

I AM THAT

Dialogues of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

That in whom reside all beings and who resides in all beings, who is the giver of grace to all, the Supreme Soul of the universe, the limitless being -- I am that.

Amritbindu Upanishad

That which permeates all, which nothing transcends and which, like the universal space around us, fills everything completely from within and without, that Supreme non-dual Brahman -- that thou art.

Sankaracharya

The seeker is he who is in search of himself.

Give up all questions except one: 'Who am I?' After all, the only fact you are sure of is that you are. The 'I am' is certain. The 'I am this' is not. Struggle to find out what you are in reality.

To know what you are, you must first investigate and know what you are not.

Discover all that you are not -- body, feelings thoughts, time, space, this or that -- nothing, concrete or abstract, which you perceive can be you. The very act of perceiving shows that you are not what you perceive.

The clearer you understand on the level of mind you can be described in negative terms only, the quicker will you come to the end of your search and realise that you are the limitless being.

Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

Foreword

That there should be yet another addition of I AM THAT is not surprising, for the sublimity of the words spoken by Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, their directness and the lucidity with which they refer to the Highest have already made this book a literature of paramount importance. In fact, many regard it as the only book of spiritual teaching really worth studying.

There are various religions and systems of philosophy which claim to endow human life with meaning. But they suffer from certain inherent limitations. They couch into fine-sounding words their traditional beliefs and ideologies, theological or philosophical. Believers, however, discover the limited range of meaning and applicability of these words, sooner or later. They get disillusioned and tend to abandon the systems, in the same way as scientific theories are abandoned, when they are called in question by too much contradictory empirical data.

When a system of spiritual interpretation turns out to be unconvincing and not capable of being rationally justified, many people allow themselves to be converted to some other system. After a while, however, they find limitations and contradictions in the other system also. In this unrewarding pursuit of acceptance and rejection what remains for them is only scepticism and agnosticism, leading to a fatuous way of living, engrossed in mere gross utilities of life, just consuming material goods. Sometimes, however, though rarely, scepticism gives rise to an intuition of a basic reality, more fundamental than that of words, religions or philosophic systems. Strangely, it is a positive aspect of scepticism. It was in such a state of scepticism, but also having an intuition of the basic reality, that I happened to read Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj's I AM THAT. I was at once struck by the finality and unassailable certitude of his words. Limited by their very nature though words are, I found the utterances of Maharaj transparent, polished windows, as it were.

No book of spiritual teachings, however, can replace the presence of the teacher himself. Only the words spoken directly to you by the Guru shed their opacity completely. In a Guru's presence the last boundaries drawn by the mind vanish. Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj is indeed such a Guru. He is not a preacher, but he provides precisely those indications which the seeker needs. The reality which

emanates from him is inalienable and Absolute. It is authentic. Having experienced the verity of his words in the pages of I AM THAT, and being inspired by it, many from the West have found their way to Maharaj to seek enlightenment.

Maharaj's interpretation of truth is not different from that of Jnana Yoga/Advaita Vedanta. But, he has a way of his own. The multifarious forms around us, says he, are constituted of the five elements. They are transient, and in a state of perpetual flux. Also they are governed by the law of causation. All this applies to the body and the mind also, both of which are transient and subject to birth and death. We know that only by means of the bodily senses and the mind can the world be known. As in the Kantian view, it is a correlate of the human knowing subject, and, therefore, has the fundamental structure of our way of knowing. This means that time, space and causality are not 'objective', or extraneous entities, but mental categories in which everything is moulded. The existence and form of all things depend upon the mind. Cognition is a mental product. And the world as seen from the mind is a subjective and private world, which changes continuously in accordance with the restlessness of the mind itself.

In opposition to the restless mind, with its limited categories -- intentionality, subjectivity, duality etc. -- stands supreme the limitless sense of 'I am'. The only thing I can be sure about is that 'I am'; not as a thinking 'I am' in the Cartesian sense, but without any predicates. Again and again Maharaj draws our attention to this basic fact in order to make us realise our 'I am-ness' and thus get rid of all self-made prisons. He says: The only true statement is 'I am'. All else is mere inference. By no effort can you change the 'I am' into 'I am-not'.

Behold, the real experiencer is not the mind, but myself, the light in which everything appears. Self is the common factor at the root of all experience, the awareness in which everything happens. The entire field of consciousness is only as a film, or a speck, in 'I am'. This 'I am-ness' is, being conscious of consciousness, being aware of itself. And it is indescribable, because it has no attributes. It is only being my self, and being my self is all that there is. Everything that exists, exists as my self. There is nothing which is different from me. There is no duality and, therefore, no pain. There are no problems. It is the sphere of love, in which everything is perfect. What happens, happens

spontaneously, without intentions -- like digestion, or the growth of the hair. Realise this, and be free from the limitations of the mind.

Behold, the deep sleep in which there is no notion of being this or that. Yet 'I am' remains. And behold the eternal now. Memory seems to bring things to the present out of the past, but all that happens does happen in the present only. It is only in the timeless now that phenomena manifest themselves. Thus, time and causality do not apply in reality. I am prior to the world, body and mind. I am the sphere in which they appear and disappear. I am the source of them all, the universal power by which the world with its bewildering diversity becomes manifest.

In spite of its primevality, however, the sense of 'I am' is not the Highest. It is not the Absolute. The sense, or taste of 'I am-ness' is not absolutely beyond time. Being the essence of the five elements, it, in a way, depends upon the world. It arises from the body, which, in its turn, is built by food, consisting of the elements. It disappears when the body dies, like the spark extinguishes when the incense stick burns out. When pure awareness is attained, no need exists any more, not even for 'I am', which is but a useful pointer, a direction-indicator towards the Absolute. The awareness 'I am' then easily ceases. What prevails is that which cannot be described, that which is beyond words. It is this 'state' which is most real, a state of pure potentiality, which is prior to everything. The 'I am' and the universe are mere reflections of it. It is this reality which a jnani has realised.

The best that you can do is listen attentively to the jnani -- of whom Sri Nisargadatta is a living example -- and to trust and believe him. By such listening you will realise that his reality is your reality. He helps you in seeing the nature of the world and of the 'I am'. He urges you to study the workings of the body and the mind with solemn and intense concentration, to recognise that you are neither of them and to cast them off. He suggests that you return again and again to 'I am' until it is your only abode, outside of which nothing exists; until the ego as a limitation of 'I am', has disappeared. It is then that the highest realisation will just happen effortlessly.

Mark the words of the jnani, which cut across all concepts and dogmas. Maharaj says: "until once becomes self-realised, attains to knowledge of the self,

these concepts.” Yes, they are concepts, even ‘I am’ is, but surely there are no concepts more precious. It is for the seeker to regard them with the utmost seriousness, because they indicate the Highest Reality. No better concepts are available to shed all concepts.

I am thankful to Sudhakar S. Dikshit, the editor, for inviting me to write the Foreword to this new edition of I AM THAT and thus giving me an opportunity to pay my homage to Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, who has expounded highest knowledge in the simplest, clearest and the most convincing words.

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Who is Nisargadatta Maharaj?

When asked about the date of his birth the Master replied blandly that he was never born!

Writing a biographical note on Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj is a frustrating and unrewarding task. For, not only the exact date of his birth is unknown, but no verified facts concerning the early years of his life are available. However, some of his elderly relatives and friends say that he was born in the month of March 1897 on a full moon day, which coincided with the festival of Hanuman Jayanti, when Hindus pay their homage to Hanuman, also named Maruti, the monkey-god of Ramayana fame. And to associate his birth with this auspicious day his parents named him Maruti.

Available information about his boyhood and early youth is patchy and disconnected. We learn that his father, Shivrampant, was a poor man, who worked for some time as a domestic servant in Bombay and, later, eked out his livelihood as a petty farmer at Kandalgaon, a small village in the back woods of Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra. Maruti grew up almost without education. As a boy he assisted his father in such labours as lay within his power -- tended cattle, drove oxen, worked in the fields and ran errands. His pleasures were simple, as his labours, but he was gifted with an inquisitive mind, bubbling over with questions of all sorts.

His father had a Brahmin friend named Vishnu Haribhau Gore, who was a pious man and learned too from rural standards. Gore often talked about religious topics and the boy Maruti listened attentively and dwelt on these topics far more than anyone would suppose. Gore was for him the ideal man -- earnest, kind and wise.

When Maruti attained the age of eighteen his father died, leaving behind his widow, four sons and two daughters. The meagre income from the small farm dwindled further after the old man's death and was not sufficient to feed so many mouths. Maruti's elder brother left the village for Bombay in search of work and he followed shortly after. It is said that in Bombay he worked for a few months as a low-paid junior clerk in an office, but resigned the job in disgust. He then took petty trading as a haberdasher and started a shop for selling children's clothes, tobacco and hand-made country cigarettes. This

business is said to have flourished in course of time, giving him some sort of financial security. During this period he got married and had a son and three daughters.

Childhood, youth, marriage, progeny -- Maruti lived the usual humdrum and eventless life of a common man till his middle age, with no inkling at all of the sainthood that was to follow. Among his friends during this period was one Yashwantrao Baagkar, who was a devotee of Sri Siddharameshwar Maharaj, a spiritual teacher of the Navnath Sampradaya, a sect of Hinduism. One evening Baagkar took Maruti to his Guru and that evening proved to be the turning point in his life. The Guru gave him a mantra and instructions in meditation. Early in his practice he started having visions and occasionally even fell into trances. Something exploded within him, as it were, giving birth to a cosmic consciousness, a sense of eternal life. The identity of Maruti, the petty shopkeeper, dissolved and the illuminating personality of Sri Nisargadatta emerged.

Most people live in the world of self-consciousness and do not have the desire or power to leave it. They exist only for themselves; all their effort is directed towards achievement of self-satisfaction and self-glorification. There are, however, seers, teachers and revealers who, while apparently living in the same world, live simultaneously in another world also -- the world of cosmic consciousness, effulgent with infinite knowledge. After his illuminating experience Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj started living such a dual life. He conducted his shop, but ceased to be a profit-minded merchant. Later, abandoning his family and business he became a mendicant, a pilgrim over the vastness and variety of the Indian religious scene. He walked barefooted on his way to the Himalayas where he planned to pass the rest of his years in quest of a eternal life. But he soon retraced his steps and came back home comprehending the futility of such a quest. Eternal life, he perceived, was not to be sought for; he already had it. Having gone beyond the I-am-the-body idea, he had acquired a mental state so joyful, peaceful and glorious that everything appeared to be worthless compared to it. He had attained self-realisation.

Uneducated though the Master is, his conversation is enlightened to an extraordinary degree. Though born and brought up in poverty, he is the richest

which the most fabulous treasures are mere tinsel. He is warm-hearted and tender, shrewdly humorous, absolutely fearless and absolutely true -- inspiring, guiding and supporting all who come to him.

Any attempt to write a biographical not on such a man is frivolous and futile. For he is not a man with a past or future; he is the living present -- eternal and immutable. He is the self that has become all things.

Translators Note

I met Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj some years back and was impressed with the spontaneous simplicity of his appearance and behavior and his deep and genuine earnestness in expounding his experience.

