

TEACHING SARANAGATI



A DIALOGUE WITH
HER HOLINESS SRI SATHGURU
SWAMI GNANANANDA SARASVATHI

DR. CHARLES S.J. WHITE



OM LAKSHMINARAYANAYA NAMAH

*Happiness and peace, which they say,
passeth understanding comes from Him alone.
Once you live in Him, then there is no problem.
But till that time, that person has to suffer.
But those sufferings, I tell you, take it as a way
and a means to purify yourself.
So when you find that you are doing this,
plead to God for help.
And when you do Saranagati
and you appeal to Him for help,
He takes away more than half your suffering.
More than half He takes. He knows you are
suffering and He knows that you have surrendered
to Him, and He has got, you must remember,
the greatest compassion,
the greatest compassion He has got,
He is watching you, He will help you.
But you must call Him,
like Draupadi called Him,
like Gajendra called Him,
like Prahlada called Him;
you must call Him in the same way.
And He will come to us at any time
when we truly want Him with all our hearts and
souls, not before that.*

– Her Holiness

Sri Sathguru Swami Gnanananda Sarasvathi

(An excerpt from Sri Sathguru's Discourse on Sanyasa delivered during the 24th Sanyasa Ashrama Svikaarana Dina celebrations on the 25th May 2001).



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INTRODUCTION

Dr. Charles S.J. White's article "Mother Guru: Jnanananda of Madras" in Unspoken Worlds edited by Nancy Auer Falk and Rita M. Gross has been for many years the main source of information about Sri Sathguru for researchers, scholars and sadhakas in the western world.

Dr. White first had darshan of Sri Sathguru in 1976 and subsequently had darshan and a few interviews in 78-79. Using that material he wrote the article in Unspoken Worlds, which was published in 1980 by Harper and Row. His dedication, love of truth and philosophy made it easy for Sri Sathguru who is normally reclusive, to explain to him Her life and teachings.

In 1998, when Sri Sathguru resumed giving Darshan after a long period of seclusion, Dr. White had two dialogues with Sri Sathguru to gather sufficient material to bring his article up to date for the new edition being brought out by Wadsworth/Thomson Learning. The dialogues have been edited by him and are now being brought out in their entirety. They are a companion to his article and should be read along with it. Sri Sathguru speaks of Her beliefs, the many deities in Hinduism, Her Ishta Daivam, samadhi, early experiences and life after death.

It is hoped that this little volume will bring as much pleasure and enlightenment to the readers as it did to Dr. White and the devotees who worked on it.

*Sri Gnana Advaita Peetam
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Chennai*

DR. CHARLES S.J. WHITE

Charles S.J. White (Ph.D. University of Chicago) is Professor Emeritus of philosophy and religion at the American University in Washington, D.C., USA. He is the author of *The Caurasi Pad of Sri Hit Harivams*, *Ramakrishna's Americans*, and co-author of *The Religious Quest* and *Joseph Campbell : Transformation of Myth through Time*. He contributed, "Indian Developments : Sainthood in Hinduism," to *Sainthood : Its Manifestations in World Religions*; and "Mother Guru : Jnanananda of Madras, India." to *Unspoken Worlds : Women's Religious Lives*. He has published numerous journal and encyclopedia articles including, "The Hindu Holy Person." "Structure and the History of Religions : Some Bhakti Examples," "Swami Muktananda and the Enlightenment through Shakti Pat," "The Sai Baba Movement : Approaches to the Study of Indian saints," "Krsna as Divine Child," "Bhakti," and "Sufism in Hindi Literature." Most recently his publications include, "The Remaining Hindi works of Sri Hit Harivams," and "The Mystique of Aryan Identity and Mircea Eliade's History of Religions."



SRI SATHGURU'S CONVERSATIONS WITH DR. CHARLES S.J. WHITE

*[The following edited transcripts are of two meetings with Sri Sathguru.
The first (Part One) was in November 1998. The Second (Part Two) was in April 1999.
Dr. White's questions and comments are in bold italics. Sri Sathguru's statements are in regular type].*

PART ONE

What significant changes have there been in your role as Guru and teacher of the spiritual way?

Yes. There have been significant changes in my role as Guru and teacher of the spiritual way. Previously, what I was teaching was more or less on the lines of Advaita only. There were many people who were coming to me; there were throngs. There were a lot of personal questions, things like that.

I was teaching them the Advaitic way at that time. But then after that there were periods I would go into seclusion. Sometimes for even as long as two years. Now the last time was for about four and a half years; I would live in one room and I would come to the next room to have my dinner and go back. I would stay inside; there was no fresh air and light, but I never missed anything. When I went outside and saw the people and the outside world, I was more interested in the trees and the animals or birds than the human beings. Even today I am very interested in Nature: the types of leaves, medicinal and ordinary plants, animals and birds and things like that. I stayed like that for four and a half years – I myself could not understand. People used to come and go. A group of ladies had come from America – they would see only lady teachers, and they came here and invited me. Many other persons from other Ashrams in South India wanted me to help them, to guide them. But I said, "It's not yet time; I can't see them. I can't see anybody. You can't break it when something is going on. You can't break it because something is just forming. It is being done in another dimension and it is growing; I can't just break it. It has to grow by itself, fulfill itself; and then I'll be told that I can go and give Darshan [be seen] to people."

What is your experience of Advaita? Do you sleep and wake up? They talk of Samadhi.

What is Samadhi? What is your experience like?

I sleep very little. Even as a small child I slept very little, just a few hours but that sufficed. I did not

have any problems with food also – I ate very little. Sometimes, I forgot to eat also. Perhaps it was breakfast which I never had. Sometimes, I also used to forget my lunch, when I was a small child. So food and sleep were very unimportant to me, never played a large part. I sort of grew up into that consciousness without any particular exertion on my own. I just grew into it and Samadhi used to come, many, many years ago. This may have been about thirty to thirty five years ago that I used to be totally unconscious; then I used to wake up. This went on regularly for about one year.

Did you sit in a meditative posture?

I would just lean back or just lie down. It would look as though I was deeply asleep or something like that. There are different types of Samadhi. Laya they say is when the mind leaves connection with the world and goes to another dimension and yet has not reached the highest levels. It is just a high level and the mind stays in a half-drowsy state and yet it has left this world also. Then there is that which is called the Saguna Samadhi when you realize the Personal God. The next one is the Impersonal, the Nirguna. But above this you go into all That; you realize all That; you become master of That. Then you come back into the world to work. That is called the Sahaja state. You are in that state, but you still continue to work as though you are an ordinary human being, fulfilling all the needs, obligations and duties of that level. I had to go through all those states to come to the last stage. I used to go along and never bothered which stage I had reached till some very highly advanced sanyasin or yogin said that, She is in that Sahaja state. In the world today you can find that there are many forces and especially the forces of evil are very strong. Superhuman evil forces will always have their human instruments in this human world.

While you are in this purified spiritual state, you don't wish to have evil influences around you?

