

I Am That

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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.

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.

Foreword

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.

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.

1. The Sense of 'I am'

M.: 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.

M.: 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? (...)

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.

2. Obsession with the body

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 ceased caring for what was not me, nor mine.

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: 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.

The way back to your self is through refusal and rejection.

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.

We discover it [Self] by being earnest, by searching, enquiring, questioning daily and hourly, by giving one's life to this discovery.

3. The Living Present

M.: 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.

M.: I am real for I am always *now*, in the present, and what is with me now shares in my reality. (...) 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.

M: Things and thoughts have been changing all the time. But the feeling that what is now is real has never changed, even in dream.

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

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

4. Real World is Beyond the Mind

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.

M.: 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.

M.: 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.

M.: 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.

5. What is Born must Die

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.

M: 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.

6. Meditation

M.: Whatever vice or weakness in ourselves we discover and understand its causes and its workings, we overcome it by the very knowing; the unconscious dissolves when brought into the conscious.

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: 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.

M.: It is neither difficult, nor a protracted process; earnestness is the only condition of success.

7. The Mind

M.: 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.: 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.

M.: 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.

M.: 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.

8. The Self Stands Beyond Mind

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.

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: How to reach the Self?

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.

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.

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

9. Responses of Memory

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.

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.

10. Witnessing

M.: Remember, you cannot abandon what you do not know. To go beyond yourself, you must know yourself.

Q: And what do I discover?

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

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 am I'? or, focus your mind on 'I am', which is pure and simple being.

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 yourself 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!

11. Awareness and Consciousness

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.

12. The Person is not Reality

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-conscious. To me these too are largely unconscious. I find myself talking to 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: 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.

M.: 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.

13. The Supreme, the Mind and the Body

M.: 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.

M.: 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: 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.

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: 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 nonexistent. 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 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: 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.

14. Appearances and the Reality

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: 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.

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 -- consciousness. All else is local and temporary. Don't forget what you are. In the meantime work to your heart's content. Work and knowledge should go hand in hand.

15. The *Jnani*

M.: 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.

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: 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: 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. The future is not entirely unreal.

Q: Which part of the future is real and which is not?

M: The unexpected and unpredictable is real.

16. Desirelessness, the Highest Bliss

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

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: 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.

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.

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 wellfurnished 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.

Q: 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, without being affected.

Q: Is such a state realisable?

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

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.

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: 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.

17. The Ever-Present

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.

18. To Know What you Are, Find What you Are Not

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: 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.

19. Reality lies in Objectivity

Q: How do you look at the world?

M: I see a painter painting a picture. The picture I call the world, the painter I call God. I am neither. I do not create, nor am I created. I contain all, nothing contains me.

M.: Causality is in the mind, only; memory gives the illusion of continuity and repetitiveness creates the idea of causality. When things repeatedly happen together, we tend to see a causal link between them. It creates a mental habit, but a habit is not a necessity.

Q: How is it reached?

M: Desirelessness and fearlessness will take you there.

20. The Supreme is Beyond All

M: The source of consciousness cannot be an object in consciousness. To know the source is to be the source. When you realise that you are not the person, but the pure and calm witness, and that fearless awareness is your very being, you *are* the being. It is the source, the Inexhaustible Possibility.

M: [The Supreme] It gives birth to consciousness. All else is in consciousness.

Q: Why are there so many centres of consciousness?

M: The objective universe (*mahadakash*) is in constant movement, projecting and dissolving innumerable forms. Whenever a form is infused with life (*prana*), consciousness (*chetana*) appears by reflection of awareness in matter.

Q: How is it that some things do happen and some don't?

M: Seeking out causes is a pastime of the mind. There is no duality of cause and effect. Everything is its own cause.

Q: No purposeful action is then possible?

M: All I say is that consciousness contains all. In consciousness all is possible. You can have causes if you want them, in your world. Another may be content with a single cause -- God's will. The root cause is one: the sense 'I am'.

M: From the self's point of view the world is the known, the Supreme -- the Unknown. The Unknown gives birth to the known, yet remains Unknown. The known is infinite, but the Unknown is an infinitude of infinities. Just like a ray of light is never seen unless intercepted by the specs of dust, so does the Supreme make everything known, itself remaining unknown.

Q: Does it mean that the Unknown is inaccessible?

M: Oh, no. The Supreme is the easiest to reach for it is your very being. It is enough to stop thinking and desiring anything, but the Supreme.

Q: And if I desire nothing, not even the Supreme?

M: Then you are as good as dead, or you are the Supreme.

Q: Which desires are cogent?

M: Desires that destroy their subjects, or objects, or do not subside on satisfaction are self-contradictory and cannot be fulfilled. Only desires motivated by love, goodwill and compassion are beneficial to both the subject and object and can be fully satisfied.

Q: All desires are painful, the holy as well as the unholy.

M: They are not the same and pain is not the same. Passion is painful, compassion -- never. The entire universe strives to fulfil a desire born of compassion.

Q: Are you then unconscious?

M: Of course not! I am fully conscious, but since no desire or fear enters my mind, there is perfect silence.

Q: Who knows the silence?

M: Silence knows itself. It is the silence of the silent mind, when passions and desires are silenced.

Q: Do you experience desires occasionally?

M: Desires are just waves in the mind. You know a wave when you see one. A desire is just a thing among many. I feel no urge to satisfy it, no action needs be taken on it. Freedom from desire means this: the compulsion to satisfy is absent.

21. Who am I?

Q: Are there not good desires and bad, high desires and low?

M: All desires are bad, but some are worse than others. Pursue any desire, it will always give you trouble.

Q: It takes time to know oneself.

M: How can time help you? Time is a succession of moments; each moment appears out of nothing and disappears into nothing, never to reappear. How can you build on something so fleeting?

Q: How to look for myself?

M: Whatever happens, it happens to you. What you do, the doer is in you. Find the subject of all that you are as a person.

Q: My question is: How to find the way to one's own being?

M: 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.

Q: I am doing nothing else for the last 60 years.

M: What is wrong with striving? Why look for results? Striving itself is your real nature.

Q: Striving is painful.

M: You make it so by seeking results. Strive without seeking, struggle without greed.

Q: Why has God made me as I am?

M: Which God are you talking about? What is God? Is he not the very light by which you ask the question? 'I am' itself is God. The seeking itself is God.

Q: How am I to find that love?

M: What do you love now? The 'I am'. Give your heart and mind to it, think of nothing else. This, when effortless and natural, is the highest state. In it love itself is the lover and the beloved.

Q: What is right and what is wrong varies with habit and custom. Standards vary with societies.

M: Discard all traditional standards. Leave them to the hypocrites. Only what liberates you from desire and fear and wrong ideas is good. As long as you worry about sin and virtue you will have no peace.

M: Sin and virtue refer to a person only. Without a sinful or virtuous person what is sin or virtue? At the level of the absolute there are no persons; the ocean of pure awareness is neither virtuous nor sinful. Sin and virtue are invariably relative.

Q: Can I do away with such unnecessary notions?

M: Not as long as you think yourself to be a person.

Q: By what sign shall I know that I am beyond sin and virtue?

M: By being free from all desire and fear, from the very idea of being a person. To nourish the ideas: 'I am a sinner' 'I am not a sinner', is sin. To identify oneself with the particular is all the sin there is. The impersonal is real, the personal appears and disappears. 'I am' is the impersonal Being. 'I am this' is the person. The person is relative and the pure Being -- fundamental.

Q: What exactly do you mean when you ask me to stop being a person?

M: I do not ask you to stop being -- that you cannot. I ask you only to stop imagining that you were born, have parents, are a body, will die and so on. Just try, make a beginning -- it is not as hard as you think.

Q: The same action is considered natural at one point and a sin at another. What makes it sinful?

M: Whatever you do against your better knowledge is sin.

M: A man who moves with the earth will necessarily experience days and nights. He who stays with the sun will know no darkness. My world is not yours. As I see it, you all are on a stage performing. There is no reality about your comings and goings. And your problems are so unreal!

Q: We may be sleep-walkers, or subject to nightmares. Is there nothing you can do?

M: I am doing: I did enter your dreamlike state to tell you -- "Stop hurting yourself and others, stop suffering, wake up".

Q: Why then don't we wake up?

M: You will. I shall not be thwarted. It may take some time. When you shall begin to question your dream, awakening will be not far away.

22. Life is Love and Love is Life

Maharaj: In the case of a beginner the practice of Yoga is often deliberate and requires great determination. But those who are practising sincerely for many years, are intent on self-realisation all the time, whether conscious of it or not. Unconscious *sadhana* is most effective, because it is spontaneous and steady.

Q: In Europe there is no tradition of a *mantra*, except in some contemplative orders. Of what use is it to a modern young Westerner?

M: None, unless he is very much attracted. For him the right procedure is to adhere to the thought that he is the ground of all knowledge, the immutable and perennial awareness of all that happens to the senses and the mind. If he keeps it in mind all the time, aware and alert, he is bound to break the bounds of non-awareness and emerge into pure life, light and love. The idea -- 'I am the witness only' will purify the body and the mind and open the eye of wisdom. Then man goes beyond illusion and his heart is free of all desires.

M: As long as you are a seeker, better cling to the idea that you are pure consciousness, free from all content.

23. Discrimination leads to Detachment

Maharaj: You are all drenched for it is raining hard. In my world it is always fine weather. There is no night or day, no heat or cold. No worries beset me there, nor regrets. My mind is free of thoughts, for there are no desires to slave for.

Q: What distinguishes your world from mine?

M: My world has no characteristics by which it can be identified. You can say nothing about it. I am my world. My world is myself. It is complete and perfect. Every impression is erased, every experience -- rejected. I need nothing, not even myself, for myself I cannot lose.

Q: Yet we are talking.

M: The talk is in your world. In mine -- there is eternal silence. My silence sings, my emptiness is full, I lack nothing. You cannot know my world until you are there.

M: See your world as it is, not as you imagine it to be. Discrimination will lead to detachment; detachment will ensure right action; right action will build the inner bridge to your real being. Action is a proof of earnestness. Do what you are told diligently and faithfully and all obstacles will dissolve.

Q: Are you happy?

M: In your world I would be most miserable. To wake up, to eat, to talk, to sleep again -- what a bother!

Q: There must be some link between your world and mine.

M: There is no need of a link between a real world and an imaginary world, for there cannot be any.

M: My experience is that everything is bliss. But the desire for bliss creates pain. Thus bliss becomes the seed of pain. The entire universe of pain is born of desire. Give up the desire for pleasure and you will not even know what is pain.

M: Why do you worry about the world before taking care of yourself? You want to save the world, don't you? Can you save the world before saving yourself? And what means being saved? Saved from what? From illusion. Salvation is to see things as they are. I really do not see myself related to anybody and anything. Not even to a self, whatever that self may be. I remain forever -- undefined. I am -- within and beyond -- intimate and unapproachable.

M: My Guru too taught me to doubt -- everything and absolutely. He said: 'deny existence to everything except your self.'

M: By its very nature pleasure is limited and transitory. Out of pain desire is born, in pain it seeks fulfilment, and it ends in the pain of frustration and despair. Pain is the background of pleasure, all seeking of pleasure is born in pain and ends in pain.

Q: All you say is clear to me. But when some physical or mental trouble comes, my mind goes dull and grey, or seeks frantically for relief.

M: What does it matter? It is the mind that is dull or restless, not you. Look, all kinds of things happen in this room. Do I cause them to happen? They just happen. So it is with you -- the roll of destiny unfolds itself and actualises the inevitable. You cannot change the course of events, but you can change your attitude and what really matters is the attitude and not the bare event. The world is the abode of desires and fears. You cannot find peace in it. For peace you must go beyond the world.

Q: To be a superman one must be a man first. Manhood is the fruit of innumerable experiences: Desire drives to experience. Hence at its own time and level desire is right.

M: All this is true in a way. But a day comes when you have amassed enough and must begin to build. Then sorting out and discarding (*viveka-vairagya*) are absolutely necessary. Everything must be scrutinised and the unnecessary ruthlessly destroyed. Believe me, there cannot be too much destruction. For in reality nothing is of value. Be passionately dispassionate -- that is all.

24. God is the All-doer, the *Jnani* a Non-doer

M: Your mind projects a structure and you identify yourself with it. It is in the nature of desire to prompt the mind to create a world for its fulfilment. Even a small desire can start a long line of action; what about a strong desire? Desire can produce a universe; its powers are miraculous. Just as a small matchstick can set a huge forest on fire, so does a desire light the fires of manifestation. The very purpose of creation is the fulfilment of desire. The desire may be noble, or ignoble, space (*akash*) is neutral -- one can fill it with what one likes: You must be very careful as to what you desire.

M: God is the All-Doer, the *jnani* is a non-doer. God himself does not say: 'I am doing all.' To Him things happen by their own nature. To the *jnani* all is done by God. He sees no difference between God and nature. Both God and the *jnani* know themselves to be the immovable centre of the movable, the eternal witness of the transient. The centre is a point of void and the witness a point of pure awareness; they know themselves to be as nothing, therefore nothing can resist them.

M.: When a *jnani* joins the universal mind, all his goodness and wisdom become the heritage of humanity and uplift every human being.

M: The daily life is a life of action. Whether you like it or not, you must function. Whatever you do for your own sake accumulates and becomes explosive; one day it goes off and plays havoc with you and your world. When you deceive yourself that you work for the good of all, it makes matters worse, for you should not be guided by your own ideas of what is good for others. A man who claims to know what is good for others, is dangerous.

Q: How is one to work then?

M: Neither for yourself nor for others, but for the work's own sake. A thing worth doing is its own purpose and meaning, Make nothing a means to something else. Bind not. God does not create one thing to serve another. Each is made for its own sake. Because it is made for itself, it does not interfere. You are using things and people for purposes alien to them and you play havoc with the world and yourself.

M: Yes, you are always the Supreme. But your attention is fixed on things, physical or mental. When your attention is off a thing and not yet fixed on another, in the interval you are pure being. When through the practice of discrimination and detachment (*viveka-vairagya*), you lose sight of sensory and mental states, pure being emerges as the natural state.

25. Hold on to 'I am'

Q: When I see something pleasant, I want it. Who exactly wants it? The self or the mind?

M: The question is wrongly put. There is no 'who'. There is desire, fear, anger, and the mind says -- this is me, this is mine. There is no thing which could be called 'me' or 'mine'. Desire is a state of the mind, perceived and named by the mind. Without the mind perceiving and naming, where is desire?

Q: Surely, you are aware of many things and behave according to their nature. You treat a child as a child and an adult as an adult.

M: Just as the taste of salt pervades the great ocean and every single drop of sea-water carries the same flavour, so every experience gives me the touch of reality, the ever fresh realisation of my own being.

Q: I do not like this *lila* (play) idea I would rather compare the world to a work-yard in which we are the builders.

M: You take it too seriously. What is wrong with play? You have a purpose only as long as you are not complete (*purna*); till then completeness, perfection, is the purpose. But when you are complete in yourself, fully integrated within and without, then you enjoy the universe; you do not labour at it. To the disintegrated you may seem working hard, but that is their illusion. Sportsmen seem to make tremendous efforts: yet their sole motive is to play and display.

M: God is not only true and good, he is also beautiful (*satyam-shivam-sundaram*). He creates beauty -- for the joy of It

Q: Well, then beauty is his purpose!

M: Why do you introduce purpose? Purpose implies movement, change, a sense of imperfection. God does not aim at beauty -- whatever he does is beautiful. Would you say that a flower is trying to be beautiful? It is beautiful by its very nature. Similarly God is perfection itself, not an effort at perfection.

M: What is your happiness worth when you have to strive and labour for it? True happiness is spontaneous and effortless.

26. Personality, an Obstacle

M: Weak desires can be removed by introspection and meditation, but strong, deep-rooted ones must be fulfilled and their fruits, sweet or bitter, tasted.

Q: The desire to live is a tremendous thing.

M: Still greater is the freedom from the urge to live.

Q: The freedom of the stone?

M: Yes, the freedom of the stone, and much more besides. Freedom unlimited and conscious.

M: A life lived thoughtfully, in full awareness, is by itself *Nisarga Yoga*.

Q: What does the marriage of life and mind mean?

M: Living in spontaneous awareness, consciousness of effortless living, being fully interested in one's life -- all this is implied.

Q: Sharada Devi, wife of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, used to scold his disciples for too much effort. She compared them to mangoes on the tree which are being plucked before they are ripe. 'Why hurry?' she used to say. 'Wait till you are fully ripe, mellow and sweet.'

M: How right she was! There are so many who take the dawn for the noon, a momentary experience for full realisation and destroy even the little they gain by excess of pride. Humility and silence are essential for a *sadhaka*, however advanced. Only a fully ripened *jnani* can allow himself complete spontaneity.

Q: Can there be happiness in unity? Does not all happiness imply necessarily contact, hence duality?

M: There is nothing wrong with duality as long as it does not create conflict. Multiplicity and variety without strife is joy. In pure consciousness there is light. For warmth, contact is needed. Above the unity of being is the union of love. Love is the meaning and purpose of duality.

Q: I am 24 years now. For the last two and a half years I am travelling, restless, seeking. I want to live a good life, a holy life. What am I to do?

M: Go home, take charge of your father's business, look after your parents in their old age. Marry the girl who is waiting for you, be loyal, be simple, be humble. Hide your virtue, live silently. The five senses and the three qualities (*gunas*) are your eight steps in *Yoga*. And 'I am' is the Great Reminder (*mahamantra*). You can learn from them all you need to know. Be attentive, enquire ceaselessly. That is all.

Q: If just living one's life liberates, why are not all liberated?

M: All are being liberated. It is not what you live, but how you live that matters. The idea of enlightenment is of utmost importance. Just to know that there is such possibility, changes one's entire outlook. It acts like a burning match in a heap of saw dust. All the great teachers did nothing else.

M: Remember facts, forget opinions.

Q: What is a fact?

M: What is perceived in pure awareness, unaffected by desire.

27. The Beginningless Begins Forever

M: *Chit* in movement is *Ananda*; *Chit* motionless is being.

M: Imperfect spirit is matter, perfect matter is spirit. In the beginning as in the end, all is one.

M: Beyond the mind there is no such thing as experience. Experience is a dual state. You cannot talk of reality as an experience. Once this is understood, you will no longer look for being and becoming as separate and opposite. In reality they are one and inseparable, like roots and branches of the same tree. Both can exist only in the light of consciousness, which again, arises in the wake of the sense 'I am'. This is the primary fact. If you miss it, you miss all.

M: Whatever is spoken is speech only. Whatever is thought is thought only. The real meaning is unexplainable, though experienceable. The *Mahavakya* is true, but your ideas are false, for all ideas (*kalpana*) are false.

Q: In your daily life are you always conscious of your real state?

M: Neither conscious, nor unconscious. I do not need convictions. I live on courage. Courage is my essence, which is love of life. I am free of memories and anticipations, unconcerned with what I am and what I am not. I am not addicted to selfdescriptions, *soham* and *brahmasmi* ('I am He', 'I am the Supreme') are of no use to me, I have the courage to be as nothing and to see the world as it is: nothing. It sounds simple, just try it!

Q: But what gives you courage?

M: How perverted are your views! Need courage be given? Your question implies that anxiety is the normal state and courage is abnormal. It is the other way round. Anxiety and hope are born of imagination -- I am free of both. I am simple *being* and I need nothing to rest on.

M: You are dragging down reality to the level of experience. How can reality depend on experience, when it is the very ground (*adhar*) of experience. Reality is in the very fact of experience, not in its nature. Experience is, after all, a state of mind, while being is definitely not a state of mind.

M: The only thing that can help is to wake up from the dream.

Q: An awakener is needed.

M: Who again is in the dream. The awakener signifies the beginning of the end. There are no eternal dreams.

Q: I began at birth.

M: That is what you are told. Is it so? Did you see yourself beginning?

Q: I began just now. All else is memory.

M: Quite right. The beginningless begins forever. In the same way, I give eternally, because I have nothing. To be nothing, to have nothing, to keep nothing for oneself is the greatest gift, the highest generosity.

28. All Suffering is Born of Desire

M: Very well. What about desires? Do you have any?

Q: Yes, they come, short and superficial.

M: And what do you do about them?

Q: What can I do? They come, they go. I look at them. Sometimes I see my body and my mind engaged in fulfilling them.

M: Whose desires are being fulfilled?

Q: They are a part of the world in which I live. They are just as trees and clouds are there.

M: Are they not a sign of some imperfection?

Q: Why should they be? They are as they are, and I am as I am. How can the appearance and disappearance of desires affect me? Of course, they affect the shape and content of the mind.

M: Very well.

Q: What is happiness?

M: Harmony between the inner and the outer is happiness. On the other hand, self-identification with the outer causes is suffering.

Q: What is the real cause of suffering?

M: Self-identification with the limited (*vyaktitva*). Sensations as such, however strong, do not cause suffering. It is the mind bewildered by wrong ideas, addicted to thinking: 'I am this' 'I am that', that fears loss and craves gain and suffers when frustrated.

M: The concrete need not be the real, the conceived need not be false. Perceptions based on sensations and shaped by memory imply a perceiver, whose nature you never cared to examine. Give it your full attention, examine it with loving care and you will discover heights and depths of being which you did not dream of, engrossed as you are in your puny image of yourself.

Q: Why is there so much suffering in love?

M: All suffering is born of desire. True love is never frustrated. How can the sense of unity be frustrated? What can be frustrated is the desire for expression. Such desire is of the mind. As with all things mental, frustration is inevitable.

Q: There is so much sex without love.

M: Without love all is evil. Life itself without love is evil.

Q: What can make me love?

M: You are love itself -- when you are not afraid.

29. Living is Life's only Purpose

M: It is only a question of incompleteness. He who could not complete his *Yoga* for some reason is called failed in *Yoga*. Such failure is only temporary, for there can be no defeat in *Yoga*. This battle is always won, for it is a battle between the true and the false. The false has no chance.

Q: Who fails? The person (*vyakti*) or the self (*vyakta*)?

M: The question is wrongly put. There is no question of failure, neither in the short run nor in the long. It is like travelling a long and arduous road in an unknown country. Of all the innumerable steps there is only the last which brings you to your destination. Yet you will not consider all previous steps as failures. Each brought you nearer to your goal, even when you had to turn back to by-pass an obstacle. In reality each step brings you to your goal, because to be always on the move, learning, discovering, unfolding, is your eternal destiny. Living is life's only purpose. The self does not identify itself with success or failure -- the very idea of becoming this or that is unthinkable. The self understands that success and failure are relative and related, that they are the very warp and weft of life. Learn from both and go beyond. If you have not learnt, repeat.

Q: What am I to learn?

M: To live without self-concern. For this you must know your own true being (*swarupa*) as indomitable, fearless, ever victorious. Once you know with absolute certainty that nothing can trouble you but your own imagination, you come to disregard your desires and fears, concepts and ideas and live by truth alone.

Q: What may be the reason that some people succeed and others fail in *Yoga*? Is it destiny or character, or just accident?

M: Nobody ever fails in *Yoga*. It is all a matter of the rate of progress. It is slow in the beginning and rapid in the end. When one is fully matured, realisation is explosive. It takes place spontaneously, or at the slightest hint. The quick is not better than the slow. Slow ripening and rapid flowering alternate. Both are natural and right.

Yet, all this is so in the mind only. As I see it, there is really nothing of the kind. In the great mirror of consciousness images arise and disappear and only memory gives them continuity. And memory is material -- destructible, perishable, transient. On such flimsy foundations we build a sense of personal existence -- vague, intermittent, dreamlike. This vague persuasion: 'I-am-so-and-so' obscures the changeless state of pure awareness and makes us believe that we are born to suffer and to die.

Q: Just as a child cannot help growing, so does a man, compelled by nature, make progress. Why exert oneself? Where is the need of *Yoga*?

M: There is progress all the time. Everything contributes to progress. But this is the progress of ignorance. The circles of ignorance may be ever widening, yet it remains a bondage all the same. In due course a Guru appears to teach and inspire us to practise *Yoga* and a ripening takes place as a result of which the immemorial night of ignorance dissolves before the rising sun of wisdom. But in reality nothing happened. The sun is always there, there is no night to it; the mind blinded by the 'I am the body' idea spins out endlessly its thread of illusion.

Q: If all is a part of a natural process, where is the need of effort?

M: Even effort is a part of it. When ignorance becomes obstinate and hard and the character gets perverted, effort and the pain of it become inevitable. In complete obedience to nature there is no effort. The seed of spiritual life grows in silence and in darkness until its appointed hour.

Q: One may get old, but why should one lose all alertness and discrimination?

M: Consciousness and unconsciousness, while in the body depend on the condition of the brain. But the self is beyond both, beyond the brain, beyond the mind. The fault of the instrument is no reflection on its user.

Q: I was told that a realised man will never do anything unseemly. He will always behave in an exemplary way.

M: Who sets the example? Why should a liberated man necessarily follow conventions? The moment he becomes predictable, he cannot be free. His freedom lies in his being free to fulfil the need of the moment, to obey the necessity of the situation. Freedom to do what one likes is really bondage, while being free to do what one must, what is right, is real freedom.

M: He who knows himself has no doubts about it. Nor does he care whether others recognise his state or not. Rare is the realised man who discloses his realisation and fortunate are those who have met him, for he does it for their abiding welfare.

M: Each moment contains the whole of the past and creates the whole of the future.

Q: But past and future exist?

M: In the mind only. Time is in the mind, space is in the mind. The law of cause and effect is also a way of thinking. In reality all is here and now and all is one. Multiplicity and diversity are in the mind only.

Q: Still, you are in favour of relieving suffering, even through destruction of the incurably diseased body.

M: Again, you look from outside while I look from within. I do not see a sufferer, I am the sufferer. I know him from within and do what is right spontaneously and effortlessly. I follow no rules nor lay down rules. I flow with life -- faithfully and irresistibly.

Q: Will this stupidity ever come to an end?

M: In man -- of course. Any moment. In humanity -- as we know it -- after very many years. In creation -- never, for creation itself is rooted in ignorance; matter itself is ignorance. Not to know, and not to know that one does not know, is the cause of endless suffering.

Q: Is there no salvation for the world?

M: Which world do you want to save? The world of your own projection? Save it yourself. My world? Show me my world and I shall deal with it. I am not aware of any world separate from myself, which I am free to save or not to save. What business have you with saving the world, when all the world needs is to be saved from you? Get out of the picture and see whether there is anything left to save.

Q: A message in print may be paper and ink only. It is the text that matters. By analysing the world into elements and qualities we miss the most important -- its meaning. Your reduction of everything to dream disregards the difference between the dream of an insect and the dream of a poet. All is dream, granted. But not all are equal.

M: The dreams are not equal, but the dreamer is one. I am the insect. I am the poet -- in dream. But in reality I am neither. I am beyond all dreams. I am the light in which all dreams appear and disappear. I am both inside and outside the dream. Just as a man having headache knows the ache and also knows that he is not the ache, so do I know the dream, myself dreaming and myself not dreaming -- all at the same time. I am what I am before, during and after the dream. But what I see in dream, I am not.

Q: It is all a matter of imagination. One imagines that one is dreaming, another imagines one is not dreaming. Are not both the same?

M: The same and not the same. Not dreaming, as an interval between two dreams, is of course, a Part of dreaming. Not dreaming as a steady hold on, and timeless abidance in reality has nothing to do with dreaming. In that sense I never dream, nor ever shall.

Q: If both dream and escape from dream are imaginings, what is the way out?

M: There is no need of a way out! Don't you see that a way out is also a part of the dream? All you have to do is to see the dream as dream.

Q: If I start the practice of dismissing everything as a dream where will it lead me?

M: Wherever it leads you, it will be a dream. The very idea of going beyond the dream is illusory. Why go anywhere? Just realise that you are dreaming a dream you call the world, and stop looking for ways out. The dream is not your problem. Your problem is that you like one part of your dream and not another. Love all, or none of it, and stop complaining. When you have seen the dream as a dream, you have done all that needs be done.

Q: Is dreaming caused by thinking?

M: Everything is a play of ideas. In the state free from ideation (*nirvikalpa samadhi*) nothing is perceived. The root idea is: 'I am'. It shatters the state of pure consciousness and is followed by the innumerable sensations and perceptions, feeling and ideas which in their totality constitute God and His world. The 'I am' remains as the witness, but it is by the will of God that everything happens.

Q: Why not by my will?

M: Again you have split yourself -- into God and witness. Both are one.

30. You are Free NOW

Q: Theory may be misleading and earnestness -- blind.

M: Your sincerity will guide you. Devotion to the goal of freedom and perfection will make you abandon all theories and systems and live by wisdom, intelligence and active love. Theories may be good as starting points, but must be abandoned, the sooner -- the better.

M: Whatever name you give it: will, or steady purpose, or onepointedness of the mind, you come back to earnestness, sincerity, honesty. When you are in dead earnest, you bend every incident, every second of your life to your purpose. You do not waste time and energy on other things. You are totally dedicated, call it will, or love, or plain honesty. We are complex beings, at war within and without. We contradict ourselves all the time, undoing today the work of yesterday. No wonder we are stuck. A little of integrity would make a lot of difference.

Q: The fact is that I do not feel free to desire what I think I should, and when I seem to desire rightly, I do not act accordingly.

M: It is all due to weakness of the mind and disintegration of the brain. Collect and strengthen your mind and you will find that your thoughts and feelings, words and actions will align themselves in the direction of your will.

Q: Again a counsel of perfection! To integrate and strengthen the mind is not an easy task! How does one begin?

M: You can start only from where you are. You are here and now, you cannot get out of here and now.

Q: But what can I do here and now?

M: You can be aware of your being -- here and now.

Q: That is all?

M: That is all. There is nothing more to it.

Q: All my waking and dreaming I am conscious of myself. It does not help me much.

M: You were aware of thinking, feeling, doing. You were not aware of your being.

Q: What is the new factor you want me to bring in?

M: The attitude of pure witnessing, of watching the events without taking part in them.

Q: I find that I am totally motivated by desire for pleasure and fear of pain. However noble my desire and justified my fear, pleasure and pain are the two poles between which my life oscillates.