However humble and difficult to discover his little tenement in the back lanes of Bombay, many have found their way there. Most of them are Indians, conversing freely in their native language, but there were also many foreigners who needed a translator. Whenever I was present the task would fall to me. Many of the questions put and answers given were so interesting and significant that a tape-recorder was brought in. While most of the tapes were of the regular Marathi-English variety, some were polygot scrambles of several Indian and European languages. Later, each tape was deciphered and translated into English.

It was not easy to translate verbatim and at the same time avoid tedious repetitions and reiterations. It is hoped that the present translation of the tape-recordings will not reduce the impact of this clear-minded, generous and in many ways an unusual human being.

A Marathi version of these talks, verified by Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj himself, has been separately published.

Maurice Frydman Translator Bombay

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The Sense of 'I am' Questioner: It is a matter of daily experience that on waking up the world suddenly appears. Where does it come from?

Maharaj: Before anything can come into being there must be somebody to whom it comes. All appearance and disappearance presupposes a change against some changeless background.

Questioner: Before waking up I was unconscious.

M: In what sense? Having forgotten, or not having experienced? Don't you experience even when unconscious? Can you exist without knowing? A lapse in memory: is it a proof of non-existence?

And can you validly talk about your own non-existence as an actual experience? You cannot even say that your mind did not exist. Did you not wake up on being called? And on waking up, was it not the sense 'I am' that came first? Some seed consciousness must be existing even during sleep, or swoon. On waking up the experience runs: 'I am -- the body -- in the world.' It may appear to arise in succession but in fact it is all simultaneous, a single idea of having a body in a world. Can there be the sense of 'I am' without being somebody or other?

Q: I am always somebody with its memories and habits. I know no other 'I am'.

M: Maybe something prevents you from knowing? When you do not know something which others know, what do you do? Q: I seek the source of their knowledge under their instruction.

M: Is it not important to you to know whether you are a mere body, or something else? Or, maybe nothing at all? Don't you see that all your problems are your body's problems -- food, clothing, shelter, family, friends, name, fame, security, survival -- all these lose their meaning the moment you realise that you may not be a mere body.

Q: What benefit is there in knowing that I am not the body?

M: Even to say that you are not the body is not quite true. In a way you are all the bodies, hearts and minds and much more. Go deep into the sense of 'I am' and you will find. How do you find a thing you have mislaid or forgotten? You

keep it in your mind until you recall it. The sense of being, of 'I am' is the first to emerge. Ask yourself whence it comes, or just watch it quietly. When the mind stays in the 'I am' without moving, you enter a state which cannot be verbalised but can be experienced. All you need to do is try and try again. After all the sense 'I am' is always with you, only you have attached all kinds of things to it - body, feelings, thoughts, ideas, possessions etc. All these self-identifications are misleading. Because of them you take yourself to be what you are not.

Q: Then what am I?

M: It is enough to know what you are not. You need not know what you are. For as long as knowledge means description in terms of what is already known, perceptual, or conceptual, there can be no such thing as self-knowledge, for what you are cannot be described, except as except as total negation. All you can say is: 'I am not this, I am not that'. You cannot meaningfully say 'this is what I am'. It just makes no sense. What you can point out as 'this' or 'that' cannot be yourself. Surely, you can not be 'something' else. You are nothing perceivable, or imaginable. Yet, without you there can be neither perception nor imagination. You observe the heart feeling, the mind thinking, the body acting; the very act of perceiving shows that you are not what you perceive. Can there be perception, experience without you? An experience must 'belong'. Somebody must come and declare it as his own. Without an experiencer the experience is not real. It is the experiencer that imparts reality to experience. An experience which you cannot have, of what value is it to you?

Q: The sense of being an experiencer, the sense of 'I am', is it not also an experience?

M: Obviously, every thing experienced is an experience. And in every experience there arises the experiencer of it. Memory creates the illusion of continuity. In reality each experience has its own experiencer and the sense of identity is due to the common factor at the root of all experiencer- experience relations. Identity and continuity are not the same. Just as each flower has its own colour, but all colours are caused by the same light, so do many experiences appear in the undivided and indivisible awareness, each separate in memory, identical in essence. This essence is the root, the foundation, the timeless and spaceless 'possibility' of all experience.

Q: How do I get at it?

M: You need not get at it, for you are it. It will get at you, if you give it a chance. Let go your attachment to the unreal and the real will swiftly and smoothly step into its own. Stop imagining yourself being or doing this or that and the realisation that you are the source and heart of all will dawn upon you. With this will come great love which is not choice or predilection, nor attachment, but a power which makes all things love-worthy and lovable.

Obsession with the body

Questioner: Maharaj, you are sitting in front of me and I am here at your feet. What is the basic difference between us?

Maharaj: There is no basic difference.

Q: Still there must be some real difference, I come to you, you do not come to me.

M: Because you imagine differences, you go here and there in search of 'superior' people.

Q: You too are a superior person. You claim to know the real, while I do not.

M: Did I ever tell you that you do not know and, therefore, you are inferior? Let those who invented such distinctions prove them. I do not claim to know what you do not. In fact, I know much less than you do.

Q: Your words are wise, your behaviour noble, your grace all-powerful.

M: I know nothing about it all and see no difference between you and me. My life is a succession of events, just like yours. Only I am detached and see the passing show as a passing show, while you stick to things and move along with them.

Q: What made you so dispassionate?

M: Nothing in particular. It so happened that I trusted my Guru. He told me I am nothing but my self and I believed him. Trusting him, I behaved accordingly and

Q: Why were you lucky to trust your teacher fully, while our trust is nominal and verbal?

M: Who can say? It happened so. Things happen without cause and reason and, after all, what does it matter, who is who? Your high opinion of me is your opinion only. Any moment you may change it. Why attach importance to opinions, even your own?

Q: Still, you are different. Your mind seems to be always quiet and happy. And miracles happen round you.

M: I know nothing about miracles, and I wonder whether nature admits exceptions to her laws, unless we agree that everything is a miracle. As to my mind, there is no such thing. There is consciousness in which everything happens. It is quite obvious and within the experience of everybody. You just do not look carefully enough. Look well, and see what I see.

Q: What do you see?

M: I see what you too could see, here and now, but for the wrong focus of your attention. You give no attention to your self. Your mind is all with things, people and ideas, never with your self. Bring your self into focus, become aware of your own existence. See how you function, watch the motives and the results of your actions. Study the prison you have built around yourself by inadvertence. By knowing what you are not, you come to know your self. The way back to your self is through refusal and rejection. One thing is certain: the real is not imaginary, it is not a product of the mind. Even the sense 'I am' is not continuous, though it is a useful pointer; it shows where to seek, but not what to seek. Just have a good look at it. Once you are convinced that you cannot say truthfully about your self anything except 'I am', and that nothing that can be pointed at, can be your self, the need for the 'I am' is over -- you are no longer intent on verbalising what you are. All you need is to get rid of the tendency to define your self. All definitions apply to your body only and to its expressions. Once this obsession with the body goes, you will revert to your natural state, spontaneously and effortlessly. The only difference between us is that I am aware of my natural state, while you are bemused. Just like gold made into ornaments has no advantage over gold dust, except when the mind makes it so, so are we one in being -- we differ only in appearance. We discover it by being

earnest, by searching, enquiring, questioning daily and hourly, by giving one's life to this discovery.

The Living Present

Questioner: As I can see, there is nothing wrong with my body nor with my real being. Both are not of my making and need not be improved upon. What has gone wrong is the 'inner body', call it mind, consciousness, antahkarana, whatever the name.

Maharaj: What do you consider to be wrong with your mind?Q: It is restless, greedy of the pleasant and afraid of the unpleasant.

M: What is wrong with its seeking the pleasant and shirking the unpleasant? Between the banks of pain and pleasure the river of life flows. It is only when the mind refuses to flow with life, and gets stuck at the banks, that it becomes a problem. By flowing with life I mean acceptance -- letting come what comes and go what goes. Desire not, fear not, observe the actual, as and when it happens, for you are not what happens, you are to whom it happens. Ultimately even the observer you are not. You are the ultimate potentiality of which the all-embracing consciousness is the manifestation and expression.

Q: Yet, between the body and the self there lies a cloud of thoughts and feelings, which neither server the body nor the self. These thoughts and feelings are flimsy, transient and meaningless, mere mental dust that blinds and chokes, yet they are there, obscuring and destroying.

M: Surely, the memory of an event cannot pass for the event itself. Nor can the anticipation. There is something exceptional, unique, about the present event, which the previous, or the coming do not have. There is a livingness about it, an actuality; it stands out as if illuminated. There is the 'stamp of reality' on the actual, which the past and the future do not have.

Q: What gives the present that 'stamp of reality'?

M: There is nothing peculiar in the present event to make it different from the past and future. For a moment the past was actual and the future will become so. What makes the present so different? Obviously, my presence. I am real for I am

always now, in the present, and what is with me now shares in my reality. The past is in memory, the future -- in imagination. There is nothing in the present event itself that makes it stand out as real. It may be some simple, periodical occurrence, like the striking of the clock. In spite of our knowing that the successive strokes are identical, the present stroke is quite different from the previous one and the next -- as remembered, or expected. A thing focussed in the now is with me, for I am ever present; it is my own reality that I impart to the present event.

Q: But we deal with things remembered as if they were real.M: We consider memories, only when they come into the present The forgotten is not counted until one is reminded -- which implies, bringing into the now.Q: Yes, I can see there is in the now some unknown factor that gives momentary reality to the transient actuality.

M: You need not say it is unknown, for you see it in constant operation. Since you were born, has it ever changed? Things and thoughts have been changing all the time. But the feeling that what is now is real has never changed, even in dream.

Q: In deep sleep there is no experience of the present reality.

M: The blankness of deep sleep is due entirely to the lack of specific memories. But a general memory of well-being is there. There is a difference in feeling when we say 'I was deeply asleep' from 'I was absent'.

Q: We shall repeat the question we began with: between life's source and life's expression (which is the body), there is the mind and its ever-changeful states. The stream of mental states is endless, meaningless and painful. Pain is the constant factor. What we call pleasure is but a gap, an interval between two painful states. Desire and fear are the weft and warp of living, and both are made of pain. Our question is: can there be a happy mind?

M: Desire is the memory of pleasure and fear is the memory of pain. Both make the mind restless. Moments of pleasure are merely gaps in the stream of pain. How can the mind be happy?

Q: That is true when we desire pleasure or expect pain. But there are moments of unexpected, unanticipated joy. Pure joy, uncontaminated by desire -

unsought, undeserved, God-given.

M: Still, joy is joy only against a background of pain. Q: Is pain a cosmic fact, or purely mental?

M: The universe is complete and where there is completeness, where nothing lacks, what can give pain?

Q: The Universe may be complete as a whole, but incomplete in details.

M: A part of the whole seen in relation to the whole is also complete. Only when seen in isolation it becomes deficient and thus a seat of pain. What makes for isolation?

Q: Limitations of the mind, of course. The mind cannot see the whole for the part.

M: Good enough. The mind, by its very nature, divides and opposes. Can there be some other mind, which unites and harmonises, which sees the whole in the part and the part as totally related to the whole?

