural as well. Nature contains endless possibilities. And the interesting thing is that we are not living outside of nature, we are part of nature. Our choosing is also due to the natural capability we have within us.

As the individual becomes more and more conscious, his ability to choose becomes more and more profound. The more unconscious an individual is, the less profound is his ability to choose. For example, there is no way that water lying in the sun cannot turn into vapor -- it would be difficult for it not to. The water can't decide whether to become vapor or not. If it stays in the sun, then it is sure to become vapor, and lying in the cold, it is sure to become ice. This, the water will have to live through, although it will have no knowledge that it is living through it, because its consciousness is low, or not at all, or dormant.

Trees in Africa rise hundreds of feet in search of the sun. They grow in height. Trees in India won't grow to such heights, because in India there aren't forests that thick. In a dense forest the tree has to grow higher and higher in order to survive. It needs to overcome other trees in height so it can receive the sunlight. The tree would die if it didn't find the needed height. It is a matter of life and death for the tree. The tree has to exercise its choice a little.

In a dense forest the trees will widen less; instead, they will grow taller, become conical. In a thick forest it is dangerous for a tree to grow wide; that will cause it to die. The branches of the nearby trees will get entangled with each other and the trees won't be able to reach the sun. So if the tree has to reach the sun it can't grow its branches wide, it has to grow tall. This too is a tree's choice. If you were to plant the same tree in a country where there are no dense forests, its height would be shorter.

There are trees which actually move a few feet every year. This means there are trees which move their roots as we move our feet. They strengthen the roots that lie in the direction where they wish to move, and relax the roots of the area they wish to abandon. This is how they move forward a little. A swampy area makes this movement easier.

There are trees that are carnivorous. They lure birds, trap them, and once the birds have landed on them, they close their leaves. These trees have developed quite a system for luring birds. They have leaves the size of a plate. The platelike leaves contain a very fragrant juice, and the fragrance naturally attracts birds from far away. As soon as the bird arrives and sits on the leaf, the leaves from all around close in on the bird, press it, and the tree sucks its blood.

Now it is difficult to accept that the tree is not exercising a choice. It certainly is, and it is making some plans as well: it is on the lookout for something. Animals make even greater choices -- they run, they move swiftly. Nevertheless, as compared to the choices made by man, their choices are very ordinary.

Man faces much greater choices because his consciousness is much more evolved. He chooses not only through his body, he chooses through his mind as well. He not only chooses to travel on earth, he also chooses to travel vertically, in space. That too is within his power to choose.

Although this area has not been researched yet, I feel, however, that in the near future science may discover there are trees which have suicidal tendencies -- trees who may not be choosing to live, who may be wanting to stay short in the dense forest and eventually die. This is yet to be discovered.

Among human beings we can see clearly that there are people who are suicidal -- they don't choose to live; they keep looking for ways of dying. Wherever they see a thorn, they rush towards it like a madman; flowers don't appeal to them. Wherever they see defeat they are drawn towards it as if hypnotized, but when they see victory they look for scores of excuses. People find thousands of arguments against the possibility of growth, but where they are certain of decay people keep moving head on in that direction.

All choices are open to man. The more conscious man becomes, the more his choices will lead him towards happiness; the more unconscious he is, the closer he will move towards misery. So when I say to you, you will have to make a choice.... There are ways to become vapor, but you will have to reach to the point where vapor comes into being. There are ways to become ice, but you will have to come to the point where ice comes into being. There are ways to live, but you will have to explore the order of life. There are ways to meet death, but you will have to find the order of death. The choice is yours. Furthermore, you and nature are not two separate entities -- you are nature.

So what this means is, nature's multidimensionality is of two kinds. Mahavira has used a term which is worth considering. The term Mahavira has used is anant-anant -- infinite infinities. There is already a word anant, infinite; it means infinite in one direction. The word anant-anant means infinite in infinite directions. It is not that the infinity is only in a couple of directions -- it is in all directions; there are infinities in all infinities. So this universe is not just infinite. Rather, one should say the universe consists of infinite infinities.

What I am saying is, first, there are infinite directions, and nature provides the opportunity for all of them. There are infinite choices and nature makes all of them available too. There are an infinite number of people who are indeterminable parts of nature itself. And each one has a free choice whether to choose or not to choose. All of this, however, is not being controlled from above -- it is regulated from within.

This infinity, or one should say this infinite infinities, is not like someone pulling an ox forward with a rope tied around its neck. Nor is it like someone lashing and shoving the ox from behind. Rather, it's like spring water which has burst forth through its own inner power and is flowing. Neither is anyone pulling it forward, nor is anyone pushing it from behind; neither is anyone giving it a call, nor is anyone forcing it to move ahead. It has a tremendous power, tremendous energy. And what is the energy doing? It is bursting forth, it is flowing. That's its inner expansion.

So there are infinite dimensions, infinite choices, infinite parts making choices. But there is no controller-type God supervising from above. There is no God sitting above and giving directions; there is no engineer. Rather, the infinite energy within is the only source that causes everything to expand.

So there are three planes. One plane consists of the state of unconsciousness, where, because of unconsciousness, whatsoever happens just happens. The choice is almost none. The second plane, where choice exists, is the human plane, the plane of consciousness. Here, whatsoever happens, happens because of our choice. Here, we can't hold anyone else responsible for it. If one is a thief, it is his choice; if one is honest, that too is his choice. On this plane whatsoever one is, it is ultimately his choice. On the human plane whatsoever occurs, it is because of choice. Since this plane consists of the state which is half-conscious and half-unconscious, we occasionally choose things we don't want to choose.

This is very interesting. To say that we occasionally choose things we didn't wish to choose in the first place sounds very contrary, but in fact we do so every day. You don't want to get angry, but you do get angry. What does this mean? It means that the anger arises from your unconscious part, while the thought about not wanting to be angry comes from the conscious part of you.

Your conscious part says, "Don't be angry," while the unconscious part goes on being angry. You remain divided in two. One half of you is joined with the lower world -- the world of rocks and mountains where everything is in a state of unconsciousness. The other half is awakened. It is filled with consciousness and is connected to the world that lies ahead -- the world of wholeness, the world of the divine, where everything is fully conscious. Man is in between, and that's the reason he is in a state of tension.

It would be better if we say man is the tension itself -- half of him being pulled to one side, half to the other. In other words, he does not have any individuality. He is schizophrenic. He sleeps at night and becomes part of nature; he wakes up in the morning and begins his journey towards the divine. When he is in a rage he is blind with anger; when he works on a mathematical problem, he does so with great awareness.

No one has been heard to say, while doing arithmetic, "I wanted to add two and two to make four, but I added them up as five." But as far as anger is concerned, a man admits he didn't want to be angry and yet became angry. Obviously there does exist a gap between the state of anger and finding the solution to an arithmetic problem. Perhaps arithmetic is a part of our awakened state, while anger is a part of our unconscious state. This is the reason why man is in continuous anxiety, why he is always plagued by worries, tension, anguish. He is always in misery. He does what he does not want to do, and he cannot do what he really wants to do. This is how he is always in tension. Man is swinging like a pendulum all the time -- sometimes to the left, sometimes to the right. That's why you can't trust him -- now he is to the right, now he is to the left. You can't be sure about him because the man moves back and forth like the pendulum of a clock.

Beyond the human plane lies the third plane -- that of total awakening. There is no choice on this plane either. However, there is a difference between the state of no-choice of the first plane and that of this plane. The first plane consists of the unconscious state. The chooser is not present, hence there is no question of making a choice.

What can a man who is asleep choose? He will continue to remain asleep. Even when his house is on fire he won't be able to decide whether to stay in or go out until he wakes up. There is no choice in the world of unconsciousness, because the chooser is asleep.

The world of consciousness, of awareness -- which I call God -- is the awakened state of nature. As soon as a man enters this fully awakened world, there is no more choice here as well. Choice is not there because the man is fully awake. He unquestionably sees that which is right, hence he has no reason to choose. The situation for choosing arises only when things appear hazy; that is, when one is in a quandary, whether to do this or that; when one is caught in the situation of either/or. This shows he is unable to see clearly; everything looks hazy to him. Both things seem worth doing, and both things don't seem worth doing as well -- hence the choice.

If one is able to see precisely what is worth doing and what is not, then where is the question of choosing? Then all choosing ends. Then one does what is worth doing and leaves what is not worth doing. Hence, on this plane a man cannot say he did something he never wanted to do -- the question doesn't arise. He can't even say, "I regret what I have done," because the question doesn't arise at all. He cannot even say he committed a mistake which he never should have -- that too is out of the question.

There is no choice involved in what a fully awakened person does. He acts only upon what he sees, upon what is worth doing. It is not that he feels he has to do it. Whatsoever needs to be done, it happens. So there is neither any choice on the plane of total awareness, nor any choice on the plane of total unconsciousness.

Choice exists on the human plane, which consists of half consciousness and half awareness. Here it is all up to you -- you can go in either direction. You are standing in the middle of the bridge -- you can either turn back or move ahead. It always looks easier to turn back. Why? -- because the place to which we return is known territory. We come from there; the place does not hold much of a threat. The terrain is familiar. Moving ahead always looks dangerous because we don't even have any sense of direction.

That's why man drinks, becomes unconscious, regresses. This shows he is giving up on being a human. This way he makes it evident, in fact, that, "I want to get out of the bother of choosing. I want to reach a point where one doesn't have to make any choice. I want to remain in a state of stupor -- where I may remain lying in a gutter, languishing on the roadside, talking filthy if I want to, not talking filthy if I don't want to. I want to be in a condition where whatsoever is happening is happening, where I don't have to make any choice."

So man arrives at a point where he no longer has to bear the tension and burden of making a decision. Hence all the intoxicants pull man back from the bridge. They call him, "Come back, you were fine in your previous location." You will have to raise consciousness in order to move forward, because as you move ahead on the bridge, you'll become more and more aware -- only then will you be able to advance.

Moving ahead means only one thing: become more and more aware. This too is a matter of choice, and it is up to you and up to everyone else what to choose. You can't make anyone else responsible for it, because there is no one sitting up above who can be blamed for causing you to make a wrong choice. There is nobody up there. The sky is empty. There is no god or goddess, no divine being sitting up in heaven whom you can drag into the court and say, "We were moving along on a right path; you made us go astray a little." You won't be able to say, "Things would have worked out better had you kept yourself out of it."

There is no one you can address like that; hence there is no way to do it. Ultimately the individual is responsible. He is responsible for the good as well as the bad. There is no one else you can hold responsible, who can answer why a certain thing happened -- there is no one at all.

Of course those who have gone ahead say, crying loudly, "Don't turn back in fear, because much joy lies ahead of you. Once you reach there, all worries, all restlessness, all misery comes to an end." They say this, shouting aloud, but their voices sound strange to us because the place from where they speak is unknown to us.

"How can we attain bliss?" is how it appears to us. If, advancing this far, so much pain has been our lot, how much more of the same will not come to us if we move even further ahead? So a man feels he should turn back to where misery did not exist. Everyone says how blissful childhood was, so if man could, he would immediately return to the state of childhood. Since he cannot, he stays where he is.

Man says there was no misery in childhood. He may even go a step further and say, "It was so blissful being in the mother's womb." If he could, he would love to be back there, but he cannot. So he moves on ahead. We can choose to regress in life; we can return to the unconscious state; we can find ways of becoming unconscious -- if that's what we want.

We don't even understand the language of the voices that come from afar because we have no idea what bliss is. We don't even know what sort of thing it is that people call bliss. We are familiar with what misery is -- all too familiar, as a matter of fact. We also know the more we tried to attain happiness, the more we found misery. Now we are afraid lest, in our quest for bliss, we land ourselves in more trouble.

Since we came across more misery trying to find happiness, we take the state of bliss to be more or less similar to the state of happiness -- perhaps as a little more intense state of happiness. But we are afraid of facing trouble as well. The fact remains that in attempting to gain happiness we encountered pain, so now, in an effort to find bliss, the fear is we may have to face even more trouble, even greater misery. So we hear these voices coming from far away, and with folded hands we salute and say to the people of the other shore, "You are gods, you are avatars, you are tirthankaras, you are great! We will worship you, but we want to go back!"

We are afraid of the unknown. The fear is we will lose whatever little happinesses we have collected; they seem to be dropping away as we move ahead. The reason is we have built our houses on the very bridge that was only meant to be crossed. We have started living there. We have settled down there, we have turned it into our living room. Now when someone tells us to move ahead, we feel worried about

losing the things we have gathered around us. It becomes obvious that moving ahead means leaving behind whatsoever we now have.

So we say, "Let the time come. When I am old, when death is at hand, when all I have begins to drop, that's when I will come forward right away. Then there won't be anything to worry about." But the closer we come to death, the stronger the grip becomes. As death approaches we close our fists more tightly. That's why an old man becomes utterly miserly; a young man is never so miserly.

An old man becomes a miser in every way. He holds tight. At the time of his departure the old man becomes paranoid lest everything he is holding on to might slip through his hands. He holds his possessions firmly, lest his grip loosen. This very clinging to things so firmly turns one into an ugly old man; otherwise, the beauty and grace of an old man can be matchless.

We are aware of beautiful children and we know of less beautiful young people, but beautiful old men are very rare to find. Only once in a while does one come across someone who has grown into a beautiful old man. Otherwise, ordinarily, with the increasing miserliness and holding fast to possessions, everything starts becoming uglier and uglier. An open hand looks beautiful, a closed fist looks ugly. Freedom is beautiful, attachment is slavery.

Everyone thinks he will give up his attachments sometime in the future, at the right opportunity. He waits until the last moment and lets go only when death finally snatches everything away. Since man never likes to let go of things, it hurts when they are taken away. There is no pain in parting with things voluntarily.

Now this whole matter of moving ahead is essentially our own choice. An impetus can be given towards making this choice; there are laws for that too. The bridge is already there; it is natural too. Do you see my point? The bridge is ready to take you forward too; it allows you to go ahead. This too is nature. And the bridge is ready to provide you passage to move backwards. This too is nature.

Nature is prepared to greet you under every condition. On all her doors is a 'Welcome' sign -- which is dangerous too. Not a single door has a sign, 'No Admission'; each and every door has a 'Welcome' sign. Hence the choice is in your hands. It's sheer compassion on the part of nature that it does not prevent you from entering any door. You are free to go wherever you feel like. The door to hell says 'Welcome', and so does the door to heaven. Which welcome sign to choose is ultimately your decision. In that case you won't be able to hold nature responsible for putting out the welcome sign. Nature has put the sign everywhere. Nature had no problem, it did not create any hindrance.

To welcome means to allow freedom. That means, intrinsically, nature is absolutely free. We are a part of nature, hence we are absolutely free. We are doing what we want to do. Nature is assisting us in all our actions, but the choice is always ours. Don't misunderstand me when I say the choice is ours because, essentially, we are part and parcel of nature. Putting it in ultimate terms, it means we are the infinite possibilities of nature itself; we are the infinite openings of nature. Basically it is nature which, seeking through its infinite parts, knocks on its infinite doors -- chooses, wanders, goes astray, and reaches.

But this is a very circular way of putting things -- there are no nooks and corners. And the problem is that all the ways of nature are circular -- none of its modes is angular, none of its courses is square. All its stars, moons, planets and satellites are circular. Their movements in space are circular. The entire system in nature is circular. This is the reason we find the circle used in many religious symbols. So nature is a circular phenomenon. You can start from anywhere and reach anywhere you like -- the choice is always yours.

Once it is understood that the choice is always yours, then one can use the laws of nature in a right manner. For example, while walking on the street you also make use of the law of gravitation. If the earth did not have gravity, you wouldn't be able to walk on the earth. By the time you lift your other foot, if the first foot did not remain steady on the ground and were to lift on its own, where would you end up? Where would you stand? When you lift your left foot, the earth holds the right foot -- that's how you are able to lift your left foot. The earth holding the right foot is responsible for your left foot lifting. Should the right foot also lift at the same time, you've had it! While the earth holds the right foot, you lift the left foot. You put the left foot down and nature holds it until you have lifted the right foot.

This is how gravity works. But gravity also works when a man jumps from the roof. At that moment the earth welcomes him and pulls him down too. Just as the earth pulls the left and the right foot, it pulls the jumping man too. Now, when the bone of the falling man hits the ground, it breaks. We complain, "What kind of nature is this? It broke the poor man's bone!" But nature simply does its job. It says, "Welcome to you, come and get your bone broken."

The same law works. The same gravity which helped you walk will break your bone and make you a cripple. Nevertheless, you won't be able to hold it responsible, because nature merely does its job. It does a totally perfect job; it never falls short. It's faultless. Whether you move your feet, or break your neck -- whatsoever you wish to do, the law of nature works as always. Keeping this law in mind, you have to choose whether you wish to break your bone -- then you may jump from the roof. If you wish to walk, you will need to lift your feet appropriately. You will have to watch that you don't go against the law of nature.

To me, science has only one meaning. The application of science does not mean we have conquered nature -- there is no way to conquer nature. Science only means that we have discovered certain ways and means of living in accord with nature. That's all it means. Put conquering aside. The question is, who is going to conquer whom?

The fact is, we have discovered the ways of living in accord with nature. For example, nature was willing to run this fan a long time ago. We took so long to put the fan in the right place and make it work. Do you follow me? The breeze was always ready to blow from outside. We prevented it by raising the wall; we did not make a window. But if you did make a window, would that mean you conquered the breeze? You simply gave way to the breeze. The breeze was always ready to pass through.

Our being able to run the fan and burn the light with electricity does not mean we have found victory over nature. We simply learned the way to be in agreement with nature. Now we fix our bulbs and

switches, lay out electric wires in such a way that electricity can pass through them. In fact, electricity was always ready to pass through them. Our act simply amounts to opening the window.

Science stands for the search for nature's laws favorable to the external world. Religion stands for the search for nature's laws agreeable to the inner world. There are certain laws of nature that exist in the outer world. If we conform to these laws, nature becomes agreeable; if we go against them, it becomes disagreeable. In a way it is wrong to say nature becomes agreeable or disagreeable; the right way to put it is whether we are able to take nature's help or not. Rather, one should say that if we conduct ourselves in a manner that nature can be helpful to us, we stand to gain from it. If we conduct ourselves in a manner that nature cannot be helpful, we stand to lose from it.

For example, you are walking with an umbrella over your head and the wind is blowing against you. Now if you bend it forward, no harm will be done, but if you place it backward on your shoulder, the wind will turn it inside out. Here nature will not be at fault. You did not place the umbrella agreeably to the wind - that's all you'll be accountable for. In both instances nature was working in the same way. It was pressing against the umbrella when you bent it forward, but its force was towards you. It also pressed against the umbrella when it was resting on your shoulder, but this time it was being pressed away from you. So although the pressure was the same, the difference was in how you had positioned the umbrella.

Similarly, there are inner laws of nature too. A man who lives with anger has his umbrella resting on the shoulder. Now that will cause him difficulty -- all his inner umbrellas are bound to fall apart. A person who spreads love is placing his umbrella forward; he is being agreeable to nature.

One who has learned how to love has actually mastered one law of the inner science. He has learned that love brings agreeability, harmony in the inner life; whereas anger creates discord, disharmony within. This is very much like the law of gravity. In anger you break your leg, in love you mend it. Nature is willing to work in both instances, depending upon what you wish to do. In anger, man wants to jump from the roof.

Meditation is the ultimate agreeability of the inner life, the uttermost harmony, the most profound of all.

Meditation means that, from within, one is now in complete harmony with the ultimate law of life. The word Lao Tzu has used for it is beautiful. He calls it Tao. Tao means the law. Or the name given by the Vedic seers is also appropriate. They call it rit. Rit means the law. Similarly, dharma also means the law. Dharma means your inner nature, the law. Dharma means: if you act according to the law, you will attain happiness. adharma, an unrighteous act, is that which would go against the law and cause you unhappiness. This is the principle of inner science.

Meditation, in the ultimate sense, in the innermost sense, means to be agreeable -- agreeability. In other words, one who is agreeable in every way, one who is nowhere in conflict with life; one who is at no point separate from life; one who has become harmonious with all the laws of life, he attains to the ultimate truth, the ultimate life, the ultimate bliss.

We exist under the same law too. But fighting against the very law, we end up in ultimate bondage -- fighting against the very law. It's kind of like this: there are people who understand the value of gold and make ornaments out of it, and there are others who do not understand its value and make shackles out of it. There is a law that works on gold. There is a law that governs the moulding, the casting of gold. Now whether you make ornaments or chains is entirely up to you.

One who totally establishes one's agreeability with the inner law of nature attains dharma. One who totally comes to an agreement with the law of nature in the outside world attains vigyana. These words are so beautiful they are worth understanding.

What is achieved through dharma we call gyana. What is gained through science we call vigyana. Both words are very meaningful. We do not use any prefix before gyana, we do not put any adjective before it. Vigyana means a specialized knowledge; gyana means just knowledge, natural -- not any special knowledge.

Religion means having an understanding of how to become spontaneous, how to be one with the inner nature of life. Hence, it is just knowing -- not a specialized knowledge. Vigyana is a specialized knowledge. It has to explore each and every direction in order to find out what would be agreeable to this law of nature and that law of nature. There are millions of laws working in the outside world.

Obviously, the more you go inside, you ultimately end up with only one law. And the laws keep on increasing as we move more and more in the outer world. It is like drawing lines away from one point. They will be one at the point of origin, but as they move away from the point their number will go on increasing, their distances will go on increasing. This is similar to the sun rays that spread all around. They are one on the sun, but in moving away from it, the one becomes two, four, a thousand, millions, and billions -- they go on spreading. Their distances become greater and greater.

Vigyan, science, is a specialized knowledge -- knowledge of each and every ray, hence specialized. Once science gets hold of one ray, it will find out all about it. As I was telling you yesterday, science means to know more and more about less and less. But in that case the ray will keep on becoming thinner and thinner -- the greater the distance, the narrower it will be. That's why science becomes more and more narrow.

Religion expands, it becomes more and more vast, it keeps on becoming formless until advaita, nonduality, oneness remains at the end. Then there won't be two left. Hence, I say to you, there can be many sciences, not many religions. Religion can only be one because it is knowledge -- not a specialized knowledge.

If we understand this, then it would mean that the laws exist, that we exist, and what we do with the laws and with ourselves -- that capacity to choose -- also exists. Whatsoever we do, we have the capability of living it through as well. Now, this is the way it is. One who is intelligent, however, continues to work towards enhancing the direction of bliss. One who is determined to choose stupidity continuously goes on diminishing the capacity to attain bliss. There is no one up there to be held responsible; the entire responsibility rests with man.

Hence my emphasis on sadhana, and my telling you repeatedly: get on with it, take a jump; the laws are firmly rooted. You are already on the diving board, but just standing there. The ocean is waving down below. You can take a jump. The sun is hot, the heat is intense, you are sweating, and the cool ocean is rolling below. You can, of course, take a jump and be in cool waters. You are standing on the diving board. If you are willing to jump, the diving board is ready to help you; it has springs, they can toss you below. But you are standing there sweating in the sun. The diving board, the springs, are shedding tears beneath you. If you care to take the jump, they are anxious to help you. But since you are not taking the jump, the diving board is quiet. The cool ocean down below is watching you sweat.

Given this state of affairs, you will have to choose decisively, you will have to make the decision. It is fine if you wish to wait, there is no problem. But make a decision: "I want to wait. I don't want to be in cool water, I want to stand in the heat, I want to sweat. I don't want to jump, I'll stay right here." Make this your choice and then wait. I believe, if you did this, then even that decisive act would show you have grown. At least you made a decision.

But you are a very strange type of people. You say, "We don't want to jump in the ocean. We would like to enter the cool water; we know the sun is hot and we are sweating profusely, but we can't take a jump right now. We do wish to jump, to leap forward, but please wait. How can we rush into it? We will do it tomorrow, or the day after."

This stops your growth. By and by it makes you inert; you get stuck in the place where you are. You become used to this sweating, the heat, and to the nonsense that you would like to jump -- but tomorrow. You will say the same thing tomorrow as well, that you would like to jump the next day. Then you will get used to saying this, you will keep on repeating the same thing, and all the laws of nature will wait patiently. The sun will continue to shine, he will welcome you and invite you to enjoy him. While we go on sweating, the ocean will keep calling, "Come if you like, it's your pleasure. The cool waters are ready to receive you." The diving board will keep saying, "I am ready to bounce, but you need to make a choice first -- you need to take off." This is how the situation is.

In my view, the real harm is not because of the fact that you are suffering from misery, it is due more to the reality that your misery is not the product of your decision. Suffer decisively! The suffering should be your decision too. If one wants to steal, then he should do so decisively, by becoming a thief. He should make it clear, "I intend to be a thief, and I want to say to all the holy men they should stop all their nonsense. It is of no use to me; none of their talk has any meaning for me. If they want to be holy, then let them be. I have decided to be a thief."

So remember, compared to a person who has become a holy man without his own decision, a man who has become a thief through his own decision would live a far superior life. ... Because the decision enhances his consciousness, the decision lends weight to his being, the decision raises his level of responsibility. When he makes the decision he becomes responsible. Being himself the decision-maker, when he decides, when it becomes his own choice, will is created. And when will is created, the consciousness is awakened. Then it can't remain asleep any longer.

Your making the decision alone will bring an end to the state of unconsciousness, because a decision cannot emerge in an unconscious state. Lacking decisiveness, you will simply go on drifting here and there, pushed by the society. The father enrolls you in a school, so you go there. The mother finds you a job, so you take that job. The wife asks you to stand on your head, so you stand on your head. Then the children surround you; you are more and more confined. You are just pulled and pushed from all sides. So if you stay indecisive, the state of unconsciousness will become more and more condensed.

There is no harm if one has to make a decision -- even for the wrong reasons. As I see it, there is only one wrongdoing -- not to make a decision. And there is only one virtue -- to be decisive. So be decisive. It doesn't matter if you decide to be a thief, but make the decision with a total mind -- then you won't stay a thief for long. One who decides with a total mind attains so much consciousness that he can no longer steal. He comes to such understanding that to him stealing seems foolish.

Even when people become holy men or women, they do so because they are somehow pushed into it. Somebody's wife dies and he turns into a holy man. A woman's husband dies and she ends up being a holy woman. A man files bankruptcy and becomes a holy man. Someone's father is about to become a renunciate; the son has no choice but to follow his father -- the father initiates him too. Now this is meaningless, this doesn't serve any purpose. A decision must be there. For one who lives decisively every moment, his consciousness will continue to grow every moment. Make decisions in small matters, and learn how to stick to them.

Let me mention something briefly, and then we will conclude this talk. Gurdjieff used to have his followers go through a small experiment. As such, it was a very small exercise, but it used to prove very effective in raising consciousness. It was called the stop exercise. For example, if Gurdjieff were to address people sitting here, all of a sudden in the middle of the talk he would say "Stop!" It would mean everyone sitting here would freeze -- your hands, head, legs, the whole body would remain motionless, like a statue. He would keep watching, and if anyone moved he would say, "Can't you muster enough will to stay as you are for a while?"

It so happened that once, along with his followers, he was experimenting in Tiflis. They were staying in a tent outside the village. A canal was situated nearby. It was dry at the time; the water had not run through the canal yet. Three of the seekers were crossing the dry canal when suddenly Gurdjieff called from inside the tent, "Stop!" All the three stood in the middle of the canal, motionless. Meanwhile, somebody released the canal waters. The canal began to fill up, while Gurdjieff stayed inside the tent. The seekers stood there, unmoving.

Dauntless, the three remained until the water reached their waists. As the water began rising further up, they became worried. They couldn't utter a word because that would have meant breaking the "Stop" command. Gurdjieff was still in the tent; they were not sure whether he even knew the canal was filling up. Perhaps he didn't even know his disciples were standing in the middle of the canal. They couldn't figure out what to do. They kept their courage until the water came up to their necks. When it began rising even further, one of them exclaimed, "This is foolishness!" and jumped out of the canal. The

second one held out until the water reached his nose, in the hope Gurdjieff might call off the stop exercise. Then he felt it was dangerous to hold on any longer, and he jumped out of the water too.

The third young man stood there without budging. The water went over his head. Gurdjieff came running from the tent, jumped in the canal and brought the man out. Gurdjieff asked how he had felt inside at that moment when the water went over his head. He said, "The thing I was waiting for happened. But it happened only when I stood firm in my resolve. The consciousness I attained to when the water went over my head was simply the ultimate. Now I don't need to learn anything further -- my resolve has come to its completion!"

This man stood firm in his resolve even in the face of death. Gurdjieff said, "This was all planned by me. I had the canal water released. I wanted to see if you were capable of something more than merely stopping the movements of your hands and feet." He dismissed the other two seekers and told them never to think of coming back -- never at all. He told them they didn't have any business there.

The greater the intensity of will, the more profound the feeling of resolve, the more one's consciousness comes closer to being total. If you show your absolute will even for a single moment, that very moment you attain to a total consciousness. All the preparations are geared toward attaining this total consciousness; they are meant for creating that absolute will.

Hence, in my view, it is always good to make a choice. If God is having us dance like puppets -- making some as sinners and others saints -- then the whole thing becomes useless, absolutely useless. Not only does everything become useless, even God himself turns out to be very foolish. What kind of craziness is this? If God alone is the decision-maker, and if he alone creates someone good and someone bad -- makes one man Rama and the other Ravana -- then what's the point? Then everything becomes nonsense, carries no meaning.

No, the individual is the decision-maker -- there is no one imposing a decision on you from above. The moments when the decision comes from within you are the moments of awakening. Twenty-four hours a day, a seeker will look forward to making even ordinary decisions -- it doesn't matter how insignificant they are. One should remain in search of making just minor, very ordinary decisions.

Right from the morning you should be continuously anxious to find opportunities for making decisions. And whenever such opportunities arise.... The opportunities come your way all the time, all kinds of opportunities.... If you can make decisions every moment, in a few days you will find your consciousness shooting up within you like an arrow. You will find it rising, gaining speed every day, simply through very ordinary decisions.

What we have named as sacrifice, austerity -- and who knows what other foolish words -- are all nonsense. If ever they had any validity, if ever any man had even made a meaningful application of them, that meaningfulness lay in their will. Someone decides, for example, that he will not eat for a day. Now, the value of this does not rest as much in the act of not eating, as it does in his coming to a resolution.

If this man eats even once in his mind, the whole thing is finished, it becomes totally useless. Not eating means not only abstaining from eating physically, but even mentally. If a man could mindfully stay without eating food for twelve hours, he would have gone a long way in maintaining his resolve. Not eating is not significant by itself -- it simply works as a peg for the man to hang his will on. After twelve hours the quality of his being is sure to change.

When I see a man has fasted for years and yet the quality of his being has not changed, I know he must have been eating in his mind, otherwise the quality would have changed. He has been fasting all through his life -- going through this fast and that fast -- and yet nowhere does he show any change of quality. The man has remained the same. He is like one who sets a lock and then comes back again to check whether it is locked or not.

I know such a man. He lives across from my house. He fasts, worships regularly, but he is a man of such poor will. I have watched him many times. He will lock his door, walk ten steps, then come back and shake the lock to be sure. I asked him, "Why do you do this? You locked the door yourself!"

He said, "Often I am not sure whether I locked it or not, so I come back to double check. And what's the harm in checking at least once?"

I said, "Having already checked once, doesn't it occur to you the second time whether or not you have indeed gone back once and seen to the lock?"

He said, "How did you know? It does occur to me indeed. Not only once but twice, even three times I feel like going back and checking the lock -- but I feel embarrassed to do it."

Here is a man who fasts, but he does not know what fasting means. The purpose of fasting is to bring decisiveness, to bring a decision-making power. Having made the decision once, a man should not turn back. And whosoever makes such a decision -- which proves to be a point of no return -- in the life of such a man nothing remains asleep, everything is awakened.

And Now, And Here, Vol 2

Chapter #12

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Question 1

IN ORDER FOR ONE TO STAY AWAKE AT THE TIME OF DEATH, OR IN ORDER FOR ONE TO SUCCESSFULLY EXPERIENCE A CONSCIOUS DEATH IN MEDITATION, PLEASE EXPLAIN IN DETAIL HOW A SEEKER SHOULD WORK ON THE FOLLOWING: THE BODY SYSTEM, THE BREATHING SYSTEM, THE STATE OF BREATHING, THE STATE OF ONE'S BEING, CELIBACY, THE STATE OF ONE'S MIND.

Before one can remain conscious in the moment of death, first one needs to prepare to stay conscious in pain and suffering. Ordinarily, it is not possible for one who becomes unconscious even in misery to stay awake at the time of death. One needs to understand what it means to become unconscious when in misery. That will make one understand what it means to be conscious in misery too.

Becoming unconscious when one is in misery means one has identified oneself with the misery. When you have a headache, you don't feel any distance between the headache and yourself; you don't remain just a distant watcher. Rather, you feel as if you are in pain. When you have a fever, it doesn't feel as though the body is hot, somewhere at a distance from you, instead you feel as if you have become hot. This is identification. When your foot is hurt and wounded, you don't feel just the affected foot; rather, you feel as if you are hurt and wounded.