Yes, each one brings individual vibrations and doesn't understand this; and one is in a very high state of sensitivity and there is no immunity. So the vibrations can cause physical illness even. So, therefore, I was staying apart for a very long period until whatever God wanted was accomplished and, when that was accomplished, I was told to give Darshan. Just before you came there was Darshan and discourses for over two and a half months. That's very rare; daily discourses are very rare. In the early days when I had

just taken Sanyasa, I used to go around the city giving discourses everywhere in Madras. There were periods when there was no Darshan for two or three months. Subsequently, I withdrew even more and then it became one year, two years and now, after I came to this house, four and a half years. I never moved in any way with the public. I did not want to expand this in any way. It is always as though God wanted only quality not quantity. You can teach people. Teaching people is different from solving their problems, which is only humanitarian compassion. Teaching is something different. You must get the right type of people to learn and so these people with me now have been trained that way.

I said previously that I was very impressed by the quality of the audience. Very good questions.

Do you know and why? As you said, it seemed unusual in any audience. I've been keeping them on a very high level. They would say, "Oh, Sathguru, you give us such high ideals and standards, almost impossible to follow!" But I said that if I want you to do 100 per cent, you will do 50 per cent. But if I say 50 per cent you will do hardly 25 per cent. So I have got to keep hammering that 100 per cent into you! And the ideals of Sri Peetam, our institution, are Truth, Dharma, Ahimsa and Purity (Saucam). These are the four pillars of Sri Peetam. I drummed it into them. That is what I am teaching now. In the early days I used to teach Advaita Vedanta, but that is a bit too hard for people to go into straightaway.

Do people still ask you about their personal problems?

Yes, they still do! Hundreds of them still come. They still come but most of them are known to me who have been coming here. I taught them how to surrender to God. The second stage of the Teaching has taken place now. The first stage was Advaita. Now I am teaching Saranagati or surrender. It is very easy to say, "I surrender" but what do you surrender? How far can you take it? How far are your duties there? I teach from the Gita, the Bhagavad Gita. I have taught them for many years; and therefore, in a situation when they are tempted to do wrong, they have qualms. I used to tell them, "You can't take a bribe or give a bribe." I am very strict on this. The devotees say that when you go out into the world, it is just like that. I tell them that you may be the exception to the rule; but you will understand that, when you surrender, God gives you Divine Protection that will see you through the

problem. I say you have got to act correctly to experience it. I tell them that this is a result-oriented place! You must show me the results.

So that even if a great problem comes, I teach them to take it. There was a couple here. Their daughter was in Singapore and had arranged airline tickets for them to go and visit her. Generally, when people say that they are going, I don't say yes or no. But this time I said, "why don't you postpone your trip?" The last Darshan was on the 16th or the 17th. So I told them, "Why don't you postpone your trip? What's the hurry now? Why don't you wait a little and then go? Wait a week at least." They did wait and within three days the husband was in the Intensive Coronary Care Unit in the hospital and passed away. He had previously been all right—he was a heart patient of course, but seemed perfectly normal—going around doing everything here. He was a retired chief engineer in the Railways. Afterwards, the remaining members of the family understood why the trip had been postponed.

Because the teaching was in their background, they took it very philosophically. You know, he wasn't so old as all that. They recited the Vishnu Sahasranama next to him and said, "What has been taught by Sathguru, we must practise now." It was a shocking thing of course. It had happened so suddenly. But they took it in the right spirit, very bravely. That's the way they are trained here.

The close disciples, how do they come and see you? Do they come for Darshan or do they see you privately?

When they come for the Darshans, all of them come together. For the last group of Darshans there were discourses daily then there wasn't much time to talk with me. It was for two hours or so and then I would go in. Sometimes there would be personal Darshans: they would line up and take the Prasadam [blessed food]. But if there was any particular reason, I used to see them privately. I also give private Darshans if necessary. But in the days when I hadn't broken the period of "No Darshan," then nobody saw me, whatever happened. They would write to me. What happened was that by the time they would write their problems to me, they would get their answers, sometimes immediately. So the rule is whatever happens, write to me, that's all. Whether by word or in action it will be seen – the answer comes immediately. This is part of the surrender that is taught here. As you progress in it, you can't do it all of a sudden. You will see the ego is there, the desires and wishes are there and so much anger and all these things are there. As long as the lower nature is strong, it will be difficult for you to surrender. That is why self-purification is so necessary.

Do you have any comments on why Sanyasins, in particular the Shankaracharyas you are close to, go on lengthy walking tours?

You know, this type of thing is wonderful, but I don't know how far it can be done in the present day, because for one thing there is the security risk. For another, in the cities you cannot walk, it's impossible! Sometimes I think I could walk from here, but it's impossible. You have to go outside the city, because there is so much traffic, exhaust fumes. You are not getting anything out of it, but misery. You might as well stay at home. It's a wonderful thing to walk around the country like they used to do in ancient times.

Even now some of them do it, but they are not able to cover much distance. You see now in the present age you need speed – you deliver a lecture in one place and the next lecture fifty miles away on the same day. In the old days it was not like that. The Guru with three or four disciples walked slowly; he taught in one place and stayed for a while. Life was much more leisurely and easy. It's not like that now. But still they do walk, the Shankaracharyas, many of them do walk. In this kind of thing it is best for a woman that she does not go on walking tours. It is not possible. Even for a man it is becoming impossible.

If you were to appoint a successor, it may be necessary to have a considerably formalized structure.

The Shankaracharyas have such a structure. In Kanchipuram they have had as many as three: the incumbent and two successors.

Now they have only two. That is because there was a very great constraint imposed on them due to circumstances, so they had to take a successor but now the senior Paramacharya is gone and they have only these two. And generally they have only one person with them. I don't have any idea, regarding that sort of thing, as there is no Divine Command. As far as we are concerned here and as far as any long term goals, I don't have any ideas like that. It is something that is guided from minute to minute. Regarding the work that I have to do in future, it is a very rare type of job, something like what Krishna did. Can you envisage that, something like what Krishna did? How difficult that must be! That would account for all those mysterious disappearances for four or four and a half years. There are so many things to be done on another dimension.

Now I am teaching mostly Saranagati or surrender. Now surrender is very difficult. That is what they all say. You have Jnana Marga, the path of knowledge; Bhakti Marga, the path of love; Karma Yoga, the path of action; and then you have the path of Raja Yoga – concentration, Yoga that is more or less physical or mental. But surrender encompasses all this. Even Ramana Maharshi, who was teaching plain Jnana, was in the early days a Bhakta. He said surrender is another name for Jnana or knowledge and liberation. When you do surrender, you have both knowledge and devotion. You have devotion to the Personal Ideal on one hand and on the other you have the Knowledge of the Almighty, the Supreme Reality that He is and His Almighty Power. You trust Him and then only can you surrender. You can surrender only when you know that you can trust a person, isn't it so? You must know to have that trust; and so you have that knowledge; and so you have knowledge and Bhakti. And when you have knowledge, you have awestruck devotion. When you see the Greatness, automatically you have that devotion. You are awestruck when you see it. Here surrender (what Ramana Maharshi said is right) is another name for Jnana, for knowledge and liberation.

