

# VENKATESA

DAILY READINGS

BY

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1st January

Calendars change.

Date-stamps change.

But what else changes on New Year's Day?

The old year lingers in our thoughts, in our habits, in our mode of life, in our granite hearts, in our vanities and prejudices.

Yet we can change everything if we want to - but do we sincerely want to change?

If we sincerely want to change anything, it is a change in other people, to suit our needs.

A new year for others to suit our old year.

Yet if we wished it sincerely, the new year could be truly new and glorious.

Yester-year is dead and the future is unborn.

Only this year is real.

The new year, today, this hour, this moment is filled with infinite potentialities.

Now is infinity.

Now is eternity.

Now is immortality.

But now slips away before we have uttered it - to capture it needs extreme alertness and vigilance.

My Master, Swami Sivananda, loved the now.

He used to celebrate New Year's Day at the Ashram.

To Him it was not so much a New Year's Day as it was a Now Year's Day.

The past is dead - we need not even bury it.

May you all enjoy this happy new year for ever and ever!

2nd January

We read good words spoken by all sorts of good people.

These books contain wonderful moral and spiritual truths; watch yourself as you read them.

We are told, "Do not cheat. Do not be unkind."

And, as you read them, if you are watchful, you will see that you are thinking, "Oh yes, this applies to that man, he is a chronic liar.

That applies to this lady, she is full of mischief."

The lesson is lost on us.

Till one learns to look within oneself, there is no possibility of change.

No one but me can change me.

Life does provide opportunities for us to awaken.

When you see people who were healthy, wealthy, wise and righteous die, and if at that time you are awake and alert, you will realize the truth concerning life, and you will remain awake and alert.

One can be shocked into wakefulness, but to keep awake is more difficult.

Very soon we are covered up once again by the cloud of ignorance.

Why can we not live in this world, without getting involved in it, like the sun, shining, shedding its light spontaneously?

If we can live in this manner, then it is possible to see how essential it is for each one of us to change.

3rd January

Question: I have never prayed during my life, not even during the war.

Surely I will never be able to do it in the usual way.

But when I am standing on a mountain, and I am overwhelmed by the silence and beauty, and it makes me infinitely happy, is this not also a prayer?

Answer: Perhaps. But it is good to watch and see what is the most important factor in this?

Is it that "it makes me happy"? Then you are making "me" supreme and 'it' a tool to make me happy. I do not think this is the substance of prayer.

Real prayer, I think, is when the human being recognizes the futility of his own individual personality, and in some way looks beyond his self, towards "a greater Being" (God).

Even here the motivation is not the "I cannot lift this table, my dear God, please carry it for me" spirit, but the recognition that this other Being knows what the individual does not.

Hence, prayer is an act of surrender.

One may or may not believe in God or what has come to be regarded as religion, but it is clear that, as long as the self rules life, there can be no peace, happiness, welfare, nor wholeness nor sincerity.

4th January

This can be practiced as an “exercise”.

While you are walking along the beach or in a forest, concentrate your attention on your breathing or on the sound of your footfall.

Suddenly stop “dead”, and ask yourself “What if ‘I’ does not exist?”

If you ask this question seriously and in a particular way, you will realise that your body is part of the material world, your mind is part of the cosmic intelligence, and you are part of the cosmic being.

This awareness may last for a few minutes, but you would have experienced something wonderful.

You cannot strive for this experience.

The thing in you that craves for religious, psychic or spiritual experience, is the ego; it will even create such experience for its own pleasure and pride itself by believing “ ‘I’ am an instrument in the hands of God”, “God’s healing grace flows through me,” etc. with the “I” and the “me” being the most important words in the sentences.

Unselfish service, love of God and humanity, etc. come into being when the little “I” has been dispelled.

In the light of this enquiry, the self, or the soul, is seen to be a cell in the cosmic body of God.

That cell spontaneously engages itself in the unselfish and egoless service of all the other cells in the same body.

5th January

Discovery is to uncover the cover that covers the truth!

Yoga is not a therapeutic system.

It does not hold out physical immortality or total freedom from disease and old age as its goal.

It is a technique for discovering the wholeness that already exists in us.

Even the yoga asanas, when they are said to promote health, do just this: they remove the toxic substances that cover the vital organs of our body, and thus enable us to discover health.

“Health” is wholeness, not just the absence of symptoms of sickness.

In fact our divine Master's physical life proved that real health could be enjoyed in spite of symptoms of physical maladies.

Wholeness in yoga implies the integration of one's own personality, harmonious relationship with others and cosmic consciousness.

These are already there - yet one has to discover them, to be aware of them.

6th January

Even yoga asanas, if performed with devotion, and a spirit of humble enquiry and discovery, can intensify one's inner awareness, and help one to "learn" the secrets of one's body.

One learns to discover and thus to understand the language of the body.

Then, pain ceases to be painful.

It is a message from the intelligence that governs the body, it is a signal to be heeded, not a danger to be dreaded.

"Terminal" ailments cease to be fearsome.

They are signs that the life-force is beginning to withdraw, ready to depart.

When the student of yoga thus learns the facts of physical life, he is no longer oppressed or distracted by the state of the body; and the body's own intelligence looks after it well.

Then the student of yoga turns his attention to the mind.

For all our problems exist in the mind, they are created by the mind, and mind is its own victim (for the anxiety, worry, suffering and frustration afflict the mind).

In meditation, the yogi asks himself such questions as "What is mind, what is thought, what is feeling?"

In order to ask these questions in the right inner climate, in order to get the correct answers, the mind should be quiet and receptive.

7th January

The student of yoga is often advised to use a mantra.

What is a mantra?

It is a short formula “that saves you” from your own mind.

Any mantra or all mantras will enable you to transcend the mind.

The mind repeats the mantra, and the mind is able to listen to it inwardly.

If you, while repeating the mantra, ask yourself “From where does the sound come?”, then you will become aware of the mind, and that which is thus aware of the mind is beyond the mind.

Yoga cannot be practiced when one isolates oneself from the world, for it means harmonious relationship with society!

It is in my reaction to what others say or do that I discover myself.

That discovery enables me to go even deeper, and discover that the “I” itself is a thought, a first thought, a sort of computer into which all sorts of data (tradition, heredity, environmental influences, education, culture) have been fed.

When the lid is uncovered, cosmic consciousness is revealed.

8th January

There is a lot in early morning meditation.

While we were asleep we were not worried, unhappy, jealous or hateful.

But these things spring up immediately when we wake up.

The yogi wakes early as if to tell the mind, "I understand that you would like to sleep till six in the morning and then wake up to your worries.

I shall allow that!

But, I am going to wake up at five in the morning and meditate.

I hope you understand that that hour is not your time to start worrying.

You are supposed to be asleep then.

During this morning meditation, the yogi comes face to face with the peace and quiet that is natural to the mind, when it does not undergo any of the modifications brought on by the interaction of sense experiences and their changeable nature.

It is then not difficult to keep a vigilant watch at the gates of the mind to "see" how the mind undergoes the first modification.

And if one falls in love with peace of mind, this vigilance will guard the mind against restless modifications.

9th January

So many methods have been suggested for self-improvement, such as suppression of evil habits, substitution or sublimation, positive thinking, prayer, penance, living in tune with the infinite or God.

Surely all these have their usefulness in this world.

However, we often forget that there has to be intense sincerity if they are to be useful.

Such sincerity invariably brings us face to face with our own mind and its mischievous ways.

And that is yoga.

If these methods are applied mechanically, we might only be turning away from our mind and, under the veneer of holiness, there may flourish terrible ugliness, which will assert itself during unguarded moments.

One who is intensely sincere and ever watchful of his mind is truly virtuous, because he sees directly the self-destructiveness of the opposite of what the Yoga Sutras describe as virtues or yamas.

It may be said that he is constantly in tune with God (therefore a bhakta), and his unselfishness flows from him as loving service to all (therefore he is a karma yogi), and he knows himself through and through (and therefore he is a Jnani).

10th January

The yogis had intuitively realized that almost all activity involved the expenditure of prana; even eating meant spending prana.

Though food (the vitamin content) has a little bit of prana, our main source of prana is still only sleep!

The natural corollary to this realization is this: when the body and mind are at rest, they are recharged with prana, and when there is agitation or excitement, the prana is depleted.

This is the vital principle of yoga.

If this is ignored, all the yoga practices become gymnastics, good for building musculature, but essentially a drain on prana.

Any form of nervous excitement (lust, anger, jealousy, anxiety, fear and hate) is a terrible drain on prana, and it is a tragedy that the excited person is unable to sleep.

The entire nervous system is wound up.

Pranayama winds the nervous system down.

The yogi's genius invented a system of breathing exercises by which the nervous excitement is soothed. Harmony is restored.

And if at the same time the yogi connects up with the inner fountain source of prana, by means of japa (repetition of a mantra) and the meditative mood, then the effects of pranayama are truly miraculous.

11th January

Even the anxiety to get rid of anxiety should go.

This is possible if the mind realizes that the great wisdom and power, which created you and me and the whole universe is surely capable of maintaining it.

This is not blind faith, but faith, born of an inward vision.

Breathing is an indicator of the state of the nervous system.

The two are connected.

If during the alternate nostril breathing you watch the flow of breath, you know the state of your nerves!

When one is agitated, the other is agitated too.

Without the effort to “control” the agitation, if you go on with the conscious breathing, the agitation is reduced.

Inhale through the left nostril and exhale through the right; now inhale through the right nostril and exhale through the left.

When this becomes easy, smooth and prolonged, try holding the breath for a few seconds.

When this becomes easy too, then try holding the lungs empty for a few seconds after each exhalation; perhaps this will enable you to realize what prana is!

Watch carefully: the power that demands the next inhalation is prana.

If you want inspiration, breathe properly.

This is what “inspire” means.

12th January

Yoga is neither a set of exercises nor is it a matter of being able to speak as if one knows all about life on earth and elsewhere.

It is not discussion on God nor is it disgust for the world.

None of these things poses any serious threat or problem to our life.

They exist even when we are fast asleep, but the problems do not exist then, because the creator of the problems does not exist.

That creator is the notion "I am ..."

By its various methods and techniques, yoga helps us to realize that.

We derive energy or life force (prana), not so much from food, drink, exercise or even rest, as from good sleep.

When "I" is absent, prana flows freely.

When "I" is suspended, even temporarily, we self-forgetfully love and serve - there is a great surge of energy, prana flows freely.

Health, happiness, healing, holiness, power, enlightenment and ecstasy are all one and that one is beyond the "me".

When this "me" ceases to be, there is harmony.

Such harmony is yoga.

Prana flows. Love flows. God is.

13th January

Do we realize that the world has never really enjoyed peace?

In fact that is the reason why we still wish for peace!

Of course there have been periods of peace, but they have been “lulls” between two wars, periods in which the powers rested and recuperated, like wrestlers do between two rounds.

A very simple way to abolish wars is to insist that he who signs the declaration of war shall be the first soldier on the battlefield.

I am sure nobody will dare sign the declaration of war, which would then become his own death warrant.

It may be unpalatable - truth is often unpalatable - to realize that one who supports a war in which others fight and get killed, is a cannibal; a cannibal kills other humans in order that he may live.

It is of course obvious that war cannot (and will not) be abolished until the climate - personal and social - that breeds war changes.

Accumulation of wealth and concentration of power, unequal distribution of natural resources, overt or covert denial to some of opportunities of education and employment, oppression and exploitation of some by others - these breed conflict, war and violence

14th January

I am by nature an optimist, but I am realistic enough to be pessimistic when it comes to mass acceptance of any doctrine, thought, or ideology.

“Brain washing” can be done by leaders of two or more camps, all aspiring for some sort of power.

They can all find convincing arguments to convince the converted - the latter usually being shareholders in the spoils.

Such a procedure may be unnecessary in a totalitarian society; but in such a society the doctrine or ideology is not really accepted by the people - fear silences the inner opposition, which waits for an opportunity to burst into a counter-revolution.

At each stage someone quotes some scripture or advances altruistic arguments.

All this becomes clear when we reflect on the state of the world we live in - a world trodden by the blessed feet of Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed, Gandhi, not to mention thousands of saints and sages.

The majority of the people of the world will always be worldly.

As Krishna declared, “One in thousands strives for spiritual perfection.” Yet, it is possible to visualize that around the great ones mentioned above, there gathered a band of devoted followers and apostles.

The majority of them were of course spiritual giants.

This is possible; and this is the root of my optimism.

15th January

Question:

How do we deal with someone who considers himself to be an enemy?

Do we have to bend and show weakness, let him enjoy our downfall a little more?

If I am excellent in my work and someone is jealous, is it not like tempting others, like showing the jewel to the neighbor?

Answer:

You are approaching the question from a wrong, an impossible angle.

You do not know for certain what the other person thinks or does.

Turn the question upon yourself: are you considering yourself his enemy, are you excelling him in order to make him jealous?

If not, be yourself.

He will come right; in any case, it is his business.

Some people have friends who love them and enemies who hate them.

Some lucky people have friends who love them and enemies who sympathize with them.

Some others have enemies who despise them and friends who dislike and disapprove of them.

16th January

Who is your friend and who is your enemy?

It is your mind.

If your mind is controlled, disciplined and pure, that mind is your friend.

If your mind is impure, undisciplined, violent, full of hatred, attachment and vanity, it is your enemy.

There is no division here between impure mind and pure mind.

The impure part of the mind cannot be destroyed; it has to be purified and the impurity thrown away.

In order to have this awakening, all these old prejudices must go; all the faith in the false must be discarded. Do we have this perception?

Do we see that our own false beliefs, prejudices, faith in the unreal, are leading us towards the precipice?

If we do not see this danger, we had better drop all enquiries.

Until we awaken ourselves, we shall not see the truth and in order to wake up, we must come to grips with the tragedy of our life.

Wisdom consists in being able to see at first hand, intimately, without any mediator.

What must I see?

That birth is pain, that death is the axe, and that my perception of both is only second-hand.

We do not appreciate God's blessings, so our lives are full of imaginary sorrow. Sorrow is deep ignorance, spiritual ignorance, spiritual blindness, in whose vicious grip we are caught.

17th January

To promote peace and lead man to eternal bliss are the very meaning and purpose of religion.

Yet, it does not take long for anyone to realize that, on the contrary, religion has been accused of promoting disharmony and misery.

Has religion failed us or have we failed religion?

If you go round the world, you discover an interesting phenomenon.

They who belong to religious orders tell the lay people what they should do, and the lay people lay down rules for the religious orders.

When is anyone going to assimilate the spirit of religion so that it may act from within oneself?

When we come face to face with the spirit of religion, and when we intellectually understand the message of religion, we recoil from it.

We are unwilling to abandon our selfish and materialistic way of life, but we bring in clever arguments to defend it, and perhaps even to reconcile it with religion!

“Family responsibility”, “social order”, “self-defense”, all these are seen to militate against the fundamental spirit of religion, which is total surrender to the will of God, and unconditional love for fellowman.

18th January

Is it terribly difficult to see that it is only selfishness that invents concepts of family responsibility, social order and self-defense, to deny admission into one's own heart to the spirit of religion?

Family, society, nationality, etc., are all extensions of the "me", and therefore we are concerned about "my" family, society or nationality, and not about human beings in general!

Religion is the giving up of this self-limiting notion, and Krishna assures us in the Bhagavad Gita that "peace immediately follows renunciation".

We have often heard that "one should be prepared to sacrifice oneself for the cause of religion or justice or peace or freedom", etc.

We have unfortunately twisted even this to mean that such sacrifice may even be death in defense of this or that "cause" or faith, etc.

Such defense has again given rise to "protective violence" or "preventive aggression", which is too absurd to need elaboration.

19th January

Perhaps, the concept of self-sacrifice has been grossly misunderstood. Perhaps it implies “Abandon your own selfish, limited or personal idea or concept of what justice, etc. may mean.

In that supreme sacrifice you may be able to exemplify in yourself the true spirit of religion.”

Without a single word being spoken, it is possible then to radiate this spirit of true love and understanding, the spirit that stands “under” every other person, looking up to the God in the “other person”, bringing out the love rather than the spirit of aggression or domination in the other person.

Not indeed by being “involved in the affairs of the world” nor by “toiling for the betterment of humanity” are peace and harmony promoted, but by the discovery of the self which generates evil, by guarding oneself against selfishness and by letting love constantly flow from oneself to all beings, does one radiate peace and harmony and infect all that come into contact with him with peace that passeth understanding and love that is God.

20th January

Why is it that we read the Bhagavad Gita over and over again?

We don't read the morning paper twice unless there is some scandal or gossip.

Isn't reading the Gita once enough ?

But then we discover that while the scripture obviously remains the same, the reader is not the same.

There is continuous change taking place.

Either I was immature a few years ago and have become mature now, or I was mature a few years ago and have become dull now.

But the change is continuous and because the change is continuous we do not notice it.

What percentage of anything that we hear or read do we remember?

Very little.

The mind has an extraordinary faculty of registering only what it is prepared to accept or, on the other hand, that which shocks.

But as we mature, more and more compartments of the mind open up and become receptive.

Then the same words, which have been heard over and over again, have a different meaning.

This is why repeated reading of the same scripture seems to produce some effect or influence

21st January

It is said that the scripture called the Bhagavad Gita was given from the battlefield.

A teaching only becomes meaningful when one is in the situation that is described - then it is no longer a description, but a reality.

It is easy to dramatize and imagine all sorts of situations, but until one is actually in the situation, the meaning is not clear. Yet we study this scripture daily.

As the Mahabharata War commenced, Krishna, whom the Indians regard as God incarnate, volunteered to drive the chariot of the warrior Arjuna.

This tremendously brave warrior Arjuna, asked Krishna to drive his chariot into the middle of the two armies so that he could have a look at all those who were involved in the battle.

But when he saw those whom he had called his enemies, his attitude changed.

They no longer seemed to be enemies - they were his own people, his cousins and teachers.

He collapsed on the battlefield, saying to Krishna, "Must I fight and kill them?"

22nd January

When you read these verses you are really touched.

“Isn't that marvelous, isn't that idealistic!”

But Krishna did not regard it as true altruism.

Compassion based on ignorance is cowardice.

Mere avoidance of violence is yet another form of violence.

We have agreed to consider only the aggression of another as violence.

If I hit another, I am violent, but if I am fuming with rage and I suppress it, I am supposed to be non-violent. If I hit another, he is injured, but if I suppress the anger, I am injured.

We know only of these two.

We are committed to either - or.

Either I must give vent to my violence, or I must suppress it.

Is there not a third possibility?

That third possibility involves understanding myself and understanding others - coming to grips with life as it is, seeing the truth as it is, seeing the whole cosmos as it is.

When that truth is seen, that truth itself acts.

23rd January

What then is the difference between a coward and a wise man?

A wise man and a coward may both withdraw from battle, but when the coward withdraws, he always finds it necessary to rationalize or justify his actions.

Whenever one is tempted to justify his actions, he is feeling inwardly guilty.

If I don't feel guilty about what I am doing, I don't justify it, I just do it.

When you go home later and fall asleep, you don't feel guilty.

But if you start snoring here, you feel guilty and say, "You know, I worked so hard today, and was so tired." Who is interested in all that?

Only you, because you want to cover your guilt with justification.

So that even Arjuna, discoursing on the highest moral principles, is speaking out of place.

The very fact that justification was called for by his mind, shows that there was still confusion in him.

If there is no confusion, there is no explanation or rationalization.

Justification comes in as a cover up, and Krishna's response merely endeavors to unmask this cover.

It is not as though the Bhagavad Gita sanctions violence as natural to human society, it merely seeks to unmask the thought processes and show that deep within is the truth.

If you peel off your feelings, your thought processes, your rationalizations, your philosophies and your opinions, there shines the truth.

24th January

Yoga is therefore a system of unmasking oneself, seeing oneself as one is. This is what Arjuna, the pupil, did not do, and this is what Krishna, the teacher, inspires him to do, by revealing a simple contradiction in his behavior. "You are talking as if you are a very wise man, but wise men do not worry. Worry and wisdom do not go together," says Krishna in the very first verse of his teachings.

Instead of looking for extraneous explanations, come face to face with worry, discover this worry and cowardice within.

As long as one looks for explanations or justifications outside oneself, there is no end to worry.

The wrong question is being asked.

If you bring a match close to cotton wool soaked in petrol, it catches alight, but if you bring the match close to green banana skins, nothing happens.

The difference is the inflammability of the material.

When we discover this worry, we must seek within what corresponds to the inflammable nature of the cotton wool.

Fire is not the cause of something bursting into flames - the inflammable nature of the material is the cause.

If this nature is altered, it will never catch fire.

If the inner nature is altered, there will never be worry, no matter what happens outside.

25th January

We all enjoy a certain inner nature.

Arjuna was a warrior, he was born a warrior, and he enjoyed the certain nature of a warrior.

A lion is carnivorous, and enjoys the nature of a carnivorous animal.

There is no difference between a carnivorous animal eating a buck, a cow eating grass, and you and I eating sandwiches.

We are all doing the same thing - we are acting according to our fundamental nature, our inner coloring.

There is no violence in a lion eating a zebra, and there is no violence or conflict in me if I conform to my own inner nature.

If I live in strict accordance with this nature, there is no inner conflict in me at all.

It is only when I bring something else in that conflict manifests in my life.

Each one acting in accordance with his fundamental nature, fulfils a tremendous function in this world.

Nothing has been created redundant.

Every species in this world has been brought into being by the creator, and there is no wrong, except when conflict or confusion enters.

This confusion happens when one strays from his fundamental nature.

It is because Arjuna was trying to slip away from his nature, trying to adopt a stance that was not his own, that Krishna tells him to do his duty and fight.

26th January

What is one's nature?

There are a few baffling statements in the Gita which have often been misinterpreted.

In one passage Krishna ridicules all attempts at discipline.

"Nature functions, everything functions naturally. What is meant by restraint or discipline?"

This statement seems to run directly counter to all religious teaching.

At another point Krishna says, "The wise man, doing whatever he is apparently doing, is not touched by it at all."

The eyes are open, seeing takes place.

Thus when we talk of nature, it is not your nature or my nature, but nature itself.

What is natural is instantly beyond thought and feeling.

Speech and intellect return defeated.

We are told that in the Mahabharata War great warriors fought one another remorselessly, but without the wish to kill.

The sin is not in killing as such.

Sin is in the wish to kill.

A tiger that jumps me is not sinning - it has no wish to kill me.

Its action is without ego interference.

When there is no wish to kill and no wish to protect, when there is no wish to act and no wish to refrain from action, when the ego is completely silent and action takes place, that action is natural action.

27th January

When a lamp is turned into my eyes, the pupils naturally contract.

There is no interference of the ego.

Nature acts purely, and where this happens, there is freedom from violence.

There is no aggression at all.

But the pure martial aspect in nature might manifest to do its own job.

Nature may use us as part of some other plan, of which we have no idea whatsoever.

The warriors in the Mahabharata War professed no personal wish to kill, but they themselves were indifferent when their own turn came to be killed.

There is the test!

When I am the aggressor and you are the oppressed, I can call to my aid sublime philosophy, but when the tables are turned, I must still be able to smile at the marvel of nature.

If you are able to do this, probably you have seen some truth.

But I think that we must also see that aggression and desire are not different from each other.

If I have desire, I must also have hate.

If I like something, automatically I dislike something else.

These are a single psychological factor.

I cannot cease to hate, to be aggressive, as long as there is in my heart desire.

It is the desire that itself manifests as hate.

If I understand this phenomenon of desire, then I understand the phenomenon of aggression.

This much can be understood, and when it is understood, evil drops away and nature functions.

28th January

I cannot love you.

Impossible.

We are two completely different beings.

As long as I still cling to the consciousness that I am I, and you are you, I cannot love you.

I may temporarily pretend to love you, I may temporarily profess to love you, but it is only a passing fancy.

As long as you scratch my back and I scratch yours, we will call ourselves lovers.

But as soon as this ceases, it is all over, and we begin to hate each other.

This is not true love at all.

Love can only come into being when the I has seen itself out and ceased to interfere in the operation of the natural intelligence, this natural intelligence being cosmic and indivisible.

In the same way, you, I, this carpet, the tape recorder, all of us, form the one cosmic body of this cosmic intelligence.

There is no division and therefore no aggression, no violence, no contradiction.

Contradiction is the product of confusion, and as soon as the confusion is surrendered, abandoned, the contradiction also disappears.

And that is the message of Sri Krishna.

29th January

Karma yoga usually begins with the admission of the existence of another.

Without the other there is no karma yoga.

It is the relationship with another person that I am trying to work out.

What happens in relationship with him?

I am happy, I am unhappy, I am jealous, I am compassionate.

Different feelings arise in me, and I am left to wonder.

The relationship is with someone else, but the effect arises in me, produces desirable and undesirable effects in me.

I must be conscious of what goes on in me.

By looking within and examining these effects, I discover what is unreal.

Like clouds that are apart from the sun, these disturbing feelings are apart from me, they are not me.

When I realize my own essential nature, suddenly I realize - he, the other and I, are one.

The object of karma yoga is to work in relationship all the time, without getting lost in the relationship, observing yourself all the time.

Observation and relationship are equally important.

When the two are fused together, and you observe yourself in relationship, you have dissolved all problems forever.

30th January

“That do we mean by “growing”?”

Growing older implies maturation.

Do we understand what this means?

When you say “to grow older means to mature”, what have you conveyed?

More experience.

What is experience?

Experience is knowledge.

What good is it?

It helps me become wiser.

Again, what is wisdom?

Learning through mistakes is experience!

This growth, this maturity must make us wise; do the right thing at the right time and place, to the right person.

That is wisdom.

Maturity is the ability to decide what is the right action, without being in a position to predict the result.

An immature person is not able to discriminate, know which choice is safe, right.

For this, one needs knowledge, wisdom, and maturity.

Doing the right thing means making the right choice.

For this I must not gamble, this is dangerous.

We cannot afford to take a chance in our decisions.

What we call wisdom is this ability to make the choice correctly.

This may become clear only when you get into trouble for having chosen wrongly.

What is the most essential thing in me, what must I have, how must I be, to make this right, wise choice?

There is need to concentrate.

The mind must be absolutely quiet.

Faith in God gives you this stillness.

31st January

Once you realize that for any action there is no choice, there is no sin.  
When you are facing the truth, you realize that there is no choice at all.  
It is only when you are looking at the shadow, the untruth, the falsehood, that  
there are different parts, different modes of behavior to choose from.

That is it.

Physically, emotionally, spiritually, whatever it is, nature functions like that.  
Truth functions inexorably.

Can you eat your cake and keep it?

Impossible.

I have to do one or the other.

It is because I am not seeing the whole situation, the truth that I am dilly-dallying  
before actually acting and taking the next step.

If I discard this foolishness, then worry will disappear too.

I am then able to look at every single thing as it is, the truth.

Then I realize that from moment to moment I do exactly what I have to do,  
without any choice whatsoever.

This is buddhi yoga.

1st February

Is there justice in this world?

Don't we often, almost always, see wicked ones (who are powerful, too) prospering and justifying their aggressive exploitation of the weaker people? "We civilized them, we conquered them, we made them work, we saved them."

Superficially, there is nothing but injustice in this world.

Yet, if you look deeper, you discover that the aggressor buys material prosperity at the expense of peace and sanity.

Again, there appears to be injustice only when you restrict your vision to a short lifespan.

When you next ill-treat a poor, weak "foreigner", remember that he may be reborn as your grandson and demand justice in your old age!

The all-seeing eye of truth cannot be cheated.

The world that we know of is perhaps full of evil, because the instrument of that knowledge (the mind) is evil.

But, we should derive great consolation from the fact that the world that we know of is not the world that is, i.e. the world that God made, saw was good and knows of.

When we raise ours to God-consciousness, then we shall know the world as he knows it, and find it is good.

2nd February

If I am love, I have no choice but to love.

The other man may be bitter and his heart closed.

If I hit him on his head, saying I am not going to love him, then I am lost too.

I cannot do that.

I have to love, because there is nothing else in me.

If someone says, "You are a fool, you are an idiot, and I am going to kill you," I am told "Why don't you defend yourself, give him a blow for a blow?"

I try, but it is not possible for me, because I am not made of that stuff.

I am made of love, so I cannot possibly retaliate.

I cannot hit him back.

Then I look at him and think, "Maybe you also have the same problem, maybe you cannot change either. I am love and therefore I cannot hit you back; maybe you are made of that stuff which makes you hit me, and probably you cannot change, either."

Why must I even want him to change?

Let him be what he is.

That is what St. Paul is supposed to have said: "Love doesn't want to change, doesn't fix any conditions."

3rd February

Question:

It seems to be a popular conception that if you wish to adopt the spiritual path, at some stage you will need a teacher.

You seem to be saying that one cannot teach another.

Where does the Guru come in?

Swamiji:

Like a midwife.

The midwife cannot deliver the baby, yet in a manner of speaking she does.

Let us start at the beginning.

You are already marching on the spiritual path, according to yourself.

How did you get started on it without a teacher?

Somewhere, something hit you and pushed you onto this path.

That is already a teacher.

It may be human, it may be divine, it may be subhuman, or it may be an incident in my life.

That is what initiation means.

I'm given a push.

So the Guru or teacher may or may not be a human person.

In the Bhagavatam there is the story of someone who says he had twenty-four gurus - the sun, moon, wind, stars, stones, etc.

All of them taught him some lesson.

4th February

So to begin with you are pushed onto the spiritual path by somebody or some non-body, and then from there it depends entirely upon you.

If you are awake and alert, then human or non-human agencies can teach you. Do you see the difficulty there though?

It is a dual action.

By myself alone I may not have noticed the truth, but I must be awake in order that you may teach me, and I must be speaking the same language as you before you can teach me.

Only if I am open to what you say, can you teach me.

If I am truly open to knowledge, I can learn from anything.

But I still need the other agency.

I must be open and at the same time the other agency must be there; the two working together make for the teaching.

Once again we have split this into two or three nice little compartments.

One school of thought says that all learning happens within; another school of thought says, "Nonsense, a teacher is necessary."

But very few people really suggest that it is the interaction that really works.

5th February

Swami Sivananda had a clever motto.

He said that as a student you must have a teacher, you must be taught by a Guru.

If you do not have a Guru, you are sunk.

Then he turned to the Gurus and said, "If you have any disciples, you are all idiots."

What do I do?

The Gurus are not supposed to have any disciples, but the disciples are lost unless they have gurus.

That is the idea.

The Guru has no business to feel that He is teaching you.

And the student must feel that either he is my Guru, or that everything is my Guru.

The Buddhists have the same thing in the Diamond Sutra.

A bodhisattva must vow that, "I will liberate all beings, and I will not look for nirvana until I have liberated all living beings," but at the same time he must know that he can liberate none.

I can do nothing.

The two attitudes together is wisdom.

It is not, 'either-or', it is, 'neither-nor'.

6th February

Question:

But how do you teach love, or is it necessary to teach love?

Swamiji:

No, it's the other way around.

If you are love, whatever you say is love, and if a student comes to you, what you teach him is nothing but love.

But unless he is receptive, he may turn round and hit you.

He may turn round and say, "Don't talk rubbish."

So unless the other person is receptive, your teaching is of no value.

Temporarily you may have won your point.

If you apply the theory of probability to what I am going to say, what would be your answer?

In the Bible, people brought a woman to Jesus who had committed adultery; they were about to stone her.

Jesus said, "He who has not sinned, let him cast the first stone."

That was a direct challenge to them.

His words were full of love, but unfortunately, to them it sounded like a challenge.

So they hung their heads down in shame and walked away.

Is it not possible or probable that some of them eventually became his persecutors?

It's probable.

So although such teaching may appear to have some effect, it does not change a person until he is open.

Therefore to teach love is impossible, but to communicate love is possible, communicate in the sense that, when you and I are one at heart, then it is possible non-verbally to communicate love.

Verbal communication is unnecessary and superfluous.

7th February

Life itself is important and therefore I must take a better look at life itself, understand who I am, who the others are, and what our relationship is. From this understanding of human relationship springs action. Action is not something which we should perform, because it leads to a certain result. Action must spring from our very being, from the understanding of oneself. That is spontaneous action. Impulsive action is immature. Most of us know only impulsive action. For example, somebody calls you a fool, so you roll up your sleeves and hit him. That is impulsive action, and proves that you are a fool! That is impulsive action born of our lower animal nature. As we mature, we begin to see that this impulsive action is confusing. It creates more problems than it solves. When we are subject to impulsive activity, our whole life becomes a string of regrets and remorse. How often have we said, "I should not have done this, but should have done something else." That is because that action was impulsive.

8th February

When we mature a little more, we grow out of that impulsive action into calculated action.

Like a businessman, I sit down and work out, "If I do this, what will happen? And if I do that, what will happen? How can I promote my own welfare?"

That is pure business, therefore if I call my young friend a fool, he begins to calculate, "If I retaliate, my friends will misunderstand me and think I am immature, so I will smile and say, 'God bless you,' and I will be enhanced in the eyes of my friends."

This is calculated action, which is slightly better than impulsive action, and yet not true action, because here you are reacting and not acting.

You are not totally immature, you are not asleep, but still not mature, and therefore you are reacting - calculating the consequences, the profits.

The problem here is that if these consequences turn out to be what you anticipated them to be, you are happy, and if the consequences turn out to be contrary to what you expected, you are unhappy.

That is not intelligent or wise action.

9th February

When you stand under, you see “him” greatly magnified!

You look up at him - you try to grasp him - and if you cannot, even then you understand him and go away.

Perhaps, you will never say, “He is wrong”, but only, “I cannot grasp him, though I understand him.”

However, if you go along this path understanding yourself, society and the relationship of that understanding, action springs up.

Out of your own innermost being, action springs up.

It is interesting if you study this problem very carefully.

To a wise man and to a fool, there is no choice of action.

The freedom and opportunity to choose exist only in-between.

The fool acts impulsively; the wise man acts spontaneously.

It is only in the middle that there is calculation.

It is only when you and I have the habit of calculating the consequences that we see a choice of action.

To an impulsive man there is no choice; he acts on impulse.

To the wise man there is no choice either; he acts spontaneously - he is a good man, and goodness springs from him.

10th February

I will tell you a story to make this clear.

A good man was taking a bath in the river.

It was the monsoon season in India, and evidently a scorpion had been washed into the stream.

Water is the enemy of the scorpion, and it was struggling for life.

This good man saw the scorpion struggling and, wanting to save its life, picked it up to throw it onto the bank of the river.

The scorpion did not know whether he was a good or a bad man, so it stung him.

As soon as the scorpion stung the finger, the hand withdrew, and the scorpion fell back into the water.

The good man saw that the scorpion was again struggling for life, so he took it up with the other hand, and tried to throw it onto the bank.

The scorpion stung him again.

(the scorpion has to do its job.)

The hand dropped it - not he, but the hand dropped it.

The man said, "What a silly fool I was. I should have scooped it up with a handful of water, so that my hand did not touch it." So he scooped up the scorpion with both his hands and threw it onto the bank.

11th February

Two people were watching this game, one a modern gentleman, and the other a religious person.

The religious person said, "What a noble character, a saint. The scorpion stung him twice and he still saved its life."

The modern gentleman said, "Silly fool, serves him right, it stung him twice and still he did not get the message. Why save a vicious creature like that?"

The good man, having listened to both comments, got out of the water, looked at both of them and said, "I am neither a saint, nor a fool. I am just what I am.

There is no enmity between the scorpion and me. The scorpion did not sting me because I am an enemy; it only expressed its own nature. It had no intention of harming me. It expressed its nature and so did I. Nothing more. So, I neither deserve your condemnation nor your praise."

From a pot of honey you can only get honey.

When someone's nature has been transformed into goodness, then nothing but good can come from that person.

He does not calculate; he does not react; all his actions are good.

12th February

I went to a huge factory where they make boxes and containers for all sorts of consumer goods.

The speed with which these goods are produced is staggering.

The moment the switch is on, the machine keeps the hand behind it busy!

The producer has to sell them.

First he sells the idea, "You cannot live without this. This is civilization; without it is backwardness, unhygienic living or even danger."

At first the buyers believe the idea, and thus keep the mills rolling, the workers busy and the industrialists sleepless.

Soon afterwards, the machine and the worker question the need for the producer.

And, the buyer plans to buy the factory instead of its products.

The idea that was invented as part of the marketing technique, has taken root in the buyer's mind as truth.

The buyer has become the producer's competitor.

The ensuing race for greater sophistication, and more intense and better selling propaganda, claims peace of mind, harmony, brotherly love, spiritual values and even commonsense as its victims.

Matter over mind!

13th February

Someone sees the truth.  
The new infection spreads.  
A new wave sweeps the world.  
The materialist is looked down upon and condemned as a terrible monster.  
The holy war is on.  
People run away from the “world”, and there is open rebellion.  
Mind denies matter.  
Truth languishes in-between the two camps.  
We have the factories, the planes, the radios, television and the motorcars.  
Time will replace them with something better or worse.  
But we cannot deny their existence.  
And they in themselves do not constitute a threat to spiritual truth.  
A motorcar is a cart with a mechanical horse!  
The need is for the driver to preserve his spiritual values, to enthrone humanity  
in his own heart, and to search for ways and means of expressing that humanity  
in the altered material conditions.  
Then he will give a lift to a friend, instead of running over a pedestrian!  
Mind over matter triumphs.  
Nature is conquered to serve man.  
Machines roll, obeying the spirit that enlivens the hand that presses the switch.  
The workers are happy for they serve man.  
The producer sleeps peacefully when love of the workers and the welfare of  
society sing the sweet lullaby of divine life in his ears.  
Let us pray for such an evolution.

14th February

“I am neither mind nor body. Immortal self I am”.

This is a direct experience of meditation, not just a formula or an intellectual or rational conclusion.

In meditation you realize that the body is only a cloak.

You wear it in order to express your nature and to gain some experience, just as an actor or actress wears a costume during a drama.

Even the life force of the vital sheath is not the self.

It is energy that animates the body and that is all.

Within the body, the thinking principle or the mind directs the life force to animate the body.

Mind is guided by the discriminating intellect in its choice.

The individual soul is the boss of this illusory performance.

The soul itself is nothing more than a reflection of the self, the sole reality which is indwelling omnipresence.

It is in you, but not confined to the individuality.

It gives reality to the entire personality.

15th February

The scriptures of the world aim at the spiritual education of the inner man. They explain that no one can lead an isolated life here, that everybody is connected with everybody else.

That we are all cells in the one body of God.

Intellectual assent to this idealism is the first step, but the goal is the actual realization of this truth.

The path lies through the progressive application of this truth to daily life, through the manifestation of this spirit of selfless service, the cultivation of cosmic love, and the recognition of the all-pervading spirit of the Godhead. As he walks along this path, man becomes purer and purer at heart, simpler in his habits, more selfless and charitable, more and more divine.

This spirit is as old as time, but today it has been sunk in the deep sea of materialism and atheism.

Let us salvage this spirit and apply it to our daily lives.

16th February

Acquiring worldly goods does not occasion undue worry and hurry, if it is done in the right spirit, but it entails endless turmoil and suffering if this spirit is absent.

What is the right spirit?

It is understanding the fundamental unity of mankind.

The same life force throbs in all hearts.

The other man too has feelings, emotions and sentiments, as much as you and I.

He is subject to hunger and thirst, heat and cold, pain and pleasure; he too has a right to have food, clothing, shelter, social security and justice.

This spirit enables us to enjoy our share of the world's goods, and, with equal eagerness to let others enjoy their share.

This spirit unveils the majesty of the soul, reveals the fountain source of peace and happiness within ourselves.

It takes away the sense of "want" from our hearts.

The man who does not possess this spirit is a spiritual baby.

He has to be educated in order that this message may become intelligible to him.

17th February

Where are YOU?

Your body is here, no doubt, but look within and see for how many seconds you are here, whole.

Your thoughts and feelings are about something else, linking up with something else.

Only part of you is here, some part is elsewhere.

This is why we are not integrated.

Take anger.

When someone says something, you get annoyed.

If a cobweb falls on your face, you may get irritated or worried.

If someone says you are a fool, am "I" annoyed or is it something exterior like the cobweb?

If I am annoyed, how can I become dis-annoyed?

If I am a man, I cannot become a dog.

Where is this annoyance?

I drink water, the water is then in me.

No danger in this.

But if I am in the water, I can drown.

This is danger.

So let us find out whether the annoyance or any other trouble is in me, or whether I am drowned in it.

The enquiry is only possible if you are still in control.

But if you have lost yourself in the annoyance, allowed it to get under you, you are finished.

18th February

What is the fundamental problem that faces us?

Making decisions?

Why does that become a problem?

Someone says, "Because we have a choice, and we do not always know what choice to make."

Because we have the freedom of choice, we are not free to be happy!

Unless of course we make the right choice: the choice "to be".

Is there a way to make the right choice?

We must look at the alternatives without prejudice.

Both alternatives are seen to be equally good or equally bad.

This attitude deflates the "world" and dries up the twin currents of attraction and repulsion.

The next step is to find the one within us who makes the choice.

To do this, we need a calm and clear mind, free from prejudice.

Now we see that worldly objects and goals have no value, except in relation to ourselves.

When we look within and make this enquiry "Who makes the choice and takes the decision?", we will soon know if it is us, or whether it is a craving that is deciding.

Then the choice we make will be the right one, totally in accord with our essential nature.

It will not be confused by petty craving.

19th February

Calculated action is not just something which takes place - it is the ego that acts, it is the ego that does it.

If you watch yourself keenly, you will see that there is always a "because" - because I like it, because I am afraid of it.

Now comes something very important.

The action takes place, regardless of Mr. X or Swami V.

But when the ego links itself with that activity, it experiences what comes after as pain or pleasure.

The coconut palm stands there with all the coconuts hanging.

The tree is totally unconcerned whether they are hanging there or not.

A coconut is cut.

Does the tree feel any loss?

Not at all.

But if I am holding a bag in my hand and somebody snatches it - "Oh! It is mine. I have lost it."

Why? Because the ego was holding it.

Because it is the ego that creates ownership, and it is the ego that creates this identification, therefore it is the ego that creates or projects the idea of pain or pleasure, and then it is the ego itself that suffers it.

It is a beautiful thing, if you watch what goes on in your own mind.

When something comes to me - why does it come to me?

Something comes - that is all.

20th February

In our attempt to find what constitutes right action and right relationship, we find that one of the vital processes is meditation.

This is not merely sitting on the floor morning and evening - it means keeping up this awareness perpetually.

Unbroken awareness is required, otherwise we break our life into pieces - then we do not know who we are.

Yoga brings about total integration - that is why it is so beautiful.

If you take isolated little strands of fiber, you may not find any pattern, any order, but once you weave them into a carpet, they become a thing of beauty.

We must try to bring order such as this into our life.

This can be brought about if there is perpetual self-awareness.

If you draw a circle, you can arbitrarily divide it into segments of one inch each.

Each segment is part of the whole, and if you remove any one part, it is no longer a circle.

The part is as vital as the whole.

Everything is part of the whole.

There is no essential distinction between part and whole.

When the whole looks at the part, it sees first of all that the part is in ME.

The state of meditation arises when the whole looks at the part, and it wakes up to the great truth that this part is part of ME.

Without that part I am not the whole.

21st February

Most of us think that we have freedom of choice.

When we think so, the only truth is that we are in a state of confusion.

We do not do what is right or wrong, the only thing we actually do is worry.

It is the only action we commit unceasingly - worrying.

If you watch yourself very carefully, as you actually do something, you might discover that really you had no choice.

When you thought you had a choice, you had in fact no choice but to worry.

To use a rather crude example, when you want to go to the toilet urgently, you just have no choice.

If you think you have a choice, it is not yet urgent.

Is this not so?

The man who thinks he has a choice is insensitive, does not see the problem.

When that problem becomes urgent, he will have no choice whatsoever.

When the real urgency of the problem is seen, action is spontaneous.

When there is no spontaneity in our action, we are not sufficiently awake.

We are not looking squarely at the problem.

We are still finding excuses, literally looking around.

I am trying to see why I am afraid.

I am trying to look around, instead of looking within where the tear is.

Face it, do not bring about excuses.

Look for the truth, not what appears to be the truth.

22nd February

Karma yoga demands rigorous inner discipline.

Watch your mind.

Self-deception is waste of time.

Scrutinize your inner motives, examine your attitude.

When you do a job for somebody else, you can regard it as labor and invite fatigue, you can do it as duty, often with a sour face, or you can derive pleasure from it, if you change your inner attitude.

What is the karma yogi's attitude?

First and foremost he knows that the ego is a non-entity, and affirms, "Not I, but the Lord in me is the doer of all actions."

Become unselfish, desireless and egoless, you will never have disappointments in life.

Secondly, the karma yogi affirms that he serves the Lord in all.

Such an attitude will free you from attachment.

You will remember God constantly.

You will never look for reward or reciprocity, and therefore you will never suffer a shock.

Regard every one of your actions as worship of the omnipresent God.

Feel it.

23rd February

Karma yoga strikes a blow at the very root of all our problems.

What are our problems?

Lust, desire, craving, desire for pleasure, profit or power.

All living organisms are active, that is the law of nature, but man is driven by desire.