M: Go to the source of both pain and pleasure, of desire and fear. Observe, investigate, try to understand.

Q: Desire and fear both are feelings caused by physical or mental factors. They are there, easily observable. But why are they there? Why do I desire pleasure and fear pain?

M: Pleasure and pain are states of mind. As long as you think you are the mind, or rather, the body-mind, you are bound to raise such questions.

Q: People die willingly quite often.

M: Only when the alternative is worse than death. But such readiness to die flows from the same source as the will to live, a source deeper even than life itself. To be a living being is not the ultimate state; there is something beyond, much more wonderful, which is neither being nor non-being, neither living nor notliving. It is a state of pure awareness, beyond the limitations of space and time. Once the illusion that the body-mind is oneself is abandoned, death loses its terror, it becomes a part of living.

31. Do not Undervalue Attention

M: At the root of all creation lies desire. Desire and imagination foster and reinforce each other. The fourth state (*turiya*) is a state of pure witnessing, detached awareness, passionless and wordless. It is like space, unaffected by whatever it contains. Bodily and mental troubles do not reach it -- they are outside, 'there', while the witness is always 'here'.

M: First purify your vision, learn to see instead of staring. Also you must be eager to see. You need both clarity and earnestness for self-knowledge. You need maturity of heart and mind, which comes through earnest application in daily life of whatever little you have understood. There is no such thing as compromise in *Yoga*.

If you want to sin, sin wholeheartedly and openly. Sins too have their lessons to teach the earnest sinner, as virtues -- the earnest saint. It is the mixing up the two that is so disastrous. Nothing can block you so effectively as compromise, for it shows lack of earnestness, without which nothing can be done.

Q: I approve of austerity, but in practice I am all for luxury. The habit of chasing pleasure and shunning pain is so ingrained in me, that all my good intentions, quite alive on the level of theory, find no roots in my day-to-day life. To tell me that I am not honest does not help me, for I just do not know how to make myself honest.

M: You are neither honest nor dishonest -- giving names to mental states is good only for expressing your approval or disapproval. The problem is not yours -- it is your mind's only. Begin by disassociating yourself from your mind. Resolutely remind yourself that you are not the mind and that its problems are not yours.

Q: You advise us to concentrate on 'I am'. Is this too a form of attention?

M: What else? Give your undivided attention to the most important in your life -- yourself. Of your personal universe you are the centre -- without knowing the centre what else can you know?

M: The nature of the perfect mirror is such that you cannot see it. Whatever you can see is bound to be a stain. Turn away from it, give it up, know it as unwanted.

Q: All perceivables, are they stains?

M: All are stains.

Q: The entire world is a stain.

M: Yes, it is.

Q: How awful! So, the universe is of no value?

M: It is of tremendous value. By going beyond it you realise yourself.

Q: But why did it come into being in the first instance?

M: You will know it when it ends.

Q: Will it ever end?

M: Yes, for you.

Q: When did it begin?

M: Now.

Q: When will it end?

M: Now.

Q: It does not end now?

M: You don't let it.

Q: I want to let it.

M: You don't. All your life is connected with it. Your past and future, your desires and fears, all have their roots in the world. Without the world where are you, who are you?

Q: But that is exactly what I came to find out.

M: . And I am telling you exactly this: find a foothold beyond and all will be clear and easy.

32. Life is the Supreme Guru

Q: What is the right use of mind?

M: Fear and greed cause the misuse of the mind. The right use of mind is in the service of love, of life, of truth, of beauty.

Q: What does it mean to go beyond the mind.

M: You have gone beyond the body, haven't you? You do not closely follow your digestion, circulation or elimination. These have become automatic. In the same way the mind should work automatically, without calling for attention. This will not happen unless the mind works faultlessly. We are, most of our time mind and body-conscious, because they constantly call for help. Pain and suffering are only the body and the mind screaming for attention. To go beyond the body you must be healthy: To go beyond the mind, you must have your mind in perfect order. You cannot leave a mess behind and go beyond. The mess will bog you up. 'Pick up your rubbish' seems to be the universal law. And a just law too.

M.: If you want to know your true nature, you must have yourself in mind all the time, until the secret of your being stands revealed.

Q: Do I need a Guru? What you tell me is simple and convincing. I shall remember it. This does not make you my Guru.

M: It is not the worship of a person that is crucial, but the steadiness and depth of your devotion to the task. Life itself is the Supreme Guru; be attentive to its lessons and obedient to its commands. When you personalise their source, you have an outer Guru; when you take them from life directly, the Guru is within. Remember, wonder, ponder, live with it, love it, grow into it, grow with it, make it your own -- the word of your Guru, outer or inner. Put in all and you will get all. I was doing it. All my time I was giving to my Guru and to what he told me.

Q: We live, because we must.

M: We live, because we crave sensory existence.

Q: A thing so universal cannot be wrong.

M: Not wrong, of course. In its own place and time nothing is wrong. But when you are concerned with truth, with reality, you must question every thing, your very life. By asserting the necessity of sensory and intellectual experience you narrow down your enquiry to search for comfort.

Q: It is a part of Indian spiritual tradition that mere living in the proximity of a saint or sage is conducive to liberation and no other means are needed. Why don't you organise an Ashram so that people could live near you?

M: The moment I create an institution I become its prisoner. As a matter of fact I am available to all. Common roof and food will not make people more welcome. 'Living near' does not mean breathing the same air. It means trusting and obeying, not letting the good intentions of the teacher go to waste. Have your Guru always in your heart and remember his instructions -- this is real abidance with the true. Physical proximity is least important. Make your entire life an expression of your faith and love for your teacher -- this is real dwelling with the Guru.

33. Everything Happens by Itself

Q: The fact is that here and now I am asking you: when did the feeling 'I am the body' arise? At my birth? or this morning?

M: Now.

Q: But I remember having it yesterday too!

M: The memory of yesterday is now only.

Q: But surely I exist in time. I have a past and a future.

M: That is how you imagine -- now.

Q: There must have been a beginning.

M: Now.

Q: And what about ending?

M: What has no beginning cannot end.

Q: But I am conscious of my question.

M: A false question cannot be answered. It can only be seen as false.

Q: To me it is real.

M: When did it appear real to you? Now.

Q: Yes, it is quite real to me -- now.

M: What is real about your question? It is a state of mind. No state of mind can be more real than the mind itself. Is the mind real? It is but a collection of states, each of them transitory. How can a succession of transitory states be considered real?

Q: I am being told that to think 'I am the body' is a blemish in the mind.

M: Why talk like this? Such expressions create problems. The self is the source of all, and of all -- the final destination. Nothing is external.

Q: When the body idea becomes obsessive, is it not altogether wrong?

M: There is nothing wrong in the idea of a body, nor even in the idea 'I am the body'. But limiting oneself to one body only is a mistake. In reality all existence, every form, is my own, within my consciousness. I cannot tell what I am because words can describe only what I am not. I am, and because I am, all is. But I am

beyond consciousness and, therefore, in consciousness I cannot say what I am. Yet, I am. The question 'Who am I' has no answer. No experience can answer it, for the self is beyond experience.

Q: Still, the question 'Who am I' must be of some use.

M: It has no answer in consciousness and, therefore, helps to go beyond consciousness.

Q: Here I am -- in the present moment. What is real in it, and what is not? Now, please don't tell me that my question is wrong. Questioning my questions leads me nowhere.

M: Your question is not wrong. It is unnecessary. You said: 'Here and now I am'. Stop there, this is real. Don't turn a fact into a question. There lies your mistake. You are neither knowing nor not-knowing, neither mind nor matter; don't attempt to describe yourself in terms of mind and matter.

Q: Let us come back to the man in need of help. He comes to you.

M: If he comes, he is sure to get help. Because he was destined to get help, he came. There is nothing fanciful about it. I cannot help some and refuse others. All who come are helped, for such is the law. Only the shape help takes varies according to the need.

Q: Why must he come here to get advice? Can't he get it from within?

M: He will not listen. His mind is turned outward. But in fact all experience is in the mind, and even his coming to me and getting help is all within himself. Instead of finding an answer within himself, he imagines an answer from without. To me there is no me, no man and no giving. All this is merely a flicker in the mind. I am infinite peace and silence in which nothing appears, for all that appears -- disappears. Nobody comes for help, nobody offers help, nobody gets help. It is all but a display in consciousness.

Q: Yet the power to help is there and there is somebody or something that displays that power, call it God or Self or the Universal Mind. The name does not matter, but the fact does.

M: This is the stand the body-mind takes. The pure mind sees things as they are -- bubbles in consciousness. These bubbles are appearing, disappearing and reappearing -- without having real being. No particular cause can be ascribed to them, for each is caused by all and affects all. Each bubble is a body and all these bodies are mine.

Q: Do you mean to say, that you have the power to do everything rightly?

M: There is no power as separate from me. It is inherent in my very nature. Call it creativity. Out of a lump of gold you can make many ornaments -- each will remain gold. Similarly, in whatever role I may appear and whatever function I may perform -- I remain what I am: the 'I am' immovable, unshakable, independent. What you call the universe, nature, is my spontaneous creativity. Whatever happens -- happens. But such is my nature that all ends in joy.

Q: I have a case of a boy gone blind because his stupid mother fed him methyl alcohol. I am requesting you to help him. You are full of compassion and, obviously, eager to help. By what power can you help him?

M: His case is registered in consciousness. It is there -- indelibly. Consciousness will operate.

Q: Does it make any difference that I ask you to help?

M: Your asking is a part of the boy's blindness. Because he is blind, you ask. You have added nothing.

Q: But your help will be a new factor?

M: No, all is contained in the boy's blindness. All is in it -- the mother, the boy, you and me and all else. It is one event.

Q: You mean to say that even our discussing the boy's case was predestined?

M: How else? All things contain their future. The boy appears in consciousness. I am beyond. I do not issue orders to consciousness. I know that it is in the nature of awareness to set things right. Let consciousness look after its creations! The boy's sorrow, your pity, my listening and consciousness acting -- all this is one single fact -- don't split it into components and then ask questions.

Q: How strangely does your mind work?

M: You are strange, not me. I am normal. I am sane. I see things as they are, and therefore I am not afraid of them. But you are afraid of reality.

Q: Why should I?

M: It is ignorance of yourself that makes you afraid and also unaware that you are afraid. Don't try not to be afraid. Break down the wall of ignorance first.

People are afraid to die, because they do not know what is death. The *jnani* has died before his death, he saw that there was nothing to be afraid of. The moment you know your real being, you are afraid of nothing. Death gives freedom and power. To be free in the world, you must die to the world. Then the universe is your own, it becomes your body, an expression and a tool. The happiness of being absolutely free is beyond description. On the other hand, he who is afraid of freedom cannot die.

M: From my point of view everything happens by itself, quite spontaneously. But man imagines that he works for an incentive, towards a goal. He has always a reward in mind and strives for it.

M.: To want nothing and do nothing -- that is true creation! To watch the universe emerging and subsiding in one's heart is a wonder.

Q: Is there no need of effort then?

M: When effort is needed, effort will appear. When effortlessness becomes essential, it will assert itself. You need not push life about. Just flow with it and give yourself completely to the task of the present moment, which is the dying now to the now. For living is dying. Without death life cannot be.

Get hold of the main thing that the world and the self are one and perfect. Only your attitude is faulty and needs readjustment.

This process or readjustment is what you call *sadhana*. You come to it by putting an end to indolence and using all your energy to clear the way for clarity and charity. But in reality, these all are signs of inevitable growth. Don't be afraid, don't resist, don't delay. Be what you are. There is nothing to be afraid of. Trust and try. Experiment honestly. Give your real being a chance to shape your life. You will not regret.

34. Mind is restlessness Itself

Q: I am striving.

M: Striving too is a form of restlessness.

Q: So what remains?

M: The self does not need to be put to rest. It is peace itself, not at peace. Only the mind is restless. All it knows is restlessness, with its many modes and grades. The pleasant are considered superior and the painful are discounted. What we call progress is merely a change over from the unpleasant to the pleasant. But changes by themselves cannot bring us to the changeless, for whatever has a beginning must have an end. The real does not begin; it only reveals itself as beginningless and endless, all-pervading, all-powerful, immovable prime mover, timelessly changeless.

M: The personality (*vyakti*) is but a product of imagination. The self (*vyakta*) is the victim of this imagination. It is the taking yourself to be what you are not that binds you. The person cannot be said to exist on its own rights; it is the self that believes there is a person and is conscious of being it. Beyond the self (*vyakta*) lies the unmanifested (*avyakta*), the causeless cause of everything. Even to talk of reuniting the person with the self is not right, because there is no person, only a mental picture given a false reality by conviction. Nothing was divided and there is nothing to unite.

M: Knowledge is but a memory, a pattern of thought, a mental habit. All these are motivated by pleasure and pain. It is because you are goaded by pleasure and pain that you are in search of knowledge. Being oneself is completely beyond all motivation. You cannot be yourself for some reason. You *are* yourself, and no reason is needed.

Q: I did attain a degree of inner peace. Am I to destroy it?

M: What has been attained may be lost again. Only when you realise the true peace, the peace you have never lost, that peace will remain with you, for it was never away. Instead of searching for what you do not have, find out what is it that

you have never lost? That which is there before the beginning and after the ending of everything; that to which there is no birth, nor death. That immovable state, which is not affected by the birth and death of a body or a mind, that state you must perceive.

Q: What are the means to such perception?

M: In life nothing can be had without overcoming obstacles. The obstacles to the clear perception of one's true being are desire for pleasure and fear of pain. It is the pleasure-pain motivation that stands in the way. The very freedom from all motivation, the state in which no desire arises is the natural state.

Q: Such giving up of desires, does it need time?

M: If you leave it to time, millions of years will be needed. Giving up desire after desire is a lengthy process with the end never in sight. Leave alone your desires and fears, give your entire attention to the subject, to him who is behind the experience of desire and fear. Ask: 'who desires?' Let each desire bring you back to yourself.

M: The desire to find the self will be surely fulfilled, provided you want nothing else. But you must be honest with yourself and really want nothing else. If in the meantime you want many other things and are engaged in their pursuit, your main purpose may be delayed until you grow wiser and cease being torn between contradictory urges. Go within, without swerving, without ever looking outward.

M: Whatever work you have undertaken -- complete it. Do not take up new tasks. unless it is called for by a concrete situation of suffering and relief from suffering. Find yourself first, and endless blessings will follow. Nothing profits the world as much as the abandoning of profits. A man who no longer thinks in terms of loss and gain is the truly non-violent man, for he is beyond all conflict.

M: What is birth and death but the beginning and the ending of a stream of events in consciousness? Because of the idea of separation and limitation they are painful. Momentary relief from pain we call pleasure -- and we build castles in the air hoping for endless pleasure which we call happiness. It is all misunderstanding and misuse. Wake up, go beyond, live really.

(...) Have your being outside this body of birth and death and all your problems will be solved. They exist because you believe yourself born to die. Undeceive yourself and be free. You are not a person.

35. Greatest Guru is Your Inner Self

Questioner: On all sides I hear that freedom from desires and inclinations is the first condition of self-realisation. But I find the condition impossible of

fulfilment. Ignorance of oneself causes desires and desires perpetuate ignorance. A truly vicious circle!

Maharaj: There are no conditions to fulfil. There is nothing to be done, nothing to be given up. Just look and remember, whatever you perceive is not you, nor yours. It is there in the field of consciousness, but you are not the field and its contents, nor even the knower of the field. It is your idea that you have to do things that entangle you in the results of your efforts -- the motive, the desire, the failure to achieve, the sense of frustration -- all this holds you back. Simply look at whatever happens and know that you are beyond it.

Q: Does it mean I should abstain from doing anything?

M: You cannot! What goes on must go on. If you stop suddenly, you will crash.

Q: Is it a matter of the known and the knower becoming one?

M: Both are ideas in the mind, and words that express them. There is no self in them. The self is neither, between nor beyond. To look for it on the mental level is futile. Stop searching, and see -- it is here and now -- it is that 'I am' you know so well. All you need to do is to cease taking yourself to be within the field of consciousness. Unless you have already considered these matters carefully, listening to me once will not do. Forget your past experiences and achievements, stand naked, exposed to the winds and rains of life and you will have a chance.

M.: The greatest Guru is helpless as long as the disciple is not eager to learn. Eagerness and earnestness are all-important. Confidence will come with experience. Be devoted to your goal -- and devotion to him who can guide you will follow. If your desire and confidence are strong, they will operate and take you to your goal, for you will not cause delay by hesitation and compromise.

The greatest Guru is your inner self. Truly, he is the supreme teacher. He alone can take you to your goal and he alone meets you at the end of the road. Confide in him and you need no outer Guru. But again you must have the strong desire to find him and do nothing that will create obstacles and delays. And do not waste energy and time on regrets. Learn from your mistakes and do not repeat them.

Q: The urge to return to the source is very rare. Is it at all natural?

M: Outgoing is natural in the beginning, ingoing -- in the end. But in reality the two are one, just like breathing in and out are one.

Q: Whoever he may be, the dweller is in control of the body and, therefore, responsible for it.

M: There is a universal power which is in control and is responsible.

Q: And so, I can do as I like and put the blame on some universal power? How easy!

M: Yes, very easy. Just realise the One Mover behind all that moves and leave all to Him. If you do not hesitate, or cheat, this is the shortest way to reality. Stand without desire and fear, relinquishing all control and all responsibility.

Q: What madness!

M: Yes, divine madness. What is wrong in letting go the illusion of personal control and personal responsibility? Both are in the mind only. Of course, as long as you imagine yourself to be in control, you should also imagine yourself to be responsible. One implies the other.

M: Here lies the trouble: you take your imagining for facts and my facts for imagination. I know for certain that all is one. Differences do not separate. Either you are responsible for nothing, or for everything. To imagine that you are in control and responsible for one body only is the aberration of the body-mind.

M: Words are of the mind and the mind obscures and distorts. Hence the absolute need to go beyond words and move over to my side.

Q: Take me over.

M: I am doing it, but you resist. You give reality to concepts, while concepts are distortions of reality. Abandon all conceptualisation and stay silent and attentive. Be earnest about it and all will be well with you.

M: When the time comes for the world to be helped, some people are given the will, the wisdom and the power to cause great changes.

37. Beyond Pain and Pleasure there is Bliss

Maharaj: You must realise first of all that you are the proof of everything, including yourself. None can prove your existence, because his existence must be confirmed by you first. Your being and knowing you owe nobody. Remember, you are entirely on your own. You do not come from somewhere, you do not go anywhere. You are timeless being and awareness.

M: Everything happens all the time, but you must be ready for it. Readiness is ripeness. You do not see the real because your mind is not ready for it.

Q: If reality is my real nature, how can I ever be unready?

M: Unready means afraid. You are afraid of what you are. Your destination is the whole. But you are afraid that you will lose your identity. This is childishness, clinging to the toys, to your desires and fears, opinions and ideas. Give it all up and be ready for the real to assert itself. This self-assertion is best expressed in words: 'I am'. Nothing else has being. Of this you are absolutely certain.

M: If you know yourself to be stupid, you are not stupid at all!

M: Before pain was, you were. After pain had gone, you remained. Pain is transient, you are not.

M: All consciousness is limited and therefore painful. At the root of consciousness lies desire, the urge to experience.

Q: What is your objection to consciousness?

M: It is a burden. Body means burden. Sensations, desires, thoughts -- these are all burdens. All consciousness is of conflict.

Q: Reality is described as true being, pure consciousness, infinite bliss. What has pain to do with it?

M: Pain and pleasure happen, but pain is the price of pleasure, pleasure is the reward of pain. In life too you often please by hurting and hurt by pleasing. To know that pain and pleasure are one is peace.

M: Pain and pleasure are both *ananda* (bliss). Here I am sitting in front of you and telling you -- from my own immediate and unchanging experience -- pain and pleasure are the crests and valleys of the waves in the ocean of bliss. Deep down there is utter fullness.

Q: Is your experience constant?

M: It is timeless and changeless.

Q: All I know is desire for pleasure and fear of pain.

M: That is what you think about yourself. Stop it. If you cannot break a habit all at once, consider the familiar way of thinking and see its falseness. Questioning the habitual is the duty of the mind. What the mind created, the mind must destroy. Or realise that there is no desire outside the mind and stay out.

M: Without words, what is there to understand? The need for understanding arises from mis-understanding. What I say is true, but to you it is only a theory. How will you come to know that it is true? Listen, remember, ponder, visualise, experience. Also apply it in your daily life. Have patience with me and, above all have patience with yourself, for you are your only obstacle.

38. Spiritual Practice is Will Asserted and Re-asserted

M: The common things of life: I experience them just as you do. The difference lies in what I do not experience. I do not experience fear or greed, hate or anger. I ask nothing, refuse nothing, keep nothing. In these matters I do not compromise. Maybe this is the outstanding difference between us. I will not compromise, I am true to myself, while you are afraid of reality.

M: It is the urge, the hidden motive that matters, not the shape it takes. Whatever he does, if he does it for the sake of finding his own real self, will surely bring him to himself. (...) Here the action only counts. Whatever you do for the sake of truth, will take you to truth. Only be earnest and honest. The shape it takes hardly matters.

M: Spiritual practice is will asserted and re-asserted. Who has not the daring will not accept the real even when offered. Unwillingness born out of fear is the only obstacle.

Q: Not everybody has the chance of meeting you.

M: Meet your own self. Be with your own self, listen to it, obey it, cherish it, keep it in mind ceaselessly. You need no other guide. As long as your urge for truth affects your daily life, all is well with you. Live your life without hurting anybody. Harmlessness is a most powerful form of *Yoga* and it will take you speedily to your goal. This is what I call *nisarga yoga*, the Natural *yoga*. It is the art of living in peace and harmony, in friendliness and love. The fruit of it is happiness, uncaused and endless.

M: What prevents you from knowing is not the lack of opportunity, but the lack of ability to focus in your mind what you want to understand. If you could but keep in mind what you do not know, it would reveal to you its secrets. But if you are shallow and impatient, not earnest enough to look and wait, you are like a child crying for the moon.

39. By Itself Nothing has Existence

M: By itself nothing has existence. Everything needs its own absence. To be, is to be distinguishable, to be here and not there, to be now and not then, to be thus and not otherwise. Like water is shaped by the container, so is everything determined by conditions (*gunas*). As water remains water regardless of the vessels, as light remains itself regardless of the colours it brings out, so does the real remain real, regardless of conditions in which it is reflected. Why keep the reflection only in the focus of consciousness? Why not the real itself?

M: To know that consciousness and its content are but reflections, changeful and transient, is the focussing of the real. The refusal to see the snake in the rope is the necessary condition for seeing the rope.

M: One must also know that a rope exists and looks like a snake. Similarly, one must know that the real exists and is of the nature of witness-consciousness. Of

course it is beyond the witness, but to enter it one must first realise the state of pure witnessing. The awareness of conditions brings one to the unconditioned.

Q: Can the unconditioned be experienced?

M: To know the conditioned as conditioned is all that can be said about the unconditioned. Positive terms are mere hints and misleading.

M: Those who make plans will be born to carry them out. Those who make no plans need not be born.

Q: This world is so rich and complex -- how could I have created it?

M: Do you know yourself enough to know what you can do and what you cannot? You do not know your own powers. You never investigated. Begin with yourself now.

Q: Everybody believes in God.

M: To me you are your own God. But if you think otherwise, think to the end. If there be God, then all is God's and all is for the best. Welcome all that comes with a glad and thankful heart. And love all creatures. This too will take you to your Self.

40. Only the Self is Real

Maharaj: The world is but a show, glittering and empty. It is, and yet is not. It is there as long as I want to see it and take part in it. When I cease caring, it dissolves. It has no cause and serves no purpose. It just happens when we are absentminded. It appears exactly as it looks, but there is no depth in it, nor meaning. Only the onlooker is real. Call him Self or *Atma*. To the Self the world is but a colourful show, which he enjoys as long as it lasts and forgets when it is over. Whatever happens on the stage makes him shudder in terror or roll with laughter, yet all the time he is aware that it is but a show. Without desire or fear he enjoys it, as it happens.

M: You imagine that without cause there can be no happiness. To me dependence on anything for happiness is utter misery. Pleasure and pain have causes, while my state is my own, totally uncaused, independent, unassailable.

M: When you are giddy, you see the world running circles round you. Obsessed with the idea of means and end, of work and purpose, you see me apparently functioning. In reality I only look. Whatever is done, is done on the stage. Joy and sorrow life and death, they all are real to the man in bondage; to me they are all in the show, as unreal as the show itself.

I may perceive the world just like you, but you believe to be in it, while I see it as an iridescent drop in the vast expanse of consciousness.

Q: Let us say, the *jnani* is ill. He has caught some flu and every joint aches and burns. What is his state of mind?

M: Every sensation is contemplated in perfect equanimity. There is no desire for it, nor refusal. It is as it is and then he looks at it with a smile of affectionate detachment.

Q: He may be detached from his own suffering, but still it is there.

M: It is there, but it does not matter. Whatever state I am in, I see it as a state of mind to be accepted as it is.

Q: Let us say you are twenty-five years old. Your marriage is arranged and performed, and the household duties crowd upon you. How would you feel?

M: Just as I feel now. You keep on insisting that my inner state is moulded by outer events. It is just not so. Whatever happens, I remain. (...)

The mind is a form of consciousness, and consciousness is an aspect of life. Life creates everything but the Supreme is beyond all.

M: I am not afraid of death, because I am not afraid of life. I live a happy life and shall die a happy death. Misery is to be born, not to die. All depends how you look at it.

M: It is enough to know the 'I am' as reality and also love.

M: The gospel of self-realisation, once heard, will never be forgotten. Like a seed left in the ground, it will wait for the right season and sprout and grow into a mighty tree.

41. Develop the Witness Attitude

Q: Surely, the dissolution of the body is an important event even to a *jnani*.

M: There are no important events for a *jnani*, except when somebody reaches the highest goal. Then only his heart rejoices. All else is of no concern. The entire universe is his body, all life is his life. As in a city of lights, when one bulb burns out, it does not affect the network, so the death of a body does not affect the whole.

Q: Is the practice of silence as a *sadhana* effective?

M: Anything you do for the sake of enlightenment takes you nearer. Anything you do without remembering enlightenment puts you off. But why complicate? Just know that you are above and beyond all things and thoughts. What you want to be, you are it already. Just keep it in mind.

M: Keep in mind what I tell you: desire nothing, for you lack nothing. The very seeking prevents you from finding.

Q: You seem to be so very indifferent to everything!

M: I am not indifferent, I am impartial. I give no preference to the me and the mine. A basket of earth and a basket of jewels are both unwanted. Life and death are all the same to me.

Q: Impartiality makes you indifferent.

M: On the contrary, compassion and love are my very core. Void of all predilections, I am free to love.

Q: If you would talk like this in the West, people would take you for mad.

M: Of course, they would! To the ignorant all that they can not understand is madness. What of it? Let them be as they are. I am as I am, for no merit of mine and they are as they are, for no fault of theirs. The Supreme Reality manifests itself in innumerable ways. Infinite in number are its names and shapes. All arise, all merge in the same ocean, the source of all is one. Looking for causes and results is but the pastime of the mind. What *is*, is lovable. Love is not a result, it is the very ground of being. Wherever you go, you will find being, consciousness and love. Why and what for make preferences?

Q: Nature is mindless, hence irresponsible. But man has a mind. Why is it so perverse?

M: The causes of perversity are also natural -- heredity, environment and so on. You are too quick to condemn. Do not worry about others. Deal with your own mind first. When you realise that your mind too is a part of nature, the duality will cease.

M: Develop the witness attitude and you will find in your own experience that detachment brings control. The state of witnessing is full of power, there is nothing passive about it.

42. Reality can not be Expressed

M: Anything that implies a continuity, a sequence, a passing from stage to stage cannot be the real. There is no progress in reality, it is final, perfect, unrelated.

(...) Reality is not the result of a process; it is an explosion. It is definitely beyond the mind, but all you can do is to know your mind well. Not that the mind will help you, but by knowing your mind you may avoid your mind disabling you. You have to be very alert, or else your mind will play false with you. It is like watching a thief -- not that you expect anything from a thief, but you do not want to

be robbed. In the same way you give a lot of attention to the mind without expecting anything from it.

(...) We dream that we are awake, we dream that we are asleep. The three states are only varieties of the dream state. Treating everything as a dream liberates. As long as you give reality to dreams, you are their slave. By imagining that you are born as so-and-so, you become a slave to the so-and-so. The essence of slavery is to imagine yourself to be a process, to have past and future, to have history. In fact, we have no history, we are not a process, we do not develop, nor decay; also see all as a dream and stay out of it.

M: You live, you feel, you think. By giving attention to your living, feeling and thinking, you free yourself from them and go beyond them. Your personality dissolves and only the witness remains. Then you go beyond the witness. Do not ask how it happens. Just search within yourself.

Q: What makes the difference between the person and the witness?

M: Both are modes of consciousness. In one you desire and fear, in the other you are unaffected by pleasure and pain and are not ruffled by events. You let them come and go.

Q: How does one get established in the higher state, the state of pure witnessing?

M: Consciousness does not shine by itself. It shines by a light beyond it. Having seen the dreamlike quality of consciousness, look for the light in which it appears, which gives it being. There is the content of consciousness as well as the awareness of it.

M: Forget the known, but remember that you are the knower. Don't be all the time immersed in your experiences. Remember that you are beyond the experience, ever unborn and deathless. In remembering it, the quality of pure knowledge will emerge, the light of unconditional awareness.

M: But the very longing and search for reality is the movement, operation, action of reality. All you can do is to grasp the central point, that reality is not an event and does not happen and whatever happens, whatever comes and goes, is not reality. See the event as event only, the transient as transient, experience as mere experience and you have done all you can. Then you are vulnerable to reality, no longer armoured against it, as you were when you gave reality to events and experiences. But as soon as there is some like or dislike, you have drawn a screen.

M: All happens as it needs, yet nothing happens. I do what seems to be necessary, but at the same time I know that nothing is necessary, that life itself is only a make-belief.