They say that Bhakti is for the Kaliyuga, for this age, because people nowadays cannot think of Jnana Marga, the path of knowledge, which says that, "I am not the mind, I am not the body, I am not the intellect but I am the soul. I am He." No doubt it is very easy to say but in action it is the most difficult thing today. Each one's grade is different from another. He or she can say, "I surrender," but cannot put it into practice. You can say I am not the body but if something pains, then you know whether you are the body or not! Then you know how it is! It is not for the present day. Kaliyuga has its own ways of expressing itself: one is speed. You see, supersonic planes have come in now and satellites. Speed is the attribute of the age, covered by darkness, by Avidya or ignorance, which makes a person think or do evil. The tendency to evil is much more prominent in this age than in any other age. So, therefore, it is not possible for anybody to think on the lines of the Jnana Marga. That was for those days when people were calm and life was calm. Now it is not possible; so the only thing is to surrender.

The pace of life is so fast there is no time to meditate, no time to sit and concentrate unless you take to Sanyasa or you go and sit in an Ashram, where you cannot be disturbed by these things. At home it is not possible. Even about fifty years ago people could do it at home. Now it is not possible because of the hectic lifestyle. The only thing that you can do is a mixture of all the Yogas and that is

surrender. With the knowledge of Whom you are surrendering to, you must have trust, faith, belief and conviction, more than anything else. Therefore, you have devotion in your heart to that (Ideal). The next part, fifty per cent, is your effort, i.e. you have to do your duty. The other fifty per cent is God's. He'll do his part so long as we do ours. That is called Karma Yoga.

“Devotion to duty is the highest form of the worship of God.” Vivekananda said that. Devotion to duty must be there, come what may. This duty comes to us as our Purva Janma Karma, our past life actions, our Prarabdha Karma. In our present life it comes to us, carried over into this birth; so we have to fulfil it. It is a debt, a debt we have to pay. We have to look at it that way and in a most detached manner fulfill it to the best of our ability so that we are freed from it. Without rewinding the tape! In the tape recorder you will see that you are unwinding on one side and rewinding on the other. That is what most people do because as they are exhausting Prarabdha they continue in evil acts or evil thoughts. They are rewinding the tape and then they come back here. That is how the cycle of birth and death comes about. So you call a halt to it.

“In this birth I am doing no wrong, whatever anybody else does to me. I am not hitting back in any way.” This again comes from knowledge – because you know very well the results. Because in surrender you do your duty and leave the results to God. When you look forward to the results then the trouble starts. When good comes, we are happy; when bad comes, we are unhappy. We should not want the good, we should not want the bad. You take both – the good and the bad. So you are free from it. You get that freedom and continue to do your duty. As you go on praying to Him and surrendering to Him, you find that you get more and more calmness and self control. When your senses are under control, you find that you are a totally different person and find it easier to live life. Take life as it comes, they say; but who can do it? It may come in many ways that we don't like. That's the problem. There should be no likes or dislikes. “Take life as it comes” means you take it without any likes or dislikes. Take anything that comes to you as part of your Karma. You just have to go through with it. I told you that they had learnt that lesson when the gentleman passed away. They were able to accept it peacefully because they had absorbed so much of the teaching of surrender.

It's wonderful!

I was so surprised. Till the body was taken away they were sitting around it and saying the

prayer, Vishnu Sahasranama, which is the traditional prayer to be said. “They are an example to the rest of you,” I told the Devotees. Such a great blow. A mortal blow, he had two daughters: one of whom was still studying, doing her Ph D.

The teaching is now surrender. Previously it was Advaita. I showed them the goal. I am taking them to the highest level and expect them to continue it. They have been so long in it and so they have learnt. I am not saying that they have overcome themselves totally, but still they have come to understand the goal and the meaning of it.

And when you say Divine Command, does the thought come into your mind?

Yes, it comes into the mind. The feeling comes and it is not as if it has to be told. It just happens like that, because there is no “I” here. So this is just motivated by the Divine Power that moves, speaks, acts and does everything. If you surrender, you must go through it; you must have the experience. That way it is good for you to have problems, because when you have a problem, you tend to grapple with it. Finally, when you find that you can’t grapple with it any longer, you leave it to God and then He solves it for you. So what happens is that you get experience and only that experience will push you forward. You will then have more and more trust in God. Each time you pass through a test and each time you get help from God you understand that this help is permanent that, He won’t let you down.

What are you most interested in talking about with your disciples at this period?

You know people are in different phases of their evolution. You have your own record when you were born, your Purva Janma Karma. You have your record and in that record there may be something very, very bad, which you have done to someone else and you have to go through the consequences in this birth. You must remember that the Law of Karma is God’s Law. You can’t change it and He can’t change it either. If He changed it for some, it would be prejudice or partiality and that He cannot show. He is the Divine Judge. When He does something like that, when He allows something to happen to you, it is because you are working out something to go through with, in your own interest. When you surrender to Him you are pushing Him (forcing Him) to look after you. Troubles won’t hurt you. You’re able to stand them.

Regarding those people who want to have a personal God and who want to have a personal existence after death, I heard somebody tell a joke the other day about a person who went to a minister and asked, “After we die, will we meet our loved ones?” “Yes,” the minister replied, “and also the others.”

The ones, we don't love—a lot of them! [laughs] Within a few hours of his death I was wondering about the man we were discussing – he was a very good man, you know, and a person who helped everybody who crossed his path. He had plenty of money and held a very highly placed job. Whomsoever he came across he helped. He wasn't one for many rituals—he did more Karma Yoga. When he had passed away (they had telephoned and informed me), I was wondering where he was. When the soul goes, it is not as though it is extinct. It is the body which is extinct, not the soul. So I was wondering what had happened to him. I felt so responsible for him. So I said, “What's happened to him? Where is he?” While I was thinking, I found, I came to know (you know, they are supposed to be around the body for about eight hours, still tied to it) that this man was there, moving about, very happy. Very happy. So then I thought that he must have gone to some other plane which is not very difficult to stay in.

So you think that personal existence continues?

Definitely. And sometime afterwards I was still sitting there and I felt there was some other presence in the room, and I found he was there and he did Namaskaram [prostration] as he usually did and went away. He had written a book and he had presented a copy to me and that book was there in the room that I was sitting in. It was kept on the window sill. I was sitting in the Puja room [used for worship]. I don't do any Puja there, just sit there.

Was that before the funeral?

This was after the funeral. I told you that his spirit had come here before the funeral. Just after the funeral about four or five days later, I was sitting quietly in the Puja room, when suddenly I heard a sound. I found that his book had fallen down. I found that there was a presence in the room, and I said, “Who's here?” I asked. “The author of the book,” he replied. I said, “What do you want?” He replied, “Nothing, just gratitude and thankfulness to You, with every bit of my heart and soul. I want

to offer thankfulness for guiding me and sending me in such an easy manner.” Then he did Namaskaram and went away. The family also had no problems at all. He had settled everything for them. So a person like that receives God’s Grace. I happened to see Rajiv Gandhi also. Rajiv Gandhi, Indira Gandhi’s son—in spite of the violent death he had. He was blasted in a very cruel manner. He was a good man, such a good man, a very kind man, a gentleman to his fingertips.

You could see it in his face.