This leads to sin and to suffering.

Karma yoga keeps action in, and desire out.

Desire disturbs the equilibrium of the mind; desirelessness preserves it.

A balanced state of mind is conducive to efficiency, skill and achievement.

This state of desirelessness is not possible to grasp, but try to have just this one desire - desire to do your duty for duty's sake.

Remember God all the time.

Feel that you are worshipping the Lord who is seated in all beings.

You will naturally be free from selfish desires and the profit motive.

With the profit motive out of the way, people promote one another's welfare.

This is karma yoga.

24th February

What is God?

How to remember God?

What is worship?

What is the spirit of worshipfulness?

The karma yogi needs to have an answer to all these questions.

Karma yoga without God is a lamp without light.

Bhakti or God-love is an integral part of any yoga, for yoga is union of the human soul with God.

God is the reality.

God is the unchanging substratum of changing phenomena.

The goal of life and all religions is God.

God is one and infinite.

God is within all and therefore everyone has his own conception of God.

The important thing in yoga is to love God.

Love God in your own way, as your father, mother, friend, master, child or lover.

Divert all your love to him.

Worship him in and through the temples, churches, synagogues and mosques, but worship him in your own home too.

Work in him, love in him, live in him.

This is yoga.

25th February

My Gurudev used to say that service of the sick and the poor is the very best form of worship of God.

But you should feel that the sick and the suffering are God in disguise.

God is nameless and formless, yet he appears in infinite forms.

When you sing, feel that the Lord Himself is sitting in front of you or in your heart, and is listening to your singing.

Pray to God at regular intervals of the day.

Even a selfish prayer will eventually lead you to unselfish and pure prayer.

When you pray or meditate, visualize God in your own heart, and later visualize him in all the people you meet.

Meditate regularly.

True, real meditation is a rare experience, but even an imperfect attempt will fill you with inexpressible peace and joy.

You must be established in great virtues, like non-violence, truthfulness, and purity, before you can taste the bliss of deep meditation.

26th February

If the buddhi or the pure intelligence is facing towards the mind with its conditioning, with the impressions of past experiences it has gathered, with all its preconceptions and prejudices, then you are limited.

The buddhi will function in a manner suited to the pleasures of the senses.

The ego will function, work, and decide in a manner suited to pleasure, which can only lead to unhappiness, shock and failure.

If however the buddhi is united with its source, the source being cosmic intelligence, then the whole process is different.

The ego is isolated.

It performs a routine function of making decisions, and the buddhi does not give the ego a choice.

When this happens, you no longer function as a crazy individual, fighting against the rest of the universe, but you work in total harmony with the entire cosmos.

In short, the buddhi has turned away from the mind and the senses, away from the limitation imposed upon it by the mind, and the senses turn towards the cosmic consciousness.

27th February

One cannot possibly lay down rules on how and in what manner the totally egoless person will behave.

I have seen this in the case of my Master.

The actions of an egoless person are totally unpredictable.

The only thing that you can say about him is that you can say nothing about him.

The great ones said we should possess the qualities of truthfulness, sincerity, consistency, humility, egolessness.

We could not understand what they meant, we were not prepared to concede that we did not understand, and therefore we did not wish to start looking at life as they commanded us to do.

We jumped to conclusions - egolessness means this, sincerity means that, humility means this.

Therefore we got married to portraits.

These are all images.

It is not possible for us deliberately to perform non-egoistic action, or to live a non-egoistic life.

What is possible however is to be intensely aware within ourselves and to detect the play of the ego from moment to moment.

It has its own role to play in life, as the decision maker in certain situations.

The mind thinks, the ego decides, the nose smells, the eyes see.

That is all.

When this is seen, life assumes a completely different quality.

28th February

One should pray that the whole universe may be happy, that all the obstacles, troubles and difficulties of everyone in the three worlds be removed - not just my and your troubles.

It is good to remember that, so long as we limit our prayers to our silly little selves, there is no redemption.

As long as my prayer is selfish, limited to myself, even if by some kind of chance it is granted, it is bound to lead to frustration.

No wise person ever prays for himself - that is basic, fundamental.

There is of course the bodhisattva ideal that one cannot achieve salvation for oneself, that there is no salvation for "me".

So long as the "me" is there, there is no salvation.

Thus even salvation is not to be asked for, for oneself alone, because I am not alone in this world.

I am part of the whole.

Wisdom lies in understanding, realizing that the 'I', the ego, is an illusory shadow.

When the shadow goes, we are one.

29th February

Whatever be the nature of knowledge and wisdom, it is a colossal waste if it merely adorns our intellect or heart.

We should have the courage of our convictions and live up to them.

We should experience what we understand to be the highest truth (even in our own present limited vision); for only then is even a verification of its validity possible.

We may err; it is human.

But if we do not have the daring, if we are ever standing on the brink, hesitant, ("look before you leap"), we may die with a great weight of falsehood misunderstood as the Truth!

Hence, by all means, look before you leap ... take a second look, and a third ... but for heaven's sake, leap!

Look at creation.

It teaches you, do not accumulate your worries.

God has introduced nights between days to break the tension.

You can follow this cue by meditation, and after each act disconnect yourself from the world.

Even with discrimination one has to be careful.

It has its light and dark sides.

When the bright side is up, it says, "Spiritual life is more worthy" - but the dark side comes up and it says, "It is difficult".

Strike while the bright side is up.

1st March

In real life, what is extremely important and interesting too is that, in order to live, I need to love and to be loved.

If I am interested in living, I also need to work, I need to serve, I need to be active in this world.

If I do some work in your house for you, while taking leave, I must thank you.

If you had not been there for me to serve, I would not have had this opportunity of exercising my limbs.

I would have wasted away.

Thank you very much for giving me this chance.

This is what our Master used to do.

I need to love, and therefore I do not expect anything in return; when someone does not love me, I do not feel I must return hate.

If I return hate, then I am injecting hate into my own heart, killing myself.

Whatever the attitude of the other person, I have a need to love, I have a need to serve - that is the nature of an enlightened person.

He is an instrument in the hand of God. He functions as an instrument.

2nd March

Yoga means harmony, union, integration.

There must be an inner harmony, a total harmony within the total being.

The oneness, the harmony that exists amongst the billions of cells in the body, the total continuous, unquestioning, undoubted, supra-national unity - that is what we are looking for.

When all actions that are performed by this body, mind, intellect and ego spring from the cosmic being, the cosmic intelligence, the result is yoga.

If you are totally unselfish, you are not even aware that you are unselfish.

If you are egoless, the ego is not even aware that it is egoless.

Non-volitional activity is where all actions spontaneously spring from this cosmic being.

We have a body, a mind, and an intellect.

If we watch ourselves, it is not difficult to realize that there is no harmony between the three.

Thinking, feeling and willing; they seem to run in different directions.

Integrate them and you have yoga in action.

3rd March

The most difficult thing in karma yoga is to be in contact, in relationship with people, without forgetting that I am not serving another person but myself. In the initial stages, this involves making sure my own being, me, is whole, and later realizing that he and I are different parts of the same organism.

Karma yoga is very difficult.

It is real yoga and needs terrible vigilance all the time.

I note that I am calm, peaceful, without jealousy.

Very good.

But can I live in relation with others all the time, and yet be inwardly watchful always?

It requires tremendous effort.

Yet, so long as it needs the effort, please remember that it is still not you.

You are not examining yourself, but examining a reflection, a shadow.

When learning to drive, you need much effort, but when experienced, you drive in your sleep.

As long as self-observation demands effort, it is good to be careful.

The moment you let go, there will be a crash.

4th March

What is undivine life?

A life ruled by the petty ego, a life full of selfishness, lust, anger and greed.

A life of ignorance, this is undivine life.

It is not life at all.

It is a living death.

Look - are you alive?

Are you alive to the purpose of life?

Do you know the purpose of life?

Do you even care to know the purpose of life?

Flesh decays, weapons rust, wealth is reduced to dust.

Empires crumble.

The life and death struggles of heroes are dismissed with a few brief sentences in a history book.

Open your eyes and see.

Who is happy in this world?

Deluded man, arise, awake!

Go to the men of God, and learn to walk this straight and narrow path called yoga.

Yoga is not a mysterious cult.

It is the path of atonement with the Lord here and now.

It leads you to the grand goal of self-realization or God-realization.

It leads you to the realization of God's indwelling omnipresence.

5th March

If I see the truth as it is, then there is no suffering at all in life.

There is no suffering in life, because the power that is responsible for what we call creation, preservation and change, is omnipresent.

This omnipresent power must function for the welfare of all beings; therefore the condition in which one finds oneself, is extremely necessary for each one of us.

Money was stolen from the Ashram in Rishikesh, the secretary was complaining. Gurudev answered him, "For one moment forget that 'I' is the secretary of the society, and think that 'I' is the cheat. It is the same self that is in you and in him."

This can only be done when the ego is not there at all, when it is not the decision maker, the judge.

The swami-ego condemns as wicked one who smokes and drinks, but if the swami-ego is dropped, we immediately become one, for what is it that stands between you and me? Me.

When that goes, everything that divided us has gone.

There is enlightenment.

6th March

What is the soul?

A little caterpillar was sitting on a leaf right in front of us.

With one end on the leaf it stretched out its other end, probing for a foothold on another leaf.

As soon as it had this foothold, it lifted its other end, and passed on to the new leaf.

Even so does the soul.

Neither the soul nor the body was ever born.

They are in a continuous process called recycling.

There is one shakti (power) which does everything.

It is not as though one God delivers me here, another preserves me and a third carries me away.

One power that sustains me also brings about the change known as death.

There is only one power in the whole universe.

When it functions in a certain manner, there is conception, birth.

Functioning as the multiplication of cells, it is preservation, living.

When its function is disintegration, it is called death, which in reality is merely "going out of sight", for what exists cannot be non-existent.

When this power creates, it is called Brahma shakti; as the preserver, it is known as Vishnu shakti, and as the destroyer (redeemer) Siva shakti.

Electricity, though always the same, performs functions which appear superficially to be contradictory.

Similarly the same shakti performs different functions, but the power is the same.

7th March

Poverty is a curse.

Men have fought against it, religious, political and economic movements have been born of it, and humanity revolts against this universal enemy number one. Ironically, however, these movements go on, scraping not more than the surface of the problem, and leaving the root untouched.

Oriental philosophers endeavored to expose the root of the problem by saying, "It is his karma. He is a poor man now because he was a miser in the past. If you do charity with what little you have now, you will never taste such poverty later."

Every poor man is his neighbor's responsibility.

Don't say it is his karma - rather see that it is your karma that has put you near him, and then do something about it.

Only you can show him the love and sympathy, which he needs, just as much as he needs a loaf of bread.

Poverty is a curse, not so much to the sufferers, but to you and me - everyone.

For, please remember, poverty breeds violence, revolution, crime and irreligion.

Let us all feel "I am my brother's keeper. In his joy lays mine."

8th March

Man cannot see what is constructive and what is destructive.

The answer to this is deep within him - in his own conscience - and he needs an inner light to read the answer.

With this inner light he will be freed from the shackles of ignorance and worldliness - the lust for power, pleasure and profit.

This light itself is liberation - liberation from darkness.

Yet, we may switch on a flood lamp.

But if our eyes are tightly bandaged, we shall be in darkness and that darkness (bandage) is bondage.

We can take it off, but do we want to?

A vicious circle has been formed.

We were in darkness, and we adapted our lives to it.

Our conscience was in darkness, and we indulged in all the vices that thrive in darkness, and those vices become delectable modes of pleasure.

We like them, and we like the darkness that makes such pleasure possible.

And even if, by the grace of God, the nature of these vices makes itself felt as suffering or disillusionment, we still try to remedy the suffering without losing the darkness, the source of our pleasure.

Only if we open the inner eye of wisdom, and kindle this inner light in which we are able to perceive the glory of a life of unselfishness, of love and of wisdom, will we realize the suicidal stupidity of selfishness, hatred and worldliness.

9th March

The “doer of deeds” in us is prakriti, and the consciousness in us is purusha. The purusha is normally mixed up with the activities of the prakriti - which means that you do not know that you are reading this - the awareness of the action is lost in the action itself.

In our every day lives this reduces us to the level of instinctual beings, acting involuntarily and mechanically.

There are many techniques for the cultivation of this inner faculty of self-awareness.

Japa, the repetition of a mantra, is one.

Vichara or enquiry into the self, is another.

Devotional practices help too.

Different methods suit different temperaments, but there is an extremely simple “exercise”, basic to all these - the method of watching the breath.

As you sit watching the breath, you are in effect breathing and watching yourself. You are breathing and you are aware you are breathing.

Half an hour of this every day enables you to acquire what is known as witness consciousness.

This witness consciousness can then be extended to other activities.

You work and you are aware of the work.

In witness consciousness, there is inward alertness.

This heightens the joy of living and sublimates all your emotions.

10th March

Divine grace can do anything.

God is omnipotent.

The world we live in is a standing monument to his omnipotence.

The very air we breathe is a miracle.

The functioning of our organs, of our brain, is a miracle.

And the wonder of wonders is that he has ordained that we carry two temples on our shoulders, one on each side.

(don't we call the side of the head the temple?)

The Lord obviously dwells within the head - he is our self, the consciousness within, and the reality within.

Yet we often need an external agent to turn our attention to this indwelling presence - and that is the mosque, or temple, or church, or other place of worship of the Lord.

When we enter the temple we leave our shoes outside, but we have to carry with us the "leather" which covers the body - the skin.

Should we not at least leave all base thoughts - our animal nature - outside too?

Is not that the animal sacrifice that the Lord requires of us?

The temple is like a savings bank - you draw from it only what you, or someone like you, has put into it.

You can even make an overdraft - if you are of a sinful nature, the purifying atmosphere of the temple will help you to change your nature.

But if the impurity persists, you will soon find the temple an uninteresting place.

11th March

Work is vital, activity is vital, and life involves living.

To live is to do - and that needs no further incentive, no vision, no wisdom, and no understanding of the principles and principals involved.

A plant is active, an animal is active, man is active and, surprisingly, a piece of metal is active.

Does philosophy or religion preach indolence, laziness, poverty, starvation, or ignorance?

On the contrary - dynamism is the message of all religions.

But life, dynamism, activity must be purposeful.

To discover the meaning of life, we study philosophy and this equips us with the necessary discipline of mind and intellect. Religion equips us with the necessary disciplines of life.

We cannot abolish baking bread, farming and making money - for that would be suicide.

Perhaps we can abolish religion and philosophy, but though the starved soul might not proclaim its debility, the death of wisdom will soon deprive life of its meaning - a suicide too subtle for the materialistic intellect to perceive, and for the most powerful agency to arrest in time.

12th March

What is time but a mental creation?

We value it, trade in it, treat it as a commodity, and convert it into money.

It has no such illusions about us.

Time is itself an illusion - it deludes and cheats us, it kills us.

Hence in Sanskrit "kala" means both time and death.

To catch time we have various devices - the diary, the calendar, and most important of all, the watch.

It watches time pass; yet it is powerless either to halt time or to inspire us with vigilance.

Time has to be conquered by its own best use.

Whether we rush madly around, looking at the watch every five minutes, or we idly let time just slip away, we are still subject to the illusion of time.

Kala, time the killer, will occasionally remind us of its dark side, but if we are non-vigilant even then, kala the cheat will make us forget the truth and live a life of self-indulgence.

When we lead a life of self-control and, by vigorous self-culture (the great aim of yoga) attain self-realization, we shall have transcended the time barrier, the thought barrier, and reached the realm where the sun of God-realization shines forever.

Time then ceases to exist.

Eternity prevails.

13th March

Freedom is the life of the soul of man.

Human pre-history begins with man's rebellion against bondage.

The life in the seed breaks the shell, splits the earth and, peeping above the earth, proclaims its freedom.

The human being rebels even against "the realities of life" by withdrawing into himself, by seeking freedom in reverie, dream or insanity.

In spite of all semblances to the contrary we have not progressed much further than the primitive man.

Our tools have changed, our technique has changed, our terrain has changed - but our motives have remained unchanged - we seek freedom, total freedom, absolute freedom.

And yet we are unwilling to pay the price - self-discipline.

In modern society the freedom of man's spirit is restricted all round, and it seeks to express itself through sex and money - escape valves.

But to escape is not to solve; there are no ready-made solutions here.

Real discipline is self-discipline and everyone has to find his own solution to his own unique problem.

Only when he realizes that, while sex and money provide him with an escape from present limitation, they will ultimately rob him of all freedom, will he discipline himself.

Only then will he surrender his lesser freedom for attaining the greater freedom - freedom from the inner tyrants of lust, anger, and greed.

14th March

The question no longer arises, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Conscience demands, "Am I not my brother's keeper?" - and does not wait for an answer.

Love is the spontaneous manifestation of the seeing, of the realization of this unity in which we are all knit - whatever our religion, caste, nationality or social status.

Love knows no distinctions, nor does distance matter.

Love flows where it is needed, spontaneously, just as water flows from high to low ground.

The holy Veda declares: "This my hand is God".

The word for both hand and abundance is the same, and the meaning of this is abundantly clear!

Only an immature person looks to another to maintain him.

A mature person, on the other hand, understands his interdependent relationship with all living beings, and thus avoids the pitfall of selfishness into which he might otherwise fall.

Interdependence, like love, is natural, mutual dependence of two or more persons who are psychologically independent and free.

Society composed of such persons is capable of maintaining itself and flourishing.

Only such progress and prosperity as are achieved by such mutual love and service are true and lasting.

And, they are within your arm's reach!

15th March

Nature is full of blessings.

The light shines externally, but we turn from it, creating darkness in our own lives.

The clouds gather, creating confusion, disorder, pain, and sorrow.

In our frantic effort to get rid of pain and sorrow, we forget that the desire to get rid of pain and sorrow is itself pain and sorrow, and that the effort worsens it.

The effort to create order is itself disorder.

We see this during sleep.

Sleep itself was the "action in non-action".

Whatever enjoyed the sleep, slept without the notion of sleep, without even the awareness of sleep, and without the desire to enjoy the sleep.

In sleep there was no division between the being and the doing, between the intelligence and the action.

At other times the being or intelligence is interfered with by the idea we have of the action.

It is the idea that acts.

The idea itself is the "I".

The "I" creates a motivation, a goal or a reward.

Thus are born the ideas of success and failure, pleasure and pain, and all the rest of the pairs of inseparable opposites.

The mind that sees this truth as truth, and not as an idea, is alert.

The alert mind itself is order, is virtue.

Its powerful gaze does not permit the idea to arise.

In this light, actions happen - actions springing directly from the being or intelligence.

The alert mind itself is meditation.

16th March

Gurudev Swami Sivananda commanded, "Turn the gaze" in order to recognize that the enemy is within - craving.

Craving itself being "the other side of the coin" of ignorance, it vanishes the moment one's whole attention is focused on it.

Hence, the yogi does not indulge in self-pity or self-condemnation (which in any case is a meaningless and worthless pastime).

If statements like "I pity myself" and "I wish to destroy myself" were based on truth, then the "I" that pities the self is superior and faultless, and the "I" that wishes to destroy the self remains after the "self" is destroyed.

All this is readily seen to be absurd.

When the craving for experience (of pleasure, etc.) ceases, life does not cease.

Pure experiencing goes on, for it is part of the very existence.

In that pure experiencing there is no subject-object relationship - it was the craving for experience that arose as the subject, creating its own object of enjoyment and suffering.

Such a life in which craving for experience ceases, is pure joy.

All else is misery.

Such a life is pure love; all else is pure hypocrisy.

Such a life is divine life.

17th March

Here is the greatest miracle possible on earth, the silent transformation of the human heart.

It reminds us that we are all parts of the body of God, which is the universe.

It proclaims that however much we try to ignore or run away from our fellow man, however much we try to hate or harm our neighbor, we cannot.

We are unhappy because our hearts have become so narrow that we want only our own happiness.

The good man delights in the happiness of others.

Selfishness is an animal instinct.

The truly unselfish man is a divine being.

We cannot truly serve mankind, unless we feel that all of us together form the body of God.

Hence all the great saints and Saviors of the world have proclaimed that we should seek God first.

Unless we seek God with all our heart, we shall not be able to experience his omnipresence.

It is dangerous to pay lip service to this doctrine.

We should sincerely pray to him, meditate upon him every day.

We should endeavor every moment to express through loving service of our neighbor, the inner faith that God is omnipresent.

We should love all, perceiving the light of God shining in all faces.

It is then that we shall truly be human beings.

18th March

What is sorrow?

Is it in the objects of the world, or is it in ourselves?

Surely, sorrow is experienced by us, within ourselves, by our thinking.

The mind that "thinks" it is miserable is miserable.

This is revealed by the fact that when the mind is asleep and does not think, there is no sorrow.

Thought creates space, thought is space.

When this space is one of pleasure or happiness, you are surrounded by happiness.

When it is one of pain and sorrow, you are surrounded by unhappiness.

How can one avoid this "space"?

By not creating it at all.

Raja yoga teaches us how to live without hurting others or being hurt by others - that is, without coming into contact with pain.

This is possible only if the psychological space is not created.

If there is no division in the mind, there is no contact with pain at all.

The understanding of the unreality of division is meditation, the very heart of yoga.

Thought tries to grasp the experience, - as a result there is "I" and the "experience" which is subdivided into pleasure and pain, etc.

But what is the real content of "thought"?

Is it not the intelligence inherent in the body and the mind?

This is reality - that that intelligence, which alone is indivisible, alone exists.

19th March

Devotion starts with the “I love you” experience.

This experience is in “me”, and can therefore be repeated in relation to others.

But then I realize that love is when the “I” is not!

Sage Vasistha points out that between “I” and “you” is the reality, love, bliss or God.

“I” and “you” are conditioned - love that is between them is unconditioned, unlimited and therefore divine.

When this divine love is veiled and the I-consciousness arises again, there is intense anguish in the heart of the devotee - for it is the “I” (ego-sense or selfishness) that is the cause of sorrow.

The devotee who becomes aware of the existence of the division created by the mind and the ego-sense practices bhakti.

Such practice takes the form of ritualistic worship, repetition of a mantra, singing of hymns, study of scriptures or service of the holy ones, depending on the nature of the devotee.

Devotion in which division is absent is not for the mind or the ego-sense to “achieve”.

Such devotion is also called supreme love, total self-surrender or total absorption.

Self-surrender is itself the supreme practice of bhakti.

Self-surrender is itself liberation.

When the “self” is surrendered, then what is, is God.

20th March

What is the purpose of life?

The answer is in life itself, not in the intellect, which brings in “convincing logic” to justify itself.

Life is not logical - it has to be lived by one who is alive to it, and not to a purpose invented by the brain, which is polluted by all sorts of ideas.

The pursuit of happiness or peace may lead to a better understanding of the purpose of life than all the philosophies and religious doctrines have been able to generate.

“My” happiness cannot be promoted at the expense of yours - your restlessness will soon engulf me.

In this sense, “I am my brother’s keeper”.

We discover that a restless man creates restlessness in his society, a person who is divided within himself divides society into warring factions, and this inner division must be removed before the purpose of life can be truly seen as it is.

The purpose of life is the spirit of religion, but the way in which to discover this spirit is to turn one's attention to life itself, without artificial aids (whether political, social, intellectual, emotional, psychological or philosophical).

There is a natural spirit in each one of us which, when freed of all kinds of pollution, will reveal itself as the true spirit of religion.

Life, God, religion and humanity become indistinguishable at that point.

21st March

I do not know who I am, but somehow I know I am.  
This being an impossible position, I seek an identification.  
Identifications are available in plenty in this world.  
I gather these false labels and somehow they assume the reality of an identity.  
Persistent repetition of a lie has the power to make it appear to be real.  
Thought lends its power to confirm this as truth.  
The “me” who was born as an ignorant enquirer has now come to accept the  
aggregate of identifications as itself.  
The “me” having created the division in the indivisible pretends that it has seen  
the disaster caused by the division and tries to abolish it!  
The “me” only pretends to have seen the problem.  
If it truly sees it, the division, will disappear in a moment.  
Yoga enables you to see the truth that the “me” is a ghost-like substitute for the  
ignorance of your identity.  
It enables you to realize the indivisibility of truth and the tragedy of division.  
It is the “me” that creates the “you”, the “other”.  
The “me” itself being a non-entity and an aggregate of ideas and concepts, it is  
seen by this indivisible intelligence as a non-entity.  
When its real nature is seen, it ceases, and with it ceases the division and all its  
mischief.  
Self-knowledge or yoga unites by abolishing the non-existent division.

22nd March

Buddha said: "Be a light unto yourself. Find your own inner light."

That is why my own guru, Swami Sivananda declared: "Within you is hidden God, within you is immortal soul, kill this little 'I', die to live, live the divine life." Divine life is not just sitting and singing, and reading a few books, and talking about it. No.

No. Kill this little "I"; die to live.

That is divine life.

When the inner light begins to shine, the "I" that is a mere shadow, disappears.

That is freedom, liberation, and salvation.

To attain this you have taken birth here.

This inner light cannot be illuminated by anybody else.

I have to do it myself. How?

Buddha had a lovely illustration: "Live in this world as if you were living with a cobra in the same room."

That is called meditation.

That is called concentration.

If the snake moves, your eyes also move.

Nobody can distract your attention because your life is in danger!

We have not realized that our life is constantly in danger.

We are dying all the time.

There is a lovely couplet in the Bhagavatam: "You have only one constant companion. He was born with you. Death!"

I do not feel it.

I am not aware.

Whatever is born must die.

Our body is dying constantly, but "I" cannot die.

One must find the truth; one must find the inner light while still living in this body.

23rd March

In our daily life we are caught by two suggested “opposing” techniques or concepts “either - or”.

In all this the central problem is forgotten - the ego and its conditioning.

The truth is that there is attraction and repulsion (hatred, violence and so on) in me, in the mind.

It is not a question of suppressing either the physical or mental expression of dislike or resentment - nor indeed of attraction. The main issue is mental conditioning, the conditioning of the mind.

Whatever our mind sees is colored, and so we divide life into “black” and “white” - “I like this” and “I do not like that”.

We must learn to see anew, to de-color the mind.

For this, the sage teaching yoga, introduced vairagya (dispassion).

This is not a discipline leading to suppression on the “either - or” basis.

It recommends neither repressing the desires by running away from them, nor closing the eyes to their existence, nor heroic resistance.

Neither shunning the world and its enjoyments, nor turning the back on places of worship can lead us to truth, to peace.

24th March

Can we go to the source of prejudice - to the source of fear, anger, hate, jealousy, infatuation and pride?

These are all mental aberrations, which do not exist in nature.

If we see that attraction and aversion belong to the realm of electricity and magnetism, of nerve endings and their objects, then they do not have the dreadful connotations we have placed on them, and hence they do not create the sorrow, violence, fear and hate, which dehumanize us.

In nature things happen - there is a going apart, a coming together as with different poles of a magnet, without struggle and emotion.

Is it possible for us, without judging, without condemning or condoning, to see for ourselves where prejudice arises and operates, where it exists in us?

Surely, it is not in the body - even when it appears to be physical, the operation of prejudice is seen to be in the mind, the physical body acting only as a docile tool of the mind.

When you learn to see this, and when you thus observe yourself, you are in meditation.

25th March

Religious authorities declare that God is omnipresent.

If that is truth, then to draw close to that is satsang (the company of the truth).

Human intelligence loves to discover - hence it first discovers the reality with ideas, concepts, symbols, rites and religious organizations.

To discover, one must see the cover, and not avert one's gaze from it.

One must also have the courage to lift the cover, not be lost in admiration of it, however enchanting we think it may be.

Such a discovery is Satsang.

We draw close to the truth, without either rejecting the encrustation of the false, or getting stuck in it - this is discrimination.

All religions declare that God is everywhere, and yet we do not experience this.

What is it that stands between him and me?

Surely it is the "me".

It is the me that has given rise to all these rites and symbols, concepts and religious organizations.

I must get closer to the reality or God - not by dividing the one into good and evil, divine and undivine, but by lifting the cover, which is "me".

This does not involve division or judgment, but only the realization of oneness through love.

26th March

What is nature? It is what makes grass green and milk white.

In Sanskrit there are two words to describe nature - prakriti and vikriti.

Prakriti is nature and vikriti is its modification.

Prakriti is the innate tendency, and vikriti is its perversion.

Your prakriti and mine may be different, just as a white canvas is different from a green canvas.

That is natural.

When we see the canvas and desire it to be some other color, we splash paint on it.

This pleases us for a time, but later disappoints us, so we change the pattern again and again.

This is vikriti, modification, perversion.

And it is here that violence, aggression, and all the ugliness of human behavior manifest.

Human nature does not need to be changed.

It is part of the cosmic pattern, and will undergo natural change in God's good time.

What does need change is the perversion of human nature.

This cannot be brought about by a change of pattern on the canvas.

Only when it is washed with a neutral agency does it become clean.

Only when self-knowledge arrives does modification cease, and pure human nature stand revealed.

27th March

We dream not only at night while asleep, but during the day as well!

Is it possible for us to become aware of this daydreaming, without disturbing its course?

If so, I discover that it is easier to understand this than to understand the dreaming in sleep.

If you and I pay more attention to our daydreams, it is possible to discover the way our mind functions.

It raises hopes to balance the reality of our failures.

It strives to restore some sort of haphazard order by covering our errors and faults with anxieties and fears - then covering these up again with unrealistic visions of the future.

This forms the substance of our daydreams.

Once the dynamics and contents of the daydream state are clearly understood, and once we learn to watch this phenomenon, it is possible that we also discover how to bring about order in the mind, without this blind and ineffectual attempt at dreaming.

Some great yogis believe that true meditation consists in this self-watchfulness, which is ever alert and awake - not only during the day, but also during sleep (both with and without dreams).

For if we see that there is truly no difference between daydream and night-dream, no difference between what we call a premonition, a hunch and a prophetic dream, we arrive at the truth that all this is but a modification of the same mind stuff.

28th March

Silence is not of speech - silence is of the mind.

In silence one sees the rise and fall of one's own thoughts, order is restored and they perform their proper function, without interfering with life.

When there is order, there is peace within, there is clarity of inner vision.

The observer, who had been silently watching the thoughts, now asks himself, "Who am I, the observer?"

Of course, the observer is a thought too, the very first thought, which attracted to itself impressions of innumerable past experiences and expressions, all of which now sit in judgment over the present.

All this is part of the ever-changing panorama of time.

The same mind divides itself into observer and observed, conscious, super conscious, lower mind and conscience!

When this is clearly seen in the light of profound inner silence, a new creative intelligence functions - the witness of the drama. In it there are no divisions - it is pure experiencing, without subject and object.

This is the inner light, the light that is not the antithesis of darkness, the light that never rises nor sets, and is therefore timeless, the light that dispels the darkness of our ignorance and its inseparable counterpart, the ego.

In it is perfect order, true virtue.

It is the absolute truth.

29th March

For most people virtue or discipline means control, and this control is usually imported from another person, even if not actually imposed by him.

This control has a motive - to attain "enlightenment" or to protect one's reputation.

The fact that discipline needs a source in another person shows the whole of the being does not see the need for it!

The intellect, with its own motive, sees that the "discipline" suggested by someone else is profitable, though the "heart" still clings to the opposite - namely pleasure or profit.

This split in the personality makes a mockery of the discipline - self-control becomes self-deception.

There is no harmony within.

Instead there is conflict between the head and the heart.

Intellectually we assent to a spiritual truth, proclaimed by someone else, but the heart is elsewhere.

How can we heal this split?

Not by subduing one or the other.

The subdued or suppressed person or feeling turns into an enemy!

We can neither suppress this conflict nor can we allow it to pollute our lives.

But when we give the problem all our attention, the ego, realizing its helplessness, dissolves - and with it the conflict.

Then there is order, which has no use for "control".

We live, move and have our being in God!

30th March

We have all heard that one should cultivate inner awareness, that we should live in the present, that we should turn to God.

We have tried all this, but nothing seems to have worked, for every hour of our lives is haunted by problems.

When we think we are living in the present, we are only thinking, and not living. If you have ever stood in the path of an oncoming car, you will know what living in the present really means - you will not be thinking of living in the present, you will leap out of the way.

It is the spontaneous action of inner awareness, and this awareness exists in you all the time, you need not cultivate it.

When this inner awareness functions without being distorted by the rationalizing faculty, there is clear vision.

In that clear vision, we see actual arising of the problems that haunt our lives.

In this clear vision, we see that what we call "the pairs of opposites" are in fact inseparable - our error consists of aspiring to have one of the pair, without the other, because we think they are independent.

When in the light of knowledge there is neither seeking nor avoidance, there is freedom.

In that freedom the inner awareness spontaneously functions "in the present".

31st March

There is a difference between curiosity and enquiry.

Curiosity is either idle or deadly - deadly because it suspends the spirit of enquiry by providing words and labels, which are often mistaken for real knowledge.

For instance, when one knows that fruit falls on account of the gravitational pull of the earth, one's curiosity is satisfied, and the spirit of enquiry is suspended.

But the spirit of enquiry is kept alive by life, which throws up fresh challenges that shatter previous assumptions and concepts.

Life does not accept intellectual cannibalism, which gives birth to a concept, and then feeds on it to satisfy its appetite, called curiosity.

Life revives the spirit of enquiry.

The spirit of enquiry is not an appetite that can be satisfied - it is a fire that consumes the enquirer and the enquiring mind, and shines as illumination or knowledge.

This fire burns all hypocrisy.

Yoga is illumination.

Yoga is self-knowledge.

Yoga is the spirit of unending enquiry.

It is not hostile to what is called science - it can well be its elder brother, cautioning against assumptions, questioning beliefs, setting aside curiosity, and relentlessly fanning the flame of the spirit of enquiry.

1st April

Life is spiritual.

The spirit is indivisible, and it is also invisible.

It therefore does not satisfy man's craving to experience it, to possess it and to express it.

Therefore we see in him a savage compulsion to materialize this spirit.

This idolatry of matter is seen in our veneration of someone who is able "to materialize things" by a wave of his hand.

But, our own life is full of such materializations, the whole world is the materialization of the spirit, all the machines and all the weapons have been "materialized" by a wave of someone's hand.

Life is an art.

Spiritual life or sadhana is still greater art.

Every stroke of the brush matters very much - we should carefully plan it, and do every action after great thought.

Thought, word and deed must be delicate and purposeful.

2nd April

It is this materialization of the spirit that has prevented us from realizing the spiritual nature of life.

The mind serves as a veil to hide the reality, and promotes the worship of matter. The mind is clever enough to conjure up, like an adept magician false concepts and images of God, of religion, of love, of peace and of happiness, so that even in a moment of disillusionment we might not turn away from the unreal, and discover the reality.

Only the greatest of spiritual heroes is able to discover this plot, and to realize that these concepts or images are not only not the reality, but also the greatest and most potent obstructions to the realization of the reality, which is pure and spiritual.

The spiritual is indivisible.

The indivisible is also eternal and indestructible.

Hence the spirit is never lost, though, in ignorance, it may be lost sight of.

It is forever waiting to be discovered.

3rd April

Right from infancy we have been bombarded with concepts that have created divisions in our consciousness.

The infant's vision is pure.

Perhaps even the notion that there is an object external to itself has not arisen in it, because its own ego-sense has not been developed.

The notions of "I" and "you" arise simultaneously.

In the little infant these are absent.

The parents strive to condition the infant's mind, and call it "training".

The child is prevented from seeking to find its true identity, by being forced to identify itself with this or that.

"I" am constantly pressurized into accepting it as an incontrovertible fact that I am a man, an Indian, a Brahmin; it hardly ever occurs to me that I am even a human being, leave alone the purest truth that the spirit alone is real, and "I" am but a cell in the cosmic body of the spirit, which is the universe.

This cell is what we call the soul.

4th April

In the spirit “we” are all one, and that oneness is love.

The “we” seems to suggest a diversity; it is diversity without division.

It is like saying there are many cells in the body.

It is the cells that constitute the body, and they are not different from the body in truth.

The difference between them is notional: like the two ends of a stick, the stick and the two ends are non-different.

The direct realization of the spirit, which is indivisible, is religion.

It is also love that is God.

That love is not partial, limited, contractual, nor is it the antithesis of hate.

It is the spontaneous manifestation of the already existing indivisible oneness, which alone is the truth.

Butter is hidden in milk.

But milk, if thrown into water, gets lost, with the butter.

Butter itself won't get lost in water.

Churn that butter of devotion in your heart, and God will steal it from you.

You won't even have to offer it to him.

5th April

Philosophy unrelated to life is not entertainment but is sheer waste of time. it can be worse, for it can pull the wool over our eyes, and blind us to the real problems that have to be tackled.

If we are awake to life, then we shall immediately see that our problems do not relate to God, or our soul, nor to the truth, or otherwise, of some antiquated religious doctrine or dogma.

Nor can these problems be solved therefore, by intensifying certain forms of religious activities.

this does not mean that these religious activities are unnecessary.

they have their own vital role in our life.

It is more difficult to stand on your feet (be self-reliant) than to stand on your head (in the yogi's head-stand).

Even so, it is easier to see God than to see God in all.

One may imagine that one can "see God", and this hallucination maybe quite satisfying, and even soul-uplifting to oneself - and this again may have its own role in our life.

But when it comes to "see God in all", such imaginings and hallucinations are utterly useless, and even dangerous.

6th April

Religion has not failed us; we have failed religion, and we have dragged religion down with us.

How deeply religious we are is revealed by how well we relate to others in this world.

It is when we are full of love in all our relationships that we really and truly love God, who is omnipresent.

This is the essence of religion, the essence of yoga.

However, we have cleverly redefined all these doctrines; and we console ourselves that we are indeed religious people, inasmuch as we love God with all our heart, and we rationalize the disharmony in our relations with fellowmen, by declaring that the other person is evil or wicked.

It is here that we have miserably failed.

But this teaching cannot be intellectualized nor reduced to a set of concepts and precepts.

It has to be directly seen, first in a dialogue with an enlightened sage, and then with oneself.

“Bear insult, bear injury - this is the highest sadhana (yoga practice)” said Swami Sivananda.

“Never hurt others' feelings,” he added to complete the picture.

This is the highest yoga, the greatest yoga.

Yet it does not make much sense unless one sees it, as we saw in the life of Sri Gurudev Himself.

7th April

There is one serious difficulty, which we experience in life - solutions come at a time when there are no problems, and problems arise at a time when there are no solutions.

That's obvious, isn't it?

I lose my temper, blow your brains out, and then sit and meditate, reconstruct the whole thing in a very calm way.

If that calmness had been there to begin with, I would not have lost my temper.

There was no calmness when I lost my temper, and when the calmness was regained, there was no problem.

It's a very serious difficulty.

That's why most lessons that we learn cannot be applied.

We've all been told to apply what we have learned to daily life, but this application is like lipstick - from the outside.

Growth is from inside, and application from outside.

Therefore no application helps us.

You've seen people who are heavily made up - if there is a sudden shower of rain, all the application disappears.

In real life also we are all the time caught in the rain, and the rain falls suddenly.

Therefore it is not possible to learn a few rules and simply apply them.

8th April

Get hold of yourself and look within.

This is possible if you are practicing meditation, and have acquired the ability to catch yourself halfway between waking and sleeping.

If you have trained yourself in this, then it is also possible to see a thing happening inside, to see anxiety or anger bubbling up.

And when it is seen, you don't have to react to it.

You don't have to justify it.

You only want to find this thing, find its source. You are not suppressing it.

If it is suppressed, it will blow up again some time later.

You are not going to analyze it, or find a reason for it, but out of curiosity, try to find an answer to this series of three questions.

One, "If I was fairly calm before those words were uttered, how is it possible for a calm mind to undergo this change?"

Two, "Where exactly does this build-up happen? Is it in my stomach, my solar plexus, my head, my fingertips?"

And, three, "What is it made of?"

9th April

You're just curious.

It's not as if the heavens are going to fall if you lose your temper once more – you've done it a few hundred times before.

But there is something that is happening inside, and you do not know what it is. This is unbearable.

When something happens to you physically, you don't sit quiet saying you don't know what it is.

Let's say you have a throbbing toothache.

You don't say, "I don't know what it is."

You jolly well run to the dentist the next morning.

Life does not keep quiet and say, "I don't know."

If you have a toothache, you can't afford to say, "I don't know," and if you are irritated you can't afford to say, "I don't know," either.

What is it? You must find out.

But not with the idea that hereafter you are not going to lose your temper.

Why not? Why make up your mind?

When you make up your mind, you apply some powder and lipstick and rouge to it, but even then it is filthy inside.

10th April

You merely want to know how a mind which is so calm and loving, suddenly became so violent.

The external provocation is not important.

That's not what we are talking about.

We are talking about the potentiality for this change to take place, and the nature of this change.

But let us not come up with verbalized, intellectualized answers.

You can read in any book that all this is mental modification, but you don't know what mind is, and you don't know what modification means.

You must come face to face with this just once, and it must be a serious thing.

But there is a danger in the course of this investigation.

You're looking within, watching irritability come up, then suddenly there is a distracting thought, "It won't happen again; it's not so bad after all."

You've looked away and it's gone.

Never let it go, because, though it seems to have gone, it can still come back again.

So, find it now.

You may still get irritable again; you may still lose your temper again.

But your life immediately loses one thing, and that is regret.

Whatever you do, you take full responsibility for.

11th April

The rising sun shone on a group of meditating yogis on the morning of Good Friday.

“There will be a puja at 9.30,” read the announcement, “and silence will be observed till its conclusion.”

A solemn atmosphere prevailed; and cheerful faces of the yogis were serene with introvert vision.

After the puja offered to Lord Venkatesa, the Durga Saptashati was read.

The three days of the Easter were observed as a “mini-Durga Puja”.

many of us fasted, and the day was packed with yoga practices.

And, the interpretation of the Durga Saptashati also took a Christian accent.

Why should we divide scriptures into Hindu scriptures and Christian scriptures?

They are common: they have a common message; they are the heritage of the whole of mankind.

By regarding some as “mine” and some as “other”, we develop blind faith in the former, and equally blind antipathy in the latter.

Sanskrit is not my mother tongue; nor is English!

If I can learn them, there is no reason why the average “westerner” should think he is incompetent to read Sanskrit, and understand the scriptures in their original.

12th April

Translations are always subject to corruption, though unintentional.

The two words “Durga Saptashati” can be simply translated into “700 verses concerning Durga”; not to be deified, not to be feared or discarded, but to be carefully studied.

Even the word “Durga” has a simple meaning: “difficult to reach or approach”.

A scientist may think it refers to electricity or nuclear power; a moralist may see it as ethical perfection; and a mystic may think it is nirvana.

Jesus Christ illustrated how difficult it is for man to seek true salvation, by demanding of the man, who professed to be a faithful adherent of the

Commandments, “Sell all that you have and follow me”; he did not!

The spiritual truth, which is ever-present in all, is revealed only by a crisis.

The divinity of Jesus was revealed by the crucifixion; and the Durga Saptashati tells us that the divine Mother revealed herself whenever evil threatened to overwhelm the good.

Yet it is the evil that helps reveal the good; which is perhaps a reason why the day of Christ's crucifixion is called Good Friday, and a reason why the demons that oppressed the devas and challenged the divine mother Durga, are also remembered in the scripture.

13th April

The Easter story and the stories of the Durga Saptashati have much in common: the immortality of the spirit, and the availability of redemption to all are dramatically proclaimed.

The words of the angels on the Golgotha, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?", reminds us that resurrection is not of the dead but of the ever living. Jesus spoke in parables; and the Durga Saptashati is in parables, too!

The first of the three stories deals with the power of sleep; and one is reminded of how the disciples of Jesus fell asleep on the night of betrayal.

You do not sleep; but sleep overpowers you.

And so, you cannot wake up.

When sleep leaves you, you wake up.

Yet, with the help of an alarm clock, you can wake up and throw off sleep.

Similarly, you are in the grip of spiritual ignorance.

You cannot shake it off by self-effort, unaided by divine grace; the divine grace is like the alarm clock.

This grace is earned by utter devotion to God, in humble recognition of one's own powerlessness to conquer the great delusion.

Hence, we pray, we worship.

On the night of betrayal, Jesus went into seclusion and prayed fervently.

When threatened by the demons, the gods prayed to the divine mother Durga.

At the ashram, we similarly worshipped Lord Jesus, Lord Venkatesa and mother Durga.

14th April

Education is integral and should not be divided into the “sacred” and the “secular”!

The human being has obviously three aspects, which are inextricably interwoven: body, mind and spirit.

Education is that which is able to “bring out” the best in each one of us.

To ensure that what is thus brought out is best, education trains the moral and the intellectual faculties of man.

None of these can be neglected without disastrous results.

We need “secular” education - the arts and the sciences (which is the “form” of the body of education).

Equally we need moral and intellectual training, so that we are able to discriminate between the constructive and the destructive uses of technology.

Here again it is when the human heart attains maturity through “moral training” that we begin to see that our worst enemy is the “me” (selfishness).

A truly mature and therefore educated person arises from this realization.

It can therefore be easily seen that education is the surest means to the eradication of the ills (evils?) humanity is suffering from today.