M: The three states rotate as usual -- there is waking and sleeping and waking again, but they do not happen to me. They just happen. To me nothing ever happens. There is something changeless, motionless, immovable, rocklike, unassailable; a solid mass of pure being-consciousness-bliss. I am never out of it. Nothing can take me out of it, no torture, no calamity.

Q: If I understand you rightly, this state did not come by cultivation.

M: There was no coming. It was so -- always. There was discovery and it was sudden. Just as at birth you discover the world suddenly, as suddenly I discovered my real being.

Q: Is there a way to it?

M: Everything can become a way, provided you are interested. Just puzzling over my words and trying to grasp their full meaning is a *sadhana* quite sufficient for breaking down the wall. Nothing troubles me. I offer no resistance to trouble -- therefore it does not stay with me. On your side there is so much trouble. On mine there is no trouble at all. Come to my side. You are trouble-prone. I am immune. Anything may happen -- what is needed is sincere interest. Earnestness does it.

Q: Can I do it?

M: Of course. You are quite capable of crossing over. Only be sincere.

43. Ignorance can be Recognised, not Jnana

Q: There are many who strive for self-knowledge earnestly, but with scant results. What may be the cause of it?

M: They have not investigated the sources of knowledge sufficiently, their sensations, feelings and thoughts they do not know well enough. This may be one cause of delay. The other: some desires may still be alive.

Q: But can a Guru give realisation without words, without trust, just like this, without any preparation?

M: Yes, one can, but where is the taker? You see, I was so attuned to my Guru, so completely trusting him. There was so little of resistance in me, that it all happened easily and quickly. But not everybody is so fortunate. Laziness and restlessness often stand in the way and until they are seen and removed, the progress is slow. All those who have realised on the spot, by mere touch, look or thought, have been ripe for it. But such are very few. The majority needs some time for ripening. *Sadhana* is accelerated ripening.

Q: What makes one ripe? What is the ripening factor?

M: Earnestness of course, one must be really anxious. After all, the realised man is the most earnest man. Whatever he does, he does it completely, without limitations and reservations. Integrity will take you to reality.

Q: I am tired of promises. I am tired of *sadhanas*, which take all my time and energy and bring nothing. I want reality here and now. Can I have it?

M: Of course you can, provided you are really fed up with everything, including your *sadhanas*. When you demand nothing of the world, nor of God, when you want nothing, seek nothing, expect nothing then the Supreme State will come to you uninvited and unexpected!

Q: If a man engrossed in family life and in the affairs of the world does his *sadhana* strictly as prescribed by his scriptures, will he get results?

M: Results he will get, but he will be wrapped up in them like in a cocoon.

Q: So many saints say that when you are ripe and ready, you will realise. Their words may be true, but they are of little use. There must be a way out, independent of ripening which needs time, of *sadhana* which needs effort.

M: Don't call it a way; it is more a kind of skill. It is not even that. Stay open and quiet, that is all. What you seek is so near you, that there is no place for a way.

Q: There are so many ignorant people in the world and so few *jnanis*. What may be the cause of it?

M: Don't concern yourself with others, take care of yourself. You know that you *are*. Don't burden yourself with names, just *be*. Any name or shape you give yourself obscures your real nature.

Q: Why should seeking end before one can realise?

M: The desire for truth is the highest of all desires, yet, it is still a desire. All desires must be given up to the real to be. Remember that you *are*. This is your working capital. Rotate it and there will be much profit.

Q: Why should there be seeking at all.

M: Life is seeking, one cannot help seeking. When all search ceases, it is the Supreme State.

Q: With me it comes and goes, with you it does not. Why this difference?

M: Maybe because I have no desires. Or you do not desire the Supreme strongly enough. You must feel desperate when your mind is out of touch.

Q: But what is the ripening factor?

M: Self-remembrance, awareness of 'I am' ripens him powerfully and speedily. Give up all ideas about yourself and simply *be*.

Q: I am tired of all the ways and means and skills and tricks, of all these mental acrobatics. Is there a way to perceive reality directly and immediately?

M: Stop making use of your mind and see what happens. Do this one thing thoroughly. That is all.

M: This is all imagination. In the light of consciousness all sorts of things happen and one need not give special importance to any. The sight of a flower is as marvellous as the vision of God. Let them be. Why remember them and then make memory into a problem? Be bland about them; do not divide them into high and

low, inner and outer, lasting and transient. Go beyond, go back to the source, go to the self that is the same whatever happens. Your weakness is due to your conviction that you were born into the world. In reality the world is ever recreated in you and by you. See everything as emanating from the light which is the source of your own being. You will find that in that light there is love and infinite energy.

44. 'I am' is True, all else is Inference

M: The body appears in your mind, your mind is the content of your consciousness; you are the motionless witness of the river of consciousness which changes eternally without changing you in any way. Your own changelessness is so obvious that you do not notice it. Have a good look at yourself and all these misapprehensions and misconceptions will dissolve.

Q: We call it God.

M: God is only an idea in your mind. The fact is you. The only thing you know for sure is: 'here and now I am'. Remove the 'here and now' and the 'I am' remains, unassailable. The word exists in memory, memory comes into consciousness; consciousness exists in awareness and awareness is the reflection of the light on the waters of existence.

M: All I can say truly is: 'I am', all else is inference. But the inference has become a habit. Destroy all habits of thinking and seeing. The sense 'I am' is the manifestation of a deeper cause, which you may call self, God, reality or by any other name. The 'I am' is in the world; but it is the key which can open the door out of the world. The moon dancing on the water is seen in the water, but it is caused by the moon in the sky and not by the water.

M: Once you realise that the world is your own projection, you are free of it. You need not free yourself of a world that does not exist, except in your own imagination! However is the picture, beautiful or ugly, you are painting it and you are not bound by it. Realise that there is nobody to force it on you, that it is due to the habit of taking the imaginary to be real. See the imaginary as imaginary and be free of fear.

M: Even the experiencer is secondary. Primary is the infinite expanse of consciousness, the eternal possibility, the immeasurable potential of all that was, is, and will be. When you look at anything, it is the ultimate you see, but you imagine that you see a cloud or a tree.

Learn to look without imagination, to listen without distortion: that is all. Stop attributing names and shapes to the essentially nameless and formless, realise that every mode of perception is subjective, that what is seen or heard, touched or

smelt, felt or thought, expected or imagined, is in the mind and not in reality, and you will experience peace and freedom from fear.

M: [After being questioned about the different approaches and paths to enlightenment:] You may feel attracted to reality at one time and repelled from the false at another; these are only moods which alternate; both are needed for perfect freedom. You may go one way or another -- but each time it will be the right way at the moment; just go whole-heartedly, don't waste time on doubting or hesitating. Many kinds of food are needed to make the child grow, but the act of eating is the same. Theoretically -- all approaches are good. In practice, and at a given moment, you proceed by one road only. Sooner or later you are bound to discover that if you really want to find, you must dig at one place only -- within.

Q: Surely there is something valid and valuable in every approach.

M: In each case the value lies in bringing you to the need of seeking within. Playing with various approaches may be due to resistance to going within, to the fear of having to abandon the illusion of being something or somebody in particular.

45. What Comes and Goes has no Being

M: The person merely appears to be, like the space within the pot appears to have the shape and volume and smell of the pot. See that you are not what you believe yourself to be. Fight with all the strength at your disposal against the idea that you are nameable and describable. You are not. Refuse to think of yourself in terms of this or that. There is no other way out of misery, which you have created for yourself through blind acceptance without investigation. Suffering is a call for enquiry, all pain needs investigation. Don't be too lazy to think.

M: To work in the world is hard, to refrain from all unnecessary work is even harder.

M: As long as we imagine ourselves to be separate personalities, one quite apart from another, we cannot grasp reality which is essentially impersonal. First we must know ourselves as witnesses only, dimensionless and timeless centres of observation, and then realise that immense ocean of pure awareness, which is both mind and matter and beyond both.

M: Your being a person is due to the illusion of space and time; you imagine yourself to be at a certain point occupying a certain volume; your personality is due to your self-identification with the body. Your thoughts and feelings exist in succession, they have their span in time and make you imagine yourself, because of memory, as having duration. In reality time and space exist in you; you do not exist in them. They are modes of perception, but they are not the only ones.

Q: What is the cause of personification, of self-limitation in time and space?

M: That which does not exist cannot have a cause. There is no such thing as a separate person. Even taking the empirical point of view, it is obvious that everything is the cause of everything, that everything is as it is, because the entire universe is as it is.

Q: Yet personality must have a cause.

M: How does personality, come into being? By memory. By identifying the present with the past and projecting it into the future. Think of yourself as momentary, without past and future and your personality dissolves.

Q: Does not 'I am' remain?

M: The word 'remain' does not apply. 'I am' is ever afresh. You do not need to remember in order to *be*. As a matter of fact, before you can experience anything, there must be the sense of being. At present your being is mixed up with experiencing. All you need is to unravel being from the tangle of experiences. Once you have known pure being, without being this or that, you will discern it among experiences and you will no longer be misled by names and forms.

Self-limitation is the very essence of personality.

Q: How can I become universal?

M: But you are universal. You need not and you cannot become what you are already. Only cease imagining yourself to be the particular. What comes and goes has no being. It owes its very appearance to reality. You know that there is a world, but does the world know you? All knowledge flows from you, as all being and all joy. realise that you are the eternal source and accept all as your own. Such acceptance is true love.

Q: All you say sounds very beautiful. But how has one to make it into a way of living?

M: Having never left the house you are asking for the way home. Get rid of wrong ideas, that is all. Collecting right ideas also will take you nowhere. Just cease imagining.

Q: It is not a matter of achievement, but of understanding.

M: Don't try to understand! Enough if you do not misunderstand. Don't rely on your mind for liberation. It is the mind that brought you into bondage. Go beyond it altogether.

46. Awareness of Being is Bliss

M.: It is the self that makes the body and the mind so interesting, so very dear. The very attention given to them comes from the self.

M: To know that you are neither body nor mind, watch yourself steadily and live unaffected by your body and mind, completely aloof, as if you were dead. It means you have no vested¹ interests, either in the body or in the mind. (...)

Just remain unaffected. This complete aloofness, unconcern with mind and body is the best proof that at the core of your being you are neither mind nor body. What happens to the body and the mind may not be within your power to change, but you can always put an end to your imagining yourself to be body and mind. Whatever happens, remind yourself that only your body and mind are affected, not yourself. The more earnest you are at remembering what needs to be remembered, the sooner will you be aware of yourself as you are, for memory will become experience. Earnestness reveals being. What is imagined and willed becomes actuality -- here lies the danger as well as the way out.

M: But the self is there. Your desires are there. Your longing to be happy is there. Why? Because you love yourself. By all means love yourself -- wisely. What is wrong is to love yourself stupidly, so as to make yourself suffer. Love yourself wisely. Both indulgence and austerity have the same purpose in view -- to make you happy. Indulgence is the stupid way, austerity is the wise way.

Q: What is austerity?

M: Once you have gone through an experience, not to go through it again is austerity. To eschew the unnecessary is austerity. Not to anticipate pleasure or pain is austerity. Having things under control at all times is austerity. Desire by itself is not wrong. It is life itself, the urge to grow in knowledge and experience.

It is the choices you make that are wrong. To imagine that some little thing -- food, sex, power, fame -- will make you happy is to deceive yourself. Only something as vast and deep as your real self can make you truly and lastingly happy.

M: Live an orderly life, but don't make it a goal by itself. It should be the starting point for high adventure.

M: you are not in the body, the body is in you! The mind is in you. They happen to you. They are there because you find them interesting. Your very nature has the infinite capacity to enjoy. It is full of zest and affection. It sheds its radiance on all that comes within its focus of awareness and nothing is excluded. It does not know evil nor ugliness, it hopes, it trusts, it loves. You people do not know how much you miss by not knowing your own true self. You are neither the body nor the mind, neither the fuel nor the fire. They appear and disappear according to their own laws.

(...) Don't pretend to be what you are not, don't refuse to be what you are. Your love of others is the result of self-knowledge, not its cause. Without self-realisation, no virtue is genuine. When you know beyond all doubting that the same

¹ Vested = revestido; (jur.) adquirido.

life flows through all that is and you are that life, you will love all naturally and spontaneously. When you realise the depth and fullness of your love of yourself, you know that every living being and the entire universe are included in your affection. But when you look at anything as separate from you, you cannot love it for you are afraid of it. Alienation causes fear and fear deepens alienation. It is a vicious circle. Only self-realisation can break it. Go for it resolutely.

47. Watch Your Mind

Maharaj: What is done under pressure of society and circumstances does not matter much, for it is mostly mechanical, mere reacting to impacts. It is enough to watch oneself dispassionately to isolate oneself completely from what is going on. What has been done without minding, blindly, may add to one's karma (destiny), otherwise it hardly matters. The Guru demands one thing only; clarity and intensity of purpose, a sense of responsibility for oneself.

M.: The Guru you have in mind, one who gives you information and instructions, is not the real Guru. The real Guru is he who knows the real, beyond the glamour of appearances. To him your questions about obedience and discipline do not make sense, for in his eyes the person you take yourself to be does not exist, your questions are about a non-existing person. What exists for you does not exist for him. What you take for granted, he denies absolutely. He wants you to see yourself as he sees you. Then you will not need a Guru to obey and follow, for you will obey and follow your own reality.

Q: Does one need to abandon one's profession and one's social standing in order to find reality?

M: Do your work. When you have a moment free, look within. What is important is not to miss the opportunity when it presents itself. If you are earnest you will use your leisure fully. That is enough.

Q: In my search for the essential and discarding the unessential, is there any scope for creative living? For instance, I love painting. Will it help me if I give my leisure hours to painting?

M: Whatever you may have to do, watch your mind. Also you must have moments of complete inner peace and quiet, when your mind is absolutely still. If you miss it, you miss the entire thing. If you do not, the silence of the mind will dissolve and absorb all else.

M: An infant knows its body, but not the body-based distinctions. It is just conscious and happy. After all, that was the purpose for which it was born. The pleasure to be is the simplest form of self-love, which later grows into love of the self. Be like an infant with nothing standing between the body and the self. The

constant noise of the psychic life is absent. In deep silence the self contemplates the body. It is like the white paper on which nothing is written yet. Be like that infant, instead of trying to be this or that, be happy to be. You will be a fully awakened witness of the field of consciousness. But there should be no feelings and ideas to stand between you and the field.

Q: To be content with mere being seems to be a most selfish way of passing time.

M: A most worthy way of being selfish! By all means be selfish by foregoing everything but the Self. When you love the Self and nothing else, you go beyond the selfish and the unselfish. All distinctions lose their meaning. Love of one and love of all merge together in love, pure and simple, addressed to none, denied to none.

Q: Does my pursuing a vocation deny my earnestness?

M: I told you already. As long as you allow yourself an abundance of moments of peace, you can safely practice your most honourable profession. These moments of inner quiet will burn out all obstacles without fail. Don't doubt its efficacy. Try it.

M: Be interested in yourself beyond all experience, be with yourself, love yourself; the ultimate security is found only in self-knowledge. The main thing is earnestness. Be honest with yourself and nothing will betray you. Virtues and powers are mere tokens for children to play with. They are useful in the world, but do not take you out of it. To go beyond, you need alert immobility, quiet attention.

48. Awareness is Free

M: Desire, fear, trouble, joy, they cannot appear unless you are there to appear to. Yet, whatever happens, points to your existence as a perceiving centre. Disregard the pointers and be aware of what they are pointing to. It is quite simple, but it needs be done. What matters is the persistence with which you keep on returning to yourself.

Q: I seem to have a clear idea of what needs be done, but I find myself getting tired and depressed and seeking human company and thus wasting time that should be given to solitude and meditation.

M: Do what you feel like doing. Don't bully yourself. Violence will make you hard and rigid. Do not fight with what you take to be obstacles on your way. Just be interested in them, watch them, observe, enquire. Let anything happen -- good or bad. But don't let yourself be submerged by what happens.

Q: What is the purpose in reminding oneself all the time that one is the watcher?

M: The mind must learn that beyond the moving mind there is the background of awareness, which does not change. The mind must come to know the true self and respect it and cease covering it up, like the moon which obscures the sun during solar eclipse. Just realise that nothing observable, or experienceable is you, or binds you. Take no notice of what is not yourself.

Q: To do what you tell me I must be ceaselessly aware.

M: To be aware is to be awake. Unaware means asleep. You are aware anyhow, you need not try to be. What you need is to be aware of being aware. Be aware deliberately and consciously, broaden and deepen the field of awareness. You are always conscious of the mind, but you are not aware of yourself as being conscious.

M: All you are conscious of is your mind; awareness is the cognisance of consciousness as a whole.

M: Don't say: 'everybody is conscious'. Say: 'there is consciousness', in which everything appears and disappears. Our minds are just waves on the ocean of consciousness. As waves they come and go. As ocean they are infinite and eternal. Know yourself as the ocean of being, the womb of all existence. These are all metaphors of course; the reality is beyond description. You can know it only by being it.

M: While the mind is centred in the body and consciousness is centred in the mind, awareness is free. The body has its urges and mind its pains and pleasures. Awareness is unattached and unshaken. It is lucid, silent, peaceful, alert and unafraid, without desire and fear. Meditate on it as your true being and try to be it in your daily life, and you shall realise it in its fullness.

Mind is interested in what happens, while awareness is interested in the mind itself. The child is after the toy, but the mother watches the child, not the toy.

M: The same power that makes the fire burn and the water flow, the seeds sprout and the trees grow, makes me answer your questions. There is nothing personal about me, though the language and the style may appear personal. A person is a set pattern of desires and thoughts and resulting actions; there is no such pattern in my case. There is nothing I desire or fear -- how can there be a pattern?

Q: What is meditation and what are its uses?

M: As long as you are a beginner certain formalised meditations, or prayers may be good for you. But for a seeker for reality there is only one meditation -- the rigorous refusal to harbour thoughts. To be free from thoughts is itself meditation.

Q: How is it done?

M: You begin by letting thoughts flow and watching them. The very observation slows down the mind till it stops altogether. Once the mind is quiet, keep it quiet. Don't get bored with peace, be in it, go deeper into it.

M: Your body and your mind exist as long as you believe so. Cease to think that they are yours and they will just dissolve. By all means let your body and mind function, but do not let them limit you. If you notice imperfections, just keep on noticing: your very giving attention to them will set your heart and mind and body right.

M: Man becomes what he believes himself to be. Abandon all ideas about yourself and you will find yourself to be the pure witness, beyond all that can happen to the body or the mind.

49. Mind Causes Insecurity

M: It is in the unknown that we live and move. the known is the past.

M: What was never lost can never be found. Your very search for safety and joy keeps you away from them. Stop searching, cease losing. The disease is simple and the remedy equally simple. It is your mind only that makes you insecure and unhappy. Anticipation makes you insecure, memory -- unhappy. Stop misusing your mind and all will be well with you. You need not set it right -- it will set itself right, as soon as you give up all concern with the past and the future and live entirely in the now.

M: As long as you see the least difference, you are a stranger to reality. You are on the level of the mind. (...)Diversity without separateness is the Ultimate that the mind can touch. Beyond that all activity ceases, because in it all goals are reached and all purposes fulfilled.

M: This work of mental self-purification, the cleansing of the psyche, is essential. Just as a speck in the eye, by causing inflammation, may wipe out the world, so the mistaken idea: 'I am the body-mind' causes the self-concern, which obscures the universe.

50. Self-awareness is the Witness

M: To see that all knowledge is a form of ignorance is itself a movement of reality.

M: In reality nothing happens. Onto the screen of the mind destiny forever projects its pictures, memories of former projections and thus illusion constantly

renews itself. The pictures come and go -- light intercepted by ignorance. See the light and disregard the picture.

M: As long as you pay attention to ideas, your own or of others, you will be in trouble. But if you disregard all teachings, all books, anything out into words and dive deeply within yourself and find yourself, this alone will solve all your problems and leave you in full mastery of every situation, because you will not be dominated by your ideas about the situation.

51. Be Indifferent to Pain and Pleasure

M: The Self is near and the way to it is easy. All you need doing is doing nothing.

Q: Yet I found my *sadhana* very difficult.

M: Your *sadhana* is to *be*. The doing happens. Just be watchful. Where is the difficulty in remembering that you are? Your *are* all the time.

M: Why do you talk of action? Are you acting ever? Some unknown power acts and you imagine that you are acting. You are merely watching what happens, without being able to influence it in any way.

Q: Why is there such a tremendous resistance in me against accepting that I just can do nothing?

M: But what can you do? You are like a patient under anaesthetics on whom a surgeon performs an operation. When you wake up you find the operation over; can you say you have done something?

Q: But it is me who has chosen to submit to an operation.

M: Certainly not. It is your illness on one side and the pressure of your physician and family on the other that have made you decide. You have no choice, only the illusion of it.

M: Your burden is of false self-identifications -- abandon them all. My Guru told me -- 'Trust me. I tell you; you are divine. Take it as the absolute truth. Your joy is divine, your suffering is divine too. All comes from God. Remember it always. You are God, your will alone is done'. I did believe him and soon realised how wonderfully true and accurate were his words. I did not condition my mind by thinking: 'I am God, I am wonderful, I am beyond'. I simply followed his instruction which was to focus the mind on pure being 'I am', and stay in it. I used to sit for hours together, with nothing but the 'I am' in my mind and soon peace and joy and a deep all-embracing love became my normal state. In it all disappeared -- myself, my Guru, the life I lived, the world around me. Only peace remained and unfathomable silence.

M: Watch your thoughts as you watch the street traffic. People come and go; you register without response. It may not be easy in the beginning, but with some practice you will find that your mind can function on many levels at the same time and you can be aware of them all. It is only when you have a vested interest in any particular level, that your attention gets caught in it and you black out on other levels. Even then the work on the blacked out levels goes on, outside the field of consciousness. Do not struggle with your memories and thoughts; try only to include in your field of attention the other, more important questions, like 'Who am I?' 'How did I happen to be born?' 'Whence this universe around me?'. 'What is real and what is momentary?' No memory will persist, if you lose interest in it, it is the emotional link that perpetuates the bondage. You are always seeking pleasure, avoiding pain, always after happiness and peace. Don't you see that it is your very search for happiness that makes you feel miserable? Try the other way: indifferent to pain and pleasure, neither asking, nor refusing, give all your attention to the level on which 'I am' is timelessly present. Soon you will realise that peace and happiness are in your very nature and it is only seeking them through some particular channels, that disturbs. Avoid the disturbance, that is all. (...)

By remembering what I told you you will achieve everything. I am telling you again: You are the all-pervading, all transcending reality. Behave accordingly: think, feel and act in harmony with the whole and the actual experience of what I say will dawn upon you in no time. No effort is needed. Have faith and act on it. Please see that I want nothing from you.

Q: Can I think 'I am God'?

M: Don't identify yourself with an idea. If you mean by God the Unknown, then you merely say: 'I do not know what I am'. If you know God as you know your self, you need not say it. Best is the simple feeling 'I am'. Dwell on it patiently. Here patience is wisdom; don't think of failure. There can be no failure in this undertaking.

Q: My thoughts will not let me.

M: Pay no attention. Don't fight them. Just do nothing about them, let them be, whatever they are. Your very fighting them gives them life. Just disregard. Look through. Remember to remember: 'whatever happens -- happens because I am'. All reminds you that you *are*. Take full advantage of the fact that to experience you must *be*. You need not stop thinking. Just cease being interested. It is disinterestedness that liberates. Don't hold on, that is all. The world is made of rings. The hooks are all yours. Make straight your hooks and nothing can hold you. Give up your addictions. There is nothing else to give up. Stop your routine of acquisitiveness, your habit of looking for results and the freedom of the universe is yours. Be effortless.

Q: Life is effort. There are so many things to do.

M: What needs doing, do it. Don't resist. Your balance must be dynamic, based on doing just the right thing, from moment to moment.

M: When the mind is in its natural state, it reverts to silence spontaneously after every experience or, rather, every experience happens against the background of silence.

M: Now, what you have learnt here becomes the seed. You may forget it -- apparently. But it will live and in due season sprout and grow and bring forth flowers and fruits. All will happen by itself. You need not do anything, only don't prevent it.

53. Desires Fulfilled, Breed More Desires

M: If you just try to keep quiet, all will come -- the work, the strength for work, the right motive. Must you know everything beforehand? Don't be anxious about your future -- be quiet now and all will fall in place. The unexpected is bound to happen, while the anticipated may never come. Don't tell me you cannot control your nature. You need not control it. Throw it overboard. Have no nature to fight, or to submit to. No experience will hurt you, provided you don't make it into a habit. Of the entire universe you are the subtle cause. All is because you are. Grasp this point firmly and deeply and dwell on it repeatedly. To realise this as absolutely true, is liberation.

M: Nature is neither pleasant nor painful. It is all intelligence and beauty. Pain and pleasure are in the mind. Change your scale of values and all will change. Pleasure and pain are mere disturbances of the senses; treat them equally and there will be only bliss. And the world is, what you make it; by all means make it happy. Only contentment can make you happy -- desires fulfilled breed more desires. Keeping away from all desires and contentment in what comes by itself is a very fruitful state -- a precondition to the state of fullness. Don't distrust its apparent sterility and emptiness. Believe me, it is the satisfaction of desires that breeds misery. Freedom from desires is bliss.

Q: There are things we need.

M: What you need will come to you, if you do not ask for what you do not need. Yet only few people reach this state of complete dispassion and detachment. It is a very high state, the very threshold of liberation.

M: Let things happen as they happen -- they will sort themselves out nicely in the end. (...)

This is detachment -- when the old is over and the new has not yet come. If you are afraid, the state may be distressing; but there is really nothing to be afraid of. Remember the instruction: whatever you come across -- go beyond.

M: If you desire to be free, neglect not the nearest step to freedom. It is like climbing a mountain: not a step can be missed. One step less -- and the summit is not reached.

54. Body and Mind are Symptoms of Ignorance

Q: If the reasons are imaginary, why should the suffering be inevitable?

M: It is always the false that makes you suffer, the false desires and fears, the false values and ideas, the false relationships between people. Abandon the false and you are free of pain; truth makes happy -- truth liberates.

Q: The truth is that I am a mind imprisoned in a body and this is a very unhappy truth.

M: You are neither the body nor in the body -- there is no such thing as body. You have grievously misunderstood yourself; to understand rightly -- investigate.

Q: But I was born as a body, in a body and shall die with the body, as a body.

M: This is your misconception. Enquire, investigate, doubt yourself and others. To find truth, you must not cling to your convictions; if you are sure of the immediate, you will never reach the ultimate. Your idea that you were born and that you will die is absurd: both logic and experience contradict it.

Q: You smoke?

M: My body kept a few habits which may as well continue till it dies. There is no harm in them.

Q: You eat meat?

M: I was born among meat-eating people and my children are eating meat. I eat very little -- and make no fuss.

Q: Meat-eating implies killing.

M: Obviously. I make no claims of consistency. You think absolute consistency is possible; prove it by example. Don't preach what you do not practise.

M: Now, divest yourself of the idea that you are the body with the help of the contrary idea that you are not the body. It is also an idea, no doubt; treat it like something to be abandoned when its work is done. The idea that I am not the body gives reality to the body, when in fact, there is no such thing as body, it is but a state of mind. You can have as many bodies and as diverse as you like; just remember steadily what you want and reject the incompatibles.

M: Without awareness, the body would not last a second. There is in the body a current of energy, affection and intelligence, which guides, maintains and energises the body. Discover that current and stay with it.

M: You assert yourself to be what you are not and deny yourself to be what you are. You omit the element of pure cognition, of awareness free from all personal distortions. Unless you admit the reality of chit, you will never know yourself.

Q: What am I to do? I do not see myself as you see me. Maybe you are right and I am wrong, but how can I cease to be what I feel I am?

M: A prince who believes himself to be a beggar can be convinced conclusively in one way only: he must behave as a prince and see what happens. Behave as if what I say is true and judge by what actually happens. All I ask is the little faith needed for making the first step. With experience will come confidence and you will not need me any more. I know what you are and I am telling you. Trust me for a while.

Q: To be here and now, I need my body and its senses. To understand, I need a mind.

M: The body and the mind are only symptoms of ignorance, of misapprehension. Behave as if you were pure awareness, bodiless and mindless, spaceless and timeless, beyond 'where' and 'when' and 'how'. Dwell on it, think of it, learn to accept its reality. Don't oppose it and deny it all the time. Keep an open mind at least.

55. Give up All and You Gain All

Questioner: What is your state at the present moment?

Maharaj: A state of non-experiencing. In it all experience is included.

Q: If there is no advantage in gaining the Supreme, then why take the trouble?

M: There is trouble only when you cling to something. When you hold on to nothing, no trouble arises. The relinquishing of the lesser is the gaining of the greater. Give up all and you gain all. Then life becomes what it was meant to be: pure radiation from an inexhaustible source. In that light the world appears dimly like a dream.

M: Let the dream unroll itself to its very end. You cannot help it. But you can look at the dream as a dream, refuse it the stamp of reality.

M: You need not bring your dream to a definite conclusion, or make it noble, or happy, or beautiful; all you need is to realise that you are dreaming. Stop imagining, stop believing. See the contradictions, the incongruities, the falsehood and the sorrow of the human state, the need to go beyond. Within the immensity of space floats a tiny atom of consciousness and in it the entire universe is contained.

M: What you call survival is but the survival of a dream. Death is preferable to it. There is a chance of waking up.

M: Freedom from all desire is eternity. All attachment implies fear, for all things are transient. And fear makes one a slave. This freedom from attachment does not come with practice; it is natural, when one knows one's true being. Love does not cling; clinging is not love.

Q: So there is no way to gain detachment?

M: There is nothing to gain. Abandon all imaginings and know yourself as you are. Self-knowledge is detachment. All craving is due to a sense of insufficiency. When you know that you lack nothing, that all there is, is you and yours, desire ceases.

Q: To know myself must I practise awareness?

M: There is nothing to practise. To know yourself, be yourself. To be yourself, stop imagining yourself to be this or that. Just be. Let your true nature emerge. Don't disturb your mind with seeking.

Q: It will take much time if I Just wait for self-realisation.