Yes, his face. That’s why they blasted it. The evil forces can’t stand anything good. He was a gentleman to his fingertips. He would not think evil about anyone. Such people have no place in the world today. I saw him you know.

You saw him?

Yes I saw him. I was wondering what happened immediately after he got blasted, how he must have suffered such a lot. No, he passed out of the body immediately. Immediately, he was standing over his body, for some time in his own form really. For some days after I could see beautiful valleys, mountains, rivers and all that. Quietly he was walking there happily. Other people were feeling sorry that he was gone, but he was happy. But for the other types – those types of soul will not come near me. They will get frightened and go away from me. There is an existence only in this world, they think, but that is not so. Those people are afraid to go, to leave this world; suppose they die, they worry. They are afraid of what is going to happen to them. There is nothing to be worried about. You just pass on to another dimension where perhaps all your problems may cease: no illness, no disease, nothing like that. I always tell this to the Devotees, who come here.

What is the relationship between one’s own Self-realization and the religious destiny of others?

You see that, one, who has got Self-realization can influence the destinies of others to a very, very great extent, provided their receptivity is there. You can pour something into a vessel. If it is a very deep one, you can pour in more. It depends on the size of the vessel. Receptivity in other

words is the key. So when one has attained Self-realization, one knows it. Then one can give it according to what others can receive. Nowadays, when I go out, I can see so many people suffering. I have been going out, for instance, in the past fifteen days.

You have been going out?

Yes, I had been to some temples. The temples here – some of them are two to three thousand years old. They were in previous times looked after by the Rajas and Maharajas who gave them a lot of money, generously endowed the temples with a lot of funds and lands so that they would be looked after. But now no one cares. They are falling into disuse, into rack and ruin. So I went there. If you awaken the Deity, the Power, then it can look after you. But nobody cares. People have forgotten God. Other than fanaticism there is no true spirituality to be found in any religion now. Most of them are just plain fanatics. So I would talk to the beggars. Some people would tell me you should not encourage beggars. I used to say, “Who are we to say which is the right beggar and which is the wrong beggar?”

He can take you where you take Him. You have to trust Him, believe in Him and be convinced about Him, and this you can do only stage by stage, step by step, by committing mistakes (maybe learning from those mistakes) but by not letting go of Him. That is the main thing. You may make a lot of mistakes, something bad happens to you and you get desperate; you get sad; you get unhappy. I always tell the Devotees that whatever happens, you go through with it. But keep on repeating your prayer, whatever your problems are. You keep hold of His Feet. You don't give up. When the dark night passes, you wake up in the morning. You feel much better. It is only through these experiences that you learn.

You see, the lives of the Pandavas [heroes of the Mahabharata]. They went through so much suffering. But they would not break Dharma. You know that Yudhishtira was called Dharmaraja. He would not break Dharma whatever happened. It does not matter if others do wrong, you should not do wrong. You should not have their behaviour as your criterion. Your creed should not be that if they do it to me I will do it back. This is revenge or something like it. Under no circumstances, as a personal thing, should you do it.

Doing it in a war is another thing. You have to fight for your country, fight for Dharma, fight for the

Right. That is another sphere altogether. Doing it personally, for your own personal reasons, you will have to answer to God. Just leave it to God, leave it to the Law of Karma, which will come back and finish them. You don't have to worry. But Dharma and Ahimsa — you have to practise them in your own Life. But in other ways you cannot practise Ahimsa. Krishna Himself made Arjuna fight the battle of Kurukshetra: made him fight it for truth. Even Buddha, who was supposed to be a man of peace, a great saint of peace, said that, "Man must fight Might with Right, or else Might will rule alone." Might rules alone, if Right does not fight it. See, what is happening. In so many countries, he, who has the gun, is the important person.

Yes, the communists of China used to quote the saying of Mao Tse Tung, that politics comes from the barrel of a gun.

Yes, yes. Politics is the power of the Gun. But it cannot go much beyond where it has already. It has reached a flashpoint.

I think your doctrine of surrender is very good, really.

You must practise it. When you surrender, you are expected to do your duty to perfection. You must remember your responsibility. But expect nothing from it. The results are given to God. So He knows how to judge. If things are bad as well as good, we can't say, "We want the good but we don't want the bad." Our attitude should be, "You look after me. That's enough. I trust you." And He will look after you! I used to say that, "I can give it in writing in my own blood that, He will look after you. It's my experience." But you come to such a level that, for example, if you lose something, He will help you. For instance, if I lose something and I can't find it, I will wonder where it has gone. Sometimes, it's a pen or something small and then I find it. I'll just walk along and suddenly the pen is there. He just shows it to me. If He can help us in such small things, will He not do big things for us? It is only that the big things take time and certain things happen which have no explanation. And we can't expect explanations from Him, and if we ask Him, He says, "You go your way and I go mine." It's like if you ask a doctor, "Why should I take these pills three times a day and not four times a day?" He will say, "Find another doctor." God expects Absolute Trust and Unquestioning Obedience. "Don't question Me!" And we find things happening for us! It's a wonderful experience once,

you come to understand it and experience it. You must have experience. You must have experience.

Take Life as it comes. If you think something very bad is happening to you, understand that something is being worked out. He cushions it for you. Understand that God cannot be wrong. What He has sanctioned—when something is happening to us, let it be. Something we must have done (something very wrong, very bad in the past birth) to some one and created pain and agony for somebody—that agony is coming back to us in this birth. But when we have surrendered to Him, He takes note of it. And He looks after us with minimum suffering for us. But, something may have to be gone through, because of what you have created. You have to pay something for causing pain to someone else.

The Law of Karma.

The Law of Karma. That is something no one can change. The whole of creation rests on that, and we have seen it happen. What somebody has done has come back to him. It may take time, but the longer it takes to come back to you, the worse it may be. They say that each Karma goes three times around the world and comes back to the person, who started it. But by then, how much force would it have gained! But, after all you are looked after. Then, what more do you want?

There is something which is not very clear in my mind. About how, when you were a young woman, you were having these Samadhi experiences.

I used to have experiences, both Advaitic and with the Personal Form.

Saguna,

Saguna. Saguna means with Gunas [qualities]. Nirguna means without Gunas.

I remember that somewhere in the original article I wrote [“Mother Guru: Jnanananda of Madras, India,” in Unspoken Worlds, Women’s Religious Lives in Non-Western Cultures, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980] you were regarded by some of your Devotees as Sri Raja Rajesvari [a Goddess].

They used to! At that moment of time, the Divine Command was not to reveal who is my

Guide, not to reveal who is the Divine Personality, who is the One, who was my Divine Master. I was told not to say it. So, they took it that, it was Raja Rajesvari and I did not say anything. After my speeches, I began to say, “Gurudeva”, and some people noticed it – that I was saying Gurudeva and not Gurudevi. So Gurudeva was masculine and they were trying to find out who it was. Even the Shankaracharya asked me, who the Guru was. But I did not reveal it. After a couple of years, I told him. The highest form is said to be Sriman Narayana, the One who lies on the Serpent Bed, in the Milky Ocean.

Mahavishnu.