15th April

“When does integral education begin?”

It is beginningless!

Hence it is a fresh beginning every day, every moment.

It is a spiritual adventure undertaken by the parent, teacher and student together.

None of the three has authority over the others, all of them being part of this maturing process.

All of them learn all the time from one another and from themselves.

In this spirit of co-operation there is no compulsion, no surrender, no repression and no rebellion.

Education is the expression of whatever is best in man, and the spirit of education is the focusing of attention within one's own heart to observe what is thus expressed!

Such observation is itself maturity.

#### SCIENCE

We do not deny that science has discovered many laws of nature - that the atom has so many protons and electrons.

But I only beg of you not to forget him who put them there - I assure you that the scientist did not.

16th April

Spring is here!

The trees had shed their burdensome foliage for the winter, and had apparently withdrawn their life force into their roots.

They know the actual timing of the arrival of spring; they do not need either a calendar or a weather bureau.

It is a joy to watch the little shoots, the myriad little buds that proclaim the sanctity and the glory of life.

Nothing can destroy life; and the trees know this.

When a cyclone strikes, the trees shed their leaves or even some branches.

They drop their burdens.

Have you seen how quickly the gardens begin to smile again?

They do not continue to bemoan the past.

They are free of hope and the accompanying fear; free of memory and the accompanying despair.

All these (the hope, the fear etc.) are dreadful burdens.

Shedding them is enlightenment, lightening one' s burden.

Enlightenment has nothing to do with seeing lights and visions, which are at best "encouraging signs of divine grace" in the words of Gurudev Swami Sivananda.

17th April

At the Yasodhara Ashram we observed Buddha Jayanti on the full moon day in April with a long meditation.

It is good to meditate on such occasions.

It is good to ask ourselves frequently: "Why is it that, in spite of the teachings of the great masters like Buddha, Jesus and Krishna, mankind is still groping in darkness? What have we done to them?"

We worship them.

We read their teachings.

We recite their sermons.

Then, we argue endlessly about which is true and which is not true; we argue about the nature of God, etc., etc.

These have no relevance to our life and, what is worse, such polemics divert our attention from the most vital truth embodied in their teachings - that as long as our life is ruled by selfishness, we shall continue to be tormented by sorrow.

18th April

We endeavor to cover up our present sorrow with hope in a distant future.

Hope does not eradicate sorrow.

It is accompanied by fear that the hope may be vain.

It leads to progressively worsening frustration, as life inevitably unveils facets and changes that are the direct contradictions of our hopes and expectations.

We do not look at life itself.

If we do, we shall at once realize that it is sufficient unto itself.

We shall realize that it is indistinguishably one with the intelligence that is beyond the grasp of our intellect.

Life is inherent in this intelligence, which is known by different names - cosmic consciousness, atman, Brahman, God, etc.

When that intelligence becomes as real to you as this paper, in that light you will see that selfishness (which was but a shadow) has disappeared, taking with it the unnecessary burdens, known as hope and fear, recollection of the past and despair.

You are enlightened: that is, you travel through life, treading softly, without unnecessary weight or burden.

Winters come and go: the spring is here again.

Cyclones come and go: flowers bloom again.

19th April

If something has gone wrong with my yoga practice, I must see where it has gone wrong.

Either I am doing it mechanically, or there is some inefficiency in it.

So, it is good to stop and think, "What has gone wrong?"

Then I will put some spirit back into my spiritual practice.

without spirit it is not spiritual practice, it is mechanical practice.

Let it come from your heart; put some meaning into it.

There is nothing wrong with your yoga practices.

Because the spirit has been lost, why must you throw the whole thing away?

Why shouldn't you put the spirit back into it?

There is the same problem with these iconoclastic trends.

"I don't like all these formalities," I used to hear.

"What do you want to do then?"

"I want to sit and meditate," I was told.

But sitting in a quiet place is also a ritual, as much a ritual as worshipping a statue.

And, in discarding the formal ritual, you have lost some of the mystique.

So, instead of condemning the whole thing for the fault of a part, repair the part.

If in your way of worship something has gone, put the spirit back in and keep it.

20th April

God created the world, and he saw it was good.

If I look round and it doesn't seem to be so good, something has gone wrong.

Either my vision has gone wrong, or the world is polluted.

I can do something about it.

If my roof is leaking, I don't pull the whole house down, I merely patch the roof.

So, when the promised result doesn't seem to be in sight, then I must reexamine the whole situation.

Incidentally, our practice of yoga or meditation has no goal at all, because when I introduce the concept of goal into this, I get worried.

The whole spirit of yoga practice is lost; meditation is lost.

Instead of relaxing me, it makes me more tense.

Instead of leading me to some kind of inner peace, it makes me anxious, worried, and full of expectation, full of frustrations.

Do not look for results, for only God knows what goes on in the world, and the results may be quite different to what anyone expects.

There is no connection between action and reward - that is God's business.

21st April

Why are goals mentioned in the scriptures?

They are not goals, but landmarks.

The scripture says that if you practice yoga, you will have peace of mind; peace of mind is not your goal, it is a landmark.

If it is not there, then your practice is wrong.

You have missed out on something.

All the techniques, all the mantras, all the rituals, are given in great detail in the yoga texts.

And then there is a tailpiece: that there is a secret, which must be learnt from a Guru.

There is no secret.

When you go to a Guru, he is going to repeat the same thing all over again.

But He is there to tell you when something has gone wrong, what you have omitted to do, the reason why the whole thing has gone wrong.

It may be as simple as this: instead of sitting upright for your meditation, probably you are slumping.

Three hours later, you sit up and wonder why there is no peace of mind or no bliss experience, and also there is a bit of stiffness in the back.

It is nothing.

It is absolutely simple, and the great and tremendous secret, which you have learned from the Guru, is that you have been sleeping.

22nd April

If we are practicing yoga techniques from a book we may also need to consult an expert as to whether our understanding is correct.

If we are missing out on some detail, which may be vital and essential, the expert or teacher or Guru may be able to tell us that there is some error there, and rectify it.

It is inevitable that, when we read or watch somebody or learn something, it is learned by the mind, and having learned it intellectually, we're tempted to apply it.

All such applications are only cosmetic.

I may not always have the opportunity of staying with a great master from whom I can inhale the truth or spirit, as I inhale perfume, so that the truth manifests from within.

That is how it should be ideally.

But this learning may not take the form of a verbal dialogue.

When we were in the ashram, we hardly had time to sit and discuss things with Swami Sivananda.

We picked it up from His writings, or occasionally when visitors asked him some question, we might have simply been sitting there and listening.

23rd April

In the ashram, I had the job of recording Swami Sivananda's dialogues with visitors, and in the course of my work, as I listened, my doubts were forestalled. Over a period of time something happens within you, as you go on inhaling this perfume, and you become that perfume.

It's a process from within to without, quite different from the cosmetic approach. When I learn something intellectually, it is an external thing, which I apply. It is also possible that, if I go on applying it thickly enough, some of the juice enters into me; possible, but a bit tricky.

The other way is to swallow or inhale it so that, from within, it blossoms out like a lotus.

When this opportunity is not available though, I must try to apply it, and the scriptures guide me by providing the landmarks, the teacher helps me by correcting the errors.

The spirit that says, "My yoga is cosmetic," is a healthy, living spirit that has the courage to deal with that fault.

24th April

Question:

For someone just beginning yoga practice, who is prepared to get up at 4.30 or 5 a.m., how could they best use an hour and a half? What proportion of time should they give to meditation, asanas, pranayama, etc.?

Swamiji:

It depends a lot on whether that person is fresh at that hour.

Some are night birds and some day birds.

People who go to bed late may find their minds sleepy and dull at 4.30 a.m.

Others are early birds, who go to bed at 9 p.m. and are awake at 4 a.m.

If a person is wide awake at 4 a.m., then it is good to jump out of bed and practice some meditation first thing - it is better to catch the mental agitation at its source.

It is possible then to look at that agitation as it rises, as it wakes up.

If a person is not wide awake in the morning, then a quick wash and one asana for a couple of minutes, without too much physical movement, will help.

Too much physical movement will bring you into mid-day at 4 a.m.

One quick posture will wake you up, just enough to enable you to meditate.

Pranayama may also help; two or three minutes of asana, two or three minutes of pranayama, and then meditation.

25th April

There is a beautiful exercise if one is alert; not quite awake, but alert.  
If you walk out of this room and go into the open, inevitably you must cross a threshold.

That is the analogy.

Here I am awake.

Where was I thirty minutes ago? Asleep.

Asleep was like being in the room, and awake like being outside.

At what moment, and how, did I cross that threshold, and what is that threshold like?

How does it feel to be just entering the wakeful state or the sleep state?

It applies both ways.

You can do it at bedtime and watch what it is like to fall asleep, or in the morning watch what it is you cross in order to come out of the sleep into the waking state.

The biggest snag is that I ask the question only after waking up.

So I use all the other tricks: I watch my breath, repeat the mantra, etc., and if I have just woken up, the mind will be fresh, without too much agitation.

That is the right condition.

26th April

You are watching.

If the mind is fresh, it drops, and it drops and it drops.

You are still watching.

It drops into a bottomless pit.

You thought you were nearly at the door, but then you nodded off.

All right, never mind, sit up again.

When you nod your head, something happens to your back and it snaps up.

Unfortunately you wake up too much.

All right, start all over again.

One must not be disappointed at all in this game, otherwise you have failed.

If you are disappointed, either you give up the practice, or there is frustration.

Try again; the breath and the mantra, the attention focused within on the mind.

You can literally see the body relaxing bit by bit.

Once again you slept.

It may not happen so quickly next time though; probably each spasm takes about ten or fifteen minutes.

Nothing happened this morning, although you sat like this for an hour, spasmodically sleeping.

Never mind, you have slept for years.

What does it matter if you don't make it this morning?

Tomorrow morning you'll start again.

That is a very beautiful form of meditation.

27th April

One must use the landmarks; the mind must be alert and fresh during meditation, and if it is not, then something has gone wrong.

Either a quick shower was indicated, or a few more yoga postures, or a little more yoga breathing.

One must learn to adjust all that.

And again, if you are too wide-awake and the mind is completely restless, it is possible that you have over-done one thing or the other: the previous night's dinner maybe!

It is a funny thing, but one can never be sure why the mind is restless in the morning, when yesterday it was more peaceful.

There is no reason at all.

One day you enjoy sitting in meditation, the next day you don't.

Something that is changing from moment to moment seems to be constant - like the flame of a lamp.

The flames of "fire" are being renewed every moment, by fresh fuel being converted into fire, but the single flame appears constant.

Yet it seems a mystery that, remaining constant and doing nothing, that flame has consumed all the oil!

28th April

These terms, "God's Will", "God's Grace", etc., have been used in very different ways.

In order to dismiss an unpleasant event from one's mind, one can say, "Oh, it's God's will or my Karma."

But in regard to the future, do you know what God's Will is for you?

The same thing is often suggested for karma.

If you throw something at me and injure me, I am supposed to say it is my karma, instead of retaliating and hitting you back.

But if you hit someone and break his nose, you dare not say that it was his karma to have his nose broken, and so you did him a good service, unless you knew this beforehand.

Instead of apportioning blame and brooding over it, I throw the whole thing over my shoulders and say, "It was God's Will."

Even that sounds absurd.

Why must I throw it over my shoulders?

It has already passed.

I am foolishly imagining that I am carrying this load on my shoulders, and in order to relieve myself of this non-existent burden, I introduce God's Will or Karma.

This is one aspect.

29th April

Wise people also use another aspect of God's Will or Grace, in order to disassociate themselves from honor and praise.

If you do something marvelous and people praise you, you say, "No, it was not me, it was God's grace. I am an instrument in the hands of God. I haven't done anything at all. You have benefited not by me but by the Grace of God."

In both these instances God's Will, Karma, destiny, etc., are all used in connection with a past event, not with a future thing.

When it comes to the future, if you are worried about it, you may say, "Well, God's Will be done."

But that's a very hazy way of using it.

Future is future.

I don't know what will happen or what God's Will is.

What does one do?

I may say, "Exist for the present," but there is no present.

Before I say "Now," it's past.

In a river you can't immerse in the same water twice.

That water is always changing.

30th April

The yogi knows that all things in this world are subject to change, and therefore he doesn't crave for anything, and he doesn't endeavor to hold onto any pleasures.

It is when you try to capture pleasure – to hold it back from flowing on, or to enjoy it again and again - that it becomes boring.

As long as it comes floating, it is delightful; but you have hugged it and crushed it; it is dead.

Now you are dancing with a skeleton - the pleasure is gone, only the dullness is left.

In the case of pain, if you allow it to go on, it will go away; it is gone.

Otherwise you are unnecessarily and stupidly immortalizing that pain and suffering it day after day.

It is gone.

Leave it; let it go.

Prayer enables us to see the truth of the continuity of change, and thus we are rooted in the wisdom, which is the continuity in the change.

The wisdom, the understanding, the perception, the realization of this truth, is the continuity in this constant change.

1st May

In order to dismiss the worry concerning the unborn future, and the brooding concerning the dead past, you use the idea of "God's Will" to drop them.

When all this is dropped, what happens is present.

It is not present in the temporal sense, nor is it connected with time; it is not present in the sense that it is neither the past nor the future.

It is something totally different.

It is not a dimension at all, but the totality of it.

Strangely, even your body is geared only to act in the present.

If I hit you on the head with a stick, you will blink.

You cannot register that hit before it happens or after it happens.

You will only blink in response to the stick at the moment of impact.

The intelligence that knows that is the present.

And that intelligence will act only in the present, not a second earlier or later.

Without confusion there is no fusion.

2nd May

When you do yoga asanas, watch this.

A certain movement of the body, a certain adjustment is possible only for the body to determine, and it determines it invariably at the particular moment.

Even as you look back, it's gone already, and is only memory.

That was able to live in the present.

That intelligence is God and is Will.

So what is called "God's Will" is merely a suggestion that it is not my will.

I can definitely become aware of my wish, my desire, my likes and dislikes.

If I ensure that my actions do not spring from any of these, it is more than enough.

I really do not know what God's will is, but I can ensure that my actions do not spring from my will.

I can ensure that I am not blinking because I want to blink.

I do not know whether what I do is good or bad, but it keeps me awfully busy!

3rd May

What is ahimsa?

It is not a political concept, nor a moral precept, nor a religious doctrine.

It is a positive quality, which is at once denied when positively defined.

Hence its negative definition, a-himsa or non-himsa.

Himsa covers not only aggression and violence, killing and injuring, but also fundamental violation of the dignity of all life.

Not doing this is ahimsa.

When we remember that its field of application covers not only all living beings but also oneself, it is not difficult to understand how complex the problem is.

Suddenly it is seen as the subtle middle path, the razor's edge.

It demands constant vigilance.

Ahimsa is not a set of do's and don'ts, it is the quality of a human being from which all trace of himsa has been banished. Such a being is divine, egoless, and unselfish.

Such a being is love.

What is the Guru?

Guru is the light that dispels the darkness.

He enables you to see if you are wide-awake, your eyes are open and you are constantly and vigilantly watching.

To one who is awake and vigilant, the whole of life can be the Guru.

The Guru imparts training in ahimsa only in the form of external imposition or training.

Firstly the disciple must see that himsa is all-destructive, see the need for constant vigilance.

4th May

War is the most essential pastime of humanity!

We are all familiar with the phrase “defender of the faith”.

In the Bible, “Thou must not kill,” is re-defined as “Thou must not murder,” because killing seems to be an inherent part of life. An executioner, a butcher or even a doctor, are all able to kill.

All these grotesque sequels will occur, until I realize what it is to be completely free of harmfulness within me.

Is it possible to rid the mind of the least trace of harmfulness?

In which case no harm comes from me to others, nor do I punish this body, and therefore there is no martyr complex.

“Assassination” means nothing more than two Asses facing each other!

If you are wise, you will make it unnecessary for another to kill you.

You will remove the cause, instead of provoking another to kill you.

So, can I be totally free of the least trace of harmfulness in my mind?

5th May

The word "love" is open to many misuses and abuses.

"We must all love our country and be prepared to sacrifice our lives."

Loving one's country and loving one's religion are all beautiful expressions, used by somebody who wants to get you killed. They say, "go to war and fight for your country and be careful to shoot the other man first, because if you don't kill him, he will kill you."

Once you are on the battlefield, nobody considers why there should have been a battlefield at all, or why you should have gone to the battle.

There are sayings on tombstones, "There is nothing nobler than sacrificing your life for your brother!"

That is not love.

If you have love in your heart, you will change the whole situation.

It does not become necessary that I should sacrifice my life, or that you should sacrifice yours.

6th May

In sleep there is not a trace of harmfulness in your consciousness, only complete peace.

What happened to that when you woke up?

Did somebody take it away from you?

When you were fast asleep, there was a consciousness, which was totally free of all harm.

When you got up from sleep, you didn't drop it somewhere, and no one took it away from you.

How do I find this peace while awake and function in its light?

That is yoga.

That is ahimsa.

It is there; I didn't throw it away, and no one took it away from me.

When I find it, it is then that I am at peace, both with myself and in my relation to everyone else.

Such a person may do something, which to a third party may seem aggressive.

But it is not.

That is why Krishna and Arjuna were able to talk philosophy on the battlefield.

Perhaps it is possible for one who is fully established in that state to even wage a war - perhaps.

7th May

Peace is not something which is theoretical.

It is there.

I had it when I was asleep, and by waking up I did not lose it.

It is still there; being in it consciously is ahimsa.

It can only be defined negatively because it is not a concept.

Only a concept can be thought of.

The truth can never be thought of.

Peace is truth.

What is thought of is not the truth; it is a thought.

So these great truths are defined negatively.

Who am I? What am I?

I cannot say, "This I am."

I can only say, "I am not this."

"I" is not a human being, "I" is not an Indian, and "I" is not a living thing.

When all these images, which have been built around the self, built by convention and culture, have been removed, you still cannot say that "I" is this.

If you do, you have created a nice little image or figure.

Ahimsa is constantly and watchfully removing all himsa from your mind and consciously ensuring there is no violence in relation to others or in relation to yourself.

8th May

Nothing that happens to me is a sure proof that I am progressing spiritually. People who have visions etc. feel highly elated at the time, but then somehow they seem to be left in the lurch just when some strength or support is needed. If suddenly I'm told I have cancer of the throat, everything seems to evaporate, and I'm left as miserable as ever.

It doesn't seem to measure up with spiritual progress.

Is it possible for me to have achieved some tremendous change and yet be aware of it?

Theoretically there is no reason why I should not, but in truth, spiritual growth is as subtle as the growth of the body.

I've been looking into the mirror every morning, and every morning my face is the same as the previous day.

But then some change has taken place.

If today's appearance is the same as yesterday's, and yesterday's as the day before, I should be exactly the same as I was fifteen years ago.

This is not true.

Yet I cannot pin-point it and say, "This morning my nose grew half an inch longer."

Any growth which is natural, and therefore valid, is imperceptible.

Most growth which we are aware of, conscious of, is better got rid of.

Real spiritual growth is almost unseen, although it is possible for someone else to point it out to you.

9th May

What is predetermined and what is not predetermined?

Where does my free will or choice enter into this?

Some things seem to be fixed and it is possible that the life span of the body is also fixed.

It is also possible that the cells of each individual body have a biological mechanism built in which responds to nature outside in a certain way.

From this it might also be possible to see that a future disease is already built into this body.

Right at the birth of this body, it is programmed into the cells that the hair will turn gray at the age of 52.

You can do nothing about it.

But something has not been programmed into the cells.

I can let the hair grow long or shave it every day.

Within that broad framework we have a bit of freedom to move around.

Life is not completely predetermined, and there is no absolute freedom of choice.

But when it comes to the direction life is to take, what do we know about it?

There seems to be a lot more elbow room here, so that one can never blame this predetermination for my viciousness or for my lack of spirituality.

Whether I face light or face darkness is left to me.

10th May

Whether I should be a wise man or a fool is not predetermined; it is not a predictable quality.

The weather can be predicted, but whether I am going to smile or cry tomorrow, whatever the weather, cannot be predicted.

My reaction or attitude cannot be predicted.

Whether I will turn towards light or turn towards darkness is not predictable.

The choice is there for me to be either a fool or a wise man.

That is all the choice; the rest is choiceless.

If I am a fool, I am choicelessly going in one direction; if I am a wise man, I am choicelessly going in the other direction. Beyond that there is no choice.

If I've chosen to be a fool, all my actions, thoughts and words will be foolish.

That choice is there each second.

Whether you have chosen to be wise or foolish will determine the next action.

11th May

Only the physical, grosser side of us seems to be predetermined; the spirit seems to be free.

Where there is a borderline between the spiritual and the psycho-physical, the psycho-physical is predetermined and the spirit is free.

They seem to mingle and overlap somewhere.

Once the spirit is awakened, it choicelessly pursues the light, but while the spirit is asleep or dormant, it choicelessly pushes the psycho-physical organism in the other direction.

Yet the spirit in itself is free.

Once such a choice has been made, the "I" has no further choice.

If the "I" has turned towards the light at one stage, then the spirit of wisdom makes the choice; the light makes the choice.

Once that has happened, life goes on choicelessly in the chosen direction.

Yet the choice need not be made at one historic moment, and having made the choice, one might still turn again and choose the darkness.

That possibility is also there, just as the possibility for the fool to turn towards the light is there all the time.

12th May

Eternal damnation does not seem to make sense, but eternal redemption is not impossible to conceive of, since it is redemption from the ego.

When the body is abandoned and the ego has dissolved, then there seems to be a point of no return.

If a lump of salt is thrown into water or a bucket of water is tipped into the sea, it cannot be returned.

So there is no end but only the means.

And while I am walking the path, I must see that the light is not out there, but in me.

Light and wisdom are not there as goals, but are in me as the path or means to the goal.

This wisdom is the understanding of life, the understanding of the self, and it is this wisdom which acts for us when we have turned towards the light.

Misery is not so hard to bear as the desire to push it away!

When a motorcar stops for lack of fuel, the man in it is not affected much - but the man who wants to push it feels its weight.

When you try to push misery away, you feel its weight all the more!

Leave it alone and let it pass.

13th May

Most of us miss thousands of opportunities of relieving the poverty and the suffering of our brethren.

We think that thereby we are assuring our own happiness and prosperity, without realizing that we are inviting the opposites.

Exploitation nurtures bitterness in the heart of the oppressed; it leads to a social explosion which spreads unhappiness all round.

Hoarded wealth is a curse.

Yet, man will accumulate wealth and strive his utmost to obtain more.

Our scriptures insist that we should produce more food and more wealth.

Yet we are unable to resist the temptation to regard that "earned" (often by exploitation) wealth as our own, and to look with suspicion upon anyone who asks for a share of it.

We are certainly not going to take it away with us when we leave this world.

So why make others and ourselves miserable by hoarding it?

Let us put ourselves in the other man's position, sincerely and truly.

What would we expect? Compassion?

Be compassionate.

Turn accursed wealth into a great blessing by sharing it with all.

14th May

It is surprising how many of us live in a paradise, where we consider that others are fools!

We blame others to hide our own blame, often from our own inner vision.

We find those faults in others which overflow in us.

We justify our own sins on the extremely simple plea: "But then all are doing so."

The inner craving, desire, lust for pleasure, profit and power, is so intense that it robs us of our time, faculty and power to search within and find the roots of our own foolishness.

If we cease to be wicked, the world will cease to be wicked, too.

Rather: in this wonderful spiritual adventure, there is no question of even "we" - it is all the time I.

We cannot touch and transform the hearts of even our dearest ones.

Each one has to do it for himself or herself.

Through meditation, self-analysis, self-searching and self-realization.

The moment this is achieved, we find the world once again reflecting our wisdom, our goodness which we find in all.

This self-same world blooms into a paradise.

We see even in the wickedness of other people, their own inner soul-struggle to find the light, the truth, God.

May you all be established in that light, in that truth, in God!

15th May

At the end of the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna says very plainly to Arjuna, "I have told you what I think is right. Go away and think it over. Sleep on it and then do what you want. You are free."

This is also the lesson of the beginning of Genesis.

God gave every human being freedom, and respecting this freedom, even he does not interfere.

Often this creates a paradoxical situation (paradoxical in its literal sense of being beyond teaching).

Adam and Eve were free to obey or disobey.

And then they were told to eat what they liked, but not to eat the apple.

Obedience meant refraining from eating the forbidden fruit.

But one can never be sure if such obedience is based on fear, or voluntary submission to the order because one wants to obey.

Most of us take problems for granted.

Life is problems.

Without problems there is no life.

Having come into this problematical existence, I am trying to untie the knots.

However, as with a ball of tangled wool or wire, when you think you have undone one knot, you find that you have several more on your hands.

You have in fact made it a little worse.

This continues until you get fed up and throw it all out.

Although we may not notice it, this is what happens to most of us in our lives.

16th May

We are not aware that there is a condition of peace-of-mind, an existence that is unconditioned.

We only know our conditioning.

We are caught in this trap of, "I am this and I am that," and every time we want to get out of it, we walk into another trap. This is so because we have no idea whatsoever that a state beyond all this exists.

We do not appreciate all the miracles in daily life - we are too busy looking for miracle-makers with extraordinary powers.

It would take years of deep meditation to come face to face with this intelligence which stops your hair growing longer than ordained.

This same intelligence protects and sustains the body, without fooling itself that the body is immortal.

The defense system is so perfect that the intelligence resists all attempts to destroy the body, yet it knows that this body, composed of material substances, cannot be maintained forever.

The same intelligence that looks after what we call life, puts an end to it when the time comes.

If I had a hat, I would take it off to this remarkable intelligence.

That is what we refer to as chit.

17th May

When you are not in the state of yoga, then the state of your mind, the thoughts and feelings that prevail in your mind, determine the world around you.

Take for example, me, the Swami.

I do not exist here as a being totally independent of the sum of all your thoughts.

What is this “me” sitting here?

The answer depends entirely upon how you view me.

When all these viewpoints, opinions and descriptions are dropped, then what I am, I am.

It is when you become like little children, as Christ enjoined, that you can get an idea of this.

Stand in front of a little baby not more than six weeks old, and watch how it looks straight at you with wide-open eyes, as if enquiring, “What is this?”

When you move, the baby's eyes move too.

It is certain that such a baby does not see a swami.

It does not even know what a Swami is.

It sees neither a Swami nor a Hindu, nor a Brahmin, nor even a brown face.

If you wish to learn to meditate, the only person to teach you is a baby less than six weeks old.

When you look into its eyes, you will know what meditation means.

There it is in all its absolute purity, gazing at you without projecting a single thought of what you are.

18th May

Life is full of unhappiness.

Yet we regard some of those experiences as happiness, to make life more tolerable.

Similarly I have to label some relations as stable; otherwise life seems to have no sense at all.

In reality, there may be no sense, but against my terrible feeling of insecurity, I classify some people as friends, and some experiences as pleasure or bliss.

This helps me carry on.

Such is life, and so it goes on and on.

Somehow, one does not know why, one tends to cling to this physical, mortal existence.

Though calling it mortal, we still want to believe that it is immortal.

A saintly man in India said that the greatest wonder in the world is the fact that, day in and day out, people die, but those whose time has not yet come believe that they will not have to go.

Such is the nature of existence here.

All these identifications, thoughts and feelings, pleasures and pains, likings and dislikings are mental modifications.

“I” is the central wave. I see another wave, “It is beautiful, and I like it.”

But another, “It is painful, I do not want it.”

There after, the whole life is only mental modification.

The mind goes on modifying itself, playing like a kaleidoscope, which the limited personality claims to enjoy.

19th May

When it comes to this mad clinging to life, to the desire to live, to enjoy, to have what we call pleasurable experiences, how does one overcome this?

Krishna expands this idea in the Gita.

The first need is to perceive immediately that all life is tainted by old age, sickness, and death.

This does not mean that one should not eat, nor marry, nor do this or that.

But when this immediate direct perception is there constantly, then one's consciousness will not be influenced by these experiences called pleasure and pain.

It will no longer run after pleasure, because it knows that it is temporary, not real. Neither will it masochistically look for pain.

Pain is inherent in life; there is no need to search for some more.

When all desires re-enter oneself, return to the source, there is true dispassion - the total opposite of passion and craving.

20th May

Everyone is driven by various desires, and the resultant seeking acquires respectability when supported by beliefs.

What is desire?

Can you locate it?

Can you see what it is made of?

Our basic ignorance is obviously the cause and the cover for all our desires!

It is difficult to know what it is, and therefore we invent various beliefs as poor substitutes.

And the beliefs also supply a sort of know-how to look for it within ourselves.

But since the belief takes away the pain of not knowing what it is and the keenness to know what it is, its utility as an indicator is ignored too.

There is an immediate temptation to reject all doctrines and beliefs.

But then that leads to belief in the testimony of the senses, which can easily be reduced to one word - desire.

Belief comes in handy, to cover up the ugliness of doctrines and dogmas (which are but opinions), and the fear of losing the false sense of security that they provide; and belief dangerously "saves" us from the difficulty of discovering the truth about ourselves.

Use belief as a springboard, not as a coffin-lid!

21st May

With what shall I examine the ego-sense?

Once again you are trapped.

There must be another way and that is called direct observation.

Again it is possible that in this direct observation one uses the mind to study the mind; it is possible for the observing intelligence to identify a thought arising.

One thought arises.

When I have slapped down that thought, I realize that that which slaps the thought down is also mental conditioning.

Another thought jumps up and says that, according to Kena Upanishad, truth cannot be intellectualized.

This is a piece of memory!

Though it pretends to be aware of the truth, it is nothing but memory.

The observing intelligence, if it is alert, can recognize that I have considered this to be right because of prejudice; it can recognize that this is pure and simple memory; a revival of some memory.

Or, it is possible to consider that mind cannot study mind, that it is a hopeless task.

This is called giving up, which is equated with sleep, a kind of spiritual sleep.

It's too hard and so I give up, I live in accordance with God's Will and imagine everything will come right.

22nd May

Integrity and sincerity are not technical skills that can be acquired; they are spiritual qualities that manifest themselves when the covering veils are removed. Neither wholeness nor sincerity can be fashioned by human effort - it is human effort that veils them!

The man who tries to be sincere is insincere, no matter how sincere his efforts may be!

One who is sincere, does not have to try - and this applies to integrity too. The self, the ego, veils the wholeness that remains forever untouched in the heart of all beings.

The self is the flaw, which the self itself endeavors to mask, by inventing what appear to be clever systems and marvelous organizations.

These latter are twice removed from the truth, which is beyond the self.

One may or may not believe in God or what has come to be called religion.

But it is clear that, as long as the self rules life, there can be no peace, happiness, welfare, wholeness or sincerity.

Simplicity, goodness, integrity, sincerity and other divine qualities are gifts of God - they cannot be acquired.

They manifest when one surrenders the self in loving devotion to the divine.

23rd May

The quest for self-discovery is unending.

When the identity has been found, the individuality has been lost.

Realization is knowledge without a knower and an object, the known without subject and object.

Knowledge alone remains, the knowledge of identity.

In yoga there is no belief.

Where knowledge takes over there is no belief.

It is because we have gone along the path of faith, belief that we have messed up our lives.

If I know I am a human being, and if I know you are a human being, then there is total identity, total oneness.

Nothing in the world will disturb this knowledge.

According to yoga, knowledge is something that is born when the individuality dissolves in the quest.

This whole thing is pure awareness; it is called meditation.

Yoga, life, must enable us to unfold everything, physical and mental.

To do this I have to be intensely alert, aware of everything in me - body, mind and intellect - so that these merge, eventually, into total awareness.

24th May

Bhakti is of the nature of immortality.

This declaration confirms that love is God, and God is love.

Love is identical with God.

Hence God's own nature is ascribed to God-love too.

Moreover in bhakti, the object of love, namely God, is eternal, infinite and immortal.

This guarantees two things.

The love that is directed towards him becomes immortal, and the lover that is thus linked to the immortal is also immortalized.

The person who is always facing the sun knows no shadow or darkness.

The person who is in love with God the eternal being, knows nothing but immortality, infinite bliss.

It is so sweet, because its joys are untarnished or undiminished by severance of our affections for our relations etc.

The same emotion, the very same affections, the very same love is sublimated, transmuted and transferred to the Lord.

The joy is intensified into bliss, and the pain that deluded attachment entails is cleverly avoided.

Bhakti is all sweetness.

It is enshrined in the heart of the devotee.

Does it need to be emphasized that he will be all sweetness too?

His words, thoughts and deeds will be characterized by sweetness.

Not an evil thought nor harsh word nor vicious, harmful action will emanate from him.

This is an unmistakable sign of a true bhakta.

25th May

It is hard to define what yoga is in positive terms.

It has been described as union, harmony, integration, as God-realization, realization of truth.

But who is to say what God is, what truth is?

Can we recognize these?

Re-cognize means to “know again”.

What we do not know already we cannot re-cognize.

Therefore, when we hear words like “God”, “truth”, we create mental images.

Yoga enables us to recognize the psychological, social, religious and national barriers, and recognize them for what they are.

If we recognize that an unhealthy life-style is endangering our life, then it will drop away.

If we recognize that the psychological barriers we erect within ourselves, with an external polished behavior for the public and an internal nature hidden even from ourselves, are a danger to our peace of mind and happiness, they will drop away.

In the same way too, we will know that the religious and national barriers that we have put up, in the false hope of ensuring our security and prosperity, do in fact promote their opposite.

Then these too will drop away from our consciousness.

26th May

When you wish to gain knowledge of the world, you do so with the help of images formed by technology and science.

Without these you would not be able to live in the world.

But in human relationships, the image becomes dangerous.

One has to see this danger quite clearly.

When someone flatters you, gratifies your desires, pleases you, you love him, you regard him as a friend; that is your image of him.

When someone insults you or injures you, your image of yourself is hurt and therefore you hate him, you regard him as your enemy; that is your image of him.

It is this image building that brings about conflicts within you, between people and the world.

How can this be prevented?

When you consider this carefully, you find that it is thought that builds these images.

Thought has its function, in the realm of technology and science, but not in the sphere of human relationship.

For thought creates the image which creates the division between you and me.

This division is violence.

This is the cause of all the conflicts and violence, which exist in the world today.

Desires and feelings are thoughts too, and they create endless problems in our lives.

27th May

My Master, Swami Sivananda could never postpone anything.

Procrastination, the thief of time, could not steal even a moment from him.

If you keep an account of the number of times you say: "I should have done this yesterday" or "I should have been more careful last year", then you will realize that, when you had the opportunity, you let it slip by, always saying: "I'll do it tomorrow" or next month or next year!

Here is some simple advice from the Master:

Spend half an hour alone with yourself soon after waking.

Use part of this time for contemplation, for prayer, and the rest of the time reflect on the purpose of your life and where your duty lies.

Do not allow the mind to say you cannot spare this time.

If you persist in this, you will find that the mind learns to enjoy this half hour.

Spend a few minutes alone before going to bed at night.

Now review the day, see how much of your precious life you wasted, how you "slipped" from the resolves made in the morning, and how you can correct this so that you once more regain self-control, self-confidence, and a purposeful direction in your life.

The only way to make the best of today, is to live in the present.

28th May

I am convinced that a healthy mind in a healthy body enables the soul of man to radiate peace and harmony.

The distinction between body, mind and soul is, from one point of view, artificial. The soul, when it wants to think, extends itself as mental substance, and when it wants to function in the physical universe “becomes” the body.

It is possible for the body to grow old without the soul undergoing senility, for the soul is birthless, deathless and ageless.

When the body naturally grows old, the soul, properly trained, might detach itself from the body, gradually, and enjoy its own power and bliss.

Unnatural functioning of the physical organism is bound to impinge on the mind and soul, hence evil habits are dangerous.

As you think you become.

Body and mind together affect your personality.

Yoga is designed to promote the healthy functioning of the body and mind.

When the brain is unclouded, the nerves are not in a state of tension, and the liver is healthy.

You discover that you are at one with your neighbor.

You are fearless, because you have come face to face with the imperishable you.

You are not arrogant.

You are extremely humble for you see that the lowliest person in the world is you in another form.

29th May

What was the origin of Hinduism?

Originally it was not called Hinduism - it had no need for a name, for it did not recognize another, nor did it antagonize another.

Hence we assert that it had its origin in God and his relation with his own creation.

Who was its founder?

God, who incarnates himself periodically in order to revive "its" spirit.

What is the textbook of Hinduism?

Nominally it is the Veda, which consists of metaphysical knowledge, but practically is the book of life itself.

What are its tenets?

They are covered by the word dharma.

Dharma is a power, a force, a shakti that bears, upholds, uplifts, preserves, sustains, protects and exalts.

It is God's own power, for He alone protects us and exalts us.

His power sustains and preserves the whole universe, including man.

His is the magnetic power that eventually draws the human soul to himself in self-realization.

In the "insentient" sectors of creation this dharma acts as the force of gravitation, as electromagnetic waves.

In sentient creatures this same force manifests as true unselfish love.

Hence it is a religion of love.

It needed, needs and will need no name.

It has to be experienced and expressed in wordless, eloquent action.

30th May

Some magicians walk, work and drive blindfolded.

Some animals can see even in dense darkness, but some human beings are blind, although there is light and they have eyes. Man stumbles from one blunder to an even greater one.

Every remedy he invents proves to be worse than the disease.

Only in the light of wisdom will he discern the middle path.

There was a time when man was illiterate, uncivilized, and used sign language and stone implements.

His world consisted only of immediate neighbors.

He was unable to commit wholesale genocide and fought only in self-defense.

Mankind has swung to the other extreme, and now we hate people we have not met, who are unaware of our existence, because they do not share our faith, beliefs or physical features.

Man has broken the shackles of slavery, but he has carried this "independence" so far that he is unable to live in peace.

He does not possess the light of wisdom or discrimination in which alone he shall have power (without desiring destruction), freedom, good neighborliness, learning with humility, and compassion, which are essential if man is to survive as a civilized and progressive force.

We need that light, and we pray to the Lord that he command once again "Let there be Light", and there shall be light.

31st May

God is omnipresent.

God alone exists.

God pervades all that exists.

He is the very soul of existence.

Give up the idea that you are different from another.

Realize that, in and through these different forms, there is one supreme God.

Give up desire, anger and greed, for these prevent you from the realization of the one God.

This does not mean that you should shut yourself away in a room and think only of God, for God is omnipresent.

Do your duty in the world, without attachment, without desire and greed.

These great truths should form part of our lives; otherwise we are worse than we were when we were ignorant of them.

A man who is ignorant may find the truth one day, but the man who thinks he knows everything is far from God.

We need both worldly and spiritual knowledge.

Worldly knowledge enables us to overcome the difficulties of this world.

Spiritual knowledge enables us to realize the self, God, atman and thus become immortal.

Therefore, serve all, love all.

Study the scriptures and meditate upon them.

Be charitable and realize the omnipresence of God.

1st June

My Master, Swami Sivananda enjoined upon His followers this sacred duty:

“Never to hurt others’ feelings. This is culture, all else is hypocrisy.”

Our entire personality, thoughts, words and deeds, must be cultured.

This is only possible if we rightly understand what is meant by culture.

Culture is the fruit of the influence upon nature of human intelligence and will.

It is seen in a garden, a garland of flowers, literature, fine arts, science and in philosophy.

Man’s intelligence evolves out of chaos, beauty evolves out of disorder.

Man's will transforms potentiality into actuality.

The wise man recognizes that even his intelligence and other faculties are but gifts of the supreme being > and that it is his duty to make proper use of them.

He knows that, used properly, they will grow (develop) and become powerful and fruitful.

This is the purpose and the goal of human life.

The goal of the body is the grave or the crematorium; but the goal of the soul is God or perfection.

“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your father in heaven is perfect.”

In our endeavor to reach this perfection, we serve humanity.

This is culture, this is religion.

2nd June

A sage knows that matter and spirit are two poles of the same being - that both of them blend into one consciousness, which transcends but includes both.

Matter is the superficial appearance; spirit (as the indweller of each object in nature) is the superior appearance.

When these two are grasped together, there is one consciousness.

Material instruments can analyze gross matter and discover its nature and the laws that govern it.

Keen intelligence can analyze the spirit that dwells in all the objects of creation, and understand its nature and function.

The one consciousness cannot be thus analyzed, either by physical instruments or by intellection, for it is the supreme subject of all existence.

The one consciousness can, however, be intuitively realized in a state of consciousness where neither the senses nor the mind function.

For then consciousness exists as itself, not modified into matter, nor multiplied into the many indwelling souls.

In that state there is neither subject nor object, hence the difficulty of proving it either physically or logically.

Mind cannot be measured, nor chemically analyzed.

3rd June

A very holy man pointed out, "Fear is the first product of duality."

The realization of non-duality is yoga.

Any attempt to bring duality in again, to split up yoga in the name of yoga, is absurd.

Yoga is harmony - harmony that already exists.

Any attempt to create harmony is dis-harmony.

If you consider yourself a man of God and see two people fighting, you may feel impelled to butt in and stop them.

If they ignore your peace-making efforts, you join the quarrel, and matters become worse.

You can never bring about peace by any kind of violence.

You and I cannot create harmony, bring about unity, or non-duality, because there is no need, no possibility for this.

It is already there.

But what you and I can and must do is observe how and where this oneness has been disrupted.

I must learn to observe myself, and see exactly how and where this harmony, this oneness, this love, got disrupted.

If one sincerely and seriously carries out this observation, then it does not take a split second to realize that the break happens the moment the feeling "I am" comes up, that thought, mental modification, creates the "you", and there is conflict.

"I" is immediately afraid of "you".

That fear generates conflict, violence, hatred.

4th June

Meditation is the direct immediate observation of the arising of the “I”, the ego, without a mediator.

A mediator is merely another distraction.

Even words, descriptions of meditation, may be distractions.

Meditation is observation, without descriptions of any type that will give you an image of what it “should be”.

What you and I practice while we are seated in a meditation posture is meant as a help.

But even while talking, while eating, while looking at anything, one should watch the arising of the “I”.

Where does this feeling, the thought, “I am talking, I am seeing him,” spring from?

This questioning is to be done continuously, not only in the morning and the evening.

There is the assurance of the great masters (which can again be a danger) that it is possible for us to extend this consciousness through to our dreams.

If we continually observe the arising of the ego-sense during our waking hours, whatever we are doing, then even while dreaming there is the enquiry, “Who is dreaming, to whom is the dream occurring?”

So eventually even while one sleeps, there is this continuing self-consciousness.

This continuous awareness, which runs through all states of consciousness, is called samadhi, the fourth state of consciousness.

5th June

You and I are one.

There is this oneness alone in reality - but there is some mysterious loss of memory.

Anything that helps to bring about the remembering of what has been temporarily forgotten, is called yoga sadhana, yoga abhyasa - the practice of yoga.

Having heard that, I am sure the question is itching in all of us, "What does one do?"

We must be careful here.

The danger lies in excessive concern about our doing (and not doing), which may then become a routine performance.

As soon as the emphasis is on what I do, it is likely to become a ritual, and I tend to see myself as the "doer".

We feel that, unless we do something, we cannot get from here, our present position, to there, that state of yoga.

Study all the scriptures as a bee collects nectar from the different flowers, and makes sweet honey.

But beware - do not manufacture poison.

The bee does not do it.

6th June

Patanjali, in his Yoga Sutras, gives us quite a number of exercises.

He describes astanga yoga.

This is the yoga which has eight limbs, not steps.

The limbs that together constitute yoga are yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi.

Samadhi, direct experience of truth, is like dhyana or meditation, also a limb of the body of yoga.

I may pretend that whatever I am and do in my life, as long as I sit and meditate for half an hour every morning, I can call myself a yogi.

But this is like my amputated leg telling you, "I am Swami Venkatesananda."

In fact, it is cut off from the main body, and is nothing but a rotten piece of flesh.

One limb does not make a person.

Similarly, it is all the eight limbs together that constitute yoga practice.

We cannot claim that any part of the body is more important than any other.

It would not do to say, "Swami is a nice fellow. To have him with me, I will take the head home, as the head is the most important part. The rest can be picked up later."

One cannot isolate one limb and call it yoga.

7th June

According to yoga philosophy, asana is any position or posture in which one is able to sit, firmly and comfortably.

If I am seated in a comfortable way, then it is possible for me directly to observe the rising of the ego-sense, and suddenly to become aware that it is a shadow.

When the shadow is gone, there is realization of oneness.

When light meets a shadow, the shadow vanishes, leaving the truth unaffected.

These yoga postures are given to us to awaken in us the truth of this harmony, this oneness of existence, the harmony that is built into everybody, because it is omnipresent, cosmic.

The body too functions on the principle of this harmony.

Without harmony life is impossible.

If I understand this, I understand the yoga asanas, their beauty, their limitation, the body, the body language - and the fear of old age, sickness and death disappears.

8th June

What do you call ill-health?

It is really the harmonizing effort of the intelligence in the body that is sometimes misinterpreted as illness.

You have a headache.

It followed two late nights with too many drinks.

Enough for two days!

So, you rest a day.

Harmony is restored.

It balances out.

You eat something you should not have taken, or you overeat, and the intelligence, the life-force within you springs into activity.