M: What have you to wait for when it is already here and now? You have only to look and see. Look at your self, at your own being. You know that you are and you like it. Abandon all imagining, that is all. Do not rely on time. Time is death. Who waits -- dies. Life is now only. Do not talk to me about past and future -- they exist only in your mind.

Q: You too will die.

M: I am dead already. Physical death will make no difference in my case. I am timeless being. I am free of desire or fear, because I do not remember the past, or imagine the future. Where there are no names and shapes, how can there be desire and fear? With desirelessness comes timelessness. I am safe, because what is not, cannot touch what is.

M: [Answering to someone eager to “help” others] Where action is needed, action happens. Man is not the actor. His is to be aware of what is going on. His very presence is action. The window is the absence of the wall and it gives air and light because it is empty. Be empty of all mental content, of all imagination and effort, and the very absence of obstacles will cause reality to rush in. If you really want to help a person, keep away. If you are emotionally committed to helping, you will fail to help. You may be very busy and be very pleased with your charitable nature, but not much will be done. A man is really helped when he is no longer in need of help. All else is just futility.

M: When you see sorrow and suffering, be with it. Do not rush into activity. Neither learning nor action can really help. Be with sorrow and lay bare its roots -- helping to understand is real help.

56. Consciousness Arising, World Arises

M: To *be*, I need no past or future. All experience is born of imagination; I do not imagine, so no birth or death happens to me. Only those who think themselves born can think themselves re-born. You are accusing me of having been born -- I plead not guilty!

M: There is no such thing as unconsciousness, for unconsciousness is not experienceable. We infer unconsciousness when there is a lapse in memory or communication.

M: Of course we live in one world. Only I see it as it is, while you don't. You see yourself in the world, while I see the world in myself. To you, you get born and die, while to me, the world appears and disappears. Our world is real, but your view of it is not. There is no wall between us, except the one built by you. There is nothing wrong with the senses, it is your imagination that misleads you. It covers up the world as it is, with what you imagine it to be -- something existing independently of you and yet closely following your inherited, or acquired patterns. There is a deep contradiction in your attitude, which you do not see and which is the cause of sorrow.

Q: The seer and the seen: are they one or two?

M: There is only seeing; both the seer and the seen are contained in it. Don't create differences where there are none.

57. Beyond Mind there is no Suffering

M: I see as you see, hear as you hear, taste as you taste, eat as you eat. I also feel thirst and hunger and expect my food to be served on time. When starved or sick, my body and mind go weak. All this I perceive quite clearly, but somehow I am not in it, I feel myself as if floating over it, aloof and detached. Even not aloof and detached. There is aloofness and detachment as there is thirst and hunger; there is also the awareness of it all and a sense of Immense distance, as if the body and the mind and all that happens to them were somewhere far out on the horizon. (...) The feeling: 'I am not this or that, nor is anything mine' is so strong in me that as soon as a thing or a thought appears, there comes at once the sense 'this I am not'.

M: Look, my thumb touches my forefinger. Both touch and are touched. When my attention; is on the thumb, the thumb is the feeler and the forefinger -- the self. Shift the focus of attention and the relationship is reversed. I find that somehow, by shifting the focus of attention, I become the very thing I look at and

experience the kind of consciousness it has; I become the inner witness of the thing. I call this capacity of entering other focal points of consciousness -- love; you may give it any name you like. Love says: 'I am everything'. Wisdom says: 'I am nothing' Between the two my life flows. Since at any point of time and space I can be both the subject and the object of experience, I express it by saying that I am both, and neither, and beyond both.

M: Having realised that I am one with, and yet beyond the world, I became free from all desire and fear. I did not reason out that I should be free -- I found myself free -- unexpectedly, without the least effort. This freedom from desire and fear remained with me since then. Another thing I noticed was that I do not need to make an effort; the deed follows the thought, without delay and friction. I have also found that thoughts become self-fulfilling; things would fall in place smoothly and rightly. The main change was in the mind; it became motionless and silent, responding quickly, but not perpetuating the response. Spontaneity became a way of life, the real became natural and the natural became real. And above all, infinite affection, love, dark and quiet, radiating in all directions, embracing all, making all interesting and beautiful, significant and auspicious.

M: Pain is physical; suffering is mental. Beyond the mind there is no suffering. (...) Pain is essential for the survival of the body, but none compels you to suffer. Suffering is due entirely to clinging or resisting; it is a sign of our unwillingness to move on, to flow with life.

As a sane life is free of pain, so is a saintly life free from suffering.

Q: Nobody has suffered more than saints.

M: Did they tell you, or do you say so on your own? The essence of saintliness is total acceptance of the present moment, harmony with things as they happen. A saint does not want things to be different from what they are; he knows that, considering all factors, they are unavoidable. He is friendly with the inevitable and, therefore, does not suffer. Pain he may know, but it does not shatter him. If he can, he does the needful to restore the lost balance -- or he lets things take their course.

58. Perfection, Destiny of All

Maharaj: The very fact of observation alters the observer and the observed. After all, what prevents the insight into one's true nature is the weakness and obtuseness of the mind and its tendency to skip the subtle and focus on the gross only. When you follow my advice and try to keep your mind on the notion of 'I am' only, you become fully aware of your mind and its vagaries. Awareness, being lucid harmony (*sattva*) in action, dissolves dullness and quietens the restlessness of the mind and gently, but steadily changes its very substance.

M: For this keep steadily in the focus of consciousness the only clue you have: your certainty of being. Be with it, play with it, ponder over it, delve deeply into it, till the shell of ignorance breaks open and you emerge into the realm of reality.

M: The urge to find oneself is a sign that you are getting ready. The impulse always comes from within. Unless your time has come, you will have neither the desire nor the strength to go for self-enquiry whole-heartedly.

Q: I should at least expect him [the Guru] to be a man of self-control who lives a righteous life.

M: Such you will find many -- and of no use to you. A Guru can show the way back home, to your real Self. What has this to do with the character, or temperament of the person he appears to be? Does he not clearly tell you that he is not the person? The only way you can judge is by the change in yourself when you are in his company. If you feel more at peace and happy, if you understand yourself with more than usual clarity and depth, it means you have met the right man. Take your time, but once you have made up your mind to trust him, trust him absolutely and follow every instruction fully and faithfully. It does not matter much if you do not accept him as your Guru and are satisfied with his company only. *Satsang* alone can also take you to your goal, provided it is unmixed and undisturbed. But once you accept somebody as your Guru, listen, remember and obey. Half-heartedness is a serious drawback and the cause of much self-created sorrow.

Q: What is the motive? Why does the Guru take so much trouble?

M: Sorrow and the ending of sorrow. He sees people suffering in their dreams and he wants them to wake up. Love is intolerant of pain and suffering. The patience of a Guru has no limits and, therefore, it cannot be defeated. The Guru never fails.

Q: Is my first Guru also my last, or do I have to pass from Guru to Guru?

M: The entire universe is your Guru. You learn from everything, if you are alert and intelligent. Were your mind clear and your heart clean, you would learn from every passer-by. It is because you are indolent or restless, that your inner Self manifests as the outer Guru and makes you trust him and obey.

Q: What is lower and what is higher?

M: Look at it in terms of awareness. Wider and deeper consciousness is higher. All that lives, works for protecting, perpetuating and expanding consciousness. This is the world's sole meaning and purpose.

Q: Is perfection the destiny of all human beings?

M: Of all living beings -- ultimately. The possibility becomes a certainty when the notion of enlightenment appears in the mind. Once a living being has heard and understood that deliverance is within his reach, he will never forget, for it is the first message from within. It will take roots and grow and in due course take the blessed shape of the Guru.

Q: So all we are concerned with is the redemption of the mind?

M: What else? The mind goes astray, the mind returns home. Even the word 'astray' is not proper. The mind must know itself in every mood. Nothing is a mistake unless repeated.

59. Desire and Fear: Self-centred States

M: If you look at yourself in your moments of pleasure or pain, you will invariably find that it is not the thing in itself that is pleasant or painful, but the situation of which it is a part. Pleasure lies in the relationship between the enjoyer and the enjoyed. And the essence of it is acceptance. Whatever may be the situation, if it is acceptable, it is pleasant. If it is not acceptable, it is painful. What makes it acceptable is not important; the cause may be physical, or psychological, or untraceable; acceptance is the decisive factor. Reversely, suffering is due to non-acceptance.

Q: Pain is not acceptable.

M: Why not? Did you ever try? Do try and you will find in pain a joy which pleasure cannot yield, for the simple reason that acceptance of pain takes you much deeper than pleasure does. The personal self by its very nature is constantly pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain. The ending of this pattern is the ending of the self. (...) When pain is accepted for what it is, a lesson and a warning, and deeply looked into and heeded, the separation between pain and pleasure breaks down, both become experience -- painful when resisted, joyful when accepted.

Q: Do you advise shunning pleasure and pursuing pain?

M: No, nor pursuing pleasure and shunning pain. Accept both as they come, enjoy both while they last, let them go, as they must.

Q: How can I possibly enjoy pain? Physical pain calls for action.

M: Of course. And so does Mental. The bliss is in the awareness of it, in not shrinking, or in any way turning away from it. All happiness comes from awareness. The more we are conscious, the deeper the joy. Acceptance of pain, non-resistance, courage and endurance -- these open deep and perennial sources of real happiness, true bliss.

Q: How can I set right a tangle which is entirely below the level of my consciousness?

M: By being with yourself, the 'I am'; by watching yourself in your daily life with alert interest, with the intention to understand rather than to judge, in full

acceptance of whatever may emerge, because it is there, you encourage the deep to come to the surface and enrich your life and consciousness with its captive energies. This is the great work of awareness; it removes obstacles and releases energies by understanding the nature of life and mind. Intelligence is the door to freedom and alert attention is the mother of intelligence.

Q: Is there no such thing as permanent perfection?

M: Yes, there is, but it includes all imperfection. It is the perfection of our self-nature which makes everything possible, perceivable, interesting. It knows no suffering, for it neither likes nor dislikes; neither accepts nor rejects. Creation and destruction are the two poles between which it weaves its ever-changing pattern. Be free from predilections and preferences and the mind with its burden of sorrow will be no more.

60. Live Facts, not Fancies

Q: Do you mean to say that between good and evil there is no wall?

M: There is no wall, because there is no good and no evil. In every concrete situation there is only the necessary and the unnecessary. The needful is right, the needless is wrong. (...)The needful is good and the needless is evil. In your world the pleasant is good and the painful is evil.

Q: Who decides?

M: The situation decides. Every situation is a challenge which demands the right response. When the response is right, the challenge is met and the problem ceases. If the response is wrong, the challenge is not met and the problem remains unsolved. Your unsolved problems -- that is what constitutes your *karma*. Solve them rightly and be free.

M: The end is in the beginning. You end where you start -- in the Absolute.

Q: Why all this trouble then? To come back to where I started?

M: Whose trouble? Which trouble? Do you pity the seed that is to grow and multiply till it becomes a mighty forest? Do you kill an infant to save him from the bother of living? What is wrong with life, ever more life? Remove the obstacles to growing and all your personal, social, economic and political problems will just dissolve. The universe is perfect as a whole and the part's striving for perfection is a way of joy. Willingly sacrifice the imperfect to the perfect and there will be no more talk about good and evil.

61. Matter is Consciousness Itself

M: Without imagination there is no world. Your conviction that you are conscious of a world is the world. The world you perceive is made of consciousness; what you call matter is consciousness Itself. You are the space (*akash*) in which it moves, the time in which it lasts, the love that gives it life. Cut off imagination and attachment and what remains?

Q: The world remains. I remain.

M: Yes. But how different it is when you can see it as it is, not through the screen of desire and fear.

M: Everything moves according to its nature. Where is the need of a policeman? Every action creates a reaction, which balances and neutralises the action. Everything happens, but there is a continuous cancelling out, and in the end it is as if nothing happened.

M: There is only imagination. The intelligence and power are all used up in your imagination. It has absorbed you so completely that you just cannot grasp how far from reality you have wandered. No doubt imagination is richly creative. Universe within universe are built on it. Yet they are all in space and time, past and future, which just do not exist.

M: What you call realization is a natural thing. When you are ready, your Guru will be waiting. *Sadhana* is effortless. When the relationship with your teacher is right you grow. Above all, trust him. He cannot mislead you.

Q: Even when he asks me to do something patently wrong?

M: Do it. A *Sanyasi* had been asked by his Guru to marry. He obeyed and suffered bitterly. But his four children were all saints and seers, the greatest in Maharashtra. Be happy with whatever comes from your Guru and you will grow to perfection without striving.

Q: Sir, have you any wants or wishes. Can I do anything for you?

M: What can you give me that I do not have? Material things are needed for contentment. But I am contented with myself. What else do I need?

Q: Surely, when you are hungry you need food and when sick you need medicine.

M: Hunger brings the food and illness brings the medicine. It is all nature's work.

Q: If I bring something I believe you need, will you accept it?

M: The love that made you offer will make me accept.

M: Let him, by all means. Let him spend a fortune, employ hundreds, feed thousands.

Q: Is it not a desire?

M: Not at all. I am only asking him to do it properly, not stingily, half-heartedly. He is fulfilling his own desire, not mine. Let him do it well and be famous among men and gods.

Q: How am I to go into *samadhi*?

M: If you are in the right state, whatever you see will put you into *samadhi*. After all, *samadhi* is nothing unusual. When the mind is intensely interested, it becomes one with the object of interest -- the seer and the seen become one in seeing, the hearer and the heard become one in hearing, the lover and the loved become one in loving. Every experience can be the ground for *samadhi*.

Q: Are you always in a state of *samadhi*?

M: Of course not. *Samadhi* is a state of mind, after all. I am beyond all experience, even of *samadhi*. I am the great devourer and destroyer: whatever I touch dissolves into void (*akash*).

62. In the Supreme the Witness Appears

Q: One has to remember not to remember. What a task!

M: It cannot be done, of course. It must happen. But it does happen when you truly see the need of it. Again, earnestness is the golden key.

Q: How is it that here my mind is engaged in high topics and finds dwelling on them easy and pleasant. When I return home I find myself forgetting all I have learnt here, worrying and fretting, unable to remember my real nature even for a moment. What may be the cause?

M: It is your childishness you are returning to. You are not fully grown up; there are levels left undeveloped because unattended. Just give full attention to what in you is crude and primitive, unreasonable and unkind, altogether childish, and you will ripen. It is the maturity of heart and mind that is essential. It comes effortlessly when the main obstacle is removed -- inattention, unawareness. In awareness you grow.

63. Notion of Doership is Bondage

M: There is only life. There is nobody who lives a life.

Q: That we understand, yet constantly we make attempts to live our lives instead of just living. Making plans for the future seems to be an inveterate habit with us.

M: Whether you plan or don't, life goes on. But in life itself a little whorl arises in the mind, which indulges in fantasies and imagines itself dominating and controlling life. Life itself is desireless. But the false self wants to continue --

pleasantly. Therefore it is always engaged in ensuring one's continuity. Life is unafraid and free. As long as you have the idea of influencing events, liberation is not for you: The very notion of doership, of being a cause, is bondage.

Q: Why should I imagine myself so wretched?

M: You do it by habit only. Change your ways of feeling and thinking, take stock of them and examine them closely. You are in bondage by inadvertence. Attention liberates. You are taking so many things for granted. Begin to question. The most obvious things are the most doubtful.

Q: How is one to be free from the 'I'-sense?

M: You must deal with the 'I'-sense if you want to be free of it. Watch it in operation and at peace, how it starts and when it ceases, what it wants and how it gets it, till you see clearly and understand fully. After all, all the *Yogas*, whatever their source and character, have only one aim: to save you from the calamity of separate existence, of being a meaningless dot in a vast and beautiful picture.

Q: I have definite spiritual ambitions. Must I not work for their fulfilment?

M: No ambition is spiritual. All ambitions are for the sake of the 'I am'. If you want to make real progress you must give up all idea of personal attainment. The ambitions of the so-called *Yogis* are preposterous². A man's desire for a woman is innocence itself compared to the lusting for an everlasting personal bliss. The mind is a cheat. The more pious it seems, the worse the betrayal.

64. Whatever pleases you, Keeps you Back

M: The point when the mind accepts the words of the Guru as true and lives by them spontaneously and in every detail of daily life is the threshold of realisation. In a way it is salvation by faith, but the faith must be intense and lasting. However, you must not think that faith itself is enough. Faith expressed in action is a sure means to realisation. Of all the means it is the most effective. There are teachers who deny faith and trust reason only. Actually it is not faith they deny, but blind beliefs. Faith is not blind. It is the willingness to try.

Q: But who creates the world?

M: The Universal Mind (*chidakash*) makes and unmakes everything. The Supreme (*paramakash*) imparts reality to whatever comes into being. To say that it is the universal love may be the nearest we can come to it in words. Just like love it makes everything real, beautiful, desirable.

Q: Why desirable?

² Preposterous = Absurdo, ridículo, despropositado.

M: Why not? Wherefrom come all the powerful attractions that make all created things respond to each other, that bring people together, if not from the Supreme? Shun not desire; see only that it flows into the right channels. Without desire you are dead. But with low desires you are a ghost.

Q: How does one reach the Supreme State?

M: By renouncing all lesser desires. As long as you are pleased with the lesser, you cannot have the highest. Whatever pleases you, keeps you back. Until you realise the unsatisfactoriness of everything, its transiency and limitation, and collect your energies in one great longing, even the first step is not made. On the other hand, the integrity of the desire for the Supreme is by itself a call from the Supreme. Nothing, physical or mental, can give you freedom. You are free once you understand that your bondage is of your own making and you cease forging the chains that bind you.

M: It is enough if you do not imagine yourself to be the body. It is the 'I-am-the-body' idea that is so calamitous. It blinds you completely to your real nature. Even for a moment do not think that you are the body. Give yourself no name, no shape. In the darkness and the silence reality is found.

Q: Must not I think with some conviction that I am not the body? Where am I to find such conviction?

M: Behave as if you were fully convinced and the confidence will come. What is the use of mere words? A formula, a mental pattern will not help you. But unselfish action, free from all concern with the body and its interests will carry you into the very heart of Reality.

M: Pleasure puts you to sleep and pain wakes you up.

65. A Quiet Mind is All You Need

M: While looking with the mind, you cannot go beyond it. To go beyond, you must look away from the mind and its contents.

Q: In what direction am I to look?

M: All directions are within the mind! I am not asking you to look in any particular direction. Just look away from all that happens in your mind and bring it to the feeling 'I am'. The 'I am' is not a direction. It is the negation of all direction. Ultimately even the 'I am' will have to go, for you need not keep on asserting what is obvious. Bringing the mind to the feeling 'I am' merely helps in turning the mind away from everything else.

Q: It is all very tempting, but how am I to proceed to realise my universal being?

M: You have two ways: you can give your heart and mind to self-discovery, or you accept my words on trust and act accordingly. In other words, either you become totally self-concerned, or totally un-self-concerned. It is the word 'totally' that is important. You must be extreme to reach the Supreme.

Q: How can I aspire to such heights, small and limited as I am?

M: Realise yourself as the ocean of consciousness in which all happens. This is not difficult. A little of attentiveness, of close observation of oneself, and you will see that no event is outside your consciousness.

M: You are right, there can be no experience beyond consciousness. Yet there is the experience of just *being*. There is a state beyond consciousness, which is not unconscious. Some call it super-consciousness, or pure consciousness, or supreme consciousness. It is pure awareness free from the subject object nexus.

Q: If I am beyond the mind, how can I change myself?

M: Where is the need of changing anything? The mind is changing anyhow all the time. Look at your mind dispassionately; this is enough to calm it. When it is quiet, you can go beyond it. Do not keep it busy all the time. Stop it -- and just *be*. If you give it rest, it will settle down and recover its purity and strength. Constant thinking makes it decay.

M: A quiet mind is all you need. All else will happen rightly, once your mind is quiet. As the sun on rising makes the world active, so does self-awareness affect changes in the mind. In the light of calm and steady self-awareness inner energies wake up and work miracles without any effort on your part.

Q: You mean to say that the greatest work is done by not working?

M: Exactly. Do understand that you are destined for enlightenment. Cooperate with your destiny, don't go against it, don't thwart it. Allow it to fulfil itself. All you have to do is to give attention to the obstacles created by the foolish mind.

66. All Search for Happiness is Misery

M: Generally speaking, there are two ways: external and internal. Either you live with somebody who knows the Truth and submit yourself entirely to his guiding and moulding influence, or you seek the inner guide and follow the inner light wherever it takes you. In both cases your personal desires and fears must be disregarded. You learn either by proximity or by investigation, the passive or the active way. You either let yourself be carried by the river of life and love represented by your Guru, or you make your own efforts, guided by your inner star. In both cases you must move on, you must be earnest.

Q: Once I have made up my mind to find The Reality, what do I do next?

M: It depends on your temperament. If you are earnest, whatever way you choose will take you to your goal. It is the earnestness that is the decisive factor.

M: What contradicts itself, has no being. Or it has only momentary being, which comes to the same. For, what has a beginning and an end has no middle. It is hollow. It has only the name and shape given to it by the mind, but it has neither substance nor essence.

M: It is the discarding the false that opens the way to the true.

Q: I understand, but how does it look in actual daily life?

M: Self-interest and self-concern are the focal points of the false. Your daily life vibrates between desire and fear. Watch it intently and you will see how the mind assumes innumerable names and shapes, like a river foaming between the boulders. Trace every action to its selfish motive and look at the motive intently till it dissolves. (...) Discard every self-seeking motive as soon as it is seen and you need not search for truth; truth will find you.

M: So, first of all abandon all self-identification, stop thinking of yourself as such-and-such, so-and-so, this or that. Abandon all self-concern, worry not about your welfare, material or spiritual, abandon every desire, gross or subtle, stop thinking of achievement of any kind. You are complete here and now, you need absolutely nothing.

It does not mean that you must be brainless and foolhardy³, improvident or indifferent; only the basic anxiety for oneself must go. You need some food, clothing and shelter for you and yours, but this will not create problems as long as greed is not taken for a need. Live in tune with things as they are and not as they are imagined.

M: All you can say about yourself is: 'I am.' You are pure being -- awareness -- bliss. To realise that is the end of all seeking. You come to it when you see all you think yourself to be as mere imagination and stand aloof in pure awareness of the transient as transient, imaginary as imaginary, unreal as unreal. It is not at all difficult, but detachment is needed. It is the clinging to the false that makes the true so difficult to see. Once you understand that the false needs time and what needs time is false, you are nearer the Reality, which is timeless, ever in the *now*. (...) If you need time to achieve something, it must be false. The real is always with you; you need not wait to be what you *are*.

Q: Must I not be happy? I may not need a thing, yet if it can make me happy, should I not grasp it?

³ Foolhardy = imprudente, temerário.

M: Nothing can make you happier than you are. All search for happiness is misery and leads to more misery. The only happiness worth the name is the natural happiness of conscious being.

Q: Don't I need a lot of experience before I can reach such a high level of awareness?

M: Experience leaves only memories behind and adds to the burden which is heavy enough. You need no more experiences. The past ones are sufficient. And if you feel you need more, look into the hearts of people around you. You will find a variety of experiences which you would not be able to go through in a thousand years. Learn from the sorrows of others and save yourself your own. It is not experience that you need, but the freedom from all experience. Don't be greedy for experience; you need none.

M: Life is worthy of the name only when it reflects Reality in action. No university will teach you how to live so that when the time of dying comes, you can say: I lived well I do not need to live again. Most of us die wishing we could live again. So many mistakes committed, so much left undone. Most of the people vegetate, but do not live. They merely gather experience and enrich their memory. But experience is the denial of Reality, which is neither sensory nor conceptual, neither of the body, nor of the mind, though it includes and transcends both.

M: If you ask me: 'Who are you?' My answer would be: 'Nothing in particular. Yet, I am.'

Q: Does it mean that I must give up all idea of an active life?

M: Not at all. There will be marriage, there will be children, there will be earning money to maintain a family; all this will happen in the natural course of events, for destiny must fulfil itself; you will go through it without resistance, facing tasks as they come, attentive and thorough, both in small things and big. But the general attitude will be of affectionate detachment, enormous goodwill, without expectation of return, constant giving without asking. In marriage you are neither the husband nor the wife; you are the love between the two. You are the clarity and kindness that makes everything orderly and happy. It may seem vague to you, but if you think a little, you will find that the mystical is most practical, for it makes your life creatively happy. Your consciousness is raised to a higher dimension, from which you see everything much clearer and with greater intensity. You realise that the person you became at birth and will cease to be at death is temporary and false. You are not the sensual, emotional and intellectual person, gripped by desires and fears. Find out your real being. What am I? is the fundamental question of all philosophy and psychology. Go into it deeply.

67. Experience is not the Real Thing

M: You cannot find me by mere denial. I am as well everything, as nothing. Nor both, nor either. These definitions apply to the Lord of the Universe, not to me.

Q: Do you intend to convey that you are just nothing.

M: Oh, no! I am complete and perfect. I am the beingness of being, the knowingness of knowing, the fullness of happiness. You cannot reduce me to emptiness!

M: I am offering you exactly what you need -- awakening. You are not hungry and you need no bread. You need cessation, relinquishing, disentanglement. What you believe you need is not what you need. Your real need I know, not you. You need to return to the state in which I am -- your natural state. Anything else you may think of is an illusion and an obstacle. Believe me, you need nothing except to be what you are. You imagine you will increase your value by acquisition. It is like gold imagining that an addition of copper⁴ will improve it. Elimination and purification, renunciation of all that is foreign to your nature is enough. All else is vanity.

Q: Of course, without the mind there will be no problems. But the mind is there -- most tangibly.

M: It is the mind that tells you that the mind is there. Don't be deceived. All the endless arguments about the mind are produced by the mind itself, for its own protection, continuation and expansion. It is the blank refusal to consider the convolutions and convulsions of the mind that can take you beyond it.

M: Listen to what I keep on telling you and do not move away from it. Think of it all the time and of nothing else. Having reached that far, abandon all thoughts, not only of the world, but of yourself also. Stay beyond all thoughts, in silent being-awareness.

Q: So you say I should try to stop thinking and stay steady in the idea: 'I am'.

M: Yes, and whatever thoughts come to you in connection with the 'I am', empty them of all meaning, pay them no attention.

M: Experience, however sublime, is not the real thing. By its very nature it comes and goes. Self-realisation is not an acquisition. It is more of the nature of understanding. Once arrived at, it cannot be lost. On the other hand, consciousness is changeful, flowing, undergoing transformation from moment to moment. Do not hold on to consciousness and its contents. Consciousness held, ceases. To try to perpetuate a flash of insight, or a burst of happiness is destructive of what it wants to preserve. What comes must go. The permanent is beyond all comings and goings.

⁴ Copper = cobre.

Go to the root of all experience, to the sense of being. Beyond being and not-being lies the immensity of the real. Try and try again.

Q: There must be a way for all to tread -- with no conditions attached.

M: There is such a way, open to all, on every level, in every walk of life. Everybody is aware of himself. The deepening and broadening of self-awareness is the royal way. Call it mindfulness, or witnessing, or just attention -- it is for all. None is unripe for it and none can fail.

But, of course, you must not be merely alert. Your mindfulness must include the mind also. Witnessing is primarily awareness of consciousness and its movements.

68. Seek the Source of Consciousness

M: Local and temporary improvement is always possible and was achieved again and again under the influence of a great king or teacher; but it would soon come to an end, leaving humanity in a new cycle of misery. It is in the nature of all manifestation that the good and the bad follow each other and in equal measure. The true refuge is only in the unmanifested.

Q: Are you not advising escape?

M: On the contrary. The only way to renewal lies through destruction. You must melt down the old jewellery into formless gold before you can mould a new one. Only the people who have gone beyond the world can change the world. It never happened otherwise.

M: Having lived a long and fruitful life you feel the need to die. Only when wrongly applied, desire and fear are destructive. By all means desire the right and fear the wrong. But when people desire what is wrong and fear what is right, they create chaos and despair.

Q: What is right and what is wrong?

M: Relatively, what causes suffering is wrong, what alleviates it is right. Absolutely, what brings you back to reality is right and what dims reality is wrong.

M: Above all, we want to remain conscious. We shall bear every suffering and humiliation, but we shall rather remain conscious. Unless we revolt against this craving for experience and let go the manifested altogether, there can be no relief. We shall remain trapped.

M: Be aware of being conscious and seek the source of consciousness. That is all.

69. Transiency is Proof of Unreality

M: There is nothing wrong with you as the Self. It is what it is to perfection. It is the mirror that is not clear and true and, therefore, gives you false images. You need not correct yourself -- only set right your idea of yourself. Learn to separate yourself from the image and the mirror, keep on remembering: I am neither the mind nor its ideas: do it patiently and with convictions and you will surely come to the direct vision of yourself as the source of being -- knowing -- loving, eternal, all-embracing all-pervading. You are the infinite focussed in a body. Now you see the body only. Try earnestly and you will come to see the infinite only.

M: All experience is necessarily transient. But the ground of all experience is immovable. Nothing that may be called an event will last. But some events purify the mind and some stain it.

Q: So far I have been following you. Now, what am I expected to do?

M: There is nothing to do. Just *be*. Do nothing. *Be*. No climbing mountains and sitting in caves. I do not even say: 'be yourself', since you do not know yourself. Just *be*. Having seen that you are neither the 'outer' world of perceivables, nor the 'inner' world of thinkables, that you are neither body nor mind -- just *be*.

M: There can be progress only in the preparation (*sadhana*). realisation is sudden. The fruit ripens slowly, but falls suddenly and without return.

M: How can anybody tell you what you shall become when there is no becoming? You merely discover what you are. All moulding oneself to a pattern is a grievous waste of time. Think neither of the past nor of the future, just *be*.

Q: Is there any particular place you would advise me to go to for spiritual attainment?

M: The only proper place is within. The outer world neither can help nor hinder. No system, no pattern of action will take you to your goal. Give up all working for a future, concentrate totally on the *now*, be concerned only with your response to every movement of life as it happens.

M: Transiency is the best proof of unreality.