Basically, we don't feel any distance between ourselves and our bodies. We live identified with the body. When hunger arises, one doesn't say his body is hungry and he is aware if it, instead he says, "I am hungry." But this is not the truth. The truth is, the body is hungry and he is aware of it. He is simply the center of awareness -- continuously aware of whatsoever is happening. If there is a thorn hurting the foot, he knows it; if there is a headache, he knows it; if the stomach needs food, he knows it.

Man is consciousness, consciousness which is continuously aware. He is not the experiencer, he is simply the knower. This is the reality. But our state of mind is not that of the knower, it is that of the experiencer. When the knower turns into being the experiencer; when he knows not, but rather becomes identified with the act itself; when he does not remain a witness watching from a distance, but rather becomes the participant in the act, that is when the identification takes place. Then he becomes one with the act. This identification prevents him from waking up, because in order to be awake, in order to be aware, a certain distance is required, a space is needed.

I am able to see you only because there is a distance between you and me. If the whole distance between you and me were to be removed, I wouldn't be able to see you. I am able to see you because

there is a space between us. If this entire space were somehow eliminated, it wouldn't be possible for me to see you. My eyes can see you, because there is a space in between but my very eyes are unable to see themselves.

Even if I need to see my figure, I have to become the other in a mirror; I have to be at a distance from myself -- only then can I see my reflection. Seeing the reflection in a mirror means my image is at a distance, and now it is visible to me. All that a mirror does is present your image at a distance from you. The intervening space thus created enables you to see.

In order to see, a distance is needed. For one who lives identified with the body, or thinks he is the very body, there exists no distance between him and his body.

Once there was a Mohammedan mystic called Farid. A man came to see him one morning and raised the same question you have asked me. He said to Farid, "We have heard that when Jesus was crucified he did not cry out, scream, or grow miserable. We have also heard that when Mansoor's limbs were cut off, he was laughing. How can this be? This is impossible."

Farid didn't say a word. He laughed, and from the coconuts offered to him by his devotees, he picked up one that was lying nearby and gave it to the man. Farid told him, "Take this coconut. It is not ripe yet. Break it open, but make sure you keep the kernel from breaking. Break the outer shell and bring me the unbroken kernel."

The man said, "This is impossible. Because the coconut is unripe, there is no space between the kernel and the outer shell. If I break open the shell the kernel will break too."

Farid said, "Forget this coconut. Here is another. Take this one, it is dry. There is a space between its kernel and the outer shell. Can you assure me you can break only the shell and leave the kernel intact?"

The man said, "What's so difficult about this? I will break the shell and the kernel will be saved without any problem."

Farid said, "Tell me why the kernel will be saved."

The man replied, "Because the coconut is dry, there exists a distance between the shell and the kernel."

Farid said, "Now don't bother about breaking open the coconut; set it aside too. Did you get your answer or not?"

The man said, "I was asking you something else, and you have gotten me into talking about a coconut. My question is, why didn't Jesus cry out when he was crucified? Why didn't he weep? Why didn't Mansoor writhe in pain when his limbs were cut off? Why did he laugh? Why did he smile?"

Farid answered, "Because they were dry coconuts, while we are wet coconuts -- there is no other reason than this."

The reason why Jesus didn't weep when crucified, and Mansoor didn't suffer pain, but rather laughed and smiled, is because they had totally disidentified themselves with their bodies. There was no other reason than this. It was not really Jesus who was being crucified. Jesus was watching his body being crucified from within, and this he did from the same distance as the people standing around him -- outside, away from his body. No one from the crowd screamed, none of them cried, "Don't kill me!" Why? -- because there was a distance between them and Jesus' body.

Within Jesus too, there was a distance between the element that watches and his body. Hence Jesus also didn't cry out, "Don't kill me!"

Mansoor's limbs were amputated and he kept laughing. When someone asked him, "What makes you laugh when your limbs are being cut off?" Mansoor said, "I would have cried had you dismembered me, but it is not 'me' you are chopping off; the one you are doing it to, you fools, is not me. I laugh at you because you are taking this body to be Mansoor's, just as you take the bodies you are in to be your authentic selves. You will obviously suffer painful deaths. What you are doing to me is nothing but a repetition of the mistakes you have committed in treating your own selves. Had you been aware you are separate from your bodies, you wouldn't have tried to cut my body. You would have known that you and your body are two different things. Then you would have realized that by cutting up the body, Mansoor is not cut."

The greatest preparation for entering death in a conscious state is to first enter pain consciously, because death does not occur often, it does not come every day. Death will come only once, whether you are prepared for it or not; there cannot be a rehearsal for death. But pain and misery come every day. We can prepare ourselves while going through pain and suffering -- and remember, if we can do so while facing them, it will prove useful at the time of death.

Hence, seekers have always welcomed suffering. There is no other reason for it. It is not that suffering is a good thing. The reason is simply that suffering provides the seeker with an opportunity for self-preparation, self-attainment. A seeker has always thanked God for the suffering he undergoes, for the simple reason that, in moments of misery, he gets a chance to disidentify himself from his body.

Remember, sadhana, spiritual discipline, is a little difficult to follow when you are happy. It is easier when you are miserable, because in moments of happiness one doesn't want to have even the slightest feeling of separation from one's body. When you are happy the body feels very dear to you; you don't feel like being detached from it for even an inch.

In moments of happiness we move closer to the body; hence it is not surprising that a seeker of happiness becomes a materialist. It is also not surprising if a person who is continuously seeking happiness believes himself to be nothing more than his body, because in happy times he begins to exist like a green coconut instead of a dry one -- the distance between him and his body continues to narrow down.

In moments of pain one wishes he were not the body. Ordinarily, a man who takes himself to be nothing but the body also wishes he were not the body when his head hurts or when his foot is injured or when

his body aches. He tends to agree with monks all over the world who go about saying that, "It would have been better if I were not the body." Feeling the pain in his body, he becomes eager to somehow find out he is not the body too. That's why I say to you, the moments of pain can become moments of spiritual discipline, they can be turned into moments of sadhana. But ordinarily, what do we do?

Ordinarily, during times of suffering, we try to forget pain. If a man is in trouble, he will drink alcohol. Someone is in pain and he will go and sit in a movie theater. Somebody is miserable and he will try to forget his misery with prayers and devotional songs. These are all different ways and means to forget pain.

Someone drinks; we can say this is one tactic: someone goes and watches a movie, this is another. A person goes to a concert; this is a third way of forgetting pain. Somebody goes to the temple and drowns himself in prayers and hymns; this is a fourth strategy. There can be a thousand and one strategies -- they can be religious, non-religious, or secular. That's not a big question. Underneath all this, the basic thing is that man wants to forget his misery. He is into forgetting misery.

A person who is out to forget misery can never wake up to misery. How can we become aware of something we tend to forget? Only with an attitude of remembering can we become aware of something. Hence, only by remembering pain can we become aware of it.

So whenever you are in misery, take it as an opportunity. Be totally aware of it, and you will have a wonderful experience. When you become fully aware of your suffering, when you look at it face to face, not escaping the pain, you will have a glimpse of your separateness from it. For example, you fell, were injured, hurt your foot. Now try to locate the pain inside, try to pinpoint the exact spot where it hurts, and you will be astonished to discover how you have managed to spread the pain over a much wider area, away from the original spot where its intensity is not so much.

Man exaggerates his suffering. He magnifies his misery, which is never actually that much. The reason behind this is the same -- identification with the body. Misery is like the flame of a lamp, but we experience it as the dispersed light of the lamp. Misery is like the flame, limited to a very small section of the body. But we feel it like the very extended light of the lamp, covering a much larger area. Close your eyes and try to locate the pain from inside.

Remember too, we have always known the body from the outside, never from within. Even if you know your body, it is known as others see it. If you have seen your hand, it is always from the outside, but you can feel your hand from within too. It is as if one were to remain contented with seeing his house only from the outside. But there is an inner side to the house as well.

Pain occurs at the inner parts of the body. The point where it hurts is located somewhere in the interior of the body, but the pain spreads to the outer parts of the body. It is like this: the flame of pain is located inside, while the light radiates outward.

Since we are used to seeing the body from outside, the pain appears to be very spread out. It is a wonderful experience, trying to see the body from inside. Close your eyes and try to feel and experience

what the body is like from within. The human body has an inner wall too; it has an inner covering as well. This body has an inner limit too. That inner frontier can certainly be experienced with closed eyes.

You have seen your hand lifting. Now, close your eyes sometime and lift your hand, and you will experience the hand rising from within. From the outside you have known what it is to be hungry. Close your eyes and experience hunger from within, and for the first time you will be able to feel it from inside.

As soon as you get hold of the pain from within, two things happen. One is, the pain does not remain as widely spread as it originally seemed to be; it immediately centers on a small point. And the more intensely you concentrate on this point, the more you will find it becoming smaller and smaller. And an incredible thing happens. When the point becomes very small, you find to your amazement it appears and disappears, goes off and on. Gaps begin to appear in between. And finally, when it disappears, you wonder what happened to it. Many times you miss it. The point becomes so small, that often when the consciousness tries to locate it, it is not there.

Just as pain expands in a state of unconsciousness, in the state of awareness it narrows down and becomes small. In such a state of consciousness the feeling will be that although you have gone through so many painful experiences, although you have lived through so much suffering, yet, in fact, the miseries were not really that many. We have suffered exaggerated pains. The same is true with regard to happiness. The happinesses we have been through were not as many as they seemed to be; we have enjoyed them in an exaggerated form too.

If one were to enjoy one's happiness with awareness, we would find that happiness becomes very small too. If we were to live through misery with the same kind of awareness, we would find it becomes very narrow as well. The greater the awareness, the narrower and smaller the pains and miseries. They become so small that, in a deeper sense, they turn out to be meaningless. In fact, their meaning lies in their expansion. They seem to be encompassing one's entire life. However, when seen through great awareness, they go on narrowing down, ultimately becoming so meaningless they don't have anything to do with life as such.

The second thing that will happen is, when you look at your misery very closely, a distance will be created between you and the misery. In fact, whenever you look at a thing, immediately a distance is created between you and the thing itself. Seeing causes the distance. No matter what we look at, a distance immediately begins to take place.

If you look closely at your misery, you will find a separation between the misery and you, because only that which is separate from you can be seen. Obviously, that which is inseparably one with you cannot be seen. One who is aware of his misery, one who is filled with consciousness, one who is full of remembrance, experiences the misery as somewhere else, and he is somewhere at a distance.

The day a man comes to realize the difference between himself and the misery, as soon as he comes to know his pain is happening somewhere at a distance, the unconsciousness caused by misery ceases to exist. And once a person comes to understand that the sufferings as well as the happinesses of the body

occur elsewhere, that one is merely a knower of them, his identity with the body is severed. Then he knows he is not the body.

This is the initial preparation. Once this preparation is complete, then it is easy to enter death with awareness. Not only easy, but it will happen most certainly. As such, we are not afraid of death really. After all, even to be afraid of death, one needs to be familiar with death. How can we feel afraid of something we know nothing about?

So, we have no fear of death really; rather, in our minds death exists in the form of a disease. That's the idea we have of it. When even minor illnesses leave us in so much trouble -- the foot hurts and we suffer so much, the head hurts and we suffer so much -- what a torture it will be when the entire body will hurt and fall apart!

The fear of death is the sum total of all our illnesses. Death in itself, however, is not an illness. Death has nothing to do with illness -- it is not even remotely connected with it. It is a different matter if illnesses precede death, but there is no cause-and-effect relationship between the two. It is beside the point that a man dies following an illness, but one need not be mistaken and think that illness causes death. Perhaps the reverse is the case.

Because a man comes close to death, he grabs on to illness. No one ever dies of illness. As death approaches, he begins to catch illnesses. As death draws near, his body becomes weak, his receptivity towards sickness increases. He becomes vulnerable, he begins to look for illnesses. The same illness would not be able to affect him were the man closer to life. Perhaps it would not have been able to catch hold of him.

Do you know there are some moments when you are more receptive to illnesses, while there are some when you are not? In moments of disappointment and sadness a person becomes vulnerable to illness, while a man full of hope and optimism becomes unreceptive to it. Even illness does not enter you without your willingness to accept it -- your inner acceptance is needed.

Hence, no matter how many medicines are given to them, those who are of a suicidal mind can never be cured. Their minds remain unreceptive to medications. Their minds go on seeking illnesses, inviting diseases with open arms, but keeping their doors very tightly closed as far as medications are concerned.

No, no one ever dies of illness. Rather, one becomes vulnerable to illnesses because of approaching death. That's why illness occurs first, then death follows. We normally think what happens first is the cause, and that which follows it is the effect. That's erroneous thinking. Illness is not the cause. Invariably the cause is death. The illness is merely the effect.

So the fear of death in our minds is really the fear of illness. First of all, we create the fear of death by adding up all our illnesses. The second thing worth remembering is that all the people we have seen dying, we have not really seen them dying, we have only seen them falling ill. How can we ever see anyone dying? Death is such an utterly inner phenomenon, no one can be a witness to it. Think twice

before you ever testify to seeing such and such a person die, because it is a very difficult thing to see someone dying. To this day it has never happened on this earth.

No one has ever seen anyone dying. Only this much has been seen: a man fell ill, grew more ill, and more and more ill, and one day it became known that the man is no longer alive. But basically, no one has ever seen when a person died. No one has ever been able to pinpoint at which moment a person died, and what exactly happened in the process of dying. The only thing we have seen is a man being set free from life.

We have not seen a boat touching the other shore; we have only seen it leaving this shore. We have seen a consciousness move away from the shores of life, and then after a certain point we have lost sight of it. The body that remains with us is no longer alive, as it was until yesterday, and so we think the man is dead.

For us, death is an inference; it is not an event that occurs right before us. We have seen sick people, we have seen the suffering of a dying man -- the cramping of his limbs, his eyes rolling up, his face deforming, his jaws clenching; we have seen that perhaps the man wants to say something but cannot -- we have seen all this. We have with us the sum of all this; it has become part of our collective mind. Whatsoever has been happening at the time of death over millions of years, we have collected it all. We are afraid of that.

We are also frightened of facing the same difficulties at the time of our death. Hence, man has devised very clever means. He has dismissed the fact of death from the whole idea of life. We create cemeteries outside the town so that we are not reminded of death more often. Really, ideally a cemetery should be created in the middle of the town, because there is nothing in life more certain than death itself: everything else is uncertain. Other things may or may not be. The only thing which one can believe in definitively is death. Death is the most certain thing; no one can doubt its existence.

We can doubt the existence of God; we can doubt the existence of the soul; we can doubt life itself, but there is no way to doubt death. Death is. That which is so certain we have put outside the town. If a funeral passes by, the mother calls her children to come inside the house, because somebody is dead. Actually, if someone is dead everyone should be asked to come out so they can watch the greatest fact of life passing by. Everyone is bound to pass through death. There is no need to deny it. But we are so scared of death we don't even want to mention it.

I have heard.... An old woman came to see a monk and said. "The soul is indeed immortal." Old people often talk about the immortality of the soul for no other reason than the fear of death. That's the only reason why we find such a large number of old folks in temples, mosques, churches. Why aren't young people and children interested in going to these places? It will be a while before they get the news of death. It will take a little time. They can afford to deny death for now; they can forget it for a while.

How can an old man forget death? He gets reminders every day. One day he finds his legs refuse to walk, another day his vision fails, sometimes his ears lose their hearing power. He receives hints from all around that, one by one, parts of his body seem to be giving in to death. Now he begins to rush towards the church, the temple, the mosque. He is not concerned with God; he goes there simply to make sure that, even though what he has understood life to be is coming to an end, will he perish too?

It is strange that societies which believe in the immortality of the soul are more frightened of death than ones which do not believe in the soul's existence. Take our country, for example. For ages we have been firm believers in the immortality of the soul. And yet, no race on earth is more cowardly than ours, no people are more dead than we are.

A nation which proclaims the soul is immortal suffers in slavery for a thousand years. How strange! One wonders how a nation which declares the soul is immortal and which is inhabited by eight hundred million souls, can live in slavery under the domination of three million. Those who believe the soul is immortal, that it can never die, what fear can they have of becoming slaves? What fear can they have of fighting the enemy? What fear can they have of facing death by hanging? How can guns and cannons frighten them? But no, something else is involved here.

Believing in the immortality of the soul is not the same as knowing the immortality of the soul. Believing in it is just a strategy for erasing the fear of death, for falsifying it -- the same as creating a cemetery outside the town.

Every day people open their scriptures and read the teachings on the immortality of the soul so that they can be absolutely sure there is no death, so that they can carry the hope that they will survive -- so there is no need to worry. They assert, "The body will die, but we will still survive!"

Who are you asserting as your existence other than the body? You have no knowledge of it. You announce, "The body may die, I will continue to live," and the fact is you have absolutely no idea who you are other than the body! You don't know what it is that will survive when the body is no more. If you should ever really think, "Who am I?" you will come to know that you know nothing about yourself except that you are the body.

So the old woman said to the monk, "I believe the soul is immortal. The soul is indeed imperishable. What do you say?"

About the immortality of the soul, the monk answered nothing. He merely looked at the woman, took her hand in his and said, "What do you think about death? Not much time is left."

The woman was annoyed. She said, "What kind of ominous talk is this? Please don't say such things. Being a monk, a good man, you should not talk about such ominous things."

The monk said, "If the soul is immortal, then how can death be ominous? Death can be inauspicious only if the soul is mortal."

But the woman continued, "Drop this and talk about something else. Talk about God, talk about moksha. I haven't come to hear you speak about death."

Actually, people go to monks precisely to hear things which can somehow comfort them and alleviate their fears. They want someone who can tell them, "You are not going to die." They want to be told, "You are not a sinner; the soul is eternally pure, uncorrupted. Did you say you are a thief? Forget it, no one is a thief. Did you say you are a black-marketeer? That's all nonsense. Can the soul ever engage in black-marketing?"

The result is, all the black-marketeers gather around monks who keep saying, "The soul is pure, without blemish. It has always been incorruptible, it can never be defiled." And the man sitting in front, an old thief, nods his head in agreement and says, "You are absolutely right, your holiness! How true, your holiness!" He wants to believe, he wants someone to assure him that the soul is absolutely pure, so he can be free from the bother of becoming pure, so he won't have to be worried about becoming impure - so there will be no more fear.

We need to have a good understanding of the reality on which this mental condition is fundamentally based. We are not afraid of death, we are afraid of illness. And we are afraid to part with what we call life.

For example, you push me out of this house. I have no idea what lies outside this house -- whether there is a big palace, a forest, a desolate place, a desert -- I haven't the faintest idea. I am not sure whether I will be happy or unhappy outside the house. I don't know at all. Although outside the door lies the unknown, yet the fear of leaving the house makes me miserable. The house was dependable, known, familiar. It is frightening to leave the familiar and go into the unfamiliar. The fear is not really of the unknown, because I have absolutely no knowledge of the unknown. The fear is having to leave the known.

You will be surprised, but the mind is so possessed by the known that we find it difficult even to let go of our known illnesses. It is even difficult to give up our known miseries. Most physicians hardly ever cure your illness, they merely persuade you to drop the illness. Most medicines do nothing to your illness, they simply give you courage to get rid of it.

Recently, a well-known scientist conducted many experiments in this area. He took twenty patients suffering from the same illness. Ten of them he treated with medicine, while he kept the other ten only on water. The interesting thing was that the patients in both categories recovered together. Now what does this mean? What it means is simply that it is neither a question of medicine nor of water. The big question is that of persuading a man to drop his illness. If water does this work, then the patient can be cured by water. If homeopathic sugar pills succeed, then he is cured by the pills. If a charm proves effective, then it can cure too. If a patient has faith in a pinch of ash given by a fakir, then it can cure him too. Faith in the water of the Ganges also does the trick. Everything works.

Even a highly intelligent man such as Aristotle has proposed remedies which make us laugh. He was, one should say, the father of logic. He has proposed incredible cures; he could not have suggested them had they not been effective. The cures did work. For example, he has written that when a woman is in labor, apply horse dung on her stomach and the pain will stop completely -- a wise and intelligent man like Aristotle says this. Can it ever be possible that a woman can get over the pain of labor by applying horse dung on her stomach? But apparently it did work. The reason why a woman recovered from her labor pains is that basically a pregnant woman never has a pain in the stomach, she simply creates it while giving birth to a child.

The more frightened a woman is of giving birth the more her pain grows. And as she becomes fearful of the pain, she contracts the entire reproductive system. The child pushes its way out of her body, while the woman goes on contracting the whole system. This creates a conflict between the two, and the conflict causes pain. That's why most babies are born at night -- seventy percent of the babies -- because the mother won't allow the birth to happen in the daytime. She remains alert during the day and hinders the birth from happening. Hence, the baby is forced to take birth at night when the mother is asleep, when she is unaware. Therefore, seventy percent of the poor babies are unable to take birth in the daylight; they have to be born in the darkness of night.

There is a man called Levin. He teaches women to cooperate with their labor. He asks them to cooperate during childbirth, and has succeeded in having thousands of women deliver babies without any pain. He neither applies horse dung, nor gives an injection, nor ties a charm about a woman, nor brings any offering from a guru -- he does nothing of the sort. He merely persuades the woman to cooperate. He advises women, "Allow the child to take birth without creating any hindrance; cooperate with the child. Be filled with the feeling of giving birth to the child. That will be enough, you won't have any pain."

There are hundreds of tribes where women do not go through any labor pains. They go on working in the fields, and when the time comes they give birth to the child. The mother places the infant in a basket and resumes her work in the field.

Man does not even give up those illnesses he has been suffering for so long, he holds tightly to them. People even insist on keeping their chains. This fact came to light during the French revolution. Some of the most dangerous prisoners were kept in a large prison. They were sentenced to life imprisonment. Their chains were never to be taken off; they were to remain in them forever. Only when they died would the shackles be removed.

The revolutionaries broke down the prison walls and brought the prisoners out of their cells. The prisoners had given up all hope of ever coming out. Some were imprisoned for twenty years, some for thirty, and some were in there for fifty years. They had become almost blind. Their chains had almost become parts of their bodies; one could not say they were separate from their bodies. There was no longer any separation left between their bodies and the chains. Do you think chains tied around one's hands for fifty years would remain separate? They are bound to become part of one's hands.

The man forgets the chains are not part of his body. He takes care of them in the same way he does his hands. He cleans and shines the chains every morning as he does his body -- after all, the chains are to stay with him his whole life. If this is the case, then the whole matter is over.

So when the revolutionaries began cutting the chains off these prisoners, many of them objected. They told the revolutionaries that without chains they will feel very uncomfortable outside. But revolutionaries are always very pigheaded. They haven't learned yet that you can't be stubborn with people. If you force people to give up their existing chains, they will put on new ones. So the revolutionaries forcibly cut the chains and released the prisoners. What followed was incredible. By nightfall, more than half the prisoners returned, saying they didn't like it outside, they felt they were naked without their chains on them.

Obviously, if you remove the many golden ornaments worn by a woman, she will feel naked, weightless. She will feel as if she has lost something, as if she has lost weight. So the prisoners said, "Give us our chains back. We couldn't take a nap in the afternoon without the chains on us, how could we?" Even the sound of those chains became part of their psychological state. The added weight of chains had become so much a part of their psyche, their subconscious, that even while changing sides in sleep they felt it.

Man becomes so tied to the familiar that he feels hurt even breaking his chains. We are caught in the familiar, which we take as life. It is because of the grip of the familiar that we are so scared of death. In the first place, we have no knowledge of death. And the first principle for awakening is awareness of misery, so that one can know one is separate from the body.

The second thing is the ability to witness. It has never occurred to us that.... Sometimes, walking in the middle of the marketplace, suddenly give a little jolt to yourself, and for two minutes just stand still. Just watch without doing anything -- simply be a witness. The moment you stand as a watcher in the middle of the street, suddenly you will be severed from your surroundings and out of them. The moment you become a witness to something, you transcend it, you jump out of it. But it is very difficult to stand on a street and be a witness. It is not easy to be a witness even while watching a movie.

The darkness in the movie theater becomes quite convenient for people watching the movie. One can cry in that darkness without any feeling of embarrassment. If we examine the handkerchiefs of people as they leave the theater, we can find out what went on inside, how many people cried. We know very well nothing really takes place on the screen, it is just a screen. We also know perfectly well that what we see on the screen is merely an appearance, that nothing is happening there. It is simply a play of light and shadow, just a network of rays projected from the rear of the theater. The screen shows nothing except pictures. And yet, everything comes off on the screen, and we don't remain a witness even to the screen; we become a part of it.

Don't be under the illusion that while watching the film you really remain a watcher. Don't be mistaken. You become a participant too; you don't remain outside the film. Once you are inside the theater, for a short while you enter into the film as well. You begin to like someone in the film, and you dislike someone else. You feel sorry for somebody, while you feel happy about someone else. After a little while you become identified, you become a participant in the film.

It will be indeed difficult to remain a witness in life if we cannot manage to do so while watching a film. As such, life is nothing more than a film. If you look a little deeper, life is not very different from a movie. If you look even more deeply, you will find that just as the network of rays appears on the movie screen, the network of electricity appears on the screen of life.

Life is made up of a profound network of electricity. It is a great interplay of electrons. If the human body were to be dissected in every way, at the end you would find nothing except electrons. If we were to break down the wall of this room and look for the element it is made of, we would find that what is ultimately left is nothing but electricity. Then what is the big difference?

Really, what is the difference between a movie screen and the screen of life? We find the interplay of electrons on the movie screen too. The only difference is, on the movie screen the pictures are two-dimensional whereas on the screen of life they are three-dimensional. But that's not much of a problem. It won't be too long before other dimensions, now lacking in films, will be met.

Just as I see you now, someday one will be able to see people on the screen exactly like that. Without any difficulty, it will soon become possible for an actor to step out of the screen and walk around in the movie theater. It won't be too long. It's just a matter of developing the technique, which is not too difficult. If a three-dimensional man can move around on the screen, his stepping just ten feet off the screen and walking around the hall is simply a matter of a little advancement in technology. It's not too difficult to foresee a film actress stepping from the screen, shaking hands with you, or caressing you.

Now, the reverse is happening: the heroine does not step out of the screen; rather, you enter the screen and pat her. You can be saved this trouble! It's not good to cause you so much bother: you need not go through the inconvenience. It will become possible for you to remain seated in your chair and the heroine will come and caress you!

What goes on in life anyway? What transpires when I take your hand in my hand? When I hold your hand in my hand, you see it either as an expression of love or of enmity. It is just a matter of interpretation. In both cases the hand is held; the difference arises only in the interpretation.

When a hand is being held, in a moment both things can happen without much difficulty: initially the holding of hands can take place with the feeling of love, while in the end, the feeling of enmity may set them apart. This is not difficult to conceive. So much change comes about in a second.

When I hold your hand, you take it as my expression of love. But what is actually happening? Really, what is transpiring? If both our hands were to be examined, what seems to be going on? Some electrons are pressing against some other electrons. And the interesting thing is, my hand never touches yours. A space inevitably remains between the two. And sometimes it shrinks. When there is a distance the space becomes visible. As the distance shrinks, the space becomes less and less visible. If the distance becomes too narrow, the space disappears.

So when one hand is holding the other, there is always a space between the two. The pressure works on that very space, not on your hand. And in effect, the pressure of that empty space works on your hand. We interpret this pressure of the empty space as either love or enmity.

It is all a matter of interpretation. However, if one could become a witness and watch this holding of hands, an incredible thing happens. When someone holds your hand, don't be in a hurry to see it as either love or enmity. Just remain a witness to the holding of hands, and you will feel a total transformation in your consciousness.

When someone's lips are pressed on yours, forget about love etcetera, simply become a witness for a moment. You will have such a strange experience in your consciousness, one you may have never had before. Then it is possible you may laugh at yourself.

As long as you laugh at others, you are not a witness. The day you laugh at yourself, you become a witness. From that day on you begin witnessing. People all over the world laugh at others, only a sannyasin laughs at himself. And one who can laugh at himself has begun to see something.

Another thing is, be a witness in life -- anywhere, any moment. For example, while eating, suddenly become a watcher for a moment: watch your hand picking up the food; watch your mouth chewing the food; watch the food reaching your stomach. Stand at a distance and simply watch. You will suddenly find the taste has disappeared. All of a sudden, the act of eating will take on a different meaning. You will find that you are not eating -- food is being taken and you are merely watching.

There is a wonderful story. The story is....

Once a monk arrived on the outskirts of the town where Krishna lived. It was the rainy season and the river was flooded. The monk was on the other shore. The women of the village were anxious to feed the monk, but the river stood in the way. On their way they stopped by to see Krishna. They asked Krishna, "How are we to cross the river? The current is very strong, boats cannot cross. The monk has been without food for the last few days. Occasionally we receive some news about him. He is waiting on the other side, which is covered with thick forest. We must bring him food. Please show us a way to cross the river."

Krishna said, "Go to the river and tell her if the monk has never had any food in his entire life, if he has always been on a fast, she should make way for you." Since these were Krishna's words, the women believed him.

The women went ahead. Addressing the river they said, "O river! If the monk has been on a fast for all of his life, then please give way so we can bring him food."

The story goes that the river gave way. The women crossed the river and fed the monk. The food they had brought was more than enough, but the monk ate it all. When it was time to return, they realized all

of a sudden they had not asked Krishna the key to finding their way back. Now they found themselves in great difficulty.

Earlier they had said to the river that the monk had been fasting his whole life, how could they say the same thing now? The monk was not an ordinary eater; saying he was on a fast was far from the truth -- he had consumed all the food the women had brought. The monk didn't even wait for the women to offer him second or third helpings. There were no leftovers.

The women became very concerned. The monk asked, "Why do you look so troubled? What is the matter?"

The women said, "We are in great difficulty. We only knew the device for coming here, we don't know the key that will take us back." The monk asked what the device was that had brought them to him. The women said, "Krishna told us if we wanted to cross the river, we should tell the river that if the monk is on a fast, it should make a way for us."

The monk said, "So what is the problem? The same device will work again. The key which can lock can also unlock, and the one which can unlock can also lock. Use the same key again."

The women said, "How can we use it now? You have already eaten the food."

The monk burst into laughter, a striking sound on the bank of that river. The women were very puzzled. They said, "Here we are in trouble, and you are laughing!"

The monk said, "I am not laughing at you, I am laughing at myself. Go ahead and tell the river the same thing you said before. The river must have understood my laughter. Go and tell her once again."

With great fear, great hesitation and uncertainty, they approached the river and said, "O river, please give way if this monk has not had any food his whole life." They knew inside what they were saying was not at all true, but the river did make way for them.

The women were very puzzled. The miracle they had seen coming to this shore was nothing compared to what they saw on their way back. They went straight to Krishna and said, "This is too much! We thought you performed the miracle when we crossed the river the first time. But it is really the monk who performed the miracle. It was all right what we said on our way to see the monk, and it worked. But we said the same thing on our way back and the river gave way!"

Krishna said, "Of course, the river was bound to give way, because only he is a monk who never eats."

"But we saw him with our own eyes devouring all the food we carried with us."

Krishna said, "Just as you were watching him eat, the monk was watching himself eat as well -- he was not the doer of his action of eating."

This is only a story. Don't ever try to cross a river like this, you might put some monk in trouble unnecessarily! No river will give way. And yet the fact remains, if we could also see ourselves in all our actions not as a doer but as a watcher, in all our actions, then dying is an act too -- the final act.

If you can succeed in keeping yourself removed from your actions, you will be able to stay removed at the moment of death too. Then you will see. The one who was eating until yesterday; the one who was attending to his business, walking down the street; the one who quarreled, fought, loved, it is he who is dying. Then you will be able to watch one additional act, the act of dying. Exactly as other acts involved loving, running one's business, being in the marketplace, dying will also be an act. You will be able to see the same person who did all these other things dying.

There was a Mohammedan fakir by the name of Sarmad. A very sweet but strange incident took place in his life. As has always happened, the maulvis, the priests, filed a suit against him. The priest has always been against the mystic. Sarmad was summoned to appear in the emperor's court.

Mohammedans express their belief through a sutra, a maxim, and that is, "There is only one God; other than him there is no God. There is only one messenger of God and he is Mohammed." But the Sufi mystics drop the latter half of the sutra. They repeat, "There is no other God than the one God," but they drop the other half, "There is only one messenger of God and he is Mohammed," because they believe there are many messengers of God. That's why the Mohammedan theology has always been against the Sufis.

Sarmad was even more dangerous. He would not even repeat the Sufi sutra fully. He had even dropped half of that too. That sutra is, "Other than the one God, there is no God." Sarmad used to repeat only the latter half "... there is no God." Now this was too much. It was okay to drop Mohammed's name; that would not have made him an atheist, it would have simply amounted to his not being a Mohammedan. However, just because one is not a Mohammedan does not mean one ceases to be a religious person. But what can you do with a man like Sarmad? He said, "There is no God!"

Sarmad was brought to the court. The emperor asked, "You say there is no God. Is it true?"