Q: The other mind -- where to look for it? M: In the going beyond the limiting, dividing and opposing mind. In ending the mental process as we know it. When this comes to an end, that mind is born. Q: In that mind, the problem of joy and sorrow exist no longer?

M: Not as we know them, as desirable or repugnant. It becomes rather a question of love seeking expression and meeting with obstacles. The inclusive mind is love in action, battling against circumstances, initially frustrated, ultimately victorious.

Q: Between the spirit and the body, is it love that provides the bridge?

M: What else? Mind creates the abyss, the heart crosses it.

Real World is Beyond the Mind

Questioner: On several occasions the question was raised as to whether the universe is subject to the law of causation, or does it exist and function outside the law. You seem to hold the view that it is uncaused, that everything, however small, is uncaused, arising and disappearing for no known reason whatsoever.

Maharaj: Causation means succession in time of events in space, the space being physical or mental. Time, space, causation are mental categories, arising and subsiding with the mind.

Q: As long as the mind operates, causation is a valid law.

M: Like everything mental, the so-called law of causation contradicts itself. No thing in existence has a particular cause; the entire universe contributes to the existence of even the smallest thing; nothing could be as it is without the universe being what it is. When the source and ground of everything is the only cause of everything, to speak of causality as a universal law is wrong. The universe is not bound by its content, because its potentialities are infinite; besides it is a manifestation, or expression of a principle fundamentally and totally free.

Q: Yes, one can see that ultimately to speak of one thing being the only cause of another thing is altogether wrong. Yet, in actual life we invariably initiate action with a view to a result.

M: Yes, there is a lot of such activity going on, because of ignorance. 'Would people know that nothing can happen unless the entire universe makes it happen, they would achieve much more with less expenditure of energy.'

Q: If everything is an expression of the totality of causes, how can we talk of a purposeful action towards an achievement?

M: The very urge to achieve is also an expression of the total universe. It merely shows that the energy potential has risen at a particular point. It is the illusion of time that makes you talk of causality. When the past and the future are seen in the timeless now, as parts of a common pattern, the idea of cause-effect loses its validity and creative freedom takes its place.

Q: Yet, I cannot see how can anything come to be without a cause

M: When I say a thing is without a cause, I mean it can be with-out a particular cause. Your own mother was needed to give you birth; But you could not have been born without the sun and the earth. Even these could not have caused your birth without your own desire to be born. It is desire that gives birth, that gives name and form. The desirable is imagined and wanted and manifests itself as something tangible or con-ceivable. Thus is created the world in which we live, our per-sonal world. The real world is beyond the mind's ken; we see it through the net of our desires, divided into pleasure and pain, right and wrong, inner and outer. To see the universe as it is, you must step beyond the net. It is not hard to do so, for the net is full of holes.

Q: What do you mean by holes? And how to find them?

M: Look at the net and its many contradictions. You do and undo at every step. You want peace, love, happiness and work hard to create pain, hatred and war. You want longevity and overeat, you want friendship and exploit. See your net as made of such contradictions and remove them -- your very seeing them will make them go.

Q: Since my seeing the contradiction makes it go, is there no causal link between my seeing and its going?

M: Causality, even as a concept, does not apply to chaos. Q: To what extent is desire a causal factor?

M: One of the many. For everything there are innumerable causal factors. But the source of all that is, is the Infinite Possibility, the Supreme Reality, which is in you and which throws its power and light and love on every experience. But, this source is not a cause and no cause is a source. Because of that, I say everything is uncaused. You may try to trace how a thing happens, but you cannot find out why a thing is as it is. A thing is as it is, because the universe is as it is.

What is Born must Die

Questioner: Is the witness-consciousness permanent or not?

Maharaj: It is not permanent. The knower rises and sets with the known. That in which both the knower and the known arise and set, is beyond time. The words permanent or eternal do not apply.

Q: In sleep there is neither the known, nor the knower. What keeps the body sensitive and receptive?

M: Surely you cannot say the knower was absent. The experience of things and thoughts was not there, that is all. But the absence of experience too is experience. It is like entering a dark room and saying: 'I see nothing'. A man blind from birth knows not what darkness means. Similarly, only the knower knows that he does not know. Sleep is merely a lapse in memory. Life goes on.

Q: And what is death?

M: It is the change in the living process of a particular body. Integration ends and disintegration sets in.

Q: But what about the knower. With the disappearance of the body, does the knower disappear?

M: Just as the knower of the body appears at birth, so he disappears at death.

Q: And nothing remains?

M: Life remains. Consciousness needs a vehicle and an instrument for its manifestation. When life produces another body, another knower comes into being,

Q: Is there a causal link between the successive body-knowers, or body-minds?

M: Yes, there is something that may be called the memory body, or causal body, a record of all that was thought, wanted and done. It is like a cloud of images held together

Q: What is this sense of a separate existence?

M: It is a reflection in a separate body of the one reality. In this reflection the

unlimited and the limited are confused and taken to be the same. To undo this confusion is the purpose of Yoga.

Q: Does not death undo this confusion?

M: In death only the body dies. Life does not, consciousness does not, reality does not. And the life is never so alive as after death.

Q: But does one get reborn?M: What was born must die. Only the unborn is deathless. Find what is it that never sleeps and

never wakes, and whose pale reflection is our sense of 'I'.

Q: How am I to go about this finding out?

M: How do you go about finding anything? By keeping your mind and heart in it. Interest there must be and steady remembrance. To remember what needs to be remembered is the secret of success. You come to it through earnestness.

Q: Do you mean to say that mere wanting to find out is enough? Surely, both qualifications and opportunities are needed.

M: These will come with earnestness. What is supremely important is to be free from contradictions: the goal and the way must not be on different levels; life and light must not quarrel; behaviour must not betray belief. Call it honesty, integrity, wholeness; you must not go back, undo, uproot, abandon the conquered ground. Tenacity of purpose and honesty in pursuit will bring you to your goal.

Q: Tenacity and honesty are endowments, surely! Not a trace of them I have.

M: All will come as you go on. Take the first step first. All blessings come from within. Turn within. 'I am' you know. Be with it all the time you can spare, until you revert to it spontaneously. There is no simpler and easier way.

Meditation

Questioner: All teachers advise to meditate. What is the purpose of meditation?

Maharaj: We know the outer world of sensations and actions, but of our inner world of thoughts and feelings we know very little. The primary purpose of meditation is to become conscious of, and familiar with, our inner life. The ultimate purpose is to reach the source of life and consciousness.

Incidentally practice of meditation affects deeply our character. We are slaves to what we do not know; of what we know we are masters. Whatever vice or weakness in ourselves we discover and understand its causes and its workings, we over-come it by the very knowing; the unconscious dissolves when brought into the conscious. The dissolution of the unconscious releases energy; the mind feels adequate and become quiet.

Q: What is the use of a quiet mind?

M: When the mind is quiet, we come to know ourselves as the pure witness. We withdraw from the experience and its experiencer and stand apart in pure awareness, which is between and beyond the two. The personality, based on self-identification, on imagining oneself to be something: 'I am this, I am that', continues, but only as a part of the objective world. Its identification with the witness snaps.

Q: As I can make out, I live on many levels and life on each level requires energy. The self by its very nature delights in everything and its energies flow outwards. Is it not the purpose of meditation to dam up the energies on the higher levels, or to push them back and up, so as to enable the higher levels to prosper also?

M: It is not so much the matter of levels as of gunas (qualities). Meditation is a sattvic activity and aims at complete elimination of tamas (inertia) and rajas (motivity). Pure sattva (harmony) is perfect freedom from sloth and restlessness.

Q: How to strengthen and purify the sattva?

M: The sattva is pure and strong always. It is like the sun. It may seem obscured by clouds and dust, but only from the point of view of the perceiver. Deal with the causes of obscuration, not with the sun.

Q: What is the use of sattva?

M: What is the use of truth, goodness, harmony, beauty? They are their own goal. They manifest spontaneously and effortlessly, when things are left to themselves, are not interfered with, not shunned, or wanted, or conceptualised, but just experienced in full awareness, such awareness itself is sattva. It does not make use of things and people -- it fulfils them.

Q: Since I cannot improve sattva, am I to deal with tamas and rajas only? How can I deal with them?

M: By watching their influence in you and on you. Be aware of them in operation, watch their expressions in your thoughts, words and deeds, and gradually their grip on you will lessen and the clear light of sattva will emerge. It is neither difficult, nor a protracted process; earnestness is the only condition of success.

The Mind

Questioner: There are very interesting books written by apparently very competent people, in which the illusoriness of the world is denied (though not its transitoriness). According to them, there exists a hierarchy of beings, from the lowest to the highest; on each level the complexity of the organism enables and reflects the depth, breadth and intensity of consciousness, without any visible or knowable culmination. One law supreme rules throughout: evolution of forms for the growth and enrichment of consciousness and manifestation of its infinite potentialities.

Maharaj: This may or may not be so. Even if it is, it is only so from the mind's point of view, but In fact the entire universe (mahadakash) exists only in consciousness (chidakash), while I have my stand in the Absolute (paramakash). In pure being consciousness arises; in consciousness the world appears and disappears. All there is is me, all there is is mine. Before all beginnings, after all endings -- I am. All has its being in me, in the 'I am', that shines in every living being. Even not- being is unthinkable without me. Whatever happens, I must be there to witness it.

M: I do not negate the world. I see it as appearing in consciousness, which is the totality of the known in the immensity of the unknown.

What begins and ends is mere appearance. The world can be said to appear, but not to be. The appearance may last very long on some scale of time, and be very short on another, but ultimately it comes to the same. Whatever is time bound is momentary and has no reality.

Q: Surely, you see the actual world as it surrounds you. You seem to behave quite normally!

M: That is how it appears to you. What in your case occupies the entire field of consciousness, is a mere speck in mine. The world lasts, but for a moment. It is your memory that makes you think that the world continues. Myself, I don't live by memory. I see the world as it is, a momentary appearance in consciousness.

Q: In your consciousness?

M: All idea of 'me' and 'mine', even of 'I am' is in consciousness.

Q: Is then your 'absolute being' (paramakash) un-consciousness?

M: The idea of un-consciousness exists in consciousness only.

Q: Then, how do you know you are in the supreme state?

M: Because I am in it. It is the only natural state.

Q: Can you describe it?

M: Only by negation, as uncaused, independent, unrelated, undivided, uncomposed, unshakable, unquestionable, unreachable by effort. Every positive definition is from memory and, therefore, inapplicable. And yet my state is supremely actual and, therefore, possible, realisable, attainable.

Q: Are you not immersed timelessly in an abstraction?

M: Abstraction is mental and verbal and disappears in sleep, or swoon; it reappears in time; I am in my own state (swarupa) timelessly in the now. Past and future are in mind only - I am now.

Q: The world too is now

M: Which world?

Q: The world around us.

M: It is your world you have in mind, not mine. What do you know of me, when even my talk with you is in your world only? You have no reason to believe that my world is identical with yours. My world is real, true, as it is perceived, while yours appears and disappears, according to the state of your mind. Your world is something alien, and you are afraid of it. My world is myself. I am at home.

Q: If you are the world, how can you be conscious of it? Is not the subject of consciousness different from its object?