70. God is the End of All Desire and Knowledge

Q: Were you to meet Ramana Maharshi, what would happen?

M: Probably we would feel quite happy. We may even exchange a few words.

Q: But would he recognise you as a liberated man?

M: Of course. As a man recognises a man, so a *jnani* recognises a *jnani*. You cannot appreciate what you have not experienced. You are what you think yourself to be, but you cannot think yourself to be what you have not experienced.

M: All desires must be given up, because by desiring you take the shape of your desires. When no desires remain, you revert to your natural state.

Q: How am I to practice desirelessness?

M: No need of practice. No need of any acts of renunciation. Just turn your mind away, that is all. Desire is merely the fixation of the mind on an idea. Get it out of its groove by denying it attention.

Q: That is all?

M: Yes, that is all. Whatever may be the desire or fear, don't dwell upon it. Try and see for yourself. Here and there you may forget, it does not matter. Go back to your attempts till the brushing away of every desire and fear, of every reaction becomes automatic.

Q: How can one live without emotions?

M: You can have all the emotions you want, but beware of reactions, of induced emotions. Be entirely self-determined and ruled from within, not from without. Merely giving up a thing to secure a better one is not true relinquishment. Give it up because you see its valuelessness. As you keep on giving up, you will find that you grow spontaneously in intelligence and power and inexhaustible love and joy.

Q: Why so much insistence on relinquishing all desires and fears? Are they not natural?

M: They are not. They are entirely mind-made. You have to give up everything to know that you need nothing, not even your body. Your needs are unreal and your efforts are meaningless.

Q: Did not *karma* compel me to become what I am?

M: Nothing compels. You are as you believe yourself to be. Stop believing.

Q: Here you are sitting on your seat and talking to me. What compels you is your *karma*.

M: Nothing compels me. I do what needs doing. But you do so many unnecessary things. It is your refusal to examine that creates *karma*. It is the indifference to your own suffering that perpetuates it.

Q: We were told about *karma* and reincarnation, evolution and *Yoga*, masters and disciples. What are we to do with all this knowledge?

M: Leave it all behind you. Forget it. Go forth, unburdened with ideas and beliefs. Abandon all verbal structures, all relative truth, all tangible objectives. The Absolute can be reached by absolute devotion only. Don't be half-hearted.

Q: I must begin with some absolute truth. Is there any?

M: Yes, there is, the feeling: 'I am'. Begin with that.

Q: Nothing else is true?

M: All else is neither true nor false. It seems real when it appears, it disappears when it is denied. A transient thing is a mystery.

Q: If the shape of things is mere appearance, what are they in reality?

M: In reality there is only perception. The perceiver and the perceived are conceptual, the fact of perceiving is actual.

Q: Where does the Absolute come in?

M: The Absolute is the birthplace of Perceiving. It makes perception possible.

Q: In all the universe is there one single thing of value?

M: Yes, the power of love.

71. In Self-awareness you Learn about Yourself

M: The person is merely the result of a misunderstanding. In reality, there is no such thing. Feelings, thoughts and actions race before the watcher in endless succession, leaving traces in the brain and creating an illusion of continuity. A reflection of the watcher in the mind creates the sense of 'I' and the person acquires an apparently independent existence. In reality there is no person, only the watcher identifying himself with the 'I' and the 'mine'. The teacher tells the watcher: you are not this, there is nothing of yours in this, except the little point of 'I am', which is the bridge between the watcher and his dream. 'I am this, I am that' is dream, while pure 'I am' has the stamp of reality on it. You have tasted so many things -- all came to naught. Only the sense 'I am' persisted -- unchanged. Stay with the changeless among the changeful, until you are able to go beyond.

M: Break the bonds of memory and self-identification and the shell will break by itself. There is a centre that imparts reality to whatever it perceives. All you need is to understand that you are the source of reality, that you give reality instead of getting it, that you need no support and no confirmation. Things are as they are, because you accept them as they are. Stop accepting them and they will dissolve.

Q: If all things come to an end, why did they appear at all?

M: Creation is in the very nature of consciousness. Consciousness causes appearances. Reality is beyond consciousness.

Q: But why did the body consciousness come into being?

M: Don't ask 'why', ask 'how'. It is in the nature of creative imagination to identify itself with its creations. You can stop it any moment by switching off attention. Or through investigation.

Q: How can I clear my mind?

M: By watching it relentlessly. Inattention obscures, attention clarifies.

Q: Why do the Indian teachers advocate inactivity?

M: Most of people's activities are valueless, if not outright destructive. Dominated by desire and fear, they can do nothing good. Ceasing to do evil precedes beginning to do good. Hence the need for stopping all activities for a time, to investigate one's urges and their motives, see all that is false in one's life, purge the mind of all evil and then only restart work, beginning with one's obvious duties. Of course, if you have a chance to help somebody, by all means do it and promptly too, don't keep him waiting till you are perfect. But do not become a professional do-gooder.

M: All changes in consciousness are due to the 'I-am-the-body' idea. Divested of this idea the mind becomes steady. There is pure being, free of experiencing anything in particular. But to realise it you must do what your teacher tells you. Mere listening, even memorizing, is not enough. If you do not struggle hard to apply every word of it in your daily life, don't complain that you made no progress. All real progress is irreversible. Ups and downs merely show that the teaching has not been taken to heart and translated into action fully.

M: When you are infected with the 'I-am-the-body' virus; a whole universe springs into being. But when you have had enough of it, you cherish some fanciful ideas about liberation and pursue lines of action totally futile. You concentrate, you meditate, you torture your mind and body, you do all sorts of unnecessary things, but you miss the essential which is the elimination of the person.

Q: In the beginning we may have to pray and meditate for some time before we are ready for self-enquiry.

M: If you believe so, go on. To me, all delay is a waste of time. You can skip all the preparation and go directly for the ultimate search within. Of all the *Yogas* it is the simplest and the shortest.

72. What is Pure, Unalloyed, Unattached is Real

M: Just like a wheel turns round an axle, so must you be always at the axle in the centre and not whirling at the periphery.

Q: How do I go about it in practice?

M: Whenever a thought or emotion of desire or fear comes to your mind, just turn away from it.

Q: By suppressing my thoughts and feelings I shall provoke a reaction.

M: I am not talking of suppression. Just refuse attention.

Q: Must I not use effort to arrest the movements of the mind?

M: It has nothing to do with effort. Just turn away, look between the thoughts, rather than at the thoughts. When you happen to walk in a crowd, you do not fight every man you meet -- you just find your way between.

Q: How long will it take me to get free of the mind?

M: It may take a thousand years, but really no time is required. All you need is to be in dead earnest. Here the will is the deed. If you are sincere, you have it. After all, it is a matter of attitude. Nothing stops you from being a *jnani* here and now, except fear. You are afraid of being impersonal, of impersonal being. It is all quite simple. Turn away from your desires and fears and from the thoughts they create and you are at once in your natural state.

Q: No question of reconditioning, changing, or eliminating the mind?

M: Absolutely none. Leave your mind alone, that is all. Don't go along with it. After all, there is no such thing as mind apart from thoughts which come and go obeying their own laws, not yours. They dominate you only because you are interested in them. It is exactly as Christ said 'Resist not evil'. By resisting evil you merely strengthen it.

Q: Do you call it *vairagya*, relinquishment, renunciation?

M: There is nothing to renounce. Enough if you stop acquiring. To give you must have, and to have you must take. Better don't take. It is simpler than to practice renunciation, which leads to a dangerous form of 'spiritual' pride.

Q: Can the witness be without the things to witness?

M: There is always something to witness. If not a thing, then its absence. Witnessing is natural and no problem. The problem is excessive interest, leading to self-identification. Whatever you are engrossed in you take to be real.

Q: Is the 'I am' the witness? Is the witness real or unreal?

M: The witness that is enmeshed in what he perceives is the person; the witness who stands aloof, unmoved and untouched, is the watch-tower of the real, the point at which awareness, inherent in the unmanifested, contacts the manifested. There can be no universe without the witness, there can be no witness without the universe.

M: A glowing ember, moved round and round quickly enough, appears as a glowing circle. When the movement ceases, the ember remains. Similarly, the 'I am' in movement creates the world. The 'I am' at peace becomes the Absolute.

Q: The world is full of desirable things and people. How can I imagine it non-existent?

M: Leave the desirable to those who desire. Change the current of your desire from taking to giving. The passion for giving, for sharing, will naturally wash the idea of an external world out of your mind, and of giving as well. Only the pure radiance of love will remain, beyond giving and receiving.

Q: In love there must be duality, the lover and the beloved.

M: In love there is not the one even, how can there be two? Love is the refusal to separate, to make distinctions. Before you can think of unity, you must first create duality. When you truly love, you do not say: 'I love you'; where there is mentation, there is duality.

M: Can't you go beyond the *gunas*? Why choose the *sattva*? Be what you are, wherever you are and worry not about *gunas*.

Q: In India spiritual life is easy. It is not so in the West. One has to conform to environment to a much greater extent.

M: Why don't you create your own environment? The world has only as much power over you as you give it. Rebel. Go beyond duality, make no difference between east and west.

Q: What can one do when one finds oneself in a very unspiritual environment?

M: Do nothing. Be yourself. Stay out. Look beyond.

Q: There may be clashes at home. Parents rarely understand.

M: When you know your true being, you have no problems. You may please your parents or not, marry or not, make a lot of money or not; it is all the same to you. Just act according to circumstances, yet in close touch with the facts, with the reality in every situation.

Q: Is it not a very high state?

M: Oh no, it is the normal state. You call it high because you are afraid of it. First be free from fear. See that there is nothing to be afraid of. Fearlessness is the door to the Supreme.

Q: No amount of effort can make me fearless.

M: Fearlessness comes by itself, when you see that there is nothing to be afraid of. When you walk in a crowded street, you just bypass people. Some you see, some you just glance at, but you do not stop. It is the stopping that creates the bottleneck. Keep moving! Disregard names and shapes, don't be attached to them; your attachment is your bondage.

Q: You are always stressing the need of going beyond, of aloofness, of solitude. You hardly ever use the words 'right' and 'wrong'. Why is it so?

M: It is right to be oneself, it is wrong not to be. All else is conditional. You are eager to separate right from wrong, because you need some basis for action. You are always after doing something or other. But, personally motivated action, based on some scale of values, aiming at some result is worse than inaction, for its fruits are always bitter.

M: You create a God to your own Image, however dismal the image. Through the film of your mind you project a world and also a God to give it cause and purpose. It is all imagination -- step out of it.

Q: Here I am sitting in front of you. What part of it is imagination?

M: The whole of it. Even space and time are imagined.

Q: Does it mean that I don't exist?

M: I too do not exist. All existence is imaginary.

Q: Is *being* too imaginary?

M: Pure being, filling all and beyond all, is not existence which is limited. All limitation is imaginary, only the unlimited is real.

Q: How to deal with people?

M: Why make plans and what for? Such questions show anxiety. Relationship is a living thing. Be at peace with your inner self and you will be at peace with everybody.

Realise that you are not the master of what happens, you cannot control the future except in purely technical matters. Human relationship cannot be planned, it is too rich and varied. Just be understanding and compassionate, free of all self seeking.

M: You cannot avoid action. It happens, like everything else.

Q: My actions, surely, I can control.

M: Try. You will soon see that you do what you must.

Q: I can act according to my will.

M: You know your will only after you have acted.

Q: I remember my desires, the choices made, the decisions taken and act accordingly.

M: Then your memory decides, not you.

Q: Where do I come in?

M: You make it possible by giving it attention.

M: Be like the chick that pecks at the shell. Speculating about life outside the shell would have been of little use to it, but pecking at the shell breaks the shell from within and liberates the chick. Similarly, break the mind from within by investigation and exposure of its contradictions and absurdities.

Q: The longing to break the shell, where does it come from?

M: From the unmanifested.

73. Death of the Mind is Birth of Wisdom

Q: What can the person do to prepare itself for the coming of the Guru.

M: The very desire to be ready means that the Guru had come and the flame is lighted. It may be a stray word, or a page in a book; the Guru's grace works mysteriously.

Q: What is the link between the relative and the absolute?

M: They are identical.

Q: From which point of view are they identical?

M: When the words are spoken, there is silence. When the relative is over, the absolute remains. The silence before the words were spoken, is it different from the silence that comes after? The silence is one and without it the words could not have been heard. It is always there -- at the back of the words. Shift your attention from words to silence and you will hear it. The mind craves for experience, the memory of which it takes for knowledge. The *jnani* is beyond all experience and his memory is empty of the past. He is entirely unrelated to anything in particular. But the mind craves for formulations and definitions, always eager to squeeze reality into a verbal shape. Of everything it wants an idea, for without ideas the mind is not. Reality is essentially alone, but the mind will not leave it alone -- and deals instead with the unreal. And yet it is all the mind can do -- discover the unreal as unreal.

Q: And seeing the real as real?

M: There is no such state as seeing the real. Who is to see what? You can only be the real -- which you are, anyhow. The problem is only mental. Abandon false ideas, that is all. There is no need of true ideas. There aren't any.

Q: Why then are we encouraged to seek the real?

M: The mind must have a purpose. To encourage it to free itself from the unreal it is promised something in return. In reality, there is no need of purpose. Being free from the false is good in itself, it wants no reward. It is just like being clean -- which is its own reward.

Q: When I ask how do you know that you are a *jnani*, you answer: 'I find no desire in me. Is this not a proof?'

M: Were I full of desires, I would have still been what I am.

Q: Myself, full of desires and you, full of desires; what difference would there be?

M: You identify yourself with your desires and become their slave. To me desires are things among other things, mere clouds in the mental sky, and I do not feel compelled to act on them.

M: You may tell a *jnani* anything; his question will always be: 'about whom are you talking? There is no such person'. Just as you cannot say anything about the universe because it includes everything, so nothing can be said about a

jnani, for he is all and yet nothing in particular. You need a hook to hang your picture on; when there is no hook, on what will the picture hang? To locate a thing you need space, to place an event you need time; but the timeless and spaceless defies all handling. It makes everything perceivable, yet itself it is beyond perception. The mind cannot know what is beyond the mind, but the mind is known by what is beyond it.

Q: When your body dies, you remain.

M: Nothing dies. The body is just imagined. There is no such thing.

Q: I cannot grasp it.

M: Who can? The mind has its limits. It is enough to bring you to the very frontiers of knowledge and make you face the immensity of the unknown. To dive in it is up to you.

Q: What about the witness? Is it real or unreal?

M: It is both. The last remnant of illusion, the first touch of the real. To say: I am only the witness is both false and true: false because of the 'I am', true because of the witness. It is better to say: 'there is witnessing'. The moment you say: 'I am', the entire universe comes into being along with its creator.

M: Duality lasts only as long as it is not questioned. The trinity: mind, self and spirit (*vyakti, vyakta, avyakta*), when looked into, becomes unity. These are only modes of experiencing: of attachment, of detachment, of transcendence.

Q: Since you have found your freedom, will you not give me a little of it?

M: Why little? Take the whole. Take it, it is there for the taking. But you are afraid of freedom!

M: Attachment destroys courage. The giver is always ready to give. The taker is absent. Freedom means letting go. People just do not care to let go everything. They do not know that the finite is the price of the infinite, as death is the price of immortality. Spiritual maturity lies in the readiness to let go everything. The giving up is the first step. But the real giving up is in realising that there is nothing to give up, for nothing is your own. It is like deep sleep -- you do not give up your bed when you fall sleep -- you just forget it.

74. Truth is Here and Now

M: It is true that it often covers sheer ignorance. The mind can operate with terms of its own making, it just cannot go beyond itself. That which is neither sensory nor mental, and yet without which neither sensory nor the mental can exist, cannot be contained in them. Do understand that the mind has its limits; to go beyond, you must consent to silence.

Q: I am full of desires and fears. Does it mean that I am not eligible for truth?

M: Truth is not a reward for good behaviour, nor a prize for passing some tests. It cannot be brought about. It is the primary, the unborn, the ancient source of all that is. You are eligible because you *are*. You need not merit truth. It is your own. Just stop running away by running after. Stand still, be quiet.

Q: I can imagine myself to be beyond. But what proof have I? To *be*, I must be somebody.

M: It is the other way round. To *be*, you must be nobody. To think yourself to be something, or somebody, is death and hell.

M: The body is made of food, as the mind is made of thoughts. See them as they are. Non-identification, when natural and spontaneous, is liberation. You need not know what you are. Enough to know what you are not. What you are you will never know, for every discovery reveals new dimensions to conquer. The unknown has no limits.

75. In Peace and Silence you Grow

Maharaj: The innermost light, shining peacefully and timelessly in the heart, is the real Guru. All others merely show the way.

Q: Is it a threat?

M: Not a threat, a warning. The inner Guru is not committed to non-violence. He can be quite violent at times, to the point of destroying the obtuse or perverted personality. Suffering and death, as life and happiness, are his tools of work. It is only in duality that non-violence becomes the unifying law.

Q: What makes us progress?

M: Silence is the main factor. In peace and silence you grow.

M: Just turn away from all that occupies the mind; do whatever work you have to complete, but avoid new obligations; keep empty, keep available, resist not what comes uninvited. In the end you reach a state of non-grasping, of joyful non-attachment, of inner ease and freedom indescribable, yet wonderfully real.

Q: How strange! Surely the doer comes before the deed.

M: It is the other way round; the deed is a fact, the doer a mere concept. Your very language shows that while the deed is certain, the doer is dubious; shifting responsibility is a game peculiarly human. Considering the endless list of factors required for anything to happen, one can only admit that everything is responsible for everything, however remote. Doership is a myth born from the illusion of 'me' and 'the mine'.

Q: What is the value of spiritual books?

M: They help in dispelling ignorance. They are useful in the beginning, but become a hindrance in the end. One must know when to discard them.

Q: I feel like a man before a door. I know the door is open but it is guarded by the dogs of desire and fear. What am I to do?

M: Obey the teacher and brave the dogs. Behave as if they were not there. Again, obedience is the golden rule. Freedom is won by obedience. To escape from prison one must unquestioningly obey instructions sent by those who work for one's release.

Q: I am very much afraid of taking intellectual understanding for realisation. I may talk of truth without knowing it, and may know it without a single word said.

I understand these conversations are going to be published. What will be their effect on the reader?

M: In the attentive and thoughtful reader they will ripen and bring out flowers and fruits. Words based on truth, if fully tested, have their own power.

76. To Know that You do not Know is True Knowledge

Q: Why am I so engrossed?

M: Because you are interested.

Q: What makes me interested?

M: Fear of pain, desire for pleasure. Pleasant is the ending of pain and painful the end of pleasure. They just rotate in endless succession. Investigate the vicious circle till you find yourself beyond it.

Q: Don't I need your grace to take me beyond?

M: The grace of your Inner Reality is timelessly with you. Your very asking for grace is a sign of it.

Q: What am I to be earnest about?

M: Assiduously investigate everything that crosses your field of attention. With practice the field will broaden and investigation deepen, until they become spontaneous and limitless.

Q: Are you not making realisation the result of practice? Practice operates within the limitations of physical existence. How can it give birth to the unlimited?

M: Of course, there can be no causal connection between practice and wisdom. But the obstacles to wisdom are deeply affected by practice.

Q: What are the obstacles?

M: Wrong ideas and desires leading to wrong actions, causing dissipation and weakness of mind and body. The discovery and abandonment of the false remove what prevents the real entering the mind.

M: Word refers to a state of mind, not to reality. The river, the two banks, the bridge across -- these are all in the mind. Words alone cannot take you beyond the mind. There must be the immense longing for truth, or absolute faith in the Guru. Believe me, there is no goal, nor a way to reach it. You are the way and the goal, there is nothing else to reach except yourself. All you need is to understand and understanding is the flowering of the mind. The tree is perennial, but the flowering and the fruit bearing come in season. The seasons change, but not the tree. You are the tree. You have grown numberless branches and leaves in the past and you may grow them also in the future -- yet you remain. Not what was, or shall be, must you know, but what *is*. Yours is the desire that creates the universe. Know the world as your own creation and be free.

Q: It all sounds very beautiful, but does not answer my question. Why is there so much suffering in the world?

M: If you stand aloof as observer only, you will not suffer. You will see the world as a show. a most entertaining show indeed.

Q: Oh, no! This *lila* theory I shall not have. The suffering is too acute and all-pervading. What a perversion to be entertained by a spectacle of suffering! What a cruel God are you offering me!

M: The cause of suffering is in the identification of the perceiver with the perceived. Out of it desire is born and with desire blind action, unmindful of results. Look round and you will see -- suffering is a man-made thing.

Q: If I am that, then what causes me to be born?

M: The memory of the past unfulfilled desires traps energy, which manifests itself as a person. When its charge gets exhausted, the person dies. Unfulfilled desires are carried over into the next birth. Self-identification with the

body creates ever fresh desires and there is no end to them, unless this mechanism of bondage is clearly seen. It is clarity that is liberating, for you cannot abandon desire, unless its causes and effects are clearly seen. I do not say that the same person is reborn. It dies and dies for good. But its memories remain and their desires and fears. They supply the energy for a new person. The real takes no part in it, but makes it possible by giving it the light.

M: Your thoughts and feelings, words and actions may also be a part of the event; you watch all unconcerned in the full light of clarity and understanding. You understand precisely what is going on, because it does not affect you. It may seem to be an attitude of cold aloofness, but it is not really so. Once you are in it, you will find that you love what you see, whatever may be its nature. This choiceless love is the touchstone of awareness. If it is not there, you are merely interested -- for some personal reasons.

Q: As long as there are pain and pleasure, one is bound to be interested.

M: And as long as one is conscious, there will be pain and pleasure. You cannot fight pain and pleasure on the level of consciousness. To go beyond them you must go beyond consciousness, which is possible only when you look at consciousness as something that happens to you and not in you, as something external, alien, superimposed. Then, suddenly you are free of consciousness, really alone, with nothing to intrude. And that is your true state. Consciousness is an itching rash that makes you scratch. Of course, you cannot step out of consciousness for the very idea of stepping out is in consciousness. But if you learn to look at your consciousness as a sort of fever, personal and private, in which you are enclosed like a chick in its shell, out of this very attitude will come the crisis which will break the shell.

M: Must one suffer only for one's own sins? Are we really separate? In this vast ocean of life we suffer for the sins of others, and make others suffer for our sins. Of course, the law of balance rules Supreme and accounts are squared in the end. But while life lasts, we affect each other deeply.

M: At the back of every experience is the Self and its interest in the experience. Call it desire, call it love -- words do not matter.

Q: On the screen of my mind images follow each other in endless succession. There is nothing permanent about me.

M: Have a better look at yourself. The screen is there -- it does not change. The light shines steadily. Only the film in between keeps moving and causes pictures to appear. You may call the film -- destiny (*prarabdha*).

Q: What creates destiny?

M: Ignorance is the cause of inevitability.

Q: Ignorance of what?

M: Ignorance of yourself primarily. Also, ignorance of the true nature of things, of their causes and effects. You look round without understanding and take appearances for reality. You believe you know the world and yourself -- but it is only your ignorance that makes you say: I know. Begin with the admission that you do not know and start from there.

M: The very admission: 'I am ignorant' is the dawn of knowledge. An ignorant man is ignorant of his ignorance. You can say that ignorance does not exist, for the moment it is seen it is no more. Therefore, you may call it unconsciousness or blindness. All you see around and within you is what you do not know and do not understand, without even knowing that you do not know and do not understand. To know that you do not know and do not understand is true knowledge, the knowledge of an humble heart.

M: Once you are inwardly integrated, outer knowledge comes to you spontaneously. At every moment of your life you know what you need to know. In the ocean of the universal mind all knowledge is contained; it is yours on demand. Most of it you may never need to know -- but it is yours all the same.

As with knowledge, so it is with power. Whatever you feel needs be done happens unfailingly. No doubt, God attends to this business of managing the universe; but He is glad to have some help. When the helper is selfless and intelligent, all the powers of the universe are for him to command.

Q: Even the blind powers of nature?

M: There are no blind powers. Consciousness is power. Be aware of what needs be done and it will be done. Only keep alert -- and quiet. Once you reach your destination and know your real nature, your existence becomes a blessing to all. You may not know, nor will the world know, yet the help radiates. There are people in the world who do more good than all the statesmen and philanthropists put together. They radiate light and peace with no intention or knowledge. When others tell them about the miracles they worked, they also are wonder struck. Yet, taking nothing as their own, they are neither proud, nor do they crave for reputation. They are just unable to desire anything for themselves, not even the joy of helping others knowing that God is good they are at peace.

77. 'I' and 'Mine' are False Ideas

Questioner: I am very much attached to my family and possessions. How can I conquer this attachment?

Maharaj: This attachment is born along with the sense of 'me' and 'mine'. Find the true meaning of these words and you will be free of all bondage. You have a mind which is spread in time. One after another all things happen to you and the

memory remains. There is nothing wrong in it. The problem arises only when the memory of past pains and pleasures -- which are essential to all organic life -- remains as a reflex, dominating behaviour. This reflex takes the shape of 'I' and uses the body and the mind for its purposes, which are invariably in search for pleasure or flight from pain. When you recognise the 'I' as it is, a bundle of desires and fears, and the sense of 'mine', as embracing all things and people needed for the purpose of avoiding pain and securing pleasure, you will see that the 'I' and the 'mine' are false ideas, having no foundation in reality. Created by the mind, they rule their creator as long as it takes them to be true; when questioned, they dissolve.

The 'I' and 'mine', having no existence in themselves, need a support which they find in the body. The body becomes their point of reference. When you talk of 'my' husband and 'my' children, you mean the body's husband and the body's children. Give up the idea of being the body and face the question: Who am I? At once a process will be set in motion which will bring back reality, or, rather, will take the mind to reality. Only, you must not be afraid.

M: Talking is not my hobby. Sometimes I talk, sometimes I do not. My talking, or not talking, is a part of a given situation and does not depend on me. When there is a situation in which I have to talk, I hear myself talking. In some other situation I may not hear myself talking. It is all the same to me. Whether I talk or not, the light and love of being what I am are not affected, nor are they under my control. They are, and I know they are. There is a glad awareness, but nobody who is glad.

Q: How can you say you do nothing? Are you not talking to me?

M: I do not have the feeling that I am talking. There is talking going on, that is all.

Q: I talk.

M: Do you? You hear yourself talking and you say: I talk.

M: All this is not very difficult to understand and practice, but you must be interested. Without interest nothing can be done.

Having seen that you are a bundle of memories held together by attachment, step out and look from the outside. You may perceive for the first time something which is not memory. You cease to be a Mr-so-and-so, busy about his own affairs. You are at last at peace. You realise that nothing was ever wrong with the world -- you alone were wrong and now it is all over. Never again will you be caught in the meshes of desire born of ignorance.

78. All Knowledge is Ignorance

Questioner: Are we permitted to request you to tell us the manner of your realisation?

Maharaj: Somehow it was very simple and easy in my case. My Guru, before he died, told me: Believe me, you are the Supreme Reality. Don't doubt my words, don't disbelieve me. I am telling you the truth -- act on it. I could not forget his words and by not forgetting -- I have realised.

Q: But what were you actually doing?

M: Nothing special. I lived my life, plied my trade, looked after my family, and every free moment I would spend just remembering my Guru and his words. He died soon after and I had only the memory to fall back on. It was enough.

Q: It must have been the grace and power of your Guru.

M: His words were true and so they came true. True words always come true. My Guru did nothing; his words acted because they were true. Whatever I did, came from within, un-asked and unexpected.

Q: The Guru started a process without taking any part in it?

M: Put it as you like. Things happen as they happen -- who can tell why and how? I did nothing deliberately. All came by itself -- the desire to let go, to be alone, to go within.

Q: You made no efforts whatsoever?

M: None. Believe it or not, I was not even anxious to realise. He only told me that I am the Supreme and then died. I just could not disbelieve him. The rest happened by itself. I found myself changing -- that is all. As a matter of fact, I was astonished. But a desire arose in me to verify his words. I was so sure that he could not possibly have told a lie, that I felt I shall either realise the full meaning of his words or die. I was feeling quite determined, but did not know what to do. I would spend hours thinking of him and his assurance, not arguing, but just remembering what he told me.

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spend hours thinking of him and his assurance, not arguing, but just remembering what he told me.

M: I was undeceived, that is all. I used to create a world and populate it -- now I don't do it any more.

Q: Where do you live, then?

M: In the void beyond being and non-being, beyond consciousness. This void is also fullness; do not pity me. It is like a man saying: 'I have done my work, there is nothing left to do'.

Q: You are giving a certain date to your realisation. It means something did happen to you at that date. What happened?

M: The mind ceased producing events. The ancient and ceaseless search stopped -- I wanted nothing, expected nothing -- accepted nothing as my own. There was no 'me' left to strive for. Even the bare 'I am' faded away. The other thing that I noticed was that I lost all my habitual certainties. Earlier I was sure of so many things, now I am sure of nothing. But I feel that I have lost nothing by not knowing, because all my knowledge was false. My not knowing was in itself knowledge of the fact that all knowledge is ignorance, that 'I do not know' is the only true statement the mind can make. Take the idea 'I was born'. You may take it to be true. It is not. You were never born, nor will you ever die. It is the idea that was born and shall die, not you. By identifying yourself with it you became mortal. Just like in a cinema all is light, so does consciousness become the vast world. Look closely, and you will see that all names and forms are but transitory waves on the ocean of consciousness, that only consciousness can be said to *be*, not its transformations.

In the immensity of consciousness a light appears, a tiny point that moves rapidly and traces shapes, thoughts and feelings, concepts and ideas, like the pen writing on paper. And the ink that leaves a trace is memory. You are that tiny point and by your movement the world is ever re-created. Stop moving, and there will be no world. Look within and you will find that the point of light is the reflection of the immensity of light in the body, as the sense 'I am'. There is only light, all else appears.

Q: Have I to understand that our minds are similar?

M: How can it be? You have your own private mind, woven with memories, held together by desires and fears. I have no mind of my own; what I need to know the universe brings before me, as it supplies the food I eat.

Q: Do you know all you want to know?

M: There is nothing I want to know. But what I need to know, I come to know.