Mahavishnu. He is watching all Creation. But if somebody calls Him, He knows that the Law of Karma is taking its course and people do suffer. He is watching but with compassion. Unless you call Him, He will not come to your aid. See, you must want it, isn't it? Nobody will come otherwise, much less God. That is how Draupadi's story [in the Mahabharata] goes. As long as she was holding on to her sari, He did not come. Not until she put both her hands up and called Him, then He came. That gesture indicated total surrender. The same thing is seen in the story of Gajendra Moksham. Gajendra was an elephant. He was a God cursed to be an elephant. He was on the banks of a river and then a crocodile came and caught his leg, you know.

I've heard of it—I've seen a picture of it.

A crocodile came and caught his leg. He was a king in his past birth, and now also he was a king, but of the elephants. In his last birth he was a king of the Devas, the Gods. So he was now trying to pull his leg out of the crocodile's mouth, trying to pull it back. The more he pulled the more the crocodile's teeth pressed into his flesh; He was bleeding. He pulled and pulled, and finally he remembered God. He remembered Mahavishnu. He was pulling back his leg as he called Mahavishnu at the same time. He was trying to help himself. He gave up finally all attempts to help himself and took some lotuses which were growing there and prayed and offered it to Him. The minute he did that and stopped trying to help himself and prayed to God, Mahavishnu, lying on the Milky Ocean, got up and prepared to go toward him. Mahalakshmi came running behind Him and asked, “Where are You

going, where are You running to?” His Angavastram [upper cloth] was missing; and She asked again, “Where are you running to like this?” He said, “My Bhakta is calling Me, I must go.” Riding on Garuda [the Sun Bird] He came immediately and rescued him. He took the Chakra [discus] and cut off the head of the crocodile. So that is the example of surrender. When you go to God without asking for anything, when you surrender to Him, is there anything which God doesn’t know? He is the Supreme Reality and knows everything. Then do we have to tell Him our sufferings? “You know about my sufferings, and I don’t have to tell You, You must help me,” like that you can ask. That is in the beginning stages. In the last stage you don’t have to ask. You don’t have to say anything, but just keep waiting. He knows what is best for us. He will do it; and whatever He does for us we should not doubt that it is for the best. Once you come to that stage, you just take Life as it comes: no problems at all.

So many things happen here, not only here but among the Devotees also. So many things happen. Sometimes it is very surprising, the way that He rushes to help. When I was told then, long ago, when I was a kid, “You have come here to do My work; and in the years to come anybody with a mustard seed of goodness will come to you,” I would say, “I can’t do any work. I am not fit for it.” Whatever work He gave me, I refused it immediately, [laughs]. “Why don’t you get a big, hefty person like Vivekananda to do your work? I am not interested in this work. I don’t want to go and lead the world.” Can you imagine I thought like that! To me it was a big headache, but when I found people suffering (compassion was very strong in me from childhood), I could not help myself. I helped them, and immediately they felt better. I told Him, “You gave me this compassion and that is why this is happening to me. You are forcing me to work!”

END OF PART ONE

VOICE DIVINE

When you pray to God, you do so believing He is Almighty, All-Powerful, All-Knowing and that He does what is the very best for you. That is the Basis of Prayer. If that is not there it is just a waste of time.



It is much easier to die for God and one's religion, than to live for God and one's religion.





God has immense self-respect! If you don't want Him and call Him whole-heartedly, He will not answer you.



Sri Krishna said that there are three Doors to Hell. Ask yourself, "How many Doors have I opened today?"

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PART TWO

What is your view of the many current Deities of the Hindus?

Hinduism is the most universal of all the religions, and it understands that there are different grades of people and all the souls are in different states of evolution. You cannot give Mahavishnu, who is Sattvic to persons, who have a lot of Rajas [references to types of inherent qualities]. They'd prefer to have Shiva or Parvati. So, according to each one's Purvajanma (prior life) tendencies, Samskaras, as they are called, or Vasanas (inherent tastes). They have an Ista Devata (chosen deity). These carry over from the past birth. There are many deities for the many states of evolution and involve the inherent qualities of Tamas, Rajas and Sattva(the Gunas).

What is your view of Christianity?

You would find, if the Christians were to take Christ's teachings of total surrender, it would be Sattvic. But, they won't follow it. They are degrading themselves. When Christians come here, I remind them of St. Francis of Assisi. He used to call his body, Brother Donkey. You have to give it food, sleep, rest and work! Similarly, we say that the body is only a resting place for the Atman to finish off its Karma here. If, we look into the basic tenets of all the religions, they are very similar. But, they don't recognize this fact. They fight and quarrel, that's all, just find a reason to have a war! It is the Evil Forces taking form to create trouble.

A person who comes here, a Roman Catholic, is completely devoted, so I teach him surrender, total surrender. The spirit of surrender is in every religion and I allow them to choose their own Deity. He writes to me regularly. When I give discourses, he attends and writes a synopsis and sends it to me.

It is only now, that I have started going out and visiting temples. Before that, for two and a half months, there were daily discourses on various subjects. I am dinning the idea of surrender into them. "I am expecting very high standards from you, the Sri Peetam devotees," I tell them. I remember once, there was a picture of Sri Krishna on the wall, a very lovely picture of Sri Krishna with a flute [Muralidhara (Bansiwala)]. While I was watching, a small lizard began walking on the picture, on His Face! I looked at it and said, "It is a lizard, a lizard on His Face and how do, I chase it off now?" I didn't want to hurt it, and

do you know what He said? “Don’t chase the lizard off. Let it be there. It is Mine”. I said, “Okay, let it be. No Problem. You have Your Lizard!” Can you see the compassion and love? “It is Mine!” He said.

Small lizards are more lovable than big lizards!

Definitely, definitely [Laughs]. They do no harm to anybody. It is the human beings, who can be either instruments of the evil forces or instruments of the Divine forces, because there is what you call the brain. Animals, birds, insects don’t have the type of brain, that can be used in the right way or the wrong way. Animals follow their natures or instincts. Humans have to contend with the soul that is inside as well as the force that can enter. A good force can guide one or an evil force can guide one, because of the brain. Now they have computers, but they still need the human brain for guidance. Computers are not on their own yet but if they develop to that extent, they may become like Frankenstein. I think we should not go further in that direction. What would we do with such Frankensteins?

There was another Sevarthi (Devotee), who came from a very prosperous family. His father was a well-known lawyer. The father died very suddenly and there was a lot of speculation about it, to the extent that he might have been poisoned. They could not account for it. This boy (the Sevarthi) was the eldest son, in his twenties, studying to be a surgeon. He doesn’t know even now how he passed his examinations. He couldn’t study, his mind was too upset over such a tragic death. I told him, “Just look through your books and go and write your examinations.” He said, “What is the use?” I said, “It is not I, who am asking you to look through your books. God will help you.” He passed his examinations, went on to specialize and is now a urologist. These are the Sevarthis, who come here and give all the help they can. The easiest path is surrender. It appeals to everyone. The ladies sometimes are able to understand it better than the men!

I have just edited an article on Sankara’s theory of Moksha (for the Adyar Library Bulletin). The author was arguing that Moksha is always present, because the Atman is always present. Hence, there is no need to do anything along the lines of meditation or Yoga. All you have to do is think of Tat Tvam Asi, the Mahavakya, “Thou art That.”