M: Consciousness and the world appear and disappear together, hence they are two aspects of the same state.

Q: M: Q: M: Q:

Q: In sleep I am not, and the world continues.

M: How do you know?

Q: On waking up I come to know. My memory tells me.

M: Memory is in the mind.

Q: The mind continues in sleep. It is partly in abeyance.

M: But its world picture is not affected. As long as the mind is there, your body and your world are there. Your world is mind-made, subjective, enclosed within the mind, fragmentary, temporary, personal, hanging on the thread of memory.

Q: So is yours?

M: Oh no. I live in a world of realities, while yours is of imagination. Your world is personal, private, unshareable, intimately your own. Nobody can enter it, see as you see, hear as you hear, feel your emotions and think your thoughts. In your world you are truly alone, enclosed in your ever-changing dream, which you take for life. My world is an open world, common to all, accessible to all. In my world there is community, insight, love, real quality; the individual is the total, the totality -- in the individual. All are one and the One is all.

Q: Is your world full of things and people as is mine?

M: No, it is full of myself.

Q: But do you see and hear as we do?

M: Yes, I appear to hear and see and talk and act, but to me it just happens, as to you digestion or perspiration happens. The body-mind machine looks after it, but leaves me out of it. Just as you do not need to worry about growing hair, so I need not worry about words and actions. They just happen and leave me unconcerned, for in my world nothing ever goes wrong.

The Self Stands Beyond Mind

Questioner: As a child fairly often I experienced states of complete happiness, verging on ecstasy: later, they ceased, but since I came to India they reappeared, particularly after I met you. Yet these states, however wonderful, are not lasting. They come and go and there is no knowing when they will come back.

Maharaj: How can anything be steady in a mind which itself is not steady? Q: How can I make my mind steady?

M: How can an unsteady mind make itself steady? Of course it cannot. It is the nature of the mind to roam about. All you can do is to shift the focus of consciousness beyond the mind.

Q: How is it done?

M: Refuse all thoughts except one: the thought 'I am'. The mind will rebel in the beginning, but with patience and perseverance it will yield and keep quiet. Once you are quiet, things will begin to happen spontaneously and quite naturally without any interference on your part.

Q: Can I avoid this protracted battle with my mind?

M: Yes, you can. Just live your life as it comes, but alertly, watchfully, allowing everything to happen as it happens, doing the natural things the natural way, suffering, rejoicing -- as life brings. This also is a way.

M: Sure. You may or may not be happy, take it in your stride.

Q: Yet I want happiness.

M: True happiness cannot be found in things that change and pass away. Pleasure and pain alternate inexorably. Happiness comes from the self and can be found in the self only. Find your real self (swarupa) and all else will come with it.

Q: If my real self is peace and love, why is it so restless?

M: It is not your real being that is restless, but its reflection in the mind appears restless because the mind is restless. It is just like the reflection of the moon in the water stirred by the wind. The wind of desire stirs the mind and the 'me', which is but a reflection of the Self in the mind, appears changeful. But these ideas of movement, of restlessness, of pleasure and pain are all in the mind. The Self stands beyond the mind, aware, but unconcerned.

Q: How to reach it?

M: You are the Self, here and now Leave the mind alone, stand aware and unconcerned and you will realise that to stand alert but detached, watching events come and go, is an aspect of your real nature.

Q: What are the other aspects?

M: The aspects are infinite in number. Realise one, and you will realise all.

Q: Tell me some thing that would help me.

M: You know best what you need!

Q: I am restless. How can I gain peace?

M: For what do you need peace?

Q: To be happy. Are you not happy now?

M: No, I am not. What makes you unhappy?

Q: I have what I don't want, and want what I don't have.

have?

Q: I want what is pleasant and don't want what is painful.

M: How do you know what is pleasant and what is not?

Q: From past experience, of course.

M: Guided by memory you have been pursuing the pleasant and shunning the unpleasant. Have you succeeded?

Q: No, I have not. The pleasant does not last. Pain sets in again.

M: Which pain?

Q: The desire for pleasure, the fear of pain, both are states of distress. Is there a state of unalloyed pleasure?

M: Every pleasure, physical or mental, needs an instrument. Both the physical and mental instruments are material, they get tired and worn out. The pleasure they yield is necessarily limited in intensity and duration. Pain is the background of all your pleasures. You want them because you suffer. On the other hand, the very search for pleasure is the cause of pain. It is a vicious circle.

Q: I can see the mechanism of my confusion, but I do not see my way out of it.

M: The very examination of the mechanism shows the way. After all, your confusion is only in your mind, which never rebelled so far against confusion and never got to grips with it. It rebelled only against pain.

Q: So, all I can do is to stay confused?

M: Be alert. Question, observe, investigate, learn all you can about confusion, how it operates, what it does to you and others. By being clear about confusion you become clear of confusion.

Q: When I look into myself, I find my strongest desire is to create a monument, to build something which will outlast me. Even when I think of a home, wife and child, it is because it is a lasting, solid, testimony to myself.

M: Right, build yourself a monument. How do you propose to do it?

M: Surely, you can see for yourself that nothing is permanent. All wears out, breaks down, dissolves. The very ground on which you build gives way. What can you build that will outlast all?

Q: Intellectually, verbally, I am aware that all is transient. Yet, somehow my heart wants permanency. I want to create something that lasts.

M: Then you must build it of something lasting. What have you that is lasting? Neither your body nor mind will last. You must look elsewhere.

Q: I long for permanency, but I find it nowhere.

M: Are you, yourself, not permanent?

Q: I was born, I shall die.

M: Can you truly say you were not before you were born and can you possibly say when dead: 'Now I am no more'? You cannot say from your own experience that you are not. You can only say 'I am'. Others too cannot tell you 'you are not'.

Q: There is no 'I am' in sleep.

M: Before you make such sweeping statements, examine carefully your waking state. You will soon discover that it is full of gaps, when the mind blanks out. Notice how little you remember even when fully awake. You just don't remember. A gap in memory is not necessarily a gap in consciousness.

Q: Can I make myself remember my state of deep sleep?

M: Of course! By eliminating the intervals of inadvertence during your waking hours you will gradually eliminate the long interval of absent-mindedness, which you call sleep. You will be aware that you are asleep.

Q: Yet, the problem of permanency, of continuity of being, is not solved.

M: Permanency is a mere idea, born of the action of time. Time again depends of memory. By permanency you mean unending memory through endless time. You want to eternalise the mind, which is not possible.

Q: Then what is eternal?

M: That which does not change with time. You cannot eternalise a transient thing -- only the changeless is eternal.

Q: I am familiar with the general sense of what you say. I do not crave for more knowledge. All I want is peace.

M: You can have for the asking all the peace you want.

Q: I am asking.

M: You must ask with an undivided heart and live an integrated life.

Q: How?

M: Detach yourself from all that makes your mind restless. Renounce all that disturbs its peace. If you want peace, deserve it.

Q: Surely everybody deserves peace.

M: Those only deserve it, who don't disturb it.

Q: In what way do I disturb peace?

M: By being a slave to your desires and fears.

Q: Even when they are justified?

M: Emotional reactions, born of ignorance or inadvertence, are never justified. Seek a clear mind and a clean heart. All you need is to keep quietly alert, enquiring into the real nature of yourself. This is the only way to peace.

Responses of Memory

Questioner: Some say the universe was created. Others say that it always existed and is for ever undergoing transformation. Some say it is subject to eternal laws. Others deny even causality. Some say the world is real. Others -- that it has no being whatsoever.

Maharaj: Which world are you enquiring about?

Q: The world of my perceptions, of course.

M: The world you can perceive is a very small world indeed. And it is entirely private. Take it to be a dream and be done with it.

Q: How can I take it to be a dream? A dream does not last.

M: How long will your own world last?

Q: After all, my little world is but a part of the total.

M: Is not the idea of a total world a part of your personal world? The universe does not come to tell you that you are a part of it. It is you who have invented a totality to contain you as a part. In fact all you know is your own private world, however well you have furnished it with your imaginations and expectations.

Q: Surely, perception is not imagination!

M: What else? Perception is recognition, is it not? Something entirely unfamiliar can be sensed, but cannot be perceived. Perception involves memory.

Q: Granted, but memory does not make it illusion.

M: Perception, imagination, expectation, anticipation, illusion -- all are based on memory. There are hardly any border lines between them. They just merge into each other. All are responses of memory.

Q: Still, memory is there to prove the reality of my world.

M: How much do you remember? Try to write down from memory what you were thinking, saying and doing on the 30th of the last month.

Q: Yes, there is a blank.

M: It is not so bad. You do remember a lot -- unconscious memory makes the world in which you live so familiar.

Q: Admitted that the world in which I live is subjective and partial. What about you? In what kind of world do you live?

M: My world is just like yours. I see, I hear, I feel, I think, I speak and act in a world I perceive, just like you. But with you it is all, with me it is nothing. Knowing the world to be a part of myself, I pay it no more attention than you pay to the food you have eaten. While being prepared and eaten, the food is

separate from you and your mind is on it; once swallowed, you become totally unconscious of it. I have eaten up the world and I need not think of it any more.

Q: Don't you become completely irresponsible?

M: How could I? How can I hurt something which is one with me. On the contrary, without thinking of the world, whatever I do will be of benefit to it. Just as the body sets itself right unconsciously, so am I ceaselessly active in setting the world right.

All these sufferings are man-made and it is within man's power to put an end to them. God helps by facing man with the results of his actions and demanding that the balance should be restored. Karma is the law that works for righteousness; it is the healing hand of God.

Witnessing

Questioner: I am full of desires and want them fulfilled. How am I to get what I want?

Maharaj: Do you deserve what you desire? In some way or other you have to work for the fulfilment

Q: Nevertheless, you are aware of the immense suffering of the world?

M: Of course I am, much more than you are.

Q: Then what do you do?

M: I look at it through the eyes of God and find that all is well.

Q: How can you say that all is well? Look at the wars, the exploitation, the cruel strife between the citizen and the state.

M: All made out of your desires. What you desire will be. Put in energy and wait for the results.

Q: Where am I to get the energy?

M: Desire itself is energy.

Q: Then why does not every desire get fulfilled?

M: Maybe it was not strong enough and lasting.

Q: Yes, that is my problem. I want things, but I am lazy when it comes to action.

M: When your desire is not clear nor strong, it cannot take shape. Besides, if your desires are personal, for your own enjoyment, the energy you give them is necessarily limited; it can-not be more than what you have.

Q: Yet, often ordinary persons do attain what they desire.

M: After desiring it very much and for a long time. Even then, their achievements are limited.

Q: And what about unselfish desires?

M: When you desire the common good, the whole world de-sires with you. Make humanity's desire your own and work for it. There you cannot fail,

Q: Humanity is God's work, not mine. I am concerned with myself. Have I not the right to see my legitimate desires fulfilled? They will hurt no one. My desires are legitimate. They are right desires, why don't they come true?

M: Desires are right or wrong according to circumstances; it depends on how you look at them. It is only for the individual that a distinction between right and wrong is valid.

Q: What are the guide-lines for such distinction? How am I to know which of my desires are right and which are wrong?

M: In your case desires that lead to sorrow are wrong and those which lead to happiness are right. But you must not forget others. Their sorrow and happiness also count.