It creates a bad taste or ulcers in your mouth that stop you from eating for the present.

It is like the road sign warning, "Road closed - men at work", telling you, "Wait a while - repair work in progress."

It is yet another attempt of the vital force in you to re-establish this balance, this harmony.

When harmony is restored, it does not mean that there will be no more upsets, pains and aches.

There are a number of cults that claim that, when you meditate, your headaches will disappear, and all indigestion will go.

Impossible. And what for?

9th June

Probably what is known as pranayama is meant, not so much to cleanse your lungs and to help purify your blood, but to steady what the yogis call the nadis. These are very difficult to demonstrate.

Some people have translated nadis as nerves; others have called them arteries and veins.

But if you look at the root of the word, nadi means something like river that which flows.

It is like a light ray, something that flows onwards, which cannot be said to apply to a nerve.

Nadis can be vaguely compared to the sound waves picked up by the radio. Something like that happens within you, and that is the nadi.

The pranayama exercises are supposed to purify the nadis.

When you are doing yoga postures, you are in fact being spiritually awakened.

That your body is also benefited is a side effect, an incidental fringe benefit, not the real one.

In the same way, when you do pranayama exercises, the nadis are purified and the mind and nerves are calmed; but these too are merely fringe benefits.

The pranayama exercises have a tremendous meaning in spiritual life.

Patanjali describes the fruit of pranayama thus: "When you practice pranayama, the veil that covers the inner light is removed."

10th June

If you will consider pranayama as mere breathing exercises, you will find the condition of your lungs is helped and nothing more.

There have been great spiritual masters in India who have roundly criticized, if not exactly, condemned yoga postures - laughed at them as a silly waste of time - but even they approved of and practiced pranayama.

So we conclude that pranayama has a spiritual value beyond the mere physical and physiological one.

The mind is enabled, by the practice of pranayama, to go on to the practice of concentration and meditation.

Concentration is a focusing of the attention in such a way that the mind does not wander in all directions.

It is as it were, bound to the object of attention.

We may use a mantra to focus attention.

I tell myself that all I want to do is to repeat the mantra.

I give the mind the instruction, "Hold on to this."

For those of you attending meditation classes, it would be interesting to watch how few seconds the attention can remain focused without wandering.

After twenty or thirty seconds, the attention is gone - no one knows how.

So one tries to limit it to a particular focal point.

That is concentration.

11th June

When the attention is absorbed, it is meditation.

For example, when I keep on looking at you, it is concentration.

When I am completely absorbed in looking at you, it is meditation.

And when I go deeper and these three (I-looking-you) become one, so that it is as though you alone are the reality and "I" is non-existent, that is samadhi.

These are again all words - which I hope do not mean much to you.

When these three, concentration, meditation and samadhi are practiced simultaneously, there is intense inner awareness, illumination or enlightenment.

We can dispose of one more question that people ask.

"Is yoga, especially meditation, like hypnosis?"

The yogi replies, "No."

In this ocean of one cosmic being, the wave has already hypnotized itself into an independent entity.

You really are the cosmic being, but you have hypnotized yourself into a self-limited personality.

Therefore the yoga of meditation is not self-hypnotization, but self-dehypnotization.

But there is a danger in being promised any reward for the serious practice of meditation, in that we may be caught in a hunt for results.

This is due to a basic insincerity.

If the fundamental sincerity is not there, then one's life on the path of yoga is full of difficulties from day to day.

12th June

When I fall and sprain an ankle, will thinking of God fix the ankle?

If I try to think that the trouble does not exist, it may work for a short while, but as soon as I come out of my autosuggestion or self-hypnosis, it will hurt all the more.

The pain in the ankle only tells me that I twisted it and should lie down and give it some rest, so that the repair work can go on.

It is not at all an undesirable feature, but the body communicating with you.

If there is pain somewhere, give the aching part a rest.

If the stomach hurts, it asks, "Please keep off food for a while.

Everything will come all right if I have some rest."

Disease is something different.

It means there is tension within.

What does tension mean?

When you hold a piece of rubber, you can note that there is tension as the two ends are pulled in opposite directions.

This happens to me when I sit here "practicing meditation".

I go up and enter the transcendental realms lovely - but really my whole heart is rooted in earthiness, in pleasures of the senses.

Naturally there is tension - the body pulls me down and the head pulls me up.

There is a tearing in the process.

This is what can be called disease.

It is not really physical illness, though the body may manifest the inner diseased condition of a tense torn mind, of confusion and doubt.

13th June

One has to come to the end of one's own tether.

One must come to the understanding, the insight that enough fish has been eaten, enough chicken has been swallowed.

Leave them free to swim in the ocean or to run around in the courtyard.

Enough alcohol has been tasted and enough cigarettes have been smoked.

The same thing has been repeated again and again - it has become boring.

Let us forget it and try something else.

Here is yoga, here is meditation.

Even if it leads nowhere else, at least it does not cause the destruction of all those living things and the intoxication of the body.

We want to have pleasures - be it chocolate, food or sexual enjoyments.

But why is it that this pleasure compels me to indulge in it?

Who is the boss?

Pleasures, not we, are the real enjoyers, and at our expense.

Natural appetites are not cravings.

We have to eat in order to live.

The natural progression of starvation is towards death.

But a craving is a perversity.

It makes the whole mind restless, and anything that makes the mind restless is harmful.

14th June

Disease, doubt, and restlessness of the mind are all obstacles and they manifest in us because of lack of one-pointed devotion.

Remember the biblical commandment: "Love the Lord with all thy heart, all thy mind, and all thy might and being."

We must apply that wholeheartedness, not only to devotion to God, but to everything we do.

That is yoga.

The whole life is yoga when real integration exists in us, and we are able to apply a totally integrated personality, to whatever we do.

The entire message of yoga is contained in the single commandment to love with one's entire being.

Patanjali echoes this in his Sutras when he says, "In order to remove the obstacles on the path of yoga, an integral approach is necessary."

Whatever I may practice, if I am not sincere in the sense of wholesouled dedication and an integrated approach, yoga is not possible.

Yoga is integration, wholeness.

Sincerity here means that I do not only accept it intellectually, but also emotionally, with my whole being.

If there is insincerity, then only part of me accepts.

I may feel it is nice to practice yoga, but when it comes to rational understanding, it seems so crazy.

I carry on doing it because I like it, but there is division here.

15th June

One is able to assent to yoga philosophy rationally, with one's intellect, but one lacks the passion of emotional assent to practice it.

It sounds very good, it is logical, and I understand the value of doing it.

I have a mind to do it - but no heart.

The mind understands, the intellect accepts yoga, but something within says, "No," or the opposite seems so tantalizing, so delightful, that it appears to be a great pity to spend one's life standing on one's head, holding one's nose, and meditating.

It does not appear to appeal to the emotions.

Yet it is the emotional assent that provides the energy for what we do.

When the emotions are stirred, they provide an almost constantly increasing supply of energy.

When it comes to intellectual comprehension and dry discussion, the head becomes heavy, the mind gets dull.

There is no energy.

It is the emotion that is needed to supply the energy.

Therefore if there is not a wedding of intellect and emotion, then there is no energy available for the yoga that you and I practice.

16th June

What is God?

The God of yoga philosophy is not a puppet, nicely wrapped with a ribbon, like a Christmas parcel and guaranteed for genuineness.

The God of yoga philosophy is a special being who enjoys the distinction of not being subject to the illusion to which you and I are subject.

The "I" is a creature of ignorance.

God is not subject to ignorance.

But God is not a total stranger to you - God is very much like you.

In order to find out what God is, you must first of all know what sort of person you are, who you are - not the body, not the living being, the flesh and bones, but the inner-spiritual entity.

God is not so different from this inner spiritual entity.

But whereas your spiritual or psychological personality is subject to ignorance and therefore egoism, God is not.

If you enter into the spirit of this, without any prejudice, it seems to be a beautiful way of looking for help in transcending oneself.

I see that I am trapped in my own ignorance, egoism.

I practice yoga, I meditate, I enquire into the nature of the self - but it is always "I" who is doing all these things.

How can I understand "I"?

How can the ego know itself?

The ego understanding itself may be nothing more than a projection of itself.

17th June

Japa means repetition of a mantra.

Repeating Om is japa.

That is easy. "Om ... Om... Om..."

It is so tranquil, so beautiful.

But it can also be mind-dulling, deadening.

The mechanical repetition of a mantra may not produce much of an effect.

If one goes on for half an hour or more saying "Om ... Om ... Om ...", even if you are on the verge of madness, or greatly disturbed, I predict that you will fall asleep.

It does not matter whether you believe in its use as a verbal indicator, as the name of God, if you sit or lie and keep on repeating Om, you will inevitably drop off to sleep.

So it has some effect - to produce sleep and to run the manufacturers of tranquillizers out of business.

I am not criticizing those who do japa mechanically, but I am pointing out that the mechanical saying of Om has no spiritual value.

The spiritual meaning is different.

The Sanskrit for the English word "meaning" is artha.

Now what is the artha of Om?

What does the label "Om" signify?

What is the substance it denotes?

It is for each one to find out.

18th June

The word mantra can be interpreted in many different ways.

“Om Namah Shivaya” can be said as a mantra, and some people believe that the very structure of these words has a distinct mystic significance, so that the repetition of the mantra builds up a psychic deity within you. Possible.

The Jewish “Adonai Elohaina Adonai Echad”, can also be used as a mantra.

A mantra maybe merely a powerful spiritual instruction.

It is not only a mystic formula, but may also be a sincere piece of advice, a counsel or teaching, which can rouse the whole being.

If the mantra is repeated as a verbal indicator of God, while looking for the substance it represents, the mind will become calm, one-pointed, awake and alert.

Added to this, there will be the passion of inquiry, if one is sincerely and seriously searching for the substance.

It is traditionally forbidden to reveal one’s mantra, as also any spiritual practice.

Through discussion with others there is danger that someone might interfere with one’s inner feelings.

This has led to the advice not to talk about your spiritual practice.

The whole-souled acceptance and emotional participation in what you are doing is tremendously important.

The effort I put into finding the substance of the mantra leads me to the ultimate transcendence of the ego.

19th June

I am mentally repeating the mantra Om, and I hear the sound Om.

I ask, "Where does the sound come from? Where does it happen?"

Here your emotions must be deeply roused, you must be terribly enthusiastic, like the Hasidim who dance and sing for love of God in joy.

The right spirit is a feeling of "I love it".

Be happy, smile, but be deadly earnest, sincere and serious.

This combination of sincere earnestness, with great joviality and cheerfulness, is also yoga.

I am very serious about searching for and also discovering the substance, yet I am quite relaxed, not at all worried or anxious.

As I am mentally repeating Om with each inhalation and exhalation, I can hear the sound within myself.

That is strange.

We know that sound is produced when one object strikes another, or when wind passes down a tube or air through the voice box, but how is it that I hear Om when I am saying it mentally?

Where and how does this happen?

What are the elements involved?

Is there vibration somewhere in my voice box, or is there another vocal chord somewhere in my brain?

I am arguing, considering, trying to analyze logically.

This is the analytical approach to enquiry into japa.

20th June

After a while the analytical approach to japa becomes a search, a research.  
You go deep within and try to locate the sound.  
Analytically you cannot possibly solve the riddle as to how the sound is produced.  
Therefore one abandons the logical, rational approach, and engages oneself in enquiry, which is the next stage of meditation.  
“Where is the sound arising? Where is it heard?”  
In this search the direction is inward, the mind is one-pointed, all distraction is ignored.  
With intensity of concentration, no distraction of attention is possible, and all the obstacles fall away.  
The mind is quiet and peaceful.  
In that complete mental tranquility, there is an experience of great bliss and joy.  
This happiness is comparable to what happens in sleep, but one's consciousness is fully alert.  
Even Om gets merged with “I am”.  
The Om sound has merged in you, and just the feeling “I am” is there.  
Not very difficult to experience.  
“Who is this 'I'?”  
Even the mantra is forgotten.  
The mantra becomes one with you, part of you, and the enquiry into the self is pursued.  
“What is experiencing the ‘I am-ness’?”  
The individual has no help at all but through enlightenment, the “I” explodes and the wave subsides into the ocean.  
God’s grace lifts you out of all this into the ocean of oneness.  
And that is the end of the quest!

21st June

Yoga philosophy seems to suggest the contrary of world denial.  
It tells us not that life is a shadow, but that the ego is a shadow.  
Not that the world is unreal, but that unworldliness is.  
This tape-recorder is a tape-recorder.  
Nobody can say it is non-existent.  
I cannot claim that the wall here is an illusion and walk through it.  
The yogi is not a dreamy wool-gatherer.  
What yoga philosophy demands is, "Look within. See, observe your ego."  
Why should I abolish it?  
What must I abolish?  
The thing to be eliminated must be real.  
I cannot destroy a non-existent entity.  
I cannot fight a shadow.  
Therefore yoga philosophy, yoga practice, teaches me merely how to look at this  
"me".

The "I" is the measure with which we measure all else.  
If the weighing scale is not set properly, it will only give us a wrong reading!  
Know thy self!

22nd June

What you call the seer is nothing but the action, the event of seeing.

All our yoga practices are supposed to lead us to this realization that seeing is not the doing of "I", but a happening.

What lifts the legs are the abdominal muscles, not the "I".

The "I" is only a mischief-maker.

Most of those who try difficult postures, know that the "I" with its own projections, is merely a nuisance, an obstacle.

When the projection of one's own self-image creeps into it, one becomes nervous, excited and anxious.

One wants to excel the other and gets into trouble.

The alternative is letting the energy and intelligence in each part of the body do what they want to.

Then the posture is perfect.

It is the best you can do at the moment.

There is no such thing as failure really.

There is only failure to do, not failure to achieve.

Success is always there.

So long as one does anything, success follows.

To succeed is "to come after".

The outcome follows the earlier action.

It is when we do not start at all, when nothing is done, that there is failure.

It is this fear of what is called failure that makes one feel ambition is necessary, that without the driving force of the urge for achievement, we would all be cabbages.

23rd June

We have been taught that we have acquired a great amount of knowledge without which our life would be unbearable.

I doubt this.

Looking at the achievements of the most humanitarian of the scientists, the medical scientists, (leaving alone the pollution creators - engineers, automobile designers and manufacturers) they are right now busy studying one cell through the microscope.

They want to know how it multiplies, what a virus is, what causes cancer, and how a cell is attacked and responds to invasion.

They want to know what genes are and how heredity is transmitted, how the brain functions, and many other things.

Medical science is still probing into the nature of the intelligence that you are full of.

It is not going to create any more of it.

The simple action of lifting an arm, which you and I do effortlessly, unthinkingly, is studied by many mighty scientists.

They are eager to discover what exactly makes the arm flex, and get Nobel Prizes for such investigations.

And the arm simply bends, life flows on, is, in its totality.

That is yoga.

24th June

Why do people practice yoga?

This question arises in the minds of the practitioners themselves, unfortunately!

Because we have come to accept that every action is invariably motivated and goal-oriented, that every event has a cause, we ask this question.

It is not ambition that brought "me" into being, gave birth to me.

I was born without any regard whatsoever to my feelings.

I am not eager to die; yet I am bound to die, very much against my wishes or private feelings about it.

When these two fundamental events are independent of my ambition, why should I assume that ambition is inherent in life?

Even so, the natural functions of the body take no notice of my ambitions!

I may be ambitious to hold my breath for half an hour, so that I may be acclaimed as a great yogi, but my body does not heed.

Digestion, circulation and sensation, as well as growth and decay, go on naturally.

Ambition is powerless to alter them.

Except in a destructive way!

Ambition always leads to frustration.

If this does not happen in the lives of some, it is only because death overtakes frustration.

25th June

Our philosophy of life, the very mainsprings of our existence, is polluted by ambition.

“Is it not natural?” we ask.

We think that even the bird has some motive in waking up at 4 a.m. and singing.

“How can life go on if we abandon all our ambitions?”

“How could there be progress in the world if the people had not ambitiously worked for and created the cars and planes, teacups and television sets?”

When we thus assume the paramount importance of ambition, we are either blind to its destructiveness, or accept it as the inevitable price one pays for progress.

It is necessary to distinguish ambition from action.

Action is natural, inherent in life; just as “eating” (and therefore hunger) is natural to all living beings.

But ambition is not natural, even as “craving for chocolate” is not natural.

26th June

Understanding of this truth restores wisdom to the inner consciousness and the energy moves naturally, generating appropriate actions, without being deflected by ambition or inhibition.

The bird awakes without ambition.

It sings without inhibition.

Meditation at dawn dispels the darkness of ignorance.

When the sun of self-knowledge arises, the ever-existent reality shines.

It we live only to promote others' happiness, we need never grow old.

This doctrine is often twisted to appear as though it involves large gifts and sacrifices.

It is nothing of the kind!

You can promote the others' happiness by just a kindly smile and a loving look.

It can bring sunshine, not only into their lives, but also into their very souls!

Radiate happiness, and you are doing greater service than do all saints and sages in the world put together.

27th June

Frustration is directly related to ambition: it is the other “side” of ambition.

It thus destroys me and the world at large.

When the several conflicting and competing ambitions of people oppose one another, there is fear, hate, violence and destruction.

This is abundantly evident in the world today.

Wisdom, therefore, recognizes not only that ambition is destructive, but also that it is unnatural and unnecessary.

The wise man turns his gaze within to see the source of this ambition.

What is this ambition made of?

Naturally, of the very substances that exist in each one of us - energy (life-force) and intelligence.

This intelligence is somehow veiled from an awareness of itself, and therefore entertains the wrong notion that it is an independent individual, whose survival as such is possible only by overcoming “others”, the “others” being similar individuals, which in self-ignorance one feels are different and often hostile to “oneself”.

Blinded by this self-ignorance, man becomes ambitious, and the energy flows in destructive channels.

28th June

Any motivation in the practice of yoga becomes almost immediately counter-productive.

Indeed, it is obvious that it is some sort of a motivation that brings the student to yoga in the first place.

But a wise teacher would do well to point out immediately that yoga being the antidote to the ills caused by motivation and a goal-oriented life, seeking a goal for the practice of yoga defeats its purpose.

People are ill, physically and mentally, because, instead of living, they are constantly struggling for something.

Living does not involve struggle, contrary to popular misconception.

The simplest form of “living” is joyous and blissful, and life is intelligent, wise and alert enough to avoid pain and unhappiness instantly.

It is some sort of twisted motivation that causes pain and suffering, and then rationalizes such pain and suffering, even to the point of exalting them.

29th June

Right from the very beginning of the practice of yoga, the student discovers that the intelligence in the body is capable of meeting every situation that arises in life from moment to moment.

This is the “purpose” of the yoga asanas (postures).

During pranayama the yogi again discovers the great power and vigilance of the life force, which is beyond the ego-sense, and which alone enables us to live.

In meditation the yogi discovers (uncovers) self-ignorance.

Then, self-knowledge (knowledge as the self or self as pure knowing) alone is.

This is freedom, liberation - which ever is and should, therefore, not be treated as the goal, nor as an idea.

There is not even a “rejection” of pain, but the realization that such rejection makes pain painful!

There is not the pursuit of pleasure, but the realization that it is the pursuit that makes pleasure pleasurable (and as its inevitable reaction, painful).

When there is neither rejection nor pursuit, life is liberated from the haunting shadows of ignorant notions.

There is enlightenment.

All life becomes divine life.

All this becomes clear only when one is able to observe the life of a great Master like Gurudev Swami Sivananda.

30th June

Yoga is the realization of God's Omnipresence.

Is it not real now?

It is, and so we say "God is Omnipresent".

But these are words, not the reality.

The actions of one to whom that statement is real are karma yoga.

But, karma yoga is often confused with laudable social service.

One who lives (and more often dies) for a cause or another person is said to be a karma yogi.

One who does his duty as defined by some others is regarded as a karma yogi.

In God or cosmic consciousness there is inherent energy of life.

There is motion or activity.

Natural motion arises in its source, moves in it, and merges into it.

It has no motivation, no goal.

In it, therefore, there is no sorrow.

But, why is our own life haunted by sorrow all the time?

"I am not what I want to be".

How do you know what you want to be?

If you are not in the refrigerator, you will not know how cold it is!

You are what you want to be already.

Because of the opening and closing of the refrigerator door, that inner state is disturbed.

Identifying yourself with the distraction, you feel you are not what you want to be.

That is all.

1st July

In a manner of speaking, the energy in cosmic consciousness condenses to form an individual (indivisible dual, indivisible from cosmic consciousness and only apparently dual).

The individual is nothing but cosmic consciousness.

However, with the formation of the individual, the energy-field around it becomes weaker, and there is an apparently low-density consciousness, which creates the notion of “ignorance” or darkness.

The individual within it is enclosed in a shell, as it were; and it assumes independence.

In the infinite consciousness there are infinite such individuals.

The movement of energy continues in the infinite consciousness and the individual is also involved in it.

Unable to realize this (on account of the surrounding low density consciousness), the individual assumes that such movement of energy, or the activity that is implied by it, emanates from itself.

The individual invents a motivation, too: “I do this” seems to be incomplete, and therefore he adds, “because I want that”.

This feverish activity, with its selfish motivation, keeps the individual so intensely occupied that he has neither the time nor the energy nor the motivation to examine the whole position and ask, “Am I the real doer of these actions?”

2nd July

The movement of energy into the shell of individuality also brings experiences with it.

Pure experiencing is pure consciousness.

But when the experience touches the individual who is busy with his selfish and goal-motivated activity, the individual classifies these experiences into desirable and undesirable.

Two more motivations are added to his busy-ness - the seeking of the desirable experiences and the avoidance of the undesirable.

He is unable to see that these experiences come and go in utter disregard of his wishes!

Harassed by all this, the individual, imprisoned in the shell, invents concepts of happiness and unhappiness, damnation and redemption, God and Satan, heaven and hell, and believes that all of them exist in truth.

They exist only within the shell and only for him!

Within the shell, this individual spends countless ages, apparently passing from one embodiment to another.

3rd July

None of this cancels the Omnipresence of God or cosmic consciousness.

All actions are movements of the energy inherent in it.

All experiencing is pure consciousness.

The realization of this truth breaks the shell of individuality, as it were, and the individual is delivered from self-imposed ignorance.

Karma yoga is that wise blending of right action and right spirit, which enables the individual to see the truth.

Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita extols yajna (sacrifice), dana (charity) and tapas (austerity) as the essential ingredients of right action.

A simple life avoids the extremes of self-denial and self-indulgence, and kindles the lamp of eternal vigilance, with which the subtle middle path is sought.

Charity destroys greed and reminds us that we have created nothing and own nothing.

Sacrifice turns the inner gaze on the real doer of actions, and thus drives selfishness away - all actions then become sacred, which is what sacrifice means.

4th July

One continues to play the game of life.

Life goes on.

But if the heat of motivation has been turned off, there is a lot of time, energy and incentive to examine the nature of action.

In this self-examination one sees that automatic and mechanical action is blind and stupid.

An awareness arises.

It begins to spy on the hidden springs of action.

Action is motivated by thought and by emotions or feelings.

Motivated action brings reaction, which is mostly painful.

When such motivation is dismissed, there is enlightened action, the action of one's own being, which is cosmic.

It is right action, spontaneous action, creative action.

This is inherent in cosmic consciousness, and beyond the limitation of individuality.

Every action is regarded as an act of worship of the Omnipresent God.

Action is movement of energy, which arises in God, moves in God, and merges in God.

In such action there is neither sin nor sorrow.

5th July

The word “bhakti” means “division” as well as “devotion”, and throughout the practice of Bhakti yoga one notices the inter-action of both division and devotion. Bhakti does not create division, but is realistic enough to acknowledge that it exists.

Wisdom leads the division towards devotion, which eliminates division.

Duality or diversity is what we become aware of to begin with.

Who created all this and why - is not for the human intellect to question.

“God created the world.”

Why? Only He can answer.

It is perhaps like a cruise: you commence the cruise from the homeport, travel around the world, and then return to the home-port!

No one seriously asks “Why”.

Such power to create is inherent in God.

God's self-realization is the world!

This is seen by man as duality or diversity.

When a ship sails through the ocean, there is unity in the water ahead of the ship, there is division around it, churning in the wake, and then homogeneity again.

Division is churning.

Devotion restores the homogeneity.

Man's self-realization is God.

6th July

In our own daily experience of sleep there is oneness, but without the experience of realization of oneness.

The desire to experience it awakens you.

When you wake up, the unity is veiled.

Sleep (as also peace and happiness that prevail in sleep) is non-volitional.

Volition veils.

On waking, you seek the experience of oneness, peace and happiness, where there is no veil.

The world seems to be “the obvious answer”.

However, neither oneness nor real peace nor lasting happiness are available in the world.

You then return to the source (sleep) but this time with full awareness.

This is bhakti yoga.

Division and devotion prevail all the way in bhakti yoga.

At the very start, the devotee notices that the mind has cleverly divided the whole world into “what I like” and “what I dislike”.

Devotion eliminates this, by making the mind no-mind, but pure love.

Hence, the devotee trains himself to like what the mind dislikes (spiritual practice) and to dislike what the mind likes (sensual pleasure).

As long as the mind functions creating divisions, the devotee avoids evil actions (which are found to be pleasure-seeking actions) and resorts to good actions (which aim at the realization of God or oneness).

His goal is to eliminate all such division and see God in all.

7th July

God is in all, indeed. But, is this real to you now, or do you only think it is so? To begin with, be devoted to, and worship what is really God to your mind, heart and entire being.

That which is egoless is divine.

Such are the “images” of God and the holy men.

Worship the Lord in them; this is devotion.

However, be aware of the material (in the images) and the human (in the holy men) aspects in all these; this is the division-aspect of the same bhakti.

Choose any object you like to worship and to meditate upon, but only for the sake of God, and not because you like it.

Devotion or love is said to be easy, because it is self-evident.

You love your friend, child, wife, Master, etc.

But, you should become aware of it as love; this awareness is division.

Then this love should be sublimated into devotion to the divine presence in all of them.

Thus, natural human love is elevated to the divine love.

You then love God as your friend, etc. and love all as the manifestations of God.

8th July

Primary devotion arises only by the Grace of God or the Holy Ones.

Devotion in which division is absent is not for the mind or the ego-sense to “achieve”.

Primary devotion is also called supreme love, total self-surrender or total absorption.

Self-surrender is liberation, whoever or whatever one surrenders to. when the “self” is surrendered, what is, is God.

A word of caution with regard to spiritual experiences.

As with human love, so with God-love.

Rationalization kills it.

The moment you become aware of the exalted privilege, it is taken away.

The ego shall not be permitted to welcome God.

But even when you think that the experience has ceased, it has only been assimilated.

There is no loss, in the words of Krishna.

9th July

Once you begin to think of Gurudev Sivananda, remember Him, remind yourself of the way in which He laughed and lectured, the way in which He smiled and frowned, your whole being is flooded by reminiscences, which keep flowing as if a dam had burst.

Sometimes we are tempted to compare Gurudev with this or that holy man.

But truly He was incomparable.

In fact, he was indefinable and therefore unpredictable.

He had no stereotyped behavior, set responses or rigid routines.

In Him contradictions were reconciled into a complete wholeness, and the

changes blended into an unchanging light that defied description.

There was no dogma in Him, and yet He was not necessarily opposed to dogma.

He was not opposed to anything - no, not even to opposition!

He was incarnate Love, but that Love was unlike anything that you and I have experienced.

10th July

Unlike many other holy men of India, Swami Sivananda did not neglect the body.

There is no such thing as physical health.

Physical health includes mental health and spiritual health.

Health is wholeness - let us not divide it into physical health or mental health or spiritual health.

No picture does Him full justice.

Though there are some excellent likenesses of the Master, I do not think that any picture can really bring out the radiance that He was.

Even physically He was extremely attractive, robust.

A figure which, if it had belonged to someone else, might have been ugly and uncouth, added to His charm, His majesty.

Even the skin was clear, clean, sparkling, and well maintained.

He did not neglect cleanliness of body or of clothes.

Even when he was not well there was a glow, a radiance about him.

One had to feel it.

When you looked at Him, went near to Him, you felt the glow - something which was not derived from any kind of tonic, but which came from within.

There was an abundance of energy that filled Him and flowed from Him constantly.

11th July

In 1953 the Parliament of Religions was convened in the ashram.

For three days the whole ashram was humming with activity.

Hundreds of visitors had come.

Swami Sivananda lengthened the last day's program, so that everyone who wanted to speak could be accommodated.

The program concluded just past midnight, and then Swamiji retired.

One of the visitors, the speaker of the Indian Parliament, wanted to leave very early the next morning, and asked to have Swamiji's Darshan just before he left at 5 a.m.

We could hardly keep our eyes open when he called on the Master.

I was watching - there was no trace of fatigue on Swamiji's face.

It was as though He had never missed an hour's sleep in all His life - yet he had only gone to bed two or three hours earlier.

That was an extraordinary feature; however hard He worked - and please remember that He was in His sixties and we were only in our twenties - He had more bubbling energy than we had.

Energy filled Him and overflowed, filling us all with enthusiasm.

You may call this awakened kundalini, self-realization or anything you like.

12th July

This physical energy, mental energy, stamina, enabled Swami Sivananda, at 67, to go round the whole of India, to undertake an intensive two-month tour.

This was a superhuman achievement.

All this was due to the regular practice of pranayama, the regular practice of asanas, and a well-regulated life.

This still may not solve some problems.

We maybe practicing all the yoga asanas, we may be eating excellent food, but look at our faces - something that was seen in Swamiji's face is missing.

The Master would gather a crowd around him wherever He went.

We went to Dehra Dun, a town not far from the ashram.

As it was winter, Swamiji had a huge overcoat on, and all His other clothes were covered - you could not see that he was a Swami.

Yet, as He walked around the shopping center, quite a crowd gathered around him, for no reason.

They just wanted to talk to Him, to walk with Him.

That was all.

13th July

Radiance and extraordinary attractiveness were there, however ill Swami Sivananda's body was.

I am speaking not only of the ordinary little influenza; I am talking of when he was at death's door with a bout of typhoid.

He had been confined to bed for about 20 days.

He was not used to that.

So, one day he told some of us, "Ah, I think I am all right now.

Take Me to the verandah so that I can see the Ganges and the Himalayas."

We literally had to lift Him off the bed; He could not walk.

We brought Him outside and He sat in His easy chair.

If you looked at His face then, it was as though there was nothing wrong with Him.

He was radiant, beautiful, laughing and joking with us all.

After an hour or so, He asked to go back to bed.

He planted both His Feet on the floor and said, "Wait, I will try to get up myself."

He lifted Himself off, then collapsed back into the chair.

Probably you and I would have had a heart attack.

"Oh, what has happened to me? Twenty years ago I was so strong."

Regret, remorse, despair, depression.

But there was no hint of that.

As He collapsed, He started laughing, "Oh, My legs have lost their strength."

It had nothing to do with Him; the legs had lost their strength.

That is an extraordinary feature, where even an aging body does not dampen the spirit.

14th July

So the ringing voice is silent.

The majestic form has vanished.

We shall no more see the gigantic figure of Swami Sivananda, clad in orange, shod in canvas shoes, stride with measured long steps, bag in hand, ready to distribute fruit, wisdom and work to us, his beloved children.

That child-like giggling, with the tummy quaking with convulsions of joy, a laughter so wholesome that tears of joy bedimmed the sparkling eyes.

A laughter that radiated the bliss of God to all can be heard no more.

But the light of Sivananda is inextinguishable.

It shines in the heart of humanity today, without a lampshade, and so the brighter for it.

Gurudev is the manifestation of God; God is the supreme immutable reality.

He dwells in us.

The physical was his own Maya.

The impersonal reality is his own self.

The end is perhaps shocking.

But that is not the end.

It is a beginning.

The builder worked outside, He was on view.

He created an inside, and He has entered it.

Now He works inside, out of external view, but more truly and purposefully active therefore.

Gurudev has moulded us, given shape to shapeless masses, laid stone upon stone in us, and built a shrine, entered it and is now busy at work in there.

Look within, behold, Gurudev is within you!

15th July

Raja yoga, the royal road to self-knowledge is aptly termed “royal” because it is the most direct highway along which riding is smooth and swift.

In the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, there is indeed a chapter, on psychic powers. But there is also a warning that they distract our attention, and throw us into the old muddle again.

There is a word of caution, “Even if you have some power, do not exhibit it.”

The whole text (and hence the whole yoga philosophy) is an inspiring declaration that “The suffering that has not yet reached oneself should be avoided”.

Pushing sorrow away, however, does not do this; it is the pushing that makes it sorrow and undesirable.

What is sorrow?

Is it in the world, in the objects of the world, or is it in ourselves?

Surely, sorrow is experienced by us, within ourselves, by our own thinking.

The mind that thinks it is miserable, is miserable.

This is revealed by the fact that, when the mind is asleep and does not think, there is no sorrow.

16th July

The understanding of the unreality of division is meditation, the very heart of yoga.

When thought tries to grasp the experience, it creates the space, the division. As a result, there is the "I" and the "experience", which then further subdivides the experience as pleasure and pain, etc.

But, what is the real content of any "experience" (be it pleasure or pain)?

Is it not the intelligence inherent in the body and the mind?

This is reality - that that intelligence which is indivisible alone exists.

However, this does not mean that the "I" and the "you" and the million other "things" are utterly nonexistent.

They are like the ripples and the waves on the surface of the ocean.

They are currents and cross currents in the ocean.

There is constant movement within itself.

Even so, in this cosmos there is constant movement of energy.

Since the movement of energy takes place in pure intelligence (known as consciousness in mysticism) the manifestation of the energy becomes sentient.

One such manifestation is the thought "I am".

17th July

When the movement of cosmic energy passes through this thought “I am”, as it were, the “I am” experiences it as an experience at the receiving end, and as an expression at the giving end.

This is very much like the broadcasting station relaying an overseas broadcast: the local station receives and transmits.

Having thus divided such movements of energy into experiences and expressions, the I-am thinks, “I am the experiencer” and “I am the doer of actions”.

Soon, these two ramify into countless divisions and subdivisions of experiences and actions.

When in meditation it is directly realized that there is only one truth, and that that is movement of energy in cosmic intelligence, the false ego vanishes, and with it the division that it created.

There is pure experiencing alone, and that itself is pure and spontaneous action. This is liberation.

The cosmic intelligence is liberated from the false ego-sense and its own creatures, which are pain, sorrow, suffering, etc.

The movement of energy in cosmic consciousness or God is both pure experiencing (which is bliss) and pure spontaneous action (which is love).

18th July

Moral and psychological discipline is essential in every spiritual aspirant whatever path he chooses.

On the path of jnana or wisdom, it is indispensable.

There are no other guidelines, no guard against self-deception, and no preventative to perversion.

Hence, in ancient times, the truth was jealously guarded and imparted by an enlightened Guru to a qualified disciple.

The rest of the discipline in jnana yoga is a face-to-face dialogue, which is almost a confrontation.

The intensity of this dialogue is kept high by the intensity of the mutual affection between the Guru and the disciple, and their earnestness in the quest of truth.

The Guru is the omni-ever-present light of God, which is revealed to the disciplined disciple in response to the latter's longing for self-knowledge.

The Guru may appear in many forms, any form.

19th July

In the Kathopanishad, the Guru is “death”.

When the spiritual aspirant faces death with unflinching courage, and remains undetected in his spiritual quest by either material or heavenly goals, death reveals the truth concerning the self.

The self or the truth (which is symbolized by Om) is beyond “this” and “that”, beyond the concepts of the real and the unreal; but it is the very experiencer of all experiences.

It is only because the experiencer, in ignorance, looks outside that the ignorance is perpetuated; when the hero turns his gaze within, he is not deluded.

The need is to awake and to remain alert, and then to approach the Guru, for the truth is subtle, and is in the middle, between the notions “I am the experiencer” and “I am not the experiencer”.

In the Kenopanishad, the Guru is the Goddess Uma, and the disciples are the Gods.

Even they are subject to the egotistic feeling “I am the doer”.

20th July

The Guru maybe a deity (like Prajapati or the Creator in the Chandogya Upanishad), rarely one's own husband (like Yajnavalkya in the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad) or father (as in the Chandogya Upanishad dialogues between Uddalaka and Svetaketu).

The story of Satyakama Jabala emphasizes that the Guru may even be “other than human agencies”.

Satyakama was devoted to truth and had rendered great and devoted service to his Guru by tending to his cows.

He is later instructed by a cow, by fire, etc.

The instruction may also take many forms: the disciple may question and the Guru may answer, as in the case of the Kathopanishad.

The Guru may indicate the truth and then prod the disciple to meditate and discover the truth for himself, as in the Taittiriya Upanishad.

Though the usual form is one of dialogue or monological instruction, there are instances in the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad where the truth is revealed in a debate form.

21st July

It is often the inner tyrant (the self) that demands freedom from external authority, and determines what that freedom means. True freedom is freedom from self, which is realized to be non-existent in the light of the inner reality, which is the Guru.

It is the awakened intelligence that realizes this inner reality.

This awakening of the inner intelligence, or chit-shakti is shaktipata.

The Guru brings about this awakening or, one who does this is known as the Guru.

It is easy for the Guru, for He is the light.

It is impossible for the self, for the self is the shadow of ignorance.

However, this shaktipata does not take place unless there is self-surrender, until the disciple has come to the end of his own resources, and is able humbly to approach the Guru in total devotion (which is of the heart and not of the intellect), and to establish a channel of direct communication, by means of loving and devoted service to the Guru.

22nd July

It is when the disciple learns to listen to the Guru “with the ears of his heart” that the Guru is able to transmit the highest truth direct to the very heart of the disciple.

The shaktipata happens then, the light of the Guru’s Grace dispels the shadow of ignorance or the self and there is spontaneous enlightenment.

All this is discipline, which is the characteristic of the disciple.

The Guru is everywhere at all times, for He is the light of God, and His Grace is freely available to all at all times.

It is up to the disciple to study his own mind (which is what discipline means) and see for himself how it throws up doubts and distractions, to study the nature of craving for pleasure and prestige that thickens the veil of the self.

The light of such self-study is viveka or vigilance.

Such vigilance keeps the distractions away and the doubting intellect at bay, so that the heart may be open to the Guru.

23rd July

That which dispels the shadow of the “me” is the light, is the Guru. God, Guru, inner reality and atman are synonyms.

That inner light is nameless and formless.

It is the limitation of our own vision that sees that light as a form.

The form of the Guru is the manifestation of the Grace of God, the light of lights.

Only Grace can thus condescend to descend to our level and appear to us in a form that is easy of our comprehension.

In the very silent presence of the Guru, ignorance is dispelled.

Words are distracting, disturbing and unnecessary.

Yet, again, the Grace of the Guru supplements non-verbal communication with verbal communication, because we are deaf to the enlightening eloquence of silence.

The Guru is the light of God that has assumed a human form by the Grace of God, in answer to our own inner aspiration and prayer.

That light dispels the haunting shadow of ignorance, which is the “me”.

Only that which is beyond the “me” (the Guru) can know how and when this has been achieved.

The “me” does not disappear so easily, therefore the Guru adopts suitable means for its eradication.

So, do not look at the merits or demerits of the Guru.

Obey implicitly.

24th July

Every moment of your life, there must be discrimination, of the real from the unreal.

There must be vigilance, alertness, discrimination with will power, for yourself, and not because someone else says so.

In reality you are alone responsible for all your actions, no one else.

You may say I misled you, but how can I mislead you?

You can safely walk behind someone, provided only that you have a light in your hand.

We can all follow one another, provided we do not walk in each other's shadow.

If I hold a candle in my hand, I do not walk in his shadow, but by the light in my hand.

Only then can I walk behind him without danger.

Keep your eyes open, your discrimination alive, and choose your own path.

I followed Swami Sivananda implicitly, and am glad to have done so.

No doubt, he asked me to do things, and I did them because I knew it was right to do them; the responsibility was mine all the time.

I must know the alternatives.

I can do this, I cannot do that.

Every moment I must discriminate with open eyes.

Face the question.

What am I going to do, what is the right action for me?

If you do this, the religion is real; otherwise you get into muddle after muddle.

25th July

The Guru, if He is ahimsa, has the most vital role to play in the life of the disciple. Being the light (Guru), the light itself being ahimsa, the Guru can spotlight those dark corners of the disciple's being where himsa may be lurking.

The Guru cannot see for the disciple, the Guru cannot force the disciple to see, nor even persuade him to see, for all this is violence.

If the Guru is capable of such violence, obviously he cannot train the disciple in ahimsa.

Therefore the Guru does not spotlight the vision of the disciple but only the himsa, which lies hidden in the disciple's being.

If the disciple does not discover it for himself, it is not real, it is not valid.

The truth is worth repeating again and again, but the disciple can in no way be made to see.

The Guru's eagerness to demonstrate His ahimsa might completely mislead the disciple.

Any imposition, persuasion, however gentle and subtle, will only bring out himsa in the disciple, manifesting as immediate revolt, and possible long-term violent behavior.

The Guru's role in ahimsa training is precisely like the role the sun plays in the life of a human being on earth, to be and to illumine, without even intending to do so.

26th July

I wonder why the sides of the head are called “temples”.

While we carry these temples all the time, why should we go to external temples? During crises in our lives, it seems to be necessary for us to go to an external temple to remind ourselves that the real temple is with us, and within us as the intelligence beyond the “me”.

Even this needs some amount of inner spiritual awakening!

If this awakening is not there, then a crisis in our life only succeeds in making us even more worldly and vicious.

When there is a slight inner awakening, we glimpse the truth concerning life.

Our dependence upon our relationships and our possessions weakens, for we realize that they are treacherous.

It is possible for some to go from there right into the inner temple; but for most people an external temple is needed.

When we go to the temple, we pray.

What do we pray for?

The immature man prays for worldly success, prosperity and happiness, without realizing that these and the pursuit of pleasure were the real causes of his unhappiness!

Only a hero has the wisdom to say: “Thy will be done.”

Such self-surrender instantly illumines the inner intelligence.

Therefore, the famous Gayatri Mantra prays, “Lord, enlighten my intelligence.”

27th July

When we talk of looking within and seeing oneself for oneself, it is not a question of estimating oneself.

That is left to the psychologists who, for the sake of convenience, classify and pigeonhole.

They look at people and label them.

They have their own tests and measurements, and if I do not fit into their pattern, I am regarded as useless.

Christ told us to be like little children.

We must shed the qualifications taught us by psychologists, stop “examining” our emotions, looking for explanations (justifications) and blaming others or ourselves for our actions.

Thought obstructs spontaneous activity!

Uncluttered by regrets concerning the past which is gone, and hopes for the future not yet here, “being” is terribly alive now and acts spontaneously.

Freed from the inner vivisection and hence torture, its entire energy is available for the work of each moment.

When the mind is freed from the past and future, it instantly acts.

Life's burden of the instant is light, and life's joy of the instant is delight.

28th July

Co-operation is not you and I getting together to destroy a third person.

It is you and I getting together and working for our mutual benefit.

The words “you” and “I” here stand for human beings and animals, or animals and plants, plants and earth, in all the various combinations.

There is a reciprocal relationship between animals and plants, plants and earth - what one gives the other takes.

For example, plants draw their nourishment from earth; later they themselves replenish the earth.

From an unknown devil man has learnt the art of exploiting the earth's resources.

He whips the soil to yield tenfold or hundredfold. Poor earth.

Robbed of her life-force she struggles on.

Before modern civilization invented a highly involved drainage system, man's excretions were returned direct to the earth.

But now human excretion is pumped into the sea, polluting it!

The life-cycle is broken, but clever man thinks he knows what the earth needs, giving earth lovely chemical fertilizers, unfit for his consumption.

Hundreds of farmers all over the world have returned to “organic” farming.

They do not use chemical fertilizers or sprays; they treat plants as living things.

They have learnt the basic lesson of life, that nature demands co-operation, and will foil any attempt to conquer her.

29th July

In the ashram in Mauritius we have a little garden.  
I like to go there, talk to the flowers, commune with them.  
There are many different colored roses, and I study them.  
They do not want to change color.  
They do not want to become marigolds.  
Wild flowers are also beautiful, and I ask them, "Would you like to be a rose?"  
and they answer, "No. Leave me to be what I am."  
That is the greatest teaching I have ever heard.  
Many people wear scent, perhaps sprinkle rose water on themselves - they are not  
usually so fragrant otherwise.  
Again, I go to the roses and ask, "Do you sprinkle yourself with rose water?"  
"Nonsense, it comes from me."  
I try again, "How did you get this scent?"  
The answer comes, "Because I am a rose."  
Is this not marvelous?  
If I am a rose, I have the fragrance of a rose, I give out the fragrance of a rose, I do  
not have to do anything more.  
Asking myself what I must do leads me nowhere, but asking myself what I am  
leads me somewhere.  
The moment I discover what I am, action is spontaneous.  
There is no effort, no problem.  
Problems only arise when someone wants to imitate someone else.  
I want to imitate you, only because I have not discovered what I am.

30th July

Deep within each one of us there is a natural quality, a natural goodness. It shows up in the lives of even the most vicious amongst us at odd moments. It is God, love, divinity.