Sarmad answered, "I do say so." And he proclaimed in a loud voice, "There is no God!"

The emperor asked, "Are you an atheist?"

Sarmad said, "No, I am not an atheist. But I have not known any God as yet, so how can I say God is? I say only as much as I know. In this sutra, so far I have come to know only one half of it, that there is no God. I don't know anything of the other half. The day I come to know it, I will let everyone know. How can I lie about it if I don't know? A religious man cannot lie."

It was a difficult situation. He was ultimately executed, beheaded in front of the Jama Masjid in Delhi.

This is not a story. Millions of people watched him executed. As he was beheaded at the front door of the masjid, the mosque, and as the head started rolling down the steps of the mosque, a voice came out of the rolling head, "There is only one God. There is no God other than the one God."

His lovers standing in the crowd said, "You crazy Sarmad, if you had to say it, why didn't you say such a simple thing before?"

Sarmad said, "How can one know him until one has lost his head? Now that I know, I say there is God, that no God exists other than him. But how could I have said this without knowing?"

There are truths we come to know only by passing through them. The truth of death is one of these. But in order that one may know death, one needs to prepare while one is still alive. The preparation for death has to be done while one is still alive. One who fails to do so, dies a wrong death.

Living a wrong life may be forgiven, but dying wrongly can never be forgiven, because it is the ultimate point, it is the very quintessence, the finale of life. Some mistakes committed here and there in life may be overlooked, but a mistake at the last moment of life will become firmly and permanently established forever. And the interesting thing is, you can repent for the mistakes committed in life -- they can be rectified -- but there is no way one can rectify his mistake, repent and ask forgiveness for it after death. Death becomes the final seal. Hence, a life lived wrongly may be excused, but a wrong death cannot be.

Remember, how can one who has lived wrongly in the first place die rightly? After all, life is bound to come to an end; it is life which will ultimately reach a point from where it departs. In fact, whatsoever I was during my lifetime, I shall depart as the sum total of that at the final moment of death. At that moment everything in my life will stand before me cumulatively. At the moment of death I will be the sum of my whole life.

Let me put it this way: life is a spread out phenomenon; death is a condensed one. In other words, life is a vast expanse, while death is the total, cumulative, condensation of this whole expanse -- the abridgment of it. Death is very atomic. Everything has come together in one atom; that's why there is no other phenomenon greater than death. But it occurs only once. This does not mean, however, that you have not died before. No, it has occurred many times before, but it occurs only once in one lifetime. And if you have lived this life remaining asleep, then death also takes place in the state of sleep. It comes anew in the next life, and again occurs only once.

So keep in mind, one who dies a conscious death takes a conscious birth in the next life -- that becomes the other part of his dying. And the life of one who dies and takes birth consciously functions on a totally different plane. For the first time, he is able to grab hold of the entire meaning of life, of the whole purpose of life, of the heights and depths of life, precisely and consciously. He is able to grasp the whole truth of life.

So, I have mentioned two things. First, in order that you may have a conscious death, become alert to the suffering, be aware of it. Don't run away from pain, don't escape from misery. The second thing I

said, while moving around and performing your day-to-day activities, suddenly stop and become a witness for a moment. Then resume your activity. If you can become a witness even for a few moments in twenty-four hours, you will find all of a sudden what a big madhouse this world is, and how, by becoming a witness, you step out of it.

When someone swears at you, immediately you become such a recipient you lose sight of the person swearing at you. As soon as he swears at you, you receive it. In fact, you receive it even before the words leave his lips. You receive the whole of it before the swearer has even managed to complete it. Actually, you receive twice as much as is sworn at you. Even the person swearing is taken aback to see how you received more than he swore. You completely fail to see what is happening.

If you could really see.... Next time when someone swears at you, become a watcher, don't be a receiver. Just be there and watch the person swearing at you. It will cause you to laugh at yourself, and the laughter will be liberating. You will laugh at your being the constant recipient of profanities all through your life. Perhaps you may even thank him and go your way. Doing so, you may leave the poor man guessing, because such an act would be beyond his comprehension. He would be totally at a loss.

In a period of twenty-four hours, whatsoever may happen -- in anger, in hate, in love, in friendship, in enmity, while walking, resting, whatever -- watch it sometimes for a moment, just for a moment. Give yourself a jolt just for one moment and watch what's happening with awareness. At that moment don't be a recipient, simply be a watcher of whatever is happening. Such calm will surround you in that moment: you will become so very aware, because at that moment you will be filled with meditation. That very moment of awareness is the moment of meditation.

If one could carry on these two experiments, then the rest of the things you have asked will follow. For instance, you ask, "If a seeker practices celibacy, will it help in death? Will he attain awareness?" In fact, he alone can attain celibacy who becomes a witness, not otherwise.

One who indulges is sure to remain sexual. An indulgent person means one who is lustful. He wants to indulge in sex. If one could be a witness, lust and sex would slowly and gradually disappear from one's life. If a man could become a witness during intercourse, perhaps he would never enter into it again, because everything would seem so meaningless, so worthless. Everything would look so childish that he might come to feel, "What's going on? What's happening? What's all this anyway? How have I managed to do this up to now? Why has all of this such a hold over me?" But since we don't become a witness, we keep on repeating it.

Actually, don't ever be a witness if you wish to continue repeating your mistakes. Every mistake will then repeat itself. Then again, every mistake has its own season, just goes on recurring. If you could keep a daily record of your life for a few months, you would immediately find yourself to be one of those who are periodically mad.

Just this afternoon I received a letter from a friend. He becomes insane every six months, and for the other six months he remains sane. He often used to ask me why this happens to him. I said, "You are able to know the difference because the duration of your sane and insane states is clearly defined. This

is not so with other people. They remain insane half a dozen times and are sane half a dozen times during the day, hence they are not able to figure it out. You stay insane for a solid period of six months and remain sane for another whole six months. The contrast is very clear." Ordinarily, a person goes mad ten times a day and behaves normally the other ten. Neither does he know nor do other people know when he is sane and when he is insane.

If, for a few months, you could keep a complete record of what goes on in your life, it will immediately become clear to you that all things repeat themselves. For example, anger recurs at almost the same time each day. Each day, you not only feel hungry at a fixed time, you get angry at a fixed time too. You feel hungry exactly at eleven o'clock. As soon as the clock strikes eleven or twelve or one in the afternoon, whatever, you feel hungry. At whichever time you take your meals, you feel hungry at that particular time. The body tells you it is hungry. In the same manner, you feel angry, sexual, loving, at a set time. These are all hungers too, and they arise at a fixed time.

You go on repeating the same mistakes, because you have never tried to realize the fact that whatsoever you do is all mechanical routine. And occasionally, this creates a problem. For example, you are hungry and there is no food around. Only then do you come to know you are hungry. If you find food when you are hungry, you will never know what hunger is. The matter is taken care of.

Similarly, when you are angry and there is no one around to vent your anger upon, only then can you know what anger is. But you do find someone around. Sometimes it happens that you are hungry and there is no food around, but it is very rare that you may not find anyone on whom you can air your anger. And when there is no one at hand, a person takes his anger out on inanimate objects. If nothing else, he bangs his fountain pen, swearing at it. If this man ever becomes aware of what he has done, what will he think of himself? What will this man think, really?

A great deal of research is being done in America to find the psychological causes for car accidents -- in a large number we seem to be responsible. In a state of anger, a man presses the accelerator harder without being aware of it. Perhaps, mentally, he may be pressing his wife's head, or his son's throat, but in that particular moment his foot is on the accelerator. In this case the accelerator is a substitute for his wife or son. He goes on pressing and forgets he is driving a car. In fact, he is riding on his anger, but no one knows what he is doing. The danger is obvious.

The car has nothing to do with this man's anger; the car has no knowledge of his anger. So far, we have not been able to create a built-in system, such that the car will refuse to move if the driver is angry. We have not been able to develop any such mechanism. The man presses the accelerator, and the car takes it to mean he wants to raise the speed. The car doesn't know it needs to go slow at that moment. It doesn't realize the man is in a dangerous situation, that the man is unable to see anything at that moment.

Within a period of twenty-four hours, the moments of anger, the moments of sex, keep recurring. We move in a set pattern like a machine. If you wake up and see, you may ask, "Am I really living, or am I just moving in a circle like an ox at a wheel?" Living, obviously, cannot be similar to being an ox at a

wheel. How can there be any life in moving round and round like an ox at a wheel? The ox simply moves mechanically. Has this ever occurred to you?

I was reading a book about a marvelous man who has done a wonderful experiment. He observed that you come across a man on the street and he says, "Hello, how are you?" and you answer, "I am fine, thank you." You may not have realized that the man neither cared to listen to your reply, nor had he asked the question with the intent of hearing your answer. He must be wanting to ask something else. Since it would have looked a little odd to start off abruptly, he began by asking, "How are you?"

Even on the phone, the man asks, "How is your health?" -- although he couldn't care less about your health; he has never been concerned about your health, nor will he ever be. Hence, no matter what reply you give, he is never going to listen to it. He will skip your answer and start talking about something else.

So the man decided to perform an experiment. One morning, someone called him on the phone and asked, "Hello, how are you?" And the man answered, "My cow gives a lot of milk."

The other fellow said, "That's good! How is your wife?" Hearing this, the man found out that no one really listens to what you say. We take things absolutely mechanically.

I was reading someone's biography. This man has traveled all over the world. In whichever country he went, he had to fill in all kinds of forms. He couldn't understand why he had to undergo the torture of filling out all these forms. So he started filling in absurd details. He did this everywhere he traveled. No government questioned him. He would write his age as five thousand years, and no one objected. Who reads these forms? Who bothers? Who is interested? Nobody cares. Life goes on absolutely off guard, mechanically. All answers are mechanical. Someone asks, "How are you?" You answer, "I am okay." Even computers can do this job. One computer asking, "How are you?" Another computer answering, "I am okay." That's how it is going on really. There is no consciousness, no alertness, no awareness -- nothing.

One needs to become a little aware of all this. One needs to be a witness. Just stop for a moment. Make any moment the moment to become alert. Give yourself a sudden jerk and look around in amazement. Just remain a watcher.

If you can prepare yourself in these two areas, you will become less and less angry. because a witnessing consciousness can never be angry. In order to be angry, one has to become identified, one has to become unconscious. A witnessing consciousness will go on attaining to celibacy because it cannot be consumed by sexual desire. A man of witnessing consciousness can never overeat, hence he doesn't need to take a vow to diet. Although we are not aware of it, food in itself is not the cause of our overeating. The reason lies much deeper.

For example, there is a man who overeats. Now he is not even aware of why he overeats. Has it ever occurred to you that when you are angry you eat too much? Have you ever kept account of it? Have you ever noticed consciously that you eat more when you feel the lack of love? Have you ever kept any record of it? Have you ever discovered consciously that when one's life is filled with love, one doesn't

eat much? When a man meets his beloved, he loses his appetite. The hunger disappears in moments of love. But when love is absent, he begins to eat voraciously. Why? There is a mechanical system, a long lasting psychological conditioning at work behind it.

A child receives both love and food from his mother. The very first experience of love for a child is that of receiving food. If the child does not receive food from the mother, he feels a lack of love; when she offers him food he feels love. So food and love are not two separate things in the child's initial experience; food and love are synonymous for him. For a child, the first experience of food and love is one and the same.

If a mother loves her child a lot, he drinks less milk, because he is always assured that he will have milk anytime, that he need not worry about the future. Hence, he doesn't find any necessity to overfill his stomach. So a child whose mother loves him a great deal will take less milk. A mother who does not love her child, who feeds him milk unwillingly, indifferently, who is always pushing the child away -- that child drinks more milk, because he is not sure. The mother may give him milk after a while, or may not. Who knows how long he may have to remain hungry?

Lack of love prompts the child to take in more food, while the abundance of love makes him take in less. This becomes part of his psychological conditioning. Whenever love flows in his life, he eats less. He begins to overeat when love stops coming to him, although now the connection is not so apparent, now it is just a mechanical routine.

Hence, people who feel a lack of love start overeating. But if you become aware of it, you will be greatly amazed. The question is not of taking a vow to eat less when you are overeating, the question is that something like love has not happened in your life. If you realize this, then you are able to catch hold of the root causes of the fundamental problem. Where does the trouble lie? What is really the matter?

One man suffers from overeating. He goes to a temple and vows before a muni, a monk, to eat once a day. However, he now consumes twice or three times more food during his once-a-day meal. He suffers from hunger the whole day and contemplates food the whole time. He turns into a maniac. Then he no longer remains just hungry, he goes crazy. He develops a craze for food. Then for twenty-four hours food becomes his sole concern.

Now in this country there are thousands of monks who live, brooding twenty-four hours a day about food. They are maniacs, they are mad. They don't realize what they have done to themselves, what kind of madness they are into. They are preoccupied with the thought of food all the time, as if that is the only subject left in the world to worry about, as if brooding about food from dawn to dusk is the only object in life. They think the problem will be taken care of if they work out the eating arrangement exactly as they want it to be.

When he was in America, Vivekananda had said, "My country would not have been ruined had our religion not become a religion of the kitchen. That caused its disaster." Can a religion remain worth its name if it turns out to be a religion confined to the kitchen? The reason why this happens is because we don't wake up and see our inner conditioning -- what we do, and when.

For example, there is a man and he is an alcoholic. People are after him: they want him to give up drinking. The man wants to give up drinking too, but he never cares to figure out why he goes on drinking anyway. Why does he wish to become unconscious? There must be something in his life he wants to forget all about, something which he would rather not remember. There is something in life he would like to draw the curtain on.

If this man could become aware of the thing he is trying to forget, perhaps some solution might be found. But instead he puts a cover on it. He goes on putting cover after cover, because there is something hidden behind it which he does not want to be exposed. Then his life becomes a continuous running about to cover things, and everything turns out a lie. Finally, a day arrives when it becomes difficult for the man even to figure out why he had wanted to forget things in the first place. He himself will have forgotten all about it. He himself will have no idea when and why he started drinking.

A man goes on puffing, dragging on a cigarette the whole day. Someone may ask, "What can the reason be? Why does he go on inhaling and exhaling smoke like that? There must be a secret behind this taking in and letting out smoke, because it is hard to imagine people all over the world smoking for nothing."

If he watches closely, a smoker can find out what makes him smoke a cigarette. Whenever he feels lonely, whenever he is without company, he immediately goes for a cigarette. He uses the cigarette as a companion, a rather inexpensive companion. It causes no problems. You can put it in your pocket, carry it wherever you like. You can sit alone and start working on it anytime. It's an occupation. In a sense, it's an innocent occupation; you are not causing any harm to anyone. You are harming yourself, more or less. You are just throwing the smoke out; you are just being occupied -- that's all.

Once I was traveling in a train. When traveling by train, it is my habit to sleep quietly as much as I can. A man traveling with me in the same compartment was bothered very much by my sleeping. He tried to wake me up several times. When I got up after six hours, took a bath, and got ready to go back to sleep again, the man could contain himself no longer. He said, "What in the world are you doing? I have read the same newspaper ten times, opened and shut this window several times, and here you are sleeping blissfully. I have never smoked as many cigarettes. It would be good if you stayed up."

He was right. Man is lonely even in a crowd. There are so many people around -- the wife, the sons, the daughters, the father, the mother, the whole family, such a mob, and everything else.... And yet man is lonely.

So far we have not been able to eliminate man's loneliness, so he goes on doing something or other to escape his loneliness. He smokes, he plays cards. He plays cards not only with others, but even with himself. The craziness reaches its limit when a man plays both hands. You can find even the most intelligent man doing this.

It seems even the so-called most intelligent man is not really intelligent. Why? One will have to become aware of this state, one will have to witness it. If this man, who plays both hands, could be filled with awareness for a moment and see the whole thing as a witness, would he not laugh at himself as you just did? Indeed he would laugh. He would wonder, "What is happening? What am I doing to my life?"

If this should become apparent, then one doesn't have to take a vow or an oath. Then one doesn't have to renounce anything; things which are worthless drop by themselves. If a man grasps the root causes and goes on becoming deeply aware of them, he reaches the point from where the causes can be rooted out without any difficulty.

Remember, you will be in trouble if you begin pruning the leaves of a tree, because once a leaf is pruned it is replaced by four new leaves. The tree believes you are interested in grafting, it is not at fault. The tree feels maybe you want four leaves, that's why you are pruning one, so it produces four leaves. When you see the four leaves, you panic and prune all four of them. That gives rise to sixteen new leaves!

No, things are to be rooted out -- simply pruning the leaves won't help. We have no idea of roots, we merely go on playing with leaves.

There are people who take a vow of celibacy. Once a friend of mine and I were guests in Calcutta. Our host was a seventy-year-old man, one of the most honest people I have known. Confiding in me one day, he said, "Please tell me, what shall I do? I have taken a vow of celibacy three times in my life."

What the old man said was fine, but the amazing thing was that my friend became very impressed by him. He exclaimed, "Three times?"

I told my friend, "Do you understand what taking a vow three times means?" Then I asked the old man, "Why didn't you take it a fourth time? Did your vow succeed the third time?"

He said, "No, the third time I lost my nerve." He was an honest man indeed. Taking the vow three times obviously means he broke it each time. And breaking the vow each time, the disappointment and frustration was bound to become profound. Breaking the vow three times, the loss of his self-confidence was sure to intensify. There was no way he could have shown any more courage to take the vow a fourth time.

So I told the man, "The monk who made you take the vow was, in fact, your enemy. You took him for a friend. He broke your will completely. Now even at the age of seventy you have no courage left to take a vow of celibacy." What's the reason? The leaves. You pluck one leaf, and three more come out. Can there be any vows of celibacy?

There are no vows of celibacy. One only needs to have an understanding of what sexual desire is. You need to become aware of sex. The fruit of celibacy comes from the awareness of sex. When a person becomes aware of his sexual desire, probes into it, understands it, lives it, recognizes it, he suddenly realizes the game in which he is engaged.

This game is no different from the game of cards I mentioned earlier. This whole game of sex is nothing but laying down playing cards. When this awareness reaches the depths of his being like an arrow, all of a sudden a man finds himself rising to celibacy. brahmacharya, celibacy, is not some kind of a vow.

Remember, religion has nothing to do with taking vows. People who take vows are never religious; they can never be. A religious man is one in whose life vows blossom like fruits -- as a consequence. The more he goes on watching life, the more he sees certain things constantly changing.

For example, a man is holding colored stones. You may cry in vain and tell him to throw the stones away, but he won't listen. Although they are colored stones, he sees them as colored diamonds. Looking at their shine and luster, he thinks they are diamonds. Obviously, how can he let them go? The man says, "We consider those people who gave them up, as gods. We are ordinary people, we can't cast them away."

The same man, when he comes across a diamond mine, sees diamonds all over. Now, will we need to convince him he should get rid of his colored stones? Before he realizes what has happened, he will have already dropped the stones, run and filled his hands with diamonds. If one were to ask him later on what he did with the stones he was holding in his hands, he might say, "I am glad you reminded me. I had completely forgotten about them. I don't know what happened to them. I don't know when they were dropped." When diamonds are in sight, one needs to empty his hands immediately.

Life is a positive ascent, it is not a negative descent. Life is a positive achievement, not a negative renunciation. As the witnessing consciousness grows deeper, new planes of bliss come to light. The layers of misery go on falling away; much garbage is thrown out. You keep throwing pebbles away, and diamonds begin to appear in your hands. These two things, the dropping of the nonessential and the acquiring of the essential, will always apply in following the points you have raised in your question.

So let your awareness of misery become intense, sharp. In that state, stop identifying with your body. Let your consciousness not become one with your body. And in all your day-to-day activities and operations, be a witness, not an experiencer.

Let me tell you a short story to explain to you what I mean. I have always loved this story.

Just recently, it seems the birthday of Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar was celebrated. Once he went to see a play. Ishwarchandra was a very well-known figure of his time, a very intelligent man. He was the honored guest and was seated in the first row. The play was in progress and there was a scene in which the villain is after the heroine to harass her. He tries to give her a hard time in every possible way. The scene reaches its climax when, finally, on a dark night in a thick forest, the villain catches hold of the woman. It is a very dark night. Everything is quiet; there is not a soul around. The villain grabs the woman. The woman screams, but her cry simply echoes in the stillness of the forest.

Ishwarchandra was watching the scene. He was a nice man. He couldn't take the villain's behavior any more. He lost his control. He got so enraged that he completely forgot it was just a play. He took off his shoe, jumped on the stage, and began pounding the villain. He started beating the actor! The actor took Ishwarchandra's shoe and placed it on his forehead to show his gratitude.

The actor showed more understanding than Ishwarchandra. Addressing the audience, he said, "Never before have I received a greater award than this. It is indeed a tribute to an actor's skills that an intelligent man such as Ishwarchandra should take the play to be real."

Addressing Vidyasagar, the actor said, "Sir, I shall treasure this shoe; I won't return it to you. This is my greatest reward."

If a person such as Vidyasagar took a play to be real, how can ordinary people like us comprehend what it means to take as play what we hold to be real? But with a few experiments of being a witness, we will be able to understand what it means: reality will begin to look like a drama. If this happens, then it is possible to enter death with awareness.

And Now, And Here, Vol 2

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Question 1

IN ONE OF YOUR DISCOURSES YOU HAVE SAID: IN DEEP MEDITATION, IF THE LUMINOUS BODY, THE SUBTLE BODY OF A MAN OR A WOMAN GOES OUT OF THE PHYSICAL BODY, IT CANNOT BE BROUGHT BACK WITHOUT THE HELP OF THE OPPOSITE SEX, BECAUSE BY THEIR TOUCH AN ELECTRIC CIRCUIT IS COMPLETED AND THE CONSCIOUSNESS THAT HAS GONE OUT OF THE BODY RETURNS IMMEDIATELY. YOU HAVE EVEN NARRATED YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE WHEN YOU WERE MEDITATING SITTING ON A TREE. IN THAT STATE, YOUR PHYSICAL BODY FELL DOWN AND YOUR SUBTLE BODY KEPT WATCHING IT FROM THE TREE. THEN, BY THE TOUCH OF A WOMAN, YOUR SUBTLE BODY REENTERED THE PHYSICAL BODY. SO THE QUESTION IS: IN THIS TECHNIQUE WHY IS THE OPPOSITE SEX NEEDED? AND FOR HOW

LONG? IS IT NOT POSSIBLE TO RETURN TO THE PHYSICAL BODY WITHOUT THE OTHER'S HELP? WHAT IS THE DIFFICULTY?

A few things need to be understood. First, the entire system in this universe is based on the polarity of the positive and the negative. Wherever there is attraction, wherever you see the pull you will find the two parts, negative and positive, working there. The male-female division, or the division of sex, is part of that larger polarity.

In the language of electricity, the negative and positive poles attract each other with great force. The same principle is behind the attraction between man and woman. There is no fundamental difference between the nature of this attraction and a piece of iron being pulled by a magnet. If the piece of iron could speak, it would also say, "I have fallen in love with this magnet, now I can't live without it. Either I'll live with it, or die with it." If the piece of iron were able to speak, it would have written as many poems on love as have been written by human beings. Its inability to speak is the only difference, otherwise the attraction is the same. If you can understand the nature of this attraction, it will be easy for you to follow a few other things.

This attraction is generally experienced by all, but it can be of value in the spiritual sense too. And in certain conditions it even becomes inevitable. For example, if a man's subtle body should ever accidentally come out of his physical body -- accidentally, without any previous arrangement or a spiritual practice to bring it out -- it becomes difficult for the subtle body to return. Similarly, if a woman's subtle body happens to leave her physical body by accident -- in some illness, in a mishap, because of an injury, or while pursuing some spiritual practice -- without her planning for it, it becomes very difficult for the subtle body to come back, because in such a case the person neither knows the way to go out of the body, nor does he know the way to return to the body. The presence of the opposite point of attraction in such situations can be helpful.

The touch of a woman makes it convenient for the subtle body of man to return to the physical body. This is similar to placing a sheet of glass between the magnet and a piece of iron. The iron will still be attracted to the magnet regardless of the sheet of glass in between. So in spite of the man's physical body lying in between, the touch of a woman will help bring back the subtle body. The magnetic force will cause it to happen. A woman's subtle body can be similarly helped to come back if it has gone out accidentally. But it has to be an accidental happening; such assistance is not necessary if the experiment is planned beforehand. Why is it so?

If you have heard my previous talks, you may recall I had said that each man's first body is male and his second body is female. A woman's first body is female and her second body male. If one has made arrangements to let his subtle body go out, then he doesn't need a woman's body. He can use his own second body -- which is female -- for the return of the subtle body. Then the other woman is not needed. This is possible however, only if the experiment is well-planned -- the leaving of the body should not be accidental.

When such an event happens by accident, you remain unaware of the other bodies present inside you. Neither do you have any idea of how these bodies function, nor do you know how to make use of them. So it is possible that the subtle body of a man may return without any help from a woman, but this too will be as much accidental as the leaving of the subtle body. Therefore, one cannot be very sure about it.

No one else has done as many experiments on the inner life of man as the tantrikas. Hence, in every tantric workshop -- where the greatest amount of work was done on the inner bodies of man -- the presence of a woman had become inevitable. Not the presence of an ordinary woman, but of a special woman. Virgin girls were highly valued in Tantra, because if a woman has had sexual intercourse with many men, her magnetic force dissipates. This was the only reason why virgin girls were required.

If a woman has been in a sexual relationship with more than one man, or many times with one man, her magnetic force wears down. Old age is not the only reason why an old woman looks less attractive. The same goes for man. The most fundamental reason is that their polarity weakens -- the man appears less a man, and the woman less a woman. If one could stay a man or a woman until one grows old, he or she would never cease to be attractive. The dynamics of staying a man or a woman until the end is what brahmacharya, celibacy, is all about.

There is a lady in America who is over seventy -- and there is no other woman in that country who can surpass her in attractiveness. Even at this age she needs special police protection. This woman has obviously succeeded in preserving her magnetic elements even until the age of seventy, A man can do the same as well. Prithvisinghji is sitting here. Even though he is quite old, the element of youth is very much present in him. He has saved his magnetic force for a much longer period. Somehow he has still remained attractive even to this date, even at this old age.

So in Tantra, virgin girls became very valuable in pulling the consciousness of the seeker back in the body. These virgins had to maintain their sanctity very meticulously so that their magnetic power would not leak out. There are ways to increase this power as there are ways to weaken it. Various asanas, body postures, such as siddhasana, padmasana, were devised specifically with the idea of preventing this power from escaping outside the body.

There are certain points in our body through which our magnetic power moves outwards. For example, it flows through our fingers. Actually, in order for this energy to flow outward it needs a pointed thing to pass through. It can't flow out of anything circular -- there it keeps turning around. It flows out of the toes as well. So hands and feet are the two main outlets from where this power flows out. That's why in siddhasana, or in padmasana, the hands and feet are meant to be joined together so that the energy flows from one hand to the other and does not move out.

Eyes are another big opening from where the magnetic power flows out. However, this power stops flowing if one can manage to keep them half-closed. You will be amazed to know that the energy flows not only when eyes are wide open but also when they are fully closed. It doesn't flow when the eyes are half-open. When the eyes are half-open and half-closed, a situation occurs in which the circuit created inside the eyes is broken. The energy wants both to move out and stay in. The energy is divided within --

half wants to flow out, while the other half wants to move in. Both oppose and negate each other. Hence, the half-open eyes became very significant -- in Tantra, in Yoga, and so on.

If the energy is conserved from all sides and the individual is aware of his opposite body within, the other is not needed. However, once in a while things happen accidentally. In the state of meditation, for example, a moment comes when without the person's knowledge this phenomenon occurs. In such a case help from outside may be taken. But it is not required except under unexpected situations.

As I see it, if husband and wife cooperate with each other, they can become partners in the spiritual sense too. If both understand completely each other's spiritual states, the magnetic and electric forces of each other, and cooperate, they can have the inner experience much more easily than a male or a female sannyasin can have it alone. Besides the fact that both come to know each other closely, their magnetic power finds a deep adjustment as well.

Hence one experiences a very strange thing. If a man and a woman are deeply in love, feel very close to each other, are very intimate, have no conflict, they begin to reflect each other's vices and virtues. So much so that if the couple is very much in love, their voices begin to resemble, their facial expressions look similar. A harmony between their personalities begins to show up. In fact, the electricity they contain within enters into each other. By and by both become homogeneous. But this is not possible if a discord exists between them. So it is useful to keep in mind that man and woman can be helpful to each other. The conjugal relationship between husband and wife is not limited merely to sex -- it can become a relationship to experience samadhi as well.

It's also worth noting in this regard that generally, a sannyasin looks very attractive. No ordinary person attracts women as much as he does. There is no other reason for this except that a male sannyasin contains a great reservoir of magnetic forces. Similarly, compared to an ordinary woman a female sannyasin looks far more attractive to men -- for the simple reason that the magnetic power is stored up in her.

Should husband and wife also conserve this power and understand well how not to lose it, they can prove much more helpful in saving each other's magnetic power rather than causing it to dissipate. You may recall my previous talks in which I have said that even sex can prove to be the conserver of energy if practiced with the knowledge of various yoga techniques and the discipline of Tantra.

So remember, the role of the opposite sex is essential only in accidental situations. However, the physical assistance from the opposite sex is not required in every case. Many times, even when the phenomenon occurs unexpectedly, the subtle body returns. But in that case it is the inner woman that makes it possible. So one way or another, the woman is inevitably instrumental, the man is inevitably instrumental.

Question 2

WHAT ARE THE PRECISE METHODS FOR COMING BACK IN THE BODY? PLEASE EXPLAIN.

Something needs to be understood in this regard too. Ordinarily, we don't realize that every touch of ours contains magnetism. When we are filled with love and touch a person, the person can feel the different quality of touch. When we are filled with hatred and touch someone, the difference is noticed too. When we touch somebody with indifference, the person knows as well. In all three cases the magnetic element in us flows in different channels. Furthermore, if one concentrates his mind just on one's hands with a total will, the magnetic forces become very strong. Mesmer calls them "magnetic passes."

Make a person lie naked. Spread both your palms four inches above his head -- don't touch his body. Now vibrate your hands vigorously and move them from head to toe -- keep your hands four inches away from the body. If you do this for fifteen minutes, the person will attain such enormous peace, such profound sleep -- the kind of sleep he may have never had before. Don't touch him -- simply create electric currents with your hands from a distance of four inches. Just feel the electric currents are flowing and, shaking both hands, move them from head to feet.

Aldous Huxley's wife has narrated a strange incident in her memoirs. She had met Huxley while his first wife was still alive. She was a psychiatrist and Huxley had approached her for treatment. She went to his house for his psychoanalysis. She made him lie on a couch and talked to him for almost two hours. She realized, however, that Huxley was such an intelligent man that it was very difficult to get anything out of him -- obviously, intelligent people are difficult to deal with!

Whatsoever she said, Huxley knew more than that. The books she referred to, Huxley had read those and many more. Huxley even explained to her the meanings of the words and terminology she used in talking to him. It became a difficult situation. The patient was wiser, more learned, more intelligent than the therapist.

Huxley was one of the wisest people of this age. The lady was just an ordinary doctor, a psychiatrist, while Huxley was a remarkable man. She became nervous in about a couple of hours. She realized that the use of scientific terminology was leading her nowhere. Naturally, those who are aware of the exact meanings of words often fail to reach the real meanings -- they remain stuck with the literal meaning.

She became very confused. It became apparent to her that what she was doing would not work. But she remembered suddenly that Huxley knew something about the magnetic passes. So she said, "I have heard you know something about magnetic passes. Is it true?" Hearing this, Huxley got up at once. Up to now he was answering her rather reluctantly; now he became very interested. He asked her to lie on the couch.

Just so that Huxley may have a chance to do something and take some interest, she lay down on the couch. Huxley had indeed become uncomfortable lying there for about two hours. So while the lady lay on the couch, Huxley gave her passes from a distance of four inches from her body. It's a very simple technique. Keep your fingers four inches away from the face and shake them vigorously. Feel electricity flowing through the fingers and move them from head to toe.

Huxley followed this technique and within ten minutes the lady went into a deep peaceful state. She had created the whole thing just as a means to bring some excitement in Huxley. Then she got up and asked him to lie down.

The lady went home after a while, but she couldn't get out of her drowsiness. She remained all the while as if in a state of sleepiness, she couldn't figure out what was happening. She called Huxley's wife on the phone and told her how she was in that funny space. Huxley's wife asked, "Did Huxley wake you up?"

The woman replied, "No, he didn't wake me, I got up by myself."

Hearing this, the wife called out to Huxley, "You forgot to wake up Laura -- she is still in the sleepy state."

Huxley said, "Before I could wake her, she got up on her own. Then we began talking and I forgot the whole thing."

Huxley had not withdrawn the energy he gave her through the magnetic passes; it followed her for about two days. So when the energy is transmitted, hands move from head to feet; when it is taken back, hands move from the feet to the head.