Q: Results are in the future. How can I know what they will be?

M: Use your mind. Remember. Observe. You are not different from others. Most of their experiences are valid for you too. Think clearly and deeply, go into the entire structure of your desires and their ramifications. They are a most important part of your mental and emotional make- up and powerfully affect

beyond yourself, you must know yourself.

Q: What does it mean to know myself? By knowing myself what exactly do I come to know?

M: All that you are not.

Q: And not what I am?

M: What you are, you already are. By knowing what you are not, you are free of it and remain in your own natural state. It all happens quite spontaneously and effortlessly.

Q: And what do I discover?

M: You discover that there is nothing to discover. You are what you are and that is all.

Q: I do not understand!

M: It is your fixed idea that you must be something or other, that blinds you.

Q: How can I get rid of this idea?

M: If you trust me, believe when I tell you that you are the pure awareness that illuminates consciousness and its infinite content. Realise this and live accordingly. If you do not believe me, then go within, enquiring 'What an I'? or, focus your mind on 'I am', which is pure and simple being.

Q: On what my faith in you depends?

M: On your insight into other people's hearts. If you cannot look into my heart, look into your own.

Q: I can do neither.

M: Purify yourself by a well-ordered and useful life. Watch over your thoughts, feelings, words and actions. This will clear your vision.

Q: Must I not renounce every thing first, and live a homeless life?

M: You cannot renounce. You may leave your home and give trouble to your

your mind in and out. First thing first - know yourself, all else will come with it.

Q: But you already told me that I am the Supreme Reality. Is it not self-knowledge?

M: Of course you are the Supreme Reality! But what of it? Every grain of sand is God; to know it is important, but that is only the beginning.

Q: Well, you told me that I am the Supreme Reality. I believe you. What next is there for me to do?

M: I told you already. Discover all you are not. Body, feelings, thoughts, ideas, time, space, being and not-being, this or that -- nothing concrete or abstract you can point out to is you. A mere verbal statement will not do -- you may repeat a formula endlessly without any result whatsoever. You must watch your-self continuously -- particularly your mind -- moment by moment, missing nothing. This witnessing is essential for the separation of the self from the not-self.

Q: The witnessing -- is it not my real nature?

M: For witnessing, there must be something else to witness. We are still in duality!

Q: What about witnessing the witness? Awareness of awareness?

M: Putting words together will not take you far. Go within and discover what you are not. Nothing else matters.

Awareness and Consciousness

Questioner: What do you do when asleep?

Maharaj: I am aware of being asleep.

M: Well, it is about the same with me, Yet, there seems to be a difference. In each state you forget the other two, while to me, there is but one state of being, including and transcending the three mental states of waking, dreaming and sleeping.

Q: Do you see in the world a direction and a purpose?

M: The world is but a reflection of my imagination. Whatever I want to see, I can see. But why should I invent patterns of creation, evolution and destruction? I do not need them and have no desire to lock up the world in a mental picture.

Q: Coming back to sleep. Do you dream?

M: Is not sleep a state of unconsciousness? Yes, I am aware of being unconscious.

Q: And when awake, or dreaming?

M: I am aware of being awake or dreaming.

Q: I do not catch you. What exactly do you mean?

M: Let me make my terms clear: by being asleep I mean unconscious, by being awake I mean conscious, by dreaming I mean conscious of one's mind, but not of the surroundings.

Q: What are your dreams?

M: Echoes of the waking state.

Q: And your deep sleep?

M: The brain consciousness is suspended.

Q: Are you then unconscious?

M: Unconscious of my surroundings -- yes.

Q: Not quite unconscious?

M: I remain aware that I am unconscious.

Q: You use the words 'aware' and 'conscious'. Are they not the same?

M: Awareness is primordial; it is the original state, beginningless, endless, uncaused, unsupported, without parts, without change. Consciousness is on contact, a reflection against a surface, a state of duality. There can be no consciousness without awareness, but there can be awareness without consciousness, as in deep sleep. Awareness is absolute, consciousness is relative to its content, consciousness is born of something. Consciousness is not a

and changeful, awareness is total, changeless, calm and silent. And it is the common matrix of every experience.

Q: How does one go beyond consciousness into awareness?

M: Since it is awareness that makes consciousness possible, there is awareness in every state of consciousness. Therefore the very consciousness of being conscious is already a movement in awareness. Interest in your stream of consciousness takes you to awareness. It is not a new state. It is at once recognised as the original, basic existence, which is life itself, and also love and joy.

Q: Since reality is all the time with us, what does self-realisation consist of?

M: Realisation is but the opposite of ignorance. To take the world as real and one's self as unreal is ignorance. The cause of sorrow. To know the self as the only reality and all else as temporal and transient is freedom, peace and joy. It is all very simple. Instead of seeing things as imagined, learn to see them as they are. It is like cleansing a mirror. The same mirror that shows you the world as it is, will also show you your own face. The thought 'I am' is the polishing cloth. Use it.

The Person is not Reality

Questioner: Kindly tell us how you realised.

Maharaj: I met my Guru when I was 34 and realised by 37.

Q: What happened? What was the change?

M: Pleasure and pain lost their sway over me. I was free from desire and fear. I found myself full, needing nothing. I saw that in the ocean of pure awareness, on the surface of the universal consciousness, the numberless waves of the phenomenal worlds arise and subside beginninglessly and endlessly. As consciousness, they are all me. As events they are all mine. There is a mysterious power that looks after them. That power is awareness, Self, Life, God, whatever name you give it. It is the foundation, the ultimate support of all that is, just like gold is the basis for all gold jewellery. And it is so intimately

ours! Abstract the name and shape from the jewellery and the gold becomes obvious. Be free of name and form and of the desires and fears they create, then what remains?

Q: Nothingness.

M: Yes, the void remains. But the void is full to the brim. It is the eternal potential as consciousness is the eternal actual.

Q: By potential you mean the future?

M: Past, present and future -- they are all there. And infinitely more.

Q: But since the void is void, it is of little use to us.

M: How can you say so? Without breach in continuity how can there be rebirth? Can there be renewal without death? Even the darkness of sleep is refreshing and rejuvenating. Without death we would have been bogged up for ever in eternal senility.

Q: Is there no such thing as immortality?

M: When life and death are seen as essential to each other, as two aspects of one being, that is immortality. To see the end in the beginning and beginning in the end is the intimation of eternity. Definitely, immortality is not continuity. Only the process of change continues. Nothing lasts.

Q: Awareness lasts?

M: Awareness is not of time. Time exists in consciousness only. Beyond consciousness where are time and space?

Q: Within the field of your consciousness there is your body also.

M: Of course. But the idea 'my body', as different from other bodies, is not there. To me it is 'a body', not 'my body', 'a mind', not 'my mind'. The mind looks after the body all right, I need not interfere. What needs be done is being done, in the normal and natural way.

You may not be quite conscious of your physiological functions, but when it comes to thoughts and feelings, desires and fears you become acutely self-

people, or doing things quite correctly and appropriately, without being very much conscious of them. It looks as if I live my physical, waking life automatically, reacting spontaneously and accurately.

Q: Does this spontaneous response come as a result of realisation, or by training?

M: Both. Devotion to your goal makes you live a clean and orderly life, given to search for truth and to helping people, and realisation makes noble virtue easy and spontaneous, by removing for good the obstacles in the shape of desires and fears and wrong ideas.

Q: Don't you have desires and fears any more?

M: My destiny was to be born a simple man, a commoner, a humble tradesman, with little of formal education. My life was the common kind, with common desires and fears. When, through my faith in my teacher and obedience to his words, I realised my true being, I left behind my human nature to look after itself, until its destiny is exhausted. Occasionally an old reaction, emotional or mental, happens in the mind, but it is at once noticed and discarded. After all, as long as one is burdened with a person, one is exposed to its idiosyncrasies and habits.

A tremendously complex work is going on all the time in your brain and body, are you conscious of it? Not at all. Yet for an outsider all seems to be going on intelligently and purposefully. Why not admit that one's entire personal life may sink largely below the threshold of consciousness and yet proceed sanely and smoothly?

Q: Is it normal?

M: What is normal? Is your life - obsessed by desires and fears, full of strife and struggle, meaningless and joyless -- normal? To be acutely conscious of your body is it normal? To be torn by feelings, tortured by thoughts: is it normal?

Q: Are you not afraid of death?

M: I am dead already.

Q: In what sense?

M: I am double dead. Not only am I dead to my body, but to my mind too.

Q: Well, you do not look dead at all!

M: That's what you say! You seem to know my state better than I do!

Q: Sorry. But I just do not understand. You say you are bodyless and mindless, while I see you very much alive and articulate.

M: One can function rightly, responding well and fully to whatever happens, without having to bring it into the focus of awareness. When self-control becomes second nature, awareness shifts its focus to deeper levels of existence and action.

Q: Don't you become a robot?

M: What harm is there in making automatic, what is habitual and repetitive? It is automatic anyhow. But when it is also chaotic, it causes pain and suffering and calls for attention. The entire purpose of a clean and well-ordered life is to liberate man from the thralldom of chaos and the burden of sorrow.

Q: You seem to be in favour of a computerised life.

M: What is wrong with a life which is free from problems? Personality is merely a reflection of the real. Why should not the reflection be true to the original as a matter of course, automatically? Need the person have any designs of its own? The life of which it is an expression will guide it. Once you realise that the person is merely a shadow of the reality, but not reality itself, you cease to fret and worry. You agree to be guided from within and life becomes a journey into the unknown.

The Supreme, the Mind and the Body

Questioner: From what you told us it appears that you are not quite conscious of your surroundings. To us you seem extremely alert and active. We cannot possibly believe that you are in a kind of hypnotic state, which leaves no memory behind. On the contrary, your memory seems excellent. How are we to understand your statement that the world and all it includes does not exist, as far

Maharaj: It is all a matter of focus. Your mind is focussed in the world, mine is focussed in reality. It is like the moon in daylight -- when the sun shines, the moon is hardly visible. Or, watch how you take your food. As long as it is in your mouth, you are conscious of it; once swallowed, it does not concern you any longer. It would be troublesome to have it constantly in mind until it is eliminated. The mind should be normally in abeyance -- incessant activity is a morbid state. The universe works by itself -- that I know. What else do I need to know?

Q: So a jnani knows what he is doing only when he turns his mind to it; otherwise he just acts, without being concerned.

M: The average man is not conscious of his body as such. He is conscious of his sensations, feelings and thoughts. Even these, once detachment sets in, move away from the centre of consciousness and happen spontaneously and effortlessly.

Q: What then is in the centre of consciousness?

M: That which cannot be given name and form, for it is without quality and beyond consciousness. You may say it is a point in consciousness, which is beyond consciousness. Like a hole in the paper is both in the paper and yet not of paper, so is the supreme state in the very centre of consciousness, and yet beyond consciousness. It is as if an opening in the mind through which the mind is flooded with light. The opening is not even the light. It is just an opening.

Q: An opening is just void, absence.

M: Quite so. From the mind's point of view, it is but an opening for the light of awareness to enter the mental space. By itself the light can only be compared to a solid, dense, rocklike, homogeneous and changeless mass of pure awareness, free from the mental patterns of name and shape.

