

The Types of Meditation

Part I

The Nature of Meditation and Its Conditions

Meditation may be described as a path that the individual cuts for himself while trying to get beyond the limitations of the mind. If a person caught in the tangles of a thick forest tries to get out into the open, his efforts to break through the encircling impediments will leave behind the marks of his journey. By the study of these marks an observer would be able to describe the path he traversed in his attempt to come out into the open. The movements of one who comes out of the forest are different in principle from those of a railway engine, for instance, which moves along rails already laid on the course it is to take. The individual is not following a ready-made path; the path becomes imprinted after he has traversed it. In the same way, the person who finds himself drawn into deep meditation is really grappling with the spiritual problems he faces and not merely trying to follow a rigid course that already exists in his mental makeup.

The development of meditation can nevertheless be anticipated in outline by those who have direct insight into the particular contours of the mind of an individual, in the same way that one who has a thorough acquaintance with the details of the constitution of the

**Meditation a path
cut through
limitations of mind**

earth's solidified crust may, in general, expect the outburst of a volcano in one region rather than another.

General outline of meditation can be anticipated When the surging powers in the bowels of the earth are trying to burst out, they are bound to take the line of least resistance; and their actual passage will be dependent

largely upon the nature of the surroundings with which they are confronted. The difference between volcanic forces and the spiritual urge is that the former are unconscious, while the latter is a conscious phenomenon. Intelligence plays an important part in the course of meditation; and it is this intelligence that is kindled by a Perfect Master, who gives the aspirant a few simple suggestions about what kinds of things he has to do or expect in his meditations.

Meditation has often been misunderstood as a mechanical process of *forcing* the mind upon some idea or object. Most people naturally have an aversion to meditation because they experience great diffi-

Intelligent meditation sustained by interest culty in attempting to coerce the mind in a particular direction or to pin it down to one particular thing. Any purely mechanical handling of the mind is not only irksome but

is bound ultimately to be unsuccessful. The first principle aspirants have to remember is that the mind can be controlled and directed in meditation only according to laws inherent in the makeup of the mind itself, and not by means of the application of any mechanical or semimechanical force.

Many persons who do not technically meditate are oftentimes found to be deeply and intensely engrossed in systematic and clear thinking about some practical problem or theoretical subject. Their mental process is, in a sense, very much like meditation, inasmuch as the mind is engrossed in intense thinking about a particular subject to the exclusion of all other irrelevant things. Meditation is often easy and spontaneous in such mental processes because the mind is dwelling upon an object that it is interested in and that it increasingly understands.

The spiritual tragedy about ordinary trains of thought is that they are not directed toward things that really matter. On the other hand, the object of real meditation always has to be carefully selected and must be spiritually important; it has to be some divine form or object, or some spiritually significant theme or truth. In order to attain

success in meditation, the mind must not only get interested in divine subjects or truths but must also begin trying to understand and appreciate them. Such intelligent meditation is a natural process of the mind; and since it avoids the monotonous rigidity and regularity of mechanical meditation, it becomes not only spontaneous and inspiring but easy and successful.

Meditation should be distinguished from concentration. Meditation is the first stage of a process that gradually develops into concentration. In concentration the mind seeks to unite with its object by the

Meditation and concentration

process of fixing itself upon that object; whereas meditation consists in thorough thinking about a particular object to the exclusion of every other thing. In concentration

there is practically no movement of the mind, but in meditation the mind moves from one relevant idea to another. In concentration the mind merely dwells upon some form or a pithy and concise formula, without amplifying it through a succession of ideas. In meditation the mind tries to understand and assimilate the object by dwelling upon diverse attributes of the form or various implications of the formula. In concentration as well as in meditation, there is a peaceful intermingling of love and longing for the divine object or principle on which the mind dwells; and both these activities are very different from the merely mechanical processes that have rigid regularity and unrelieved monotony.

Persons with no capacity for intense concentration have to begin with meditation; whereas for those who have a capacity for concentration, meditation is unnecessary. It is sufficient if they concentrate on the mere form of the God-Man or a Man-God or on some simple formula like "I am neither the gross body nor the subtle body nor the mental body: I am the *atma* (soul)."

Meditation is essentially an individual matter in the sense that it is not for self-display in society but for one's own spiritual advancement. Utter isolation of the individual from social surroundings is

Silence and seclusion

almost always conducive to the unhampered practice of meditation. The ancient yogis took to mountain tops or caves in

search of complete seclusion. Great quiet and undisturbed silence are essential for attaining success. However, it is not necessary for a person to go to the mountains or caves in search of these conditions.