There are certain points in the body which are very sensitive; the energy passes through them very quickly. The most sensitive of all points is between our two eyes. It is called the agya chakra, or the third eye. It is the most sensitive spot in our body. If you sit with your eyes closed and someone points his finger in between your eyes four inches away from you, you will soon begin to see the finger inside -- although you won't see outside because of closed eyes. The finger will not touch you from outside, but you will begin to feel its touch from within and the chakra will be activated inside. If the same experiment were carried out even on a sleeping person, his chakra would become active in sleep.

The second most active point is at the back of your neck. It would be fun some time to experiment on this center. For example, a stranger is walking ahead of you. If you focus your eyes on the back of his neck from a distance of four feet and give him suggestions to look back, in a few minutes you will find the man looking behind him nervously. You can even make him look behind from his left or right -- whichever way you suggest, he will look back. You can even suggest to him to turn on the next street instead of going straight ahead. After a few experiments, when you become confident, you can make a person go astray. You can make him go where he never wanted to go.

When children are kidnapped, their hands and feet are not tied; rather, the center at the back of their necks is worked on. If one attempts to tie their limbs openly on the street, children can yell and scream and draw people's attention. The kidnapper can be easily caught. But if one knows how to act on the center at the back of the neck, one can take anybody with him wherever he wants. And the interesting thing is, this man X, for instance, will be walking behind Y, the person he is working on. So no one can accuse X of leading anybody away. Although Y will be walking ahead of X, he will be only following X's suggestions. X can make Y walk, turn, move whichever way he wants. He can take Y wherever he wants.

So these two points are very significant. There are many other points in the body, but it is better not to discuss them. These two centers are simple and straightforward. As I pointed out in my previous talk, any woman who went to see Gurdjieff immediately felt some work happening on her sex center. Many intelligent women went to see him and their experience was the same. As soon as they would go to Gurdjieff, immediately their sex center would become active -- some strange intense sensation would begin making a circular movement at that point. It's a tremendously sensitive point. The navel is also one such center. There are many other centers as well.

So the question is, if a man's consciousness has gone out, where should the body be touched so that it can be brought back? Generally we need to know the man's personality; we must know which point in his body was most alive. If he is sexual, then touching his sex center would enable his subtle body to return at once. If he is an intellectual, lives through intellect, then the body would return by touching the agya chakra. If the person is sentimental, emotional, then the subtle body can be brought back by touching his heart. So it will all depend on the center through which the person lives the most.

Remember, when a person dies his life force leaves from the very center he has lived through most. And the same is the point for his subtle body to enter his physical body as well. For example, when a sexual man dies his life force departs through his genitals. There is a complete science which describes how by observing a dying man, you can tell which center in his body was most active, because that is the center which breaks down at the moment of death.

We still observe an age-old practice at the time of cremation; it's a practice which although now totally meaningless, was conceived once upon a time at a great moment of realization. At the end of cremation we break the skull of the burning body with a staff. The blow is made at the point of the sahasrar, the seventh chakra.

The fact is that the skull of a person who attains to sahasrar breaks open at the moment of death. His vital energy escapes from that point. Now in the foolishness of hoping that the life breath of our beloved one will pass through the sahasrar, we have been following the tradition of breaking the skull at cremation. This is quite meaningless because the man's life breath has already escaped through another center. However, one who at the moment of his death has attained the highest state of consciousness, a hole appears on his forehead because the life breath escapes from that point. Ever since people came to notice this fact, they have been breaking skulls at the cremation ground -- affectionately, in the hope that this way the vital breath of their dead beloveds may leave through that center, although actually the person is dead, the vital breath is already out.

The center of our life is the same from where our vital breath departs. That's why on touching this center the subtle body returns immediately. Although this center is different in each individual, ninety out of a hundred people will have sex as their center, because the whole world is obsessed with sex. So if you are unable to figure out, touching the sex center will do. If that doesn't work, then most probably it is the agya chakra, the third eye, because with people who are very intelligent or who use their intellect a great deal, their sex energy turns into intelligence. If both centers fail, then one should touch the heart center. Those who are neither very sexual nor very intelligent are emotional people.

These three are the common centers. Then there are some uncommon centers too, but there are very few uncommon people with such centers. By touching these common centers....

In exercising this touch, a few things need to be taken into account. If a particular center is predominantly active in the person who is applying the touch, then it creates an unusual situation. For example, if a person whose agya chakra is active were to touch somebody's heart center, it will have very little effect. The whole thing has a science of its own.

Hence, it is always dangerous to practice these experiments on one's own -- experiencing the seven bodies, out of the body experience, and so on. A school, an ashram where there are people who understand the whole system, who can be of some assistance -- is the place appropriate for conducting such experiments. That's why in the tradition of monks who decided to remain parivrajakas, wandering monks, the seven chakras, the seven bodies all disappeared... because a wandering monk cannot make use of them. Monks who are continuously on the move, roaming around, never staying at one place, can't experiment much in these areas. Therefore, great experiments in these fields were carried out only in the monasteries and the ashrams.

For example, there is a monastery in Europe where no man has ever entered. The monastery is about fourteen hundred years old. Only nuns reside in it. Once a woman is admitted she can never come out of it. Her name is struck from the citizens' list; she becomes as good as dead. The world becomes meaningless to her, she no longer exists for the world.

A similar kind of monastery exists for men too. In creating this monastery the esoteric Christianity had done a remarkable job. No woman has ever entered in that men's monastery. No man who has entered has ever come out of it. Both these monasteries are close to each other. Should a monk's subtle body leave his physical body, a woman's touch will not be necessary. It is enough to place him next to the wall of that women's monastery. The whole monastery is charged. No man has ever entered it. There are thousands of women inside. There are thousands of men inside the men's monastery. It is not an ordinary resolve, it's an extraordinary determination. It's a resolve to embrace death while being alive. Now there is no way to turn back.

The secretmost sciences could develop in these monasteries because they were very convenient for carrying on experiments. The tantrikas had also created such facilities but by and by they were wiped out. And we are responsible for it, because the foolish puritanical attitudes of people in this country had declared tantrikas immoral. If a naked woman is worshipped in a monastery, it will obviously upset the man of ethics and morality in the outer world. It is indeed dangerous if it becomes known that in a monastery a woman sits naked and seekers worship her. About the naked woman being worshipped by men, a man outside is bound to project his own mind, his own acts.

So we destroyed a great many monasteries, a great many scriptures in this country. King Bhoja alone slaughtered one hundred thousand tantrikas. They were murdered en masse throughout the country, wherever they were found. The reason was they were carrying on certain experiments which would have brought an end to the entire priesthood, to the so-called morality and the puritan mind of this country. If their experiments were right, then all our morality is wrong.

It was the experience of tantrikas that if a man performs a particular kind of worship before a naked woman with the feeling of reverence, he becomes free from women forever. Similarly, if a woman performs particular kinds of worship before a naked man, she becomes free from men forever.

The magnetic forces between man and woman are actually designed to unite them. So it is not a small thing if a man becomes capable of looking at a naked woman before him with a feeling of reverence. Although nature has equipped man to enjoy woman, should a man become adept at looking at a woman with reverence his magnetic force -- the energy which otherwise moved toward the outer woman -- begins to flow toward the inner woman. That's the only way it can be, because his attraction for woman disappears. Now she becomes a mother to him. Now he looks upon her as a goddess. She becomes someone who is venerable.

Once the energy is reversed, where will it go? Obviously the energy is never destroyed; one simply changes its course. No energy is ever destroyed, only its course is diverted. If the woman outside becomes an object of worship, the energy begins to flow inward and the meeting with the inner woman occurs. Once the union with the inner woman has taken place, a meeting with the woman outside has no purpose, it becomes meaningless.

There were specific procedures, particular states of mind, special meditations, certain mantras, definite words, select techniques in order to worship a naked woman. The union with the inner woman occurred when the experiment included all these ingredients. The entire system was similar to how it is in a science laboratory.

We all know that the combination of hydrogen and oxygen makes water. This does not mean however, that if you fill your room with hydrogen and oxygen, water will result. Just the presence of both hydrogen and oxygen is not enough. A high voltage of electricity is required to convert the hydrogen and oxygen into water. The rainwater is caused by the lightning. Hydrogen and oxygen both are present, but only when the lightning flashes with such a powerful force that the heat generated by that electricity brings about a mixture of both the gases, is water created.

God forbid, but such an unfortunate day may come -- thanks to our scientists -- that we may be left with books which simply mention that water is created by combining hydrogen and oxygen. But just this much will not help in creating water. The same is true with the books on Tantra. The books contain only this much information, that by worshipping naked women with the feeling of devotion, the energy flows inward. But we have no idea how some charge of electricity, how some special occurrence of this kind is needed for this phenomenon to happen. Let's look at it this way.

You may have heard the Tibetan mantra: om mani padme hum. If you repeat this mantra, you'll find that several parts of your body are involved in uttering these words. For example, the word Om reverberates above the throat level, while the word Padme reaches the navel, and Hum to the sex center.

Just uttering this mantra repeatedly will show how it penetrates into the different parts of your body. Now this mantra, Om Mani Padmi Hum... if the word Hum is repeated often, its powerful impact stops

the outward flow of the sex center. With the repeated use of this Hum, the sexuality of man is destroyed, it disappears.

Many techniques were performed before the naked woman. It is easy to find out whether a technique is working or not if the worshipping man is naked as well and the other seekers are watching him. But watching a naked woman from outside, one cannot be sure whether or not she is sexually aroused; her sexual mechanism is hidden inside her body. Watching a naked man however, one can instantly find out whether he is sexually aroused or not. Mahavira allowed only those monks to stay naked who had practiced deeply the sound of Hum. They could be permitted to remain naked, their sex organs were not affected even in sleep.

You will be surprised to know, but ordinarily it is difficult to find a man who doesn't have an erection two to four times during sleep at night -- whether he is aware of it or not. In America, where a great deal of research is being done on sleep, a very amazing thing has been noted: every man invariably has an erection two to four times in sleep at night. Whenever dreams center around sex, the genitals are affected. If dreams can affect sex organs, then words can too. If dreams can affect sex organs, then pictures can as well. After all, what are dreams?

So there is a whole system for transformation, the energy can be turned inward. In the context of turning the energy inward, it may be asked: Why wasn't there a tantric system where the man would stand naked and women would worship him? This needs to be understood as well.

There never was any tantric system where a naked man was worshipped by a woman because such practice was found unnecessary. There are a few reasons behind this. The first reason is that whenever a man is attracted toward a woman, he wants to see her naked. The woman has no such desire. Man is a voyeur. Man wants to see the woman naked; the woman has no such interest. This is the reason why during intercourse ninety-nine out of a hundred women close their eyes, while man keeps his eyes open. Even when you kiss a woman, she keeps her eyes closed. There is a reason for it: she doesn't want to live that moment outwardly. To her, this moment has nothing to do with what is outside. She wants to enjoy this moment inwardly, within.

This is the reason why men have created so many statues, films, paintings of women in the nude, but women have as yet taken no interest in nude men. Neither do they keep photographs of nude men, nor do they paint nude men or hang calendars of nude men in their homes -- they have absolutely no interest in seeing a nude man. Women have never shown any interest in nude men, but man's interest in nude women is very deep. A nude woman may well become instrumental in man's transformation, but a nude man would only cause a woman to close her eyes -- nothing more. So a similar technique is meaningless for women.

A woman's transformation happens differently. It is important to keep in mind that a woman is the passive sex -- she is not aggressive, she is receptive. No woman can be aggressive. She never even goes to anyone on her own to say, "I love you" -- let alone being aggressive about it. Even expressing this much would be an act of aggressiveness on her part. Even when a woman falls in love with somebody,

she works it out in such a way that the man goes to her and says, "I love you." A woman never goes and says such things on her own. She can't even commit this much of an aggression.

When a man approaches a woman and says, "I love you," even if the woman would like to respond favorably, she says, "No" instead of "Yes." She refrains from cooperating in man's aggression by not saying even as little as "Yes." She will say "No." She will refuse. The fact that a woman's refusal actually indicates her approval is a different matter. A woman's denial, in this case, contains acceptance. The woman's "No" will of course reflect the "Yes" as well as her pleasure; but she'll be unable to say "Yes."

Man has to initiate the woman in sexuality, he has to lead her in the world of sex. However, if a man seeing a nude woman becomes one with his inner energy instead of becoming sexually aroused, the phenomenon proves to be of immense value for the woman. The inward-going energy of a man helps the woman's energy to go within -- it becomes an initiation for her. Just as man succeeds in leading a woman into sex, if he could also transcend sex in her presence he can initiate her into transcending sex as well. That's why a separate system for woman was not discovered -- there was no need for it.

Question 3

WHAT HAPPENS TO WOMEN WHO ARE OF MASCULINE NATURE?

This is possible, and there are reasons for it. It will be useful to talk about it a little. Actually, it is not quite correct to say that someone is a man and someone is a woman. In fact, no one is only a man or a woman. Being a man or a woman is a matter of degrees. For a certain period, a child in the mother's womb contains both sexes -- it is neither clearly male nor female. The fetus gradually develops into either a male or a female.

This progression is also just a matter of degree. When we identify someone as a 'man', it means he is sixty percent male and forty percent female, or seventy percent male and thirty percent female, or ninety percent male and ten percent female. When we say 'woman', it means the female element in her is proportionately greater than the male element. Occasionally it happens that a man is fifty-one percent male and forty-nine percent female -- a very minor difference. Such a man will appear to be feminine. Similarly, if a woman is fifty-one percent female and forty-nine percent male, she will look very masculine. If such a woman were to find a feminine husband, she will immediately take a dominant role.

In a case like this we commit a linguistic error. In a situation like this, if we were to use language correctly, the man should be called the wife, and the woman the husband, because the one who is dominant is the master. In that case we must drop 'husband' and 'wife' as synonyms for man and woman.

Truly speaking, 'husband' stands for a particular function. To be a husband is a position in itself -- either a man or a woman can be in that position. To be a wife is also functional -- either a man or a woman can fulfill that function. Many men live and function as wives. Many women live and function as husbands.

So the high or low male/female ratio in their personalities causes men and women to live such lives. And once in a while it happens that either a man accidentally, in some illness, becomes a woman, or a woman changes into a man.

Some time ago there was a case in London in which a woman turned into a man soon after her marriage. A suit was filed accusing her of cheating the man she was married to. The suit contended that she was already a man at the time of their marriage and the man had been deceived. It became very difficult for the poor woman to prove that she was indeed a woman at the time of marriage, that she turned into a man afterwards. But medical science came to her rescue and it was proved that she was a woman at the time of marriage, but on the verge of becoming a man. She was a marginal case -- one more step and she could have turned into a man. And she moved that one step.

In the future it will not be too difficult for science to make it possible for men and women to change their sexes if they wish. And it is good, because people after all do get bored playing the same role -- a change is needed.

Women who have the male element more in them will become domineering. And such women will always remain unhappy. The reason is, such domineering element is contrary to their feminine nature; hence their misery will be endless. Actually, a woman likes a man who can dominate her. No woman likes a man who becomes dominated by her. A woman with a high degree of male element will dominate and suffer unhappiness too, because she didn't find a man who would dominate her. Her misery will have no end. The situation with the man however is that his happiness lies in the woman surrendering to him. But if he surrenders to her on his own, the woman will always remain uneasy -- she will never be satisfied.

So being a man or a woman should not be a marginal thing. But the kind of system we have developed is by and by causing men and women to live marginally. We have only our civilization to blame for this. In fact the way our culture has evolved, it has made the roles of men and women almost identical. This has proved harmful. Because of it the woman's femininity has declined, and so has man's masculinity -- although ideally, both need to be on the extreme poles.

A man should be ninety-nine percent male and one percent female -- one percent effeminacy is bound to remain, that he cannot avoid. A woman should be ninety-nine percent female and one percent male. For this to be possible, it is necessary that there should be different exercises for both, different diets, different kinds of education. It is essential that their entire discipline of life be different; only then will we be able to place them as two polarities.

The day man will grow in his understanding, we won't want women to become like men and men like women. That day we will want a woman to be like a woman and a man like a man. And we will want a big gap between the two, because the greater the distance the more attraction between the two, the

more juice flows between the two. The greater the distance, the more joy of union between the two. The lesser the distance the less juice flows between the two, the less joy in their meeting.

But this is what has happened. In the process of becoming civilized, man has become more and more soft and tender. Since he neither goes to fight battles, nor does he go to work in fields, fight animals, or break stones, his feminine personality has begun to grow. He has become soft, he has lost his muscles. A very basic part of his manhood has disappeared.

The woman is coming closer to being a man. She is receiving the same education as men. If she needs to be successful within the male-oriented structure of society she has to compete with men, she has to perform the same jobs as men do. She has to be like man if she needs to work in the factory. She has to behave like men if she chooses to work in an office environment. In such situations she is just nominally a woman. Biologically, her being a woman becomes meaningless, because in all other respects she remains a man. She performs the same jobs that are performed by men. She stays in competition with them.

On the one hand man is becoming more and more womanish, less virile. On the other hand, the woman is moving closer to man, she is becoming mannish. This has proved very harmful. The greatest harm it has caused is that no woman is able to feel satisfied with any man. The same is true with man. Consequently, both suffer from discontentment twenty-four hours a day. This is bound to happen. Until we have enabled man and woman to be on the opposite polarities, distinct from each other, their suffering is inevitable. This factor is responsible for their suffering -- which is sick. Otherwise, there is no reason for it.

Question 4

CAN WE NOT CALL THIS PERVERSION? CAN WE NOT CALL THESE PEOPLE PERVERTS?

It is not a question of calling them perverts, it is an accident. It has nothing to do with perversion. It is basically an accident, and ways should be found to save oneself from such an accident. The one who is a victim of such an accident deserves pity, he should not be called a pervert. The person is not at fault. Unless we care to bring about a qualitative change in people with respect to their effeminacy or masculinity, which is not too difficult, all our efforts to correct them are acts of foolishness. By injecting hormones the person can be made feminine or masculine -- but we don't think along these lines.

If a woman nags her husband, harasses him, dominates him, the husband never thinks of consulting a doctor. He prefers rather to bring her to a monk, a holy man, for him to counsel her. The fact is, the holy man is the least responsible in this matter, he has nothing to do with it. There is no question of anyone counseling the woman. She needs hormones which can make her more feminine. Such hormones can be given -- there is no problem in it. If a man shows feminine tendencies and his wife no longer finds him

interesting, there is no reason to be upset or miserable. He needs the same kind of treatment as is required in any other situation.

Question 5

ONCE THE SUBTLE BODY IS OUT, IT CAN'T ENTER BACK INTO THE PHYSICAL BODY COMPLETELY. THE ADJUSTMENT AND HARMONY BETWEEN THE TWO IS DISRUPTED FOREVER. THIS IS THE REASON WHY THE YOGIS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN ILL AND HAVE BEEN DYING AT AN EARLY AGE. HOW CAN WE PREPARE OURSELVES SO THAT THE DISHARMONY MAY BE AVOIDED? CAN THE POSSIBILITIES OF ILLNESS BE MINIMIZED? HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE?

In this respect too, the first thing is: the moment the subtle body goes out of the physical body, nature's order is bound to be disrupted. The phenomenon is not natural; one should say, it is beyond nature. When a phenomenon occurs which is contrary to nature, or which is beyond nature, the entire harmony and adjustment of nature becomes disorderly. A great deal of preparation is needed if one wants to save oneself from such a disorderly state. Various yogasanas and mudras, yoga postures, are very helpful in this respect. In fact all the techniques of Hatha Yoga are useful in this direction. So you need an extraordinary body -- an ordinary body won't work. You need your body to be made of steel so that it can withstand an unnatural phenomenon of such great magnitude.

For example, there was no fundamental difference between the body of Ramamurti and any other human body, but he had mastered a few tricks. We see that trick working every day, but it never strikes us. You see a tire; when inflated it carries the heavy weight of a car. Take out some air and the car will not move. The air has to be in a particular proportion for the tire to carry that much weight.

Through a special technique of pranayama one can fill the lungs with so much air that the body can hold the weight of an elephant. The chest functions exactly like a tire, like a tube. In order to withstand the weight of an elephant, if one knows the proportion, the volume of air required in the chest, then there is no problem. Ramamurti had the same kind of lungs as we do.

The tube inside the tire is not made of any hard steel, it doesn't have any strength. The tube's only use is that it takes in its volume a specific amount of air -- that's all. If that much air is present, the thing works.

Recently, a new type of car has been conceived which can run four feet above the ground. It will not require any tire tube. In fact the same trick applies in this mechanism. The car will move so fast that the air underneath will have volume enough to bear its weight. The speed will cut through the air, separating its upper and lower parts, and due to the speed a layer of four feet will be created which will sustain the moving car.

This works on the same principle as a moving boat. As the boat moves with speed, a void is created behind it. It is this void that helps the boat to move ahead. Water from all sides rushes to fill the void;

this pushes the boat forward. This is the trick that works all along. Should the water behave differently, the boat will not move.

So if a car is made to run at a particular speed, a four-foot thick layer of air can be made underneath for it to function as a road. In fact, there is no need to make it really -- it will be formed automatically as the car moves at high speed. Then there won't be any need for wheels; the car will simply slide along. Then nothing else will matter -- only air will be needed, that's all.

Hatha Yoga has discovered many techniques which give the body a special discipline. Giving such a discipline makes the difference. That's why a hatha yogi never dies young. A normal raja yogi dies at a young age like Vivekananda or Shankaracharya, but not a hatha yogi. And the reason is that the hatha yogi gives a total discipline to his body before such a happening can take place. In order to prepare his body to withstand any unnatural situation, he performs many unnatural practices.

For example, when it is hot outside he will cover himself with a blanket. Sufi mystics wrap a blanket around themselves. The word suf means wool. One who always covers himself with a woolen wraparound is known as a Sufi. There is no other meaning of the word 'sufi'.

All Sufi fakirs in the Arab world, where the sun is burning hot, move around in blankets. In that scorching heat they wrap themselves in a woolen blanket. They create a very unnatural situation. As it is, the sun is sizzling hot, there is no greenery anywhere around, and a man is sitting there wrapped up in a blanket. He is making his body able to withstand unnatural conditions. In Tibet a lama sits naked on the snow, and you will be shocked to see perspiration running down his body. This lama is working on his body to perspire even under the falling snow. His effort is very unnatural.

There are many such ways of preparing the body. If the body has been made to pass through these preparations, it becomes fit to withstand any unnatural happening. Then no harm is caused to the body. But ordinarily these preparations take years. Consequently, the discipline of Raja Yoga finds it useless to spend so many years in preparation just to live a little longer. Hatha Yoga requires years of preparation. Twenty or thirty years are minimum -- thirty years are needed at least. If a man begins at the age of fifteen, he would be fifty by the time he is fully prepared.

Hence, the discipline of Raja Yoga decided not to be so much concerned about the body. If such a state does occur and the body dies, then so be it. What is the need for saving it? So these preparations were abandoned.

That's why Shankaracharya died at the age of thirty-three; the reason is that his body was not prepared to handle an event of such magnitude. But there was no need for such a preparation. If it appears necessary then it is all right; otherwise, no need to bother. If one has to work for years in order that the body may last for only thirty-three years, and if the body is saved to last for thirty-three years more, then the arrangement doesn't prove to be of much benefit. If I have to work from the time I am fifteen until I am fifty, I will already have lost thirty-five years in preparation. Should I remain alive for another thirty-five years -- till the age of eighty-five -- the sum total of years that I will have 'lived' will still be thirty-five. So it has no meaning.

If someone were to have said to Shankaracharya, "You could have lived for seventy years if you had practiced Hatha Yoga," Shankaracharya would have replied, "But I would have had to work forty years for it. I find making such an effort unnecessary. I like to die at the age of thirty-three. There is nothing wrong in it."

Hence, gradually Hatha Yoga lagged behind. The reason was that no one was ready to follow its long practices. But my feeling is, Hatha Yoga can come back in the future if its practices are followed with the help of science. As I see it, what took thirty-five years can now be completed in five years with the help of science. Time can be saved with the maximum use of science. However, it will be a while before the scientific Hatha Yoga can come into being. I believe scientific Hatha Yoga will be born in the West, not in India, because India doesn't have any scientific environment at all.

So time can be saved, but it doesn't serve any particular purpose. It might be useful to save time under very special circumstances, but that too will happen only on the gross level, the level of the physical body. For Shankaracharya it may not be useful to continue living but for others it can be. That's why even if remotely, even if barely, Hatha Yoga is still meaningful. One could have said to Shankaracharya, "Granted that extending life is of no use to you. However, if you could live for thirty-five years more, it would benefit many people." This is the only excuse which can bring back Hatha Yoga.

When the subtle body separates from the gross body, the adjustment between the two is interrupted. It is almost like once you take apart the engine of a car, you can reassemble it, but it does shorten the life of the engine. That's why the buyer first makes sure the engine of the car was not dismantled before. Even if the engine has been put together exactly the way it should be, it does lose its longevity. The reason is that it cannot be the same -- even a little change in its original adjustment affects the life of the engine.

Furthermore, in our body there are some elements that die very quickly; there are other elements that take a little longer to die. And there are some elements that refuse to die even after the man is dead. Even in the grave the dead man's nails and hair keep growing for some time. They keep doing their job and take a longer time to die.

Death occurs on many levels. In fact there are several arrangements in your body which are automatic -- even the presence of your soul is not needed for them to function. For example, I am sitting here talking to you. If I leave this room the talking would stop, but the fan will go on moving because the fan has its own arrangement -- it has nothing to do with my presence.

There are two kinds of systems in our body. One system is such that it will come to an end as soon as the consciousness leaves the body. Another system keeps working for a short while even after the consciousness has left the body. It is automatic, it has a built-in arrangement to continue to function for an extended period of time. The consciousness will move out and the hair won't know the man is dead. The hair will take quite a while to know the man is gone, that it need not grow anymore.

So there are certain elements within us which die very soon; there are some which die in six seconds -- for example in case of a heart attack. A man can survive a heart attack if aid reaches him in six seconds.

Basically, a heart attack is not a death; it is just a structural fault which can be set right. In the first world war about fifty people were saved like this in Russia. If the aid reached in six seconds to soldiers who died of a heart attack, they survived. But after six seconds certain elements die, and then it becomes very difficult to revive them. The delicate parts of our brain die very soon -- immediately.

So if the subtle body stays out for too long, then it becomes very necessary to protect the physical body; otherwise, some of its elements will begin to die. However, you won't be able to gauge how long the subtle body remained outside, because the gross and the subtle body exist on a different time scale. For instance, if my subtle body goes out, it may seem like I stayed for years in that state. But after returning to the physical body I may find not even a second has elapsed. The time scales for both are different.

It is as though a man dozes off and dreams he is being married, the marriage procession is moving on, then he had children, and they grow up and now they are being married. He wakes up and narrates his long dream. One may tell him, "But you dozed off for only a minute, how can such a long dream take place in such a short time?" It can; the time scale is different. Such a long dream can take place in one minute, for the simple reason that its time measurement is very different from that of the waking state - it is very fast, speedy.

If the subtle body stayed out even for a minute, it may seem to you as if you have been out for years. It doesn't give you any idea how long you remained outside really. In that condition it is absolutely necessary that the body is preserved -- which is very difficult. However, if complete arrangements are made, one's subtle body can stay outside for a long time.

There is an incident in the life of Shankaracharya which is worth relating. It is meaningless to talk of how long he stayed outside in terms of his subtle body's time scale, but according to our time scale he remained outside his physical body for six months. A woman got him into trouble.

He had a debate with Mandan Mishra which Mandan lost. But Mandan's wife made a very womanly argument, which only women can make. She said, "Only one half of Mandan Mishra has lost. I, the other half of him, am still alive. Until you have defeated me, you can't claim to have defeated Mandan Mishra totally."

Shankara was put into difficulty. Although what the woman said was right, it didn't really carry any weight. Mandan Mishra was fully defeated. One doesn't have to defeat Gama, the wrestler and his wife too in order to become the winner. But the wife of Mandan Mishra, Bharati, was worth having a debate with. The world has seen very few learned women of her caliber. So the idea of debating with her appealed to Shankara. He thought it would be fun. He figured if Mandan couldn't win, how long would Bharati last before him? But he was mistaken.

It is very easy to defeat a man, but it is not so easy to defeat a woman, because the arguments of man and woman, winning or losing, are never the same. They follow a different logic. That's why so often husbands and wives don't understand each other. Their ways of reasoning are different, they are never harmonious. They often go parallel, never meeting anywhere.

So Shankara thought Bharati would discuss matters like Brahman, etcetera. But she didn't raise any issue regarding Brahman, because she had witnessed how Mandan Mishra had got himself in trouble on that ground. She knew very well any discussion of Brahman and maya will be of no use. So she said to Shankara, "Please say something about sex."

Shankara was at a loss. He said, "I am an accomplished celibate. Please don't ask me anything about sex."

Bharati said, "If you know nothing about sex, then what else do you know? When you don't know even this much, I wonder what you may be knowing about the Brahman, maya and so on. You will have to say something about sex because, after all, it is the very source of this world you call maya. I will debate only on that topic."

Shankara said, "Please allow me six months' time to learn about this subject. I have no knowledge of it, no one ever taught me. I don't know the secret of sex."

In order to learn the secret of sex, Shankara had to leave his body and enter into another body. Here one may ask, "Why could he not have learned through his own body?" He could have, but his entire life energy had become so introverted, the entire flow of energy had moved so deep inside, that it was difficult to draw it out. He could have, of course, related with a woman using his own body. If he had set out to know what sex was all about, he could have related with any woman by means of his own body, but the problem was that his whole bioenergy had turned inward. Drawing it out would have required more than six months. It was not a simple thing. It is easy to draw the energy within from without, but to draw it out again is very difficult. It is easy to drop pebbles and pick diamonds, but very difficult to give up diamonds for pebbles.

So Shankaracharya was in a predicament. He knew his body was no good for the challenge at hand. He asked his friends to go and find out if anyone has just died so that he may enter his body. Then he told them to guard his own body zealously till he returned. He entered into the dead body of a king, lived through it for six months, and then came back.

Shankara's body was maintained for six months. This kind of guarding and maintenance of the body is an extremely difficult task. Only individuals of incredible devotion must have been entrusted with this responsibility.

As I mentioned earlier, a Tibetan seeker sits out in the open in the biting cold and makes his body perspire. This is all a matter of will. Through his determination he denies the reality of the bitter cold and creates another reality that the sun is shining and it is hot. Merely by his resolve, he subordinates his circumstances to his state of mind. The actual situation around him is that of the falling snow, but closing his eyes he denies that situation. He suggests to himself that it is not snowing, that the sun is burning hot. He causes this suggestion to go so deep within that a moment comes when his every breath, every cell of his body, every part of his being begins to feel the heat. Then how can he not perspire? His very perspiration shows that he made his state of mind prevail over the circumstances.

In a sense, all yoga is nothing but allowing the state of mind to overcome the circumstances. And all worldliness in a sense is nothing but subjecting the state of mind to the circumstances.

It has not been recorded or even mentioned anywhere exactly what Shankara's friends did in order to preserve his physical body. For six months, a group of his devotees sat around his body without breaking the circle. The idea was to maintain a fixed number of people present all the time. They would take turns with others, but basically everyone present was required to remain awake and alert all twenty-four hours. A special environment had to be maintained in the cave where the body was being guarded. It was necessary that certain thought waves prevail in that cave.

About seven individuals were needed to sit around the body feeling intensely that they are not breathing, Shankara is; they are not alive but Shankara is. And their bioelectricity had to flow continuously into Shankara's body. The hands of these seven people were to be placed upon Shankara's seven chakras. It was essential that the bioelectricity of these seven people be poured uninterruptedly into the seven chakras of Shankara; only then was it possible to preserve Shankara's body for six months. Even a moment's lapse was enough to break the circuit, causing the body to lose its temperature.

It was imperative that the same degree of temperature which is present in the normal living human being should be maintained in Shankara's body. Not even the slightest variation was allowed in his body temperature. And this body heat could not be created by any other external means except that these seven individuals continue to pass their whole life energy, all their magnetic forces through the seven chakras of Shankara's body.

Throughout this experiment, the body never comes to know that the man is not present, because the seven individuals supply the same energy that the body received from the man under normal conditions. Do you follow what I am saying? The body never comes to know its seven chakras are no longer receiving energy from the man's consciousness, precisely because the chakras go on receiving a non-stop flow of energy from the seven individuals sitting around. These individuals function like transmission centers. Consequently, the body remains alive. But if any error occurs in the procedure, the body gets ready to die. Until then it remains totally unaware.

So a body can be kept alive if other people supply energy to it. This was the incredible technique used in order to keep Shankara alive for six months. For six months a group of individuals was diligently engaged in it. Taking turns, it was required that seven people always remain actively involved in the process. Finally, Shankara returned after six months and answered Bharati's questions. This is how he came to learn about something he had no knowledge of.

There was yet another way of learning about sex, but Shankara was not aware of it. Had such an event occurred in Mahavira's life, he would not have entered into another body. Instead, he would have entered into the memory of his past lives; that was yet another source available. This technique of remembering past lives, however, remained limited only to the Jainas and the Buddhists -- it never reached the Hindus.