It’s very difficult. Extremely difficult. You see, Krishna Himself said in the Bhagavad Gita, that it is very difficult for the embodied to try to become the disembodied. “For the goal of the Unmanifested

is very hard for the embodied to reach.” It is not so easy. It is possible, no doubt, but we have got to work for it. We have to overcome the ego, mind and intellect. The ego has to be totally surrendered till, it has no wishes or desires. That is why you do Karma Yoga. In all the work that you do, the results go to God [Nishkamya Karma (without desire)]. That way you cleanse yourself. You can’t do it in one jump. “Tat Tvam Asi” may be the truth. But how many can achieve it? It is not for the common crowd. When people are not even able to surrender, how can they attain Vichara [discernment]? They may say, “I am not the body, not the mind, not the intellect,” but how can they bring this into action?

It has always been said in the Sastras that in the Kali Yuga (and this is the Kali Yuga) the only means is Bhakti. Bhakti was not for Dvapara Yuga, when Sri Krishna was living, or the Treta Yuga, when Sri Rama was living, or the pristine Satya Yuga. In those days the pace was much easier. People were much more kind, good and honest and truthful and Sattva prevailed. Now there is little or no Sattva and mainly Tamas, just darkness.

You said yesterday that Shiva and Parvati were Tamasic and Vishnu was Sattvic.

Shiva and Parvati represent the Tamasic forces, that is all. But when they are prayed to, for instance when Shiva sits and meditates, he is Sadashiva, the Purified One. He sits and meditates on his own Self. Then there is the Trimurti, the three Murtis: Brahma, representing Rajas; Vishnu, representing Sattva; and Shiva, representing Tamas. These are the three forces, governing Creation. Now all these forces are necessary, and they must be balanced. When that balance is upset, many problems come. When you build a house, you are starting to do something, energizing yourself to build it. That is creation—that is Brahma. Then you preserve it, maintain it – that is Vishnu. When it goes to rack and ruin, then you must demolish it – that is Shiva.

In my case it is not as if I was an Advaitan and then changed. I have always been as I am. But during what I was passing through then, I conformed to the Shankaracharya system. When one wants to reach a spiritual goal, generally it is necessary to do Tapas [austerities, including meditation] to whichever Deity, one wishes to attain. So at that time I was made to do Tapas to Shiva—not so much Parvati as Shiva. The Shankaracharya asked me, “Who is your Guru?” He went on asking, and I was given no permission to tell Him. After some time, when, He was told, He was shocked. He had not known, it was

Narayana. Now, He knows it very well. The truth was there all the time. Remember, Sri Krishna had to be taken to Vraja in the dead of night because there were so many evil forces, waiting to finish Him off. It was something like that here. Only it was sort of much more incognito in the case of Sri Krishna. During His time, it was the Dvapara Yuga and Dharma was much more powerful. Fifty per cent of Dharma was prevailing in the Dvapara Yuga, but now, there is only twenty-five per cent prevailing, so the evil forces are much more powerful than when Krishna was born.

That is why you find so much cruelty. You open the newspapers and you learn of somebody shot dead, somebody killed in cold blood. One just cannot understand how people can be like this. There is so much of evil pre-dominating, that is why spiritual life has sometimes to be kept private. Probably, it is about time now for me to act more publicly, but how many years it has taken to come to this point in the work! It was more or less on another dimension. It was a war that was fought out on another dimension. So one worships Krishna, who is one's Highest Ideal, one's Protector. I did not have any particular God or Chosen Deity, when I was a child. This matured with me as I grew up. At first, it was more Jnana than Bhakti with me. Now, the world needs Bhakti and somebody must show the way of surrender as Bhakti. Bhakti means unselfish love, devotion, trust and surrender. Surrender means absolute Bhakti. You must have it to achieve anything.

When we spoke in the past, you said that even as a child you used to have these experiences of Samadhi. You said that in Samadhi you felt like you were in the ocean, like a wave in the ocean.

Yes, yes. Many times I have felt like that, but now I have attained the final stage and have come back to do this work. It is to guide and help others and to show the way. Most of those I contact are willing and ready to accept God. But they don't know how to do it.

So you see God as Personal?

It is not like that; it is both. It is like the two wings of a bird: one is Jnana; one is Bhakti. If you want Jnana, you must have Bhakti. From the Saguna, you go to the Nirguna and from the Nirguna, the creation takes form. Then, the Creation has to be guided and helped along. That is what I told you

yesterday. The man of small intellect sees his own family and that of another as personal and alien respectively, while a man of realization sees the whole world as his family. There is no I and mine there. You see, the whole process works towards the elimination of the Ego. Whether it is the Jnana Marga or the Bhakti Marga or surrender, the elimination of the Ego is most important. As long as the Ego is there, we have the lower nature predominant. When the Ego is not there, the lower nature subsides. For the developed person the Ego is merged with God, such that none but God exists. The developed person does things in a very automatic manner without thought or plan. He just takes things as they come and acts for the moment. That is what they used to say about Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. There was a certain unpredictability about Him—the true hallmark of a Prophet of God. The reason is that such people do not belong to the circle of Maya of Creation, because the rules of Maya do not hold good for Them. They function under the rules of some different dimension. So others can never understand Them.

For instance when I went to Pondicherry, they did not think that I would go to any temple there. When I suddenly said that I was going to a temple and they went with me there, they found out that it was one of the greatest temples of India. There is only one like it. It is almost two thousand years old and nearly in ruins. Is it a Krishna temple? No, it is a Narasimha [another incarnation (Avatar) of Vishnu] Temple. That is what we need now. That is what I think sometimes, because things must be set right. It cannot be done by being soft on people.

This Taliban, if you are going to be soft on them, can you imagine what could happen? In this morning's paper I read that they had beaten a woman and had cut off the hands of some men. The Taliban claim that this is the Muslim Shariat and that everyone is going to be made to follow it. My God, I was so shocked to read it. Just cutting off people's hands! They did rob, no doubt, but then put them in jail. What is the necessity to cut off people's hands? So inhuman and cruel! Cruelty is ruling! The Asuric nature is ruling. The Rakshasas and the Asuras want to rule and to enjoy themselves. They want power. The Asuric and Rakshasic natures are so profoundly described in the Bhagavad Gita. "I have conquered this today, tomorrow I will conquer that!" More than anything else, it is that inhuman behaviour which is ruling today. As long as India stands for Dharma, India will be very unpopular with the Asuric types.

I was thinking about a question to ask You (one I seem to keep repeating and one of the most difficult things to explain), about Your experience in Samadhi, that grants direct knowledge of God. Hindu mystics call It Ananda or Bliss. Ramakrishna revealed that He had experienced an incredibly wonderful state. Samadhi is what I would like to understand.