Q: Does this knowledge come to you from within or from outside?

M: It does not apply. My inner is outside and my outer is inside. I may get from you the knowledge needed at the moment, but you are not apart from me.

M: Consciousness is pure in the beginning and pure in the end; in between it gets contaminated by imagination which is at the root of creation. At all times consciousness remains the same. To know it as it is is realisation and timeless peace.

M: When awareness is turned on itself, the feeling is of not knowing. When it is turned outward, the knowables come into being. To say: 'I know myself' is a contradiction in terms for what is 'known' cannot be 'myself'.

M: To know that the known cannot be me nor mine, is liberation enough. Freedom from self-identification with a set of memories and habits, the state of wonder at the infinite reaches of the being, its inexhaustible creativity and total transcendence, the absolute fearlessness born from the realisation of the illusoriness and transiency of every mode of consciousness -- flow from a deep and inexhaustible source. To know the source as source and appearance as appearance, and oneself as the source only is self-realisation.

M: The state of detached awareness is the witness-consciousness, the 'mirror-mind'. It rises and sets with its object and thus it is not quite the real. Whatever its object, it remains the same, hence it is also real. It partakes of both the real and the unreal and is therefore a bridge between the two. (...)To say 'not me, not mine' is the task of the witness.

79. Person, Witness and the Supreme

M: A quiet mind, undistorted by desires and fears, free from ideas and opinions, clear on all the levels, is needed to reflect the reality. Be clear and quiet -- alert and detached, all else will happen by itself.

Q: You had to make your mind clear and quiet before you could realise the truth. How did you do it?

M: I did nothing. It just happened. I lived my life, attending to my family's needs. Nor did my Guru do it. It just happened, as he said it will.

Q: Things do not just happen. There must be a cause for everything.

M: All that happens is the cause of all that happens. Causes are numberless; the idea of a sole cause is an illusion.

Q: You had to make your mind clear and quiet before you could realise the truth. How did you do it?

M: I did nothing. It just happened. I lived my life, attending to my family's needs. Nor did my Guru do it. It just happened, as he said it will.

Q: Things do not just happen. There must be a cause for everything.

M: All that happens is the cause of all that happens. Causes are numberless; the idea of a sole cause is an illusion.

Q: How does one gain self-control? I am so weak-minded!

M: Understand first that you are not the person you believe yourself to be. What you think yourself to be is mere suggestion or imagination. You have no parents, you were not born, nor will you die.

Either trust me when I tell you so, or arrive to it by study and investigation. The way of total faith is quick, the other is slow but steady. Both must be tested in action. Act on what you think is true -- this is the way to truth.

Q: Will the understanding that I am not the body give me the strength of character needed for self-control?

M: When you know that you are neither body nor mind, you will not be swayed by them. You will follow truth, wherever it takes you, and do what needs be done, whatever the price to pay.

Q: Is action essential for self-realisation?

M: For realisation, understanding is essential. Action is only incidental. A man of steady understanding will not refrain from action. Action is the test of truth.

M: The foreseen and expected is rarely true.

Q: How does the person come into being?

M: Exactly as a shadow appears when light is intercepted by the body, so does the person arise when pure self-awareness is obstructed by the 'I-am-the-body' idea. And as the shadow changes shape and position according to the lay of the land, so does the person appear to rejoice and suffer, rest and toil, find and lose according to the pattern of destiny. When the body is no more, the person disappears completely without return, only the witness remains and the Great Unknown.

The witness is that which says 'I know'. The person says 'I do'. Now, to say 'I know' is not untrue -- it is merely limited. But to say 'I do' is altogether false, because there is nobody who does; all happens by itself, including the idea of being a doer.

Q: Then what is action?

M: The universe is full of action, but there is no actor. There are numberless persons small and big and very big, who, through identification, imagine themselves as acting, but it does not change the fact that the world of action (*mahadakash*) is one single whole in which all depends on, and affects all. The stars affect us deeply and we affect the stars. Step back from action to consciousness, leave action to the body and the mind; it is their domain. Remain as pure witness, till even witnessing dissolves in the Supreme.

M: The dissolution of personality is followed always by a sense of great relief, as if a heavy burden has fallen off.

M: The personality gives place to the witness, then the witness goes and pure awareness remains. The cloth was white in the beginning and is white in the end; the patterns and colours just happened -- for a time.

Q: Can there be awareness without an object of awareness?

M: Awareness with an object we called witnessing. When there is also self-identification with the object, caused by desire or fear, such a state is called a person. In reality there is only one state; when distorted by self-identification it is called a person, when coloured with the sense of being, it is the witness; when colourless and limitless, it is called the Supreme.

Q: How am I to reach perfection?

M: Keep quiet. Do your work in the world, but inwardly keep quiet. Then all will come to you. Do not rely on your work for realisation. It may profit others, but not you. Your hope lies in keeping silent in your mind and quiet in your heart. Realised people are very quiet.

80. Awareness

Maharaj: All waiting is futile. To depend on time to solve our problems is self-delusion. The future, left to itself merely repeats the past. Change can only happen now, never in the future.

Q: What brings about a change?

M: With crystal clarity see the need of change. This is all.

M: All experience is illusory, limited and temporal. Expect nothing from experience. Realisation by itself is not an experience, though it may lead to a new dimension of experiences. Yet the new experiences, however interesting, are not more real than the old. Definitely realisation is not a new experience. It is the discovery of the timeless factor in every experience. It is awareness, which makes experience possible. Just like in all the colours light is the colourless factor, so in every experience awareness is present, yet it is not an experience.

M: The totality of conscious experiences is nature. As a conscious self you are a part of nature. As awareness, you are beyond. Seeing nature as mere consciousness is awareness.

Q: Are there levels of awareness?

M: There are levels in consciousness, but not in awareness. It is of one block, homogeneous. Its reflection in the mind is love and understanding. There are levels of clarity in understanding and intensity in love, but not in their source. The source is simple and single, but its gifts are infinite. Only do not take the gifts for the source. Realise yourself as the source and not as the river; that is all.

M: You *are*, while all else appears.

M: Look closely and you will see that the seer and the seen appear only when there is seeing. They are attributes of seeing. When you say 'I am seeing this', 'I am' and 'this' come with seeing, not before. You cannot have an unseen 'this' nor an unseeing 'I am'.

Q: I can say: 'I do not see'.

M: The 'I am seeing this' has become 'I am seeing my not seeing', or 'I am seeing darkness'. The seeing remains. In the triplicity: the known, knowing and the knower, only the knowing is a fact. The 'I am' and 'this' are doubtful. Who knows? What is known? There is no certainty, except that there is knowing.

Q: How to put an end to memory?

M: It is neither necessary, nor possible. realise that all happens in consciousness and you are the root, the source, the foundation of consciousness. The world is but a succession of experiences and you are what makes them conscious, and yet remain beyond all experience.

M: Matter and mind are not separate, they are aspects of one energy. Look at the mind as a function of matter and you have science; look at matter as the product of the mind and you have religion.

M: Are you not the victim of your language? You speak about the flow of time, as if you were stationary. But the events you have witnessed yesterday somebody else may see tomorrow. It is you who are in movement and not time. Stop moving and time will cease.

Q: What does it mean -- time will cease?

M: Past and future will merge in the eternal *now*.

M: What is unexpected on one level may be certain to happen, when seen from a higher level. After all, we are within the limits of the mind. In reality nothing happens, there is no past nor future; all appears and nothing is.

M: [The world after realization...] It remains a world of experiences, but not of names and forms related to me by desires and fears. The experiences are qualityless, pure experiences, if I may say so. I call them experiences for the lack of a better word. They are like the waves on the surface of the ocean, the ever-present, but not affecting its peaceful power.

Q: You mean to say an experience can be nameless, formless, undefined?

M: In the beginning all experience is such. It is only desire and fear, born of memory, that give it name and form and separate it from other experiences. It is not

a conscious experience, for it is not in opposition to other experiences, yet it is an experience all the same.

Q: If it is not conscious, why talk about it?

M: Most of your experiences are unconscious. The conscious ones are very few. You are unaware of the fact because to you only the conscious ones count. Become aware of the unconscious .

Q: Can one be aware of the unconscious? How is it done?

M: Desire and fear are the obscuring and distorting factors. When mind is free of them the unconscious becomes accessible.

Q: Does it mean that the unconscious becomes conscious?

M: It is rather the other way round. The conscious becomes one with the unconscious. The distinction ceases, whichever way you look at it.

Q: I am puzzled. How can one be aware and yet unconscious?

M: Awareness is not limited to consciousness. It is of all that is. Consciousness is of duality. There is no duality in awareness. It is one single block of pure cognition.

M: Any thing, to change, must pass through death, through obscurity and dissolution. Gold jewellery must be melted down before it is cast into another shape. What refuses to die cannot be reborn.

Q: Barring the death of the body, how does one die?

M: Withdrawal, aloofness, letting go is death. To live fully, death is essential; every ending makes a new beginning.

81. Root Cause of Fear

Q: Is there any relationship between pure being and particular being?

M: What relationship can there be between what *is* and what merely appears to be? Is there any relationship between the ocean and its waves? The real enables the unreal to appear and causes it to disappear. the succession of transient moments creates the illusion of time, but the timeless reality of pure being is not in movement, for all movement requires a motionless background. It is itself the background. (...)It is like the daylight that makes everything visible while itself remaining invisible.

M: Just as every wave subsides into the ocean, so does every moment return to its source. realisation consists in discovering the source and abiding there.

Q: Being born is a fact. Dying is another fact. How do they appear to the witness?

M: A child was born; a man has died -- just events in the course of time.

M: *Karma* is only a store of unspent energies, of unfulfilled desires and fears not understood. The store is being constantly replenished by new desires and fears. It need not be so for ever. Understand the root cause of your fears – estrangement from yourself – and of desires -- the longing for the self –, and your *karma* will dissolve like a dream. Between earth and heaven life goes on. Nothing is affected, only bodies grow and decay.

Q: Between the person and the witness, what is the relation?

M: There can be no relation between them because they are one. Don't separate and don't look for relationship.

M: The effort to understand yourself is *Yoga*. Be a *Yogi*, give your life to it, brood, wonder, search, till you come to the root of error and to the truth beyond the error.

M: Meditation is a deliberate attempt to pierce into the higher states of consciousness and finally go beyond it. The art of meditation is the art of shifting the focus of attention to ever subtler levels, without losing one's grip on the levels left behind. In a way it is like having death under control. One begins with the lowest levels: social circumstances, customs and habits; physical surroundings, the posture and the breathing of the body, the senses, their sensations and perceptions; the mind, its thoughts and feelings; until the entire mechanism of personality is grasped and firmly held. The final stage of meditation is reached when the sense of identity goes beyond the 'I-am-so-and-so', beyond 'so-I-am', beyond 'I-am-the-witness-only', beyond 'there-is', beyond all ideas into the impersonally personal pure being. But you must be energetic when you take to meditation. It is definitely not a part-time occupation. Limit your interests and activities to what is needed for you and your dependents' barest needs. Save all your energies and time for breaking the wall your mind had built around you. Believe me, you will not regret.

M: Just as every drop of the ocean carries the taste of the ocean, so does every moment carry the taste of eternity.

Q: What exactly do you want me to do?

M: Give your heart and mind to brooding over the 'I am', what is it, how is it, what is its source, its life, its meaning. It is very much like digging a well. You reject all that is not water, till you reach the life-giving spring.

Q: How shall I know that I am moving in the right direction?

M: By your progress in intentness, in clarity and devotion to the task.

M: The limited only is perfectible. The unlimited is already perfect. You are perfect, only you don't know it. Learn to know yourself and you will discover wonders.

82. Absolute Perfection is Here and Now

M: You fight others all the time for your survival as a separate body-mind, a particular name and form. To live you must destroy. From the moment you were conceived you started a war with your environment -- a merciless war of mutual extermination, until death sets you free.

M: The final answer is this: nothing is. All is a momentary appearance in the field of the universal consciousness; continuity as name and form is a mental formation only, easy to dispel.

Q: I am asking about the immediate, the transitory, the appearance. Here is a picture of a child killed by soldiers. It is a fact -- staring at you. You cannot deny it. Now, who is responsible for the death of the child?

M: Nobody and everybody. The world is what it contains and each thing affects all others. We all kill the child and we all die with it. Every event has innumerable causes and produces numberless effects. It is useless to keep accounts, nothing is traceable.

M: Our only hope: to stop, to look, to understand and to get out of the traps of memory. For memory feeds imagination and imagination generates desire and fear.

M: The witness of birth, life and death is one and the same. It is the witness of pain and of love. For while the existence in limitation and separation is sorrowful, we love it. We love it and hate it at the same time. We fight, we kill, we destroy life and property and yet we are affectionate and self-sacrificing. We nurse the child tenderly and orphan it too. Our life is full of contradictions. Yet we cling to it. This clinging is at the root of everything. Still, it is entirely superficial. We hold on to something or somebody, with all our might and next moment we forget it; like a child that shapes its mud-pies and abandons them light-heartedly. Touch them -- it will scream with anger, divert the child and he forgets them. For our life is *now*, and the love of it is *now*. We love variety, the play of pain and pleasure, we are fascinated by contrasts. For this we need the opposites and their apparent separation. We enjoy them for a time and then get tired and crave for the peace and silence of pure being. The cosmic heart beats ceaselessly. I am the witness and the heart too.

M: Things are as they are and nobody in particular is responsible. The idea of personal responsibility comes from the illusion of agency.

Q: Have you no problems?

M: I do have problems. I told you already. To be, to exist with a name and form is painful, yet I love it.

Q: But you love everything!

M: In existence everything is contained. My very nature is to love; even the painful is lovable.

Q: It does not make it less painful. Why not remain in the unlimited?

M: It is the instinct of exploration, the love of the unknown, that brings me into existence. It is in the nature of being to see adventure in becoming, as it is in the very nature of becoming to seek peace in being. This alteration of being and becoming is inevitable; but my home is beyond.

Q: Is your home in God?

M: To love and worship a god is also ignorance. My home is beyond all notions, however sublime.

Q: But God is not a notion! It is the reality beyond existence.

M: You may use any word you like. Whatever you may think of am beyond it.

Q: Once you know your home, why not stay in it? What takes you out of it?

M: Out of love for corporate existence one is born and once born, one gets involved in destiny. Destiny is inseparable from becoming. The desire to be the particular makes you into a person with all its personal past and future. Look at some great man, what a wonderful man he was! And yet how troubled was his life and limited its fruits. How utterly dependent is the personality of man and how indifferent is its world. And yet we love it and protect it for its very insignificance.

M: I do not look at death as a calamity as I do not rejoice at the birth of a child. The child is out for trouble while the dead is out of it. Attachment to life is attachment to sorrow. We love what gives us pain. Such is our nature.

For me the moment of death will be a moment of jubilation, not of fear. I cried when I was born and I shall die laughing.

M: The world had all the time to get better, yet it did not. What hope is there for the future? Of course, there have been and will be periods of harmony and peace, when *sattva* was in ascendance, but things get destroyed by their own perfection. A perfect society is necessarily static and, therefore, it stagnates and decays. From the summit all roads lead downwards. Societies are like people -- they are born, they grow to some point of relative perfection and then decay and die.

Q: Is there not a state of absolute perfection which does not decay?

M: Whatever has a beginning must have an end. In the timeless all is perfect, here and now.

Q: But shall we reach the timeless in due course?

M: In due course we shall come back to the starting point. Time cannot take us out of time, as space cannot take us out of space. All you get by waiting is more waiting. Absolute perfection is here and now, not in some future, near or far. The

secret is in action -- here and now. It is your behaviour that blinds you to yourself. Disregard whatever you think yourself to be and act as if you were absolutely perfect -- whatever your idea of perfection may be. All you need is courage.

Q: Where do I find such courage?

M: In yourself, of course. Look within.

M: Behave as best you know, do what you think you should. Don't be afraid of mistakes; you can always correct them, only intentions matter. The shape things take is not within your power; the motives of your actions are.

M: What can it gain? Nothing whatsoever. But it is in the nature of love to express itself, to affirm itself, to overcome difficulties. Once you have understood that the world is love in action, you will look at it quite differently. But first your attitude to suffering must change. Suffering is primarily a call for attention, which itself is a movement of love. More than happiness, love wants growth, the widening and deepening of consciousness and being.

M: Our indifference to our neighbour's sorrow brings suffering to our door.

83. The True Guru

M: Words of a realised man never miss their purpose. They wait for the right conditions to arise which may take some time, and this is natural, for there is a season for sowing and a season for harvesting. But the word of a Guru is a seed that cannot perish. Of course, the Guru must be a real one, who is beyond the body and the mind, beyond consciousness itself, beyond space and time, beyond duality and unity, beyond understanding and description. The good people who have read a lot and have a lot to say, may teach you many useful things, but they are not the real Gurus whose words invariably come true. They also may tell you that you are the ultimate reality itself, but what of it?

Q: [About Gurus] How can I make out whom to follow and whom to mistrust?

M: Mistrust all, until you are convinced. The true Guru will never humiliate you, nor will he estrange you from yourself. He will constantly bring you back to the fact of your inherent perfection and encourage you to seek within. He knows you need nothing, not even him, and is never tired of reminding you. But the self appointed Guru is more concerned with himself than with his disciples.

M: The knower is but a state of mind. The real is beyond.

Q: If there is no such thing as the knowledge of the real, then how do I reach it [the real]?

M: You need not reach out for what is already with you. Your very reaching out makes you miss it. Give up the idea that you have not found it and just let it come into the focus of direct perception, here and now, by removing all that is of the mind.

Q: Does the witness remain?

M: As long as there is consciousness, its witness is also there. The two appear and disappear together.

Q: If the witness too is transient, why is he given so much importance?

M: Just to break the spell of the known, the illusion that only the perceivable is real.

Q: Sir, I am an humble seeker, wandering from Guru to Guru in search of release. My mind is sick, burning with desire, frozen with fear. My days flit by, red with pain, grey with boredom. My age is advancing, my health decaying, my future dark and frightening. At this rate I shall live in sorrow and die in despair. Is there any hope for me? Or have I come too late?

M: Nothing is wrong with you, but the ideas you have of yourself are altogether wrong. It is not you who desires, fears and suffers, it is the person built on the foundation of your body by circumstances and influences. You are not that person. This must be clearly established in your mind and never lost sight of. Normally, it needs a prolonged *sadhana*, years of austerities and meditation.

Q: My mind is weak and vacillating. I have neither the strength nor the tenacity for *sadhana*. My case, is hopeless.

M: In a way yours is a most hopeful case. There is an alternative to *sadhana*, which is trust. If you cannot have the conviction born from fruitful search, then take advantage of my discovery, which I am so eager to share with you. I can see with the utmost clarity that you have never been, nor are, nor will be estranged from reality, that you are the fullness of perfection here and now and that nothing can deprive you of your heritage, of what you are. You are in no way different from me, only you do not know it. You do not know what you are and therefore you imagine your self to be what you are not. Hence desires and fear and overwhelming despair. And meaningless activity in order to escape.

Just trust me and live by trusting me. I shall not mislead you. You are the Supreme Reality beyond the world and its creator, beyond consciousness and its witness, beyond all assertions and denials. Remember it, think of it, act on it. Abandon all sense of separation, see yourself in all and act accordingly. With action bliss will come and, with bliss, conviction. (...)Just catch hold of what I told you and live by it.

Q: You are telling me to live by memory?

M: You are living by memory anyhow. I am merely asking you to replace the old memories by the memory of what I told you. As you were acting on your old memories, act on the new one. Don't be afraid. For some time there is bound to be a conflict between the old and the new, but if you put yourself resolutely on the side of the new, the strife will soon come to an end and you will realise the effortless state of being oneself, of not being deceived by desires and fears born of illusion.

M: I do not ask you to trust me. Trust my words and remember them, I want your happiness, not mine. Distrust those who put a distance between you and your true being and offer themselves as a go-between. I do nothing of the kind. I do not even make any promises. I merely say: if you trust my words and put them to test, you will for yourself discover how absolutely true they are. If you ask for a proof before you venture, I can only say: I am the proof. I did trust my teacher's words and kept them in my mind and I did find that he was right, that I was, am and shall be the Infinite Reality, embracing all, transcending all.

As you say, you have neither the time nor the energy for lengthy practices. I offer you an alternative. Accept my words on trust and live anew, or live and die in sorrow.

Q: It seems too good to be true.

M: Don't be misled by the simplicity of the advice. \very few are those who have the courage to trust the innocent and the simple. To know that you are a prisoner of your mind, that you live in an imaginary world of your own creation is the dawn of wisdom. To want nothing of it, to be ready to abandon it entirely, is earnestness. Only such earnestness, born of true despair, will make you trust me.

Q: Have I not suffered enough?

M: Suffering has made you dull, unable to see its enormity. Your first task is to see the sorrow in you and around you; your next to long intensely for liberation. The very intensity of longing will guide you; you need no other guide.

Q: Suffering has made me dull, indifferent even to itself.

M: Maybe it is not sorrow but pleasure that made you dull. Investigate.

Q: Whatever may be the cause; I am dull. I have neither the will nor the energy.

M: Oh, no. You have enough for the first step. And each step will generate enough energy for the next. Energy comes with confidence and confidence comes with experience.

Q: Is it right to change Gurus?

M: Why not change? Gurus are like milestones? It is natural to move on from one to another. Each tells you the direction and the distance, while the *sadguru*, the eternal Guru, is the road itself. Once you realise that the road is the goal and that you are always on the road, not to reach a goal, but to enjoy its beauty and its wisdom, life ceases to be a task and becomes natural and simple, in itself an ecstasy.

Q: So, there is no need to worship, to pray, to practice *Yoga*?

M: A little of daily sweeping, washing and bathing can do no harm. Self-awareness tells you at every step what needs be done. When all is done, the mind remains quiet.

Now you are in the waking state, a person with name and shape, joys and sorrows. The person was not there before you were born, nor will be there after you die. Instead of struggling with the person to make it become what it is not, why not go beyond the waking state and leave the personal life altogether? It does not mean the extinction of the person; it means only seeing it in right perspective.

Q: One more question. You said that before I was born I was one with the pure being of reality; if so, who decided that I should be born?

M: In reality you were never born and never shall die. But now you imagine that you are, or have a body and you ask what has brought about this state. Within the limits of illusion the answer is: desire born from memory attracts you to a body and makes you think as one with it. But this is true only from the relative point of view. In fact, there is no body, nor a world to contain it; there is only a mental condition, a dream-like state, easy to dispel by questioning its reality.

Q: After you die, will you come again? If I live long enough, will I meet you again.

M: To you the body is real, to me there is none. I, as you see me, exist in your imagination only. Surely, you will see me again, if and when you need me. It does not affect me, as the Sun is not affected by sunrises and sunsets. Because it is not affected, it is certain to be there when needed.

You are bent on knowledge, I am not. I do not have that sense of insecurity that makes you crave to know. I am curious, like a child is curious. But there is no anxiety to make me seek refuge in knowledge. Therefore, I am not concerned whether I shall be reborn, or how long will the world last. These are questions born of fear.

84. Your Goal is Your Guru

Q: We are told that total surrender to the Guru is enough, that the Guru will do the rest.

M: Of course, when there is total surrender, complete relinquishment of all concern with one's past, presents and future, with one's physical and spiritual security and standing, a new life dawns, full of love and beauty; then the Guru is not important, for the disciple has broken the shell of self-defence. Complete self-surrender by itself is liberation.

Q: When both the disciple and his teacher are inadequate, what will happen?

M: In the long run all will be well. After all, the real Self of both is not affected by the comedy they play for a time. They will sober up and ripen and shift to a higher level of relationship.

Q: Is it by accident that I met you and by another accident shall we separate never to meet again? Or is my meeting you a part of some cosmic pattern, a fragment in the great drama of our lives?

M: The real is meaningful and the meaningful relates to reality. If our relationship is meaningful to you and me, it cannot be accidental. The future affects the present as much as the past.

M: Leave others alone for some time and examine yourself. There are so many things you do not know about yourself -- what are you, who are you, how did you come to be born, what are you doing now and why, where are you going, what is the meaning and purpose of your life, your death, your future? Have you a past, have you a future? How did you come to live in turmoil and sorrow, while your entire being strives for happiness and peace? These are weighty matters and have to be attended to first. You have no need, nor time for finding who is a *jnani* and who is not.

Q: You are not answering my question: how to find the right Guru?

M: But I did answer your question. Do not look for a Guru, do not even think of one. Make your goal your Guru. After all, the Guru is but a means to an end, not the end in itself.

M: Now, go within, into a state which you may compare to a state of waking sleep, in which you are aware of yourself, but not of the world. In that state you will know, without the least trace of doubt, that at the root of your being you are free and happy. The only trouble is that you are addicted to experience and you cherish your memories. In reality it is the other way round; what is remembered is never real; the real is *now*.

Q: All this I grasp verbally, but it does not become a part of myself. It remains as a picture in my mind to be looked at. Is it not the task of the Guru to give life to the picture?

M: Again, it is the other way round. The picture is alive; dead is the mind. As the mind is made of words and images, so is every reflection in the mind. It covers up reality with verbalisation and then complains. You say a Guru is needed, to do miracles with you. You are playing with words only. The Guru and the disciple are one single thing, like the candle and its flame. Unless the disciple is earnest, he cannot be called a disciple. Unless a Guru is all love and self-giving, he cannot be called a Guru. Only reality begets reality, not the false.

Q: I can see that I am false. Who will make me true?

M: The very words you said will do it. The sentence: ‘ I can see that I am false’ contains all you need for liberation. Ponder over it, go into it deeply, go to the root of it; it will operate. The power is in the word, not in the person.

Q: I do not grasp you fully. On one hand you say a Guru is needed; on the other -- the Guru can only give advice, but the effort is mine. Please state clearly -- can one realise the Self without a Guru, or is the finding of a true Guru essential?

M: More essential is the finding of a true disciple. Believe me, a true disciple is very rare, for in no time he goes beyond the need for a Guru, by finding his own self. Don't waste your time on trying to make out whether the advice you get flows from knowledge only, or from valid experience! Just follow it faithfully. Life will bring you another Guru, if another one is needed. Or deprive you of all outer guidance and leave you to your own lights. It is very important to understand that it is the teaching that matters, not the person or the Guru. You get a letter that makes you laugh or cry. It is not the postman who does it. The Guru only tells you the good news about your real Self and shows you the way back to it. In a way the Guru is its messenger. There will be many messengers, but the message is one: be what you are. Or, you can put it differently: Until you realise yourself, you cannot know who is your real Guru. When you realise, you find that all the Gurus you had have contributed to your awakening. Your realisation is the proof that your Guru was real. Therefore, take him as he is, do what he tells you, with earnestness and zeal and trust your heart to warn you if anything goes wrong. If doubt sets in, don't fight it. Cling to what is doubtless and leave the doubtful alone.

Q: I have a Guru and I love him very much. But whether he is my true Guru I do not know.

M: Watch yourself. If you see yourself changing, growing, it means you have found the right man. He may be beautiful or ugly, pleasant or unpleasant, flattering you or scolding; nothing matters except the one crucial fact of inward growth. If you don't, well, he may be your friend, but not your Guru.

his reaction is: 'the man must be mad to teach such nonsense'. What am I to tell him?

M: Take him to himself. Show him, how little he knows himself, how he takes the most absurd statements about himself for holy truth. He is told that he is the body, was born, will die, has parents, duties, learns to like what others like and fear what others fear. Totally a creature of heredity and society, he lives by memory and acts by habits. Ignorant of himself and his true interests, he pursues false aims and is always frustrated. His life and death are meaningless and painful, and there seems to be no way out. Then tell him, there is a way out within his easy reach, not a conversion to another set of ideas, but a liberation from all ideas and patterns of living. Don't tell him about Gurus and disciples -- this way of thinking is not for him. His is an inner path, he is moved by an inner urge and guided by an inner light. Invite him to rebel and he will respond. Do not try to impress on him that so-and-so is a realised man and can be accepted as a Guru. As long as he does not trust himself, he cannot trust another. And confidence will come with experience.

Q: How strange! I cannot imagine life without a Guru.

M: It is a matter of temperament. You too are right. For you, singing the praises of God is enough. You need not desire realisation or take up a *sadhana*. God's name is all the food you need. Live on it.

M: I watch all that happens, including my talking to you. It is not me who talks, the words appear in my mind and then I hear them said.

Q: Is it not the case with everybody?

M: Who said no? But you insist that you think, you speak, while to me there is thinking, there is speaking.

Q: There are two cases to consider. Either I have found a Guru, or I have not. In each case what is the right thing to do?

M: You are never without a Guru, for he is timelessly present in your heart. Sometimes he externalises himself and comes to you as an uplifting and reforming factor in your life, a mother, a wife, a teacher; or he remains as an inner urge toward righteousness and perfection. All you have to do is obey him and do what he tells you. What he wants you to do is simple, learn self-awareness, self-control, self-surrender. It may seem arduous, but it is easy if you are earnest. And quite impossible if you are not. Earnestness is both necessary and sufficient. Everything yields to earnestness.

Q: What makes one earnest?

M: Compassion is the foundation of earnestness. Compassion for yourself and others, born of suffering, your own and others.

Q: Must I suffer to be earnest?

M: You need not, if you are sensitive and respond to the suffering of others, as Buddha did. But if you are callous and without pity, your own suffering will make you ask the inevitable questions.

Q: I find myself suffering, but not enough. Life is unpleasant, but bearable. My little pleasures compensate me for my small pains and on the whole I am better off than most of the people I know. I know that my condition is precarious, that a calamity can overtake me any moment. Must I wait for a crisis to put me on my way to truth?

M: The moment you have seen how fragile is your condition, you are already alert. Now, keep alert, give attention, enquire, investigate, discover your mistakes of mind and body and abandon them.

Q: I feel my hold on the body is so strong that I just cannot give up the idea that I am the body. It will cling to me as long as the body lasts. There are people who maintain that no realisation is possible while alive and I feel inclined to agree with them.