Had such a question been raised to Mahavira, he would not have bothered to enter another body -- there was no need. Rather he would have revived the memories of his relations with women in his previous lives, and known through this method. He would not have needed six months. But Shankara didn't have the scientific knowledge of this technique. He knew the science of entering into the other body, which was developed by a different group of seekers.

There are many spiritual sciences, and so far no religion possesses all the details of all these sciences. A certain religion developed a particular technique and then remained satisfied with it. But up to now, no single religion has been founded which contains the treasures of all the religions. And this will not come about until we have stopped seeing other religions with enmity. If these religions could come close to each other as friends and share each other's treasures, become partners, a new science may evolve that makes use of an infinite number of sources.

What was developed in Egypt is unknown in India. Those who built the pyramids knew something which no one in India knows. Those who worked in the monasteries of Tibet possessed something which is not found in India. What India has known is unknown in Tibet. What is known by one is not known by the other, and the problem is that each looks upon its respective fragment as complete.

Now going back into past lives is a very simple experiment; entering another body is very difficult and very dangerous. The experiment in regression is very easy and it involves no danger. But Shankara had no knowledge of this technique. Since he spent all his life challenging and debating the Jainas and the Buddhists, all the doors of Jainism and Buddhism were closed to him. He could not gain anything from them because he could not establish any contact with them. It was a process of continuous confrontation. Naturally, some doors were closed to Shankara. Shankara was not ready to receive sunrays coming from any other direction except through his own door.

Although we don't realize it, the fact is no matter through which door the rays may enter, they come from the same sun. But here we are, sitting by our respective doors, putting our claim on it. We fail to recognize that what an Arab does wrapped up in a woolen blanket under the sun is the same thing a Tibetan does naked in the falling snow. Their work is identical -- there is no difference at all. Although they are engaged in contrary experiments, essentially both are involved in the same kind of work: the principles are the same.

Question 6

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ENTERING ANOTHER BODY AND PSYCHIC MEDIUMSHIP? HOW DOES ONE ENTER INTO A MEDIUM?

Actually, the experiments are contrary to each other. In the former case, a person enters into another person's body, while in the case of mediumship, the medium allows a person to enter his body. These are two different things. The technique of leaving one's body and entering into another can be called

the male technique; one has to enter another body. Mediumship is a female technique. Here, the medium will simply remain receptive and invite someone to enter his body. This is much simpler, and the souls invited by the medium will in most cases be bodiless. Rarely will an embodied soul ever respond to a medium's invitation. The disembodied souls which are moving around us....

We are not the only ones sitting here; there are others present here as well. Since they are bodiless, their presence makes little difference to us. Their presence can be understood in terms of how the radio works. If you turn on a radio you can catch the Delhi station, but when the radio was not turned on, do you think the Delhi station was not transmitting or that the sound waves were not passing through here? They were, but we were not aware of them. There was no medium to connect us with the sound waves. The radio functions as a medium. It puts us in touch with the sound waves.

So the individuals who work as mediums function on the same principle as a radio does. They perform the act of tuning. Their presence makes it possible for any of the wandering souls to enter them. But these are all bodiless souls, and these souls are always eager to enter a body.

There are reasons for it. The biggest reason is that bodiless souls -- we can call them ghosts -- their desires, their passions are the same as those of any ordinary mortal, any embodied soul. However without being in the body, without the help of the body, the desires of these bodiless souls are never satisfied -- they can't be.

For example, a ghost wants to make love to someone; for that it needs a body. The ghost carries the desire but is helpless without the body. When it comes closer to a human body, the ghost passes through it. Our body offers no resistance to it. The spirit wants to be in the body, it longs to enter a body.

The spirit succeeds in entering the body when out of fear a person contracts from within. In a state of fear your consciousness does not cover as much space -- you shrink. A vacuum is created in your body. In that fearful state the spirit enters the vacuum. Generally, people think ghosts are born out of fear, or that fear itself is the ghost. None of these beliefs is true. A ghost has its own existence. A person in a state of fear makes it possible for the ghost to manifest -- he becomes the medium. And since it is the ghost that enters into his body, problems are bound to arise.

The mediumship you are talking about is the consequence of a voluntary invitation given to a soul. Someone on his own creates a space within and invites a spirit to enter. The sole technique of mediumship is that you create a space within and invite a spirit present in the vicinity to enter your body. Since this is done voluntarily, there is not much risk involved in it. And since it is done purposely one knows the method of calling the spirit as well as the device for sending it back. Nevertheless all of this is possible only if the medium is receptive, and it works only on the ordinary bodiless souls.

The risk increases if a soul that is already in the body is to be called, because if I were to call an embodied soul to enter a medium, the body of the man being called will fall unconscious. Very often, when someone falls unconscious, it is taken as an ordinary state of unconsciousness. But many times it is not the case -- it is a situation where the individual's soul has been called somewhere. Hence it is

highly risky to treat the individual at that time -- it is best to leave his body alone. But we have no knowledge of all this.

Up to now, it has not become clear to science when a state of unconsciousness is of the normal kind, and when it is caused by the soul's moving out of the body. So the phenomenon is the same but of a different nature. In the case of mediumship the soul is invited in the body; in another, the soul is moved out of the body.

Question 7

IN ORDER TO KEEP HIS BODY ALIVE, RAMAKRISHNA HAD TO RELY ON THE CRAVING FOR FOOD. IS IT NOT POSSIBLE FOR A HIGH LEVEL BODY TO EXIST WITHOUT ANY SUCH CRAVING? IN WHICH BODY DOES SUCH ASSISTANCE BECOME NECESSARY? IF THE BODIES ARE OF THE HIGHER STATES -- SUCH AS THE FIFTH, SIXTH, OR THE SEVENTH BODY -- WOULD THEY BE REQUIRED TO BE MAINTAINED WITH THE AID OF ANY SUCH CRAVING AS WELL?

Ramakrishna was very fond of food -- excessively. One might say he was crazy after food. Even in the middle of a profound religious discussion he would walk to the kitchen and ask his wife Sharada what she was cooking for dinner. Then he would come back and resume the discussion. This caused aggravation not only to Sharada, but to his close devotees as well. The devotees were concerned that if word got around of their master's weakness for food, it would create a scandal.

Actually, disciples are always greatly worried about their master! They are always very nervous lest their master's name be dragged into disgrace. So finally they said to Ramakrishna, "Your all of a sudden dropping a serious discussion for the sake of food does not look good upon you. And why should the food matter so much for a man of your stature?"

What Ramakrishna said in response was very remarkable. He said, "Perhaps you don't know... how could you? All the anchors of my ship are lifted, all the pilings have been uprooted, the sails of my ship are filled with the wind and I am ready to depart. One anchor I have carefully saved so that my ship does not leave the shore yet. The day I stop taking interest in food, know that I shall die three days later. I don't need to live for myself -- there is no reason for it. But I have something to tell you, something to convey to you. There is something I have which I am eager to give to you. Hence it is necessary that I linger a little longer.

"My ship is ready to sail, but it contains a treasure which I would love to distribute to those who are on the shore. But the people on the shore are all asleep. I have to wake them up, I have to coax them to accept the treasure I possess. They don't realize it is a treasure, they think it is trash. They say, 'We don't know what you are talking about -- leave us alone. We are happy sleeping in our cozy beds.'

"Let me persuade the people on the shore to accept the treasure my ship is filled with. Let me distribute to them everything I have got. The time has come for me to say goodbye.

"So this is the reason why I have tied myself to one anchor; this is why I take so much interest in food. Food is my anchor. The day I turn my face away from food, know that I shall be dead three days thereafter."

No one took him seriously that day -- which is normally how things happen. The world would have benefited greatly had certain things in the lives of Ramakrishna, Buddha, or Mahavira been taken seriously. But that never happened. So it was thought perhaps Ramakrishna was providing an explanation, that he was merely trying to make a point. The devotees must have suspected also that maybe Ramakrishna was explaining away his weakness for food so that he doesn't have to be bothered.

But exactly what he had said happened. One day, Sharada brought his meal as usual. In his room Ramakrishna was lying down on his bed. He looked at the plate and turned on his side. Ordinarily, he would jump out of his bed to see what was in the plate. The moment he turned on his side, Sharada recalled Ramakrishna's words: his turning away from food would mean he won't be alive three days after that. The plate fell from her hands. She broke down and wept. Consoling Sharada, Ramakrishna said, "What will crying do? I have pulled up the anchor. How long could I have remained tied to it?" Exactly three days later he died.

You ask me: "Can such a soul stay on this earth without the aid of any desire?" Up to the fifth body, some earthly desire, an anchor, is needed; otherwise the soul can't stay around. One who has attained to the fifth body has to fasten himself around some craving related to one of the five senses.

But beyond the fifth body this is not necessary -- the soul can stay around without needing to do this. However, in that case some other factors will contribute in extending the soul's existence. Then it won't be necessary to preserve any craving. But this is altogether a different matter and requires a lengthy discussion. Let me explain it to you briefly.

If one wants to continue to exist beyond the fifth body -- as Mahavira, Buddha, or Krishna have done -- then in that case a pressure from the liberated souls, from the free spirits works upon them. The urge, the persuasion comes from above. Theosophy did a very significant research in this area. The theosophists discovered that many souls which are now liberated, which have become one with the universe, which have attained to the highest, their pressure works in keeping such individuals a little longer on the earth.

For example, a ship is about to leave. It is not tied to any piling, but the people from the other shore call out loudly, "Please stay a little longer: please don't be in a hurry." These voices from the other shore can become instrumental in preventing the ship from leaving. And these voices did prove effective in the time of Mahavira, Buddha and Krishna.

By Ramakrishna's time the conditions had changed considerably, and things became very difficult. In fact such an enormous, unimaginable gap exists between the people who have reached the other shore and

this century that it is almost impossible to hear their voices. The distance has grown wider and wider -- there is no continuity, no link left anymore.

For example, Mahavira's life is part of a continuity. Twenty-three tirthankaras preceded Mahavira, and he was the twenty-fourth of that tradition, that system. There is a chain of twenty-three individuals before him, and the twenty-third person preceded Mahavira not long before he lived -- two hundred and fifty years before him. Although the first man of the chain happened very long ago, all the twenty-three in between appeared very close to each other.

The man who reached the other shore before Mahavira.... The meaning of the word tirthankara may surprise you. Tirtha means a ghat, the quay, and tirthankara means one who has landed on that ghat before you, that's all. So twenty-three tirthankaras have landed on the other shore, the ghat. They constituted a systematic order. The language, the signs and symbols, the information pertaining to that world were all well preserved. The twenty-fourth man, standing on this shore, could easily hear, understand, pick up messages coming from these twenty-three beings.

There is not one person among the Jainas today who can follow a single word of this tradition. Mahavira died two thousand five hundred years ago. A huge gap exists between him and us. Even if Mahavira were to shout from there, there is no one here who can understand his language. In two thousand five hundred years, the entire system of language, the signs and codes pertaining to that world have changed -- they have lost the continuity.

Jaina monks simply wade through the scriptures -- they don't know what else they can do. But they make a big thing about the 2500th birth anniversary of Mahavira -- they make a great deal of noise, display banners, raise flags, cry out loud slogans of "Hail Mahavira!" They no longer have any mechanism to receive Mahavira's communication -- there is not a single man who can receive it. People other than Jainas may have such a system still, but the Jainas don't have it.

Hindus and Buddhists had a similar system too, but by Ramakrishna's time no such mechanism was available. Ramakrishna did not have any link, any connection with the people of the other shore. Hence there was no way he could be persuaded by them. So the only course left for him was to drive a piling here on this shore and hold on to it. There was no other way. It was difficult to know of any pressure working from the other side.

Two kinds of people in this world have worked for spirituality. There are some who have worked in a chain, and the chain remained active for thousands of years. The twenty-fourth man in the Buddhist tradition is yet to be born. One more incarnation of Buddha is yet to appear, and Buddhist monks all over the world are awaiting his appearance. They are looking forward expectantly -- desiring him in infinite ways, hoping to find him once more. The Jainas are awaiting no one. Hindus are also expecting an incarnation -- Kalki. He is yet to descend. But they don't have a clear picture yet as to how he can be called, how he can be received and recognized. They don't have any means to identify him.

You will be amazed to know that all the twenty-three Jaina tirthankaras had left clues to identify the twenty-fourth tirthankara. All possible indications were made available. They had defined all the

characteristics: the lines on his palms, the signs on the soles of his feet, how his eyes would look, what sign he will have on the side of his heart, how tall he will be, how long he will live -- everything was determined. There was no problem identifying such a man.

In Mahavira's time eight individuals, including Mahavira, claimed to be the twenty-fourth tirthankara. The time was ripe for a tirthankara to appear, but there were eight claimants. Finally, Mahavira was accepted and the other seven were discarded, because only Mahavira showed all the signs of being a tirthankara.

But no such system or means of identification was available by the time Ramakrishna appeared on the scene. In a spiritual sense, the world today is in a very confused state. And in this confusing situation now there is no alternative left except that one remains tethered to the earth by anchoring himself to some piling. No messages are heard from the other shore; even if they are heard, no one follows them. Even when one does follow their transmissions, it becomes difficult to decode their secret. The basic difficulty is that now, only by way of signs and signals is communication possible between that world and this world.

You may not be aware, but within the last hundred years scientists have discovered that there must be at least fifty thousand planets in the universe on which there may be life. And they suspect there may be beings on these planets with a consciousness developed as high as that of human beings -- or even higher. But the most difficult thing is: how to establish a dialogue with them? How to send them signals? What sign or symbol will they understand? How will they follow them? Seeing the tricolor flag of India, an Indian knows it is his national flag. But what significance will the flag have for people of other planets? And how can we make it fly so that it becomes visible to them? Many strange experiments have already been carried out in this respect.

One man created a gigantic triangle in Siberia. He grew yellow flowers on that triangle which was miles long. Then he illuminated the triangle with special light effects. Now, no matter on which planet you may draw a triangle, it will still be a triangle. No matter where you may draw, it will still have three angles. Wherever there is a human being, or beings higher than man -- whatever -- the figures of geometry will remain the same.

So the idea was to establish a contact with other planetary beings by means of geometry. It was hoped, firstly, that people looking at such a huge triangle from another planet may come to think that such a triangle could not have come into existence on its own. And, secondly, seeing the triangle they might safely assume that geometry must be known to the people on earth.

For many days a great deal of work was done under this assumption, but there was no confirmation whether or not anyone on the other planets understood this attempt. Now of course, radar has been set up to receive signals which perhaps the other planets may be sending us. Occasionally some signals are caught, but their secret, their meaning remains obscure.

For example, you must have heard of the flying saucer. Many people have seen a small luminous saucerlike object moving around and then disappearing in the sky. It has been seen at many places, on

many occasions, and sometimes at many locations around the world on the same night. And yet, so far, it has remained a mystery. No one knows what that object is. Who sends it? Why does it appear and then disappear?

It is quite possible that beings of some planet are trying to establish contact with earth. They may be sending us signals which we are unable to follow. When we don't understand them, some of us say it's all a fiction. They think the talk of flying saucers, etcetera is nothing more than gossip. Some believe it must be an optical illusion, while others think it could not be anything but some kind of natural phenomenon. So it is not clear exactly what it is. There are a few people in this world who at least believe that maybe through these objects people of another planet are sending an invitation to us, that they are trying to convey something to us.

But even this is not such a difficult situation, because the distance between life on this planet and life on another planet is not so great as it is between souls which have reached the other world and souls which still exist in this world. This distance is much greater. In the first place, the signals transmitted from that world are difficult to catch here. Even if they are caught, they are not understood. Their secrets remain undiscovered.

So people like Ramakrishna in this century, or say within the last two hundred years -- it is not right to say even two hundred years.... Actually after Mohammed -- that is in the last fourteen hundred years -- things became difficult, very difficult indeed. Realizing the situation, Nanak created a new set-up from the start. He forgot about the past and started a new tradition of ten people. But it too disappeared very soon -- didn't last long.

So now there are only individual seekers left -- those who are not part of any chain. An individual seeker has to use an anchor as a means -- that's the only way at least up to the fifth body. The external signals and pressures can work when one is beyond the fifth body. But for now, if the messages from the other world are not coming in, even a man in the seventh body too will have to make use of the anchor established before the stage of the fifth body -- there is no other way.

And Now, And Here, Vol 2

Chapter #14

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Question 1

AT THE DWARKA MEDITATION CAMP YOU HAVE DISCUSSED THE PROCESS OF ENTERING INTO THE MEMORIES OF PAST LIVES. YOU SAID THEN THAT BY DISCONNECTING THE CONSCIOUSNESS COMPLETELY FROM THE FUTURE, THE POWER OF MEDITATION SHOULD BE FOCUSED TOWARD THE PAST. EXPLAINING THE PROCESS FURTHER, YOU SAID THAT FIRST ONE REGRESSES TO THE AGE OF FIVE, THEN TO THE AGE OF THREE, FOLLOWED BY THE MEMORY OF BIRTH, THE POINT OF CONCEPTION, AND FINALLY INTO THE MEMORIES OF PAST LIFE. YOU SAID ADDITIONALLY THAT YOU DID NOT INTEND TO EXPLAIN THE WHOLE SUTRA, THE WHOLE TECHNIQUE FOR REMEMBERING PAST LIVES. WHAT IS THE WHOLE TECHNIQUE? WOULD YOU KINDLY EXPLAIN THE SUTRA FURTHER.

Memories of our past life have been prevented by nature. There is a reason for it. It is necessary that in the overall system of one's life one forgets most of the things that happen to him every day. That's why we don't remember all the memories that we create during our lifetime. However, that which you don't remember is not completely erased from your mind. Only the connection between your consciousness and the memory is severed.

For example, if a person lives for fifty years, billions of memories will be formed in his mind. If he were to remember them all he would go mad. So he remembers whatever is meaningful: whatsoever is worthless he slowly forgets. But your forgetting does not mean the memory is completely wiped out. It merely slips out of your center of consciousness and is stored in some corner of your mind.

Buddha has given a very significant name to this storehouse. He calls it *alaya vijnana* -- the storehouse of consciousness. It is just like having an attic or a basement where all the unwanted things are stored. Even though the objects are out of your sight, they still remain present within the house. Similarly, your memories go out of sight, but remain accumulated in some corners of your mind.

It would become difficult to live if you were to recall all the memories of even this life. In order that the mind stays free to handle the events of the future, the past has to be forgotten. Since you forget what happened yesterday, you become capable of living the tomorrow. This way the mind goes on becoming empty, it is able to look ahead. In order to look ahead it is necessary to forget the past. Without forgetting what has already occurred you won't have the capability to see what is ahead of you.

Every day a part of your mind must become blank so that it can receive new impressions, otherwise how can it work? As the future arrives, the past disappears every day. And as soon as this future becomes the past, it disappears too so that we are free to receive what lies ahead. This is how the mind functions.

We cannot carry the full memory of even one life. You won't be able to recall anything if I ask you what you did on January 1, 1960. You did exist on January 1, 1960, and you must have done something from dawn till dusk, yet you will be unable to remember anything. A small technique of hypnosis can revive the memory of that day. If you are hypnotized, and a part of your consciousness is put to sleep, and then if you are asked to describe what you did on January 1, 1960, you will recount everything.

For a long time I experimented on a young man. But my problem was how to be sure of the details he gave of January 1, 1960. He was able to narrate that day only under hypnosis: in the waking state he would forget everything. So it was difficult for me to determine whether or not he really took a bath at nine o'clock on the morning of January 1, 1960. There was only one way to do it. I wrote down everything he did on a certain day. After a few months when I asked him to describe his activities of the same day, he couldn't recall anything.

When I put him under a deep state of hypnosis and asked him to narrate the particular day, he not only recounted all that I had noted down, but described many other things which had not been written. He did not miss anything from what I had written down; rather he added many more things. Obviously I could not have noted everything. I had written only what I saw or what had occurred to me.

In hypnosis you can be taken as deeply inside your self as one would like to go. But it will be done by someone else; you will be unconscious. You won't know a thing. Under hypnosis you can be taken even into your past lives, but it would essentially be in a state of unconsciousness.

The only difference between jati-smaran regression and the technique of hypnosis is that while regressing you go into your past lives with consciousness; in hypnosis you are taken into your previous lives by being made unconscious. The validity increases a great deal if both the techniques are applied. Suppose you hypnotize a man, ask him about his previous lives and write it down; then in his conscious state you lead him into meditation. If even under the meditative state he gives the same account of his previous lives, you gather additional evidence and the validity of the story is established.

So the same memory can be revived by applying two methods. Although the process of regression is simple, it has its own hazards. That's why I did not explain all the keys. All the keys can be told only to an individual who is ready to experiment. Otherwise, ordinarily, they cannot be explained to everyone. The whole technique can of course be explained saving one sutra -- this one cannot be practiced.

As I said yesterday, our consciousness moves with the aid of will, determination. For example, when you sit for meditation and begin to go deep into it, make a resolve to go back when you were five years old and find out what happened to you then. In that deep state of meditation you will suddenly find you have indeed become five years old, and whatever happened to you at that age is coming back to you.

At first, enter into the memory of this birth. As one gains clarity and depth in meditation, and as it becomes possible to go back into the past -- which is not difficult -- one can go as far back as the mother's womb and revive memories of that time. If your mother fell down when she was pregnant with you, her memory of that fall, that hurt, will become part of your memory too. Or, if she was unhappy at the time you were in her womb, her memory of that suffering will be your memory as well, because in the mother's womb the states of your being and hers were not separate -- they were combined. Hence, deep down the experience that your mother had becomes your experience too -- it is automatically transferred to you.

During pregnancy, the mother's state of mind plays a vital role in the formation of the child. In the right sense of the meaning, one is not a mother just because she has carried a child in her womb; she is also a mother because she has given a special direction to the child's consciousness. Even a female animal is able to carry a baby in her stomach -- all animals do it. Sooner or later machines will do it as well. It is not too difficult to imagine babies growing in a machine.

An artificial womb can certainly be created. The same system that exists in the mother's womb can be created in a machine run by electricity. A system with the same degree of heat, the same amount of water, can be produced. And sooner or later, instead of growing babies in a mother's womb, they will be placed and grown in a mechanical womb. But that will not be enough to meet the requirement of motherhood.

Perhaps very few mothers on this earth have fulfilled the role of motherhood. It's a Herculean task to be a mother. And the task is, for nine months giving the child's consciousness a specific direction. During these nine months, if the mother stays angry.... And when she gives birth to an angry child, when he behaves angrily, she scolds him, rebukes him, and wonders who has spoiled him, what bad company he must have fallen into.

Mothers come to me complaining about their sons and daughters having fallen into bad company. But they don't realize that they are the ones who have sown the seeds of their children's wrongdoings. They alone are responsible for building their consciousness -- children are simply manifesting it. Of course, sowing the seed and its manifestation are two different phenomena. We don't see the connection between the two because an enormous gap exists in between.

Emile Coue has written an anecdote in his biography. He says a friend of his, a major in the army, was once reading a book on hypnosis. Somewhere in the book it was mentioned that when a child is in the womb, whatever impressions the mother may receive are automatically transferred to the child. His wife was pregnant at that time. He told her, "The author of this book says, 'Whatsoever a mother thinks, whatever she feels, whatever she lives -- all of that is directly transferred to the child.'" They both laughed and took no serious note of it.

That evening they were invited to a party in honor of a general. By coincidence, the major's wife sat next to the general at the dining table. The general's thumb was squashed during the war. The major's wife suddenly remembered what her husband had read to her that afternoon. Afraid that her child may be born with a deformed thumb, she tried deliberately not to see the general's thumb. Throughout the

party she avoided the general's thumb, but the more she tried not to look at it the more her eyes wandered toward that thumb.

She forgot the general, she forgot the party, her whole attention remained focused on the thumb. Since she was sitting next to the general, she saw the thumb as he ate, as he shook hands with people. It got so bad that she even shut her eyes, but by shutting her eyes she saw the thumb even more clearly. It is easier to see things clearly with closed eyes. She completely freaked out. As long as the party lasted, the poor woman remained totally obsessed with the general's thumb.

At night, she woke up with a start several times. In the morning she said to her husband, "I am in trouble. I am very much afraid my child will be born with a deformed thumb."

Consoling her, the husband said, "Are you crazy? What's in a book? Do you believe something will happen just because it was written by somebody? Drop the whole thing from your mind!" But the wife couldn't drop it.

The fact is, the very thing we are asked to drop becomes difficult to let go of. The more the husband tried to persuade her to drop the thing and forget about it, the more it became crystallized. You know very well -- that which you want to forget, you never can. In fact in the very attempt of forgetting you have to keep remembering it -- just to forget it. It keeps coming back to your mind. If you really want to forget something, you will at least have to remember it. And in order to forget, the more you will need to remember it the stronger that memory becomes.

As the days passed and the time of the child's birth drew closer, the thumb began to weigh heavily on her mind. No matter how much she tried, she couldn't forget it. As she went through labor pains, as the child was taking birth, the thumb was in her thoughts -- not the child. And an incredible thing happened: the child was born with a deformed thumb. When the photographs of the child's and the general's thumbs were compared, they looked identical. It was the mother who gave this thumb to the child. Like this, all mothers give their own thumbs, their own disorders to their children. Everyone has different kinds of thumbs, disorders which have been given to them.

So first, you will have to go back in your memory to the day you were born -- but that is not your real birthday. The actual birthday is the day a child is conceived. What we call the birthday is in fact the day which falls nine months after the birth has happened -- it is not the right birthday.

The day the soul enters the mother's womb is indeed the correct birthday. It is neither difficult nor dangerous to go back in memory this far, because it pertains to this very life. And in order to do that, as I mentioned earlier, you need to turn the mind away from the future. Those who practice even a little bit of meditation will have no difficulty forgetting about the future. And what is there to remember in the future anyway? In fact, there is no future.

So the direction has to be changed. Instead of looking at the future, look in the past, and go on making your resolve stronger and stronger in your mind. Turn one year back, two years back, ten, twenty years back; keep moving backward and you will have a strange experience.

Ordinarily, if we go back into our past without meditation, even in a conscious state, the further we go back the hazier the memories will become. Someone may find it impossible to recall anything beyond the age of five, and even up to five the memories may be few and far between. As you draw closer and closer to your present age, your memories will become more and more clear. You will have a clear memory of yesterday; your memory of today will be even more clear. But your memory of the day before yesterday, that of a year back, or that of twenty-five or fifty years back will be increasingly hazier and hazier.

But if you apply the same technique in the state of meditation, you will be greatly surprised. The situation will be totally the reverse. As you will draw closer to the childhood memories, the clearer they will be, because the mind's slate is never so clear as it is during the childhood; the writing on it is never so clear after that.

So you will have a big surprise reviving memories in meditation, because the situation will be reversed. The more you will move backward, drawing closer to childhood, the more transparent will be the memory. And as you will grow older in your memory, the more hazy everything will look. In meditation, today will look the foggiest, while the first day of birth, fifty years ago for example, will be the clearest day in memory. Returning to the past memories in meditation is not remembering. You must understand the difference.

When we remember consciously, we are remembering. How is this different? When you remember your childhood -- and you are now fifty years old, for example -- you are fifty now, at this moment, and you revive the memory when you were five years old, or two years old, or one year old, what happens? Your fifty-year-old mind stands in between this moment and the memory of those years. The memories become hazy because you are looking through the layers of fifty years spread in between.

When you remember the past following the technique of meditation, you no longer remain fifty years old; you become five years old. In meditation you remember as a five-year-old child. At that moment you are not a fifty-year-old man remembering the days when you were five years old. You go back to the fifth year of your life.

So when we recall memories consciously we should call it remembering, whereas the same in meditation is reliving. And there is a difference between the two. In remembering you face great layers of memories which make everything fuzzy. In meditation, reliving the memory turns you into a five-year-old.

Shobhana is here with us. She says in meditation, all of a sudden strange thoughts start coming to her. She thinks she is a child playing with dolls. That thought becomes so strong that it frightens her. She suspects someone may see her in that condition and feel strange about her, so she opens her eyes now and then to make sure no one is watching her.

She is not aware, at that moment her present age disappears. In that state she is not even remembering her childhood; it is reliving. That means in meditation she turns into a five-year-old girl.

There is a young man here: in meditation he begins to suck his thumb -- he becomes six months old. The moment he enters into meditation, his thumb goes right in his mouth. He returns to the age when he was six months old.

It is necessary to understand the difference between remembering and reliving. It is not very difficult to relive one life. The only problem is we have become identified with our age. A man of fifty is not willing to step back even five years -- he wants to remain stuck at the age of fifty. Those who wish to relive their past, who want to remember their past, will have to give up their fixed identities; they will have to relax a little.

For example, if a man wants to go back to his childhood it would do him good if he played with children for an hour or so every day. It would help him greatly if he dropped his fixation on being fifty years old, if he stopped being serious for a while. It would be good if he did jogging, swimming, dancing. It would be helpful if he consciously lived like a child for an hour; that would make it easier for him to return to his past in meditation as well. Otherwise he remains rigidly at the age of fifty.

Remember, consciousness has no age; it only consists of conditionings. There is nothing like a five-year-old, a ten-year-old, or a fifty-year-old consciousness. It is just an idea. Close your eyes and try to find how old your consciousness is -- you won't be able to say anything. You might say, "I will have to check the diary, or look into a calendar, or consult the horoscope."

The fact is, no one knew what his age was until horoscopes, calendars, the counting of years, the numbers came into existence. Even today there are aboriginals who find it difficult to answer if you ask them how old they are, because for some of them the numerals stop at fifteen, for others at ten, and for some the number doesn't go beyond five.

I know a man who is a house-cleaner. Once someone asked him how old he was. He replied, "Just about twenty-five." In fact he was at least about sixty.

The people who heard him were a little surprised. They asked, "How old is your son?"

He said, "Maybe about twenty-five."

The people were puzzled. They said, "Your son is twenty-five, you are also twenty-five years old -- how can this be?" He had no problem with it, because for him twenty-five was the last number, there was no number beyond that. The difficulty arises for us because we have numbers beyond twenty-five. For him, beyond twenty-five was the infinite, the numberless.

Age exists because of our calculations based on calendars, dates, days. Age is a byproduct of all these. If you look within there is no age. You won't know how old I am by looking inside me, because age is purely an external measure. But this outer measurement becomes fixed on the inner consciousness -- it sticks there like a nail.

You go on driving nails in your consciousness, saying, "Now I am fifty, now I am fifty-one, now I am fifty-two...." If these nails become too much set, it will be difficult to go back into the memories. One who is very serious cannot return to his childhood memories.

The serious people are sick people. Actually, seriousness is a psychological disease. Those who are very serious always suffer from illness. It's very difficult for them to regress. Those who are simple and light-hearted, who can play and laugh with children, for them it will be easy to go back into the past memories.

So try to break the fixations of your external life. Don't be conscious of your age all the time. Never say to your son, "I know, because my age is such and such." Age has nothing to do with knowing. Don't behave with children as if there exists a gap of fifty years between you and them. Instead, be a friend to them.

A seventy-year-old woman has written a book. It's a small book containing the story of her experiment of befriending a five-year-old child. It's a difficult thing to do, not a simple matter. It is easy to be a father, a mother, a brother, a guru of a five-year-old child; to be a friend is very difficult. No mother, no father is ever able to be friends with their children.

We will have transformed the entire world the day parents become friends of their children. It will be altogether a different world, it will no longer be so hideous and ugly. But they don't extend that hand of friendship. So this woman of seventy really carried out an amazing experiment. She befriended the child when he was three. For the next two years she maintained her friendship with him in every possible way. It would be good to understand her attitude toward this friendship. It will be easy for such a woman to return to her past memories.

This woman of seventy would go to the sea-shore with that child who happens to be her friend. The child would run, pick up stones and pebbles, and the woman would do the same. How else could she have broken the tremendous age barrier between her and the child? Her picking up the stones and pebbles along with the child was not just to advance her friendship with him. She really tried to see the stones and pebbles with the same joy and delight as the child.

She would look into the child's eyes, and watch her own eyes too. She would look at his hands picking up a shining pebble, and she would look at her own hands doing the same act. She would watch how thrilled the child was, how he was looking at those pebbles with such wonder and excitement in his eyes. She tried to look the same way -- becoming a child too.

She ran with him to catch the foam as the waves lapped on the shore. The child would run after butterflies, and she would run with him too. The child once came up to her in the middle of the night and said, "Let's go out. The crickets chirping sound so beautiful." She did not say, "Go to sleep now. This is no time to go out." She immediately went along with him. The child walked, step by step, softly so as not to disturb the crickets. The woman followed him exactly the same way.

Two years of this friendship brought exceptional results. The woman writes, "I forgot I was seventy years old. What I did not know at the age of five, I came to know at the age of seventy by becoming a five-year-old child. The whole world turned into a wonderland, a fairyland for me. I indeed ran, picked up rocks, chased butterflies. All the differences of age between the child and me disappeared. He talked to me as he would talk to any other child. I also talked to him the same way a child talks to another child."