Even in cities a little care and trouble can secure for the aspirant the quiet, silence, and seclusion necessary to facilitate and promote progress in the different forms of meditation.

Darkness or closing one's eyes is not absolutely necessary for meditation. If the aspirant is face to face with the object of meditation, he may have a successful meditation even when his eyes are open. But

Value of darkness in most cases, getting away from all gross sight and sound is more conducive to intensive meditation. To secure complete external silence involves careful selection of the spot for meditation, but one has only to close one's eyes in order to protect the mind from the disturbance of sights. Sometimes, when there is light, closing the eyes is not sufficient to ward off all visual stimulation. Then it is advisable to start meditation in complete darkness. Darkness normally promotes progress in meditation.

With regard to posture, there are no fixed rules. Any posture that is comfortable may be adopted, so long as it contributes to the alertness of the mind and does not induce sleep. The posture should not involve

Posture for meditation any physical tension or pain, because it would then draw attention to the body itself. The body should, therefore, be completely relaxed as when going to sleep, but the usual position taken in sleep should be avoided because of its tendency to induce sleep. When the body has assumed a convenient and suitable posture, it is helpful to think of the head as the center of the body. When the head is regarded as the center, it is easier to forget the body and to fix one's attention on the object of meditation.

It is desirable that the aspirant should maintain the same posture for each meditation. The previous associations the posture has with his meditations endow it with a special capacity to induce and facilitate similar meditations. When the body

Importance of fixing spot, posture, hour has assumed the chosen posture, it is constantly under the subconscious suggestion that it must no longer obtrude upon consciousness and that it has to serve the purpose of meditation. Choosing

the same spot and a fixed hour also has a salutary effect. Hence the aspirant must be serious about resorting to an identical place, posture, and hour. The choice of the spot also involves consideration of the spiritual associations and possibilities of the spot. Special importance

is attached to meditating in holy places where the Masters themselves have lived or meditated.

The place, posture, and hour of meditation all have their relative importance, which varies according to the peculiarities and history of the individual. A Master, therefore, often gives different instructions to each disciple to suit the individual case. However, when meditation has become habitual through constant practice, adherence to a fixed place, posture, or time can be dispensed with; and the aspirant can carry on his meditation at any time under any conditions. Even when he is walking, he may be inwardly absorbed in meditation.

Meditation should not be approached with a heavy heart, as if one were taking castor oil. One has to be serious about meditation but not grave or melancholy. Humor and cheerfulness not only do not interfere with the progress of meditation but actually contribute to it. Meditation should not be turned into a distasteful and tiresome thing.

Meditation should be joyous

The aspirant should freely allow himself the natural joy that is attendant upon successful meditation, without getting addicted to it. Meditation should be something like a picnic on the higher planes. Like excursions into new and beautiful natural surroundings, meditation brings with it a sense of enthusiasm, adventure, peace, and exhilaration. All thoughts of depression, fear, or worry have to be cut out completely if there is to be really successful meditation.

Though meditation is essentially an individual matter, collective meditation has its own advantages. If different aspirants who are in harmony with each other take to the same line of meditation together, their thoughts have a tendency to augment and strengthen each other. This is particularly noticeable when disciples of the same

Collective meditation

Master are collectively engaged in meditating upon their Master. If collective meditation of this type is to yield its full advantage, each aspirant who participates must be concerned with the course of his own meditation and not with what the others of the group are doing. Though he starts his meditation in the company of others, he has to lose himself in the object of his meditation. He has to be entirely oblivious of the whole world, including his body, and he has to be exclusively cognizant of the object agreed upon before the beginning of the meditation. When intelligently handled, collective meditation can

be of immense help to beginners, while advanced aspirants can carry on by themselves.

In ordinary thinking, the uninterrupted flow of relevant trains of ideas is common; but when the mind sets itself to systematic meditation, there is inevitably a reactionary tendency for irrelevant and

**Emergence of
disturbing thoughts**

contrary thoughts to emerge and create disturbances. This is the law of the mind, and the aspirant should not be upset by the appearance in the consciousness of many contrary and unwholesome thoughts that had hitherto never made their appearance. Meditation involves bringing the subconscious contents of the mind to the forefront of consciousness. Like the conjurer who summons into existence many strange and unexpected things, the process of meditation invites many absurd and unwanted thoughts. The aspirant must expect and be prepared for all these disturbing thoughts and should exercise inexhaustible patience, with unshakable confidence that ultimately all these disturbances will be overcome.