M: Before you agree or disagree, why not investigate the very idea of a body? Does the mind appear in the body or the body in the mind? Surely there must be a mind to conceive the 'I-am-the-body' idea. A body without a mind cannot be 'my body'. 'My body' is invariably absent when the mind is in abeyance. It is also

absent when the mind is deeply engaged in thoughts and feelings. Once you realise that the body depends on the mind, and the mind on consciousness, and consciousness on awareness and not the other way round, your question about waiting for self-realisation till you die is answered. It is not that you must be free from 'I-am-the-body' idea first, and then realise the self. It is definitely the other way round -- you cling to the false, because you do not know the true. Earnestness, not perfection, is a precondition to self-realisation. Virtues and powers come with realisation, not before.

85. 'I am': The Foundation of all Experience

M: It is the full and correct knowledge of the known that takes you to the unknown. You cannot think of it in terms of uses and advantages; to be quite detached, beyond the reach of all self-concern, all selfish consideration, is an inescapable condition of liberation.

M: Of the unknowable only silence talks. The mind can talk only of what it knows. If you diligently investigate the knowable, it dissolves and only the unknowable remains. But with the first flicker of imagination and interest the unknowable is obscured and the known comes to the fore-front. The known, the changeable, is what you live with -- the unchangeable is of no use to you. It is only when you are satiated with the changeable and long for the unchangeable, that you are ready for the turning round and stepping into what can be described, when seen from the level of the mind, as emptiness and darkness.

M: Whatever may be the experience, true or false, the fact of an experience taking place cannot be denied. It is its own proof. Watch yourself closely and you will see that whatever be the content of consciousness, the witnessing of it does not depend on the content. Awareness is itself and does not change with the event. The event may be pleasant or unpleasant, minor or important – awareness is the same. Take note of the peculiar nature of pure awareness, its natural self-identity, without the least trace of self-consciousness, and go to the root of it and you will soon realise that awareness is your true nature and nothing you may be aware of, you can call your own.

M: When the content is viewed without likes and dislikes, the consciousness of it is awareness. But still there is a difference between awareness as reflected in consciousness and pure awareness beyond consciousness. Reflected awareness, the sense 'I am aware' is the witness, while pure awareness is the essence of reality. Reflection of the sun in a drop of water is the reflection of the sun, no doubt, but not the sun itself. Between awareness reflected in consciousness as the witness and pure awareness there is a gap, which the mind cannot cross.

M: There is no such thing as the experience of the real. The real is beyond experience. All experience is in the mind. You know the real by being real.

Q: I hear you talking of the unshakable and blissful. What is in your mind when you use these words?

M: There is nothing in my mind. As you hear the words, so do I hear them. The power that makes everything happen makes them also happen.

Q: But you are speaking, not me.

M: That is how it appears to you. As I see it, two body-minds exchange symbolic noises. In reality nothing happens.

M: Assiduously watch your ever-changing life, probe deeply into the motives beyond your actions and you will soon prick the bubble in which you are enclosed.

86. The Unknown is the Home of the Real

Q: How is the person removed?

M: By determination. Understand that it must go and wish it to go -- it shall go if you are earnest about it.

M: The door that locks you in, is also the door that lets you out. The 'I am' is the door. Stay at it until it opens. As a matter of fact, it is open, only you are not at it. You are waiting at the non-existent painted doors, which will never open.

M: If you stay with the idea that you are not the body nor the mind, not even their witness, but altogether beyond, your mind will grow in clarity, your desires -- in purity, your actions -- in charity and that inner distillation will take you to another world, a world of truth and fearless love. Resist your old habits of feeling and thinking; keep on telling yourself: 'No, not so, it cannot be so; I am not like this, I do not need it, I do not want it', and a day will surely come when the entire structure of error and despair will collapse and the ground will be free for a new life.

Q: There was a time when I was most displeased with myself. Now I have met my Guru and I am at peace, after having surrendered myself to him completely.

M: If you watch your daily life you will see that you have surrendered nothing. You have merely added the word 'surrender' to your vocabulary and made your Guru into a peg to hang your problems on. Real surrender means doing nothing, unless prompted by your Guru. You step, so to say, aside and let your Guru live your life. You merely watch and wonder how easily he solves the problems which to you seemed insoluble.

M: Ask yourself: ‘To whom it all happens?’ Use everything as an opportunity to go within. Light your way by burning up obstacles in the intensity of awareness. When you happen to desire or fear, it is not the desire or fear that are wrong and must go, but the person who desires and fears. There is no point in fighting desires and fears which may be perfectly natural and justified; It is the person, who is swayed by them, that is the cause of mistakes, past and future. The person should be carefully examined and its falseness seen; then its power over you will end. After all, it subsides each time you go to sleep. In deep sleep you are not a self-conscious person, yet you are alive. When you are alive and conscious, but no longer self-conscious, you are not a person anymore. During the waking hours you are, as if, on the stage, playing a role, but what are you when the play is over? You are what you are; what you were before the play began you remain when it is over. Look at yourself as performing on the stage of life. The performance may be splendid or clumsy, but you are not in it, you merely watch it; with interest and sympathy, of course, but keeping in mind all the time that you are only watching while the play -- life -- is going on.

87. Keep the Mind Silent and You shall Discover

M: All that happens, happens in and to the mind, not to the source of the ‘I am’. Once you realise that all happens by itself, (call it destiny, or the will of God or mere accident), you remain as witness only, understanding and enjoying, but not perturbed.

Q: Somehow I feel responsible for what happens around me.

M: You are responsible only for what you can change. All you can change is only your attitude. There lies your responsibility.

M: The mind shapes the language and the language shapes the mind. Both are tools, use them but don’t misuse them. Words can bring you only unto their own limit; to go beyond, you must abandon them. Remain as the silent witness only.

M: All depends on you. It is by your consent that the world exists. Withdraw your belief in its reality and it will dissolve like a dream. Time can bring down mountains; much more you, who are the timeless source of time. For without memory and expectation there can be no time.

M: Don’t be afraid of a world you yourself have created. Cease from looking for happiness and reality in a dream and you will wake up. You need not know ‘why’ and ‘how’, there is no end to questions. Abandon all desires, keep your mind silent and you shall discover.

88. Knowledge by the Mind is not True Knowledge

Maharaj: All the three states are sleep to me. My waking state is beyond them. As I look at you, you all seem asleep, dreaming up words of your own. I am aware, for I imagine nothing. It is not *samadhi* which is but a kind of sleep. It is just a state unaffected by the mind, free from the past and future. In your case it is distorted by desire and fear, by memories and hopes; in mine it is as it is -- normal. To be a person is to be asleep.

Q: We are condemned to fear?

M: Until we can look at fear and accept it as the shadow of personal existence, as persons we are bound to be afraid. Abandon all personal equations and you shall be free from fear. It is not difficult. Desirelessness comes on its own when desire is recognised as false. You need not struggle with desire. Ultimately, it is an urge to happiness, which is natural as long as there is sorrow. Only see that there is no happiness in what you desire.

Q: We settle for pleasure.

M: Each pleasure is wrapped in pain. You soon discover that you cannot have one without the other.

Q: As I listen to you, my mind is all in the now and I am astonished to find myself without questions.

M: You can know reality only when you are astonished.

M: Don't talk of means, there are no means. What you see as false, dissolves. It is the very nature of illusion to dissolve on investigation. Investigate -- that is all. You cannot destroy the false, for you are creating it all the time. Withdraw from it, ignore it, go beyond, and it will cease to be.

M: Liberation is not the result of some means skilfully applied, nor of circumstances. It is beyond the causal process. Nothing can compel it, nothing can prevent it.

Q: Then why are we not free here and now?

M: But we are free 'here and now'. It is only the mind that imagines bondage.

Q: What will put an end to imagination?

M: Why should you want to put an end to it? Once you know your mind and its miraculous powers, and remove what poisoned it -- the idea of a separate and isolated person -- you just leave it alone to do its work among things to which it is well suited. To keep the mind in its own place and on its own work is the liberation of the mind.

Q: I have not yet understood why, if nothing stands in the way of liberation, it does not happen here and now.

M: Nothing stands in the way of your liberation and it can happen here and now, but for your being more interested in other things. And you cannot fight with your interests. You must go with them, see through them and watch them reveal themselves as mere errors of judgement and appreciation.

M: There are good people among your friends -- you can learn much from them. Running after saints is merely another game to play. Remember yourself instead, and watch your daily life relentlessly. Be earnest, and you shall not fail to break the bonds of inattention and imagination.

Q: Do you want me to struggle all alone?

M: You are never alone. There are powers and presences who serve you all the time most faithfully. You may or may not perceive them, nevertheless they are real and active. When you realise that all is in your mind and that you are beyond the mind, that you are truly alone; then all is you.

M: To lose entirely all interest in knowledge results in omniscience. It is but the gift of knowing what needs to be known, at the right moment, for error-free action. After all, knowledge is needed for action and if you act rightly, spontaneously, without bringing in the conscious, so much the better.

M: Do not try to know the truth, for knowledge by the mind is not true knowledge. But you can know what is not true -- which is enough to liberate you from the false. The idea that you know what is true is dangerous, for it keeps you imprisoned in the mind. It is when you do not know that you are free to investigate. And there can be no salvation without investigation, because non-investigation is the main cause of bondage.

M: I can see, beyond the least shadow of doubt, that you are not what you believe yourself to be. Logic or no logic, you cannot deny the obvious. You are nothing that you are conscious of. Apply yourself diligently to pulling apart the structure you have built in your mind. What the mind has done the mind must undo.

89. Progress in Spiritual Life

Q: Who are the people in this room? Are they your disciples?

M: Ask them. It is not on the verbal level that one becomes a disciple, but in the silent depths of one's being. You do not become a disciple by choice; it is more a matter of destiny than self-will. It does not matter much who is the teacher -- they all wish you well. It is the disciple that matters -- his honesty and earnestness. The right disciple will always find the right teacher.

Q: What are the signs of progress in spiritual life?

M: Freedom from anxiety; a sense of ease and joy; deep peace within and abundant energy without.

Q: How did you get it?

M: I found it all in the holy presence of my Guru -- I did nothing on my own. He told me to be quiet -- and I did it -- as much as I could.

Q: Is your presence as powerful as his?

M: How am I to know? For me -- his is the only presence. If you are with me, you are with him.

Q: What is the course of training in self-awareness?

M: There is no need of training. Awareness is always with you. The same attention that you give to the outer, you turn to the inner. No new, or special kind of awareness is needed.

90. Surrender to Your Own Self

Q: Such realisation comes and goes with me. I have not yet reached the immutability of absolute completeness.

M: Well, as long as you believe so, you must go on with your *sadhana*, to disperse the false idea of not being complete. *Sadhana* removes the superimpositions. When you realise yourself as less than a point in space and time, something too small to be cut and too short-lived to be killed, then, and then only, all fear goes. When you are smaller than the point of a needle, then the needle cannot pierce you -- you pierce the needle!

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Q: I admit that now I want to go back and live a very active life, because I feel full of energy.

M: You can do what you like, as long as you do not take yourself to be the body and the mind. It is not so much a question of actual giving up the body and all that goes with it, as a clear understanding that you are not the body. A sense of aloofness, of emotional non-involvement.

M: You are married and a mother only when you are man-women conscious. When you do not take yourself to be the body, then the family life of the body, however intense and interesting, is seen only as a play on the screen of the mind, with the light of awareness as the only reality.

M: There can be no continuity in existence. Continuity implies identity in past, present and future. No such identity is possible, for the very means of identification fluctuate and change. Continuity, permanency, these are illusions created by memory, mere mental projections of a pattern where no pattern can be; Abandon all ideas of temporary or permanent, body or mind, man or women; what remains? What is the state of your mind when all separation is given up? I am not talking of giving up distinctions, for without them there is no manifestation.

Q: Is pleasure always wrong?

M: The right state and use of the body and the mind are intensely pleasant. It is the search for pleasure that is wrong. Do not try to make yourself happy, rather question your very search for happiness. It is because you are not happy that you want to be happy. Find out why you are unhappy. Because you are not happy you seek happiness in pleasure; pleasure brings in pain and therefore you call it worldly; you then long for some other pleasure, without pain, which you call divine. In reality, pleasure is but a respite from pain. Happiness is both worldly and unworldly, within and beyond all that happens. Make no distinction, don't separate the inseparable and do not alienate yourself from life.

M: Trusting Bhagavan is trusting yourself. Be aware that whatever happens, happens to you, by you, through you, that you are the creator, enjoyer and destroyer of all you perceive and you will not be afraid. Unafraid, you will not be unhappy, nor will you seek happiness.

In the mirror of your mind all kinds of pictures appear and disappear. Knowing that they are entirely your own creations, watch them silently come and go, be alert, but not perturbed. This attitude of silent observation is the very foundation of *Yoga*. You see the picture, but you are not the picture.

Q: I find that the thought of death frightens me because I do not want to be reborn. I know that none compels, yet the pressure of unsatisfied desires is overwhelming and I may not be able to resist.

M: The question of resistance does not arise. What is born and reborn is not you. Let it happen, watch it happen.

Q: Why then be at all concerned?

M: But you are concerned! And you will be concerned as long as the picture clashes with your own sense of truth, love and beauty. The desire for harmony and peace is in eradicable. But once it is fulfilled, the concern ceases and physical life becomes effortless and below the level of attention. Then, even in the body you are not born. To be embodied or bodyless is the same to you. You reach a

point when nothing can happen to you. Without body, you cannot be killed; without possessions you cannot be robbed; without mind, you cannot be deceived. There is no point where a desire or fear can hook on. As long as no change can happen to you, what else matters?

Q: Well, God will look after me. I can leave everything to Him.

M: Even faith in God is only a stage on the way. Ultimately you abandon all, for you come to something so simple that there are no words to express it.

Q: Sir, wherever I go people take it to be their duty to find faults with me and goad me on. I am fed up with this spiritual fortune making. What is wrong with my present that it should be sacrificed to a future, however glorious? You say reality is in the now. I want it. I do not want to be eternally anxious about my stature and its future. I do not want to chase the more and the better. Let me love what I have.

M: You are quite right; do it. Only be honest -- just love what you love -- don't strive and strain.

Q: This is what I call surrender to the Guru.

M: Why exteriorise? Surrender to your own self, of which everything is an expression.

91. Pleasure and Happiness

Q: [About suicide] Is it not obligatory to live out one's natural span of life?

M: Natural -- spontaneously -- easy -- yes. But disease and suffering are not natural. There is noble virtue in unshakable endurance of whatever comes, but there is also dignity in the refusal of meaningless torture and humiliation.

M: However powerful the Guru may be, he should not impose his will on the disciple. On the other hand, a disciple that distrusts and hesitates is bound to remain unfulfilled for no fault of his Guru.

Q: What happens then?

M: Life teaches, where all else fails. But the lessons of life take a long time to come. Much delay and trouble is saved by trusting and obeying. But such trust comes only when indifference and restlessness give place to clarity and peace. A man who keeps himself in low esteem, will not be able to trust himself, nor anybody else. [...] When self-confidence and trust in the teacher come together, rapid and far-going changes in the disciple's character and life can take place.

Q: I may not want to change. My life is good enough as it is.

M: You say so because you have not seen how painful is the life you live. You are like a child sleeping with a lollypop in its mouth. You may feel happy for a moment by being totally self-centred, but it is enough to have a good look at human faces to perceive the universality of suffering. Even your own happiness is so

vulnerable and short-lived, at the mercy of a bank-crash, or a stomach ulcer. It is just a moment of respite, a mere gap between two sorrows. Real happiness is not vulnerable, because it does not depend on circumstances.

M: Liberation is a natural process and in the long run, inevitable. But it is within your power to bring it into the now.

Q: Then why are so few liberated people in the world?

M: In a forest only some of the trees are in full bloom at a given moment, yet every one will have its turn.

Q: I understood that suffering is inherent in limitation.

M: Differences and distinctions are not the causes of sorrow. Unity in diversity is natural and good. It is only with separateness and self-seeking that real suffering appears in the world.

92. Go Beyond the I-am-the-body Idea

Maharaj: What prevents you from knowing yourself as all and beyond all, is the mind based on memory. It has power over you as long as you trust it; don't struggle with it; just disregard it. Deprived of attention, it will slow down and reveal the mechanism of its working. Once you know its nature and purpose, you will not allow it to create imaginary problems.

Q: How to bring the mind under control? And the heart, which does not know what it wants?

M: They cannot work in darkness. They need the light of pure awareness to function rightly. All effort at control will merely subject them to the dictates of memory. Memory is a good servant, but a bad master. It effectively prevents discovery. There is no place for effort in reality. It is selfishness, due to a self-identification with the body, that is the main problem and the cause of all other problems. And selfishness cannot be removed by effort, only by clear insight into its causes and effects. Effort is a sign of conflict between incompatible desires. They should be seen as they are -- then only they dissolve.

Q: Must not one be fit and eligible for realisation? Our nature is animal to the core. Unless it is conquered, how can we hope for reality to dawn?

M: Leave the animal alone. Let it be. Just remember what you are. Use every incident of the day to remind you that without you as the witness there would be neither animal nor God. Understand that you are both, the essence and the substance of all there is, and remain firm in your understanding.

Q: Is understanding enough? Don't I need more tangible proofs?

M: It is your understanding that will decide about the validity of proofs. But what more tangible proof do you need than your own existence? Wherever you go you find yourself. However far you reach out in time, you are there.

Q: Obviously, I am not all-pervading and eternal. I am only here and now.

M: Good enough. The 'here' is everywhere and the now -- always. Go beyond the 'I-am-the-body' idea and you will find that space and time are in you and not you in space and time. Once you have understood this, the main obstacle to realisation is removed.

M: The true teacher, however, will not imprison his disciple in a prescribed set of ideas, feelings and actions; on the contrary, he will show him patiently the need to be free from all ideas and set patterns of behaviour, to be vigilant and earnest and go with life wherever it takes him, not to enjoy or suffer, but to understand and learn.

Under the right teacher the disciple learns to learn, not to remember and obey. *Satsang*, the company of the noble, does not mould, it liberates. Beware of all that makes you dependent. Most of the so-called 'surrenders to the Guru' end in disappointment, if not in tragedy. Fortunately, an earnest seeker will disentangle himself in time, [the] wiser for the experience.

M: In *adhi yoga* life itself is the Guru and the mind -- the disciple. The mind attends to life, it does not dictate. Life flows naturally and effortlessly and the mind removes the obstacles to its even flow.

Q: Seen as the service of life by the mind, the *adhi yoga* is a perfect democracy. Everyone is engaged in living a life to his best capacity and knowledge, everyone is a disciple of the same Guru.

M: You may say so. It may be so -- potentially. But unless life is loved and trusted, followed with eagerness and zest, it would be fanciful to talk of *Yoga*, which is a movement in consciousness, awareness in action.

Q: But ultimately is there a world, or is there none?

M: What you see is nothing but your self. Call it what you like, it does not change the fact. Through the film of destiny your own light depicts pictures on the screen. You are the viewer, the light, the picture and the screen. Even the film of destiny (*prarabdha*) is self-selected and self-imposed. The spirit is a sport and enjoys to overcome obstacles. The harder the task the deeper and wider his self-realisation.

93. Man is not the Doer

Maharaj: As long as there is the body and the sense of identity with the body, frustration is inevitable. Only when you know yourself as entirely alien to and

different from the body, will you find respite from the mixture of fear and craving inseparable from the 'I-am-the-body' idea. Merely assuaging⁵ fears and satisfying desires will not remove this sense of emptiness you are trying to escape from; only self-knowledge can help you.

Q: I have so much to do. I just cannot afford to keep my mind quiet.

M: It is because of your illusion that you are the doer. In reality things are done to you, not by you.

Q: If I just let things happen, how can I be sure that they will happen my way? Surely I must bend them to my desire.

M: Your desire just happens to you along with its fulfilment, or non-fulfilment. You can change neither. You may believe that you exert yourself, strive and struggle. Again, it all merely happens, including the fruits of the work. Nothing is by you and for you. All is in the picture exposed on the cinema screen, nothing in the light, including what you take yourself to be, the person. You are the light only.

Q: If I am light only, how did I come to forget it?

M: You have not forgotten. It is in the picture on the screen that you forget and then remember. You never cease to be a man because you dream to be a tiger. Similarly you are pure light appearing as a picture on the screen and also becoming one with it.

Q: Since all happens, why should I worry?

M: Exactly. Freedom is freedom from worry. Having realised that you cannot influence the results, pay no attention to your desires and fears. Let them come and go. Don't give them the nourishment of interest and attention.

Q: If life is so wonderful, how could ignorance happen?

M: You want to treat the disease without having seen the patient! Before you ask about ignorance, why don't you enquire first who is the ignorant? When you say you are ignorant, you do not know that you have imposed the concept of ignorance over the actual state of your thoughts and feelings. Examine them as they occur, give them your full attention and you will find that there is nothing like ignorance, only inattention. Give attention to what worries you, that is all. After all, worry is mental pain and pain is invariably a call for attention. The moment you give attention, the call for it ceases and the question of ignorance dissolves. Instead of waiting for an answer to your question, find out who is asking the question and what makes him ask it. You will soon find that it is the mind, goaded by fear of pain, that asks the question. And in fear there is memory and anticipation, past and future. Attention brings you back to the present, the now, and the presence in the now is a state ever at hand, but rarely noticed.

Q: We love only ourselves.

⁵ Assuage = mitigar; atenuar; satisfazer.

M: Were it so, it would be splendid! Love your Self wisely and you will reach the summit of perfection. Everybody loves his body, but few love their real being.

Q: Does my real being need my love?

M: Your real being is love itself and your many loves are its reflections according to the situation at the moment.

Q: Yet I do not understand why the various Gurus insist on prescribing complicated and difficult *sadhanas*. Don't they know better?

M: It is not what you do, but what you stop doing that matters. The people who begin their *sadhana* are so feverish and restless, that they have to be very busy to keep themselves on the track. An absorbing routine is good for them. After some time they quieten down and turn away from effort. In peace and silence the skin of the 'I' dissolves and the inner and the outer become one. The real *sadhana* is effortless.

Q: I have sometimes the feeling that space itself is my body.

M: When you are bound by the illusion: 'I am this body', you are merely a point in space and a moment in time. When the self-identification with the body is no more, all space and time are in your mind, which is a mere ripple in consciousness, which is awareness reflected in nature. Awareness and matter are the active and the passive aspects of pure being, which is in both and beyond both. Space and time are the body and the mind of the universal existence. My feeling is that all that happens in space and time happens to me, that every experience is my experience, every form is my form. What I take myself to be becomes my body, and all that happens to that body becomes my mind. But at the root of the universe there is pure awareness, beyond space and time, here and now. Know it to be your real being and act accordingly.

94. You are Beyond Space and Time

M: I am not bound by your dreamlike world. In my world the seeds of suffering, desire and fear are not sown and suffering does not grow. My world is free from opposites, of mutually distinctive discrepancies; harmony pervades; its peace is rocklike; this peace and silence are my body.

M: Just see the person you imagine yourself to be as a part of the world you perceive within your mind and look at the mind from the outside, for you are not the mind. After all, your only problem is the eager self-identification with whatever you perceive. Give up this habit, remember that you are not what you perceive, use your power of alert aloofness. See yourself in all that lives and your behavior will express your vision. Once you realise that there is nothing in this world which you can call

your own, you look at it from the outside as you look at a play on the stage, or a picture on the screen, admiring and enjoying, but really unmoved. As long as you imagine yourself to be something tangible and solid, a thing among things, actually existing in time and space, short-lived and vulnerable, naturally you will be anxious to survive and increase. But when you know yourself as beyond space and time -- in contact with them only at the point of here and now, otherwise all-pervading and all-containing, unapproachable, unassailable, invulnerable -- you will be afraid no longer. Know yourself as you are -- against fear there is no other remedy.

You have to learn to think and feel on these lines, or you will remain indefinitely on the personal level of desire and fear, gaining and losing, growing and decaying. A personal problem cannot be solved on its own level. The very desire to live is the messenger of death, as the longing to be happy is the outline of sorrow. The world is an ocean of pain and fear, of anxiety and despair. Pleasures are like the fishes, few and swift, rarely come, quickly gone. A man of low intelligence believes, against all evidence, that he is an exception and that the world owes him happiness. But the world cannot give what it does not have; unreal to the core, it is of no use for real happiness. It cannot be otherwise. We seek the real because we are unhappy with the unreal. Happiness is our real nature and we shall never rest until we find it. But rarely we know where to seek it. Once you have understood that the world is but a mistaken view of reality, and is not what it appears to be, you are free of its obsessions. Only what is compatible with your real being can make you happy and the world, as you perceive it, is its outright denial.

Q: How can one remain happy among so much suffering?

M: One cannot help it -- the inner happiness is overwhelmingly real. Like the sun in the sky, its expressions may be clouded, but it is never absent.

Q: If happiness is independent, why are we not always happy?

M: As long as we believe that we need things to make us happy, we shall also believe that in their absence we must be miserable. Mind always shapes itself according to its beliefs. Hence the importance of convincing oneself that one need not be prodded into happiness; that, on the contrary, pleasure is a distraction and a nuisance, for it merely increases the false conviction that one needs to have and do things to be happy when in reality it is just the opposite.

But why talk of happiness at all? You do not think of happiness except when you are unhappy. A man who says: 'Now I am happy', is between two sorrows -- past and future. This happiness is mere excitement caused by relief from pain. Real happiness is utterly unselfconscious. It is best expressed negatively as: 'there is nothing wrong with me. I have nothing to worry about'. After all, the ultimate purpose of all *sadhana* is to reach a point when this conviction, instead of being only verbal, is based on the actual and ever-present experience.

Q: Emptiness and nothingness -- how dreadful!

M: You face it most cheerfully, when you go to sleep! Find out for yourself the state of wakeful sleep and you will find it quite in harmony with your real nature. Words can only give you the idea and the idea is not the experience. All I can say is that true happiness has no cause and what has no cause is immovable. Which does not mean it is perceivable, as pleasure. What is perceivable is pain and pleasure; the state of freedom from sorrow can be described only negatively. To know it directly you must go beyond the mind addicted to causality and the tyranny of time.

Q: What about witnessing?

M: Witnessing is of the mind. The witness goes with the witnessed. In the state of non-duality all separation ceases.

Q: What about you? Do you continue in awareness?

M: The person, the 'I am this body, this mind, this chain of memories, this bundle of desires and fears' disappears, but something you may call identity, remains. It enables me to become a person when required. Love creates its own necessities, even of becoming a person.

Q: What is the relation between reality and its expressions?

M: No relation. In reality all is real and identical. As we put it, *saguna* and *nirguna* are one in *Parabrahman*. There is only the Supreme. In movement, it is *saguna*. Motionless, it is *nirguna*. But it is only the mind that moves or does not move. The real is beyond. You are beyond. Once you have understood that nothing perceivable, or conceivable can be yourself, you are free of your imaginations. To see everything as imagination, born of desire, is necessary for self-realisation. We miss the real by lack of attention and create the unreal by excess of imagination.

You have to give your heart and mind to these things and brood over them repeatedly. It is like cooking food. You must keep it on the fire for some time before it is ready.

Q: Am I not under the sway of destiny, of my *karma*? What can I do against it? What I am and what I do is pre-determined. Even my so-called free choice is predetermined; only I am not aware of it and imagine myself to be free.

M: Again, it all depends how you look at it. Ignorance is like a fever -- it makes you see things which are not there. *karma* is the divinely prescribed treatment. Welcome it and follow the instructions faithfully and you will get well. A patient will leave the hospital after he recovers. To insist on immediate freedom of choice and action will merely postpone recovery. Accept your destiny and fulfil it -- this is the shortest way to freedom from destiny, though not from love and its compulsions. To act from desire and fear is bondage; to act from love is freedom.

95. Accept Life as it Comes

Q: I have some property in the United States which I intend to sell and buy some land in the Himalayas. I shall build a house, lay out a garden, get two or three cows and live quietly. People tell me that property and quiet are not compatible, that I shall at once get into trouble with officials, neighbours and thieves. Is it inevitable?

M: The least you can expect is an endless succession of visitors who will make your abode into a free and open guesthouse. Better accept your life as it shapes, go home and look after your wife with love and care. Nobody else needs you. Your dreams of glory will land you in more trouble.

Q: It is not glory that I seek. I seek Reality.

M: For this you need a well-ordered and quiet life, peace of mind and immense earnestness. At every moment whatever comes to you unasked, comes from God and will surely help you, if you make the fullest use of it. It is only what you strive for, out of your own imagination and desire, that gives you trouble.

Q: Is destiny the same as grace?

M: Absolutely. Accept life as it comes and you will find it a blessing.

M: As long as you take yourself to be a person, a body and a mind, separate from the stream of life, having a will of its own, pursuing its own aims, you are living merely on the surface and whatever you do will be short-lived and of little value, mere straw to feed the flames of vanity. You must put in true worth before you can expect something real. What is your worth?

Q: By what measure shall I measure it?

M: Look at the content of your mind. You are what you think about. Are you not most of the time busy with your own little person and its daily needs?

The value of regular meditation is that it takes you away from the humdrum of daily routine and reminds you that you are not what you believe yourself to be. But even remembering is not enough -- action must follow conviction. Don't be like the rich man who has made a detailed will, but refuses to die.

Q: I admit it is courage that I lack.

M: It is because you are not fully convinced. Complete conviction generates both desire and courage. And meditation is the art of achieving faith through understanding. In meditation you consider the teaching received, in all its aspects and repeatedly, until out of clarity confidence is born and, with confidence, action. Conviction and action are inseparable. If action does not follow conviction, examine your convictions, don't accuse yourself of lack of courage. Self-depreciation will take you nowhere. Without clarity and emotional assent of what use is will?

Q: What do you mean by emotional assent? Am I not to act against my desires?

M: You will not act against your desires. Clarity is not enough. Energy comes from love -- you must love to act -- whatever the shape and object of your

love. Without clarity and charity courage is destructive. People at war are often wonderfully courageous, but what of it?

Q: I see quite clearly that all I want is a house in a garden where I shall live in peace. Why should I not act on my desire?

M: By all means, act. But do not forget the inevitable, unexpected. Without rain your garden will not flourish. You need courage for adventure.