Q: Is there any connection between the mental space and the supreme abode?

M: The supreme gives existence to the mind. The mind gives existence to the body.

Q: And what lies beyond?

M: Take an example. A venerable Yogi, a master in the art of longevity, himself over 1000 years old, comes to teach me his art. I fully respect and sincerely admire his achievements, yet all I can tell him is: of what use is longevity to me? I am beyond time. However long a life may be, it is but a moment and a dream. In the same way I am beyond all attributes. They appear and disappear in my light, but cannot describe me. The universe is all names and forms, based on qualities and their differences, while I am beyond. The world is there because I am, but I am not the world.

Q: But you are living in the world!

M: That's what you say! I know there is a world, which includes this body and this mind, but I do not consider them to be more “mine” than other minds and bodies. They are there, in time and space, but I am timeless and spaceless.

Q: But since all exists by your light, are you not the creator of the world?

M: I am neither the potentiality nor the actualisation, nor the actuality of things. In my light they come and go as the specks of dust dancing in the sunbeam. The light illumines the specks, but does not depend on them. Nor can it be said to create them. It cannot be even said to know them.

Q: I am asking you a question and you are answering. Are you conscious of the question and the answer?

M: In reality I am neither hearing nor answering. In the world of events the question happens and the answer happens. Nothing happens to me. Everything just happens.

Q: And you are the witness?

M: What does witness mean? Mere knowledge. It rained and now the rain is over. I did not get wet. I know it rained, but I am not affected. I just witnessed the rain.

Q: The fully realised man, spontaneously abiding in the supreme state, appears to eat, drink and so on. Is he aware of it, or not?

M: That in which consciousness happens, the universal consciousness or mind, we call the ether of consciousness. All the objects of consciousness form the

universe. What is beyond both, supporting both, is the supreme state, a state of utter stillness and silence. Whoever goes there, disappears. It is unreachable by words, or mind. You may call it God, or Parabrahman, or Supreme Reality, but these are names given by the mind. It is the nameless, contentless, effortless and spontaneous state, beyond being and not being.

Q: But does one remain conscious?

M: As the universe is the body of the mind, so is consciousness the body of the supreme. It is not conscious, but it gives rise to consciousness.

Q: In my daily actions much goes by habit, automatically. I am aware of the general purpose, but not of each movement in detail. As my consciousness broadens and deepens, details tend to recede, leaving me free for the general trends. Does not the same happens to a jnani, but more so?

M: On the level of consciousness -- yes. In the supreme state, no. This state is entirely one and indivisible, a single solid block of reality. The only way of knowing it is to be it. The mind cannot reach it. To perceive it does not need the senses; to know it, does not need the mind.

Q: That is how God runs the world.

M: God is not running the world.

Q: Then who is doing it?

M: Nobody. All happens by itself. You are asking the question and you are supplying the answer. And you know the answer when you ask the question. All is a play in consciousness. All divisions are illusory. You can know the false only. The true you must yourself be.

Q: There is the witnessed consciousness and there is the witnessing consciousness. Is the second the supreme?

M: There are the two -- the person and the witness, the observer. When you see them as one, and go beyond, you are in the supreme state. It is not perceivable, because it is what makes perception possible. It is beyond being and not being. It is neither the mirror nor the image in the mirror. It is what is -- the timeless reality, unbelievably hard and solid.

Q: The jnani -- is he the witness or the Supreme?

M: He is the Supreme, of course, but he can also be viewed as the universal witness.

Q: But he remains a person?

M: When you believe yourself to be a person, you see persons everywhere. In reality there are no persons, only threads of memories and habits. At the moment of realisation the person ceases.

Identity remains, but identity is not a person, it is inherent in the reality itself. The person has no being in itself; it is a reflection in the mind of the witness, the 'I am', which again is a mode of being.

Q: M: Q: M: Q:

Q: Is the Supreme conscious?

M: Neither conscious nor unconscious, I am telling you from experience. Pragnanam Brahma.

Q: What is this Pragna?

M: It is the un-selfconscious knowledge of life itself.

Q: Is it vitality, the energy of life, livingness?

M: Energy comes first. For everything is a form of energy. Consciousness is most differentiated in the waking state. Less so in dream. Still less in sleep. Homogeneous - in the fourth state. Beyond is the inexpressible monolithic reality, the abode of the jnani.

Q: I have cut my hand. It healed. By what power did it heal?

M: By the power of life.

Q: What is that power?

M: It is consciousness. All is conscious.

Q: What is the source of consciousness?

M: Consciousness itself is the source of everything.

Q: Can there be life without consciousness?

M: No, nor consciousness without life. They are both one. But in reality only the Ultimate is. The rest is a matter of name and form. And as long as you cling to the idea that only what has name and shape exists, the Supreme will appear to you non-existing. When you understand that names and shapes are hollow shells without any content whatsoever, and what is real is nameless and formless, pure energy of life and light of consciousness, you will be at peace -- immersed in the deep silence of reality.

Q: If time and space are mere illusions and you are beyond, please tell me what is the weather in New York. Is it hot or raining there?

M: How can I tell you? Such things need special training. Or, just travelling to New York. I may be quite certain that I am beyond time and space, and yet unable to locate myself at will at some point of time and space. I am not interested enough; I see no purpose in undergoing a special Yogic training. I have just heard of New York. To me it is a word. Why should I know more than the word conveys? Every atom may be a universe, as complex as ours. Must I know them all? I can - if I train.

Q: In putting the question about the weather in New York, where did I make the mistake?

M: The world and the mind are states of being. The supreme is not a state. It pervades, all states, but it is not a state of something else. It is entirely uncaused, independent, complete in itself, beyond time and space, mind and matter.

Q: By what sign do you recognise it?

M: That's the point that it leaves no traces. There is nothing to recognise it by. It must be seen directly, by giving up all search for signs and approaches. When all names and forms have been given up, the real is with you. You need not seek it. Plurality and diversity are the play of the mind only. Reality is one.

Q: If reality leaves no evidence, there is no speaking about it.

M: It is. It cannot be denied. It is deep and dark, mystery beyond mystery. But it

is, while all else merely happens.

Q: Is it the Unknown?

M: It is beyond both, the known and the unknown. But I would rather call it the known, than the unknown. For whenever something is known, it is the real that is known.

Q: Is silence an attribute of the real?

M: This too is of the mind. All states and conditions are of the mind.

Q: What is the place of samadhi?

M: Not making use of one's consciousness is samadhi. You just leave your mind alone. You want nothing, neither-from your body nor from your mind.

Appearances and the Reality

Questioner: Repeatedly you have been saying that events are causeless, a thing just happens and no cause can be assigned to it. Surely everything has a cause, or several causes. How am I to understand the causelessness of things?

Maharaj: From the highest point of view the world has no cause.

Q: But what is your own experience?

M: Everything is uncaused. The world has no cause.

Q: I am not enquiring about the causes that led to the creation of the world. Who has seen the creation of the world? It may even be without a beginning, always existing. But I am not talking of the world. I take the world to exist -- somehow. It contains so many things. Surely, each must have a cause, or several causes.

M: Once you create for yourself a world in time and space, governed by causality, you are bound to search for and find causes for everything. You put the question and impose an answer.

Q: My question is very simple: I see all kinds of things and I understand that each must have a cause, or a number of causes. You say they are uncaused --

question of causation does not arise. Yet you seem to admit the existence of things, but deny them causation. This is what I cannot grasp. Once you accept the existence of things, why reject their causes?

M: I see only consciousness, and know everything to be but consciousness, as you know the picture on the cinema screen to be but light.

Q: Still, the movements of light have a cause.

M: The light does not move at all. You know very well that the movement is illusory, a sequence of interceptions and colour-ings in the film. What moves is the film -- which is the mind.

Q: This does not make the picture causeless. The film is there, and the actors with the technicians, the director, the producer, the various manufacturers. The world is governed by causality. Everything is inter-linked.

M: Of course, everything is inter-linked. And therefore everything has numberless causes. The entire universe contributes to the least thing. A thing is as it is, because the world is as it is. You see, you deal in gold ornaments and I -- in gold. Between the different ornaments there is no causal relation. When you re-melt an ornament to make another, there is no causal relation between the two. The common factor is the gold. But you cannot say gold is the cause. It cannot be called a cause, for it causes nothing by itself. It is reflected in the mind as 'I am', as the ornament's particular name and shape. Yet all is only gold. In the same way reality makes everything possible and yet nothing that makes a thing what it is, its name and form, comes from reality.

But why worry so much about causation? What do causes matter, when things themselves are transient? Let come what comes and let go what goes -- why catch hold of things and enquire about their causes?

Q: From the relative point of view, everything must have a cause.

M: Of what use is the relative view to you? You are able to look from the absolute point of view -why go back to the relative? Are you afraid of the absolute?

Q: I am afraid. I am afraid of falling asleep over my so-called absolute certainties. For living a life decently absolute, don't help. When you need a shirt

you buy cloth, call a tailor and so on.

M: All this talk shows ignorance.

Q: And what is the knower's view?

M: There is only light and the light is all. Everything else is but a picture made of light. The picture is in the light and the light is in the picture. Life and death, self and not-self --- abandon all these ideas. They are of no use to you.

Q: From what point of view you deny causation? From the relative -- the universe is the cause of everything. From the absolute -- there is no thing at all.

M: From which state are you asking? Q: From the daily waking state, in which alone all these discussions take place.

M: In the waking state all these problems arise, for such is its nature. But, you are not always in that state. What good can you do in a state into which you fall and from which you emerge, helplessly. In what way does it help you to know that things are causally related -- as they may appear to be in your waking state?

Q: The world and the waking state emerge and subside together.

M: When the mind is still, absolutely silent, the waking state is no more.

Q: Words like God, universe, the total, absolute, supreme are just noises in the air, because no action can be taken on them.

M: You are bringing up questions which you alone can answer.

Q: Don't brush me off like this! You are so quick to speak for the totality, the universe and such imaginary things! They cannot come and forbid you to talk on their behalf. I hate those irresponsible generalizations! And you are so prone to personalise them. Without causality there will be no order; nor purposeful action will be possible.

M: Do you want to know all the causes of each event? Is it possible?

Q: I know it is not possible! All I want to know is if there are causes for everything and the causes can be influenced, thereby affecting the events?

M: To influence events, you need not know the causes. What a roundabout way

of doing things! Are you not the source and the end of every event? Control it at the source itself.

Q: Every morning I pick up the newspaper and read with dismay that the world's sorrows -- poverty, hatred and wars -- continue unabated. My questions are concerning the fact of sorrow, the cause, the remedy. Don't brush me off saying that it is Buddhism! Don't label me. Your insistence on causelessness removes all hope of the world ever changing.

M: You are confused, because you believe that you are in the world, not the world in you. Who came first -- you or your parents? You imagine that you were born at a certain time and place, that you have a father and a mother, a body and a name. This is your sin and your calamity! Surely you can change your world if you work at it. By all means, work. Who stops you? I have never discouraged you. Causes or no causes, you have made this world and you can change it.

Q: A causeless world is entirely beyond my control.