She has recounted all her experiences of these two years in a book called *The Sense of Wonder*. She says with great conviction that she once again found a sense of wonder, that even the greatest of all saints could never have achieved more than what she did.

When Jesus was asked what kind of people will enter his kingdom of heaven, he replied, "Those who are like children." Perhaps children do live in a kind of big heaven. We take their heaven away by schooling and tutoring them. But it is necessary that the paradise be taken away, because when it is found again the feeling is rare.

Very few people are able to regain this paradise, however. People generally live in the state of "paradise lost"; the situation of "paradise regained" comes in the lives of very few. We all lose our paradise, of course, but we never find it again. If one can become again like a child before his death, the paradise returns to him. If an old man can see the world with a child's eye, the kind of peace, the kind of joy and bliss that will shower upon him is beyond comprehension.

So those who wish to return to their past memories will have to break their fixation with age. Once in a while hold a child's hand and run along with him forgetting how old you are. And the funny thing is, that age exists just as a thought, a memory. It's merely an idea which has taken hold of us very strongly.

Break your fixation with age in living the outer life; and in your inner life, when you sit in meditation, move back year by year. Let each birthday come alive one by one; go back slowly. Then it would not be difficult to reach to the point of your birth. The same technique works in returning to the past lives. However, I can't tell you the sutra for moving from one life to another. There is a reason for it: if one experiments with it just out of curiosity he can go mad, because in doing so, if the memories of the past life come crashing down unexpectedly, it will be difficult to bear them.

Once a girl was brought to me. When I saw her, she was eleven years old. For no specific reason she had a memory of her three past lives. This was purely accidental -- just an error on the part of nature.

Nature makes a great arrangement. It buries the layer of your past lives' memories, and the layer of this life's memory starts building over it. Deep down, this layer keeps you disconnected from your previous birth. Some countries -- such as Mohammedan or Christian countries -- do not believe in reincarnation. In such countries children are not born with the memory of any past life because the people in those countries are not attuned to that direction. It is as though we firmly believe there is nothing on the other side of this wall; by and by we'll stop looking beyond it.

In India, no matter how much disagreement the Jainas, the Buddhists, the Hindus may have among themselves, they agree on one point -- the existence of past lives. There is no conflict in their belief in

reincarnation. Therefore, for thousands of years the mind of this country has been filled with the belief in the possible existence of past lives.

Often it unexpectedly happens that if a man dies with a deep feeling to remember that life in the next one, then without his going through any yogic practice or following any meditation technique, he will be able to retain the memory in his next birth. But that will put him in trouble.

So when the girl was brought to me, she remembered three of her past lives. Her first birth happened in Assam, where she had died as a seven-year-old girl. Presently, she could speak as much of the Assamese language as a seven-year-old girl can. She could perform as much Assamese dance as a seven-year-old girl can. But in her current life she was born in Madhya Pradesh. She had never been to Assam: she had nothing to do with the Assamese language.

Her second birth happened in Madhya Pradesh too, in Katni. And there she had died at the age of about sixty. So that adds up to sixty-seven, plus eleven years of this birth. When I saw that eleven-year-old girl her eyes, her face looked like that of a seventy-eight-year-old woman. Even at the age of eleven she looked so jaundiced and pale, so worried and troubled, as if she was close to death, because she carried within her an awareness of the sequence of memories spread over seventy-eight years. She was in great trouble.

The relatives of her past life were my neighbors in Jabalpur; they brought her to me. The girl had recognized all the relatives of her past life from a crowd of thousands. In that crowd she spotted people from her previous life: her son, daughter-in-law, grandson, and so on -- she recognized all of them.

The house where she lived in her previous life was situated in a village. Her relatives in that life had now moved to Jabalpur. She told them of a treasure buried in the old house -- it was indeed found there. In her past life she was the elder sister of my next door neighbor. The man has a scar on his head. The moment this girl recognized him, the first thing she said was, "Good Lord! The scar is still on your head!"

The man asked with a surprise, "Can you tell me, when did I get this injury? I certainly don't remember."

The girl said, "On the day of your wedding you fell from the marriage horse: the horse reared and you fell down." The man was about eight or nine years old at the time of his marriage; he couldn't recall. So inquiries were made in the old village to find out if anyone remembered this incident. Finally, an old woman of the village corroborated the story, although the man himself had no memory of it.

I advised the girl's father to do something for her to forget those memories. I asked him to bring the girl to me so that I could help her forget in a week's time; otherwise, I said, the girl will be in a lot of trouble. Already she was facing great difficulties. She couldn't go to school. How can you enroll a seventy-eight-year-old woman in a school? She couldn't learn anything -- she already knew too much! She couldn't play. There was nothing like a childhood for her. How can a seventy-eight-year-old woman play? She looked serious. She was always nitpicking everyone in the house. At this age, she was filled with as much bitchiness as a seventy-eight-year-old man or woman is.

So I said that unless that girl was made to forget the past memories, she would go mad. But the members of her family were enjoying the way she was. A whole crowd would gather to see her. People even began offering her coins, coconut, fruits and sweets. The president of India invited her to Delhi. An invitation came to bring her to America as well. Her family was very happy with all this. They stopped bringing her to me. They said, "We don't want to help her forget the memories -- it's a good thing."

Seven years have gone by since I saw her last. Today the girl is mad. So they came and asked for my help. I told them, "Now it is a difficult situation. You did not agree when it was possible to do something about it." The girl is totally out of her senses. She is in a confused state. She can't figure out which memory belongs to which birth. She is not sure whether this brother, or this father is from her present life or her past life -- everything is mixed up.

Nature's arrangement is such that it allows you to carry only as much memory as you can bear. That's why it is necessary to go through a special discipline before reviving the memories of past lives. It makes you so capable that nothing ever confuses you. In fact, the primary condition for going into the memories of previous lives is that one should be able to see the world as nothing more than a dream, a leela, a play. Until this happens, it is not right to take a person into his past life.

Once you begin to see this world as a play, a dream, then there is no problem. Then nothing will hurt you. The memories of a play are not the kind which can cause any harm. But if this world looks very real to you... if you have been taking your wife to be real and you come to remember that she was your mother in the previous life, you will be confused. You won't know whether to take her as a wife or a mother!

I once helped a woman experiment in recalling her past life. First I kept restraining her from doing it because it was just out of curiosity. But she was very curious to know and went on insisting. Finally I consented, and she did as I explained to her. The experiment succeeded; the woman recalled that she was a prostitute in her past life. This was too much for an ethical and chaste woman like her to bear. She said, "I don't want to remember all this, I want to forget all about it." But it wasn't so easy to forget it; a lot of effort was needed. It is easy to remember a thing but very difficult to forget it, because once a fact has become part of our knowledge it is very difficult to erase it.

That's why I purposely left out one key in my explanation, and that is how to enter from this life into your previous life. This key can be given only to one who has revived all the memories of this birth. But then it will be strictly an individual matter. It cannot be discussed publicly, nor is it right to do so.

Our mind does innumerable things out of curiosity. Most people live by curiosity alone. They always pry into things out of curiosity, but such an attitude may sometimes prove dangerous. A particular memory may surface which cannot be restrained later on. Nevertheless, one can certainly experiment with reviving this life's memories. When that becomes an enjoyable experience, and when the entire situation of this life....

As soon as you have relived your past memories, you will find it is all nothing more than a dream. You will come to realize that whatsoever you are taking so seriously today -- profit or loss in business,

quarrels with the wife, a father showing his annoyance, the son leaving home, the daughter marrying an undesirable person -- all will end up tomorrow in the junkyard of your memory.

When the memories will come back to you, you will be amazed to see the things you took so seriously many times in the past exist nowhere today. You will see how some moments had taken such control over you that for a second everything seemed like a matter of life and death. Those moments have become worthless today, they are lying like a heap of dust somewhere on the road, they are like trash lying in a pile of rubbish. They are totally useless today.

So, reliving the past memories will cause two things to happen. First, it will become evident that whatsoever you had taken so seriously did not prove to be such a grave matter after all. It wasn't even important enough to remember. You will see that whatever you were ready to stake your life for doesn't even exist anywhere.

Such an understanding will transform your life, because then you will come to see that the thing you are willing to kill or be killed for will someday be rotting in a heap of garbage. Just stop for a moment or two and everything will look absurd. Wait a moment or two and all will turn into memory. And if the total outcome of life is nothing but memories, then how is an ordinary man's life different from the life an actor lives on the screen? After all, whatever an actor does, the final outcome is the creation of a film which we see on the screen. Similarly, in an overall sense whatever we do, whatever we live through is recorded onto a film of memories which can be seen again.

What we call life is not much different from focusing a camera. And the captured moments we once considered so significant are just like pictures projected on the screen. They are worth no more than a film. The only difference being that the film we normally use can be enclosed in a box, while the film recorded in life has to be stored in the container of your memory. That's all the difference there is. And what is stored in the container of your memory is as much a film as the regular celluloid film.

Sooner or later, it won't be too difficult for science to discover a way to draw this film out and project it on the screen. It's not much of a problem, because when we close our eyes, we see the same film being projected on our optical screen. In a dream, your eyeballs move in the same way as when you watch a movie. By placing one's fingers on a sleeping person's eyes and sensing the movement or non-movement of his eyeballs, one can determine whether he is dreaming or not. The movement of his eyes will indicate he is watching something. What do you suppose he is watching? He is, of course, watching a movie.

In meditation, if one can relive his past lives as well, he will find that experience to be no more than watching a film. The experiment of jati-smaran, remembering past lives, was meant for this very purpose. In fact, Mahavira or Buddha never initiated anyone until he had gone through jati-smaran. That's why the initiated monk of today is not really initiated nor is he a monk -- he is neither. He knows nothing.

A few days ago a Jaina monk came to see me. He said, "Please teach me meditation. I am a monk from Acharya Tulsi's order. He has initiated me."

I asked him, "You have received initiation from Acharya Tulsi and have not learned meditation? Then what have you learned? What did you take the initiation for? What does initiation mean really? If you have come to learn meditation from me, then why did you take the initiation? If not even meditation was taught to you there, then what else was taught? If Acharya Tulsi doesn't teach meditation, then what else does he do?"

To initiate means to lead someone into meditation -- that's the only way initiation can happen, not otherwise. So Mahavira and Buddha gave initiation only after one had relived his past lives. Mahavira's teaching was that until you have relived your past lives, you cannot drop your serious attitude.

If a man were to remember once, "I had made love to a woman in my previous birth and had told her, 'I can't live without you even for a moment'... and the same I had done and said the life before that, and the same thing the life previous to that one. Even before I was born a human being I had repeated the same act, whether I was an animal or a bird: I have been doing and saying the same things all along." And then if he were to say all this to a woman today, he will burst out laughing, because now he knows he can live very well without her -- in fact he has been living for lives without any problem.

Someone had wanted to attain a high position in his past life and had become like an emperor. He had thought that once he attained the highest honor everything would be fine. But it was all in vain. The poor fellow died. It was the same story the life before that, and the one previous to that. And the same man is once again racing to Delhi in search of a position. If he were to remember his past lives just before reaching Delhi, he would turn back realizing the absurdity of the whole thing. He would laugh, seeing how many times he went to Delhi, and how each time ultimately the mad scramble ended up in death.

Man wants to repeat all he has been doing in his previous lives, but he has no memory of it. If he could remember it even once, it would be impossible for him to do it again. No man can really become a sannyasin until he has realized the whole world as nothing but a dream. But how can this world look like a dream? The key to that lies in jati-smaran, remembering past lives.

So, go back into the memories of this birth -- but not just out of curiosity. Only when you have seen this life as a dream and feel the burden lifted from your mind, and only after you have gained the capacity to see the previous lives as a dream too, can this key be given to you. However, it will be a one-to-one communication.

The techniques I am working on with you collectively are such that they can't harm you. Whatsoever I am saying publicly are things which can lead only up to a point where it is safe for you. Beyond that, the communication of sutras will be strictly on an individual basis. Hence with those who will progress fast, I will start sharing things which otherwise cannot be told openly in public. As soon as such people become ready, those things can be imparted to them. But that will be absolutely in person, individually. There is no point talking about them before everyone.

Question 2

WHAT ARE THE DISTINGUISHING FEATURES THAT MAKE A WOMB WORTHY ENOUGH TO RECEIVE A HIGHER SOUL, AND WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A WOMB IN WHICH AN INFERIOR SOUL MAY ENTER? WHAT PREPARATIONS ARE NECESSARY IN ORDER THAT A HIGHER SOUL MAY DESCEND? HOW ARE THE PREPARATIONS MADE? AS COMPARED TO ORDINARY WOMBS, HOW SPECIAL WERE THE WOMBS THAT CARRIED GREAT SOULS LIKE BUDDHA, MAHAVIRA, KRISHNA, AND JESUS?

Many things will have to be considered. The first thing is: the purer the moment of lovemaking is, the purer the soul a womb can attract. But sex has been condemned so much that the moment of copulation hardly ever becomes a divine moment. Sex has already been branded as sacrilegious. It is already rooted in our consciousness as something impure. The sexual union between husband and wife takes place in the shadows of sin; it does not transpire in a worshipful moment of prayer and bliss. Naturally, it is not possible for a pure soul to be attracted toward a womb surrounded by a cloak of sin. So in order that a higher soul may enter a womb, the first condition is that it be a divine moment of lovemaking.

In my view, the moment of sexual union is a moment of prayer. Only after prayer and meditation should the husband and wife enter into sex. The result will be twofold. One is that after meditation it won't be possible for them to enter into sex for years. The first thing that will happen after meditation is that you won't be able to enter sex. As you will go into meditation, the desire for sex will disappear -- meditation will become the way to celibacy. Years will go by without sex. The purity ensuing from these bygone years will not be the product of a suppressed sex. It won't be the result of any vow taken by the husband and wife both practicing celibacy by sleeping separately in locked rooms, or the husband sleeping in the temple all by himself. This celibacy will not be the consequence of a vow, rather it will be a spontaneous flowering. It is simply impossible to enter sex after meditation. Meditation gives so much joy, such bliss, that why would one care for the pleasures of sex?

If husband and wife can meditate regularly for years, they won't be able to enter sex. That will have a twofold effect. One, the energy will become very dynamic and intense. A very potent sperm is needed in order to give birth to a pure soul. Weak sperms won't do. Only an intercourse which is preceded by years of celibacy can be effective in allowing a powerful soul to enter the womb. After years of meditation when someone goes into sex -- that is, when meditation makes him competent to enter into sex -- then naturally it will have to be a divine moment, because if there had been even a slight impurity left in that moment, meditation would not have given the go-ahead.

When meditation gives the command -- that is, when the possibility to enter sex exists even after one has been in meditation -- then it means that even sex has taken on a sacredness. Now it has a divineness of its own. When two individuals make love in this divine moment, it would be better to say the union is not physical, it is very spiritual. The bodies are meeting, yet the meeting is not physical -- it is very profound and spiritual.

So giving birth to a divine soul is not merely a biological phenomenon. The meeting of two bodies simply provides an opportunity for another body to take birth; but when two souls meet as well, a situation is created for a greater soul to descend.

The births of Mahavira or Buddha are of this kind. The birth of Jesus is even more incredible. The births of Mahavira and Buddha had been prophesied. Their coming was awaited for years. Every detail was foretold -- so much so that Mahavira had even predicted in his previous life how many dreams the mother of his next life will have before his birth. The dreams were mentioned in a sequence with their contents. Mahavira's prophecy was, "When these many dreams occur, know that I have entered the womb." He also pointed out the symbols that would appear in the dream -- a white elephant, a lotus, and so on. So people were waiting eagerly for a woman to declare she had seen all the dreams with these symbols.

In Buddha's case too, symbols were mentioned. When he was due to be born, a monk from the faraway Himalayas arrived at the palace. He was old and had been waiting. He was very worried lest he should die before the advent of Buddha. So when he came to beg at the palace, he told Buddha's father, "I know a child is to be born here. I have come for his darshan, to see him and pay my respects."

The father was very astonished to hear this. The monk was a renowned figure, very famous, a divine person in his own right. He had thousands of devotees, and he was asking to pay his regards to the child! The father was simply amazed. But he felt very happy too, because his wife had already mentioned to him the special dreams she had.

So the next day the monk arrived to see the newborn child. Seeing the child, the monk broke down and began crying bitterly. The father became very worried. He asked the monk, "Are you crying because you see a bad omen?"

The monk said, "There is no bad omen for the child. I am crying for myself. The man at whose feet I could have attained a timeless bliss, is born. But alas, I am nearing death and this child will take time to grow and flower -- I cannot wait that long. The time for my departure has come."

The birth of Jesus was awaited by the whole world -- especially so in the Middle East. The prediction was that at the time of Jesus' birth, four stars will appear in the sky. Those who knew the secret understood the symbolic meaning of the stars. A man from India journeyed to Bethlehem in order to offer his greetings on Jesus' birth. One man went from Egypt, and two from other countries. All four of them knew that the appearance of the four stars would herald the birth of Jesus.

So as soon as they saw the stars, they hurried in search of the child. The information was that those who recognized the stars would be guided by them to the place where the child was born. The stars kept moving ahead and the travelers followed them.

The wise man from Egypt who had set out in search of the child first came to Herod -- the emperor at the time of Jesus. He said to the emperor, "Perhaps you don't know, but the king of kings has arrived at last." Herod couldn't follow what the man meant by "king of kings." He thought an enemy was born who

would finish him someday, so he ordered all newly born children in Jerusalem to be killed. The news reached Mary in time and she escaped. Jesus was born in hiding in a dark and dingy stable.

The story of Jesus' birth is even more significant than that of Buddha's or Mahavira's. It illustrates the question you have asked: "What preparations are necessary in order to give birth to a higher soul?" Jesus' soul was ready to take birth. A suitable mother was available, but not the father. Mariam was qualified to give birth to Jesus, but her husband was not. That's why it has always been said Jesus was born of a virgin mother. There is a reason for saying this, because the father was irrelevant. Jesus was indeed born of a virgin mother. A bodiless soul, which the Christians call the Holy Ghost, had to enter the body of Jesus' father. Through the medium of Jesus' father, another soul remained present in his place. That means, Jesus' father was not there, only his body was.

I have mentioned before how Shankara entered another body. Similarly, a soul entered the body of Mary's husband and Jesus was born. That's why he could say he had nothing to do with Jesus' birth. He had no knowledge of what happened. Insofar as he was concerned, Mariam was virgin; in his eyes, the son was born to a virgin Mary. He was unconscious all along. His body was simply used as a medium. But Christianity is not clear on this point. Hence the Christian priest somehow tries to prove Jesus was born of a virgin mother. But he doesn't know what it means to be born of a virgin -- he is unable to prove it.

The biggest argument against Jesus in the West has been over how he could be born to a virgin girl. It is unscientific. This is true: a child cannot be born of a virgin girl. But Jesus was born of a virgin girl in the sense that his father was not consciously present at the time -- he was only a medium. He was not a conscious participant in the birth of Jesus. He was totally unaware. He was only made to function as an instrument for this phenomenon to occur.

Often it happens that many superior souls wish to take birth but they don't find any appropriate situation for their conception. Today it has become even more difficult. It has been almost impossible to create superior conditions for the conception of higher souls, because the whole science pertaining to it has been lost.

What we call conception today is absolutely animal-like -- there is no science behind it. Those who had given full consideration to the phenomenon of conception had worked out all the details. They had taken into account, for example, the minutest calculation of time in terms of finding the exact and the most characteristic moment to conceive. We can't imagine how much attention was paid to this phenomenon.

You may not be aware of the fact that more people go mad on the full moon, and less on the new moon. Science is not yet fully clear why this is so. The fact remains that the full moon does affect our mental state. Just as it brings storms in the seas, it stirs our emotions and raises them to the heights of lunacy. The word lunatic means one who is affected by the moon. luna means the moon, and lunatic means one who is moonstruck. It means the man has gone mad because he has been attacked by the moon.

There is a complete science that studies how the earth is affected by various forces every moment, every hour. If conception can take place during the time of these unique extraterrestrial influences, the

results will be highly significant. And if the conception does not occur during these moments, the results can be to the contrary. The whole of astrology was developed for the very purpose of finding out the exact moment of conception, because the influences working in that particular moment alone can give some indication of the conceived soul. At least some rough data can be obtained of the possibilities hidden in that moment of conception. Each second, each hour has its own implication.

So before entering sex, one needs the strength of meditation, years of celibacy behind it. Keep in mind, however, my understanding of brahmacharya, celibacy -- it is neither an outcome of suppression nor repression. By celibacy I mean that which comes on its own, which happens spontaneously. Then one may enter in sex with a prayerful heart, invoking pure souls to accept the invitation. Not only are many such souls available, but there is a continuous race among them for entering a womb.

So in this situation, if you can invite certain souls, the subsequent results will become more clearly evident. Also, when such a soul is conceived, for nine months the baby needs to grow in the womb within a certain psychological and spiritual environment. For example, Mahavira's mother was kept under very special conditions. So was Buddha's mother. One prediction made before Buddha's birth was that he would be born when the mother is in a standing position; and that he will be born not inside, but outside the house. It was quite a strange thing: as Buddha's mother was traveling to her parents, on her way she stopped for a while and stood under the sal tree, and Buddha was born, under the open skies.

Ordinarily, babies are born in the darkness of night. And normally, people make love in dark chambers, sneakily, with a sense of fear and guilt. People look at sex as if it is some kind of sin, a crime which has to be done surreptitiously, without anyone knowing about it. Obviously, sex of this kind is bound to produce grave consequences. In order to make love, freedom, openness, purity are essential.

At the time of lovemaking, even small things bring distinct results, such as the color on the walls, the light in the room, the fragrance. A whole science exists around it. If we could make use of the science of child-conception, a complete transformation of the human race could be brought about.

Even little things make a difference. Currently, a scientist is carrying on a small experiment which will bring about a fundamental change. He has devised a small belt which is to be tied around a pregnant woman's abdomen. It so happened that once a woman had to wear a belt for some reason in her pregnancy -- she was ill -- but it created a strange effect on the child. It was found that the belt pressed against the baby's head and the child was born with a very high IQ. This was purely accidental; a particular center of the child's brain was pressed.

Following this incident, the scientist has carried out many more experiments. It may well be that the child was naturally endowed with such high intelligence, and the whole thing was just a coincidence. However, the subsequent experiments proved that if pressure is applied at a particular place on a pregnant woman's abdomen, it causes a remarkable change in the child's intelligence.

There are many asanas, body postures, which are meant to bring about the required pressure at a particular point. There are many breathing techniques for the same purpose. There are many words

which, when articulated properly, bring about a certain pressure. All of these become helpful in allowing the genius, the health, the capability, the potentiality of the child to manifest fully.

Up to now man has discovered who knows how many ways to cause mischief, but he has not been putting enough energy into discovering ways which can build, enrich the future of mankind. But it is all possible. As soon as a woman conceives, she begins to reflect the possibilities the child is endowed with. It is in fact a dual process. In pregnancy, if the mother becomes irritable, angry, the child will be born with an angry temperament. Similarly, if the soul of an angry disposition has entered the womb, a woman who otherwise never became angry would begin to show anger. This is indeed very remarkable. And in view of this fact, experiments can be done for treating the anger of the conceived child right when it is in a seed form.

There are many souls which can take birth but haven't been able to yet. It's a very strange situation. It is something like a university which may give some people education up to the B.A., but has no additional provision or facility for postgraduate study or for research. In that case, many graduates would have to be on the lookout for some place where they can work toward an M.A. or do further research.

This world of ours develops the being and intelligence of some people only to a certain point, and then deserts them. Beyond that we have no means to help them further. But a systematic provision can be made. The right type of possibilities and conditions can be created so higher souls may find their way into this world. So let me repeat the few basic points.

The first thing is: our whole attitude toward sex is sick and dangerous. As long as the sacredness of sex is not recognized in this world, we'll go on causing more and more harm to mankind. So long as one has not become meditative prior to entering sex, his sex will remain animal-like: it can never have a human quality. And secondly, without a prolonged period of celibacy preceding the sexual involvement the creation of a powerful sperm is not possible. And without it there is no possibility of giving birth to a powerful soul.

Question 3

YOU HAVE SAID ONCE BEFORE THAT IF PEOPLE LIKE KRISHNA, CHRIST, BUDDHA, MAHAVIRA DO NOT APPEAR ON THE EARTH IN THE NEXT FIFTY YEARS, THE WHOLE OF HUMANITY MAY PERISH. YOU ALSO STATED, AS DID VIVEKANANDA, "I AM IN SEARCH OF A HUNDRED INDIVIDUALS WHO CAN SHOW COURAGE IN ATTAINING THE ULTIMATE HEIGHTS OF SPIRIT. IF THAT COMES TRUE, THEN IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO SAVE NOT ONLY THIS COUNTRY, BUT THE ENTIRE HUMANITY. THIS IS THE REASON WHY IN VILLAGE AFTER VILLAGE I KEEP LOOKING IN THE EYES OF THOSE WHO CAN BE USEFUL. FROM MY SIDE I AM READY TOTALLY TO TAKE YOU INWARD. LET'S SEE IF AT THE TIME OF MY DEATH I WILL HAVE TO SAY AS WELL THAT, 'I WAS LOOKING FOR A HUNDRED INDIVIDUALS, BUT COULDN'T FIND THEM.' IF YOU ARE READY, THEN COME ALONG!"

WOULD YOU KINDLY EXPLAIN WHAT YOU MEAN BY "I AM READY" AND "IF YOU ARE READY"? PLEASE EXPLAIN WHAT PREPARATION IS REQUIRED ON OUR PART, AND HOW DO WE PREPARE OURSELVES?

Let me just explain to you the meaning of your preparation. I have to do my own preparation -- you have, of course, nothing to do with it. In fact, I don't have to do any preparation, I am ready.

So what is your preparation? There are three things involved in it. First, over the past thousands of years, we have become believers rather than inquirers. A believing mind has come to exist instead of an inquiring mind. We immediately believe, we never go on a search. And whatsoever is worth attaining in this world, cannot be attained without inquiring, searching. Even if it were possible to attain everything else without searching, one's own being cannot be attained without a quest. So the first thing is: one should have a mind full of questions. The first preparation is to have a probing mind.

You may say you do inquire, you do ask questions. Remember, however, your inquiries only look for an answer; I don't consider them inquiries. The question should not just look for an answer, it should look for an experience. Anyone can give you an answer; no one can give you the experience.

There are people who seem to be inquiring, and their inquiry seems religious. Ostensibly they ask, "Does God exist? Is there moksha, salvation?" But it appears they are looking for answers; someone should provide them the answers -- that's all. If the query is only to find the answer, then sooner or later the answer will turn into a belief, because the questioner is not ready to take much trouble. His interest is simply that he should meet someone he can believe in, someone who can provide the answer and satisfy his curiosity.

I have no answers for anyone. I am not interested in supplying answers. If I do speak a little in terms of answering the questions, it is only so that the questioners don't altogether run away. I would like them to stay a little longer so that I may destroy their desire to find the answer, and instead help grow the seed desiring the experience.

People are ready to have answers, no one wants to know really. Answers are cheap. You can find them in books, gurus can provide them. Finding answers is an absolutely intellectual thing; it has nothing to do with living totally. A quest for experience is needed, a probing for the sake of experience is required. Let me tell you a story as an example.

In Tibet lived a mystic called Milarepa. There was a custom in Tibet that when someone went to see the master, he had first to walk around him three times, then bow down to him seven times, and then sit in a corner reverently until the master called and allowed him to ask. Milarepa went straight to the master and caught him by the neck. He neither went around him three times, nor did he bow seven times and wait his turn sitting quietly in the corner. He simply took hold of the master and said:

"Tell me quickly what you want to say to me, because I don't even know what I want to ask. I know this much: that I don't know anything. If you have anything to say, then speak!"

The master said, "Now wait a minute and behave yourself. Aren't you aware of the etiquette for asking a question? Don't you know that you are required to go around the master three times, bow down to him seven times, and then sit in a corner till you are called?"

Milarepa said, "I'll do all that later. Tell me, in the process of going around three times, and bowing down seven times, and sitting in the corner respectfully, if I were to die, who will be responsible? Will you take the responsibility for my death or will I be responsible? If you promise me I won't die while doing all that, I am willing to go around and bow down not only seven but seven hundred times. First answer me; the formalities can be done later, at leisure."

The master said, "Sit down. You are the kind of person who is in search of an experience, not an answer. It is good that you didn't circle around me, because that business is meant only for those who can do it. When someone does this going around, I know a wrong man has come, because it shows he still has time to do it."

So the first element I look for in a seeker is the element of inquiry: the quest, not for an answer, but for the experience; a search not to find a philosophy, but to discover one's own being; a probing not simply to know, but to attain; not even just to attain, but to be. So this is the first thing.

The second thing is that normally, when we set out to achieve something we have to lose something. Nothing in this world is attained without losing something in return. But that is not the case in attaining truth. No matter how much wealth you may be willing to give away, the truth will not be found.

Neither can you buy the truth by having wealth, nor by losing it. Some people think they will buy truth once they have earned a lot of money; there are others who believe they will find truth if they renounce the money. But essentially, both types of people carry the idea that truth can be purchased by means of wealth.

Truth cannot be found through money. In fact, as long as you are not ready to give up yourself you won't be able to attain truth by renouncing whatever else you may have. Truth can be discovered not by losing what you have, but by disappearing as you are. It needs courage to lose yourself as you are.

So the second element is: are you ready to disappear? Are you willing to give yourself away? And it is not that you have to give or anything, because why would truth be interested in having you? The readiness to give yourself is enough. Just the very readiness in itself is as good as giving away yourself. Once you have shown the readiness, the matter is finished. You simply need to be prepared to disappear. One who cannot do so will never be able to set out on the great journey.

People are always ready to give away things. Someone says, "I'll renounce my home, I'll renounce my parents, wife, son, property." But no one ever says, "I'll renounce my self." As long as one doesn't show the readiness to give himself up, he can't progress on the path of finding truth.

The question is: is the wife really yours that you can renounce her? No husband can ever put a claim on his wife. It becomes apparent to him every hour of the day that she is not his possession. So if you are renouncing that which was never yours in the first place, you are simply deceiving yourself. Who are you

deceiving really? Is your wealth really yours that you talk so much about giving it away? The fact is, you have nothing to call your own except your self, that which you are. How strange! You go on talking about renouncing all that is not yours, while that which is truly yours, you never even mention giving it up! This won't work.

So the second thing I look for is the courage to let go of one's self. And the third thing that is expected of you in regard to your preparation is infinite awaiting, infinite patience. Actually this journey is such that it would be a kind of childishness for anyone to ask for immediate results. Not that one can't achieve instantly -- one can; except that one has to be in a state where he has no instant demand, where he says, "Let it be whenever it has to be, it is okay with me. I am willing to wait."

So patience is needed. And that is the very element which is absolutely lacking in the world today. There is no other reason for the decline of religion than this lack of patience. Patience is the very root of religion. Only one who is patient can be religious. Everything else except religion is tangible, perceptible. Religion is absolutely invisible: you can't touch it, you can't lock it in a safe, it can't become your bank balance, you can't put it in a safe deposit vault and then go home and sleep without a care. Religion is the only thing one can go in search of only if one is ready to pursue it with patience.

The biggest problem with religion is that it is not attained piecemeal -- an inch today, a couple of inches tomorrow -- so that one may live in some hope. Even an impatient man carries hope that if he has earned a rupee today, he can earn two tomorrow, or four the day after. And if he should go on making money like this, he can earn millions someday.

No, religion is either attained instantaneously or not attained at all. There are no stages in between -- you don't find it in parts. The day you attain it, it comes in an instant -- it explodes on you. Nothing happens as long as you have not attained it in one instant; till then you remain in utter darkness. In that moment of darkness, those who have no patience begin to look for something immediately available. They start collecting rocks and pebbles which are lying all around, and are accessible right away. They begin to look for money, fame, and so on, which can be achieved without waiting for long, which seem to be just around the corner. In regard to worldly things, there is one advantage: you can get them in fragments, in installments. You cannot find religion in installments.

So the third element is awaiting -- infinite awaiting. But waiting is very difficult, because the mind says, "Who knows whether I will attain or not? Perhaps I am waiting in vain. Maybe it is already too late, it's time to give up. The time I have wasted so far could have been put to a better use -- in the pursuit of some tangible gains, in working toward substantial achievements. I missed all that for nothing." An impatient mind such as this can never become free.

In fact, there is no connection between impatience and peace, between impatience and equanimity. Peace and impatience cannot go together. Impatience means unrest, impatience means excitement, agitation. Such a mind is bound to miss.

Patience means as if the sea has calmed down -- not a single ripple, just mirrorlike. The interesting thing is that the moon always shines above -- if the sea could calm down and become mirrorlike, it could catch the moon in its reflection this very moment. But an agitated sea, full of waves, can't catch the moon.