Q: I need time to collect my courage, don't hustle me. Let me ripen for action.

M: The entire approach is wrong. Action delayed is action abandoned. There may be other chances for other actions, but the present moment is lost -- irretrievably lost. All preparation is for the future -- you cannot prepare for the present.

Q: What is wrong with preparing for the future?

M: Acting in the now is not much helped by your preparations. Clarity is now, action is now. Thinking of being ready impedes action. And action is the touchstone of reality.

M: Once you know yourself, it is immaterial what you do, but to realise your independence, you must test it by letting go all you were dependent on.

M: Keep quiet, undisturbed, and the wisdom and the power will come on their own. You need not hanker. Wait in silence of the heart and mind. It is very easy to be quiet, but willingness is rare. You people want to become supermen overnight. Stay without ambition, without the least desire, exposed, vulnerable, unprotected, uncertain and alone, completely open to and welcoming life as it happens, without the selfish conviction that all must yield you pleasure or profit, material or so-called spiritual.

Q: I respond to what you say, but I just do not see how it is done.

M: If you know how to do it, you will not do it. Abandon every attempt, just be; don't strive, don't struggle, let go every support, hold on to the blind sense of being, brushing off all else. This is enough.

Q: How is this brushing done? The more I brush off, the more it comes to the surface.

M: Refuse attention, let things come and go. Desires and thoughts are also things. Disregard them. Since immemorial time the dust of events was covering the clear mirror of your mind, so that only memories you could see. Brush off the dust before it has time to settle; this will lay bare the old layers until the true nature of your mind is discovered. It is all very simple and comparatively easy; be earnest and patient, that is all. Dispassion, detachment, freedom from desire and fear, from all self-concern, mere awareness -- free from memory and expectation -- this is the state of mind to which discovery can happen.

96. Abandon Memories and Expectations

Q: I am afraid of my own mind. It is so unsteady!

M: In the mirror of your mind images appear and disappear. The mirror remains. Learn to distinguish the immovable in the movable, the unchanging in the changing, till you realise that all differences are in appearance only and oneness is a fact. This basic identity -- you may call God, or *Brahman*, or the matrix (*Prakriti*), the words matters little -- is only the realisation that all is one.

Q: Is there anything unnecessary in the scheme of things?

M: Nothing is necessary, nothing is inevitable. Habit and passion blind and mislead. Compassionate awareness heals and redeems. There is nothing we can do, we can only let things happen according to their nature.

Q: Are austerities and penances of any use?

M: To meet all the vicissitudes of life is penance enough! You need not invent trouble. To meet cheerfully whatever life brings is all the austerity you need.

Q: What about sacrifice?

M: Share willingly and gladly all you have with whoever needs -- don't invent self-inflicted cruelties.

Q: What is self-surrender?

M: Accept what comes.

Q: Will compete solitude be of any benefit?

M: It depends on your temperament. You may work with others and for others, alert and friendly, and grow more fully than in solitude, which may make you dull or leave you at the mercy of your mind's endless chatter. Do not imagine that you can change through effort. Violence, even turned against yourself, as in austerities and penance, will remain fruitless.

M: It is all due to your complete misunderstanding of reality. Your mind is steeped in the habits of evaluation and acquisition and will not admit that the incomparable and unobtainable are waiting timelessly within your own heart for recognition. All you have to do is to abandon all memories and expectations. Just keep yourself ready in utter nakedness and nothingness.

Q: Who is to do the abandoning?

M: God will do it. Just see the need of being abandoned. Don't resist, don't hold on to the person you take yourself to be.

Q: Unless I am told what to do and how to do it, I feel lost.

M: By all means do feel lost! As long as you feel competent and confident, reality is beyond your reach. Unless you accept inner adventure as a way of life, discovery will not come to you.

Q: Discovery of what?

M: Of the centre of your being, which is free of all directions, all means and ends.

Q: Be all, know all, have all?

M: Be nothing, know nothing, have nothing. This is the only life worth living, the only happiness worth having.

Q: I may admit that the goal is beyond my comprehension. Let me know the way at least.

M: You must find your own way. Unless you find it yourself it will not be your own way and will take you nowhere. Earnestly live your truth as you have found it -- act on the little you have understood. It is earnestness that will take you through, not cleverness -- your own or another's.

97. Mind and the World are not Separate

M: The mind and the world are not separate. Do understand that what you think to be the world is your own mind.

Q: What is your attitude to sin? How do you look at a sinner, somebody who breaks the law, inner or outer? Do you want him to change or you just pity him? Or, are you indifferent to him because of his sins?

M: I know no sin, nor sinner. Your distinction and valuation do not bind me. Everybody behaves according to his nature. It cannot be helped, nor need it be regretted.

Q: Others suffer.

M: Life lives on life. In nature the process is compulsory, in society it should be voluntary. There can be no life without sacrifice. A sinner refuses to sacrifice and invites death. This is as it is, and gives no cause for condemnation and pity.

Q: If a sinner, a breaker of the law, comes before you and asks for your grace, what will be your response?

M: He will get what he asks for.

Q: In spite of being a very bad man?

M: I know no bad people, I only know myself. I see no saints nor sinners, only living beings. I do not hand out grace. There is nothing I can give, or deny, which you do not have already in equal measure. Just be aware of your riches and make full use of them. As long as you imagine that you need my grace, you will be at my door begging for it.

Q: All the Buddhas and Rishis have not succeeded in changing the world.

M: The world does not yield to changing. By its very nature it is painful and transient. See it as it is and divest yourself of all desire and fear. When the world

does not hold and bind you, it becomes an abode of joy and beauty. You can be happy in the world only when you are free of it.

Q: What comes first, being or desire?

M: With being arising in consciousness, the ideas of what you are arise in your mind as well as what you should be. This brings forth desire and action and the process of becoming begins. Becoming has, apparently, no beginning and no end, for it restarts every moment. With the cessation of imagination and desire, becoming ceases and the being this or that merges into pure being, which is not describable, only experienceable.

The world appears to you so overwhelmingly real, because you think of it all the time; cease thinking of it and it will dissolve into thin mist. You need not forget; when desire and fear end, bondage also ends. It is the emotional involvement, the pattern of likes and dislikes which we call character and temperament, that create the bondage.

Q: Since you count your spiritual ancestry from Rishi Dattatreya, are we right in believing that you and all your predecessors are reincarnations of the Rishi?

M: You may believe in whatever you like and if you act on your belief, you will get the fruits of it; but to me it has no importance. I am what I am and this is enough for me. I have no desire to identify myself with anybody, however illustrious. Nor do I feel the need to take myths for reality. I am only interested in ignorance and the freedom from ignorance.

Q: There must be some hopeless cases too?

M: None is hopeless. Obstacles can be overcome. What life cannot mend, death will end, but the Guru cannot fail.

Q: When did the dream begin?

M: It appears to be beginningless, but in fact it is only now. From moment to moment you are renewing it. Once you have seen that you are dreaming, you shall wake up. But you do not see, because you want the dream to continue. A day will come when you will long for the ending of the dream, with all your heart and mind, and be willing to pay any price; the price will be dispassion and detachment, the loss of interest in the dream itself.

Q: How helpless I am. As long as the dream of existence lasts, I want it to continue. As long as I want it to continue, it will last.

M: Wanting it to continue is not inevitable. See clearly your condition, your very clarity will release you.

Q: The world is full of troubles, no wonder my mind too is full of them.

M: Was there ever a world without troubles? Your being as a person depends on violence to others. Your very body is a battlefield, full of the dead and dying. Existence implies violence.

Q: As a body -- yes. As a human being -- definitely no. For humanity non-violence is the law of life and violence of death.

M: There is little of non-violence in nature.

Q: God and nature are not human and need not be humane. I am concerned with man alone. To be human I must be compassionate absolutely.

M: Do you realise that as long as you have a self to defend, you must be violent?

Q: I do. To be truly human I must be self-less. As long as I am selfish, I am sub-human, a humanoid only.

M: So, we are all sub-human and only a few are human. Few or many, it is again 'clarity and charity' that make us human.

98. Freedom from Self-identification

Maharaj: To be, just *be*, is important. You need not ask anything, nor do anything. Such apparently lazy way of spending time is highly regarded in India. It means that for the time being you are free from the obsession with 'what next'. When you are not in a hurry and the mind is free from anxieties, it becomes quiet and in the silence something may be heard which is ordinarily too fine and subtle for perception. The mind must be open and quiet to see.

Questioner: How do we learn to cut out worries?

M: You need not worry about your worries. Just *be*. Do not try to be quiet; do not make 'being quiet' into a task to be performed. Don't be restless about 'being quiet', miserable about 'being happy'. Just be aware that you are and remain aware -- don't say: 'yes, I am; what next?' There is no 'next' in 'I am'. It is a timeless state.

Q: If I know myself, shall I not desire and fear?

M: For some time the mental habits may linger in spite of the new vision, the habit of longing for the known past and fearing the unknown future. When you know these are of the mind only, you can go beyond them. As long as you have all sorts of ideas about yourself, you know yourself through the mist of these ideas; to know yourself as you are, give up all ideas. You cannot imagine the taste of pure water, you can only discover it by abandoning all flavourings.

As long as you are interested in your present way of living, you will not abandon it. Discovery cannot come as long as you cling to the familiar. It is only when you realise fully the immense sorrow of your life and revolt against it, that a way out can be found.

Q: Then, what am I to do?

M: Try to *be*, only to *be*. The all-important word is 'try'. Allot enough time daily for sitting quietly and trying, just trying, to go beyond the personality, with its addictions and obsessions. Don't ask how, it cannot be explained. You just keep on

trying until you succeed. If you persevere, there can be no failure. What matters supremely is sincerity, earnestness; you must really have had surfeit of being the person you are, now see the urgent need of being free of this unnecessary self-identification with a bundle of memories and habits. This steady resistance against the unnecessary is the secret of success.

After all, you are what you are every moment of your life, but you are never conscious of it, except, maybe, at the point of awakening from sleep. All you need is to be aware of being, not as a verbal statement, but as an ever-present fact. The awareness that you *are* will open your eyes to what you are. It is all very simple. First of all, establish a constant contact with your Self, be with yourself all the time. Into self-awareness all blessings flow. Begin as a centre of observation, deliberate cognisance, and grow into a centre of love in action. 'I am' is a tiny seed which will grow into a mighty tree -- quite naturally, without a trace of effort.'

M: Evil is the shadow of inattention. In the light of self-awareness it will wither and fall off.

All dependence on another is futile, for what others can give others will take away. Only what is your own at the start will remain your own in the end. Accept no guidance but from within, and even then sift out all memories for they will mislead you. Even if you are quite ignorant of the ways and the means, keep quiet and look within; guidance is sure to come. You are never left without knowing what your next step should be. The trouble is that you may shirk it. The Guru is there for giving you courage because of his experience and success. But only what you discover through your own awareness, your own effort, will be of permanent use to you.

Remember, nothing you perceive is your own. Nothing of value can come to you from outside; it is only your own feeling and understanding that are relevant and revealing. Words, heard or read, will only create images in your mind, but you are not a mental image. You are the power of perception and action behind and beyond the image.

M: To be attached to one's name and shape is selfishness. A man who knows that he is neither body nor mind cannot be selfish, for he has nothing to be selfish for. [...] To be selfish means to covet, acquire, accumulate on behalf of the part against the whole.

M: *Karma*, or destiny, is an expression of a beneficial law: the universal trend towards balance, harmony and unity. At every moment, whatever happens now, is for the best. It may appear painful and ugly, a suffering bitter and meaningless, yet considering the past and the future it is for the best, as the only way out of a disastrous situation.

M: To be is to suffer. The narrower the circle of my self-identification, the more acute the suffering caused by desire and fear.

Q: Can there be no suffering that is necessary and good?

M: Accidental or incidental pain is inevitable and transitory; deliberate pain, inflicted with even the best of intentions, is meaningless and cruel.

Q: You would not punish crime?

M: Punishment is but legalised crime. In a society built on prevention, rather than retaliation, there would be very little crime. The few exceptions will be treated medically, as of unsound mind and body.

M: Begin from the beginning: give attention to the fact that you *are*. At no time can you say 'I was not' all you can say: 'I do not remember'. You know how unreliable is memory. Accept that, engrossed in petty personal affairs you have forgotten what you are; try to bring back the lost memory through the elimination of the known. You cannot be told what will happen, nor is it desirable; anticipation will create illusions. In the inner search the unexpected is inevitable; the discovery is invariably beyond all imagination. Just as an unborn child cannot know life after birth, for it has nothing in its mind with which to form a valid picture, so is the mind unable to think of the real in terms of the unreal, except by negation: 'Not this, not that'.

M: A level of mental maturity is reached when nothing external is of any value and the heart is ready to relinquish all. Then the real has a chance and it grasps it. Delays, if any, are caused by the mind being unwilling to see or to discard.

Q: It is very difficult to abandon words. Our mental life is one continuous stream of words.

M: It is not a matter of easy, or difficult. You have no alternative. Either you try or you don't. It is up to you.

Q: I have tried many times and failed.

M: Try again. If you keep on trying, something may happen. But if you don't, you are stuck. You may know all the right words, quote the scriptures, be brilliant in your discussions and yet remain a bag of bones. Or you may be inconspicuous and humble, an insignificant person altogether, yet glowing with loving kindness and deep wisdom.

99. The Perceived can not be the Perceiver

Maharaj: Relinquish your habits and addictions, live a simple and sober life, don't hurt a living being; this is the foundation of *Yoga*. To find reality you must

be real in the smallest daily action; there can be no deceit in the search for truth. You say you find your life enjoyable. Maybe it is -- at present. But who enjoys it?

Q: I confess I do not know the enjoyer nor the enjoyed. I only know the enjoyment.

M: Quite right. But enjoyment is a state of mind -- it comes and goes. Its very impermanence makes it perceivable. You cannot be conscious of what does not change. All consciousness is consciousness of change. But the very perception of change -- does it not necessitate a changeless background?

M: Between the remembered and the actual there is a basic difference which can be observed from moment to moment. At no point of time is the actual the remembered. Between the two there is a difference in kind, not merely in intensity. The actual is unmistakably so. By no effort of will or imagination can you interchange the two. Now, what is it that gives this unique quality to the actual?

Q: The actual is real, while there is a good deal of uncertainty about the remembered.

M: Quite so, but why? A moment back the remembered was actual, in a moment the actual will be the remembered. What makes the actual unique? Obviously, it is your sense of being present. In memory and anticipation there is a clear feeling that it is a mental state under observation, while in the actual the feeling is primarily of being present and aware.

Q: Yes I can see. It is awareness that makes the difference between the actual and the remembered. One thinks of the past or the future, but one is present in the *now*.

M: Wherever you go, the sense of here and now you carry with you all the time. It means that you are independent of space and time, that space and time are in you, not you in them. It is your self-identification with the body, which, of course, is limited in space and time, that gives you the feeling of finiteness. In reality you are infinite and eternal.

Q: This infinite and eternal self of mine, how am I to know it?

M: The self you want to know, is it some second self? Are you made of several selves? Surely, there is only one self and you are that self. The self you are is the only self there is. Remove and abandon your wrong ideas about yourself and there it is, in all its glory. It is only your mind that prevents self-knowledge.

Q: How am I to be rid of the mind? And is life without mind at all possible on the human level?

M: There is no such thing as mind. There are ideas and some of them are wrong. Abandon the wrong ideas, for they are false and obstruct your vision of yourself.

Q: Which ideas are wrong and which are true?

M: Assertions are usually wrong and denials -- right.

Q: One cannot live by denying everything!

M: Only by denying can one live. Assertion is bondage. To question and deny is necessary. It is the essence of revolt and without revolt there can be no freedom.

There is no second, or higher self to search for. You are the highest self, only give up the false ideas you have about your self. Both faith and reason tell you that you are neither the body, nor its desires and fears, nor are you the mind with its fanciful ideas, nor the role society compels you to play, the person you are supposed to be. Give up the false and the true will come into its own.

Q: I find being alive a painful state.

M: You cannot be alive for you are life itself. It is the person you imagine yourself to be that suffers, not you. Dissolve it in awareness. It is merely a bundle of memories and habits. From the awareness of the unreal to the awareness of your real nature there is a chasm which you will easily cross, once you have mastered the art of pure awareness.

Q: All I know is that I do not know myself.

M: How do you know, that you do not know your Self? Your direct insight tells you that yourself you know first, for nothing exists to you without your being there to experience its existence. You imagine you do not know your Self, because you cannot describe your Self. You can always say: 'I know that I am' and you will refuse as untrue the statement: 'I am not'. But whatever can be described cannot be your Self, and what you are cannot be described. You can only know your Self by being yourself without any attempt at self-definition and self-description. Once you have understood that you are nothing perceivable or conceivable, that whatever appears in the field of consciousness cannot be your Self, you will apply yourself to the eradication of all self-identification, as the only way that can take you to a deeper realisation of your Self. You literally progress by rejection -- a veritable rocket.

M: You create disharmony and then complain! When you desire and fear, and identify yourself with your feelings, you create sorrow and bondage. When you create, with love and wisdom, and remain unattached to your creations, the result is harmony and peace. But whatever be the condition of your mind, in what way does it reflect on you? It is only your self-identification with your mind that makes you happy or unhappy. Rebel against your slavery to your mind, see your bonds as self-created and break the chains of attachment and revulsion. Keep in mind your goal of freedom, until it dawns on you that you are already free, that freedom is not something in the distant future to be earned with painful efforts, but perennially one's own, to be used! Liberation is not an acquisition but a matter of courage, the courage to believe that you are free already and to act on it.

M: Stop, look, investigate, ask the right questions, come to the right conclusions and have the courage to act on them and see what happens. The first steps may bring the roof down on your head, but soon the commotion will clear and

there will be peace and joy. You know so many things about yourself, but the knower you do not know. Find out who you are, the knower of the known. Look within diligently, remember to remember that the perceived cannot be the perceiver. Whatever you see, hear or think of, remember -- you are not what happens, you are he to whom it happens. Delve deeply into the sense 'I am' and you will surely discover that the perceiving centre is universal, as universal as the light that illumines the world.

Q: I can only investigate the mind with the mind.

M: By all means use your mind to know your mind. It is perfectly legitimate and also the best preparation for going beyond the mind.

M: Nothing you do will change you, for you need no change. You may change your mind or your body, but it is always something external to you that has changed, not yourself. Why bother at all to change? realise once for all that neither your body nor your mind, nor even your consciousness is yourself and stand alone in your true nature beyond consciousness and unconsciousness. No effort can take you there, only the clarity of understanding. Trace your misunderstandings and abandon them, that is all. There is nothing to seek and find, for there is nothing lost. Relax and watch the 'I am'. Reality is just behind it. Keep quiet, keep silent; it will emerge, or, rather, it will take you in.

Q: Must I not get rid of my body and mind first?

M: You cannot, for the very idea binds you to them. Just understand and disregard.

Q: You want me to remember to forget!

M: Yes, it looks so. Yet, it is not hopeless. You can do it. Just set about it in earnest. Your blind groping is full of promise. Your very searching is the finding. You cannot fail.

Q: Because we are disintegrated, we suffer.

M: We shall suffer as long as our thoughts and actions are prompted by desires and fears. See their futility and the danger and chaos they create will subside. Don't try to reform yourself, just see the futility of all change. The changeful keeps on changing while the changeless is waiting. Do not expect the changeful to take you to the changeless -- it can never happen. Only when the very idea of changing is seen as false and abandoned, the changeless can come into its own.

Q: Everywhere I go, I am told that I must change profoundly before I can see the real. This process of deliberate, self-imposed change is called *Yoga*.

M: All change affects the mind only. To be what you are, you must go beyond the mind, into your own being. It is immaterial what is the mind that you leave behind, provided you leave it behind for good. This again is not possible without self-realisation.

Q: What comes first -- the abandoning of the mind or self-realisation?

M: Self-realisation definitely comes first. The mind cannot go beyond itself by itself. It must explode.

Q: No exploration before explosion?

M: The explosive power comes from the real. But you are well advised to have your mind ready for it. Fear can always delay it, until another opportunity arises.

100. Understanding leads to Freedom

Q: Then why are *sadhanas* prescribed?

M: Unless you make tremendous efforts, you will not be convinced that effort will take you nowhere. The self is so self confident, that unless it is totally discouraged, it will not give up. Mere verbal conviction is not enough. Hard facts alone can show the absolute nothingness of the self-image.

M: I agree that *Yoga*, as presented by you, means violence and I never advocate any form of violence. My path is totally non-violent. I mean exactly what I say: non-violent. Find out for yourself what it is. I merely say: it is non-violent.

Q: If I remain passive, nothing will change. If I am active, I must be violent. What is it I can do which is neither sterile nor violent?

M: Of course, there is a way which is neither violent nor sterile and yet supremely effective. Just look at yourself as you are, see yourself as you are, accept yourself as you are and go ever deeper into what you are.

M: Before the mind -- I am. 'I am' is not a thought in the mind; the mind happens to me, I do not happen to the mind. And since time and space are in the mind, I am beyond time and space, eternal and omnipresent.

Q: Are you serious? Do you really mean that you exist everywhere and at all times?

M: Yes, I do. To me it is as obvious as the freedom of movement is to you. Imagine a tree asking a monkey: 'Do you seriously mean that you can move from place to place?' And the monkey saying: 'Yes. I do.'

Q: Are you also free from causality? Can you produce miracles?

M: The world itself is a miracle. I am beyond miracles -- I am absolutely normal. With me everything happens as it must. I do not interfere with creation. Of what use are small miracles to me when the greatest of miracles is happening all the time?

Q: When I practice self-enquiry, or go within with the idea that it will profit me in some way or other, I am still escaping from what I am.

M: Quite right. True enquiry is always into something, not out of something. When I enquire how to get, or avoid something, I am not really inquiring. To know anything I must accept it -- totally.

Q: Yes, to know God I must accept God -- how frightening!

M: Before you can accept God, you must accept yourself, which is even more frightening. The first steps in self acceptance are not at all pleasant, for what one sees is not a happy sight. One needs all the courage to go further. What helps is silence. Look at yourself in total silence, do not describe yourself. Look at the being you believe you are and remember -- you are not what you see. 'This I am not -- what am I?' is the movement of self-enquiry. There are no other means to liberation, all means delay. Resolutely reject what you are not, till the real Self emerges in its glorious nothingness, its 'not-a-thingness.'

M: As long as you divide events into good and evil, you may be right. In fact, good becomes evil and evil becomes good by their own fulfilment.

Q: Is *brahmacharya*, continence, imperative in *Yoga*?

M: A life of constraint and suppression is not *Yoga*. Mind must be free of desires and relaxed. It comes with understanding, not with determination, which is but another form of memory. An understanding mind is free of desires and fears.

Q: How can I make myself understand?

M: By meditating which means giving attention. Become fully aware of your problem, look at it from all sides, watch how it affects your life. Then leave it alone. You can't do more than that.

Q: Will it set me free?

M: You are free from what you have understood. The outer expressions of freedom may take time to appear, but they are already there. Do not expect perfection. There is no perfection in manifestation. Details must clash. No problem is solved completely, but you can withdraw from it to a level on which it does not operate.

101. *Jnani* does not Grasp, nor Hold

Questioner: How does the *jnani* proceed when he needs something to be done? Does he make plans, decide about details and execute them?

Maharaj: *Jnani* understands a situation fully and knows at once what needs be done. That is all. The rest happens by itself, and to a large extent unconsciously. The *jnani's* identity with all that is, is so complete, that as he responds to the universe, so does the universe respond to him. He is supremely confident that once a situation has been cognised, events will move in adequate response. The ordinary man is personally concerned, he counts his risks and chances, while the *jnani* remains aloof, sure that all will happen as it must; and it does not matter much what

happens, for ultimately the return to balance and harmony is inevitable. The heart of things is at peace.

M: All attributes are personal. The real is beyond all attributes.

Q: How is it that the person, which to you is quite illusory, appears real to us?

M: You, the Self, being the root of all being, consciousness and joy, impart your reality to whatever you perceive. This imparting of reality takes place invariably in the *now*, at no other time, because past and future are only in the mind. 'Being' applies to the now only.

Q: Is not eternity endless too?

M: Time is endless, though limited, eternity is in the split moment of the *now*. We miss it because the mind is ever shuttling between the past and the future. It will not stop to focus the *now*. It can be done with comparative ease, if interest is aroused.

Q: What arouses interest?

M: Earnestness, the sign of maturity.

Q: And how does maturity come about?

M: By keeping your mind clear and clean, by living your life in full awareness of every moment as it happens, by examining and dissolving one's desires and fears as soon as they arise.

Q: Is such concentration at all possible?

M: Try. One step at a time is easy. Energy flows from earnestness.

Q: I find I am not earnest enough.

M: Self-betrayal is a grievous matter. It rots the mind like cancer. The remedy lies in clarity and integrity of thinking. Try to understand that you live in a world of illusions, examine them and uncover their roots. The very attempt to do so will make you earnest, for there is bliss in right endeavour.

Q: I have seen people supposed to have realised, laughing and crying. Does it not show that they are not free of desire and fear?

M: They may laugh and cry according to circumstances, but inwardly they are cool and clear, watching detachedly their own spontaneous reactions. Appearances are misleading and more so in the case of a *jnani*.

Q: What am I holding on to, which you do not?

M: You are a creature of memories; at least you imagine yourself to be so. I am entirely unimagined. I am what I am, not identifiable with any physical or mental state.

Q: An accident would destroy your equanimity.

M: The strange fact is that it does not. To my own surprise, I remain as I am -- pure awareness, alert to all that happens.

Q: Even at the Moment of death?

M: What is it to me that the body dies?

Q: Don't you need it to contact the world?

M: I do not need the world. Nor am I in one. The world you think of is in your own mind. I can see it through your eyes and mind, but I am fully aware that it is a projection of memories; it is touched by the real only at the point of awareness, which can be only *now*.

M: Love is boundless. What is limited to a few cannot be called love.

Q: Do you know such unlimited love?

M: Yes, I do.

Q: How does it feel?

M: All is loved and lovable. Nothing is excluded.

Q: Not even the ugly and the criminal?

M: All is within my consciousness; all is my own. It is madness to split oneself through likes and dislikes. I am beyond both. I am not alienated.

Q: To be free from like and dislike is a state of indifference.

M: It may look and feel so in the beginning. Persevere in such indifference and it will blossom into an all-pervading and all-embracing love.

M: Discontinuity is the law, when you deal with the concrete: The continuous cannot be experienced, for it has no borders. Consciousness implies alterations, change followings change, when one thing or state comes to an end and another begins; that which has no borderline cannot be experienced in the common meaning of the word. One can only be it, without knowing, but one can know what it is not. It is definitely not the entire content of consciousness which is always on the move.

Q: If the immovable cannot be known, what is the meaning and purpose of its realisation?

M: To realise the immovable means to become immovable. And the purpose is the good of all that lives.

Q: Life is movement. Immobility is death. Of what use is death to life?

M: I am talking of immovability, not of immobility.

Q: As I watch my mind I find it changing all the time, mood succeeding mood in infinite variety, while you seem to be perpetually in the same mood of cheerful benevolence.

M: Moods are in the mind and do not matter. Go within, go beyond. Cease being fascinated by the content of your consciousness. When you reach the deep layers of your true being, you will find that the mind's surface-play affects you very little.

Q: There will be play all the same?

M: A quiet mind is not a dead mind.

Q: Consciousness is always in movement -- it is an observable fact. Immovable consciousness is a contradiction. When you talk of a quiet mind, what is it? Is not mind the same as consciousness?

M: We must remember that words are used in many ways, according to the context. The fact is that there is little difference between the conscious and the unconscious --- they are essentially the same. The waking state differs from deep sleep in the presence of the witness. A ray of awareness illumines a part of our mind and that part becomes our dream or waking consciousness, while awareness appears as the witness. The witness usually knows only consciousness. *Sadhana* consists in the witness turning back first on his conscious, then upon himself in his own awareness. Self-awareness is Yoga.

M: Reality is within consciousness, but it is not consciousness nor any of its contents.

Q: What is false, the world, or my knowledge of it?

M: Is there a world outside your knowledge? Can you go beyond what you know? You may postulate a world beyond the mind, but it will remain a concept, unproved and unprovable. Your experience is your proof, and it is valid for you only. Who else can have your experience, when the other person is only as real as he appears in your experience?

Q: Are you a part of the world which I have in consciousness, or are you independent?

M: What you see is yours and what I see is mine. The two have little in common.

Q: There must be some common factor which unites us.

M: To find the common factor you must abandon all distinctions. Only the universal is in common.

Q: I am in a world which I do not understand and therefore, I am afraid of it. This is everybody's experience.

M: You have separated yourself from the world, therefore it pains and frightens you. Discover your mistake and be free of fear.

Q: You are asking me to give up the world, while I want to be happy in the world.

M: If you ask for the impossible, who can help you? The limited is bound to be painful and pleasant in turns. If you seek real happiness, unassailable and unchangeable, you must leave the world with its pains and pleasures behind you.

Q: What is sin?

M: All that binds you.

Appendix-1: Nisarga Yoga

Maurice Frydman

To *be*, and to know that one *is*, is most important. And to be of interest, a thing must be related to one's conscious existence, which is the focal point of every desire and fear. For, the ultimate aim of every desire is to enhance and intensify this sense of existence, while all fear is, in its essence, the fear of self-extinction.

To delve into the sense of 'I' -- so real and vital -- in order to reach its source is the core of *Nisarga Yoga*. Not being continuous, the sense of 'I' must have a source from which it flows and to which it returns. This timeless source of conscious being is what Maharaj calls the self-nature, self-being, *swarupa*

This dwelling on the sense 'I am' is the simple, easy and natural *Yoga*, the *Nisarga Yoga*. There is no secrecy in it and no dependence; no preparation is required and no initiation. Whoever is puzzled by his very existence as a conscious being and earnestly wants to find his own source, can grasp the ever-present sense of 'I am' and dwell on it assiduously and patiently, till the clouds obscuring the mind dissolve and the heart of being is seen in all its glory.