This has to be discovered, seen for what it is, otherwise we live in a world created by our own thoughts, by our calculating mentality, being good to those that favour us, and not so good to those who do not favour us.

The discovery of this inner, innate and essential nature cannot be made by our mind, for our mind is cluttered by a million ideas we have gathered from each other.

The mind can only function in terms of these ideas; it is an obstruction to the full realization of this inner, innate nature.

The mind acts as a dam.

Yet even the worst enemy of civilization has someone or some group whom he loves.

He does not have any love for others; it is all directed towards this one group.

When one discovers one's inherent inner nature, it becomes natural for one to become good.

It needs no persuasion, no imposition, and no enforcement from outside.

When it is discovered, then the "dam", created by the mind and its ideas, disintegrates, and natural goodness flows in all directions, towards all, spontaneously and invariably.

31st July

True action is always spontaneous.

Look at the present; look at each thing as it is.

Learn to look at each event, each happening as it is.

In a movie film each frame records a complete and independent scene.

Yet, because of the speed of the camera, it seems to move while in fact there is no motion.

So, in life too, there is possibly no continuity of action, each action being a completely separate and independent unit.

This may be termed "living in the present", not to be confused with the doctrine, "live in the present" which often means utilizing past experience logically in order to achieve a future goal.

It is not possible, because before you utter the word present it is gone.

What is needed is a complete, total attention to the action that is taking place now.

Because the mind relates a present action to a future result, it is shocked, surprised by an unexpected turn of events.

Nothing turned, you turned, you were standing crooked, and when time straightened you out, you felt the crookedness.

1st August

Appropriate action - not right action, not wrong action, but appropriate action - is also what is called balance.

Balance is to match my effort with the challenge in front of me.

If I meet a thousand challenges every day, I must exert myself in the corrective proportion, just to the extent of balancing the challenge - neither too much nor too little.

But how much is too much?

How little is too little?

How do I know?

In order to answer the question, "How do I know?", and in order to solve all these problems, I have to be awake all the time.

I don't have to adopt a certain pattern of life, but I must be alert and vigilant all the time.

If I am alert, I might discover - I might discover, it is not an automatic process - that most of my foolish actions spring from either my brain, which is all the time calculating, or from my emotions.

There is a reason behind all my actions, and all my reasons are calculated towards some gain or the fulfillment of some expectation.

If I love someone, whatever he does is all right, but if I hate someone, I don't mind if he is killed.

These two constantly lead me into some kind of mess or other.

I 'm watching - these are not appropriate actions.

2nd August

When I don't imagine anything, I see the world as it is, the circumstances as they are, and not as I hoped they might have been, nor as I fear they are, but just as they are.

I see the circumstances just as they are, without the calculating intellect, and without the emotional heart clouding the whole thing.

When I see the fact of my life and the fact of the world around me, then there is appropriate action, something that is so natural to life.

In nature there is no worry.

Some trees have no leaves and there is no worry.

But if no hairs grow here on my head, there is a lot of worry.

You look at a completely bald tree; it doesn't go to a hair-stylist and get some leaves stuck on.

If you are able to watch from within, you will realize what appropriate action really means.

It is so simple and natural to life.

It is beautiful. and the only thing it demands, we are unwilling to do.

This is constant vigilance.

To find the appropriate action from moment to moment, from hour to hour, in our life, demands constant vigilance, constant awakened intelligence.

This enlightened intelligence is buddhi.

And one whose intelligence is thus constantly awake, such a person alone is alive in this world.

All others are asleep.

3rd August

Yoga has come a full circle.

The practice of yoga was obviously popular all over the world in ancient times. Hence, suryanamaskara, pranayama, japa, worship and meditation were woven into one's daily life.

The malpractices of some, in the name of yoga, led to two results: it became unpopular and also secretive.

Then began a great revival.

Gurudev Swami Sivananda contributed in a great measure to the breaking down of the secrecy barrier.

But some sort of resistance continued to exist, linking yoga with magic, oriental religious thinking and health-cults.

Even these are gradually being overcome.

Once again, yoga is fast becoming popular and acceptable.

It is recognized today that yoga promotes peace and harmony.

However, it is a disturbing fact that even some of the "leaders of the yoga movement" have been unable to avoid disharmony within their own ranks, as also in their relationship with others.

Surely, if one has found harmony within oneself, it is reflected in one's relationships.

When this does not prevail, it is good to stop, pause and re-examine the situation.

4th August

A common error we commit in yoga is commencing with the conclusions of others.

We are told that yoga leads to such and such an experience.

We practice yoga.

When the expected results do not follow, we either become frustrated or imagine we have them.

A wise yoga student avoids all this.

It is not difficult to realize that life in the world is full of disharmony, destruction and sorrow.

These are all found in "me".

We cover these often with very convenient rationalization.

Hence, we ignore these and pretend they do not exist.

So, even this disharmony has to be discovered and seen for what it is.

Then it hurts.

It will hurt if (and only if) we are sensitive, sincere and serious about our own discovery.

If we are, then we stop blaming others for what exists in us.

(It does not take two to make a quarrel, but only one, and that one is "me".

If "I" will not quarrel, no one can make me quarrel, no one can quarrel with me.)

At once there is peace, harmony, health and happiness in me, and in my relationship with others.

5th August

Once I taste this inner peace and harmony, health and happiness, I see that they are all one, and that it is its own protector.

I cherish it, I love it, and I am in it.

Nothing is of greater value.

It is of inestimable value; I do not throw it away, whatever be the temptation.

By the practice of the yoga asanas, I discover "health".

In that process, all the toxic poisons that cover the cells and the tissues in the body are discarded.

By the practice of meditation, I discover "peace".

In that process all the prejudices and superstitions, attachments and aversions, which made the mind restless, are discarded.

The study of scriptures and teachings of the masters remind us that God is Omnipresent.

By the practice of bhakti or devotion, I discover "love", which is God in me, which then flows to all beings in whom God dwells.

God alone is the reality in me and in them all.

The realization of this is yoga - the realization of cosmic oneness that already exists and which alone is true.

6th August

“Does hope bring about a positive attitude or approach to meditation in the practitioner?” asked a young man who is involved in the practice of meditation. Naturally, if there was no hope of gaining peace of mind, happiness, freedom from pain and suffering or some sort of inner experience, we might not undertake to practice yoga at all!

But, as long as that hope is there, there is no hope of attaining any of these.

Hope promotes duality.

It chases its own goal, which runs away, leading to frustration.

Unable to face this frustration, hope may even experience what it hoped for.

Because such experience is shadow without substance; it vanishes, soon leaving a deeper sense of frustration.

Hope may lead to frustration or, what is worse, imaginary attainment of the hoped for goal.

A concept may itself shine as the reality it symbolizes.

When these errors arise, there is restlessness within oneself once again.

The self is never deceived.

7th August

Death is not a respecter of persons, but it is in love with all.

Or else, a young man who was a yoga teacher, a bachelor who did not smoke, drink or eat meat, who led a well-regulated life, and ate only the best of health food, and who was ever cheerful and helpful, and never lost his temper, need not die of brain tumor.

Yet, the rest of the world hugs the illusion that it was only his fate to die, it does not affect others, and it is “pessimistic” even to think of death.

It is this perfectly obvious ignorance that keeps man chained to sin and suffering. Countless evils spring from a willful and futile denial of death.

When one is able to see the inevitability of death from within oneself (in which case it is not just a word, nor a mere concept, but the living truth), then there is a psychological revolution, which alters one's whole life.

All forms of destructive aggression, competition with all its pettiness, jealousy, hate, etc., and the anxiety that cuts ulcers in the intestines drop away, leaving us healthy, intelligent and well-adjusted human beings.

8th August

When the superficial brain thinks that it sees death as inevitable, a person may become irresponsible.

But, if the innermost being sees the inevitability of death as clearly as you see this paper, then the pursuit of pleasure or power here on this earth becomes meaningless, too.

You are not interested in heaven nor in a happy life in the next incarnation, but neither are you interested in the pursuit of pleasure here and now, as you see that death puts an end to all that.

If you are not interested in doing what someone else considers good, you are also not interested in what that someone else considers as evil either.

You are not interested in self-denial nor in self-indulgence.

Self-indulgence is as meaningless as self-denial or service of others, though some people have asserted that the former is evil and the latter is good.

When you realize that death puts an end to all this, you live without being torn between these concepts of good and evil, right and wrong.

Such a life is virtue.

In it there is no violence, competition and all that has characterized the destructive life-style, miscalled civilization.

9th August

It is not easy to define what “Hinduism” (or who a “Hindu”) is. Yet many Hindus and non-Hindus have attempted to do so. We therefore have numerous definitions, which are sometimes unrelated. This is not only because the religion itself is ancient, but because of the nature of the fundamental tenet of the religion. It seeks to help each individual find his or her freedom (moksa). Hinduism is believed to hold the veda as its authority. It is the common belief that Veda signifies the text that exists with that title; but Veda means “knowledge”. In the latter sense, the authority for Hinduism is knowledge or experience. The ultimate experience may be the same for all, but even the penultimate experience of one may be very different from that of another person. As “experience” they are all valid, whether we call them true, false or centre! Hence the famous cliché that Hinduism promotes tolerance.

10th August

The spirit of Hinduism is not just tolerance.

It is the understanding that everyone is free to free himself from ignorance with the help of knowledge (experience), and that if my experience is real to me, yours is equally real to you.

All experiences are made possible by the self, or God, who is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient.

These apparent differences are reflected in the conduct and the life style of the people.

However, the spirit of Hinduism unmistakably shines through all these.

This spirit can be summed up in one word, "ahimsa", which is "nonviolence in thought, word and deed".

One who is established in ahimsa finds the truth, which is the self or God.

To be a Hindu, therefore, is to embody this spirit to the utmost of one's own ability in all sincerity.

Naturally, this implies that every Hindu should strive every moment of his life to reach perfection.

You are the light of Hinduism.

Hinduism is what you are.

11th August

Our master Swami Sivananda prescribed an immediate solution to the problems that were brought to Him.

Whatever was the problem and whoever faced it, He invariably prescribed the Japa of a Mantra.

When this was done, the appropriate remedies for the particular problem “appeared”.

The devotee knew that it was Gurudev’s miracle.

The Master Himself gently remarked, “It is due to God's Grace.”

What is it in the Mantra that makes this possible?

What is a Mantra?

Specifically, a Mantra is a “mystic formula”.

It can be the Name of God, a piece of wholesome life-transforming advice, or a word of power, with which the master’s spiritual energy is transmitted to the disciple and the latter's energy is activated.

The latter is known as Shaktipata.

Shaktipata is greatly emphasized in the teachings of Baba Muktananda Paramahansa.

Bhagavan Ramana Maharishi in His “Talks” has alluded to it.

The Maharishi has said that when the disciple listens to the Master with the heart (while the intellect is utterly silent) Shaktipata takes place.

This is the “initiation”.

12th August

Once the disciple has been initiated into the Mantra, he does Japa.

Japa is repetition of the Mantra.

The disciple should realize the meaning of the Mantra.

The meaning of the Mantra is the reality it stands for.

Hence, the realization of the meaning of the Mantra is the same as the realization of truth, self, God or cosmic consciousness, or whatever that may be called, as long as you realize that the word is not the truth.

Ramana Maharishi asks the disciple to focus his attention upon the sound of the Mantra, and first see where it comes from, and secondly who utters it and who hears it.

The answer is “oneself “ - not as a word, but as the reality!

If that is so, why should one do Japa, which implies the repetition of the Mantra?

The obvious answer is: if one is able to realize the self immediately one utters the Mantra once, it is not necessary to repeat it at all.

However, if one is unable to find the source of the Mantra, the self, one repeats the Mantra.

13th August

The very act of the repetition of the Mantra (if this act is earnest, sincere and serious) is capable of purifying the mind - which, simply, means, "clearing the mind of all other thoughts, concepts and percepts".

If such purification does not happen, obviously sincerity is absent.

A pure heart instantly realizes the Mantra as the self or consciousness, which is the indwelling Omnipresence, the transcendent reality.

In ignorance, there was a mistaken notion, "I say the mantra" entertained by the ego sense.

When this truth is directly realized, the disciple sees that similarly other egoistic notions, "I do this", "I experience this" are false.

They are notions whose reality is consciousness unmodified by these notions.

Similarly, life is unmodified by the actions and the experiences.

The light of this realization dispels the dark shadows or problems that appeared to exist in a state of ignorance.

14th August

I am convinced that Karma is “action” and not “fate”, that we do not suffer because of some unknown sin we committed in the distant past, but because of the state of our being just now, and the most dreadful sequel of the past is the repetitive tendency which past action leaves in our mind.

This is the reason why our life runs round in circles.

We blame our present conditions on a remote past, ignoring the immediate cause (which may be the same as the remote cause).

The problem is inside me; the problem is me, not what I did years ago.

It is more profitable therefore that we should look within immediately, now, and discover the present cause of the present conflict or unhappiness, without relating it to past Karma or commitment.

Relating it to past karma may dilute the observation and make it ineffective and incapable of bringing about an immediate change.

Immediate change can only be the result of a direct observation.

Direct observation can only be of what is there now, though undefinable.

It is what is there now that is throwing up all this sorrow and conflict.

If we become intensely aware of what is now, the change can also be immediate and radical.

This is what the yogis implied when they said that self-realization immediately puts an end to all Karma.

15th August

Early in 1961, I had the Darshan for the last time of Swami Puroshottamananda, a very holy sage.

This wonderful man had lived for a long time in a cave on the Himalayan hillside. He led a type of ascetic and simple life, which I don't think many of you can even visualize, because the mind can only comprehend that which it can compare with something that is already known.

For years his only friends were the tigers and cheetahs of the Himalayan forests. We used to visit him quite frequently and have his Darshan.

He was a very stern and severe type of man, though also extremely loving.

He used to come to the ashram quite frequently, and Gurudev asked him to address the Parliament of Religions in 1953.

He was perched on top of a big table - a tiny little person seated in the diamond posture - and everybody was watching him, waiting for him to deliver a lecture.

He said one word, "Sincerity".

The lecture consisted of one word repeated thrice, "Sincerity, sincerity, sincerity," then he got up and left the stage.

I thought that was the best lecture in the world.

16th August

Why do we go to these holy men and what do we get from them?

We can talk to them and say, "Swamiji, I smoke."

"You smoke - what do you want me to do, manufacture some cigarettes for you?"

"You know, Swamiji, I would very much like to give it up."

"Ah yes, then what stops you?"

"But I like smoking, Swamiji."

When you go to a holy man, look at yourself, why do you go?

You have some problem, you say you want to give it up, then why don't you?

After you light the cigarette, put it down, then sit watching it.

The cigarette smokes, you don't smoke.

Does the cigarette jump into your mouth and say, "Please smoke me?"

It does not.

So, why must you give up your smoking?

Why must you take up smoking to start with?

You have never asked that question.

I don't need anyone to come and tell me how I should stop fighting with you - I

don't want to fight with you, and if I don't want to, can anyone make me?

So if you say, "I want to give up smoking, but I like it," then smoke, please go ahead.

It is a terrible sin to give up something that you love, whether it is your wife or cigarettes.

Smoke until it burns your lips and burns your lungs, because until you decide not to take up the next cigarette, nobody on earth can help you.

17th August

When I go to a holy man must I ask him what he is going to give me?

Why shouldn't I ask what I am going to give Him?

It is easy to offer a flower, it is easy to offer a fruit, and it is probably easy to offer some money, but what is most difficult to offer is yourself.

Instead of asking what he is going to give me, why should I not approach the holy man with this feeling "I am going to offer myself to him."

If I do this for one single moment, all my problems are solved, all my problems are over.

If I feel that my clothes are getting dirty and I have no one to wash them, what must I do?

Throw away the clothes and walk around naked - the root of the problem is destroyed.

So I see that all my troubles are created by me.

"I want this - I want that."

I have all these problems, but all these problems are basically selfishness.

Is there any problem in our life that cannot ultimately be traced to this single thing - selfishness?

If I give that away, I am free.

When a sincere man goes to a Guru, he never asks, "What are You going to give me?"

All that he wants is to give himself away to the Guru, so that negatively the problem is solved.

Negatively in the sense that I have rid myself of this big problem, selfishness.

It is over, that is all, the end of it.

18th August

There is a lovely picture by a famous painter, depicting a sage who had fallen in love with a nymph and produced a baby.

Suddenly he realizes that he has fallen from his asceticism, and in great anger he turns from the nymph and baby, and not even wanting to look at them, he covers his eyes.

But from between his fingers one eye is still peeping through.

Just a corner of him still wants to look.

So, I want to turn away from selfishness, I want to go away from this world and be free, but through one corner of my eye I am still looking - "I have renounced selfishness, what am I going to get in return for having given up selfishness?"

This is the most difficult thing to do in life, because we have got into the habit of thinking in terms of logic - when I give up something I get something else.

We have been told that, if we suffer in this world, we will go to heaven and enjoy there.

We have been conditioned to think that in order to enjoy afterwards we must suffer now.

The suffering is therefore directly related to some pleasure later on.

We cannot abandon the idea of pleasure altogether.

Let it go, I don't want it either here or hereafter, neither physical nor spiritual.

I don't want this at all; it is a nuisance.

19th August

Do we go to the Master merely to hear what we want to hear, merely to get something out of him?

If I go to the teacher, I must go symbolically holding a flower in my hand.

“It is the flower of my heart that I offer at Your Feet.”

And having offered myself at His Feet, I stand there not expecting a thing, knowing that expectation itself is the parent of all unhappiness, of all misery. Therefore those disciples and devotees who are sincere go to the holy man for Darshan.

This Darshan is a strange thing, a peculiar thing.

It means to see.

Can you open your eyes and see?

Do I go to this holy man with my own image, with a ready-made garment and ask him to fit into it?

Then I am not having darshan.

In order to have the holy man's Darshan, I must go there completely free, and only then I may be able to look at him.

Darshan means looking, but it is not looking like going to a museum and looking at the paintings and statues.

That is easy, but to look at a man, something living, with all my being, I have to be so completely pure that what is, is seen, what is, is known.

That is called Darshan.

20th August

On the first day of life, all babies look alike, but as they grow, each child begins to look like his parents.

At the moment of conception, in that fertilized egg, there is already hidden the entire image of the future man or woman.

If you watch the way the body develops, you immediately understand the vital message of development.

The pattern of development is not something imported from outside, it is already there.

If you have ever cut a baby-coconut in half, you will see it is just a mass of flesh.

If you were able to stand and watch it form, you would not observe anyone opening and filling it with water.

Yet somehow, right in the middle of it, lovely coconut milk is produced.

The shell forms.

The outside is not tampered with at all.

No one has made a hole in it and poured liquid into it.

In the same way, you and I too have our development, like all growth, from within, out.

It is a constant unfolding.

That is why in Indian mythology you have a lotus associated with all gods and goddesses.

Divinity is not something which I can get from outside.

It has merely to unfold.

21st August

Some flowers unfold quite fast.

You see them as a bud in the evening, and the next morning they are open.

You would almost think that if you had watched them for half an hour, you would have observed them opening up; but this is not so.

This development happens so smoothly that the stages are unobservable.

The unfoldment does not happen spasmodically - it is gradual, yet continuous.

That is true development.

The total flower - not just one part of it - opens up slowly, imperceptibly, without the blowing of trumpets, "Look, I am going to open, to develop!"

It unfolds beautifully and subtly, because the fullness or the developed state of perfection was already inherent in the flower.

It did not have to call for perfection.

Even in the bud stage, perfection was there already.

Therefore the unfoldment has to happen.

Only when we realize these basic principles in our own unfoldment, can we avoid frustration.

There can be no hurry in development, no haste in unfoldment.

It has to happen.

22nd August

We tend to create alternatives; either I will exert myself in order to develop myself or I will just go to sleep.  
If fate, karma, God's will, God's Grace, or whatever you call it, is going to do it, let it do it!  
We are caught in "either - or."  
Either I must do it or God must do it.  
This is an artificial choice.  
Either "I" must do it or "they" must do it.  
Why not both?  
Why not do my part of it.  
Forget all these silly arguments.  
Why not, right from now, observe within myself this bud bursting with eagerness to blossom?  
I must look within and see that there is the bud, the spiritual bud, the bud of my life, of my intelligence, of my consciousness, filled with eagerness to burst, to unfold.  
Then there is no anxiety, there is no rush.  
That is what we call the "development" of spiritual consciousness.  
It is there already.  
It does not need to be imported from outside.  
I must merely recognize it.  
What stops me from recognizing it, strangely enough, is the very desire for development!

23rd August

Inside each one of us there is a bud, which is unique.  
No two total personalities are identical.  
How must I develop?  
Do not ask me.  
Do not ask anyone else.  
Only you will know because you are unique.  
When God made you, He put something into this personality of yours that he did not put anywhere else in the world.  
Therefore, in your development, no one can help you - and no one can obstruct you.  
It is already there in everyone.  
One must become aware of it, must see it, and let it be.  
It is the same with a sculptor when he looks at a slab of marble.  
He already visualizes the figure in the marble.  
If he does not thus visualize, he will never succeed.  
From then on he does not put anything into the marble or make the figure.  
It is already there!  
But there is a lot more there in addition.  
The artist merely subtracts.  
What remains is what he wanted.  
So, first I have to see within myself this unique personality, this unique truth, this unique spirit.  
I have to become aware of this.  
Once I become aware, I also see quite a lot of rubbish sticking to this central spiritual being; and as I keep pushing these other things away, the latent perfection is revealed.  
There is total development!

24th August

We must avoid any sectional development e.g. development of the body alone, or emphasis on increase of money etc.

Luckily for us any non-spiritual substance of the world that you continue developing eventually becomes self-destructive.

You go on concentrating on it until it fortunately bursts.

Otherwise the nuisance would be eternal.

You see this in countries where there is the concept of competition, the concept that prosperity means one must promote someone else's adversity.

I must bring you to see that the goods that I have to sell are "needed" by you.

If I am a yoga teacher, then it is yoga that is most important, vital to you.

If a doctor wants to achieve some kind of development, he needs sick people.

He must necessarily promote sickness in society to help him develop as a doctor!

It is said in the Ramayana that Rama wanted to bless Hanuman.

He was about to say, "For what you have done to aid me, I am bound to help you birth after birth."

But he stopped himself, "How can I help you, unless you are in difficulty!"

Rama realized this was no real blessing, but more like a curse saying, "I wish you difficulties in birth after birth!"

In all forms of sectional development, you will find this poison hidden.

25th August

How do I bring about total development?

Note the question: How do I bring it about?

Hidden in this question is the answer that it is "I" that brings about development.

In order to bring about total development, I must bring about self-development first.

I must have integrated, total inner development, which we call spiritual development.

Once this is there, then whatever it touches will become totally developed.

For example, we can all go into the fields and cultivate the whole of Mauritius.

That is total development.

But, as I am doing this, I am also watching for signs of sectional feeling.

Do I want some kind of development for myself - for my clan, my community, my this, my that?

Then I am already violent.

The desire for sectional development is itself violence!

Unless I prevent it from rearing its head in me now, I cannot prevent it later, and total development will not happen.

26th August

I must deal with any problem in me here and now.

I must develop myself in order to participate in this total development.

And unless I participate in this total development, I will not be able to develop myself.

I do not know what I am; I do not know whether I am a vicious or a good person.

It is only in my encounter with you, when I come to deal with you, when I bring myself to work with you, and when we are all engaged in this business of development, that I discover myself - "discover" in the sense of "uncovering".

I have a lot of cover and all this appears very holy.

But in working shoulder to shoulder with you, it is then that all this "cover" is discovered; it is then that my nature comes up.

That again may not be my true nature.

I am merely looking at it.

I see that when it comes to this matter of development, of life itself, when I am working with other people, there is this spirit of competition, there is this spirit of desire to shine better than somebody else, there is this desire to dominate others. Therefore, there is the seed of violence.

27th August

Self-development is like the unfolding of the spirit that is already there.  
But I am not able to discover that spirit all at once, because the spirit is covered.  
When I turn to look within, I am merely seeing that cover.  
The "cover" of craving for pleasure, craving for domination, for superiority - all of which is violence.  
I need to be able to look at this clearly, look at it closely, turn it around, and see how it works, so as to handle it successfully.  
By merely tearing away, blindly rushing at things, one may cause damage.  
In order to discover something one has to be calm.  
Haste, rush, excitement will not do here at all.  
In order to effectively discover myself I need absolute quiet.  
It is only then that I am audible and visible to myself.  
When not only the vocal organs, but even the mind is completely tranquil, calm, still, then you can listen to yourself.  
This does not mean empty!  
When you say that the ocean is calm or still, you do not imply it is empty, but that some disturbance that was there on the surface, has ceased.  
It is only when there is no disorderly feeling and thinking, no commotion, that I can see clearly.  
This clear-seeing is what is really called "clairvoyance".

28th August

I need a very calm mind to discover what is within.

That is what we are aiming at when we sit and pretend to meditate.

You look within yourself with the help of a Mantra or something else, and then you come face to face with your own thoughts.

If you take a rather seriously curious or curiously serious interest in this practice, you will find it very interesting.

You think you are a good man.

You want to meditate.

Suddenly you begin to doubt yourself.

“I thought I was good, but where do these thoughts come from? I never thought I was capable of such monstrous thoughts!”

What must I do with them?

They are within me after all.

If a little bit of fluff comes and lands on my head, I brush it off; it does not belong to me.

Anything landing on my head I brush off.

But I do not try to brush off my hair.

It belongs to me.

I go on cleaning it.

But I keep it there, it is part of me.

Similarly, with these thoughts, I learn to look at myself.

I see when I look within: they are there, they are part of me.

29th August

In order to look within, the mind has to be completely calm.

Otherwise one cannot become aware of his thoughts at all, and there will be no development, like a mad man who runs about doing this, doing that, a hundred things, and ends up in a mental home!

(Some of the most brilliant people go there!)

This does not mean that we should be idle, lazy.

Whether it is social, political, economic, educational, national, international or universal, I am contributing to this development.

As I am the architect of this development, I must first discover myself.

In this discovery is self-development or spiritual development.

In order to bring about this discovery I must have patience.

There is no rushing at all in this.

You cannot rush a six-year-old boy into being a forty-six year old man.

Yet, on the other hand, you cannot leave him to sleep himself into that stage - "either - or" - either we rush or we go to sleep.

Neither of these is true.

30th August

By vigilantly and hopefully watching, you bring about this internal maturity, this internal self-development, and this spiritual development.

How to do it?

I must become aware of whatever there is in me.

If there is a God in me, let me see.

If there is a devil in me, let me see.

I am not proud of being a God.

Someone said, "Let us have the truth, even if the heavens should fall."

One must have the courage to discover the truth within one's own nature, without merely assuming what it is like.

I cannot start by saying, "I am the spark of God," or "God dwells in me."

Maybe, but look what comes out of me!

God alone does not seem to dwell in me!

Watch, observe, how can something come out of me that is not in me?

If there is a bowl of sugar and you dip your hand in, you cannot take out salt.

You claim that there is God in you, is it "God" that comes out of you?

Look at the rubbish that comes out of your mouth and mind.

Is that God?

No, that means there is something else there that you had conveniently ignored.

31st August

I should not be ashamed of the undivine thoughts in me, nor should I assume “I am all God”.

Dispassionately and patiently with a curious seriousness, or a serious curiosity, I must take complete stock.

If I take complete stock, I am looking at the same thing from innumerable angles of view.

When one goes to a temple, one goes round the idol, only it is done blindly.

But again there is a message in it.

It is a symbolic action.

The symbolism is this: I do not want to see God only from one angle, one side.

I want to go round him, and see what he looks like from the front, from behind and from all sides.

Then I will never be shocked.

If I know that the flowering of the trees and the fruits that I get from the trees are from God, then mosquitoes and cyclones and volcanoes are also seen as part of God.

The “good” things as well as the “horrible” things of life are all from God!

Thus I have a comprehensive view of God.

In the same way, when I want to discover myself, I must not assume that there is only God or goodness in me, but I must also have the courage to face the non-God in me.

Once I see this divine and I see this diabolical, I know how to develop myself immediately.

1st September

You cannot beat a flower into blossoming in any desired way or any desired time. It is an extraordinary thing - the closer to perfection you are, the more you will be able to appreciate nearly everybody.

You know why you made some mistakes and therefore, when you see someone else making the same mistakes, you sympathize and humbly note that he is trying at least.

If you are earnest and sincere in bringing about this unfoldment yourself, you will know the nature of flowers everywhere in the world.

You will know how the same nature is bursting to unfold in each one - even in this matchstick, in dust, in a creature as small as the ant - you can understand everything and everybody!

And at that stage, probably you will find no need to communicate.

You may still go on speaking, as the dog barks.

Things go on.

The sun shines, not because it wants to warm your back, but it shines because it is one of those things the sun cannot help.

So, you keep talking and communicating in your own way, while knowing that all this is irrelevant to life!

2nd September

To ascribe the cause of inner evil to something outside oneself is immature, infantile.

I have no time for that.

When my foot is cut by coral, I must immediately fix it.

It hurts like mad.

I only want instantaneous relief.

I have become one with the problem, which is like becoming one with the wave.

This means that "I" is not there.

It means the mind is absolutely tranquil, absolutely peaceful, and therefore transparent.

I suppose you have enjoyed this at sometime in your life, although these occasions are rare.

There is no difference felt between "you" and "me".

In such moments the mind is quiet and calm, so completely transparent, that you can look through it.

In that transparent mind, you see the play of thoughts.

The thoughts are still there.

"I" am not thinking, but the thoughts are there.

There is a tremendous intelligence ever active in you.

A wonderful intelligence is built into every cell of your being.

I am merely witnessing.

I am becoming aware of this flow of thoughts, like a river.

3rd September

What exactly is an “evil thought”?

(I am not asking why it arises. That is endless enquiry!)

What is the thought made of, i.e. what is the material, and who made it, i.e. who is the thinker of the thought?

I know the answer, not verbally, but immediately, experimentally.

I know what it is made of and who made it.

The asking itself is the answer.

Since I know the stuff of which the evil, painful thought is made, and that it is the ego that hurts like mad, I throw it away.

Each must arrive at this point himself, as he continues watching vigilantly, from moment to moment, the ordinary things he says and does.

It needs the toughest activist to be really vigilant.

When the thorn is in one's foot, one does not resignedly say, “This is not my business, leave it to God.”

One does not “accept”, as accepting leads to justification and defending.

Facing the cobra, one does not stay motionless, but one does everything one has to do - except one will not step on it. Similarly, with a thorn in the foot, one carries on one's normal movements, but does not step on that part of the foot.

Aware of the thorn, of the venomous snake, one is constantly on guard, one-pointedly, this above all!

Vigilance until the last breath!

4th September

In a few days we shall be celebrating the birthday of My Gurudev, Swami Sivananda.

He is the light of our life.

Gurudev is light.

Light illumines, it is not concerned with, nor is it responsible for what we do with or in that illumination.

We the followers often err, and I have heard many people blame their Guru for this or that, saying: "He should not have done so-and-so."

The light is impartial and that does not suit our narrow minds.

We expect the enlightened one to pat us on the back and kick others in the pants.

Most of all light hurts the owl's eyes.

So we, who are accustomed to darkness, find it hard to face the light.

What glorious opportunities we lose because of this diabolical instinct.

His light shines on our life, the light has already reached its destination.

We shall not know this unless we tread the path and reach the destination.

We do not want to do that, we want the Guru to self-realize for us.

He is the light of our life.

Every thought word and deed that proceeds from us must be illumined by that light.

We should learn to look at our own life in the light of our guru; only then does he truly become the dispeller of darkness (gu - gloom, ru - remove).

May His light shine forever.

5th September

Swami Sivananda was fond of what he called “namaskara yoga”.

“Namaskara” is greeting everybody with humility and reverence, in an attempt to see the presence of God in all.

Yoga is nothing if it does not lead us, no matter how quickly or how slowly, in the direction of the realization that that, which is omnipresent, has no duality in it.

How does this wisdom or knowledge arise?

Is it possible for the thought that thinks that there is diversity, to cease, without another thought arising, suggesting that there is no diversity?

The two thoughts think of the same diversity.

Whether you say that I exist, or I do not exist, I am there in your mind.

Diversity does not cease to be by merely raising another thought called unity, another thought called omnipresence, another thought called infinity.

It only adds to our worries.

The one that is infinite is not opposed to diversity.

The infinite is not the opposite of diversity, and therefore by creating another thought called infinity, we are not going to solve the problem of diversity.

Be a Christian if you want, but see that in and through the content of that religion is God.

Be an atheist if you want, but the content of that atheism is God.

Be what you want to be - the content of what you are, in reality, is God.

That is the beautiful approach of Krishna, also of Swami Sivananda.

6th September

It is possible to get hold of each one of these diverse, so-called objects, and by wise enquiry, or by devotion (you can adopt any path you like) to see through the object and say, "If God is Omnipresent, He must be there inside this; if God dwells in all hearts, He is there in this person; if God dwells in everything, He must be in this glass of water."

Can I approach each one of these objects, still regarding them as objects, with surrender, with devotion, with wisdom, with knowledge and with understanding? God is infinite, God is Omnipresent, so even this must be divine; if there is a suspicion, or an idea, or a thought, or a notion within me that it is not so, it is because of a deficiency in me, not in the object.

If I am not able to see God in this man, it is not because this Omnipresent God suddenly disappeared from that particular spot.

There is something wrong in me so that I cannot read the fine print.

It is not because the fine print is not clear, but because my eyesight is not good. Therefore I must rectify that, instead of trying to manipulate the outside world. So if I bow down to this man too, it is possible that, one of these days, true knowledge will arrive; some day the heart will be purified and the truth will be seen.

Then one day I am bound to look into the mirror and suddenly see God there also - that is the end of the journey.

7th September

We cannot do without the Guru on the spiritual path.

We cannot do even without the material objects like food, clothes, and shelter.

These are like the crutches with which the lame man walks.

We cannot renounce them all of a sudden.

We must develop inner strength, dispassion to a high degree, before we can be content with chance alms, the shade of a tree, or near nudity.

If these are like crutches, then the Guru's guidance is like the light on the path.

Even if we can give up the crutches, we cannot walk the path without the light.

We have to traverse strange lands, incomplete darkness.

Guru's light alone can guide us.

Even if we have attained a high degree of perfection in bhakti, it is not safe to renounce the Guru.

There is fear of downfall till the last moment.

Even when one is established in God it is necessary that one should remain there till the body falls, otherwise there may be a downfall.

Moreover, according to Kena Upanishad, one can never be aware of God realization.

One who has really realized God does not know that he has.

One who thinks or feels he has realized God, has not.

Hence, at no stage can we renounce the Guru.

To the devotee, guru and God are one.

8th September

It is necessary and important to remind ourselves of the great life and inspiring teachings of Sri Gurudev Sivananda.

Even when He was in His body, in the ashram, we decided it was no good celebrating the birthday just once a year, and we started celebrating the birth-date, the eighth of every month; so that, if not every day, at least once a month, we could remind ourselves of the sublime life and teachings.

But I think we should be extremely careful.

Are we seeking power or glory for ourselves in this?

Then we are misusing the whole concept of Guru.

We may think we are getting out of the ego trap - we are in it.

One can pretend to be vigilant all the time.

One can equally easily bluff oneself that "I am selfless, I am unselfish".

It is the ego that says, "I am egoless. I have completely surrendered" - which means, "As long as you tell me what I want you to tell me, I'll do everything exactly as you say" - that's a very different kind of surrender.

One can bask in the glory of the Guru, one can imagine that one derives a tremendous lot of power from the Guru, as a club to hit others.

The glory belongs to Him, the power belongs to Him, and the privilege of remembering all this belongs to us.

9th September

Why do we wish to study Swami Sivananda's teachings?

His teachings were embodied in Him.

His whole life, His every action was the cream of his teachings.

Therefore it is more fruitful for us to see if we can learn from His life itself.

Is it possible for me to contemplate His life and to learn something from that?

We who have witnessed His life, we ourselves were awed sometimes.

Sometimes He looked so human, so simple, and sometimes that simplicity was so complex that we were tempted to give up.

He was so beautiful, so simple, so straight - and that was what was so difficult for our complex minds to understand.

We tend to crystallize, to petrify things, so that they become hard.

For example, I pick up some teachings and I want to put them into practice.

My life is in motion; the whole world is in motion.

I don't take any notice of these ever changing phenomena - I have a teaching and I am going to apply it here.

But life is not something that stands in front of you - life is in motion.

Yet we tend to become petrified, to become rigid.

Therefore we find it extremely difficult to watch a genius in action, a saint in motion, a living saint who is not also petrified. We are familiar with robots, pillars; we are not familiar with human saints.

10th September

When I watch the life of such a great man as Swami Sivananda, what example do I follow?

What we usually do with all the great masters is to follow all the convenient examples.

What suits me, I follow.

But I cannot do what is uncomfortable for me.

And therefore, when he does what does not suit me, I say, "Oh, He was so great. He was God almighty; he can do that, but I cannot; I can only do this."

I put Him on a pedestal and worship Him - and what is comfortable, nice, and pleasant, I blindly copy.

That won't do.

One has to get saturated with the teachings; not only as they were embodied in His writings, but also in His life.

One must watch, one must listen with the whole of one's being open.

Your whole being will be open to these teachings, only if you are not even anxious about how you are going to apply them to your life.

"How am I going to get self-realization the day after tomorrow, through this?"

Even that anxiety must go.

I must let these teachings and the incidents of his life soak through my whole being, so that then, from there, the teachings themselves will act.

The whole being is transformed.

Then it is possible for life to undergo drastic and complete change.

11th September

A holy man, who was a contemporary of Swami Sivananda, told us a beautiful story.

In those days there were not many English speaking Swamis and the villagers loved to hear Swamis speak in their own language - Hindi.

This Swami, a wonderful man, was fascinated by the appearance of this young Sivananda, who was very young and radiant.

He saw something great in Him.

It seems he got hold of Sivananda and said, "Come and stay with me for a month and I will teach you Hindi. Afterwards, you can travel and thrill all audiences with your dynamic, radiant personality!"

Swami Sivananda stayed only three days - the fourth night he quietly slipped away.

"This is not my path. This is not what I am here for; not to imitate this man, but to find myself."

And I think that is what He wanted all of us to do.

"What am I here for in this world? What is my unique role to play in this world?"

That each one has to discover - then that itself acts, enriching one's life.

12th September

The ascetic, Dattatreya, said, "If you are inwardly awake, life itself teaches you, everything around you becomes your teacher.

If you are inwardly asleep, then God almighty, standing in front of you, is of no use to you."

I think it is quite simple.

It is only now that there are millions of people who call themselves Buddhists, millions of people who call themselves Christians, millions of people who call themselves Hindus.

But, how many people recognized that Buddha was enlightened, how many people recognized that Jesus was Jesus Christ, how many people recognizes that Krishna was an incarnation of God? Very few.

If there were half a dozen fanatic devotees, there were also a dozen fanatic critics. During their own lifetimes they were not recognized as they are recognized now. That is obvious.

So, if my heart is not open, even if God stood in front of me and taught me, I would not pay any attention.

I would ask a million questions and demand an identification card, "How do I know that you are God, and not an impostor?"

Unless I am receptive, nothing is of any use; and if I am receptive, everything is of use.

Isn't that simple!

And so the ascetic says, "Since I am inwardly awake, since I am seeking, I find the teaching in everything around me."

13th September

There is another beautiful saying from the ascetic Dattatreya: "It is not enough to have one Guru."

I am sure that many of you who, have followed the teaching of most of the present day masters, are a bit disturbed by this, because we have been told that one should tenaciously adhere to one Guru, that one should not even look at another.

But here it says that that is not enough, and that each great master reveals a facet of this truth.

Therefore, one who seeks enlightenment or freedom from limitation must expose himself to these different facets, to the teachings of different Masters, different Gurus, so that there is a comprehensive understanding of this truth.

It is immediately clear that one who thus exposes himself to several masters is freed from one of the greatest scourges we find among ourselves - criticism.

"My guru is superior to yours."

I am immediately freed from this wasteful pastime of running other people down. If that can happen to us, it is already a great gain.

I am devoted to several teachers and therefore, in my own mind, in my own heart, nothing critical of any of them arises.

Is it possible for us to be confused, to be lead in different directions? Impossible.

Why is it so?

Because there is an inner awakening, and it is the awakened intelligence that seeks this instruction and knowledge.

14th September

What is this inner controller?

What is this indwelling divinity in all?

It is a kind of Shakti or power, not a blind force, but a conscious power called Chit-Shakti by the yogis.

Even if you think about it, you cannot understand nor conceptualize this power; you cannot come face to face with this power, because it is beyond the mind and the intellect.

It is something marvelous.

Ultimately all matter can be reduced to atoms, and these again can be split into something else.

Yet, this same substance is able to give rise to all this diversity.

We are all endowed with the same physiological structure and, we may eat the same food, yet we grow differently.

There is a mysterious intelligence in all that is truly responsible for this diversity. "That" is.

That is the inner controller in all atoms.

That is what constitutes the individual characteristics.

That is what makes me and you, makes the grass green and the rose red.

It is not possible for the human mind to grasp this, to conceptualize this.

The inner controller is supreme intelligence.

Perhaps that is the only thing that is intelligence; perhaps all the rest is merely a reflection of that intelligence.

15th September

There is no such word as disciple.

The word is discipline!

I want to go to a Guru, Guru meaning the one, the light, who removes the darkness of ignorance.

If I go with the attitude of a pupil, I am closed, contracted against anything he can do for me.

If I go to him as a disciple, one who wants to learn, an embodiment of discipline, then first I must realize that I am ignorant; second that this ignorance is dreadful, that it is the cause of all my sorrow and unhappiness; and third, that this light will help to dispel the darkness of ignorance.

Only when these truths are accepted can I learn.

Otherwise I cannot learn.

I must go to the master only when I have these disciplines.

He need do nothing more than light the candles, and they will radiate their light, by which I can see the truth.

It is only in this light that I shall be able to see.

But unless I am awake, alert, unless my eyes are open, the light will do nothing for me.

This is what is meant by discipleship.

Living near a great master does not automatically confer merit on me.

It is my openness, my discipleship, and my eagerness to learn that matters.

Once this realization is there, the whole path is clear.

16th September

We work for peace and the world goes to pieces. Why?

We talk of peace and end up fighting. Why?

When shall we learn to pause and think?

When shall we learn to assess correctly the problems that face us and eradicate the roots of our troubles?

These roots were exposed thousands of years ago by the Vedic Sages, Krishna, Buddha, Moses, Jesus and Mohammed.

In different languages they remind us that selfish desire, ignorance and inertia, are the causes of all sin and suffering.

An enlightened life of love, charity, dynamic selfless service alone can ensure our happiness and peace.

To live is to turn away from evil (live is the reverse of evil) and it is evil that acts as a veil, hiding God (evil and veil both have the same spelling).

Even to live is not enough.

The undivine little "I" is there (the ego, the root of all selfishness).

It has to be dropped and we should feel that we are (the "I" is) nothing, zero.

This zero is full, perfect, complete (it is the only letter in the alphabet that returns to the starting point), and unchanged in all directions.

When this zero (the letter "o") replaces "I", we really live, we love all.

This is what my master called divine life.

To love all, to lovingly serve all, feeling that God dwells in all, that God is the reality in one's self - is divine life.

17th September

The yogi knows that muscles are the tools of nerve power (prana) and this power is the servant of the mind, which is seated in the brain.

Prana is life, the power in life-breath, the life-giving nature of food.

It functions in the countless faculties of the body and mind.

If prana functions properly, one is full of life, one faces the challenges of life with hope, enthusiasm and faith.

If the prana is at low ebb, one thinks about nothing but doctors, hospitals and operations.

Prana and mind are closely linked.

The health of the body depends largely on the health of the nerves and certain hormone-secreting glands.

Health cannot be easily defined; it is like happiness, one has to experience it oneself.

The yogi's powers of resistance and endurance are far higher than others.

He enjoys an inner sense of well-being.

Even on his deathbed he looks forward, backward and inward with supreme sense of delight and well-being.

This yogic system prevents illness in youth and in old age enables one to ignore it.

In the system of yogic physical culture we almost completely ignore the muscles, we concentrate on the glands and nerves. We strengthen the nerves by strengthening their source, the brain and the spinal column.

18th September

I have a rather simple prayer.

“God, give me enough health to be able to serve, to work, and enough pain not to forget you.”

A life without some pain, some heartache - not necessarily physiological - would be useless, impossible.

We need this, and if I can see life without getting worked up about my own silly little aches and pains, I am bound to discover that the balance always seems to be in favor of something positive, something good.

Here I've lost two friends through death, but I have gained six new ones - their grandchildren.

Why don't I give thanks to God for these, instead of brooding over something that I am supposed to have lost?

When I forget all these things, then I see life flowing on smoothly, beautifully, completely regardless of what we do and what we do not do.

Why should we pray at all?

In order that we may constantly remember that the only thing in this world that does not change is change.

The only unchanging factor in this universe is constant change; it is continuous, the continuity itself is unchanging.

19th September

Everything seems to be circulating all the time; everything is recycled and brought back.