The last but not least important condition for attaining success in meditation is adoption of the right technique for handling disturbing thoughts and mental influences. It is useless to waste energy by trying

**Technique for
dealing with
disturbing thoughts**

to combat and repress disturbing thoughts *directly*. Any such attempt involves giving further attention to them; and they feed upon the very attention given for the purpose of repressing them, thereby being further strengthened and confirmed in the consciousness. It is best to ignore them and turn to the object of meditation as early as possible, without attaching any undue importance to the disturbing factors. By recognizing the irrelevance and worthlessness of disturbing thoughts and the relative value and importance of the object of meditation, it becomes possible to let the disturbing thoughts die through sheer neglect—thus making the mind permanently steady in the object of meditation.

The Types of Meditation

Part II

The Chief Types of Meditation and Their Relative Value

Meditation is of different types, which can be conveniently distinguished from each other on the basis of three distinct principles: (1) the function meditation performs in spiritual advancement, (2) the part of personality that is predominantly brought into play during the process of meditation, or (3) the items of experience it tries to understand. Any one of these three principles can be adopted for the classification of

Types of meditation classified by three principles

the different types of meditation. The last principle will be used while giving a detailed account of the different forms of meditation, as it is most suitable for enumerative purposes. This Part will make use of the first two principles, as they are helpful in different ways in explaining the relative value of the various forms of meditation.

With reference to the *first principle*, meditation has to serve the purpose of associating consciousness with the eternal Truth and of dissociating consciousness from the false and unimportant things of the phenomenal world. There thus arise two types of meditation. *Associative* meditation predominant-

Associative and dissociative meditation

ly involves the synthetic activity of the mind (*anwaya*), and *dissociative*

meditation predominantly involves the analytic activity of the mind (*vyatireka*). Associative meditation may be illustrated by the formula "I am infinite," and dissociative meditation may be illustrated by the formula "I am not my desires." Through associative meditation the aspirant tries to unite with the spiritual ideal as mentally constructed by him. Through dissociative meditation the aspirant tries to separate himself from the conditions that come to him as antipsiritual. Associative meditation is a process of *assimilation* of the essentials of spiritual life; dissociative meditation is a process of *elimination* of those factors that prevent the life of the spirit.

Associative meditation is concerned with objects that are, so to say, selected from the land of light, and dissociative meditation is concerned with objects that are parts of the land of shadows. The

**Dissociative
meditation paves way
for associative**

world of illusions, like the world of shadows, has a bewildering charm of its own. If a person is to succeed in getting out of the world of illusions and arrive at the Truth, he must develop resistance to the enticements of the world of illusions by repeated recognition of its real worthlessness—just as a person must develop discontent with the world of shadows if he is to come into the light. Therefore, dissociative meditation is a preliminary to associative meditation. It comes first and has its own value, but it is meant merely to pave the way for associative meditation.

Associative meditation and dissociative meditation are both necessary in their own way, but eventually associative meditation turns out to be far more fruitful and important than dissociative

**Associative
meditation most
fruitful**

meditation. If a person is surrounded by shadows, it does not help very much to be continuously upset about them. If his only interest is being cross with the shadows, there will be no end to his worries. But if, instead of fretting and fuming about the engulfing shadows, he sets himself to the more important task of bringing himself under the full blaze of the sun, he will discover that all the shadows have disappeared.

What really matters is not aimless discontent with existing limitations but directive effort toward the established ideal. As long as the person is turned toward the sun and is trying to walk into the light, the shadows that encircle him cannot be serious handicaps to his emanci-

pation. In the same way, the aspirant need not worry too much about his failings, as long as his heart is firmly set upon uniting with his spiritual ideal. His failings will all have vanished into nothingness when his pilgrimage ends.

Associative meditation is to the spirit what the assimilation of food is to the body. The body can make up for its deficiencies by assimilating the right sort of food. Similarly the mind can secure its health by the assimilation of spiritual truths through meditation. It is necessary to strike a balance between the different forms of associative meditation, even though in their own way they are all good, just as it is necessary to balance one's diet, even when one is satisfied as to the nutritive value of the different components of the diet. Disproportionate development of mental life hampers advancement because of the internal fracturing that accompanies it; while happy combinations of the different forms of meditation facilitate rapid progress because they secure a harmonized and balanced mind. The right combinations are those that promote an advancing equilibrium by emphasizing just those aspects of the Truth that are relevant to removing the special obstacles the aspirant is faced with at the moment.