M: On the contrary, a world of which you are the only source and ground is fully within your power to change. What is created can be always dissolved and re-created. All will happen as you want it, provided you really want it.

Q: All I want to know is how to deal with the world's sorrows.

M: You have created them out of your own desires and fears, you deal with them. All is due to your having forgotten your own being. Having given reality to the picture on the screen, you love its people and suffer for them and seek to save them. It is just not so. You must begin with yourself. There is no other way. Work, of course. There is no harm in working.

Q: Your universe seems to contain every possible experience. The individual traces a line through it and experiences pleasant and unpleasant states. This gives rise to questioning and seeking, which broaden the outlook and enable the individual to go beyond his narrow and self-created world limited and self-centred. This personal world can be changed -- in time. The universe is timeless and perfect.

M: To take appearance for reality is a grievous sin and the cause of all calamities. You are the all-pervading, eternal and infinitely creative awareness -

meantime work to your heart's content. Work and knowledge should go hand in hand.

The Jnani

Questioner: Without God's power nothing can be done. Even you would not be sitting here and talking to us without Him.

Maharaj: All is His doing, no doubt. What is it to me, since I want nothing? What can God give me, or take away from me? What is mine is mine and was mine even when God was not. Of course, it is a very tiny little thing, a speck -- the sense 'I am', the fact of being. This is my own place, nobody gave it to me. The earth is mine; what grows on it is God's.

Q: Did God take the earth on rent from you?

M: God is my devotee and did all this for me.

Q: Is there no God apart from you?

M: How can there be? 'I am' is the root, God is the tree. Whom am I to worship, and what for?

Q: Are you the devotee or the object of devotion?

M: I am neither, I am devotion itself.

Q: I just do not know how much I can do for the world. All I can do, is to try. Is there anything else you would like me to do?

M: Without you is there a world? You know all about the world, but about yourself you know nothing. You yourself are the tools of your work, you have no other tools. Why don't you take care of the tools before you think of the work?

M: You are always after the improvement of the world.

Q: I can wait, while the world cannot. By not enquiring you keep the world waiting.

Q: God runs the world, God will save it.

M: That's what you say! Did God come and tell you that the world is His creation and concern and not yours?

Q: Why should it be my sole concern?

M: Consider. The world in which you live, who else knows about it?

Q: You know. Everybody knows.

M: Did anybody come from outside of your world to tell you? Myself and everybody else appear and disappear in your world. We are all at your mercy.

Q: It cannot be so bad! I exist in your world as you exist in mine.

M: You have no evidence of my world. You are completely wrapped up in the world of your own making.

Q: I see. Completely, but -- hopelessly?

M: Within the prison of your world appears a man who tells you that the world of painful contradictions, which you have created, is neither continuous nor permanent and is based on a misapprehension. He pleads with you to get out of it, by the same way by which you got into it. You got into it by forgetting what you are and you will get out of it by knowing yourself as you are.

Q: In what way does it affect the world?

M: When you are free of the world, you can do something about it. As long as you are a prisoner of it, you are helpless to change it. On the contrary, whatever you do will aggravate the situation.

Q: Righteousness will set me free.

M: Righteousness will undoubtedly make you and your world a comfortable, even happy place. But what is the use? There is no reality in it. It cannot last.

Q: God will help.

M: To help you God must know your existence. But you and your world are dream states. In dream you may suffer agonies. None knows them, and none can

Q: So all my questions, my search and study are of no use?

M: These are but the stirrings of a man who is tired of sleeping. They are not the causes of awakening, but its early signs. But, you must not ask idle questions, to which you already know the answers.

Q: How am I to get a true answer?

M: By asking a true question - non-verbally, but by daring to live according to your lights. A man willing to die for truth will get it.

Q: Another question. There is the person. There is the knower of the person. There is the witness. Are the knower and the witness the same, or are they separate states?

M: The knower and the witness are two or one? When the knower is seen as separate from the known, the witness stands alone. When the known and the knower are seen as one, the witness becomes one with them.

Q: Who is the jnani? The witness or the supreme?

M: The jnani is the supreme and also the witness. He is both being and awareness. In relation to consciousness he is awareness. In relation to the universe he is pure being.

Q: And what about the person? What comes first, the person or the knower.

M: The person is a very small thing. Actually it is a composite, it cannot be said to exist by itself. Unperceived, it is just not there. It is but the shadow of the mind, the sum total of memories. Pure being is reflected in the mirror of the mind, as knowing. What is known takes the shape of a person, based on memory and habit. It is but a shadow, or a projection of the knower onto the screen of the mind.

Q: The mirror is there, the reflection is there. But where is the sun?

M: The supreme is the sun.

Q: It must be conscious.

M: It is neither conscious nor unconscious. Don't think of it in terms of

beyond both.

Q: Life is so intelligent. How can it be unconscious?

M: You talk of the unconscious when there is a lapse in memory. In reality there is only consciousness. All life is conscious, all consciousness - alive.

Q: M: Q: M:

Q: Even stones?

M: Even stones are conscious and alive.

Q: The worry with me is that I am prone to denying existence to what I cannot imagine.

M: You would be wiser to deny the existence of what you imagine. It is the imagined that is unreal.

Q: Is all imaginable unreal?

M: Imagination based on memories is unreal.

Q: The future is not entirely unreal.

M: Which part of the future is real and which is not? The unexpected and unpredictable is real.

Desirelessness, the Highest Bliss

Questioner: I have met many realised people, but never a liberated man. Have you come across a liberated man, or does liberation mean, among other things, also abandoning the body?

Maharaj: What do you mean by realisation and liberation?

Q: By realisation I mean a wonderful experience of peace, goodness and beauty, when the world makes sense and there is an all-pervading unity of both substance and essence. While such experience does not last, it cannot be forgotten. It shines in the mind, both as memory and longing. I know what I am

By liberation I mean to be permanently in that wonderful state. What I am asking is whether liberation is compatible with the survival of the body.

M: What is wrong with the body?

Q: The body is so weak and short-lived. It creates needs and cravings. It limits one grievously.

M: So what? Let the physical expressions be limited. But liberation is of the self from its false and self-imposed ideas; it is not contained in some particular experience, however glorious.

Q: Does it last for ever?

M: All experience is time bound. Whatever has a beginning must have an end.

Q: So liberation, in my sense of the word, does not exist?

M: On the contrary, one is always free. You are, both conscious and free to be conscious. Nobody can take this away from you. Do you ever know yourself non-existing, or unconscious?

Q: I may not remember, but that does not disprove my being occasionally unconscious.

M: Why not turn away from the experience to the experiencer and realise the full import of the only

true statement you can make: 'I am'?

Q: How is it done?

M: There is no 'how' here. Just keep in mind the feeling 'I am', merge in it, till your mind and feeling become one. By repeated attempts you will stumble on the right balance of attention and affection and your mind will be firmly established in the thought-feeling 'I am'. Whatever you think, say, or do, this sense of immutable and affectionate being remains as the ever-present background of the mind.

Q: And you call it liberation?

M: I call it normal. What is wrong with being knowing and acting effortlessly

and happily? Why consider it so unusual as to expect the immediate destruction of the body? What is wrong with the body that it should die? Correct your attitude to your body and leave it alone. Don't pamper, don't torture. Just keep it going, most of the time below the threshold of conscious attention.

Q: The memory of my wonderful experiences haunts me. I want them back.

M: Because you want them back, you cannot have them. The state of craving for anything blocks all deeper experience. Nothing of value can happen to a mind which knows exactly what it wants. For nothing the mind can visualise and want is of much value.

Q: Then what is worth wanting?

M: Want the best. The highest happiness, the greatest freedom. Desirelessness is the highest bliss.

Q: Freedom from desire is not the freedom I want. I want the freedom to fulfil my longings.

M: You are free to fulfil your longings. As a matter of fact, you are doing nothing else.

Q: I try, but there are obstacles which leave me frustrated.

M: Overcome them.

Q: I cannot, I am too weak.

M: What makes you weak? What is weakness? Others fulfil their desires, why don't you?

Q: I must be lacking energy.

M: What happened to your energy? Where did it go? Did you not scatter it over so many contradictory desires and pursuits? You don't have an infinite supply of energy.

Q: Why not?

M: Your aims are small and low. They do not call for more. Only God's energy is infinite — because He wants nothing for Himself. Be like Him and all your

desires will be fulfilled. The higher your aims and vaster your desires, the more energy you will have for their fulfilment. Desire the good of all and the universe will work with you. But if you want your own pleasure, you must earn it the hard way.

Before desiring, deserve.

Q: I am engaged in the study of philosophy, sociology and education. I think more mental development is needed before I can dream of self-realisation. Am I on the right track?

M: To earn a livelihood some specialised knowledge is needed. General knowledge develops the mind, no doubt. But if you are going to spend your life in amassing knowledge, you build a wall round yourself. To go beyond the mind, a well-furnished mind is not needed.

Q: Then what is needed?

M: Distrust your mind, and go beyond.

Q: What shall I find beyond the mind?

M: The direct experience of being, knowing and loving.

How does one go beyond the mind?

M: There are many starting points -- they all lead to the same goal. You may begin with selfless work, abandoning the fruits of action; you may then give up thinking and end in giving up all desires. Here, giving up (tyaga) is the operational factor. Or, you may not bother about any thing you want, or think, or do and just stay put in the thought and feeling 'I am', focussing 'I am' firmly in your mind. All kinds of experience may come to you -- remain unmoved in the knowledge that all perceivable is transient, and only the 'I am' endures.

Q: I cannot give all my life to such practices. I have my duties to attend to.

M: By all means attend to your duties. Action, in which you are not emotionally involved and which is beneficial and does not cause suffering will not bind you. You may be engaged in several directions and work with enormous zest, yet remain inwardly free and quiet, with a mirror-like mind, which reflects all,

Q: Is such a state realisable?

M: I would not talk about it, if it were not. Why should I engage in fancies?

Q: Everybody quotes scriptures.

M: Those who know only scriptures know nothing. To know is to be. I know what I am talking about; it is not from reading, or hearsay.

Q: I am studying Sanskrit under a professor, but really I am only reading scriptures. I am in search of self-realisation and I came to get the needed guidance. Kindly tell me what am I to do?

M: Since you have read the scriptures, why do you ask me?

Q: The scriptures show the general directions but the individual needs personal instructions.

M: Your own self is your ultimate teacher (sadguru). The outer teacher (Guru) is merely a milestone. It is only your inner teacher, that will walk with you to the goal, for he is the goal.

Q: The inner teacher is not easily reached.

M: Since he is in you and with you, the difficulty cannot be serious. Look within, and you will find him.

Q: When I look within, I find sensations and perceptions, thoughts and feelings, desires and fears, memories and expectations. I am immersed in this cloud and see nothing else.

M: That which sees all this, and the nothing too, is the inner teacher. He alone is, all else only appears to be. He is your own self (swarupa), your hope and assurance of freedom; find him and cling to him and you will be saved and safe.

Q: I do believe you, but when it comes to the actual finding of this inner self, I find it escapes me.

M: The idea 'it escapes me', where does it arise?

Q: In the mind.

Q: The witness of the mind knows the mind.

M: Did anybody come to you and say: 'I am the witness of your mind'?