You look at yourself in the mirror.

What is this?

Recycled banana, potatoes and sandwiches.

All that will go down the drain, little by little, day after day; one day a lot more - death.

But even this is not lost.

You know the saying, "Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return."

It is literally true.

This physical body sitting here in front of you is nothing but what grew out of earth.

It consumes the food, but what consumes it is still more interesting.

Fifty-four years ago, I was a baby about eighteen inches long, with a tiny little mouth and a tiny little tongue.

Now they have become a big mouth, big tongue and big teeth.

How did I get them in the first place?

Potatoes, bananas, milk, yogurt and curd.

Can you see the shocking truth?

This tongue is nothing but sandwiches eaten two or three years ago, and these sandwiches eaten then are now looking for more sandwiches to eat.

I ate some food and made this body, which is nothing but the end product of food, now it in turn craves more food.

This process keeps going until one day the body becomes food to fertilize the earth.

20th September

We see that though life is constantly changing, there is some unchanging continuity in it.

Wonderful, isn't it?

It is only because we don't seem to grasp this fun – some silly child playing somewhere – that we are frightened.

I don't know if you believe in this idea of immortality, but I think there is an extremely simple, direct explanation for this - nothing ever dies.

Years before a man becomes old, aged, ready to leave this world, something goes out of this body and takes a form, and that form he gives the name my son, or my daughter.

It is nothing but part of his own body or of the mother's body or a combination of the two.

And it is almost as if the child looks at him and says, "I'm already here to replace you, how long are you going to live?"

After all, you started at this point, didn't you?

If you can visualize your own beginnings, you also started as a fertilized ovum.

So, that is physiologically and biologically speaking the beginning of your own life.

You are nothing more than that.

And before you disappear from this earth, you have given part of this body to make one more, so that even that physiological entity continues.

21st September

There is a continuity of humaneness in this world and yet there is no continuity concerning wisdom or foolishness.

If you are a wise man, your son may not be a wise man, or if you are a fool, your son may not be such a fool.

In the case of some of us who may not have children in the ordinary physical sense of the term, we leave behind an idea, a thought, an inspiration, a teaching, a message, and a memory - these being in no way inferior or superior to the biological babies.

There is the continuity of the spirit and yet continuous change.

The continuity itself is a continuous change, or the change is continuous and therefore there is a continuity.

When we really and sincerely pray, we see the whole life in a completely different light - that there is immortality without any metaphysical connotation.

And then birth, death, old age, pain, and what is called suffering, are all seen as part of the ever-flowing stream, ever changing and yet never changing.

All our prayer is meant to awaken ourselves to this truth.

22nd September

Is it possible to be free of selfishness and thus become directly aware of what this self means?

What is this self?

We have completely neglected this quest, and instead have been busy building up relationships, family, properties, endlessly multiplying our problems; then struggling to escape from them, and thus creating more.

I think, "I am not married, I am alone, no one to look after me. If I marry my problem will be solved."

So I marry, and then find that my own problem has become two.

We are both dissatisfied, bored, she is constantly looking for my faults; so, "I'll divert her attention, give her a baby. When the baby is crying, she won't bother about my snoring."

Has the problem been solved?

No, now it is three.

This continues until eventually I go to the divorce court and am back to square one.

Again I am lonely and again seek a wife, and the problem is endless until I begin to turn my gaze within and see me, the ego, the personality as it is.

There is this vacuum, this emptiness that draws all these problems to itself; and therefore I must become aware of this emptiness.

I or the personality is the emptiness that invites all the problems.

If there were no vacuum, the air would not rush in.

23rd September

That which becomes aware of the emptiness inside is not empty, but seeing with the light of wisdom, becomes an image of the divine light.

So, first I must completely rid myself of all those images that I have built to fill the emptiness - the image of God, the image of security, the image called my wife, the image called my children - and focus my attention wholly and solely on this inner emptiness.

Then let the question arise - I cannot ask it, it must arise - "Who is it that is aware of me?"

Who is aware of this me, which is empty, and which has therefore filled itself with all sorts of concepts - concepts of religion, concepts of ethics, concepts of morality, concepts of role; I am the husband and she is the wife, I am the father and these are my children.

All these concepts have poured into this emptiness.

This is our mistake.

We keep the emptiness in its glorious state and try to rid ourselves of our problems, but the emptiness is still there and will attract something else.

24th September

I don't want to have children, but instead I may take on disciples.

I don't wish to possess any property, but if the emptiness is still there, I'll build an ashram.

Or I may change the name.

Of course I don't eat fish, I eat seafood!

In some countries cows are no longer called cattle, they are "live-stock", stock that walks.

"Thou shalt not kill" has become "Thou shalt not murder"!

So, this business of changing the label will not do.

I must see the emptiness for what it is, and be prepared at one instant to drop seeing from this emptiness, stationing myself there and identifying with it, and what it contains.

The fact is that I am empty, but unable to tolerate this, I have dropped in a label, and now I judge you from that emptiness.

There is an awareness that looks at this emptiness, looks at this personality, looks at this "I" or ego, and sees that, so long as my life is based upon what this emptiness and its contents dictate, it will run in cycles.

That's all, the limit that you and I can reach.

The question must arise one of these days, "Who is it that is aware of this emptiness?"

Then there is what is called enlightenment.

Such an enlightened life is divine life.

25th September

Life brings all sorts of situations from day to day.

Some of them are the same old things repeated from time immemorial - hunger, thirst, fear and sleep - some of them are new, and some of them are a mixture of both old and new.

How do we deal with them, how do we cope with life, how do we live here?

In a manner of speaking, nothing has ever happened - the same life is carrying on, sometimes stumbling, sometimes falling and then getting up.

But life goes on continuously without interruption.

What we call death is falling down, lying down, and what we call illness, is stumbling, tripping on a piece of stone.

You're tottering, you're not quite steady, and suddenly you fall flat on the ground, lie down for a few minutes, and get up - that's called death and what is known as rebirth.

From one point of view this thing is continuous, without beginning and without end, it goes on and on; it's neither born nor does it die.

From another point of view, there is constant change, but this change is change of form; the spirit is unchanging, the form is ever changing.

26th September

What is happening within me, as I demand, "Tell me what I must do?"

I'm uncertain, not quite sure what to do, and I am too lazy to find out for myself what I should do.

But even more important, if something goes wrong, I'll hold you responsible.

If I make the decision myself and something goes wrong, I've no one to blame.

When we ask someone else to make up our mind, we are literally looking for a scapegoat.

If anything goes wrong, I can say, "He told me to do this, he misled me."

But if it turns out well, I say, "What a wonderful person I am. Of course, he gave me the suggestion and advice, but that was not important, it was all my doing."

It is here that we have to be alert and vigilant - and this is what nobody wants.

When asked, "What must I do," if I am a wise person, I will follow the example of Christ, Krishna, Buddha, etc. and say, "I have told you what I consider to be right, but you must make up your own mind."

Because, even in our day-to-day affairs, certain things are continuous, recurring, and certain things are not, but appear fresh.

These we have to face afresh ourselves.

27th September

Question:

What is a split personality?

Answer:

A split personality, from my point of view (which is the only point of view I can see and present!), is a person who wants to do contradictory things.

He is running in opposite directions, and yet wants to persuade himself that he does not want to do these conflicting things!

There was a lady who behaved very violently.

She was at least sincere enough to admit the need to excuse herself for bad behavior.

Then she justified, "People misunderstand me. I had a difficult childhood, I have this problem in my subconscious."

I may then decide to bring your subconscious to the conscious level by giving you a good slap!

How am I responsible for your childhood misfortunes and for what goes on in your subconscious?

You had better look at it if you want to!

There is a Tamil saying, "Even your brothers do not help you as much as a few good spankings will help you."

Unfortunately, these well-intentioned psychological theories that have been trotted out that the criminal or the mad man is a sick man who deserves our sympathy, etc. leave open the question of who will sympathies with the victim of this madness!

28th September

What is perfection?

When there are no more cravings, no more aspirations.

How does one reach a state where there are no aspirations, no desires?

We have been told that one keeps desiring something or other, "I wish to be healthier, to be better, I desire peace of mind, to become divine, to have God-realization, to be a yogi ..."

It has been said that this desire is like a catalyst, like a fire that burns everything, and burns itself out when the time comes.

The beautiful analogy given is that desire for self-realization is like fire that reduces all other desires to ashes, and eventually goes out.

This is possible if you are terribly vigilant and careful.

If I desire to be a yogi, then so long as the desire lasts, I am not a yogi.

If I am anxious to have peace of mind, I am like the person who is preoccupied with the need for falling asleep and repeats, "I must sleep, I must sleep."

He will not sleep!

Possibly, if I stop telling myself, "I must sleep," I will fall asleep immediately.

29th September

If I want to maintain my dignity in spite of the fact that I am a fool, running after pleasure, I will invent a theory, a doctrine, in order to cover my own wickedness.

Now I am not only a wicked man, but also a cheat!

This can go on for all time to come, until one day, somehow, I have the courage to turn away from this shadow and to face the light.

One can see the shadow only when one turns away from the source of light!

If you turn your face towards the sun, you no longer see the shadow.

On facing the sun, you see the light.

What caused the shadow to fall was your body or simply yourself.

The shadow was formed because of yourself and the sun.

When I turn round and face the sun, I do not see myself any more.

When I had my back to the sun, to light, I saw the shadow which had the appearance of myself, I mistook that to be myself, but when I wheeled round and faced the sun, I saw only the sun, the light, and not myself.

That is God-realization, self-realization, whatever you want to call it.

That is perfection where there is no shadow and where truth alone shines!

30th September

Why am I nasty to someone else?

I say, "Because violence, aggression, self-defense, self-protection, are part of human nature."

That means I cannot change myself.

If it is part of human nature, it is absurd even to think of changing the reality.

In that case, I must accept exactly the same behavior from the other man, and everything will become all right!

I told a lady, who excused herself for anger by saying that she had an unhappy childhood, which caused her to be violent, that I too had a family problem, and therefore, I also could be violent.

You see the contradiction here?

I want to be brutal to you, but I want you to understand and bear with me.

(I think, when it comes to me, that selfishness, brutality, etc. are all part of human nature and therefore have got to be there; but I do not want you to behave like that to me!)

Well, nature will teach you.

So instead of indulging in all this sophistry, if I am able to look at life itself, I will see that there is confusion in my heart and mind.

My whole life is in a state of confusion.

1st October

I know that my state of confusion is impossible.

I am sitting on a bed of nails, and I want to remove it.

Maybe, as I go on digging, I will find the same thing again and again.

But I will go on digging, if I do not want this confusion to continue.

One goes on peeling off layer after layer.

Again and again one finds the same thing.

This present state is impossible; one cannot live with this confusion.

We are on the right track as long as we go on persistently removing all confusions and obstacles in our life - obstacles to this development, to this unfoldment.

Then, one day or the other, sometime, the goal is reached.

It may be now, it may be in a couple of million years - that is not serious.

If you read anthropology or biology, you find that all these "ologies" talk in terms of billions of years.

If, for example, a man has a long nose and he goes on rubbing it until it becomes the desired length, it may take six million years! (The doctor could have done it in a few minutes!)

That is the beauty of natural evolution, unfoldment.

It may happen now, or centuries later, but it has to happen eventually.

2nd October

We have been discussing a number of aspects of spiritual development. There is a problem here, a basic problem: what we have been discussing so far cannot be understood at all, unless we see the thing happening, unless we come face to face with an exemplar, somebody who exemplifies these truths. Thus we go in search of some great Guru, who is a living example of all this. Without the living example I cannot understand what non-volitional activity is. Even with the living example of someone, I still need an inner understanding. The two must come together. Then it is possible to progress. Even then, it is not automatic, like pressing a button on the tape recorder. In vedanta we have a beautiful illustration. If you light a match, there will be a small fire. If you bring that tiny fire anywhere near a big ball of cotton soaked in petrol, it will immediately burst into flames. You do not even have to touch it with that tiny match. The cotton is ready to burst into flame because it is soaked in petrol. But it needs that spark, that contact. Otherwise, even if the bundle were there for a hundred years, it would not catch fire.

3rd October

A further example is charcoal or firewood.

Probably a small match is not enough to get it to catch fire.

You stick it under the firewood.

It does not burn.

So you fan it, and eventually it starts burning.

Finally there is a stack of banana stems.

Matches are useless here.

A couple of well-lit candles are probably inadequate.

But a bundle of rags soaked in kerosene, set afire, then put underneath, may set it alight.

But you must be careful here that the mountain of banana skins does not put out the fire!

So, on the one hand, I must come into contact with the spark of fire, the Guru.

On the other hand, I must be at least like charcoal, if not like the petrol soaked ball of cotton!

If I am like the banana tree, it is better for me not to go near the Guru.

I will put him out!

Both these things seem to be necessary.

First, I must prepare myself; I must be ready to burst into flame.

Then I must go to a Guru.

By merely looking at Him, I may attain enlightenment.

4th October

The Guru may have to instruct me once, twice, thrice.

Usually the holy men restrict themselves to three attempts.

My Guru would go up to ten - he had infinite patience.

If you still would not listen, he would not throw you out, but offer you some tea or coffee, hoping that one of these days, even this banana stem might get dried.

Just hoping.

This part of the responsibility is the student's, the disciple's.

It cannot be done by any Guru.

The Guru will never prepare me for this burning.

I have to be naturally ready, and by a certain amount of self-exertion, I must at least have graduated to the second stage, the charcoal stage, before I can approach the Guru.

It is only when I am able to see how this man functions, that I begin to have a glimpse of what this non-volitional activity is, that I may understand the concept that "I" is a cell in the body of God.

Even then, in my understanding, there is bound to be some deficiency.

The Guru will put it right, if you let him.

I go to the Guru, but can I understand the Guru?

I can see what He does.

But do I understand the spirit in which he does it?

I can imitate His gestures, His external actions, but do I know what His inner spirit is?

5th October

There is a funny story told of Shankaracharya, the famous philosopher. He had some disciples, and they were touring the whole of India on foot. In hot Central India, they were dying of thirst, and they appealed to the Guru for help.

There was no water available anywhere, but they passed a shop selling toddy, Indian native liquor.

The Guru walked in and so did the followers.

The Guru poured himself a drink of toddy, the only liquid available.

The obedient disciples followed the Guru's example.

His thirst was quenched easily - he had only one glass, but they each required two!

The Guru was watching them out of the corner of his eye.

Then, intentionally he walked through hot areas until again they told him they were thirsty.

He led them to the outskirts of a town where they entered a blacksmith's shop.

The only liquid available there was molten lead.

The Guru poured himself a drink and asked his disciples if they wanted to follow his example once more.

Oh no, they were not thirsty now!

6th October

Do I know what spirit motivates the Guru?

If I am mature, ready to burst into flame, I will know.

The mature person's understanding is different.

He will know in what spirit the Guru functions, non-volitionally.

This is the problem.

I have to have an example, but I have to be extremely cautious in approaching this example, and not to imitate stupidly.

If I had not lived with my Guru Swami Sivananda for seventeen years, I would not have understood anything.

We read a passage from a holy book, but it makes no sense at all.

We are told that just as there are cells in our body, we are cells in the body of God.

But what about cyclones? There is no cyclone in my body. Is a cyclone also a cell in the body of God? We will have millions of unanswerable questions.

Only when you live with a Guru, and live with him in the right spirit, the right attitude, is it possible for you to get a remote glimpse of what it means.

7th October

The concept of duty is very difficult to grasp, because it is not something that can be intellectualized or conceptualized.

It is not a formula that can be chewed up and applied to one's life.

If you are very careful, you will see that your present idea of duty is very different from what it was a few years ago.

Is duty something that keeps on changing?

If not, what is it? Who is going to tell me?

It is not something that my mind or my intellect can manufacture.

It is something that is.

Once you recognize that, what you call duty, or nature, or God's Will, or God's Grace, all become synonyms.

You cannot go against your duty, because that is your nature, and you cannot violate your nature.

It is natural for a bird to fly, but not for me.

If I jump off a balcony, nature asserts itself, not my imagined ability to fly.

Nature triumphs all the time.

Therefore, can I discover that nature?

It has to be discovered now, every day.

It is then that what my duty is, becomes clear.

Why is it that we always have to be told what our duty is?

It is because the attention is elsewhere.

I am not discovering my nature, but I am more interested in covering up my nature, and pretending that I am something else.

I am looking at someone else, and comparing myself with him.

This is another wretched pastime, because it always misleads me.

8th October

I do not look into my own nature, but I am looking at somebody else.  
Then, of this is born jealousy and greed, of this is born craving and desire, of this is born frustration, and of that ignorance is aggravated.  
I am constantly looking outwards, thinking, "What shall I gain from all this?"  
Duty is not something that I can learn from somebody else.  
It can only be discovered by observing one's own nature.  
The spontaneous expression of that nature is one's duty.  
In that there is no "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not".  
This does not arise at all.  
Once I turn my attention within, to see what my fundamental nature is, what do I see first?  
I don't see what my nature is, but I do see that I am greedy, that I am easily irritated, that I am proud and that I am interested in prestige.  
These things come up when I look directly into myself.  
So, can I say that this is my nature, that I am a bad-tempered person?  
I can see quite clearly that I am easily upset, easily annoyed.  
Can I take this to be my nature?  
What is natural to me must also be constant.  
As long as there is life, as long as there is consciousness, this quality must also be there.

9th October

I am a man, and as long as there is life, as long as there is consciousness, I know that I am a man, not a woman or a dog.

Can I also say, in the same way, that I am irritated all the time?

Few of us can say that.

I smile sometimes; I am not always angry - I hope not!

Therefore, that again is not natural to me.

It comes into being only in certain situations.

What is natural will be constant and invariable; so, this anger is not natural, but is perverse.

When I observe this perversity, I see that I am not living a natural life, and that I am therefore not doing my duty.

When life becomes more and more natural, there is duty and great beauty, both together, in one's life.

It is then that one goes on to the next inevitable step.

If this is natural to me, what is "me"?

If I say that this is my nature, then what is "me" in this "my nature"?

This again leads to self-realization.

Therefore, if you learn to do your duty in this way, your heart becomes pure, and in that pure heart there is self-realization.

This is the essence of karma yoga.

Karma yoga is not doing one's duty as dictated by others; karma yoga is not doing something, thinking that it is an unselfish action.

Karma yoga is to go right down into one's own inner nature to find what the self is.

10th October

Why does religion promote what it condemns?

Why is there such a gulf between theory and actuality?

Is it because of hypocrisy or ignorance?

Every religion declares that God is one, that humanity is one, yet each one declares that it alone has the monopoly of this truth.

How can religion unite man by dividing it, by carving out a slice of its own, and then proclaiming the other slices to be untruths or half-truths?

Does such polemical and proselytizing activity promote peace and unity?

Can it be considered religious at all, when it only succeeds in creating greater antagonism and worse bitterness than already exist?

Yet, whatever substitute we offer man in place of religion, in order to awaken brotherly love, humanity, and an awareness of the divine essence in each person - that substitute would eventually organize itself into a religion, and mankind would soon find itself in the same position as today.

If such difficulties beset religion, which stands for peace, love and goodwill, how much more confusing will be the other fields of human activity - such as commerce, politics and society!

11th October

The crucial question is whether we can do without security at all?

Or, can we evolve a new way of life to find true security, without creating vested interests and institutions that will assume authority and exercise control?

To answer this, a deeply spiritual heart is necessary.

There is no real security in the world!

Death, disease, and destruction, in countless forms, are waiting at the door.

What shall we use as a lock against these?

When you "secure" something against someone else, you are alienating that someone, creating an enemy, without realizing that you and he are one in truth!

Is it difficult to see then that love is the only source of unfailing security? Love is oneness. Love is the total negation of the "me" (selfishness). Love does not exercise control nor impose its authority. Love is freedom, but this freedom is the freedom of the spirit, which asserts this freedom in humility, unselfishness and pure love - not in revolts, revolutions and violence.

This love is God. When this love results, there will be perfect security without anyone imposing it. This is the peace that passeth understanding.

12th October

Freedom is basically a spiritual quality.

Man demands freedom because his spirit is free – ever free - never bound.

Yet, in his daily life, he finds that he is never free!

But if the urge to freedom is born of reaction to previous repression or oppression, the spirit is lost and that loss is great.

Freedom is a quality of the spirit; it is not the result of a reaction.

A free man rejects from his mind and heart even the memory of bondage - he is not burdened by past bitterness and enmity, the strife and struggle of bygone days - for him, today is fresh, it has never been before.

The free man meets each day with a fresh heart, a fresh mind, a fresh spirit.

He clings to nothing; neither does he find anything that should be rejected.

He is unbiased, his mind is unconditioned by prestige or prejudice.

He is free from personal ambition, superiority or inferiority complexes, from selfishness and slave mentality.

He goes from freedom to greater freedom.

The spirit of freedom is born of the freedom of the spirit.

May this freedom manifest in the heart of every man, woman and child.

13th October

In one of the yoga camps, there was a girl who was born deaf and dumb. She was given a hearing aid and discovered she could hear our words. She wrote: "I hear what you are saying but I cannot understand the words." This unveils truth.

To her everything is associated with a visible symbol - sign language or written word - but we are conditioned differently.

One day our mother pointed and said, "tree".

Later on the teacher confirmed this by writing the word "tree".

That is the ultimate extent of our "knowledge" - even today the tree remains an unknown something.

In fact, not a thing in this world in which we live is really known to us.

We discover the truth, only if we have the courage to say, "I can hear but I cannot understand."

We hear, but we do not understand the truth; we think, yet we do not understand the truth.

The moment we see or hear, the audiovisual association - the dreadful curtain that veils the truth - presents itself to us and we console ourselves that we "know".

If we can say, "I see the form, but I do not know what it is," then we shall see the truth "in all these names and forms", in the words of My Master Swami Sivananda.

14th October

If we are sincere we shall discover that the teachings of the great men of God are all the same.

Differences were invented because we wanted to build walls around their personalities and teachings.

We need to remind ourselves constantly that, though walls make the house, we do not live in the walls, we live in the space which was there even before the walls went up.

The spirit of man is like a river.

The waters of the ocean (God) rise and fall over the land, but their destination is always "back to the ocean".

Humanity is constantly moving towards that destination - and that is religious spirit.

Religion is constant, yet ever-changing like the river.

The same water and the same stream may be called different names at different places, and there may even be superficial differences in the appearance and behavior of the river.

But it is the same river, the same water, the same spirit of religion, and the same human aspiration to merge in the source, whatever we call that source.

When this is realized, we realize that we are all brothers and sisters.

Inner conflict and external hostility cease.

In harmony we discover a new dimension called love.

15th October

When I wake up in the morning, the mind also wakes up with all its myriad thoughts, feelings, desires and ambitions.

What is mind?

What is thought?

How does it arise?

How does one thought yield to another?

There is a lump of dough in your hands, and you fashion it into Buddha.

Your child comes along, smashes it, and makes it into a film star.

The baby comes along, and smears this on the floor.

Here you have examples of the sattvic (pure, divine), of the rajasic (dynamic and passion-filled) and of the tamasic (or dull and stupid) states of mind and forms of dough.

Can you understand the mind itself?

Can you understand the dough itself, without any form or shape?

The states of mind are mental activities, but what is the dharma of the mind?

In other words, what is mind without moods, thoughts, feelings?

When this enquiry is pursued, meditation happens.

When this enquiry is pursued the seeker becomes truly humble and also truly virtuous.

Such a seeker is the most noble citizen in the world, an asset beyond value. He is neither an escapist nor a selfish man.

16th October

Life has become a problem only because we have tried to isolate it from death, treating death itself as a problem.

When we see that death is not a problem, but an inevitable component of life, then life is not a problem either.

Life and death are inseparable.

This is pure and simple truth - it is universal.

Death has no partiality - it comes to saint and sinner alike.

If you meditate upon this both selfishness and injustice collapse, they lose their significance.

When that which you love the most - life - is seen as a vehicle that drives you to the grave, a profound change takes place.

You learn to live and to love all.

Injustice cannot be eradicated by any other means.

Evil cannot be "fought" by good.

The fighting and the destruction are themselves evil, and breed evil in those who were formerly oppressed by the former evil.

Evil cannot be cancelled by resistance.

It is resistance that infuses strength to the evil force.

If there is no resistance, the evil may, in all probability, blow itself out.

This does not mean, however, that injustice and oppression are desirable!

There is another way - to live as if the last hour were at hand.

Life and death are inseparable - that itself is total awakening to the truth.

17th October

Many people in this world are unaware of health, happiness or peace.

If you have not enjoyed them, you do not know what they are, and you will mistake their shadows for the substance.

But once you taste them, you know them unmistakably.

Yoga enables us to discover this.

The yoga postures enable us to remove the toxic substances that cover the pure cells of the body – and when practiced with inner awareness - to discover what a healthy body really means.

This awareness penetrates further, and enables you to discover the mind.

The student of yoga, with the light of inner awareness, sees that the mind is covered by thick layers of prejudice, ignorance, greed and hatred.

He discovers them to find the pure intelligence, in whose light the mind functions in an enlightened manner.

That intelligence or soul is pure and divine.

The soul is nothing but a cell in the cosmic body of God.

As cells in that body, we are all one.

Separation is the result of ignorance.

It is in the darkness of ignorance that prejudices thrive and cover the mind, thus creating the illusion that you are different from me.

Yoga removes this cover, this illusion, this ignorance, and reveals the truth that in God we are all one.

18th October

Yoga practices are like doors to a house.

On one side of the threshold they are marked "Entrance" and on the other side, the same door becomes "Exit".

These doors can admit us into the hall of truth - or they may be an escape.

It all depends on the way we are facing.

Are we practicing yoga in all aspects so that we may enter the hall of truth, or are we endeavoring to escape, using the same door as an exit from reality?

This problem arises because all spiritual practices have, not only a spiritual value, but also a multi-purpose effectiveness.

We may not be spiritually motivated at all and still enjoy their physical, moral, social and psychic benefits.

Worse still, we may merely use these spiritual practices, paradoxically, to run away from truth.

They are then used as tranquillizers.

We may indulge in them and piously wish that our problems will go away.

They will not.

If you use these practices as escape-exits, the problem you are running away from usually runs ahead of you, and is waiting for you at the next corner.

When the right spirit prevails, rediscover the divine energy that flows through the body, sustaining it, towards self-knowledge.

With self-knowledge, the creator of all the problems is discovered, is unmasked, and is silenced.

It is then that these spiritual practices act as the door to admit us to the hall of wisdom.

19th October

It will not do to ignore violence, to turn our face from it, and to pretend that we have eradicated it.

It is there, in each one of us, in as much as we take sides, approve or disapprove, judge and advise.

What is this violence?

Is it inherent in the personality, or is it a visitor?

If it is inherent, then why is it that, at certain times, it is completely absent?

If it is a visitor, then why is it that the personality is vulnerable.

The problem of violence is internal and not external, is potentially inherent and not existentially inherent.

As long as the human personality lasts, so long the possibility of violence exists.

It is the mind-stuff that becomes violence when you least expect it to.

The error therefore is foolish complacency.

If you anticipate violence, you create it, because you are afraid, and fear is another name for violence.

But if you are alert and aware of its potential existence, this awareness is free from violence.

When self-awareness is constant, it so vitally and radically changes one's personality, that the potentiality of violence is under heavy surveillance, and hence rendered inoperative.

Such self-awareness is yoga, is meditation.

20th October

Truth cannot be transferred – each one has to discover it.  
Each one has to seek and know the experiencer, the seer.  
When one thus seeks to know the experiencer, there is meditation.  
One should not be satisfied with formulated answers - like “I see” or “the mind sees” - but one should relentlessly pursue the source of those answers.  
“Does such meditation lead to happiness?”, one may question.  
When does one want happiness?  
When one realizes one is unhappy.  
And what is the happiness one wants?  
It is some preconceived idea - a notion - of happiness.  
But surely, this notion is not happiness.  
Even the striving to be happy is the surest proof of unhappiness.  
In this striving, when one grabs moments of happiness, the grabbing destroys the happiness and the striving, which is unhappiness, alone remains.  
When all these are dropped, then happiness is.  
It can never be caught.  
I can never seek happiness.  
I can never be happy.  
I am happiness.

21st October

A psychologically inert person, one who is not alert, has fixed ideas, for they seem to afford him some comfort.

They destroy the ever-stirring spirit of enquiry in him.

Such a person is committed to the "either - or" choice.

We have the pervasive and pernicious influence of this spiritual suicide in our life.

Temples and rituals, science and technology, places of entertainment, political parties and religious denominations, certain forms of behavior - all these are either good or bad, according to most people.

They blindly apply these labels because they are blind - the "either - or" choice makes them blind.

The truth may be "neither - nor" and it will keep you forever awake, alert, questioning.

What is a question?

A question is really a quest, and the quest is for what is.

Hence, a serious questioner is not satisfied with an exchange of opinions.

What is, is naturally some factor that is, was and will be.

If you ask, "What is?", the answer is the same two words, pronounced as an affirmation!

The quest itself is, the questioning intelligence is, the questioner is, was and will be, till dissolved in self-knowledge - when the quest ceases.

What is, is eternal and unchanging.

22nd October

It is good to know that our sorrow is our own making; no one else is responsible for it.

What the humble ant does in the anthill, what the busy bee does in the hive, mighty man is unable to do: to live in harmony, to live as an integral part of the infinite, which he is in reality (in the undivided and true state).

Disharmony is not the law of nature; and hence nature eliminates the elements that pretend to produce it.

If you look round you, you will see the proof of this everywhere.

The victor and the vanquished, the killer and the killed, the ruler and the ruled, the murderer and the victim have all been eliminated.

Life that is natural continues to live.

The sun shines.

The ocean roars.

Wind sweeps.

Earth yields its riches.

Flowers smile.

Rivers flow.

All of them sing the song of harmony, oneness, love and a vision in which there is no division.

God creates work - man creates worry.

God creates challenges - man creates problems.

Good will is truly God's will.

23rd October

Man has to “fight the battle of life” and struggle to keep even the friendship of those who may not be hostile to him, for fear of losing that friendship.

All this is sorrow and unhappiness.

Scientists (biologists) have made wonderful discoveries.

They tell us that the ants in an anthill and the bees in a beehive are “one entity, the individual ants and bees being cells of the one body”.

Maybe our soul is just a cell in a “larger” body.

Maybe, when the “lander on Mars” scans in the direction of the earth, he does not see it at all, and decides it does not exist or at best sees it as a particle of dust which, if magnified a million times, resembles a rounded anthill, with individual ants creeping over it.

Perhaps the (earth) anthill is itself one cell of a cosmic being, and “we” are merely infinitesimal parts of the cell, inseparably bound together.

And, perhaps it is our puerile attempt to create a separation from one another that causes the “space-of-sorrow” around us.

Daily and hourly we are filling the space with our cravings, hate, greed, aggression and violence, not realizing that we are the only victims of our own viciousness.

24th October

Whether individuality is fact or fiction, there is the idea of the individuality. Perhaps the first pronoun "I" is nothing but the abbreviation of the full word "Idea".

The first person pronoun "I" may itself be nothing more than an idea.

However, as soon as this idea arises, it creates you, the other person, the second person, the he, she, and it, the third person ...

From this division flows an interminable stream of worry, anxiety, fear and hate. How does one put an end to this?

By realizing that you are the stream.

The moment you realize that, the menace has ceased.

The "I am anxious" duality creates a distinction between "I" and the anxiety.

If I am the fire, I no longer feel the heat, as "I" and "fire" are no longer separate, but one.

If I am the iceberg, I do not shiver and freeze anymore, as when "I" feel the "cold".

Similarly, if I am anxiety, anxiety no longer haunts me.

I am it, and there is no more struggle.

The anxiety as anxiety falls away.

25th October

Man has set his boot on the moon.

Now he has landed a machine on Mars.

Exploration of outer space is progressing at great speed and greater expense.

Some yoga teachers got together for the annual fortnight-long seminar during which we tried to explore inner space.

Mars may or may not be a warlord; but man is.

Moon may or may not be responsible for the moods of the mind, but man himself is responsible for his emotions.

Who is responsible for man's sorrow but himself?

But, what is emotion?

What is sorrow?

Why is man unhappy?

The Sanskrit word for sorrow or unhappiness is dukham.

“Kham” means “space”, and the prefix “du” indicates that space is bad, evil, polluted.

Dukham literally means that there is a space in and around man that is evil and polluted!

How did man create this space around himself in the first place?

Surely by thinking that he is independent of and separate from the rest of the universe.

This thought itself is space.

This thought (which is the “I”-thought) generates other thoughts in order to assume and to establish a relationship between the individual and the rest of the universe.

These thoughts pollute that inner space.

26th October

Health, happiness, healing, holiness, peace, power, enlightenment and ecstasy, are all one, and that one is beyond the “me”, or what my Gurudev Swami Sivananda called “the self-assertive, rajasic and arrogant ego-sense”.

The ego asserts itself and assumes an importance it does not possess.

The ego thinks that it supports life and that it is indispensable, and that without it, life cannot go on in this world.

I am sure you have seen beautiful mansions in Europe, whose pillars are sturdy figures of strong men and women who seem to support the massive buildings on their hands; in most cases they are considered indispensable, and hence they do not have legs (to prevent them from running away, abandoning the buildings they are holding).

It is this foolish notion that we are supporting the world that creates problems.

It is this self-arrogating “I” that creates problems.

Hence, Gurudev sang: “When shall I be free? When ‘I’ ceases to be.”

When the ‘I’ ceases to be, there is health, happiness, harmony, holiness and healing.

Such harmony is yoga.

Prana flows.

Love flows.

God is.

27th October

I am unhappy all the time because I am pursuing something.

I am pursuing a goal that is fleeting, impermanent.

What is permanent?

The pursuer of all these goals, the experiencer of all these experiences, the knowledge that forever knows remains as knowledge.

It doesn't pursue any goals thereafter, it is ever there, not static, not asleep, but awake, wide-awake, undivided, uncontaminated.

Hence it is not a goal; yoga has no goal at all.

The pursuit of the goal is the root cause of all our troubles and difficulties.

When the goal is dropped, life seems to know which way to flow, how to flow and in that flow there is no problem, there is no anxiety, there is no mental distress, there is no unhappiness.

But the avoidance of unhappiness is not necessarily the goal of yoga.

When the self remains the self, without pursuing a goal outside itself, without pursuing an object created by itself, there is bliss.

Bliss is not the goal.

Once the bliss is taken to be a goal outside the self, the division is made and trouble starts.

Can we practice yoga, can we assimilate yoga, can we live in the spirit of yoga without creating a goal, constantly enquiring, looking within?

That is the object, or rather the non-object of yoga.

28th October

We have accustomed ourselves to consider only that clear which shines as an object in front of us.

The self is not an object, it is the subject.

What is the self?

It isn't clear because of the constant endeavor to objectify it.

It can never be made an object.

That which threw up that question is the self.

The self is the self; the self is.

We should divest ourselves of this bad habit of considering only that as knowledge in which there is awareness of an object.

When this has dropped away, it is possible that what is called self-knowledge or the self that is knowledge, or knowledge that is the self becomes clear in its own way; not in the way in which I see you, not in the manner in which you see me, but in another completely different type of knowledge.

That knowledge enables you and me without verification to know that "I am alive".

This quest for an object that is the goal must be dropped at the very first step, at the door.

Not merely your hats and shoes, but that which is inside your skull also has to go.

That which you call your soul must be exposed like the soles are exposed if the shoes are taken off.

29th October

One good thing about the factor of time in our lives is that it seems to take everything away.

If there is a little happiness, time washes it away.

Unhappiness won't last as long as you don't hold it back, wishing it weren't there. We have all done this; somebody insults you and you get angry and upset and you are miserable for a couple of days.

Even that is not necessary.

The whole incident lasted only ten minutes.

So, why did you have to hold onto it?

But the mind keeps chewing it over: "He should not have done that. This should not happen to me."

The trouble happened long ago, but chewing it again, you are perpetuating the unhappiness.

Time washed it away immediately.

One has to learn this art of dealing with sorrow or happiness, which is passing all the time.

Whatever unhappiness that has not yet reached me, I avoid.

If I do that, then I have enough strength and energy to deal with the sorrow that does reach me.

I don't invite it, I don't anticipate it, and I don't run into it.

The intelligence points clearly to the sorrow and avoids it.

The sorrow that has already reached me, I allow to blow over.

30th October

What does sorrow mean?

Who is it that suffers?

What do we mean by happiness and who experiences it?

Am I referring to physical happiness?

Physically, perhaps there is some pleasure and some pain.

The body has contact with the outside world; this body is matter and the world outside is matter.

When these two come together, they react upon each other, which is a pure and simple physical phenomenon.

The nerve-endings are excited and some excitement of these nerve-endings is called pleasure, and some other excitement of these nerve-endings is called pain.

Besides the common factor called excitement of the nerves, there is another interesting truth concerning pleasure and pain.

The human being can only appreciate a certain amount of pain and a certain amount of pleasure; beyond that, both of them are exactly the same experience.

We suffer a dreadful illusion that the more pleasure, the better.

It is not true.

One becomes unconscious with pain and swoons with pleasure - they are exactly the same.

In the same way, people cry out of pleasure and cry out of pain - the tears are the same.

So neither the body, nor the external object, determines the definition of pain or pleasure, happiness or unhappiness.

31st October

As long as we are unable to step out of the conventional attitude towards sorrow, it will continue.

We are taught, conditioned and brought up with the concept that if someone insults you, you must punish him.

We must try to get out of the group rut, and try to look at this whole phenomenon from a different angle.

Then it is possible for us to get a glimpse of the truth.

A holy man came to a very simple and beautiful understanding - sorrow is 's-o-r-r-o-w', nothing more than the word.

If the word were not there, and if the mind that gave value to that word were not there, where would sorrow be?

This Holy man discovered that "as you think, so you become".

This does not mean what it is generally regarded to mean.

It only means this: I am thinking of sorrow and at that moment I experience sorrow.

In exactly the same way, happiness is nothing but 'h-a-p-p-i-n-e-s-s', the word and the corresponding concept that seems to arise in the mind.

Once the concept has arisen in the mind, the mind itself experiences the same concept.

What is it that gives rise to that concept?

When you directly enquire into this, you come face to face, not with sorrow, not with happiness, but with the content of these, which is the same - the spirit of the mind.

1st November

## Hail Light Divine

Unseen, you enable sight to see.

Shining without motive, you are the prime mover of all activities on earth and in heaven.

Unrecognized, you make recognition possible.

You shine and in your light the universe shines in all its glory.

When you shine in the heart of man, he beholds your glory.

O Light! You illumine the earth and the heavens and there is sight.

You are the inner light as insight.

You are the witness of the universe.

You are the eye of wisdom in the hearts of all.

Your presence is not seen, only the effect is seen.

Your absence is not seen either, only its effect is inferred.

Light reveals the truth to sight.

When insight is not and the reality of life is not realized, darkness or ignorance is assumed.

Mysterious Light!

When you do not shine, the reality is apparently veiled.

That which is, appears not to be.

That which is not and has no existence (darkness) appears to exist.

2nd November

Darkness is a non-entity.  
It hides nothing, veils nothing, makes nothing disappear.  
Light is the truth.  
It alone is the truth.  
It exists at all times.  
It plays hide and seek with itself and even beholds darkness!  
Nature is full of blessings.  
The light shines eternally.  
But we turn away from, it creating darkness in our own lives, and the clouds gather, creating confusion, disorder, pain and sorrow.  
In our frantic efforts to get rid of pain and sorrow, we forget that the desire to get rid of pain and the effort worsens it!  
The effort to create order is disorder.  
The mind that sees this truth, not as an idea but as truth, is alert.  
The alert mind itself is order, virtue.  
It's powerful gaze does not permit the ideas to arise.  
In its light actions happen, actions spring directly from the being or the intelligence.  
When the clouds disperse and your hemisphere faces the sun, there is light.  
To live in that light is enlightenment.  
Such a life is divine life.  
He who sees the light alone as the eternal truth is undeluded.  
In his heart the Lord, Who is the supreme controller of all, Paramesvar, stands revealed.  
Jai Paramesvar!

3rd November

When you all leave me in one hour's time, what is to be my fate?

The answer is terribly simple: it will be precisely the same as it was before you came in here.

I was alone before you came, and now I think I am with you, but it is not true.

If my heart stops now and I collapse, you will not be with me, no matter who you are.

My fate will be exactly what it was before you came into my life.

It doesn't matter if the other person is called Krishna, or your husband, or your wife, or your son or your friend.

Whatever I was before I met you, that will I be after you leave me.

The one exception is that I may be haunted by some kind of memory, just as before I was haunted by some kind of hope.

I think that the difference between memory and hope is just the spelling!

If you try to remember something that happened ten years ago, you will never be able to remember it as it was, without some imagination distorting it.

Memory is never pure; it is invariably distorted by hope.

Hope interferes with the purity of memory, and in the same way all our hopes are invariably built on memory.

Take the memory away and there are no hopes.

If I can't even remember my name, what am I hoping for?

4th November

We are all looking for something, without ever having asked this simple question: "How do I know that what I am looking for exists?"

This is a ridiculous thing about the whole of life, not just so-called "spiritual life". I am looking for happiness - how do I know that such a thing exists?

If you ask this question seriously, only one thing exists and that is the questioner. The hoper of the hopes exists; the rememberer of the memories exists.

That is all.

See if you can recognize that one.

If this is not done and the carrot is dangled in front of the donkey, it is inevitable that the teaching will be misunderstood.

Anyone who hopes that a teaching can ever not be misunderstood, is hoping against hope.

It is not possible.

There is an interesting but tragic quality of the mind: when a teaching is presented, whether in the form of a scripture or a lecture, the mind picks up what it wants to pick up.

I look into these scriptures merely to find confirmation for what I already know, to be able to pat myself on the back.

The mind selects what it values most, not in terms of how to better oneself, how to discover oneself, but just to give one a testimonial that he is a good person.

The self is purposely hidden; it doesn't want to look at itself.

5th November

When I am full of love and devotion for God, happiness flows towards me from all directions.

When this is not there, then I am not really devoted.

What is it that resists?

Hope, fear, craving; and naturally the attention is focused on all these.

When you focus your attention on one of these, it seems to fade away, to disappear.

But has the craving really gone?

It is possible that it has moved out of the focus of your attention temporarily.

However, if you had trained yourself to focus your attention, then you wouldn't let it slip away.

You would hold it there, because you want to know what it is.

You seek nothing.

The seeker himself was sought, and the seeker has merged himself in his own seeking, by seeking himself.

There is a state in which there is no deliberate thought; there is a state in which there is no thinking as such - I think.

That state is total surrender, absolute devotion, complete and total love.

When you are full of that love, naturally happiness will flow to you from all directions.

It is then that devotion is properly understood and properly practiced.

Then all problems are instantly solved or resolved.

6th November

Nature is complex in her simplicity.

She loves those who try to understand her and receives them into her bosom (the grave); the rebellious conquerors of nature, too, receive from her the same treatment.

Nature remains a mystery.

Every philosophy that the understanding man has proclaimed as truth has been falsified before the ink is dry on his thesis.

Man struggles against the inevitable.

The inevitable is the reality!

This reality takes no notice of private wishes and aspirations of the puny ignorant man.

Unwilling to admit this, successive generations of men have invented "other" philosophies.

One school of philosophers has challenged another school and declared that their invention is more permanent and truly and totally universal.

All this inevitably leads to conflict, to aggression and to violence.

Conflict is born of ignorance.

Wisdom sees different forces as co-operative agents.

Wisdom is synthesis.

Wisdom recognizes that even the threatening, "pull in the opposite direction" is inevitable when the pendulum swings and this recognition acts as the moderating influence.

Conflict is avoided, coexistence is realized and co-operation made possible.

Aggression yields place to love.

Love is God.

May God be with you.

7th November

We do not know what happiness means.

We only know what sorrow means.

Happiness is, according to our limited experience, the period in between two sorrows; the time when we are not miserable.

Between two headaches there is a head - waiting for the next headache!

Life is something that happens between two deaths.

Happiness is something that happens between two sorrows.

I was unhappy yesterday, and while I say that I am happy today, there is the sneaking suspicion that this may not be so tomorrow.

The valley between two hills of sorrow is envisaged to be happiness.

The wish to enjoy the delight, the bliss - to capture and hold it - that becomes sorrow!

Whatever you are trying to hold onto is dead.

You are left with just the effort of holding on!

That effort is pain and sorrow.

Unfortunately, since we do not want to recognize this truth, we do not see it as such.

We pretend to ourselves that we know what happiness means.

The mind is not trained to live in truth.

Freedom from sorrow is a negative concept.

We want something positive, so we invent bliss.

Having invented it, we go looking for it, we want to experience it.

The periods in between the peaks of pain in life are regarded by the foolish mind as bliss, which is in fact non-existent.

8th November

We expect great joy, great bliss to follow “freedom from sorrow”.

There is a thing called sensual bliss, bliss of meditation, spiritual bliss, infinite bliss.

All these are castles in the air constructed in order to satisfy a craving to be happy, to enjoy what you and I regard as the opposite of sorrow.