I have experienced it I can say, but it is very difficult to put into words. You just move out, slowly you just move out and from that dimension you go away. Sometimes it is the ending of Samadhi that matters. I remember an experience of a huge sea and waves dancing, not huge waves but small waves dancing. Every wave is lit up as though with electricity, bright lights dancing. I am looking all over, I am looking around and I can see only this. I can't feel my body but the "I" that is aware is looking through and it can see and it is as if I can see all over. Then suddenly a great happiness comes for no reason, and there is nothing in particular to make me happy there; but just looking at the dancing waves makes me very, very happy. And this is perhaps what persons like Ramakrishna are saying.

I had another experience I am trying to remember and tell you about. It was one in which I could see a big sea and I could see that I was dissolving into it. In the early stages I can feel that I am going into it deeper and deeper and then after some time I can feel that I am lying there, and I am trying to answer the question, "Where is my head?" But I can't see it. (The "I," a little bit of it is there to be aware of this. I was looking everywhere, looking everywhere). "Where is my hand?" I wonder. I can see my hand, but I cannot see the ends of it, it's far away, very far away. I try to see my legs, and I can't see my legs, I can't feel my legs. I can't see, I can't feel but I know the body is there. It is as if it is a huge thing lying with no awareness of the end of it. I was lying like that and very happy. After some time this just goes off and then there is no "I". A sense of happiness alone remains that lives apart. I have had many Samadhis like this.

The thing is that when you go into Samadhi, you are not aware of the world. I have been in Samadhi sometimes for nine hours, sometimes even longer—not aware of the world at all. You go into Samadhi and don't know what time it is. Sometimes it would start at eight in the morning and end about ten in the night. I would feel as though the body was very hot, boiling hot. I must have

been accumulating power. I would feel like going and pouring cold water on myself because of the heat. But then I was told, "Wait a little. Don't pour cold water." I would wonder whether in medical terms, when the body was so hot, the blood pressure must have increased. If you pour cold water under such conditions, you could get a stroke. In this state events to come are sometimes very clearly told, very clearly. I could see them, sometimes even ten or twelve years in advance. That depends on the seriousness of the subject, on who and what it is, and how much I would have to do with it. Sometimes, if someone thinks very deeply about me, wants some help from me or just thinks about me suddenly, I can see the person immediately. I have to explain to those near me, "I saw such and such a person, you can expect a letter." Sometimes if they are ill or tired, it flashes into my consciousness.

What is the relation between Samadhi and the goal of surrender?

Samadhi comes automatically when surrender grows. When surrender increases more and more, the Ego lessens. There is no Ego after some time because it merges into That. The Ego is the problem. Some people's Egos are very strong and that brings on all the problems of the world. Some people are more gentle, more refined: they don't mind insults or humiliations. "Sadness or poverty," they think, "this is part of my life. I must take it". Such people have less Ego. When the Ego is very strong then the lower nature will be very strong. To the extent that they are able to transcend the Ego they suffer less and grow closer to God. That is why the Personal God is so important. You see, you develop a love of that God and then you'll do anything for His sake. You are overcoming your desires and begin to think, "If God wants me to do such and such, then I do it. I won't say, 'I want to do this; I'd like to do this; I don't want to do this. Not at all. If God wants me to do it then well and good I will do it.'" You don't think about whether it is right or wrong. You have implicit faith that God's wish cannot be wrong. You realize it as part of the Divine Command.

When I asked you yesterday, you said it is not a thought, it just comes to you?

Sometimes there is a command. Most of the time, as you go closer to God, all your thoughts, words, deeds and feelings are God's. You don't have to ask Him; it is all natural. He talks through

you, He acts through you, He feels through you; so you cannot be wrong. At that Highest Level then you can trust yourself. That God has entered into me is a fact and, therefore, that human being Ego has merged with Him. Only then can He take over. There cannot be two inside; there can be only one. Either it is God or you! This can be experienced by anybody. But they must put forth effort. Nothing is achieved in this world without effort. You see, most of the people here, the Devotees, I have trained them: "Oh, so this is how God wants it, so let it be." Even if they want something else inside, they understand that what God wants is the right thing. So one must accept it. That is resignation to the Divine Will. And yet it has a very Dynamic Aspect also. You have to go to the Formless via the form. When one transcends the form, then he comes back and acts in the world with Bhakti.

You must have heard of many of the Bhaktas. Their method is just pure Bhakti, like that of Mahaprabhu Chaitanya. But there is some difference between what Chaitanya teaches and what Sri Krishna teaches because in the latter teaching there is a part of knowledge. In surrender there is knowledge, also, not pure devotion alone. There is knowledge because you come to understand the greatness of the Almighty and then you surrender. It is a little harder than pure Bhakti which is just praying to God and getting lost in Him. That also is quite different.

To go back to our previous discussion : who are truly fit to follow the Jnana Marga today? I think that there is hardly one per cent of the population in the world who can do it or who have the qualifications to do it. It is not easy because it presupposes self-conquest. Because there is no self there, the "I" does not exist. You are starting on a very high basis. Even if they say, "Aham Brahmasmi," "I am Brahman," after a few hours they drop down and come back to this world. Then all the problems start as usual. I always said to the Devotees, who come here, "What is the use of praying to Rama and trying to emulate Him in the Puja room and then coming out and behaving and living like Ravana [a demon] in the outside world?" It would be a total cancellation of what little had been achieved. Jnana was for the other Yugas. In the Kali yuga, the Scriptures themselves say that the Bhakti Marga is the way.

Once you come to have Absolute Faith and Trust in God, you see that whatever is necessary (it may be material, it may be spiritual) will come to you. Somehow or the other it will be provided. We don't have to look after ourselves. Of course it does not absolve us of our duties till such time as we come

to the highest level. For instance, when I took Sanyasa, I got such a stupendous command from God to work for all of humanity. Previously, it had only been for one family. It looks as though that was easier!

In the Hindu conception of Time it takes millions of years to complete one Yuga.

Well, it has to be gone through, that's all. You will see that it is very scientific. It is similar to what science is saying now. It is very scientific because those who taught these things were great, very great seers who had great knowledge. Most of the powers that we used to have as human beings, whether on the spiritual level, on the mental level or even on the physical level, have become atrophied by disuse. You see, people then lived a very healthy life, with wholesome food (not too much) and sleeping only as much as they needed. They did not eat for the pleasure of eating or the taste but because it was wholesome, because they needed food to keep body and soul together. This sort of attitude is not present now. People just gorge and that brings trouble: illness in the body and they can't control their tempers, especially their anger. You see, the three gates to hell are Anger, Desire and Greed. You can see it everywhere now. There is so much desire for money. People have money, but they want more and more and so they go in for various types of scams. And then they land in jail with a disgraced name – spoiling the name of their families also.

There was an incident a very long time ago, when my children were very small. I had been very humorous, filled with life, a very sunny type of person as I grew up till I became around sixteen or seventeen years old. Then I became very serious and reserved, but before that I was very mischievous, though my life at times seemed haunted. Now when I look back, I can see so many incidents when I could have been killed. Once when a madman came and another time when I nearly fell in front of a train. I was in my teens, going to college and the train was coming along and I thought I would cross before it came. I was very daring. I just ran across. You know they have these wires running along the lines. I tripped on a wire and fell. I fell on the other side and the train went past. If I had fallen on this side, I would have been crushed. But, I did not have any fear of anything.