Q: Of course not. He would have been just another idea in the mind.

M: Then who is the witness?

Q: I am.

M: So, you know the witness because you are the witness. You need not see the witness in front of you. Here again, to be is to know.

Q: Yes, I see that I am the witness, the awareness itself. But in which way does it profit me?

M: What a question! What kind of profit do you expect? To know what you are, is it not good enough?

Q: What are the uses of self-knowledge?

M: It helps you to understand what you are not and keeps you free from false ideas, desires and actions.

Q: If I am the witness only, what do right and wrong matter?

M: What helps you to know yourself is right. What prevents, is wrong. To know one's real self is bliss, to forget - is sorrow.

Q: Is the witness-consciousness the real Self?

M: It is the reflection of the real in the mind (buddhi). The real is beyond. The witness is the door through which you pass beyond.

Q: What is the purpose of meditation?

M: Seeing the false as the false, is meditation. This must go on all the time.

Q: We are told to meditate regularly.

M: Deliberate daily exercise in discrimination between the true and the false and renunciation of the false is meditation. There are many kinds of meditation to begin with, but they all merge finally into one.

Q: Please tell me which road to self-realisation is the shortest.

M: No way is short or long, but some people are more in earnest and some are less. I can tell you about myself. I was a simple man, but I trusted my Guru. What he told me to do, I did. He told me to concentrate on 'I am' -- I did. He told me that I am beyond all perceivables and conceivable -- I believed. I gave him my heart and soul, my entire attention and the whole of my spare time (I had to work to keep my family alive). As a result of faith and earnest application, I realised my self (swarupa) within three years.

You may choose any way that suits you; your earnestness will determine the rate of progress.

Q: No hint for me?

M: Establish yourself firmly in the awareness of 'I am'. This is the beginning and also the end of all endeavour.

The Ever-Present

Questioner: The highest powers of the mind are understanding, intelligence and insight. Man has three bodies -- the physical, the mental and the causal (prana, mana, karana). The physical reflects his being; the mental -- his knowing and the causal -- his joyous creativity. Of course, these are all forms in consciousness. But they appear to be separate, with qualities of their own. Intelligence

(buddhi) is the reflection in the mind of the power to know (chit). It is what makes the mind knowledgeable. The brighter the intelligence, the wider, deeper and truer the knowledge. To know things, to know people and to know oneself are all functions of intelligence: the last is the most important and contains the former two. Misunderstanding oneself and the world leads to false ideas and desires, which again lead to bondage. Right understanding of oneself is necessary for freedom from the bondage of illusion. I understand all this in theory, but when it comes to practice, I find that I fail hopelessly in my responses to situations and people and by my inappropriate reactions I merely add to my bondage. Life is too quick for my dull and slow mind. I do understand but too late, when the old mistakes have been already repeated.

Maharaj: What then is your problem?

Q: I need a response to life, not only intelligent, but also very quick. It cannot be quick unless it is perfectly spontaneous. How can I achieve such spontaneity?

M: The mirror can do nothing to attract the sun. It can only keep bright. As soon as the mind is ready, the sun shines in it.

Q: The light is of the Self, or of the mind?

M: Both. It is uncaused and unvarying by itself and coloured by the mind, as it moves and changes. It is very much like a cinema. The light is not in the film, but the film colours the light and makes it appear to move by intercepting it.

Q: Are you now in the perfect state?

M: Perfection is a state of the mind, when it is pure. I am beyond the mind, whatever its state, pure or impure. Awareness is my nature; ultimately I am beyond being and non-being.

Q: Will meditation help me to reach your state?

M: Meditation will help you to find your bonds, loosen them, untie them and cast your moorings. When you are no longer attached to anything, you have done your share. The rest will be done for you.

Q: By whom?

M: By the same power that brought you so far, that prompted your heart to desire truth and your

mind to seek it. It is the same power that keeps you alive. You may call it Life or the Supreme.

Q: The same power kills me in due course.

M: Were you not present at your birth? Will you not be present at your death? Find him who is always present and your problem of spontaneous and perfect response will be solved.

Q: realisation of the eternal and an effortless and adequate response to the ever-changing

temporary event are two different and separate questions. You seem to roll them into one. What makes you do so?

M: To realise the Eternal is to become the Eternal, the whole, the universe, with all it contains. Every event is the effect and the expression of the whole and is in fundamental harmony with the whole. All response from the whole must be right, effortless and instantaneous.

It cannot be otherwise, if it is right. Delayed response is wrong response. Thought, feeling and action must be one and simultaneous with the situation that calls for them.

Q: How does it come?

M: I told you already. Find him who was present at your birth and will witness your death.

Q: My father and mother?

M: Yes, your father-mother, the source from which you came. To solve a problem you must trace it to its source. Only in the dissolution of the problem in the universal solvents of enquiry and dispassion, can its right solution be found.

To Know What you Are, Find What you Are Not

Questioner: Your way of describing the universe as consisting of matter, mind and spirit is one of the many. There are other patterns to which the universe is expected to conform, and one is at a loss to know which pattern is true and which is not. One ends in suspecting that all patterns are only verbal and that no pattern can contain reality. According to you, reality consists of three expanses: The expanse of matter-energy (mahadakash), the expanse of consciousness (chidakash) and of pure spirit (paramakash). The first is something that has both movement and inertia. That we perceive. We also know that we perceive -- we are conscious and also aware of being conscious. Thus, we have two: matter-energy and consciousness. Matter seems to be in space while energy is always in time, being connected with change and measured by the rate of change.

Consciousness seems to be somehow here and now, in a single point of time and space. But you seem to suggest that consciousness too is universal -- which

makes it timeless, spaceless and impersonal. I can somehow understand that there is no contradiction between the timeless and spaceless and the here and now, but impersonal consciousness I cannot fathom. To me consciousness is always focalised, centred, individualised, a person. You seem to say that there can be perceiving without a perceiver, knowing without a knower, loving without a lover, acting without an actor. I feel that the trinity of knowing, knower and known can be seen in every movement of life. Consciousness implies a conscious being, an object of consciousness and the fact of being conscious. That which is conscious I call a person. A person lives in the world, is a part of it, affects it and is affected by it.

Maharaj: Why don't you enquire how real are the world and the person?

Q: Oh, no! I need not enquire. Enough if the person is not less real than the world in which the person exists.

M: Then what is the question?

Q: Are persons real, and universals conceptual, or are universals real and persons imaginary?

M: Neither are real.

Q: Surely, I am real enough to merit your reply and I am a person.

M: Not when asleep.

Q: Submergence is not absence. Even though asleep, I am.

M: To be a person you must be self-conscious. Are you so always?

Q: Not when I sleep, of course, nor when I am in a swoon, or drugged.

M: During your waking hours are you continually self-conscious?

Q: No, Sometimes I am absent-minded, or just absorbed.

M: Are you a person during the gaps in self-consciousness?

Q: Of course I am the same person throughout. I remember myself as I was yesterday and yester year - definitely, I am the same person.

Q: Of course.

M: And without memory, what are you?

Q: Incomplete memory entails incomplete personality. Without memory I cannot exist as a person.

M: Surely you can exist without memory. You do so - in sleep.

Q: Only in the sense of remaining alive. Not as a person.

M: Since you admit that as a person you have only intermittent existence, can you tell me what are you in the intervals in between experiencing yourself as a person?

Q: I am, but not as a person. Since I am not conscious of myself in the intervals, I can only say that I exist, but not as a person.

M: Shall we call it impersonal existence?

Q: I would call it rather unconscious existence; I am, but I do not know that I am.

M: You have said just now: 'I am, but I do not know that I am'. Could you possibly say it about your being in an unconscious state?

Q: No, I could not.

M: You can only describe it in the past tense: 'I did not know. I was unconscious', in the sense of not remembering.

Q: Having been unconscious, how could I remember and what?

M: Were you really unconscious, or you just do not remember?

Q: How am I to make out?

M: Consider. Do you remember every second of yesterday?

Q: Of course, not.

M: Were you then unconscious?

M: So, you are conscious and yet you do not remember?

Q: Yes.

M: Maybe you were conscious in sleep and just do not remember.

Q: No, I was not conscious. I was asleep. I did not behave like a conscious person.

M: Again, how do you know?

Q: I was told so by those who saw me asleep.

M: All they can testify to is that they saw you lying quietly with closed eyes and breathing regularly. They could not make out whether you were conscious or not. Your only proof is your own memory. A very uncertain proof it is!

Q: Yes, I admit that on my own terms I am a person only during my waking hours. What I am in between, I do not know.

M: At least you know that you do not know! Since you pretend not to be conscious in the intervals between the waking hours, leave the intervals alone. Let us consider the waking hours only.

Q: I am the same person in my dreams.

M: Agreed. Let us consider them together waking and dreaming. The difference is merely in continuity. Were your dreams consistently continuous, bringing back night after night the same surroundings and the same people, you would be at a loss to know which is the waking and which is the dream. Henceforward, when we talk of the waking state, we shall include the dream state too.

Q: Agreed. I am a person in a conscious relation with a world.

M: Are the world and the conscious relation with it essential to your being a person?

Q: Even immersed in a cave, I remain a person.

M: It implies a body and a cave. And a world in which they can exist.

Q: Yes. I can see. The world and the consciousness of the world are essential to

M: This makes the person a part and parcel of the world, or vice versa. The two are one.

Q: Consciousness stands alone. The person and the world appear in consciousness.

M: You said: appear. Could you add: disappear?

Q: No, I cannot. I can only be aware of my and my world's appearance. As a person, I cannot say: 'the world is not'. Without a world I would not be there to say it. Because there is a world, I am there to say: 'there is a world'.

M: Maybe it is the other way round. Because of you, there is a world. To me such statement appears meaningless.

IQ:ts meaningfulness may disappear on investigation. Where do we begin?

M: All I know is that whatever depends, is not real. The real is truly independent. Since the existence of the person depends on the existence of the world and it is circumscribed and defined by the world, it cannot be real.

Q: It cannot be a dream, surely.

M: Even a dream has existence, when it is cognised and enjoyed, or endured. Whatever you think and feel has being. But it may not be what you take it to be. What you think to be a person may be something quite different.

Q: I am what I know myself to be.

M: You cannot possibly say that you are what you think yourself to be! Your ideas about yourself change from day to day and from moment to moment. Your self-image is the most changeable thing you have. It is utterly vulnerable, at the mercy of a passer by. A bereavement, the loss of a job, an insult, and your image of yourself, which you call your person, changes deeply. To know what you are you must first investigate and know what you are not. And to know what you are not you must watch yourself carefully, rejecting all that does not necessarily go with the basic fact: 'I am'. The ideas: I am born at a given place, at a given time, from my parents and now I am so-and-so, living at, married to, father of, employed by, and so on, are not inherent in the sense 'I am'. Our usual attitude is of 'I am this'. Separate consistently and perseveringly the 'I am' from 'this' or

'that', and try to feel what it means to be, just to be, without being 'this' or 'that'. All our habits go against it and the task of fighting them is long and hard sometimes, but clear understanding helps a lot. The clearer you understand that on the level of the mind you can be described in negative terms only, the quicker you will come to the end of your search and realise your limitless being.