We do not know what happiness means.

We only know what sorrow means.

Even the sage who is godly will still function as a normal human being while on earth.

Neither creating nor suffering problems, he watches moment to moment the ordinary things he says and does.

It needs the toughest “activist” to be really vigilant!

When the thorn is in one's foot, one does not resignedly say, “This is not my business; leave it to God.”

One does not “accept”, as accepting leads to justifying and defending.

Facing the cobra one does not stay motionless, but does everything one has to do - except one does not step on it!

Similarly with a thorn in the foot.

Aware of the thorn, of the venomous snake, one is constantly on guard, one-pointedly.

This above all - vigilance till the last breath.

9th November

That is the connection between breathing and meditation?

Just as the eyes are the windows of the soul, breathing is the measure of nervous tension and mental activity.

Breathing, mind, nerves and also winking of the eyes are all somehow related to one another.

Agitation in one is accompanied by agitation in the other.

Perhaps "breathing" was intended more to bring about relaxation of the nerves and calming the mind, than just ventilating the lungs.

If you are absorbed in deep contemplation the breath slows down, becomes finer and finer, and "breath flows within the nostrils", as Gurudev put it.

When you are absorbed in the inner silence, even a little movement of the breath is felt as a great distraction; it is then that spontaneous suspension of breath takes place.

The eyes, even if they are open, have a "far-away" look in them.

They do not blink.

Breathe in and out through alternate nostrils; watch the character of the flow.

You will know the state of your nerves and mind.

Watch. When there is tension, the eyeballs are agitated and tend to "go up".

By deliberately turning them downwards, you can check this too.

Perhaps that is the purpose of "looking at the tip of your nose".

Practise, and realize the truth.

10th November

In the Gita, Krishna gives us a comprehensive aspect of meditation.

We can only go up to a certain stage, and Krishna clearly enunciates it.

You cannot capture God.

The word self-realization seems to suggest that you are going to create the self, because to realize is to make real.

But is self-realization to make the self real? No.

The fault is in the expression itself.

We are not going to make the self real or God real, but we are going to purify ourselves.

How is this purification done?

Lust or desire arises in our mind when we meditate upon an object.

Why do we meditate upon an object?

Have we ever asked ourselves this question?

Obviously, we only think of an object associated with happiness, pleasure, enjoyment.

How does the mind know that there is enjoyment in having that object, in possessing it, in being near it, in coming into contact with it?

In this contemplation of the object of enjoyment, a link has been established.

The mind has fixed a label upon it, and then wants a repetition.

It is when the mind has a mental image of a past experience of pleasure projected onto an object, that the link is established. The desire arises.

Otherwise there is no craving in the heart of man if this process is cut somewhere.

11th November

I look into myself and it seems that the personality is in fragments, broken into a thousand pieces.

Is my personality really broken into pieces?

Has my freedom, knowledge, enlightenment been completely obliterated?

If it has been, nothing is going to save me!

Looking within myself, I feel that that may not be true.

I am only suggesting that it may not be true.

To give you an apt illustration: you are standing on the bank of the river on a beautiful moonlit night; the moon is reflected on the water, but you don't see it as a lovely little white disc - it is broken - the surface of the water is agitated.

There lies the key.

The yogi realizes that the personality has not really been fragmented, but that the fragmentation is apparent.

It is due to the fact that the mind is not calm.

A calm mind is virtue, an uncalm mind, no matter how holy that person may look, is the source of all evil.

We all enjoy a calm mind in sleep, but since we are unaware of that calmness, it is of no use to us.

The yogi tries deliberately to reproduce, create this calmness, while he is awake.

He captures a glimpse of that wholeness, inner harmony, homogeneity.

From then on his life is a continuous search for this inner harmony.

12th November

How must I worship?

Must I kneel down, bang my head on the floor?

Must I fall flat on the ground, or offer a large donation?

Do anything you like.

What is demanded here is “with love in your heart”.

Whatever you give, whether it is just a fruit or a flower or a little water, it does not matter.

What matters is love, devotion.

What is devotion?

It is being completely self-forgetful.

In some scriptures, descriptions are given of great devotees of God who, in a state of ecstasy, have tears flowing down their faces.

These are beautiful descriptions, but are only external marks of ecstasy.

How does one distinguish devotion from emotion?

Look at the words.

Emotion is externalized motion: “I love him, I love her, I love it.”

When my consciousness flows outwards, it is emotion.

What is devotion?

It is motion in depth within me.

There should be no externalization.

The opposite of emotion is devotion or depth; the fountain which sees the truth, which loves the truth, which loves God deep within, not only here but everywhere, deep within.

When I reach the depth of the image, I suddenly realize that in the depth of all beings, including this being, there is God.

How shall I worship him?

In any manner I like.

13th November

You say: "You practise jnana yoga, I practise bhakti yoga, and somebody else practises karma yoga."

Stuff and nonsense! Either you practise yoga or not at all.

Some people are after the "body beautiful", but in their head is nothing, and in their heart cruelty.

Then there are those emotionalists - they have neither wisdom, nor the intellectualism to discriminate between devotion and emotion.

Neither have they the will nor the capacity to do something about it.

They are so full of love that, if I faint, they will also faint.

This is also called love, isn't it?

I love you so much that unfortunately I can do nothing to help you!

Perfection is integral or there is no perfection.

Visualize this worldly existence, which we call samsara, as a well ten feet in diameter.

The karma yogi is able to jump six feet, the bhakti yogi four feet, the jnana yogi eight feet.

Where will they land?

All of them down the well!

Unless we achieve integral perfection, there is no perfection.

14th November

What prevents integral perfection?

The “me”, that is all.

The entire universe is pervaded by God, by the divine, though you may call it God, Isvara, Christ, Brahma, Atma, Allah.

Somehow I am caught up in this diversity - I, you, he and this is the obstacle.

This “I” was originally the infinite.

Probably the letter “I” actually stood for the whole word ‘infinite’, but we use the word “I” to refer to the finite, to the absurdly little thing, a dot, a point.

This littleness must go.

This “me” must go, must disappear.

How? By practicing self-denial, self-sacrifice.

That is called karma yoga.

You can practise self-surrender.

That is called Bhakti yoga.

You may have self-realization.

That is called jnana yoga.

But do we or do we not see that eventually all these have the same significance, all these mean the same thing?

Whether the self is denied, whether the self is surrendered, whether the self is sacrificed, whether the self is realized, it is all the same.

The self, this little self, this “me” is the problem.

15th November

A man is known by his companions, for they do influence us, they awaken latent tendencies in us (good or bad, desirable or undesirable).

A saint kindles saintliness and a criminal provokes sinfulness in us.

But for them these qualities would have “died” within us.

My guru, Swami Sivananda, used to say that even inert objects like dress and furniture can alter our behavior.

A man wearing simple sandals walks gently; the same man wearing fashionable shoes has a different gait.

When we talk of civilization, we imply a greater accumulation of, or intimate association with the machine.

Yet does the machine civilize us, evoke civilized behavior in us?

Perhaps not.

Civilization and progress are not evils in themselves, but the abuse of machines that progress and civilization symbolize can lead to evil consequences.

Man should turn to nature, to simplicity, humility, humanity.

Man should turn to God, the indweller, the inner ruler of humanity.

Then will he become a peace lover, radiating and promoting peace.

16th November

“Greater than the man of knowledge, austerity and action is the yogi; therefore become a yogi,” said Lord Krishna in the Bbagavad Gita.

“Is there not a nobler mission than eating, drinking and sleeping? It is difficult to get a human birth, therefore try to realize (God) in this birth,” admonished My Gurudev, Swami Sivananda.

Mahatma Gandhi never allowed us to forget for a single moment that even his unprecedented and epoch-making political activity was part of his adventure in the realm of God or truth.

Yoga is integration of our own personality, which prevents countless physical and mental maladies; of our individuality within society, which ensures social welfare, harmony and national prosperity; of the soul with God, which is enlightenment or salvation.

It is not a religion or a cult.

Rightly understood: it is the core of all religions.

Religious conversion loses all meaning; yoga strengthens and vitalizes one’s faith in one’s own religion.

It promotes true understanding in each practitioner who is eager to concede to others the same religious freedom that he wishes to enjoy.

Step by step yoga leads us to the pinnacle of perfection, total freedom from every type of limitation and bondage.

17th November

We spiritual aspirants, what do we want?

The prize we covet is self-realization, which is synonymous with “the peace that passeth all understanding”, “eternal bliss”, “infinite life”.

To earn his daily bread which appeases his hunger for a few hours, man toils for not less than six hours a day.

To earn self-realization that will fulfill all our desires and lead us to permanent satisfaction, what should we do?

Is it enough to spend a few minutes a day on our yoga practices? No.

Yoga must become our very life-breath.

If you spend one hour in the morning for yoga asanas and pranayama, the other twenty-three hours will be filled with health, and if you spend another hour in meditation, those twenty-three hours will be filled with divinity.

Yoga is life - the whole of our life must be transformed into divine; that is divine life.

To live in tune with the infinite, to let divinity radiate through every one of our thoughts, words and deeds - that is yoga.

That is the price we should be prepared to pay, to win the priceless prize of self-realization.

18th November

We are living in a strange world and yet not so strange, for it has always been so. For those who have made an honest study of the legend called history and the history called legend, it would appear that the problem has remained the same - the struggle between the forces of light and the forces of darkness.

The former triumph and their triumph turns them (or their descendants) into the latter.

So the world merry-goes-round.

The triumphant erects walls of security ostensibly to preserve the light, but obviously to cover his gnawing sense of inadequacy.

And so, in effect, he imprisons himself in his glory, having imprisoned his enemies in another part of the same building.

The distinction is formal.

Is there no escape from this vicious circle?

Where is the light that makes us free?

Is there a state of being in which we shall neither turn the light on ourselves in an attempt to shine as superior persons, nor hide our face from it, reveling in the vanity of obscurity.

The light of the light hurts the latter and binds the former.

Yet, perchance someone will discover that light is not for owning but for shedding.

19th November

One who would like to tread this spiritual path must be eternally vigilant; he should not relax that vigilance even for a single moment.

As long as there is an "I" capable of being vigilant and therefore of being non-vigilant, one should be vigilant.

This eternal vigilance itself is enlightenment, liberation.

I think now it is easy to see how and why a person who is eternally vigilant must inevitably enjoy his life here and now.

That is obvious.

If I know that when I stick my finger into this power point, it might electrocute me or give me a painful shock, I will not do it at all.

That is the person of eternal vigilance.

One who realizes that a certain action is foolish and causes unhappiness will not do it.

He is vigilant.

Therefore a person who is eternally vigilant is happy now.

His own heart is heaven here and now.

In the light of eternal vigilance he is already liberated from the darkness of ignorance.

20th November

We fall down because we attempt to excel.

Why do I want to excel?

Because I want to have control over you, to dominate you, to mould you.

It is here that we have gone wrong.

The rose by just being the rose attracts everybody.

We have a beehive at the ashram.

I don't even tell the bees where the roses are blossoming, they know.

That flower, by just being what it is, has such tremendous power over all those bees.

Yoga is the art of self-discovery, of being oneself.

What am I?

Am I a red rose, a yellow rose or a white rose?

What am I?

Are we interested in this at all; or are we merely fighting to reach a so-called goal?

If we examine this goal business very carefully, we find that it always suggests our superiority over somebody else, excelling someone else.

Otherwise I have no idea of a goal at all.

The goal is that I must be more qualified than my friend; I must have more muscles than that fellow.

It is all the time more and more.

Do we have a goal that does not involve this comparison, this competition, this "more"?

I cannot be more aware of myself than you are, it is absurd.

I can only be aware of myself.

Yoga enables us to drop, completely and totally, this whole concept of becoming something.

Yoga enables us to discover what "I am".

21st November

If you allow the life force to function without your interference, you'll enjoy perfect health.

It is only human interference that destroys health.

The less I interfere, the better the body functions.

There is no need to fear.

How far can I go?

Don't ask me, ask yourself.

Can I do this?

Don't ask others, do it and see.

At the same time learn to listen to the voice of your own body, that voice within yourself will tell you "thus far and no farther."

When will you defy that voice?

When there is wrong motivation.

When the body is in a state of good health, the mind becomes clear.

Yoga enables you to see your own mind, to observe your own mind.

When the mind is calm and peaceful and you are able to observe it, it is clear.

That clear mind is transparent and the transparent mind reveals the inner secrets.

This is called clairvoyance.

Clairvoyance means, in French, "clear sight".

That is all.

My sight is clear, it is not confused, and therefore I am able to look within, see the mind clearly.

It becomes transparent.

There one discovers what one is.

22nd November

Normally we are taught that waking, dreaming and deep sleep, are three distinct and different states, one following the other.

That is, when the waking state comes to an end, dreaming starts, and when dreaming ends, sleep starts, and when sleep comes to an end, dream starts again. But there is a commentary written on the Mandukya Upanishad where the author makes a very innocent and terribly interesting statement.

He says that these three exist all the time, at all times.

When you think you are awake, you are already dreaming and sleeping at the same time, and when you are dreaming, you are also awake in a thing called dream (only the objects seen are different, only the experiences experienced are different, but the thing is the same).

Similarly, when you are fast asleep, you are also in another world, in a third world, called the sleep world, where you are experiencing another type of experience, comparable to the dream state and to the experience of the waking. It's a beautiful thought.

When that becomes a realization - you are free.

When that becomes a realization, that is what is called enlightenment.

All these words denote but one thing: a direct awareness of the simple and fundamental truth that there is no division between what is called waking and dream, and between these two and sleep.

23rd November

When one is awake, when the heart is pure, one discovers that the spiritual truth is unclear, because the mind is unsteady and distracted by a number of forces. Man tries to deal with these, one by one, but each victory defeats him; every solved problem has given birth to a dozen more.

The seeker sees that even the good work he has done on himself has only strengthened his ego.

It is only when all actions are done as worship of the Lord that this danger is averted.

When the ego is surrendered to the divine, then this unsteadiness, produced by these distractions, ceases, and the seeker sees the Lord whom he worships in his every action in and through all names and forms in the world.

The last hurdle is not for the human personality to cross, it is for the divine to descend, and redeem the seeker.

The veil cannot be lifted by man.

All aspirations, even for liberation, cease, and the seeker says in the words of Jesus: "Not my will but thy will be done."

It is idle to repeat the formula, for the divine will only descend into a pure heart, and remember that crucifixion must precede resurrection.

Resurrection is a divine act, not a human achievement.

24th November

The most important principle that we should constantly remember, and which should govern all our thoughts, words and actions, is that we ourselves are instruments in the hands of the divine power.

It is not easy, because our own little self, our ego, bursts in every little while, sometimes in a tragic way.

Tragic because, at such times, our own selfish little personality projects itself in the garb of the divine, which is terribly confusing.

Hence meditation is vital.

In meditation, while we are still, struggling to still the mind, it is essential to use a formula.

It is like self-dehypnotization; we have fooled ourselves long enough that we do it; we have fooled ourselves long enough that if we don't want to, we shall not do it.

We must dehypnotize ourselves by the counter suggestion, "Not I, but God, does".

It is when the ego is pushed out of the way, and not used as a prodder or obstruction, that the divine flows through the personality.

The divine flowing through the personality is constantly working for the welfare of all beings.

25th November

How do I know that something I do with a divine, sublime feeling, is good for all beings?

That must be left to divine discretion.

“Not I, but he is the judge.”

“Lord, thy will be done, not mine.”

This suggestion must sink deeper into our consciousness during meditation.

Even a spiritual giant may lose the thread of this occasionally.

Therefore all religions insist that we should sit down and pray, if possible five or fifty times a day, to re-link this broken thread, so that it is continuous and constant.

So that the consciousness of the divine functioning in and through us, motivates each cell of our being constantly.

At the end of the day, it is good to look at the activities of the little personality.

Has it behaved as it should, or has it slipped up again, as it did yesterday?

Never mind, there is still tomorrow, and today has not been ill spent, for I have endeavored to lead the divine life.

Tomorrow will be better still, and with this resolution we greet the next day with faith in God, in his almighty power.

Each day we strive harder, till we reach the supreme, till we are not even aware that we are instruments in the hands of God.

It is the spirit of the divine omnipresence that is vital to our life.

May you all lead the divine life, here and now.

26th November

Years ago an indian in a responsible position recommended me to a group of seekers as an authority on “yogism”.

I have always wondered what he meant!

Yoga is fast becoming a fashion; it will soon be regarded as a status symbol, a qualification for obtaining a job or getting married.

People have always aspired to dominate others; some people with the know-how of yoga will soon “capture” the field, create a cult, put a hedge of rules of their own invention around it - and another “ism” is born!

When this “ism” is born, the simplicity and meaning of the technique of yoga are forgotten, the spirit of yoga evaporates, leaving only rituals, formalities, the organizations and headaches.

Yet one cannot do without the rituals and formalities, the organizations and, if you please, the headaches too.

For they are life’s vehicles and vexations.

Wisdom lies in using the positive and, if not eliminating the negative, at least minimizing the negative aspects of these necessary evils.

Yoga is a technique for self-realization, or God-realization, redemption, communion, mystic atonement with the divine.

Words do not matter if you get the idea right.

Keep the spirit of yoga.

Use the form, but where “the letter killeth the spirit”, be bold enough to revive or resurrect the spirit.

27th November

Our mind constantly hangs on to something or other.

It jumps from one object of enjoyment to another.

It constantly feels that if only the next object is had, it will have perfect happiness.

This incidentally shows that the nature of the self - our essential nature - is perfection and bliss.

Hence, till this perfect bliss is attained, the mind cannot find rest.

No object can possibly give us permanent satisfaction, eternal bliss.

It is simply not in the object.

Even happiness that we get from the enjoyment of the object of the senses is not really derived from them, but from our own self.

After we have got the object we longed for, and after the enjoyment is over, before the next desire arises in the mind for another object, there is an interval.

The mind is tired and withdraws into itself.

That is when we feel it is perfectly satisfied.

We are peaceful and happy.

Once again we become restless when the desire for the next object arises.

This itself shows that peace and happiness are in the self, and not in the objects.

The true devotee of the Lord convinces his mind of this truth.

Naturally his mind does not long for the objects of enjoyment.

28th November

I read a delightful article in the "Reader's Digest", explaining how a germ entering the body is fought by other cells in the body.

The cells behave as though they have an independent intelligence and total free will.

One detail which caught my imagination is that white cells function even after death.

This means that one of the vital life forces functions even after I am dead.

According to hatha yoga, one of the pranas goes on functioning after life has left the body.

In other words, part of the vital life force functions even after death.

These vital defenders of our organism are manufactured in the spinal marrow.

Those of you who have studied hatha yoga, especially laya yoga or kundalini yoga, will recall that all the vital centers, the chakras, are located within the spinal cord.

There are suggestive similarities between these descriptions.

So, if we are all cells in the body of God, we should function more or less in the same way as the body's cells - beautifully, harmoniously, and lovingly.

Why is there no harmony in our life?

Why is there this perpetual craving for this and that?

We must learn to distinguish between being active and restless.

Work and worry are also two different things.

God created work, man created worry.

29th November

When the Indian sage says: "Creation is the Lord's Leela (play)," the earnest, rationalistic believer in God and his purposeful creation is disgusted.

He asks cynically: "Is all this just his play: construction (and the creative demolition which precedes it) and preservation, evolution and revolution, heart-breaking search and back-breaking toil, challenging and surviving death, disease and destruction?"

Why should he assume that play does not include all this?

Play is no idle fun or purposeless activity.

It involves the rules of the game, within which the players have scope to use their free will, must use their free will.

Success and failure are vital parts of the play; everyone cannot "win" and "losing" involves no disgrace.

One who understands the rules and plays without undue anxiety to win, wins.

In this world play the Lord is the originator of the game, the umpire, the field, the starting point and the winning post.

One inspiring religious formula has it: "The Lord does everything, with the help of his own divine energy and strength, unto himself, by himself for his own satisfaction."

The work that lies ahead of us is his worship.

He uses us as his instruments, provides the right sort of help and brings about the right conditions in order that his mission may be fulfilled.

30th November

It is not possible for me to surrender myself.

Surrender must happen just as humility must happen.

It is God who exercises the will; it is God who makes these things possible.

When I accept this truth, then surrender is possible.

As long as I have independent desire, self-willing, longing and insisting, surrender is not possible.

The question "How must I make it take place" is absurd.

I cannot surrender myself, nor can I be humble by willing it.

If I had a searchlight turned within, whatever I was doing, I would see clearly that nothing exists - nothing belongs to me.

It is all foolishness.

It is foolishness to think my house is burning and feel unhappy about the loss.

It is also foolishness to say the house that is burning belongs to somebody else and not care.

Both reactions have to be renounced, and when all this is given up, then the truth of oneness will be revealed, will be seen.

This oneness cannot be cultivated, but it can be experienced when the darkness of ignorance is removed.

We cannot create or achieve unity. but the moment the darkness in ourselves has gone, we realize that oneness is there.

When the darkness disappears, the light of the self will reveal itself.

It shines on its own account.

It does not need to be created.

It is there.

1st December

My mind says: "When everything is God, then dirt, hate, lies, cruelty, untruthfulness and illness must be God, but my heart and feeling says this cannot be so. What is the answer?"

Dirt, hate, cruelty - these are words, symbols, but what is the reality, the substance that they indicate?

The reality is the response of one's personality to a certain situation; water flows down from one level to another making a lot of noise, "disturbance", as it flows.

If you can see this you will see evil is incidental to the flow of energy.

This in itself is not evil though we regard it as evil.

Remember, unless you regard it as evil in the first place, the enquiry itself would not take place.

The entire universe is energy in motion.

When the stomach is empty, there is a vacuum, and it demands food.

Hunger is natural.

When there is non-understanding, love evaporates and dislike sets in.

When you learn to look within in the right manner, you see the causal factor in each case.

When that is removed, there is no vacuum and the "evil" reaction does not occur.

The sage therefore sees in others only the movement of energy and not evil.

2nd December

Krishna says, "I pervade everything in this universe."

He says very clearly, "All beings are in me, I am not in them," not denying thereby His immanence, but knocking out the false concept, the defective expression, "God is in me".

God is not in all, but he is "All in All".

This is what is meant by that simple word "Omnipresent".

God is not confined within me; God is not limited to you or me, nor are there spaces where God is not.

The simple conclusion of the word "omnipresent" is that there is nothing but God.

This is the greatest secret. Why?

Because you and I still do not understand what God's Omnipresence means.

We think: "Oh, of course, I know God", but of course we do not know. God is a code word; God is hidden "in our own heart".

It seems that God, having created all beings in the universe, suddenly finds himself homeless.

It seems that God said, "I have created man. He is my own child, so I must not be too far away from him, but he must not grab me - unless his heart is pure. So, what must I do? Where must I dwell?"

"I will dwell in his heart, very close to him, and yet he will never look into his own heart - unless it is pure."

The key to the knowledge of God is in the heart, which must be pure - only then will we find him.

3rd December

If you scratch my back, I purr, and if you squeeze my tail, I jump on you.

It doesn't seem to make any sense at all.

One who is intent on discovering his identity does not react, and the problem does not arise in his heart: "Must I conform or must I non-conform?"

This, I feel, is urgently needed, not only on the part of the young people now, but even on the part of the older generation.

Why must I feel that it is too late to change now?

Why must I be shy - ashamed of confessing that I have been wrong, that I have messed up my own and other people's lives?

If that is true, let us face it.

I must drop this business of doing.

Whatever be my chronological age, if I have not started on the quest of self-discovery, I am an unborn baby.

If I don't know what I am, how do I know I exist?

It is when we commence this quest of self-knowledge that we are really and truly born, otherwise we exist just as this table exists, but slightly worse, because the table doesn't need food three times a day.

It is in this discovery of one's own identity that I feel yoga can help us tremendously.

There are no dogmas in yoga.

Write the word "dogma" and reverse it - "am God".

Eventually yoga leads us to the discovery of this truth: "am God".

Not "I am God".

There is no "I" there.

4th December

In religious life, as it is popularly understood, religion is one part of life. Prayer in the morning and evening, regularly visiting the temple, observance of fasts and festivals, and so on.

In divine life however the whole of life is divinised.

This does not mean that a divine life is opposed to a religious or good life.

On the contrary, it is the fulfillment of an ethical or religious life.

Spiritual life is definitely opposed to worldly or materialistic life.

It should awaken in us the consciousness that we are in truth the immortal spirit.

It should result in our expressing our essential, divine, spiritual nature, in all our thoughts, words and deeds.

This demands keen discrimination, intelligent dispassion and firm determination.

This demands an ability to make sacrifices, a daring spirit of adventure, and a willingness to make the necessary psycho-spiritual experiments, which might cost us not only the pleasures of this worldly life, but our life itself.

All this is possible more easily when our spirit (not only our body) is young, rather than when the senility of pessimism and infirmity has overtaken us, and we cling to the false security of riches and relations.

5th December

People labor under the delusion that while a disciplined life is indispensable for a certain path, for another it is not.

Saints and sages glorify certain practices like japa and kirtan as easy; this is to encourage the aspirant.

Soon the aspirant is reminded that, unless he detaches the mind from the world, and attaches it to the Lord, no progress is possible.

Even so with karma yoga.

Gurudev Swami Sivananda constantly warned that without desirelessness, egolessness and (on the positive side), seeing God in all, mere activity is but labor, so much energy wasted.

Without physical, mental and moral disciplines, what is styled hatha yoga, but which is in fact just yoga asanas, will degenerate into mere physical culture, and raja yoga, or “yoga of meditation” will be impossible.

Gurudev insisted from the beginning, however, that everyone should practise japa, kirtan, meditation and study of the scriptures, asanas, pranayama, without losing sight of the imperative need to progress side-by-side in self-control.

Intelligently and sincerely practised asanas and pranayama enable us to acquire mastery over the senses and the mind. Perhaps the greatest obstacle on the path of yoga is insincerity.

Only God and Guru’s Grace can enable us to detect its presence and ultimately to remove it.

6th December

“I met a beggar in the street, he asked for alms. And I, not liking promiscuous charity, passed on and then had qualms. I turned and sought him but found him not. He had passed the poorer, and I am poorer too.”

So do most of us miss the opportunities of relieving the poverty and suffering of our brethren.

We think we are assuring our happiness, but exploitation nurtures bitterness in the heart of the oppressed, and leads to a social explosion, which spreads unhappiness all round.

Hoarded wealth is a curse.

Yet man accumulates wealth and strives his utmost to obtain more.

Our scriptures insist that we should produce more food and more wealth.

Yet, again, one is unable to resist the temptation to regard that “earned” (often by exploitation) wealth as our own, and to regard with suspicion anyone who asks for a share of it.

Gurudev suggested a way out: “Consider that you are only the trustee of the wealth that has been entrusted to you by God.”

You are certainly not going to take it away with you when you leave this world, so why make yourself and others miserable by hoarding it?

Put yourself in the other man's position, sincerely and truly.

What would you expect? Compassion?

Be compassionate.

Turn accursed wealth into a great blessing.

Share with all.

7th December

The yogi is tremendously alert.

In the Yoga Vasistha there is even a specific instruction that a yogi should live as if he were an ordinary human being, weeping with the sorrowful, and laughing with the joyous.

But he knows that whether those experiences seem to be pleasant or unpleasant, the content of those experiences is the same pure experiencing that arises in the one undivided, indivisible intelligence.

The yogi behaves in exactly the same way as you and I do, seeing, touching, hearing, smelling, tasting etc.

But he knows that all these actions or expressions of his own senses, of the mind, of the intellect, arise in that intelligence, and the content of these expressions is nothing but that pure intelligence, which is in itself indivisible.

That is the self.

Yet the essence of the self is distorted the moment you express it.

The awareness of this indivisibility is bliss.

Don't look for any happiness in that which is fragmented, whether you call it a finite experience, or whether you call it the infinite.

I'm meditating upon what I call the form of my Guru, or the form of Krishna or the form of Buddha, and I am meditating upon what I call the infinite.

The meditator is the infinite.

8th December

Motives are usually hidden deep within the subconscious.

It is difficult to detect them.

We should constantly endeavor to dive deep within ourselves, and plant the right outlook on life there.

This is done by meditation.

If we do not do this, service, though begun with pure love, leads either to attachment or dislike.

There is a mysterious power within us that does not allow us to love all and serve all.

It generates two currents, attraction and repulsion, attachment and hatred.

We love those we like, and it is towards those that the current of our "liking" leads us.

We serve them, become attached to them, we expect them to reciprocate.

From others the current of "dislike" pulls us apart, we hate them, are cruel to them.

Even our love for those we like does not last forever, because they fail to reciprocate our love. Love turns to hate and they turn into our worst enemies.

Nothing but meditation (coupled with selfless service) enables us to rise above these two currents of infatuation, attachment, desire; and hate, anger and aversion.

There are many methods of meditation, but the one unalterable law is that, if we are sincere in our approach to our practice, we must arrive at the truth that the God, who dwells in our hearts, dwells in all.

9th December

Yoga does not prohibit people from enjoying life.

It does not demand that one should cut oneself completely away from all the pleasures of life.

We have a weakness for surrounding ourselves with so many prohibitions, that nobody wants to look at spiritual practices, because, before I take up spiritual practices, I think I must drop this and drop that.

When I come across somebody who tells me this, I ask, "Please tell me what I can do! Not a string of 'Thou shalt nots'."

Let us try some "Thou shalt".

Far from making the student incapable of enjoying life, yoga enables one to enjoy life more keenly.

If I resolutely make up my mind that I shall live to be happy, that I shall live in such a way that life gives me pleasure, then I am quite sure that my life will be well ordered, well disciplined.

I am quite sure that I will eat the right food, engage myself in right activity.

Before I take a cigarette in my hand, I will think, "Does it give me pleasure?"

Momentarily, maybe, but I can feel it is going to lead me into distress - so I may not want it.

Therefore, basically, the philosophy of yoga does not indulge in injunction and prohibition, but promotes awareness.

That is the key word.

Awareness.

10th December

Anything that disturbs the inner harmony, that threatens to break that wholeness within himself, the yogi avoids, including what we call ill health.

Ill health, wrong functioning of the internal organs, is a sort of disharmony within oneself.

The cause may be physical, the cause may be mental, but the harmony must be restored.

If the cause is physical, treat it with physical means.

If the cause is internal, treat it with internal means.

If your living habits are not right, rectify those habits.

If the cause is emotional, put it right there.

These things are not to be confused.

Restoration of that inner harmony is the goal.

This demands the performance of yoga postures, which are wonderful, followed by some breathing exercises, also wonderful, followed by meditation, where you glimpse the inner harmony, followed by what we call karma yoga - dealing with people and still preserving that inner harmony.

Harmonizing our relationship with one another is also yoga.

Harmonizing our relationship with cosmic forces is also yoga, bhakti yoga.

All these together constitute yoga.

11th December

Granting that one has been the target of genuine black magic, in what manner does the suffering or the misfortune differ from other forms of suffering?

Does the black magician do anything which a simple germ or virus cannot do? So, why should one be especially afraid of witchcraft?

Again, can any harm come to me if I do not deserve it, if it is not my Karma?

If it is my Karma, what can prevent it, except my own present exceedingly good Karma?

Ultimately, therefore, there is only one thing that can save me: faith in God who is love, God who is good.

If I am devoted to God, if I repeat his name with every breath, if I am good and do good, how can witchcraft touch me at all?

If I am devoted to God in this manner, then the harm that someone may direct towards me will only rebound on that someone.

Of course, people do have the belief that where images of God, holy scriptures, religious articles, like the rosary, are kept, no evil influence can enter.

Gurudev used to say that no evil influence dare enter the place where the Mahamantra is sung, that no evil influence will touch the man who does japa of the Lord's name.

12th December

In the Bhagavad Gita Arjuna says, "Tell me what is good for me, what is ultimately good for me, pleasant or unpleasant! I surrender myself."

This surrender is a mysterious thing.

Does anybody want to surrender at all?

Do I know what surrender is?

If there is surrender, what is surrendered, and by whom?

It is very easy to say: "Oh, I surrender myself to you."

Every girl promises the boy before they get married, "I am yours - so long as you do what I want you to do!"

Is that surrender?

If I surrender myself, is there ever a need to surrender myself again?

If I do, it means there is some doubt, doesn't it?

Surrender is an extremely difficult concept to understand, because the understander of this surrender is the ego.

It is very easy to bluff oneself.

If there is true surrender, then there is immediate illumination, because the one thing that stands between God and me is me!

When the me is removed, God alone exists - which is truth.

Krishna reveals the truth to Arjuna immediately: "You are grieving, you are worried unnecessarily.

You are worrying about those you should not worry about."

This is a fantastic verse; it has saved my life a hundred times.

Let us be clear what we are talking about.

I say I am worried, but if I try to find out who "I" is, what this "worry" is, the problem is gone.

13th December

When you observe yourself during Japa, you are aware of the Mantra being repeated and heard within yourself.

These two, sound and hearing, are inseparable, the distinction being one of polarization.

If “you” distinguish yourself from these, another “pair” is “born”: the self and the non-self.

Another polarization.

In the words of Patanjali, you discover that “desire follows the pleasure-sense” and “an experience of pain is accompanied by dislike”.

If you can learn to observe these, without being caught up in their coils, you will discover that hope and anxiety, the ambition to succeed and the fear of failure, craving and frustration, security and slavery, domination and revolt, all of these come in pairs.

In fact everything you wish to have comes along with everything you wish to avoid.

You cannot possibly break up these pairs and have them singly.

Even to attempt to separate the self from the non-self can therefore lead to constant inner conflict and frustration, till in pure awareness even this distinction disappears, and all contradictions are seen to be polarization, and thus no contradiction at all.

14th December

Often we think that the person who is able to see colors and visions is a yogi; that he who is able to read our thoughts is a yogi.

These are all our own ideas, the creations of our own mind, our own egos.

All preconceived notions of what is right and wrong, good and evil, righteous and unrighteous, all these dualities are the creation of the ego, which is the creation of Maya.

These may be approved by society - you have a sort of stupid satisfaction, because your conduct is approved by people and you are respected by them.

When you look within yourself, you must be able to see this vanity.

You must see the uselessness of this kind of life.

It is then that you arrive at the precipice - this is all you can get to, the only point you can reach.

Beyond that is Durga, the unapproachable.

See the utter worthlessness of this knowledge; knowledge of what tradition considers right, good, wisdom.

It is then you have reached the limits of your own mind, your own intelligence.

15th December

When you realize that even what we call wisdom is within the realm of Maya and is therefore, disastrous, then what happens?

You are bewildered because you have come to the end of your tether.

All that I depended upon for so long has fallen away.

I thought this was right and pursued that course and suddenly I find it is useless.

I thought that this was wisdom and knowledge and clung to it.

Suddenly I realized that this is Maya.

I have come to the end of thought, to the conclusion of logic, the mind and the intellect.

When the mind is thus baffled, it is stilled.

Only that mind can be still which has arrived at its own conclusion.

It has committed suicide as it were.

Just as the ocean can become absolutely calm, without any waves at all, and yet still be there, only its modification as waves and currents having ceased, even so intelligence will be there without the modifications known as thoughts, ideas, concepts and actions.

16th December

“The world is full of unhappiness”, says Krishna in the Gita, and this does not need any commentary.

Nothing is permanent here.

Everything is changing.

In this changing world, do not look for security.

The person on whom you are depending today is leaving, changing.

When I see that change is the only unchanging thing in this world, when I know that I cannot depend on anything in this world, then I am truly insecure.

As the Hassidic Masters would say, “This is divine insecurity.”

When I become aware of this divine insecurity, then I am at peace with my maker.

I can no longer afford to be arrogant, to depend upon anybody, to expect anyone to do anything for me.

When I thus do not expect anyone to do anything for me, I am naturally grateful to everyone that does anything for me.

Do you see how all the virtues spring from this one thing - this divine insecurity?

Then I abandon even the quest for security, because I know that it is false, that it does not exist in this world.

When I am afraid to face this insecurity that I am surrounded by, I create the false security of relationships.

If I am able to face the truth that there is no security in this changing world, from that springs all the virtues.

I do not assume that people are the same today as they were yesterday, so I approach them humbly.

17th December

What is the purpose of life?

Is there any purpose or do we merely exist until we die?

What is my relation with you?

What is the meaning of "pleasure and pain"?

Often these questions do not arise in man's mind until he is rudely shaken by shock, failure or calamity.

The normal man is far too busy with the struggle for existence to find time for such thoughts about life.

He is content to exist; he hardly ever lives.

Even miseries fail to waken him; he only changes his tactics, blaming his neighbors and sometimes himself, and endeavors to find happiness by other methods.

There is total darkness around him, and even the way out is completely forgotten. At such times the Almighty Lord grants us great spiritual awakeners, who come and live with us.

Different from us, they reveal a pattern of life that has a greater meaning than merely awaiting its earthly end.

If we heed the example and precepts of the master, we can get spiritually healed and awakened.

If we ignore the master's message, God, our benign mother, will resort to other methods to remind us that we live in a world of pain and death.

Sooner or later we have to ask, "What is the purpose of life?"

Life has a great purpose to find God, who is supreme bliss.

18th December

Do we have to have a personal savior or God to pick us up? No.

You will not know when you are eligible for self-realization.

You have to surrender.

When you have really surrendered, you will not know whether the surrender is total.

If you do know, then you have not surrendered.

If I am able to say, "I am asleep", I am not asleep.

Unless the ego is totally lost, God will not be experienced.

The finite cannot experience the infinite.

My finite mind is trying to experience the omnipresence of God.

If we try to reach out to the infinite with finite instruments, we have trouble, mess, confusion, sin and headaches.

It is here that we are caught.

Krishna says, "Look, go on striving, keep at it, and when the time comes, I will liberate you."

"You cannot see me with your own eyes. Your eyes are limited. Don't bluff yourself."

This refers not only to the physical eyes, but it refers to our mental eyes.

The ego cannot perceive God.

What the ego perceives is its own image.

So Krishna said, "I will give you the divine eye."

The divine eye is the eye that sees the divine, which is completely rid of any materiality.

I cannot open that divine eye myself.

That is the goal of buddhi yoga.

19th December

The word is the scripture, the truth, the highest wisdom, the consciousness that is God himself.

But until the truth is discovered and realized, the word remains a sealed book, a hidden treasure.

Food outside the body decays, but the same food eaten, digested and assimilated, becomes body, becomes "me", becomes living substance.

Scripture outside one's self is a dead weight, because it causes the illusion of knowledge, and thus blocks discovery or realization.

When the same scripture (word) is discovered, uncovered and is seen in the light, then it is assimilated.

There is sameness between the truth and the discoverer, the seeker and the sought.

The word becomes flesh, spiritual being; it is not a foreign body suspended in the stomach, it is not even a "part" of one's being, it is one's being itself.

That is religion.

That is Holy Communion.

That is yoga.

This light is within every one of us, and has to be diligently sought there in meditation.

Meditation in itself may look like a technique to begin with, but with persistent practice it becomes life itself.

Then daily life becomes divine life.

20th December

We think that discussions on self-realization should be held in a lovely spiritual atmosphere, in a forest or a cave, where nobody irritates us, where nothing is born, nothing dies.

The problem is here and now.

The battle is here, the problem is here.

What must I do about the noise, about this nagging wife, this drunken husband?

The need for the Bhagavad Gita is here.

It must be practised here.

Occasionally you can get away, but do not take your transistor radio with you.

Sit and meditate; that will at least prevent you from going mad.

The need for self-realization is in the battle of life.

I am the creator of this battle.

I am the battle.

If I run away from this battle, I must return to it.

To solve this problem once and for all, I must be here.

I must attain self-realization.

This body is supposed to be "you", but actually it is potatoes, vegetables.

If I understand this, then I know what to do.

21st December

Teaching and learning are not always what we take them to be.

There are levels of communication, completely different from verbal communication.

This the yogi accepts - that one has to learn yoga from a teacher, but that that learning is not what we commonly consider learning to be.

It is communication, and that communication can take place on unknown levels.

A story is told of St. Francis.

He was a simple, loving, humble saint, teaching people how to be loving, gentle, and particularly how to lead a life of poverty - not this business of ugly poverty, but to be poor in spirit.

It seems, one day he was walking through a small town and people began to follow him.

Even then he was quite simple and humble; probably he was looking down at the earth and treading very carefully, gently and slowly, not even treading ants under his feet.

Someone stopped him and said: "Hey, are you the teacher we have been waiting for?"

"You have been waiting for me?", He said.

"Yes, someone has been saying that a great teacher is coming, to enlighten us.

Aren't you going to teach us?"

St. Francis looked at this man and said, "If you have not learned so far, I cannot teach you any more. If you have not had the power of observation, then saying a few words is not going to be of any use to you."

22nd December

The yogi is not an unusual, super-natural, super-normal being.

Everyone has knowingly or unknowingly experienced the state of yoga some time or other.

In the case of most of us this state of yoga happens and we do not taste it, we do not enjoy it, and therefore we are not established in it.

The yogi consciously and deliberately moves towards it.

One must be very careful here.

You cannot consciously and deliberately bring on the state of yoga, it has to happen; but you can consciously and deliberately move towards it, so that you have an indirect experience of it, in the penultimate state, and in the state afterwards, when you return to what is called normal consciousness.

In other words, when you want to fall asleep, you arrange the pillows properly, you switch off the lights, you lie down and you observe yourself falling asleep.

As long as you are observing, you are not going to sleep.

When you have fallen asleep, you stop observing; a couple of minutes before you are destined to sleep, the observation is switched off.

But having deliberately moved towards that sleep, you remember, "This is what I wanted."

And when you wake up in the morning, you say, "Oh, that was beautiful."

So, if you have learned to enjoy that state of sleep, to enjoy that state of yoga, then you cherish it, you value it, and then it is possible for you to be established in it.

23rd December

You cannot will yourself into the state of yoga.

But in this repeated exercising and experiencing of the state of yoga - not in itself but just before and just after - something within tastes that peace, tastes that bliss.

You value the inner peace more than anything else.

Therefore you are asked to meditate in the morning, immediately after getting up from bed, coming out of sleep.

It is so beautiful, so blissful.

You have been sleeping for six or seven hours.

The world went on without you, probably better without your meddling.

Even the body was alive, functioning.

So once again, just like the tortoise withdraws its limbs into its shell, you bring yourself back into it, and try to taste that peace.

'Taste' that peace this time.

You spend half an hour or an hour in meditation, then you get up and come out, making sure every now and then that that peace is still there, that you have not dropped it anywhere.

If I do not drop that which I have in my pocket, it's bound to be there.

When in this fashion, you constantly repeat that taste, that experience of the inner peace, then you are established in it.

24th December

What can be done to salvage the spirit of Christmas?

During one's travels around the world one cannot avoid meeting the spirit of the antichrist, still professing to be Christian - but where is Jesus?

Is it not possible to "see" Jesus in the Holy Land, in the cathedrals and museums of Europe? Oh yes.

Is it not possible to "see" Jesus and Bernadette in Lourdes? Yes, it is.

If not, then one sees all these places as so many prosperous and thriving souvenir shops!

But, even when one "sees" Jesus in these places, where does Jesus abide?

Most mysteriously and most certainly in one's own heart.

If Jesus is absent there, he cannot be seen outside.

The pure heart is the Lord's throne.

His throne is not of matter, nor is his kingdom of this earth.

It is when man aspires to rule another that conflict arises, and his own personality is split into numerous fragments.

For such a person it is almost impossible to experience Holy Communion.

To be holy one has to achieve "wholeness".

To achieve wholeness means the resolution of all conflicts, all duality.

In fact, this is communion - hence communion is holy.

25th December

The mystery of the birth of Jesus Christ is unveiled in a universal scripture known as the Bhagavad Gita (The Song of God).

“Whenever the world order is threatened by disorder, I incarnate myself in order to preserve what is good, destroy evil and re-establish world order,” says the Lord.

Such is the nature and the purpose of the divine incarnation.

But it needs divine eyes to see the divinity in the incarnation.

All else is vain argumentation.

It is a common human weakness to say “Lord, Lord,” and to expect to arrive at the kingdom of heaven.

But, unless we are good and we do good (the will of the father) and thus align ourselves with the world order, such an expectation is arrogance and foolishness.

When he comes again, may he not find us on the side of evil!

Such should be our active prayer day and night, especially on this auspicious occasion, the Holy Christmas when we remember His incarnation.

26th December

In the young life is hopeful, daring, ambitious and restless.

The innocence of childhood is lost, but gives rise to strength of character, whether for good or ill.

Marriage, raising a family, providing a house and other necessities seem tremendously important and urgent.

They prevent us from asking the question, "What is life?"

The fruit hides the seed, and hidden in the seed is the secret of life - death.

The fruit has to be sacrificed that life may live.

Yet there is no death - death is the shedding of the shell; death is the bursting of life out of the covering shell.

That covering is hell and its destruction is liberation.

What is life?

Life is eternal.

Life is.

And that which is, is God.

In youth, in manhood, and in a state of coma, this eternal life, this immortal being, is the sole reality.

Life is not born; it does not undergo any change.

The differences we see are assumed and not real, but they give rise to different attitudes, approaches, forms of behavior and different experiences, which we call good and evil, pleasure and pain, hell and heaven.