The analogy of diet can be extended even to the second type, dissociative meditation, which consists in avoiding and eliminating things that are antispiritual. As faulty diet can upset physical health, faulty types of meditation can throw the mind into disorder. As the wrong type of food can ruin health instead of nourishing it, instinctive meditation on the objects of craving creates further fetters for the mind instead of breaking those that already exist. Therefore it is as important to avoid the wrong type of meditation as it is to avoid the wrong type of food. Further, just as good health requires constant elimination of waste products and poisonous substances, spiritual health requires the expulsion of undesirable thoughts and emotions.

Thus far, the explanations have differentiated the two types of meditation that may be observed from the standpoint of the first principle, the *function* meditation performs in spiritual advancement. It is equally illuminating to understand the principle by

Analogy of food

Extension of diet analogy

Second principle

which the process of meditation is differentiated by considering the nature of the part of the personality that is predominantly brought into play during the process. The application of this *second principle* results in three distinct types of meditation.

In the first type of meditation, the intellect is predominantly brought into play; it might be called *discriminative* meditation. In the second type, the heart is predominantly brought into play; it might be

**Discriminative
meditation and
meditations of heart
and action**

called the meditation of the *heart*. In the third type, the active nature of man is predominantly brought into play; it might be called the meditation of *action*. Discriminative meditation is represented by intellectual assertion of a formula like “I am not my

body but the Infinite.” The meditation of the heart is represented by a steady and unhampered flow of love from the aspirant to the divine Beloved. The meditation of action is represented by an unreserved dedication of one’s life to the selfless service of a Perfect Master or of humanity. Of these three types, the meditation of the heart is the highest and most important; but the other two types also have their own value and cannot be neglected without serious detriment to the spiritual progress of the aspirant.

The different types of meditation must not be looked upon as being entirely exclusive of each other. They can proceed in all sorts of combinations. Sometimes one type of meditation inevitably leads to

**Types of meditation
supplement each
other**

another type, and progress in one of the meditations is often held up until there is corresponding progress in the others. All the different types of meditation are valuable for securing the spiritual advancement

of the aspirant. They almost always make up for mutual deficiencies and supplement each other.

One type of meditation may also interfere seriously with the progress of another type if it is resorted to at an inopportune moment.

**One type of
meditation may
interfere with another**

The different types of genuine meditation all dwell upon aspects of life that are equally true; but depending upon the mental state of the individual, the assimilation of a certain truth of life is often more urgently

necessary than the assimilation of some other truths of life. Therefore,

a Master never prescribes the same form of meditation to all but gives specific instructions according to the individual needs of the aspirant.

The type of meditation necessary in a particular situation often cannot be correctly ascertained by the aspirant for himself. The aspirant can get addicted to one type of meditation so exclusively that he finds it difficult to get out of the groove that has been cut into his mind by the type he has been practicing. He fails to see the importance of any other type of meditation

Need for instructions from Master

and is not drawn to it. Of course the aspirant himself may come to feel his own deficiency along a particular line. But just as many medicines are disagreeable to the patient, the types of meditation that are really indicated in a specific situation often seem distasteful to the aspirant -and he is disinclined to take to them. The help and advice of a Master are indispensable on this point. The insight that the Master has into the deeper and real spiritual needs of the aspirant is infinitely greater than the insight the aspirant can hope to have into himself. Specific instructions from the Master supply the necessary corrective for the neglected aspects of personality.

Although the aspirant may start with an initial aversion to the type of meditation he needs, he becomes interested in it when he sees its real value and purpose. He can come to appreciate the real value and purpose of a particular type of meditation only when he has tried it. It is not possible to discover the value and possibilities of any type of meditation by purely theoretical speculation about that mode of meditation.

True value of meditation perceived only in its practice

Such purely theoretical guesswork may have some superficial results, but it fails to fathom the real unity of meditation. Like many other things of spiritual importance, meditation yields its full significance after the person has gotten into it and not when he is trying to understand it by envisaging it from outside.