Truth is ever-present. God is close, all around us, herenow. But our impatient mind -- unstable, restless, wavering -- fails to have any grip over God. God does not reflect in it, because it fails to become a mirror. Awaiting turns mind into a mirror. And the day one becomes a mirror, he attains everything that very moment... because everything was always present, only you were not present as a mirror. Once you become present like a mirror, everything that is, that ever was, is at once reflected in it.

So you need to fulfill these three conditions. Once that's taken care of, the matter is finished. The rest will happen very easily. The difficulty right now is that you are standing with open hands, while I am holding a jug of water asking you to fold your hands, make a cup of your palms so that I may pour water into it. Once your hands are cupped, once you have settled down a little, once you have become grounded even for a moment, the water can be poured. But don't be under the wrong impression that I will be pouring the water -- as soon as your hands are cupped, the water just flows into them. Even I can be nothing more than a witness to it. As a witness, I can simply say, "Yes, this man has indeed joined his palms and the phenomenon of water pouring into them has taken place."

This is what initiation means really. How can a man initiate another man? One always receives initiation from God alone. Of course this much is possible, that the one who has gone a little ahead can testify that the hands are indeed joined into a cup, and therefore the initiation will happen. So from my side there is no need for any special preparation. If your preparation is complete, then I can be the witness to it.

So I have given you three sutras for your preparation. Don't think over them; try living them and they will be in your grasp immediately. As you think, you lose; as you think, you miss. Even a little thought and all is lost. So don't think. Understand these three sutras and search within yourself. Look and see if there is any desire for answers lurking inside. Pay attention to the search for experience. Make sure you are not looking for any intellectual theory built around the idea whether God created this world or not. What difference does it make if God has created the world? And if he has not, how does that matter? So ask yourself, "Am I truly in search of an experience?" Make this point very clear inside you.

It is okay if you are not seeking an experience. But then it should become clear to you that your only interest is in having the answer, not the experience. With that clarity, an honesty will arise in you. Then at least you won't have to bother about going through the experience -- you will follow the answers and be finished with them. Remember, the very recognition of the fact that you are only looking for the answers will immediately make you realize the futility of your search, because after all, what will you do with the answers given in words?

Words neither satisfy your hunger nor quench your thirst -- words are good for nothing. If you want to cross a river, you need a real boat -- the word boat described in the dictionary won't be of any use. If you bring the dictionary which describes the word boat as a vessel that carries you across the river and you try to use it, the dictionary will drown and so will you. And the river will simply laugh at your

stupidity. The river will say, "If you really wanted to go across with the help of the word boat given in the book, you should have also crossed the river described in the book! You shouldn't bring the boat given in the book to cross a real river. You should have drawn the boat in the book and the river as well -- that would have worked."

If you are looking for answers, then a book is good enough. Then you don't need to do anything in life. But if you become clear about this, then the book will soon begin to bore you. Not only that, but sooner or later words will seem worthless; all theories and doctrines will look like trash; you will feel like throwing away the weight of all scriptures, and a quest for experience will begin.

But first it is necessary to make it clear within yourself: "What exactly am I looking for? Is this just out of fun, out of mere curiosity, or is it a mumuksha?" Mumuksha means a burning desire, a search, for experience.

The second thing you need to be clear about is: "What am I ready to let go?" If God were to stand before you and say, "I am ready to come to you, I am ready to be yours, what can you give me in return?" the chances are you will start feeling your pocket -- most people will. You will start counting rupees, and begin figuring whether to give five rupees, or ten, or whatever. Or what else would you give? At such a moment would you be able to give yourself away? Would you be able to say to God, "I offer myself. Except myself what else do I have?"

If this becomes clear to you, then the second sutra: "I am ready to give myself," will become instrumental in changing your life. This readiness should come simply as a clarity -- and that's all. It needs to be clear to you that "Should the time come, I am willing to give myself. I won't fail in that. I won't say, 'Wait a little while. Let me first discuss this with my family, let me consult my friends. How can I just give myself right away? Please wait for a few days. Let my son be married first.'"

The point is, it should become clearly evident to you that when the time comes, you can stake yourself without the slightest hesitation.

There is no gamble greater than religion. All other bets are very small in nature. In other bets you wager and either you lose or win something, but you always remain outside. In the case of religion you wager your own self, and there is no question of losing or winning, because when you have wagered yourself, who is going to win or lose? Now you are the stake, now there is no way to either lose or win. Now you are gone. So let this be clear to you.

And the third thing you need to make plain to yourself is that when you set out in search of the eternal, a childlike impatience won't work. You need infinite patience. And one who is ready to have infinite patience -- he attains now and here. So make these three things clear in your mind, and the preparation will take place on its own accord.

You have mentioned... the first condition is that one should have an inquiring mind and a longing. And the second thing you say is the willingness to let go. But as long as there is an inquiring mind, as long as

there is doubt, how can one let go completely? Actually, the day your inquiry is over there will be no doubt any longer. This is very interesting and it will be good to take a look at it.

When does one doubt? Remember, doubting is not inquiry. In fact, only those doubt who believe in something, who carry some belief. Only he can doubt who believes, but one who does not have a belief, how can he doubt? Who will he doubt? How can he doubt? Where there is inquiry there is neither doubt nor belief, because doubt takes place only when one is believing in something. Doubt appears against that which was previously believed. For example, a man says he doubts God's existence. This means he must have had some belief before in the existence of God; otherwise how could he have a doubt about it?

No, a seeker has neither any doubt nor does he have any belief. The seeker says, "I don't know anything, how can I doubt? How can I believe?" A seeker is not a nonbeliever; a seeker's mind is without any doubt, because a seeker's mind is free of any belief. Where there is no belief, there is no doubt either. Hence it is interesting to note that all these believers actually carry doubt within themselves, and the one who says he believes strongly, an equally strong doubt exists within him. To suppress that strong doubt the poor fellow has to believe strongly. Doubt is seated firmly inside and when it tries to come out, his equally strong belief suppresses it. He closes his eyes and repeats, "Rama, Rama," so that the doubt can be buried deep inside, so that the belief stays firm. But the question is, firm belief against what? Against oneself? Then it is certain there is doubt inside.

In fact, when the seeking, the inquiry is finished, there is neither belief nor any doubt. Only inquiry remains. One simply wants to know: What is it? When one asks, "What is it?" there is neither any belief nor any doubt. Do you follow me?

So inquiry is a very pure thing. It is not only free from doubt, it is free from belief as well. Inquiring is the purest state of mind. In it you will not find rising waves of doubt, nor is it contained within the shores of belief. Both are absent. Hence inquiring is the purest state of mind. There is nothing but inquiry. It is the most uncontaminated state; there is no other state more purified than this. In other states something else gets added to it.

So, as I mentioned earlier, the day the inquiry comes to an end the other thing too will be taken care of easily, because when you set out in search of the ultimate you will come to realize what is at stake. You will come to know what you need to put on the line. No search is without a price. In order to take each step on the path one has to walk, one has to put oneself at stake. Every rung of the ladder that you climb increases your blood pressure. Even a small step on the path has its implications. In this world, anything you want to search for has a price tag. If we are on our way to seek the ultimate, to unravel the essential mysteries of the world, to find the truth, to find God, then the question is: what are we going to put at stake?

One whose inquiring has come to its conclusion will be able to see clearly that except his own self there is nothing else he can stake. All he has is himself to offer, he has nothing more than that. And one whose inquiring has come to its conclusion, his stake will also be total, because a total inquiry cannot make a half-hearted wager. A half-hearted wager is possible only if there is a little doubt. For example, a

gambler wagers five rupees although he has ten rupees in his pocket. He is doubtful; otherwise he would have wagered all ten rupees. He wagers only five rupees because he is not sure what the outcome will be. He is doubtful, but he is also confident -- both things are there. The nonbeliever inside him creates fear that he might lose; the believer is also right there telling him to go ahead. So the gambler finds a compromise -- he wagers five. He goes for the middle and saves the remaining five anyway.

But if there is neither doubt nor belief, if the mind is total, not divided, then the stake is total. Then one is able to put himself on the line totally. And when the inquiring is complete and the stake is total, one is ready for eternal patience, because in order to find the ultimate one cannot be impatient and approach it in the same way as we do trivial matters.

So the three steps I have talked about are deeply interconnected. If you complete the first you will reach the second, if you complete the second you will arrive at the third. All three are inevitably related with each other.

And Now, And Here, Vol 2

Chapter #15

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Question 1

OSHO, YOU HAVE SAID BEFORE THAT IF A SEEKER IN HIS EXPERIMENT SHOULD MAKE AN INTENSE RESOLVE THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO DIE, THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO RETURN TO HIS OWN CENTER, IN A FEW DAYS HIS LIFE ENERGY WILL BEGIN TO CONTRACT FROM WITHIN AND THE SEEKER WILL BE ABLE TO SEE HIS BODY AS DEAD -- FIRST FROM WITHIN, AND THEN FROM WITHOUT. CONSEQUENTLY, HIS FEAR OF DEATH WILL DISAPPEAR FOREVER. SO THE QUESTION IS: IN THIS CONDITION, DOES ONE NEED TO

MAKE ANY SPECIAL PREPARATION OR TAKE ANY EXTRA PRECAUTION SO THAT THE SUBTLE BODY MAY RETURN SAFELY TO THE PHYSICAL BODY? OR, DOES THE RETURN OF THE SUBTLE BODY HAPPEN ON ITS OWN? PLEASE EXPLAIN.

In many ways, man lives essentially through the mind. Even when we perceive something as a physical occurrence, deep down it turns out to be a psychological phenomenon. All bodily manifestations have their roots in the mind. Let me explain a few things in this regard, then it will be easy to follow the question.

Until fifty years ago, all human illnesses were treated as illnesses of the body. In the last fifty years, the more we have learned about illnesses, the more the proportion of physical illnesses has decreased while that of the psychological illnesses has increased. Even the greatest of physiologists is ready to admit today that more than fifty percent of all human ailments are psychological. Sickesses which are otherwise considered as physical, more than half of them are caused by the mind. Mind is the very substratum of man's being, his existence. It is the source of our life, it is the source of our illness, and it is the very source of our death. That's why so much importance is given to the will.

If you have ever witnessed an experiment in hypnosis, there are a few things about it worth keeping in mind. A hypnotized person is simply one whose conscious mind is asleep and whose unconscious mind is awake. When the conscious mind goes to sleep, the person stops doubting, because all doubts and misgivings are limited to the conscious mind.

If we divide the human mind into ten parts, it will appear that one part of it is conscious while the remaining nine are unconscious. Nine parts are in the dark unconscious; only a small portion -- one tenth of the mind -- is awake. It is this conscious mind that doubts, thinks, ponders. If this conscious mind were to sleep, then the remaining nine parts below would stay totally receptive. There, no questions are asked, no doubts are raised.

In the state of hypnosis, the doubting mind is put to sleep and the undoubting, receptive mind comes into effect. In that state, if you were to place a small piece of rock on the hand of the hypnotized person and tell him it is a hot coal, he will cry out in pain as if his hand had been burned. He will at once throw the rock away -- just as he would if a real hot coal had been placed on his hand.

Up to this point one may assume that just an idea in his mind must have caused this to happen. But the astonishing thing is that blisters appear on his hand -- the same as it would have if a hot coal had been placed there. So apparently, although you had placed an ordinary piece of rock, the person's mind totally accepted your word that it was a hot coal. And the body has no means of denying the mind, so it acts accordingly. Remember well, if the mind accepts totally, the body will have to follow it.

There is a reverse of this experiment too, which is even more astonishing. You can place an ember in the hypnotized person's hand and tell him it is just a cold pebble. The man will keep on holding the ember

and yet no blisters will appear on his hand. Without the mind's permission, the body is helpless to do anything.

That is why fakirs are able to dance barefoot on fire -- there is no miracle in it. It's just a little experiment in the science of mind. There are ten fakirs dancing on the fire, they openly invite anyone to join them, so there is no question of any fraud. You are welcome to dance with them. But that will be possible only when watching those ten people you become fully convinced the fire is not affecting them. Once you are convinced -- that if they are not having burns, you won't either -- you reach the same state a hypnotized person does. In that state, the one part of your mind is not doubting, and the nine parts are believing -- now you can jump into the fire, your feet won't burn. One who has any doubts will not jump, but the one who has none will jump in. What this means is that even fire cannot burn you if the mind is not open to it, and even coldness can cause burns if the mind is ready for it.

Experiments in hypnosis reveal very profound truths about the mind. For example, I was once conducting experiments in hypnosis on a girl. I was a guest in her house. We were sitting in a room. Altogether we were ten people: the girl, myself, and eight other people including her mother, who was seated right across from her.

When I placed the girl under hypnosis, I told her that her mother had left the room. Then I asked her to open her eyes and count the number of people present in the room. She counted nine because for her, the mother who was sitting across on the sofa did not exist. I asked her several times who was sitting on the sofa and her answer was, "The sofa is empty." Her mother called out to her. She looked all around the room -- except at the sofa where her mother was sitting -- to see where her voice came from. As far as she was concerned, the mother was not seated on the sofa.

Once again I asked her to close her eyes and told her that her father, who was not in the room, had come and was sitting across from her on the sofa. Then I asked her to open her eyes and count the number of people in the room. She counted ten. I asked, "You had said earlier the sofa across from you was empty; why are you counting it now?" She said, "The sofa is not empty, father is sitting on it." Her mother, who was actually sitting on the sofa, did not exist for her. But her father who was not even in the room -- she counted him. Her mind had totally accepted my word.

A resolute mind holds wonderful possibilities. For those who face many defeats in their lives, the readiness of their mind to accept defeat is far more responsible than the circumstances. The world as such has very little to do with the failures met by people -- ninety percent of the responsibility lies with the people themselves. When one is ninety percent ready to encounter failure, it would be a little too much if the world didn't cooperate even ten percent with it -- the world makes a ten percent contribution.

The same principle applies to those who go on attaining success as it does to those who meet with failures. Those who are healthy and those who remain mostly sick, those who are peaceful and those who are continuously restless -- all are subject to the same principle. Deep down, whatsoever you want to be that's what you become. Thoughts become objects, thoughts become happenings, thoughts create your personality. Essentially, we alone are responsible for the way we live, and the level at which we

live. We alone lay the foundation of the life we live. Once this truth is understood, what I am explaining to you will become clear.

I have already mentioned to you that as long as one has not entered death voluntarily, he cannot be free from the fear of death. Someday death will come, of course, but then you won't be entering into it voluntarily -- you will be compelled to face it. It wouldn't be surprising if you closed your eyes and became unconscious when forced to go somewhere. You can't be forced into something if you are fully conscious. But there is no need for one to be under such compulsion. Dying voluntarily, one can see death even while being alive. Watching such a death is a fascinating experience -- far more fascinating than the experience of ordinary death, because this death is seen of your own free will. You may ask, however, "How can one die voluntarily and see death?"

This also needs to be understood. Two kinds of mechanisms are working in your life, in your body -- one is voluntary, the other is involuntary. There are some parts in your body which move only with your willingness. For example, my hand moves only when I want it to; it won't move if I don't want it to move. But the blood inside this hand does not flow according to my desire; it won't stop flowing if I don't want it to. So the working of the blood is involuntary. The same is the case with the throbbing of my heart, the beating of my pulse, the food digesting in my stomach -- none of these functions follow my command, they are involuntary.

So our biological organism consists of two parts: one that works according to our desire, and the other which works independent of our desire. However, if one were to increase his willpower, what is outside the realm of desire now would become part of it. Similarly, if one's willpower were to decrease, what is now within the reach of his desire would be no longer. The paralytic condition is a case in point.

More than seventy percent of all cases of paralysis are psychological in nature. Actually it is not that a man is struck with paralysis; only his legs, for instance, go beyond the control of his willpower. Even this is not right to say. How can legs manage to get out of one's control? Truly speaking, the range, or the scope of his willpower becomes narrow. What it means is the will of such a person has shrunk. It is as though as one's feet are sticking out from underneath a shrunken blanket. The feet remain beyond the reach of the blanket. Similarly, the willpower of a paralytic person shrinks, and loses its control over the limbs.

It has occurred many times; for example, once a house caught fire at night and the people inside came running out. But they suddenly remembered that the old man who had been paralyzed and sick for years had been left behind. Before they could figure out how to rescue the man, they saw him come running out of the house. They were shocked and frightened. They forgot all about the fire and asked him, "How did you come out? How did you manage to walk?" The moment they asked how he managed to walk, the man said, "Are you joking? How can I walk?" And he fell down.

In the stress and fear caused by the fire, the circumference of the man's willpower grew larger -- the feet came within reach of the blanket -- and the man walked out. Having come out, he suddenly realized: how could he really have walked out? And the scope of his willpower once again became narrow, the feet once again were out from under the blanket!

The pulse rate can be brought under voluntary control. This is not a feat that only yogis can perform -- you can too. It's a very small experiment. Check your pulse rate for a minute. Then close your eyes and simply feel that your pulse is beating faster. Open your eyes after ten minutes and check. You'll rarely come across a man whose pulse rate will not increase if he does this experiment. That's why when the doctor checks your pulse, it is never the same. The moment he touches you, you become a bit anxious, and that causes the pulse rate to increase. This is even more true if you are being checked by a lady doctor!

The heartbeat can be controlled too -- almost to the point of stopping it. Scientific experiments have been carried out to this effect and the fact has been accepted. About forty years ago, a man by the name of Brahmayogi astounded doctors at the Bombay Medical College by stopping his heartbeat completely. He repeated the same act at Oxford, and later at Calcutta University.

This man could do three things. Firstly, he could stop the blood circulation completely -- not only could he stop it, but he could control its flow as well. He could let it run or withhold its movement at will. When he would stop the circulation, not a drop of blood would come out even when the vein was cut. The third thing he could do was to take in any kind of poison and retain it in his stomach for half an hour, after which he would throw it out of his system. However, this experiment finally caused his death later on.

Many X-rays were taken while the poison was still inside his stomach. No gastric juices, no blood released and mixed with the poison. They remained separate until he allowed them to mix. The man died in Rangoon. After having performed the act of taking poison at the Rangoon University, he was driven home in a car. The car got into an accident, and by the time he reached home forty-five minutes had passed since he took the poison. He could withhold the mixing of the poison for not more than thirty minutes. So he reached home unconscious. He could just manage to keep the poison out during the thirty-minute range of his willpower -- his practice was limited to thirty minutes only. He crossed that limit. For the next fifteen minutes the poison was able to penetrate the limits of his will and mix into his internal system.

There is no part in our body which cannot be brought within the power of our will, and there is no part which cannot go outside this power either. Both things can happen. Entering death voluntarily is a deeper experiment. It's an experiment where one contracts his life energy at will. What needs to be kept in mind is: if the will is applied totally, the energy is bound to shrink within. It can't be otherwise.

Actually, the way our life energy has spread out is a result of our will too. For example, we think we are able to see because we have eyes. According to the scientists, the reverse is the case: because we want to see through this part of our body, the eyes have appeared there. Otherwise, there is basically no difference between the skin of our eyes and that of our hands. The eye is formed of skin as well, except that it has become transparent. The same skin is in the nose, only it has become specialized in picking up smells. The same principle that made the skin of the eyes transparent made the skin of the nose sensitive to smell. Similar is the case with regard to our ears, except they have become capable of picking up sound.

All this has happened as an effect of our will -- the collective will asserted over millions upon millions of years. It has not come about as a consequence of an individual's will; the same will was exercised generation after generation, and it showed the result.

There is a woman in Russia who can read with her fingers -- not Braille, the language for the blind -- she reads any ordinary book, with closed eyes, just by placing her fingers on the printed letters. As a result of the lifelong practice, her fingers have become so sensitive that they can detect the infinitesimal difference between the print and the blank paper. Our fingers won't be able to do this to such an extent.

When we look at a tree, we only see the color green, while a painter's eyes see a thousand kinds of green trees having shades of green blended in a thousand ways. So whereas green is just one color for an ordinary person, in the eyes of a painter the color green is not one but many colors of the same kind. To him, the difference between one green and another is as obvious as it is between green and yellow, or between green and red. However, one needs a certain kind of sensitivity in order to see such fine shades. Obviously, people ordinarily don't possess such sensitivity.

A musician is able to catch subtle nuances in music which we cannot. Not only is he able to catch the nuances, he even begins to experience the gap, the emptiness between the two notes. The real music is not born of sound, rather it springs from the moments of silence existing between the sounds. The notes on either side merely do the job of projecting that silence, that's all. But people have no idea of this silence; for them music is no more than noise.

For a master musician, the words, or the notes have no direct bearing upon the music. To him the musical notes merely serve the purpose of emphasizing the state of no-sound that exists in between. So whatever we practice continuously, whatever we resolve persistently, begins to manifest, show results.

The way human beings, birds, animals, plants live, is determined by their will. Whatever we resolve deeply is what we become. There is a significant account in the life of Ramakrishna. In his life Ramakrishna had practiced six or seven spiritual disciplines of different religions. He felt that if all religions lead to the same place, why not follow their methods and verify this truth? So he underwent the disciplines of the Christians, the Sufis, the Vaishnavas, the Shaivites, the Tantrikas, and so on. Whatever method he could lay his hands on, he tried.

However, no one knew what he was doing, because these disciplines were practiced on the inner plane. Outwardly, no one could know what was going on with Ramakrishna. For instance, how could one figure out from the outside what was happening inside him when he followed the discipline of the Sufis? And he himself never mentioned a word about what he was involved in. Nevertheless, in the course of these practices he went through a certain discipline which produced such incredible results that even people from outside could not miss what was happening to him.

There is a sect in Bengal called the sakhi-sampradaya. In this sect, the seeker looks upon himself as Krishna's beloved or wife. He begins to live like Krishna's girlfriend. Whether the seeker is a male or a female doesn't matter. To the followers of this sect, Krishna is the only man; the seeker becomes his beloved, his Radha, his girlfriend.

For six months Ramakrishna practiced the discipline of this sect, and strangely enough, the tone of his voice became feminine. No one could distinguish his voice from a distance. His gait became feminine. Actually, men and women cannot walk alike; their biological structure is basically different. Since the woman carries a child, she has a special place in her abdomen for that purpose -- which is not the case with men. Hence both walk differently. No matter how carefully a woman may take her steps, she can never walk like a man. She can never run like a man does -- there is no way; their physical make-up is different.

But Ramakrishna began running like a woman, he began walking like a woman; his gestures, his voice, took on a feminine quality. One could explain away all these changes by assuming that any man with some effort can walk or talk like a woman. The astonishing thing, however, was that his breasts developed and became womanlike. Even this too, one can rationalize by pointing out that many men grow breasts in their old age. But the most incredible thing was that Ramakrishna began to have a regular menstrual period in much the same way as a woman does. For medical science, this phenomenon caused great interest and concern.

After having practiced the discipline for six months, it took a year and a half for Ramakrishna to recover from its impact and come back to his normal state. Just by exercising his will power Ramakrishna assumed he was the girlfriend of Krishna, and his personality changed accordingly.

In Europe, stigmata appear on the hands of many Christian monks. Stigmata are.... When Jesus was crucified, nails were driven into his palms and the blood came out. So there are many Christian monks who, following the morning of Good Friday, the day Jesus was crucified, identify themselves with Jesus. They become one with Jesus. As the hour of crucifixion approaches, thousands of people gather to watch them. The monks stand with their arms outspread as if they are tied to the cross. And, as if nails have been driven into their hands, holes appear in their palms and blood begins to flow. With such resolve do they become identified with Jesus that, as it were, they go through an actual crucifixion. Without any means being used, a hole being made, a nail being driven, the blood begins to flow from their hands.

We are not aware of the immense possibilities in which willpower can be effective. Entering death voluntarily is the most profound of all experiments in exercising one's will. Ordinarily it is not difficult to make a resolve in favor of life -- we indeed want to live. But it is very difficult to make use of will for the sake of experiencing death.

Those who really want to know the full meaning of life should have an experience of death at least once. Without having seen what death is like, they can never really know what life is worth. That's the only way to realize that they have something of immense value -- the elixir of life -- which they can know only by passing through the experience of death. One who cannot go through this experience remains sadly deprived, because if he could see once on his own what death is like, the fear of death would no longer exist for him; then there is no death at all.

Simply using your total willpower you can draw your consciousness inside from all parts of your body. You close your eyes and feel that the consciousness is shrinking inward. You feel the energy moving

away from your hands and feet towards the inside. You see the energy moving down from your head. The energy begins to converge upon the center from where it originated -- the rays begin to withdraw from all points.

If this experiment is carried on with an intense feeling, in an instant the whole body becomes dead; only one point remains inside, alive. The entire body becomes lifeless, while the inner core remains alive like a flame. This living center can now be experienced very well as something separate from the body. It is as though rays of light were spread out in pitch darkness and it was impossible to differentiate between the light and the darkness, and then all the rays were to withdraw and come back in at one point -- the contrast between the darkness and light would become clearly apparent.

So when the vital energy inside us withdraws and becomes condensed at a certain point, one begins to feel the entire body separate from that point. Now all you need is a little willpower and it will be out of the body. Then just think of going out of the body, and you will be out of your body. Now you can see the body from outside, lying like a corpse. A thin silver cord will still keep you connected with the navel of your body, however. This is the very passage for going in and out of the body.

You will be amazed to see that as soon as this substance, this condensed energy comes out of the body, it assumes a new form of its own -- that it enlarges and becomes a new body. This is the subtle body. It is an exact duplicate of the physical body, except that it's like a fuzzy film, transparent. If anyone were to touch this body, his hand would pass through without affecting it.

So the first principle in the discipline of operating the will is to pull all the life energy inward at one point. The moment this energy becomes condensed at the inner core, it jumps out of the body. Just a desire to come out of the body, and the phenomenon occurs. And again, just a desire to get back into the body, and it is back in. This does not involve any doing on your part. The only thing that requires any action is that of simply drawing all the energy inside at a certain point. Once that happens, your subtle body can easily get out of the physical body and get back in.

If the seeker goes through this experience once, his entire life is transformed instantly. Then what he had known as life until that moment, he will no longer be able to call it the same. Similarly, he will not look upon death the way he did until then. He will find it a little difficult to run after the things he chased in the past. It will be hard for him to fight for things as he used to. He will no longer be able to ignore things he ignored previously.

The life is bound to change, because it is the kind of experience which can never leave the life just the way it was. Therefore, every seeker of meditation must at some time or other go through the out-of-the-body experience. It's an essential step, which once having been taken brings about incredible consequences for his future.

It's not difficult, only a firm resolve is required. Making a firm resolve is hard, not the technique itself. Hence it's a little difficult to jump directly into this experiment. One needs first to begin experimenting with smaller resolutions. As one succeeds in these, his willpower goes on increasing.

Actually, the various religious practices in the world are not religious practices really. They are, in fact, preparatory to building one's resolve. For example, a man fasts for three days -- this is simply a discipline for strengthening one's willpower. Fasting in itself is of little advantage; the real gain lies in the fact that he completed his vow, that he maintained his resolve. Another man declares solemnly that he would stand in one place for twelve hours. Now his standing for twelve hours is of no use; the actual benefit comes from his making that resolve and the completion of it.

By and by, people forgot the basic idea that these techniques were meant for strengthening one's determination. The man thinks standing in itself is enough, so he continues to stand. He loses sight of the fact that simply standing there is purposeless. The basic idea is to exercise the inner firmness which decides to stand, and then sticking to that decision.

Any means can be used in order to fulfill one's determination. Even small resolves can do -- no need to make big resolutions. For example, a man may stand in this balcony and resolve not to look below for six hours; even this much will do. The question is not that the man will gain something by not looking downward. The question is that he determined something and went on to fulfill it.

When one determines to do something and does it, his energy within becomes stronger; he becomes more and more centered. He no longer feels like a leaf drifting in the air. A sort of crystallization begins to take place within him. For the first time, some foundations are laid in his life.

So one should begin experimenting with smaller resolves, and this way collect the energy within. We come across lots of opportunities to do so. For example, while driving along the road simply make a resolve that you will not read the billboards. Your doing so is obviously not going to harm anyone, but it's an opportunity to exercise your will. And no one needs to know about it -- it's your own inner process.

You will find that with this resolve, sitting in the car even for half an hour did not prove to be worthless. You will come out with the feeling that you have gained something, that you are richer than you were a half hour ago. So the question is not where you experiment, or what means are used for that purpose. I just gave you an example. The point is, you may follow any experiment that will help you strengthen your will-power. It would be good if you carried on with the small ones.

If a man is asked to go in meditation for forty minutes by simply closing his eyes, he can't do it; he opens his eyes frequently and looks around. Now this man is without a will, he is not centered. There are great advantages in closing the eyes, it causes no harm. But this man can't even hold to his resolve by keeping his eyes closed for forty minutes; not much else can be expected of him.

When the same man is asked to breathe deeply and vigorously for ten minutes, within two minutes he slows down his breathing. When you remind him to take deep breaths, he makes one or two feeble attempts and again goes back to slow breathing. This man is not centered at all. Breathing ten minutes deeply is not a very difficult thing to do. And actually the question is not what will be gained or lost by breathing deeply for ten minutes. What is certain, however, is that by resolving to breathe deeply for ten minutes, this man will become centered. Something inside him will become crystallized. He will

overcome something, he will succeed in breaking some kind of resistance working inside him. And his vagrant mind will be weakened, because it will come to realize there is no way to push the man around: the only way to get along with him is to obey.

You drive by every day. Maybe you don't read the billboards along the road. But the day you will decide not to read them, your mind will do its utmost to force you to read the advertisements. The power of mind lies in your being irresolute. As your determination grows, the mind goes dead. The stronger the will, the more dead is the mind. The stronger the mind, the weaker becomes the will.

The mind did not press you to look at the billboards in the past because you had not challenged it. Today you posed the challenge. The mind will find a thousand and one excuses for you to look outside. It will contrive a thousand ways to force you to break your resolve and read the signs. It will use all its cunning. This is how things are.

We only live by the mind. A seeker begins to live by his will. One who lives by the mind is not a seeker at all. Only one who lives by his resolve is a true seeker indeed. A seeker means one whose mind is being transformed into will.

So pick very small situations -- you can choose for yourself -- and then experiment a few times during the day. No one needs to know about it, but there is no need to go into isolation either. Just do the experiment quietly and move along. For example, make a small resolve that "When someone becomes angry at me, I will laugh it off." When carried out a number of times, each experiment will yield such rich dividends that you will thank the person who became angry at you.

So make this tiny resolve: "Whenever anyone gets angry at me, I'll simply laugh, no matter what." Within fifteen days you'll find you have become a different person. The whole quality of your being has changed -- you are no longer the same man who lived fifteen days ago. Make very small decisions and try to live up to them. In the process of living the decisions, when you become confident of making bigger decisions, then go ahead and make a little higher resolutions.

The final resolution a seeker should find worth making is that of meeting death voluntarily. The day you feel you can, go ahead and do it. Having determined, the day you see your body lying like a corpse, you will know all that there is to know. Then no scripture in the world, no guru will have anything new to add to it.

Question 2

ONE WHO COMMITS SUICIDE ALSO TRIES TO KILL HIMSELF VOLUNTARILY. AND UNTIL HE IS DEAD COMPLETELY, HE REMAINS AWARE OF THE PROCESS OF DYING TOO: THAT THE BODY IS BECOMING COLD, OR THE LIFE ENERGY IS SHRINKING, AND SO ON. BUT HE CANNOT COME BACK IN THE BODY AFTER HAVING REACHED THE FINAL STATE. ISN'T SUICIDE SIMILAR TO THE EXPERIMENT IN VOLUNTARY DEATH?

Suicide can be used as an experiment in willpower, but normally people who commit suicide don't do it for that reason. Ordinarily, the man who commits suicide does not do it feeling himself responsible for it. Mostly he feels people are driving him to commit suicide; certain circumstances, certain events are compelling him to end his life. If the circumstances were not such, he would not have attempted the suicide.

This man, for instance, was in love with someone, but his love was not returned. Now he wants to end his life. Had his love been reciprocated, there would have been no need for him to embrace death. In fact, this man who is contemplating suicide is not doing so with any readiness to die really. He is willing to live only on one condition. Since the condition has not been fulfilled, hence the denial of life. The man is not interested in dying actually; the truth is, he has lost interest in living.

So basically this kind of suicide is a forced one. Therefore, if a person who is about to end his life can be stopped even for two seconds, perhaps he will not attempt it the second time. Just the delay of a couple of moments can be enough, because in those moments his mental resolve will fall apart -- it was put together forcibly.

A man committing suicide is not making a resolve. The fact is he is running away from making the resolve. Ordinarily, a man who has killed himself is not a brave man; he is a coward. Actually, life was asking him to exercise his will; it was telling him, "The woman you loved before... now make a resolve and forget her." But the man didn't have the capacity. Life was pointing out to him: "Forget the person you loved before, love someone else." But the man didn't have the guts.

Life tells someone, "You were rich until yesterday, today you are bankrupt. Nevertheless, live!" He doesn't have the courage. He is not able to make a determination and live. He sees only one way out: self-destruction. He does this in order to avoid making firm resolves. Meeting death like this is not a demonstration of his positive will; rather, it is a show of his negative will. A negative will is of no use.