Life is beyond all these.

Life is God, and in God there is no distinction whatsoever.

When distinctions are overcome, their effects do not arise. Rejoice. Life is.

27th December

That power that one day decides that you should stop breathing for good, functions in us all.

He to whom this power belongs is called the cosmic person or God.

In relation to him, perhaps we are as cells in a body.

The changes and interchanges taking place in that person are called by us birth, death, reincarnation and so on.

God alone exists.

In him there are no distinctions between the sentient and the insentient; the latter (the material universe), is similar to our hair and nails.

There is beauty in this vision, and with it we cultivate not only respect for all life, but also reverence for all things in this world.

All action that springs from this is karma yoga.

Karma yoga is the touchstone for the truth of meditation, and meditation will necessarily obliterate the distinctions that are created by the mind, that create selfishness, anger, lust, greed and so on.

Karma yoga is when meditation and life fuse into one.

28th December

What are we afraid of? Death?

The silliest thing in the world is the fear of death, because death is inevitable.

I may be afraid of you; that makes sense, because I can avoid you.

I may be afraid of catching a cold, and may prevent it by covering myself with a shawl.

But how can I avoid death?

Again, what is the sense in saying "I am afraid of losing wealth or health?"

Everything is bound to change; there is change from day to day.

Once I see the truth there is no fear.

That is what the Holy Bible says: "The truth shall make you free."

What does not free you from fear is not truth.

If you believe in some God and this puts fear into you, that is not God.

Why should I be afraid of God Who is Omnipresent?

If I am afraid of you, I can run away from you, but can I run away from an Omnipresent God?

Hence I cannot fear God.

That which does not free me from fear is not divine.

The scripture says: "By merely remembering this great truth, I am freed from fear."

29th December

Mortal life is a straw caught in a gale, and yet its immortal essence is the space unaffected by the gale.

Mortal life is bounded by life and death, but the immortal is unborn and deathless.

A glimpse of the immortal makes you fearless, and realization that all life is mortal makes you equally fearless.

Selfish man's diabolical attempts to acquire power, position and prestige lead him all the sooner to the grave, where he is trodden underfoot by those whom he exploited.

O Life! What are you?

With the ticking of the clock, the rising and setting of the sun, the changing of the calendar, where are you leading me, unborn, deathless, immortal soul?

You are unbearably exacting in your demands, yet those who have eyes can see that eating is not to appease hunger (hunger is never appeased!) but to rediscover the self, which is beyond hunger and thirst, sin and suffering.

Life is for self-realization, the antithesis of selfishness and self-aggrandizement.

Life's goal is immortality, beyond the world.

Be good, do good are the way of preparation; serve, love, meditate, realize, are the steps.

Cosmic love is the key.

This is the truth, is the self.

This will make you free, here and now.

30th December

As New Year's Day comes closer, each one of us is filled with great expectations for the new year.

Related to this is the question: what is the purpose of my life?

I once saw under the tabletop of a business executive a big poster with the words: "God!

Let me know thy will so that I may do it."

What an extraordinary prayer.

Who is to answer that question? Yourself!

How and when will I know what my mission is?

When I know myself, obviously.

In fact that itself is your mission - to know the Self.

If you have really and truly found the Self, then by just being the Self, you will fulfill your mission!

You will not of course behave like the silly spiritual aspirant who wrote to Gurudev: "I have attained self-realization; please tell me what to do next."

A rose is a rose, because it is a rose.

It is unique in God's creation even as you are.

A rose smells as sweet as a rose, because it does not want to become a lotus or jasmine.

You can fulfill your mission if you are yourself, and not the imitation of Mr.X or Mrs. Y.

Measuring up to someone else is a waste of time.

In the new year may you be your self.

May you, the unique and fragrant flower in the cosmic garden of the Lord, live the divine life of truth, love and purity.

31st December

What do we do to herald the New Year?

Exactly what we did at the beginning of the old year, and every year before that. After a whole night of revelry, we take the old calendar down and put another in its place.

And the old life goes on unaffected by this insignificant change.

We take pious resolves, but they usually march out of our lives in March at the latest.

Why is this so?

Because of past habits.

And often we say, "I would love to give up this habit, but it is so difficult."

If it is possible then to look within, we shall see that in actual fact, "I love the habit and do not want to give it up."

A real and radical change will not happen in my life till I develop an inner sensibility to such an extent that the past habits really hurt, that every manifestation of selfishness or egoism hurts.

Then selfishness and its diabolical retinue lose their charm.

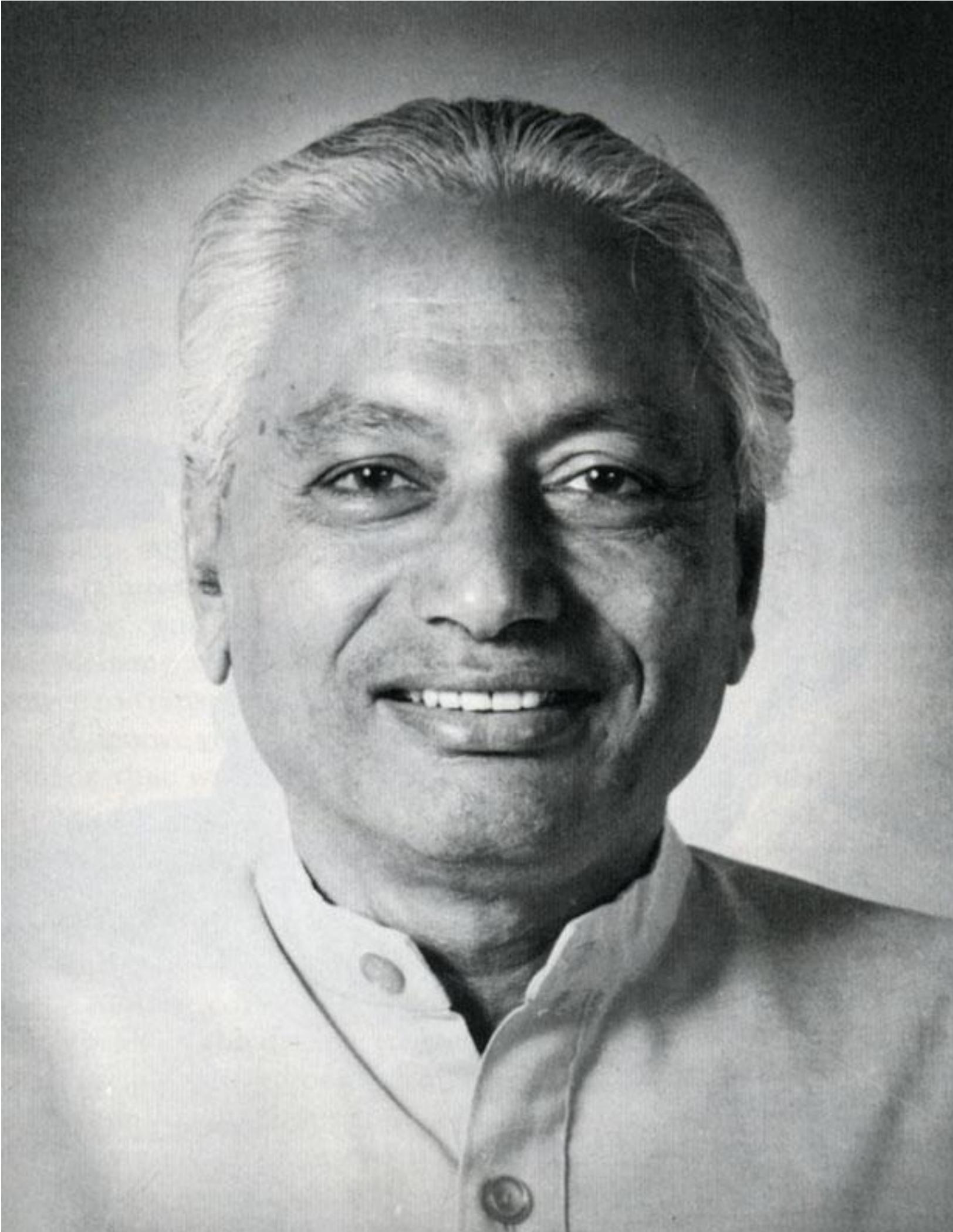
Vanity and its violent companions lose their value.

Love rules our heart.

Wisdom rules our brain.

Enlightenment prevails in our soul.

Our daily life becomes divine life.



# VENKATESANANDA: A TRIBUTE

*Guru brahma guru vishnu gurur devo maheshwara  
Guruh sakshat parabrahma tasmai sri gurave namah*

## **Guru Brahma**

*'Guru is Brahma the Creator'*

From people scattered all over the world, Swamiji created a 'family' of seekers, dedicated to his work and the search for truth; through his devotees he created Trusts to publish his books, every page of which is illumined by his wisdom and his own unique way of presenting the Eternal Truth. Revered Swami Jnanananda once remarked: "His lectures flowed like the Ganges"; and, like the Ganges, each time the 'water' was fresh and new, with his own unmistakable flavour.

In Mauritius and Australia, ashrams were created with his own special touch — the murtis and statues were placed outdoors in the garden so they were always surrounded by fresh flowers; he didn't like to see flowers plucked unnecessarily. In Mauritius there are Sivananda schools, Sivananda roads and streets and a beautiful Sivananda stamp.

It is said in the *Varaha Purana, Part 1, Chapter 58*

*Mata 'ntara pravistanam api bhaktir bhavisyati*

*'All people from all over the country and abroad, people belonging to different faiths, too, will participate in Lord Venkatesa's festivals and will develop devotion to Him.'*

Swamiji was the instrument in making this possible. In his centres all over the world there are murtis of Lord Venkatesa, and Venkatesa Puja is done regularly.

Swamiji 'created' the idea of satsang without a master present, so

that *wherever* he was, satsang in the various centres would go on just as if he were there. His wonderful translations of the major Indian and Buddhist scriptures, presented as they are in the unique form of daily readings, made this possible — as also the fact that he never allowed his personality to intrude into the satsang atmosphere so that there was no feeling of loss when he was not there; but, of course, when he was present there was that extra light and inspiration which was an inseparable part of him!

Swamiji rarely gave instructions or made requests — except about mundane day-to-day matters; but he would drop a hint. If we picked up the hint the full unstinting flood of his attention would be there. Not the smallest most insignificant factor would be overlooked. (If we did not pick up the hint his love was unchanged. If we tried but did not succeed, or abandoned the project, there was never the slightest reproach or disappointment. It might have worked out — it didn't; he dropped all thought of it.) For instance, when we were planning to present Swami Madhavananda with a cake at his birthday satsang, Swamiji wanted to know every detail of the planning of the actual cake making; he supervised the construction of the frame which supported the cake; he supervised and made suggestions for the decoration, candles, etc; he taught us a chant and made us rehearse it several times (with much laughter); and we had to rehearse also the carrying of the heavy cake, planning the easiest route to the Samadhi Hall. He worked out the timing so that we arrived at the most appropriate moment, he organised a messenger to keep us informed of the events in the satsang and he checked that the person who was deputed to light the candles had a fresh dry box of matches. He asked us to dress in our best clothes for the event, he even arranged us in order of height — shortest at the front — and he made the whole proceedings such fun that we felt as if it were our birthday celebration! (If the cake toppled and the decorations caught on fire it was because of our incompetence at carrying out his instructions, not because of any oversight on his part.)

Sometimes, however, his grace alone enabled things to happen. For instance, in 1971 he dropped a suggestion that Perth should have an ashram. When the idea was taken up his grace enabled the Sivananda Ashram in Perth to grow and flourish, so that in a few years we have a magnificent building, a beautiful big new hall and a press — all of which grew without drives for funds, and seemingly without much effort.

## Gurur Vishnu

'Guru is Vishnu the Preserver' in all His aspects:

As *Krishna the irresistible delighter of hearts* Swamiji's love flowed unstintingly to all; and, as in the case of Krishna, his 'lilas' sometimes bewitched, bemused and confused us. His wisdom, laughter, humour, thoughtfulness, compassion and that particular 'something' that radiated from him delighted all who knew him. In those whose hearts were troubled he created peace and acceptance. No-one could remain in his company for long without feeling their worries fade into insignificance — and then one wondered what the problem had been!

Like Krishna, what he was in essence was hidden from all. The longer one knew him the more one realised that one knew him not at all. He made everyone feel special, yet no-one was special to him; or everyone was!

As *Rama the embodiment of righteousness* all the virtues effortlessly had this abode in him. His loving care and foresight towards all his friends never failed. He did nothing that was not for our ultimate good, even if at the time it seemed to our small minds to be incomprehensible. Mostly we discovered his wisdom only in retrospect. If we had problems and wrote to him about them he usually answered promptly, though sometimes he would give no written reply but the answer would come without the need for physical communication from him, transcending time and space. Often before even mailing the letter the answer would come in some mysterious way — either in a letter that day from him, from a chance conversation, from a passage read at satsang or a sudden inspiration in meditation.

Swamiji gave us lots of work to do once we had shown that we were eager to serve him, and the only reason he created the work was to enable us, through service, to be on the same 'wave-length', so that communication was possible. He could have easily had his books professionally typeset and beautifully printed, but that would have meant that so many people would not then have had an opportunity to serve him while he travelled extensively. But with the bookwork we were always kept busy in his service and in tune with him. What blessings he showered on us through this bookwork! We were (and are) constantly dwelling on his thoughts, constantly feeling his presence, and at the same time slowly growing in spirituality while becoming familiar with the scriptures and philosophy of yoga.

As *Venkatesa the destroyer of sins* he looked at us 'through the corner of his eyes' (only with love). And even without complete surrender to him his compassion protects us so that our troubles come only to 'thigh level'. We do not drown in our troubles. (Lord Venkatesa, after whom Swamiji got his sannyas name, is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. There are two extraordinary features — the face is covered and one hand points to the feet while the other gracefully rests at thigh level — which denote that God can only look at his devotee through the corner of his eyes, and if one surrenders to Him one's troubles come only to thigh level.)

### **Gurur devo maheshwarah**

*'Guru is Maheshwarah (Siva), the destroyer or redeemer.'*

Swamiji destroyed all our misconceptions and illusions; he had none of his own. If one were to say (with a long face), "Swamiji, I am disillusioned," he would be delighted: "Wonderful. That is the best thing that can happen. Throw away all your illusions and look for the Reality." He constantly saw the Reality behind the names and forms; his every action flowed from that realisation. He lived in that Reality.

The aspect of *Rudra* was seen very rarely. Only if someone was misguided enough to try to manipulate him or do something against Swami Sivananda's mission, was this aspect manifested (and his 'hiss' was something terrible to witness!), but if he was misunderstood or badly treated there was no reaction — except perhaps a gesture of absolute humility and self-effacement. He could be a very stern disciplinarian, but it was always what the recipient needed for his spiritual growth, never because Swamiji was angry.

### **Guruhsakshat parabrahma**

*'Guru is verily the supreme Brahman Himself'*

We saw the beauty of his form; we basked in his love and laughter; we were stimulated by his wisdom and clarity of thought; we were enchanted and delighted by his play on words to make obscure spiritual concepts clearer; but in all that, we glimpsed only a ray of his Light, and only occasionally were we aware of the depth of the Ocean that he was.

### **Tasmai sri gurave namah**

*'Prostrations to that Guru.'*

May our hearts be purified that he may dwell there always.

## **Swami Venkatesananda**

Parthasarathy (as Swami Venkatesananda was called before he entered the holy order of Sannyasa) was born to the pious and noble parents, Sri Srinivasan and Srimati Lakshmi Devi, in a village called Koil Venni in Tanjore District, South India, on 29th December 1921. Many incidents happened in his childhood and boyhood which reveal his inborn divine qualities. The boy's mind began to turn to devotion and love towards Lord Venkatesa of the famous shrine of Holy Tirupati. When Parthasarathy was a boy of twelve years, he came across books written by Swami Sivananda who was destined to become his spiritual Master and Living God. In course of time Parthasarathy held a responsible position at Delhi as a personal assistant to highly influential Secretary to the Government of India. But the call of the spirit was irresistible. His contact with Swami Sivananda through books had developed into contact through frequent letters. Then it flowed into regular visits to the holy Ananda Kutir, whenever Parthasarathy managed to get leave from his office duties. The personal contact with the Master soon overwhelmed Parthasarathy and he cut off all bonds that bound him to the secular life, renounced a promising career and offered himself as a dedicated Sevak (servant) at the lotus-feet of his Divine Master Swami Sivananda.

Coming thus into the spiritual fold of Swami Sivananda at a very young age, Parthasarathy took to the renunciate in the year 1945 when he resigned the excellent position he was holding. He came with the specific intention of placing himself entirely at the service of Gurudev's Universal Spiritual Mission, with intense devotion, utter dedication and unparalleled spirit of service. He soon made himself indispensable to worshipful Gurudev, especially, in his global spiritual dissemination work. From early 1945 up to the time when he breathed his last, his entire life was whole-souled absorption in the sublime good work of Gurudev Sivananda. Parthasarathy was ordained as a monk on 8th of September, 1947, the sacred Diamond Jubilee of Sri Gurudev. He became Swami Venkatesananda.

The Swami was a versatile personality. He placed his great talent in the service of the holy Master. He was one of the pillars of the Divine Life spiritual movement. At a certain period he was the very right hand of worshipful Gurudev. Such was the great confidence reposed on him by worshipful Gurudev, that every morning, when Gurudev stepped out of his little cottage on the banks of the holy Ganga, he would first go directly to Swami Venkatesananda's room situated right in front and sitting there, he would many a time consult him and seek his opinion on matters concerning Jnana Yagna (dissemination of spiritual knowledge) and publishing activities of the Society and at times on other important matters as well.

He was a tower of strength to Sri Gurudev during the latter's unique "All India Spiritual Awakening Tour of 1950" which had electrified the entire nation and powerfully stirred up the spiritual consciousness of millions of

people creating a wave of religious awakening and inspiration throughout the country. Gurudev declared about Swami Venkatesananda: "He is the Crest-Jewel of my Mission. He is the resplendence of my work. Will I see anyone else shine brighter than him! Surely none have I seen so far. He is a tower of strength to me and my Mission." During the tour he took down notes of every word spoken by Sri Gurudev at each centre and has brought a voluminous work "Sivananda's Lectures: All India Tour."

He came especially to work vigorously in the correspondence section of the Ashram. One can say that volumes of typewritten material connected with correspondence is to be turned out, even during night hours by this Swami. The entire career of his in the Ashram was devoted to writing, recording of Gurudev's speeches and editing the day-to-day messages and conversations of Gurudev which he did to the point of perfection and perhaps most of the Sivananda: Day-to-Day that we have these days recorded are the works of Swami Venkatesananda, principally. After tireless service and winklessly working in the Ashram for Sri Gurudev's glory, his main mission was to bring glory around the aura of Gurudev's Centre, The Divine Life Society, which task he fulfilled very commendably. He has produce a superb work entitled "Gurudev Sivananda" which is not merely a detailed biography of Swami Sivananda but also an authentic record of the history of the Divine Life Society, - a reference book involving great labour.

The Indian devotees in South Africe, headed by Swami Sahajanandaji Maharaj, required a powerful spirit of the Divine Life Society to enthuse them and Swami Venkatesananda was the man chosen by Sri Gurudev for the fulfilment of this Mission there. Thus in 1961 Swami Venkatesananda was deputed to South Africa, where he did a marvellous work. Reports came from there Swami Venkatesananda shook the whole of South Africa and he hoisted the banner of Sri Gurudev's Mission. After working there for some years, he moved to other countries - Mauritius, Madagascar, and some countries in Europe, - and later on to the East, particularly to Australia. Most of his later days were spent in South Africa only, where again he did vigorous literary work, writing and compiling excellent text books on philosophy, Yoga and scriptures. He produced more than 50 books covering a wide range of subjects pertaining to philosophy, religion, metaphysics, ethics, self-development, spiritual Sadhana (spiritual practice), the different Yoga paths, Gurudev's special teachings, comparative religion, psychology and the different scriptures like the Ramayana, Srimad Bhagavata Purana, Yoga Vasishtha, the Gita, the Devi Mahatmya, etc., the very latest volume being a compilation of the teachings of Lord Buddha, entitled "Buddha Daily Readings." No other single disciple of worshipful Gurudev has made such an admirable, substantial contribution on such a scale to the great Master's world-wide spiritual ministry of the present-day mankind. The crowning glory of his contribution was the spade-work he prepared of the "Complete Work of Swami Sivananda" in 18 volumes, of which 6 volumes have been printed under the auspices of the Birth Centenary Celebration by the Divine Life

Society, Freemantle Branch of Australia.

A scholar without ostentation, a writer without pedantry and a speaker without idiosyncrasies, Swami Venkatesananda has made himself lovable and valuable to all. As an exponent of Yoga, as an Organizer of Bhajan (singing of the Lord's Name) Group, as an inaugurator and promoter of a Society Branch, as an editor and prolific writer of many books, as a versatile genius, he always carried distinction in serving the cause of the Society in many countries of the world.

The great saintly soul passed away on the 2nd of December, 1982 at the Sivanada School of Yoga, Johannesburg, South Africa. In the special services offered at the Rishikesh Ashram, Swami Chidananda paid the following tribute to him: "I offer my homage to the sacred memory of our departed brother Revered and Worshipful Sri Swami Venkatesanandaji Maharaj whom his own pre-monastic, earthly, physical mother used to regard as younger brother of Chidananda-like Rama and Lakshmana. He was unparalleled and versatile genius, Chronicler-Editor. I pay my reverential homage and my most loving prostrations and adorations to one who had become in many ways an integral part of this Ashram, a part of our very lives and, as such, he is within the hearts of all those who have been closely moving with him, and in the hearts of all of us enshrined as an inseparable part of our inner being. He had the rare capacity of endearing himself to everyone, to children, to his equals, to the venerable old and to everyone. He is the universal being. He was in harmony with all. The part that he had played in Jnana Yajna work or the dissemination of spiritual knowledge by teaching and preaching the spiritual culture of India, the knowledge of Vedanta and the science of Yoga to the people all over the world, is something unequalled. He was a tower of strength to Gurudev and one of the greatest contributors in his World Awakening Mission, both from the Ashram and later throughout the world after Gurudev's physical passing."

*Speech delivered by Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj on the 26th December 1954, at Sivanandashram, Rishikesh, for the celebration of the 34th birthday of Swami Venkatesanandaji*

## **The Ideal of a Sadhaka**

To have such a fiery renunciation and the spirit of service: what is it due to? There are people of 50 and 60 who do not get such ideas. What is it that made Swami Venkatesananda renounce the world and adopt this life? That is, I think, good Samskaras and virtuous qualities. He had been a Sanyasi in the previous birth, leading the divine life, leading a Sattwic life on the banks of the Ganges, studying the Upanishads, Brahma-Sutras and Gita. I am not saying this to glorify him; but to point out to you that here is an example before you. Every one of you should, in this life, try to do virtuous deeds, practise Ahimsa, Satyam and Brahmacharya, to have aspiration—intense aspiration—and burning Vairagya. You may not have it, but you will have to cultivate it by Satsanga, study, enquiry into the nature of the Self, reflection. That is your foremost duty.

These people may or may not deliver lectures. Look at Sri Krishna Ashram of Gangotri; the very life of such people you will have to watch—their simple food, simple living, their love of Japa, Kirtan and meditation, and their Vairagya. Vairagya is the greatest wealth, the real wealth, which weans the mind away from the objects of the world, which is a strong weapon to cut off all the attachments that you have for the world. For such a man of Vairagya, there is no world, no object of sense-enjoyment can attract him. When you become a district-judge, you rejoice; when you get a little thing of this world, you rejoice; when you have accumulated a little bank balance, you rejoice; but look at these people: they know that you cannot have eternal satisfaction in these objects but that you can have it only in the Atma, the Innermost Self that resides in the chambers of your heart.

*Jyotishaamapi tat jyotih tamasah paramuchyate,  
Jnaanana jneyam jnaanagamya hridi sarvasya vishtitam.*

That, the Light of all lights, is said to be beyond darkness; knowledge, the knowable and the goal of knowledge, seated in the hearts of all.

These things of the world do not attract them, because they have got the spiritual wealth of good Samskaras, through enquiry and reflection. You must possess Vairagya which will lead you to the attainment of the Atma, the inexhaustible spiritual wealth.

But you do not have aspiration! The mind is full of evil tendencies. You may be endowed with a little talent; and you will be puffed up. The mind is veiled. There is Avarana. In spite of your intellectual faculties and talents, you will not be able to understand and realise the Universal, Cosmic, Supreme Being, whose nature is Satchidananda. You can get many Oxford University graduates, but not many Jivanmuktas who have realised the Self—that is the

supreme veiling power of Maya. You know; yet you will not be able to understand it! There is something beyond these senses, mind and intellect; the Supreme Soul, full of Bliss, the only Reality! How many educated people have understood this, and are trying to realise it? How many have got even an aspiration to realise it? That aspiration is the real wealth.

Aspiration. Renunciation. Meditation. These will make you a king of kings, emperor of emperors – *kaupenavantah khalu Bhagyovantah*. Very few have realised this, and very few are attempting to realise this. Because, they are satisfied with the little toys of this world. They have not got the supreme subtle Vichara-Buddhi which is the greatest wealth of man. That comes through selfless service, study, meditation, enquiry, Satsanga. Nobody wants this! How many people want the wealth of the Atma? How many are attempting to possess these qualifications which are necessary?

How many intellectual people try to sit in Padmasan and do Japa and meditation? People don't know what Padmasan is! They do not know what Prana is, nor the relation between Prana and the mind and the will. They want to become scholars. Their mind will run in that direction only. Their goal is an American degree. If a doctor becomes an "America-returned" specialist, he will get Rs. 32 as his visiting fees. God has given you an intellect. You must understand the magnitude of human suffering. What is the nature of this world? What is the mind? Ask yourself. Then only will you become a great man. He is a great man who tries to possess Vairagya, who tries to practise the Sadhana-Chatustaya. Equip yourself with Viveka, Vairagya, Shat-Shampat and Mumukshutwa. What is Viveka? People do not know. They will deliver lectures on engineering! Maya will make your mind work along the external grooves. It is its duty. Maya hides the real and makes the unreal appear as real. So, you want only external things.

Ye hi samsarsaja bhogao dukkha-yanaya eva te,  
Adyantavantah kaunteya na teshu ramate budhah.

The enjoyments that are born of contacts are only generators of pain, for they have a beginning and an end, O Arjuna; the wise do not rejoice in them.

The pleasure that is derived through contact of sensual objects is verily the womb of pain. You will have to meditate upon this; then only will you get the discriminating intellect, which will make you bold with the power that is born of the wisdom of the Self. Cultivate discrimination and dispassion. That only will make you bold. Otherwise, moving along the sensual grooves, you will lose everything.

God has given you this chance—this human birth—to rise above sensual things and to realise the goal of life. How many of you are attempting to do so? Mere study of the scriptures will not do. You can talk. But, have you got that burning Vairagya, the burning aspiration, which Lord Buddha had, which Raja Gopichand had? Then only can you become the king of kings. If you do not attempt to possess these, then you fail in your duty.

You forget this truth. It is difficult to give up, to renounce these sensual

objects. But, if you are sincere, the path will be easy; it is easy for those who resort to Satsanga, who close their eyes and make a little enquiry: “What is this world, what is the goal of life, what is mind?” Only such enquiry will lead you to everlasting peace. Very few people do this. You will have to generate these Samskaras now, just as Venkatesanandaji did—and so he has come here.

This clearly proves there is rebirth. You come down here with your Samskaras. You wanted to become an engineer; God has given you birth that will enable you to fulfil your ambition. But this will not give you satisfaction. In your old age you will suffer from all sorts of diseases and lead a miserable life. Your mind is full of evil Vasanas. How many selfless acts have you done?

How many people try to do selfless service? All are selfish. Close your eyes and practise self-analysis and find out for yourself what are the various kinds of impurities that are lurking in the mind, and what are the good qualities that you are possessing.

Amanitwam adambhitwam ahimsa kshaantiraar javam,  
Acnaaryopaasanam saucham sthairyam aatmavinigraha.  
Indriyaartheshu vairaagyam anahamkaara eva cha.  
Janmamrityujaraavyaadhi dunkhadosha-anudarshanam.

Humility, unpretentiousness, non-injury, forgiveness, uprightness, service of the teacher, purity, steadfastness, self-control, dispassion, egolessness, perception of the evil of birth, death, old age, sickness and pain.

Are you trying to cultivate these virtues? Even to possess one virtue, and give up the little tea-habit, how difficult it is! How many good acts have you done today? Which evil quality is troubling you? You must know. That is the thing which will make you a real man, a Superman.

How many of you are keeping the spiritual diary? What is your spiritual progress, compared with the previous year's? These are the things that matter. He is the greatest man, a real sovereign and emperor who is striving to answer these questions. He may not possess any wealth or treasury; but he who possesses dispassion, discrimination, serenity, spirit of selfless service, spirit of sharing with others what he has—he is the greatest man. Man is generous to himself, He can spend any amount on the saree of his daughter; but his heart is very small, because he has not cultivated the spirit of charity. He cannot share with others what he has. He closes the doors and takes first-class Bourn-Vita.

To his friends he may give a little. To servants he will not give even water! Such is the nature of the great man who has got a number of factories! Analyse yourself. You have a small heart, and a small intellect. Your world consists of only yourself and four or five relatives, and perhaps a few friends who will help you when you are in difficulties. No. You must have a large heart. You must become one with the entire mankind. You must share with others what you have. Every day, as soon as you get up, ask yourself: “How many good actions was I able to do yesterday?” and resolve to excel the previous day in doing good to others. Thus would you evolve rapidly.

Practise patience, tolerance and endurance. These are the qualities you will have to develop. Then you can become fearless. He has practised these already; so they have become the basic traits in him. If you cultivate these qualities and acquire the spiritual wealth, whatever you want God will give you. Spiritual wealth alone will make you king of kings. You will be freed from all sorrows when you see the One Common Consciousness everywhere. You must have Sarvatma-Buddhi. Then you will be free from sorrow, pain and delusion. Then you will enjoy supreme satisfaction, perennial joy and immortality. That is the goal.

The little sensual pleasure is no pleasure at all. When there is a patch of eczema, you scratch yourself and seem to enjoy it. Later it bleeds, and you suffer from intense pain. Similar is the case with the pleasure derived from sensual objects here. You must have a bold understanding to ask yourself: "Is this really pleasure?" and arrive at the conclusion that it is no pleasure at all. Study the phenomenon of deep sleep; that itself will give you the knowledge that you can get real joy and peace only when you go beyond the objects of this world. In deep sleep, there are not objects, and there is no objective enjoyment. Yet, you enjoy great bliss and peace there. You say: "I slept well; I enjoyed my sleep; but I did not know anything." In spite of the absence of the sensual objects, you got the homogeneous experience of bliss. This joy is not to be had in the sense-objects. The third cup of milk produces retching and vomiting. If it is really pleasure-giving, it ought to give you that homogeneous experience, eternal and everlasting. It is only to the dull-witted, gross persons that the worldly objects appear to be pleasurable. For a man of discrimination, it is no pleasure at all.

Real happiness you can have through meditation, with a pure, concentrated mind, filled with Sattwa. People may write articles and theses; but how to convert Rajas into Sattwa? No one knows this. Nobody practises introspection. As soon as you get up, you put on your suit and go to the office. In the evening you go to the club and at night go to sleep. Where is time for you to introspect? Only regular and systematic introspection will enable you to control the mind; and only he who has controlled the mind will be able to enjoy real happiness. Only when the mind is filled with Sattwa, you can have concentration of mind. In a Sattwic mind alone does real Atmic enquiry arise. He alone can discover the answer to the question: "What is my real essential nature?"

Are you the body? No. The body is a perishable object made of five elements; so you are distinct from the body. Similarly, you are not the Prana, and you are not the mind, either. In dream the idea of the body does not exist, and yet you exist; in deep sleep even the mind vanishes, and yet you exist. When there is great fear or shock, the mind does not function. Therefore, it cannot be the ever-intelligent Atma. These are the enquiries that you should pursue. Regular introspection, Japa, Kirtan, meditation, Atmic enquiry, only these will make you strong and really wealthy.

It is your important duty to try to realise the Self in this life itself. This is

your foremost duty. This only can remove your worries, cares, anxieties and make you blissful at all times, under all conditions, and all kinds of environments.

Meditation is very difficult. Before attempting to meditate really, you should equip yourself with the virtues enumerated under Yama-Niyama. Be truthful. Practise non-injury. Practise Brahmacharya. These are all the things that you will have to cultivate, little by little. If you are earnest and sincere, everything will become easy.

Have a programme of life. Know what is the real goal. Do not imagine, “When I retire, I will be able to do Japa and meditation.” When all your energy is squeezed out, you will not, in your old age, be able to sit even in Padmasana for a few minutes. When you are young, you must meditate, and practise enquiry. Study Yoga-Vasishtha, Viveka-Chudamani. Yoga Vasishtha will raise you to supreme Brahmanhood and make you the real king of kings. He who is full of desires is a beggar of beggars; he is a slave of the senses, slave of the Indriyas, slave of emotions. Try to rise above all these and then you can attain to the realisation of oneness or unity, and realise the fearless Atman.

The Atman is fearless. There is no anxiety, no worry, no misery in the Self, where there is neither east, nor west, neither south nor north. In the Self there is neither hunger nor thirst, no old age or death; no Tuesday or Monday. He is Sat-Karma and Sat-Sankalpa. Only if you attain this Atman will you be free. That is your essential nature. Tat Twam Asi, you are That, my dear children.

But the realisation of this Truth, Tat Twam Asi, is not so easy. By selfless service you will have to purify your mind of the dirt which has accumulated in it; and then steady the mind through Upasana, and through the Grace of the Lord the veil (Avarana) will be removed. This, our Venkatesanandaji has done.

When we celebrate the Birthday of Venkatesanandaji, we are celebrating the Birthday of the Supreme Being. We worship, we remember the One Common Consciousness which, through the veiling power of Maya, appears as all these,—like the blueness in the sky, like a snake in the rope. You will have to enquire. You have been overwhelmed by these little appearances, by these names and forms; there is an ocean of peace, Satchidananda, behind these. Eko Devah Sarvabhuteshu Gudhah. That One Supreme Consciousness is hidden in all these beings, like butter in milk. He who is able to see the one Light of lights, he alone really sees. Otherwise he is blind. Study the Upanishads, Atma-Bodha, Tattwa-Bodha. Cultivate reverence to teachers, reverence to saints, reverence to Sadhus. They only can redeem you. The Sanyasin is Sakshat Narayana Himself. He who is able to infuse into you discrimination, has placed you under a debt of gratitude to him, which you cannot repay in millions of lives. Your mind runs along the sensual grooves. He who is able to turn your mind away from the sensual grooves—you cannot very easily repay the debt you owe him. He who is able to infuse into you a

little aspiration and to turn your mind slightly from the sensual objects, you cannot repay without Sadhana the debt you owe him. Such are the people who wear this gerua cloth. Glory to these worthy children of Sankaracharya, Dattatreya, Sanaka, Sanandana and Sanatkumara. He who is not able to understand the one all-pervading Presence, whose mind runs along sensual grooves, is a burden upon earth, however great he is intellectually, and however wealthy he may be. He who is not filled with discrimination and dispassion is a burden upon earth. But he who is able to turn the mind from the sense-objects, who is devoted to the Omnipresent Indweller, is a saint. He is a saint who has understood the real significance of the Four Mahavakyas: Prajnanam Brahma, Aham Brahmasmi, Tat-Twam-Asi, Ayam Atma Brahma. You are not this small being of 5'4", with all sorts of cravings, Vasanas and Trishnas (these have made a beast of you), but Tat Twam Asi—thou art That Satchidananda Atman. Only he who has not understood this runs after the sensual pleasures which appear to taste like nectar in the beginning, but eventually turn out to be poisonous.

Understand the magnitude of human suffering. Understand what this world can give you—only a little sensation, titillation of the nerves. If you waste your life in these little things, how foolish you are! You have forgotten the goal of life. One anna of pleasure is mixed with fifteen annas of pain. Can you recognise this as pleasure?

So many virtues have to be cultivated. So many scriptures have to be studied, not only for the sake of knowledge and understanding, but for the sake of practice. Remember:

Vihaaya kamaan yah sarvaan pumaamscharati nihsprihah, nirmamo  
nirahankaarah.

Sa shaantimadhigachchati, indriyartheshu vairagyam Anahamkara eva  
cha, janmamrityu-jaravyadhi dukkha doshanudarshanam.

*The man attains peace, who, abandoning all desires, moves about without longing, without the sense of mine and without egoism, indifferent to the objects of the senses, reflecting on the evil of birth, death, old age, sickness and pain.*

Are you keeping these as your ideals before you? He who is free from cravings and temptations, he alone will enjoy peace. Your endeavour must be daily to find out "How much Ahamkara and Mamakara have I got?" You will have to repeat these formulas every second and annihilate desires, Ahamkara and mineness. Then you will enjoy real peace.

Are you attempting all this? Have you got this ideal before you? What are the obstacles? When you want to eradicate I-ness and mine-ness, you must feel within and have devotion to the ideal of Atmic realisation. Keep the goal always before you. Then comes control of Indriyas. The man who has controlled the Indriyas gets Supreme Peace. This is the real science. This is the Brahma Vidya taught by Uddalaka to Swetaketu, by Yajnavalkya to Maitreyi. These Upanishadic truths must enter your very bones and nerves. Then you will have selflessness, egolessness, desirelessness, Vasanalessness,

Trishnalessness. Then only can you be called a human being.

God has given you a chance. When you have strength, knowledge, beauty, health, etc., and when you have been provided with books, teachers—everything—if you do not attempt for Self-realisation, then God is not to be blamed.

People have begun to ask: “Where is God?” He is everywhere. It is absurd to ask for proof of the existence of God. Who created the mind with its several faculties? Who pumps blood in your heart? Who causes the peristaltic movements? He is the All-pervading Essence. He is hidden in all these things, like oil in the sesame seed, like butter in milk, like electricity in the wires. God is Swatah-Siddha. The mother says: “Here is your father”—you don’t ask her for further proof. Similarly, you will have to repose faith in the words of the scriptures and the sages. God is everywhere; He is in the Light, in the Sun, in the Moon, in the Stars, in every speck of creation.

He who is sincere, who has aspiration, he will realise God. Every man is selfish. Therefore, Shastras say that you must do charity. By charity you purify yourself and you recognise the all-pervading Atman. You grow in unity and oneness. Charity gives rise to knowledge of the oneness, the unity of Consciousness.

There is time yet, if you start doing the right thing from this very moment. But you must apply yourself seriously to Sadhana. How many of you are getting up at 4 o’clock in the morning and contemplating upon questions like: “What is the world in Infinity?” If you are attempting to have knowledge of Infinity, will you waste your time in reading newspapers? No. Even an attempt at the realisation of the Self raises you to Brahmaloaka. Actual realisation takes you beyond sorrow, once for all; Tarati Shokam Atmavit. Such a man becomes Brahman Himself: Brahmavit Brahmaiva Bhavati. He enables others to cross the ocean of Samsara: Sa Tarati sa Lokan Tarayati. All sorrows are banished from you even when you think of the Atman: Aham atma Nirakarah Sarvavyapi Swabhavatah.

Do you get this knowledge in your Universities? You should exert yourself to acquire this Brahma Vidya. That alone can make you bold. The whole wealth of the Lord belongs to you. All divine Aiswaryas, all Siddhis and Riddhis roll under the feet of the sage of Self-realisation. That you should attempt to become. Repeat formulas like: Ahan-atma Nirakarah Sarvavyapi Swabhavatah; Jnanamritam Suddham Atindriyoham. Even the mere repetition of these formulas makes you fearless and helps you to cross this ocean of Samsara.

There are three kinds of impurities in the mind. One is Mala (dirt) which is removed by the practice of Karma Yoga. The other is Vikshepa (tossing of the mind) which is removed by Bhakti, and the third is Avarana (veil of ignorance) which is removed by Jnana Yoga. Thinking, willing, feeling all these must be developed harmoniously; then only will there be integral development. That is your duty.

You should not merely study the scriptures and deliver lectures; but you should also discipline the mind. Whatever the Gita teaches, you should put into practice. Simply lecturing on Brahma Sutras will not do. If you are not given due respect and honour, you will lose your balance of mind. Not only study and lecturing; you should introspect, analyse and find out what virtues you should develop and what defects you should get rid of. That leads to Brahma Jnana,—not mere study. Develop humility. Cultivate the spirit of selfless service. You must watch for opportunities. If a man is lying down on the roadside, hungry and thirsty, you must run to him with a cup of milk. Otherwise your study of Brahma Sutras is useless. You should not bring in Vedantic arguments to support your Vedantic indifference here! One man said to the other: “My house is on fire; please come and help.” The latter replied: ‘Well, friend, this world is unreal. Where is house, where is fire?’ This is sheer foolishness. The world is unreal . . . for whom? For a Jivanmukta. If sugar is a little less in coffee, you will know whether the world is real or unreal for you. It is only when you discipline yourself through untiring selfless service, that Atma-Jnana will arise in you.

Venkatesanandaji is not a small boy. All the Ashram work he is doing. I must tell all this, so that other people may be inspired to emulate his example. He has not uttered a single word that could displease me. If I want to get some work done urgently, the next morning it is ready; he would do it sitting up the whole night. He has no ego. He will never say: “This is not good.” He is pleasing in manners. We should always try to please everybody. People generally bring in the story of the donkey, the old man and his son, in support of their argument that it is not possible to please everybody. This is wrong. I always try to please everybody, whatever be the nature of people. When a man comes to me, I find out what is good in him and try to please him. Though it may not always be possible, you must try to please all to the maximum extent open to you.

One old man wants to take Sanyas. He is still postponing it. “You have got Moha for your son,” I said. “Yes, I have,” he says! Look at the force of Samskaras. He who is living with Sanyasins in this birth will gather sufficient Samskaras now to take Sanyas next birth. One girl has come here; she has taken Sanyas. I thought she won’t be able to pull on and, therefore, refused to give her Sanyas. The Sanyas-spirit sometimes comes and goes. She observed Satyagraha; she did not take food for three or four days. Her mother came to be and said: “Give her Sanyas.” Her father also blessed her. Then I gave her Sanyas. Such is the force of good Samskaras. It won’t allow you to lead a worldly life. When spiritual Samskaras begin to take effect, it is like the atom bomb bursting.

Venkatesanandaji’s letters are full of honey. Our Professor Swami Sadanandaji is a great critic; and he is all-appreciation for Venkatesanandaji’s letters. They are preserved in the iron-safe by those who receive them. He does not even prepare a draft; he sits at the typewriter, and the letter is at once ready. No stenographer will be able to compete with him. Many are

coming; but if I say one thing, they will write something else. That is one kind of “stenography”! But Venkatesanandaji; even if he hears once, it is quite sufficient for him, he will reproduce the speech beautifully. He has a very acute grasping power; there is no confusion in his brain. But for him all that I say,—not only I, but many others like Dr. Graham Howe, Prof. Burt, Sri Satchidanandam Pillai, Major-General A.N. Sharma, and others who have delivered lectures here—would have been lost. He is a man to be adored.

I told Venkatesanandaji, when I was at Roorkee: “Don’t always refer to me as Gurudev, in your talks; just say Swamiji, that will do.” He said: “If I say ‘Swamiji,’ it does not express the Bhav of my heart; it creates an illusion of equality with Gurudev.” Then I allowed him to continue to refer to me as Gurudev.

The work he does, other people won’t be able to do. So many books and pamphlets are coming out of the press—all through his work only. He has written my day-to-day talks in Four Volumes, yet to be published; he has also written my life-sketch and the “Bhagavad Gita for Students” which is very much appreciated by all. He has performed much austerity, Tapas, in previous births also; and he has rendered selfless service to Yogis, sages and great people. This has taken the shape of his talents, his kindness, good qualities and good Samskaras. I have seen people here; when they have a little talent, their head swells. Whoever may come, I make him a lecturer, the cashier and most important man, in order to encourage him, the new inmate. But some people’s heads swell. Venkatesanandaji is not like that. He is humble and egoless. Similarly, Swami Chidanandaji also; therefore, everybody loves him.

He, Swami Chidanandaji and the others, are the people to continue the work of the Divine Life Society. Every man is useful; and Venkatesanandaji is useful in his own way. Just as in the body there are so many cells, tissues, etc., and life is sustained by their harmonious working, similarly if all of you work harmoniously, together, you can do grand service to the world.

He is overworked, and there is nobody to help him. The work he does is very great. During the All-India Tour, Venkatesanandaji was working day and night. He was given a small room in the Tourist Car. He had not even a proper place to sit and work. Yet he has produced the huge volume “Sivananda’s Lectures: All-India Tour.” But for him this book would not have come out at all. Saradanandaji also contributed a lot to this book. He used to ascend trees and buildings in order to take photographs. He is also working in his own way; and he is a genius. Thus is the work carried on by all these people. May God bless them all with health, long life, peace and Eternal Bliss!