When I was twenty-eight or thirty this incident took place. The children, both of the boys and their younger sister, who has now married and gone to Malaysia, the three of them were playing. The

Divine Command said, "Don't let the children play outside in the garden. Bring them inside." It was difficult to stop their playing, but luckily they were obedient. They were happy enough. There were lots of toys and they played inside. It was very, very hot. Their father had gone to his job. He was working in the magnesite factory. I expected him back soon. It was just about six in the evening. We were living in the residential quarters there, very nice quarters, just outside the factory. I asked, "Can I go outside and sit in the garden?" God said, "No, sit inside. Don't go." It was so hot and I felt as though I was burning. After about half an hour I asked, "Can I go and put a chair in the garden and sit in the cement square?" It was a very nice garden with a cement square in the middle. I said, "I won't go into the garden. I'll just sit in the cement square." God said, "Don't open the door and go out!" I was wondering why. I had the trust that there must be some reason for God's command. So I said, "Okay." I just walked around, played the radio and waited.

The children's father was coming down the road. I saw him through the window. He stopped and spoke with the people next door. I heard them telling him, "Mr. Achan, you don't know what has happened." "What happened?" he asked. I looked from my living room, but I couldn't see anything. I saw them bending down and gazing at something. I thought, "Anyway he will come inside and then I'll know." When he came in, he said, "Do you know what happened?" I said, "No, I wanted to go out but God had asked me not to go out." "Do you know what you missed?" he went on. "No wonder God told you not to go out! Go there and see and you will find a five-foot cobra!"

I went out and over to the other house. There I saw the snake. It was a black one, a very rare and poisonous cobra. Our neighbour had been coming in on their motorbike and the headlights fell on the snake coming out of our house, from the cement square where I wanted to sit. It was going toward their house. He told his wife to bring a big rod. She got it. By that time it had crossed the hedge and was entering his garden. He managed to hit it on the head and killed it. He dragged it and kept it in front of his house and stretched it out.

Just then my husband had come around the corner so the neighbour told him, "See what has come from your garden, from the cement square. It was just coming out and if I had not been here I don't know what would have happened to your family or mine. Suppose it had lain in one of the bushes?"

God had told me and I was grateful for it. I did not understand why these evil forces wanted to do these things to me. I had done nothing to them. Even if I see an ant dying, I feel sorry for it and would like to help it. Later, I was told to take a particular volume of some works by Annie Besant we had and to read a particular page. "Now you will understand about this cobra," was the message to me. In it was written that the souls of murderers and suicides, such cruel souls are cursed and are born as cobras. They bite and kill or they bite and they are killed, and then go on in a cycle like that for a long time to work out the evil that they did. I was shocked when I read it. Really! I couldn't believe it you know, so true! People don't know, when they commit suicide, that they are going to end up like this. They are beyond the pale of Divine Grace for a very long time and they have to suffer and suffer. Our lives are never ours to take. Similarly, you can't take someone else's life. Both of these bring on this kind of terrible punishment: terrible to be reborn as a cobra, to keep on in circles, always to be killed and to suffer in that form. It will be very difficult to come back to human embodiment. These people who are so trigger- happy: when they kill people, they don't understand the consequences.

It is very bad in America, constant killing.

It should be stopped. Why can't they enact a law?

So many people have guns.

Yes, I read about a thirteen-year-old boy doing some killing. You people should start a movement, asking the President to call for a law. Such behaviour is like in a jungle. America is a superpower today. It should be setting an example to the rest of the world. Guns should not be available like that, especially to children. Now even in India the terrorists have killed so many thousands. Many people come to me and say "Sathguru, you have so much power, why can't you kill them (evil people) off straight?" I tell them that that is not the way God does things. There is a promise in the Gita, that even a most wicked sinner, "If he surrenders to Me [Krishna] and has resolved rightly, from then on I will take him in hand. He will be purified and will become My Devotee." You see the hope that He holds out even to the worst of them. For some of them there is no hope. It is no use telling them, but we can do our best to change the rest of them.

Many years ago, when I was in school, I used to get up at 1.30 in the morning for meditation. After the little ones were born, I put them in the same school, and I used to go and see my old teachers, all the nuns, (they were mainly French and Irish) and I used to tell them about my spiritual life. And one asked me, "When do you get up and pray?" I told her and she said, "Bless me, even we nuns don't do that." And she got hold of the other nuns and told them, "Can you see, a house-holder is doing all these things, and you nuns are getting up at five o' clock!" And she met the Bishop, who sent for me and asked me the details of my Sadhana [spiritual discipline]. He said, "You are an example to us monks!"

END OF PART TWO

GLOSSARY

Advaita	: <i>the non-dual philosophy of the Upanishads propagated by Adi Sankara</i>
Ahimsa	: <i>non-violence</i>
Ashram	: <i>the abode of a sanyasin where there is no srama (individualistic activity)</i>
Bhagavad Gita	: <i>the dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna occurring in the Mahabharata, possibly the most important Hindu Scripture</i>
Brahman	: <i>the Supreme Being – beyond name, thought and form.</i>
Darshan	: <i>lit. seeing. The sight of a Deity or a sage which confers incalculable blessings</i>
Dharma	: <i>Righteousness, the principle that rules the world</i>
Dharmaraja	: <i>a name of the Emperor Yudhisthira (circa 3000 BCE) the eldest Pandava Prince</i>
Draupadi	: <i>the consort of the Emperor Yudhisthira, known for her bhakthi to Sri Krishna</i>
Kali Yuga	: <i>the fourth Yuga (supra) which is 432,000 years long</i>
Mahalakshmi	: <i>the Divine Consort of Mahavishnu, the Goddess of Good Fortune</i>
Mahaprabhu Chaitanya	: <i>a great saint of the Vaishnava tradition who spread bhakthi</i>
Mahavishnu	: <i>the Deity (one of the Trinity) who Protects the universe</i>
Namaskaram	: <i>prostration</i>
Paramacharya	: <i>H.H. Sri Chandrasekharendra Sarasvathi, 67th Shankaracharya of the Kamakoti Peetam</i>
Ramana Maharishi	: <i>a saint who lived in South India in the first half 20th century</i>
Samadhi	: <i>absorption into the Self or Brahman</i>
Sankara	: <i>the great philosopher and reformer who lived from 788 to 820 CE</i>
Sanyasin	: <i>a person who has renounced the world</i>
Saranagati	: <i>the philosophy of self-surrender taught first in the Bhagavad Gita</i>
Sathguru	: <i>the Guru who is established in the Truth; the name by which Sri Sathguru Swami Gnanananda Sarasvathi is addressed</i>
Shankaracharya	: <i>a pontiff of the mutts established by Sankara</i>
Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa	: <i>a famous saint who lived in Dakshineswar near Kolkata (Calcutta) in the 19th century</i>
Vedanta	: <i>lit. the end of the Vedas, the philosophy of the Upanishads</i>
Vishnu Sahasranamam	: <i>a hymn containing 1000 names of Mahavishnu occurring in the Anusasana Parva of the Mahabharata</i>
Yuga	: <i>an Aeon there are four yugas namely Krta, Treta, Dwapara and Kali</i>



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