Such a man will be born with an even weaker soul in his next life -- with a much more impotent soul than the one he had in this life, because he escaped from a situation that had offered him an opportunity to arouse his will. It is as if a child runs away from his class as the examination hour approaches. In a way, he has shown his determination too. Thirty students were taking the exam, but this fellow decided to run away. This indicates a negative will. The will to appear for the exam was a positive one; it meant willingness to put up a struggle. But the boy escaped from the struggle.

An escapist shows his determination too. When a man confronted by a lion runs and climbs up a tree, in a way he also uses his will. But that won't necessarily make him a man of will, because after all, he is running away, he is escaping. A suicidal tendency is essentially an escapist tendency. There is no resolve in it. Death can be used, of course, for the purpose of exercising willpower -- but that's a different matter.

For example, in the Jaina tradition death has also been used to strengthen willpower. Mahavira is the only person in the world who allowed if any seeker wished to use death for this purpose. No one else has given such permission. Only Mahavira has said one can use death as a spiritual discipline -- but not the kind of instantaneous death which occurs by taking poison. One can't build his willpower in one instant; it requires a long span of time. Mahavira says, "Go on a fast, and die of hunger."

It takes ninety days for a normal, healthy man to die of hunger. If he is weak in his resolve -- even a little bit -- the desire for food will return the very next day. By the third day he will begin cursing at having created such a nuisance for himself, and will start finding ways to get out of it.

It is very difficult to maintain the desire to stay hungry for ninety days. When Mahavira said, "Stay hungry and die," there was no room for anyone to create any deception, because in ninety days... anyone who has even the slightest lack of will would escape much earlier in the process. So there is no way to deceive.

If Mahavira had given the permission to die by taking poison, drowning in a river, jumping off a mountain, it would have been a matter of instant death. Of course, we all manage to make a resolve good enough for one moment. But a warrior good for showing only a moment's bravery is of no use on the battlefield, because he will become a coward the next moment. He will turn out to be a coward with as much resolve as he was brave a moment ago.

So Mahavira has given permission to commit santhara, causing death to oneself as a spiritual discipline. If anyone wished to put himself through a final test, even if it meant meeting death voluntarily, Mahavira had given permission for it. This is truly very significant and worth giving a thought. Mahavira is the first person on this earth who has authorized that a seeker can follow this discipline. There are a couple of reasons for it.

For one thing, Mahavira was fully assured that no one dies really. Hence he felt there was no need to worry so much about death, and he found no harm in a seeker pursuing this discipline.

Secondly, besides being experienced himself, Mahavira was also confident that if a man were to seek death unwaveringly for fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty, ninety, or a hundred days, the very greatness of that event is bound to transform him.

We all experience a moment or two when the thought of death crosses our mind. There is hardly a person in the world who has not wished to die at least a few times during his life. Of course, that he didn't die is a different matter. The fact is, such moments do come when a man wishes to die. But then he takes a cup of tea and forgets the whole thing. The wife gets fed up with her husband and contemplates hanging herself. Then the husband comes home with tickets for the movie. That's it, the woman drops the whole idea. She finds it too boring.

Once I had an occasion to stay at a place where a Bengali professor and his wife were my next-door neighbors. The very first night of my stay I heard loud noises coming from the other side. There was a terrible fight going on between the husband and wife. I could hear everything through the wall. The

husband was threatening to kill himself. I was in a quandary. There was no one else around except me, and things looked rather serious. I wondered whether I should go over and help. Although it was the first night and the couple were total strangers to me, I felt it didn't matter if we knew each other or not. I said to myself, "They are my neighbors; I'll be responsible too if the man dies." Nevertheless, I restrained myself in the hope that when the man would actually walk out to kill himself I would go and stop him.

Then for some time all was quiet. I thought the matter was settled between the two and that both had cooled down. But still I felt I should go out and see what was going on. So I came out. The door next to my room was open and the wife was sitting inside. The fellow had already gone.

I asked her, "Where did your husband go?"

She said, "Don't be worried, he has gone away like this many times before; he'll be back soon."

I said, "But he has gone to kill himself!"

She said, "You need not be worried, he is sure to come back."

And indeed, about fifteen minutes later the husband returned. I was still waiting outside. I said to him, "You have come back?" He was unaware that I knew he had gone to commit suicide.

He said, "Can't you see the clouds have gathered? Looks like it's going to rain. I had not taken an umbrella with me, so I came back." A man wanting to kill himself drops the idea if he is without an umbrella! This is how it is.

We all think of dying many times, but not for the sake of dying really. The idea comes to us because there is some problem in our life. We think of ending our lives because we lack resolution. Just a little trouble, a little difficulty, and one rushes to end it all.

One who wants to meet death because he can't face the problems of life is not a man of will. However, if a man sets out to have a direct, positive experience of death, if he is on his way to know what death is with a positive attitude, if he has no conflict with life, if he is not against life, then even in death this man is searching for life. This is a totally different thing.

There is yet another significant factor involved in this matter. Ordinarily, we cannot determine our birth. Although ultimately we do influence birth, but our determination of it happens through our unconscious state. We never know why we will be born, where we will be born, and for what purpose we will be born. But death, in a way, is something which can be determined by us. Death is a very unusual event in life, it's a very decisive happening.

Nothing can be clearly determined by us as far as birth is concerned -- that is, where to take birth, the purpose of taking birth, the circumstances surrounding the birth, and so on. But about death we can certainly decide how we are going to die, where we are going to die, why we are going to die. We can definitely determine the way we want to die.

So Mahavira had given permission to follow the discipline of death for this reason also, that one who will die applying this method will automatically become the determiner of his next birth as well, because one who has managed to choose his death, who has arranged to die voluntarily, for him nature provides an opportunity to choose his next birth too. This is the other side of it.

If one exits from the gate of life with dignity and grandeur, in full knowledge, then the other gates will become wide open and welcome him with high regard and honor too. So those who wish to determine their next lives should first go through death with their own willingness. This was also the reason why Mahavira gave his permission. So the point is, an ordinary man wanting to commit suicide is not a man of will.

Question 3

YOU HAVE TALKED ABOUT HOW THE SUBTLE BODY CAN BE SEPARATED FROM THE PHYSICAL BODY USING ONE'S WILLPOWER. CAN THE SUBTLE BODY OF A SEEKER WHO FOLLOWS THE DISCIPLINE OF WITNESSING, OR THAT OF A SEEKER WHO FOLLOWS THE DISCIPLINE OF TATHATA, SUCHNESS, BE SEPARATED WITHOUT EXERCISING THE WILL?

To follow the discipline of witnessing requires a great resolve. Following the discipline of tathata requires even greater resolve. It is the greatest resolution ever. When a man determines to live like a witness, that in itself is a great resolution. For example, a man decides he will not eat. He resolves to remain hungry for the day. Another man decides he will eat, but instead of watching himself eat, he will eat watchfully. This is a more difficult resolution.

It is not too difficult to give up food. The truth is, for those who have plenty to eat, it is easy to go without food for a day or two. That's why in an affluent society the cults of dieting and fasting become popular. For example, in America the idea of dieting has become very popular. People immediately become attracted to naturopathy.

When people have enough to eat, the idea of fasting once in a while appeals to them. It seems to make one feel lighter and more cheerful. In fact in a poor society, staying hungry may be a kind of use of one's willpower. But in an affluent society it's a matter of convenience. Actually, if food becomes sufficiently available throughout the world, fasting will turn out to be a necessity for everyone. People will have to remain with empty stomachs once in a while. But witnessing is a very difficult thing.

Let's understand it this way. For instance, you make a decision that you won't walk, that you will remain seated in the same chair for eight hours. Now this is not a big thing. You decided not to walk, so you are not walking. Someone else decides he will walk for eight hours -- this is not a big thing either, because since he decided to walk, he is walking. But witnessing means you'll walk, and at the same time you will also know that 'you' are not walking. What does witnessing mean? It means you'll walk as well as know

that it is not 'you' who is walking -- that 'you' are simply witnessing the act of walking. This is a much more subtle resolution, a supreme resolution indeed.

Tathata, suchness, is the suprememost resolution; it's the ultimate resolve. There is no determination higher than this. Even the resolve to enter death voluntarily is not so great a resolve really. Tathata means accepting things as they are. In a way, even the resolve to die voluntarily has its roots somewhere in nonacceptance. That is, we want to know what death is; we want to verify whether death actually occurs or not.

Tathata means, if death appears we will die; if life remains we'll continue to live. Neither are we concerned with life, nor with death. If darkness falls we'll stay in the dark; if the light appears we'll settle with light. If something good comes to us we'll receive it; if something bad befalls us we'll bear it. Whatsoever happens, we are willing to accept it -- we deny nothing. Let me explain this to you with an example.

Diogenes was passing through a forest. He walked around naked -- had a beautiful body. It seems quite possible man must have started wearing clothes in order to cover his ugliness. This seems highly possible. We are always interested in hiding the ugly parts of our body. But this man Diogenes was a very handsome man. He lived naked.

So as he was passing through the forest, four men engaged in the business of capturing and selling slaves, saw him. They figured if they could capture this man -- good looking, strong, powerful -- they may receive a good price for him. But they felt very apprehensive and couldn't find any way to capture him without risking their lives.

Somehow, they tried and managed to surround him. Diogenes stood in the middle, calm and unperturbed. He asked, "What do you want to do?" The men were very surprised. They took out chains. Diogenes stretched out his hands. Full of fear and with trembling hands, the captors began to chain him.

Diogenes said, "No need to tremble. Come, let me tie the chains for you." He helped them put on the chains. The men were simply flabbergasted.

After having chained him firmly, they said, "What sort of a man are you? We are putting you in chains and you are helping us! We were afraid this might lead to some fighting and trouble."

Diogenes said, "You are having fun chaining me, I am having fun in being chained. Where is the need for any trouble? It's great! Now tell me, where do we go from here?"

The men said, "We feel very embarrassed in telling you that we are in the business of slavery. We'll now take you to the marketplace and put you up for sale."

Diogenes said, "Good, let's go." He took off with great excitement and began walking even faster than the captors.

They said, "Please slow down a little. What's the hurry?"

Diogenes said, "Now that we are going to the marketplace, why not reach in time?"

So finally they reached the marketplace. It was very crowded. Those who had come to buy slaves turned their eyes toward Diogenes. They had rarely seen a slave of this quality, because he looked more like an emperor. A huge crowd gathered around him.

He was made to stand on the platform where the slaves were auctioned. Raising his voice, the auctioneer said, "Here is a slave for sale. Come forward and name your price."

Diogenes said, "Shut up, you fool! Ask these men, did I walk in front, or did they? Did they tie the chains on me or did I let them tie the chains on me?"

His captors said, "The man is right. Left to ourselves, we don't believe we could have captured him. And indeed he walked ahead of us so fast that we could not keep pace with him -- we had to practically run behind him. So it is not correct to say we have brought him to the marketplace. The truth is, we have followed him to this place. And it is not right to say we have made him a slave. The fact is, this man agreed to become a slave, we didn't make him."

Diogenes said, "Stop talking nonsense you fools, and let me do my own auctioneering! Besides, this man's voice is not loud enough, no one will be able to hear him in this large crowd."

So Diogenes raised his voice and said, "A master has come here for sale. Anyone interested in buying him should come forward."

Someone from the crowd asked, "You call yourself a master?"

Diogenes said, "Yes, I call myself a master. I tied the chains on my own. I have come here on my own, willingly. I stand here for sale of my own free will. And I shall leave whenever I choose to leave. Nothing can happen against my will, because whatsoever happens I make that my will."

Diogenes is saying, "Whatsoever happens, I make that my will." This man has indeed attained to tathata, suchness. What it means is: whatever goes on, he is ready for it. He resists nothing at all. In no way can you defeat him, because he will already be a defeated man; you cannot beat him because he will readily allow you to hurt him; you cannot subjugate him because he will readily submit. You can't do anything to such a man, because no matter what you do, he will not resist. This is indeed a demonstration of a truly supreme resolve.

So tathata is the ultimate will. One who has attained tathata has attained God. Therefore, the question is not whether a seeker who follows the discipline of witnessing, or one who follows the discipline of tathata would attain the same as a seeker who attains by following the discipline of will. It is already attained by him without any problem.

The discipline of will is the most elementary. The discipline of witnessing is of the intermediary kind, and tathata is the ultimate sadhana, the ultimate discipline. So start with the practice of will, take a voyage through witnessing, and reach ultimately to tathata, suchness. There is no conflict among the three.

Question 4

PLEASE EXPLAIN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WITNESSING AND TATHATA.

In witnessing, the duality is present. The witness finds himself separate from that which he experiences. If a thorn pricks his foot, the witnessing man says, "The thorn has not pricked me, it has pricked my body -- I am only the knower of it. The piercing has occurred at one place, while the awareness of it is present somewhere else."

So in the mind of a witness there exists a duality, a separation between the experiencing of an event and the actual occurrence of it. Therefore, he cannot rise up to the state of advaita, nonduality. And this is why the seeker who stops at the level of being a witness, a watcher, remains confined to a kind of dualism. He ultimately divides the existence into conscious and unconscious. Conscious means the one who knows, and the unconscious means that which is known. So eventually he is bound to end up dividing existence into purusha and prakriti.

Both of these words, purusha and prakriti, are highly significant. Perhaps the true meaning of prakriti may not have occurred to you, Prakriti doesn't mean 'nature'; in fact, there is no word for prakriti in English. Prakriti means that which was in existence before everything came to be -- pra-kriti. Prakriti does not mean srishti or nature, because srishti means that which exists after creation. The word prakriti means that which was before creation.

The word purusha is also very meaningful. The equivalents of such words are extremely difficult to find in any other language of the world, because all these words are born out of very special experiences. You know what pur means; pur means the city. For example, Kanpur, Nagpur. So pur indicates the city, and the one who resides in the city is the purusha. The human body is like a town, a city, and there is someone who resides in it -- he is the purusha. Prakriti, therefore, is the pur, and the one who lives in it - - separate, unattached -- is the purusha.

So the witness comes as far as the separation of purusha and prakriti. He will set them apart as two entities -- the conscious and the unconscious, and a distance will be created between the knower and the known.

Tathata is even more remarkable -- the ultimate. Tathata means, there is no duality. There is neither a knower nor is there anything to be known. Or, in other words, the knower is the known. Now it is not that the thorn is hurting me and I am aware of it; or that the thorn and I are separate from each other. It is not even that it would have been better if the thorn had not pierced me, or that it would be good if the thorn came out -- no, there is nothing of this sort. Now, everything is accepted: the presence of the thorn, the pricking of it, the awareness of being pricked by it, the experience of pain -- everything. And they are different parts of the same thing. Therefore, I am the thorn. I am the very occurrence of

pricking. I am the awareness of this occurrence. I myself am the very realization of this all -- I am all of this.

That's why there is no going beyond this 'I', my very being. I cannot think, "It would have been better if the thorn had not pricked me" -- how can I? For I am the very thorn, the pricking of it, and the knowing of being pricked as well. Nor can I think, "It would be good if the thorn didn't prick me," because that would be tantamount to tearing myself apart from my very own being.

Tathata is the ultimate state there is. In that state, whatsoever is, is. It's a state of the ultimate acceptance of that-which-is. It contains no distinctions. But one cannot reach tathata without having been first a witness. However, one can stop at the level of witnessing, if he so desires, and choose not to arrive at tathata. Similarly, without the use of will, one cannot attain the state of witnessing. Although, having gained willpower, one may wish to stay there and not come to the point of witnessing.

One who stops with attaining firmness of resolve would of course become very powerful, but he won't be able to attain wisdom. And therefore, the ability to make a resolve can be misused, because wisdom is not required to attain it. One will surely gain a lot of power, but that is precisely why he can abuse it. The entire black magic is a product of willpower. One who practices it gains a lot of power, but he lacks wisdom totally. He can end up using that power without any discrimination.

A man of will becomes filled with power. It is difficult to predict right away what use he will make of it. He can obviously put it to bad use. Power in itself is neutral. Nevertheless, it is necessary -- whether one intends to use it for good or for evil. And as I see it, rather than remaining a weakling, it is better if one uses his power for evil purposes -- for the simple reason that one who commits an evil act now may someday use the same power for a good cause. One who cannot do evil can never do good either. That's why I say it's better to be powerful than to be impotent and a wimp.

So a man of power can set out on the path of good as well as evil. It is better to follow the course of goodness, because if followed rightly, it will bring you to the state of witnessing. You won't end up as a witness if you follow the course of evil; rather, you will simply wander around within the confines of your willpower. Then you will get into mesmerism and hypnotism, tantras and mantras, witchcraft and voodooism. All kinds of things will crop up, but they won't lead you on a journey toward the soul.

This is becoming lost. The power will indeed be there, but gone astray. If the power is put on the course of goodness, it is sure to give rise to the witness within you, and ultimately that power can be used to know and attain oneself. This is what I call the course of goodness. By the course of evil I mean controlling, possessing, enslaving the other. This is what black magic is. Making use of the power for the purpose of attaining oneself, knowing who am I, what am I, and living authentically, is moving in goodness. And it will indeed lead one toward becoming a witness.

If the urge to attain the state of witnessing is satisfied with the knowing of oneself, the seeker reaches up to the fifth body and stops there. However, if the urge is further intensified, one discovers that he is not alone, he contains everything; that the sun and the moon and the stars, the rocks, the soil, the

flowers are all part of him; that his very being, his existence incorporates all the rest. If the seeker proceeds with such an intense feeling, he reaches tathata.

Tathata, suchness, is the ultimate flowering of religion, it is the supreme achievement. It is total acceptance. Whatsoever happens, one is open and agreeable to it. Only such an individual can become totally silent, because even a little bit of resentment can prolong the restlessness. One's restlessness and tension will continue to remain if he carries even a small degree of complaint. Even the slightest idea, "It didn't happen the way it should have," and the tension will continue to persist.

The experience of supreme silence, the experience of the greatest freedom from tension, and that of the ultimate liberation is possible only in the state of tathata. However, only a man of will can eventually attain the state of witnessing, and only his going deeper into witnessing can bring him to the state of tathata. One who has not yet known what being a witness means can never know what total acceptance is.

One who hasn't realized that he is separate from the thorn which is pricking him is not yet ready to know that the thorn is a part of him. In fact, one who comes to experience the separateness of the thorn can take the next step of feeling one with the thorn as well.

So tathata is the fundamental principle. Among all the spiritual disciplines discovered all over the world, tathata is the greatest. That's why one of Buddha's names is Tathagat. It would be good to have some understanding of what this word tathagat means. It will be useful in comprehending the meaning of tathata.

Buddha has used the word Tathagat for himself. He would say, for instance, "Tathagat said...." Tathagat means, thus came, thus gone. Just as a breeze comes and goes away without any purpose, without any meaning. Just as a breath of air enters your room and goes out -- without any reason. So the one whose coming and going away is as unmotivated, as desireless as the breeze, such a being is called Tathagat. But who would come and go like a breeze?

He alone can pass like a breeze who has attained to tathata. Only he to whom the coming and the going makes no difference can move like a breeze. If he needs to come, he comes; if he needs to go, he goes -- the same as Diogenes did. It made no difference to him whether people put him in chains or did not put him in chains. Diogenes said later on, "Only one who is prone to be a slave can be nervous about becoming a slave. Since no one can make me a slave, why should I be afraid I might be taken as a slave? One who carries even the slightest anxiety that he may be turned into a slave, he alone will remain in fear of it. And one who has such a fear is indeed a slave. Since I happen to be the lord and master myself, you can never enslave me. Even in chains, I am the master, and will remain so in your prison as well. It makes no difference where you throw me; I still remain the lord and master. My mastership is total and complete."

So the journey consists of this: from will to witness, and from witness to tathata.

Question 5

YOU MENTIONED THAT THERE IS NO COMPARABLE WORD FOR PRAKRITI IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE. ISN'T THE WORD CONSTITUTION SIMILAR IN MEANING TO PRAKRITI?

No, it's not the same meaning. Constitution in that sense means an individual's makeup, his psycho-physical structure. Constitution in this sense means one's system, one's physical and psychological makeup as such. Prakriti is something very different. Normally we use prakriti in the sense that "That man's constitution is such...." But this kind of usage is not correct. Prakriti means that which was before creation -- pre-created. And pralaya means: post-creation -- that which follows the creation, the end of creation. So prakriti means that which was even before the creation came to be, that which didn't need to be created -- which has always been, beginningless. That which already is. Srishti means the created -- that which came to be.

There is no word in European languages which stands for prakriti, because these languages are influenced by Christianity. In Europe there are words such as the 'creation', and the 'creator'. In the Indian languages exists the word prakriti, although not everyone uses it in the sense the Sankhyaites, the Vaisheshikas, the Jainas use it. This word belongs to them. In their view, that which has been eternally present, which has never been created, is prakriti. It is already there even before your creating anything.

For example, when you build a house, the design, the structure of it is its constitution. But the material that goes into the making of it -- the soil, the air, the heat -- is all prakriti. That which arises out of it is simply its structure. However, that which was present even before the making of the structure -- which you did not create, which no one created, which is uncreated, which always was -- that something is called prakriti. There is no word equivalent to prakriti in any of the European languages.

Question 6

IS TATHATA THE SAME AS BEING JUST AWARE?

Actually, there is a slight difference between tathata and what you call "just awareness." Witnessing is also slightly different from it. You can say that being "just aware" makes up the link between witnessing and tathata. As you move from witnessing to tathata, you pass through the state of "just awareness."

In the state of witnessing, there exists a firm feeling of "I am" and "you are." In the state where there is just awareness, only the feeling of "I am-ness" remains, the feeling of 'you' disappears. There is just the feeling of am-ness. In tathata, besides the feeling of am-ness, there is the feeling that my am-ness, my existence and your you-ness, your existence, constitute only one is-ness, one existence; that they are

one and the same. As long as there exists just the awareness, just the feeling of am-ness, there will remain a world outside my state of am-ness -- a world which I am not, a world that exists beyond the limits of my am-ness, separate.

Tathata is limitless, it is simply being. So if you mean tathata, then it is not just awareness; it means just being. That's the right expression; being has a much wider connotation. The moment you say "just awareness," you obviously leave something out. The word 'just' is indicative of omission. When you say "just consciousness," you exclude something that does not fall within the parameters set by using the word 'just'; otherwise, why would you have added 'just' before consciousness?

Question 7

CAN WE SAY: ONLY AWARENESS?

Yes, saying "only awareness" will do, but again, there is no need to add 'only' before it. 'Awareness' is enough -- then there is no problem.

Question 8

YOU HAVE SAID THAT BY RESOLVING CONSCIOUSLY TO WITHDRAW INSIDE, OR AT THE TIME OF DEATH, THE ENTIRE LIFE ENERGY SHRINKS AND RETURNS TO THE CENTER FOR THE PURPOSE OF TURNING INTO A SEED ONCE AGAIN. AT WHICH CENTER DOES THE ENERGY SHRINK? DOES IT CONCENTRATE AT THE AGYA CHAKRA, AT THE NAVEL, OR AT SOME OTHER POINT? WHICH IS THE MOST IMPORTANT CHAKRA, AND WHY?

This requires a little consideration. The whole energy will of course shrink before death occurs. Before one embarks on a new journey, the energy which is otherwise dispersed all over the body will return to a point. This is the same as when one moves from a house -- he collects all his important belongings. When he lived there, all kinds of things were spread out in every part of the house, from the bathroom to the living room. So at the time of moving, he sorts out his possessions. He throws away the junk, packs up the important stuff, and sets out on a new journey.

Just as we abandon one life, one body, and commence the journey of another life, another body -- similarly the consciousness which was spread out withdraws and once again becomes the seed. Up to now it functioned as an actuality; now it will once again become a potentiality, because now, like a seed, it will enter a new body.

Just as a tree leaves seeds behind before dying, similarly the body too leaves behind seeds before it meets death. What we call sperm or ova are the seeds left by the body at the time of death. These are the seeds released prior to death, in anticipation of death. The sperm contains the entire built-in program of your body, it contains the exact replica of your body. As the body gets ready to depart, it leaves behind the tiny seed. This phenomenon occurs at one level -- the physical. Similarly, consciousness, on a different level, gathers itself and becomes a seed in order to enter the seed present in some other body.

All journeys begin with the seed and end with the seed. Remember, that which is the beginning is also the end. The journey's cycle ends where it started. We begin from a seed, we end up again as a seed. So the question is: at the moment of death, at which center would the consciousness gather to shrink and become a seed? It would, of course, gather at the very center you have lived through all your life. It would concentrate at the center which was most valuable to you in your life, because that was your most active center; one should say, that was the very point from where your whole vital energy functioned.

For example, if a man lived his whole life obsessed with sex, if he knew nothing beyond sex, if sex was all he lived for -- he earned wealth to enjoy sex, he went after a high position in the pursuit of sex, he wanted to have good health so that he could indulge more into sex -- if sex was the most predominant center functioning in his life, then that is where the entire energy will converge at the moment of death. Then his new journey will begin from the sex center. Why? -- because his next birth will be an ongoing journey of the same sex-obsessed center. This man's consciousness will gather at the sex center in the dying moments, and that is the point where his life will come to an end. His life energy will leave through his genitalia. Had this man lived through a different center, the energy would have concentrated and left from that center.

The center around which one's life has revolved is the center from where he will depart. The place where he dwelt the whole life will be the place from where he will depart. Therefore, a yogi can leave from the agya chakra, and a lover from his heart chakra. The life energy of an enlightened man would leave from the sahasrar, the seventh chakra -- his skull will break open as he departs from there.

The point from where one makes an exit is the conclusive proof of how one has lived his life. Such techniques were discovered in the past that by looking at a dead body one could say through which chakra, through which door the consciousness left the body. All the chakras are doors for entrance as well as for exit. The soul will use the same door for entering another body which it used for exiting the dying body. The soul will enter the new cell in a mother's womb through the same door from which it came out at the previous death -- that's the only door it knows.

Therefore, the mental condition of the father and the mother, as well as their state of consciousness at the time of intercourse, determine what kind of soul will enter the womb, because only that type of consciousness, that kind of soul will be attracted to seek that womb which fits with the center closest to the minds of the father and mother during the intercourse. If two individuals who have gone deep into

meditation make love not with the desire for sexual pleasure, but as an experiment in giving birth to a soul -- they can make use of the highest possible chakras for that purpose.

This is the reason why the higher souls have to wait for a long time -- because they need a womb of a higher quality, which is very difficult to find. Hence, many good souls cannot take birth again for hundreds of years. The same is the case with many of the evil souls. The ordinary souls are born right away. They take birth instantly, without any difficulty, because many suitable wombs are available to them every day. About one hundred and eighty thousand births take place every day, excluding the number of people dying. Every day about two hundred thousand souls can enter as many wombs -- but this applies only to the ordinary souls.

Many souls, who after great difficulty were born on this earth, have been forced to take birth on other planets. The earth became incapable of giving them birth again. This is the same as if a scientist born in India were to find a suitable job in America. He would be born on our soil, we would provide him with food and water, care and nourishment, but not a single living opportunity befitting his background and training. Obviously, he is forced to seek a position in America.

Today, most of the scientists from all different parts of the world have settled down in America. This is bound to be so. In the same manner, although we help souls evolve on this earth we do not make available a suitable womb for their next birth. Naturally, they are forced to seek opportunities for birth on other planets.

Question 9

IF WE DO INDEED POSSESS THE TALENT FOR CREATING SCIENTISTS, WHY AREN'T WE ALSO ENDOWED WITH THE ABILITY TO MAKE THE RIGHT KIND OF EMPLOYMENT AVAILABLE TO THEM?

No, there isn't any necessary correlation between the two. The problem is, creating a scientist depends on one set of requirements while providing him with a suitable employment depends on some other set of factors. Giving birth to a scientist depends on how his soul has lived through its previous lives. If the moment of lovemaking between a couple is such that a soul can have an access through the door of intellect, it will have found the suitable womb, and it will be born.

Providing work for a scientist, however, depends on how the entire society is set up, how it functions. Our scientist may earn ten thousand rupees in America, but a thousand rupees in India. Moreover, he can have laboratory and research facilities in America which in India he may have to await for a thousand years. In America, his discoveries will not be lost in the bureaucratic maze or rot in the stacks of files -- they will earn him a Nobel prize. Here in India, his superior will put a lid on it and will never allow it to see the light of day. And some day, if his work does ever become known to the public, the chances are that either the politician or his superior officer may claim the credit for it -- he may never earn the credit for his own achievements. So all of this depends on a thousand and one things.

Many individuals who take birth and attain higher consciousness on this earth, have to seek birth on other planets. Actually, people who brought information from other planets to this earth were basically from the other planets. It's only now that the scientists have come to recognize there may be life on some fifty thousand planets. Yogis have known this since ancient times. In the past, however, they didn't have any means to verify it. But when the souls who belonged to other planets took birth on earth and brought the news, their hypothesis was confirmed. Similarly, those who have carried the news of this planet to other planets are also different kinds of souls -- the ones which could not be conceived on the earth.

At the moment of death, the consciousness of man comes together totally. In that crystallized form it draws in all his conditionings, propensities, desires -- the total essence, we may call it the perfume or the stench of his entire life -- and moves on to its next journey. Mostly, this journey will be automatic -- there won't be any element of choice in it. It will be as if you pour water and it moves into small hollows in the earth. Similarly, in the normal course, a womb works like a hollow into which a nearby available consciousness enters.

Therefore, in most ordinary cases a man is born again and again in the same society, in the same country. Very rarely does this change. The variation occurs only when a suitable womb is not available. That's why it is so amazing that in the last two hundred years many great souls, which otherwise were born in India, had to take birth in Europe. Annie Besant, Madame Blavatsky, Leadbeater, Colonel Olcott - these are all souls from India who were forced to take birth in Europe. Lobsang Rampa, for example, is a Tibetan soul born in Europe. The reason for all this was that a womb was not available to them in the country of their birth, hence they had to look for it somewhere else.

An ordinary man is born immediately. This is like if you were to move from your house, you would obviously make a search for another house in the same neighborhood. If you fail to locate a house here, only then would you go looking for it somewhere else, in another neighborhood. If you don't find it in Bombay proper, you may hunt for it in the suburbs: if you don't succeed there, you may move ahead and look somewhere else. But once you have found the house, the matter is over. This phenomenon was put to a wonderful use. It would be good to consider a couple of things in order to see how this principle was used. It is necessary that we take a look at it now, because it carries a special significance in the context of the present times.

The most amazing application of it was made in India, through the caste system. The application was of great value. The Indians divided the entire society into four castes. The idea was that if a brahmin died, his soul should be reborn as a brahmin. If a kshatriya died, his soul should be reborn as a kshatriya.

It is obvious that if a society is divided into fixed divisions, then there is a great possibility that when a kshatriya dies, his soul would seek its next abode in the same neighborhood. It will enter into the womb of a kshatriya woman. And if a person's soul continues to be born as a kshatriya for a few times, it will become kshatriya-like. You won't be able to produce such a kshatriya, such a fighter, even by giving someone a regular military training. Similarly, if a soul were to be reborn as a brahmin ten or twenty

times, the kind of pure brahminic quality that will unfold because of it can never be created by putting one into a gurukul -- a residential school run by a brahmin teacher -- or by educating him.

The amazing thing is, we have devised educational means good for only one lifetime. Some people in the past had worked out a system of education that would last for an infinite number of lives. It was indeed a remarkable experiment, but it met with decay. It became corrupt and putrefied -- not because the idea and its application were wrong, but because its fundamental sutras, its main principles were lost. And those who claim themselves to be the custodians of the system do not have a single sutra to vouch for. No brahmin, no shankaracharya holds any sutra, any understanding on which they can lay their claim or authority. They only quote their scriptures which state that a brahmin is a brahmin, and a sudra is a sudra. But scriptures are of no use; only the scientific principles work.

So the most incredible experiment this country did was that of planning the birth of a soul for endless lives. That means they not only prepared the man for his future lives, they also made a controlled and systematic effort to redirect and channelize his consciousness for the lives ahead. ... Because it is possible that a brahmin may take birth in a sudra family and, lacking an appropriate environment, he may not be able to carry the gains of his past lives into his next lives. This can cause great difficulty. It is also conceivable that what he could have achieved in ten days by being born in a brahmin's home, he may not achieve in ten years in a sudra's home.

So such an advanced concept and farreaching vision of human evolution was at the base of this clear fourfold division of the Indian society. The people had worked out the idea of taking birth in the same neighborhood so that one may keep finding wombs of the same quality for lives together.

All the twenty-four births of Mahavira and Buddha took place within the kshatriya tradition. Their entire growth happened in a particular direction. In each birth they were given a definite training. Hence, no gap existed between the training and direction given to them in successive births -- an unbroken continuity was maintained. That's why we could produce such incredible individuals. Producing people of such caliber now has become very difficult. Their appearance on this earth will now be only a matter of chance. Giving birth to such people through such a systematic planning has become very difficult indeed.