In order to have real success in any mode of meditation, the aspirant must launch upon it with the determination to explore all its possibilities. He must not start with any limiting reservations and should be prepared to encounter unexpected states of consciousness. He should be willing to go where that line of meditation leads him without

Determination necessary for success in meditation

making any rigid demands based on preformed expectations. The very essence of meditation is one-pointedness and the exclusion of all other considerations, even when these considerations happen to be enticing.

However, if the aspirant takes to any type of meditation on his own initiative and without having the benefit of the guidance and supervision of a Master, he may get into it so far that he loses perspec-

**Supervision of Master
is indispensable**

tive and is unable to recover himself. It may be impossible for him to change over to some other complementary mode of meditation, even when it is absolutely necessary.

This risk is avoided if the aspirant has taken to a line of meditation on the orders of his Master. When he is under the guidance and supervision of a Master, the Master not only can ask the aspirant to halt at the right time but also can actually help him get out of the grooves cut by his previous meditation.

In this connection there is an illustrative story of a man who was highly intelligent and who wanted to know from personal experience what it felt like to be suffocated by hanging. He was not content merely with imagining what it would be like but

Illustrative story

wanted to experience it himself. So he asked a friend to help him perform the experiment. He said that he would be hung by a rope and would signal to his friend when the feeling of suffocation reached the danger limit. He further asked his friend not to relieve him from the gallows before he received the intended signal.

His friend agreed to all this, and the man was hung by tying a rope around his own neck. But when he suffocated, he became unconscious and therefore could not give his friend the promised signal. The friend, however, was wise; finding that the suffocation of the man had really reached the danger point, he went beyond the limits of his agreement and relieved the man just in time to save his life. The man was saved not through his own thoughtfulness and precautions but through the wise discretion of his friend. In the same way, it is safer for the aspirant to rely upon the Master than upon any provisions of his own making.

The Types of Meditation

Part III General Classification of the Forms of Meditation

The process of meditation aims at understanding and transcending the wide and varied range of experience. When meditation is interpreted in this manner, it is at once seen to be something that is not peculiar to a few aspirants. It turns out to be a process that every living creature in some way is engaged in. The tiger intent upon devouring a lamb that it has spied “meditates” upon the lamb. The lamb in its turn, having sighted the tiger, “meditates” upon the tiger. The passenger who waits on the platform for a train is “meditating” upon the train; and the driver of the train, expecting to be relieved at the next station, is “meditating” upon the station. The scientist who works upon an unsolved problem “meditates” upon that problem. The patient who is waiting with tense anxiety for a doctor is “meditating” upon the doctor; and the doctor who is awaiting payment of a bill is “meditating” upon the account. When a police officer tries to catch a thief, they both “meditate” upon each other.

The person who falls in love is “meditating” upon the beloved; and one who is jealously watchful of a rival is “meditating”: upon the rival. The individual struck with grief at the death of a friend is

“meditating” upon the friend. Someone who seeks revenge upon an enemy “meditates” upon the enemy. The woman lost in choosing attractive clothes to wear is “meditating” upon herself as the body; and the man who boasts of his intellectual or psychic attainments is “meditating” upon himself as the mind.

All these are, in a way, forms of meditation; but in spiritual discourses the term *meditation* is usually restricted to those forms of meditation that tackle the problem of understanding experience intensively and systematically. In the above

Spiritually important meditation

examples, meditation is a result of a natural application of the mind to the objects with which it is presented. In this application of the mind, the individual is almost unconscious of the ultimate purpose of the process of meditation. In the realm of spirituality, however, meditation in the initial stages at least is deliberate.

During such meditation the subject is more specifically conscious of the ultimate objective. Nevertheless, the forms of meditation characteristic of the spiritual life are *continuous* with those found throughout the world of consciousness. The spiritual forms of meditation spring into existence only when the other more general forms of meditation have brought the person to a certain crisis or blind alley. Then he is forced to choose the object of meditation in the light of some spiritual ideal and must also revise the manner of meditation he may have become accustomed to.

The spiritually important forms of meditation are of two kinds: general meditation, which consists in the assimilation of the divine Truths; and specialized meditation, in which the mind selects some

General and specialized meditation

definite item of experience and is exclusively concerned with it. General meditation is only a carrying further of the ordinary thought processes systematically and intensively. It is different from the many prespiritual meditations of a worldly person only in so far as the thought processes now come to be directed toward realities that have spiritual importance and the mind makes intelligent use of the expositions of the divine Truths given by those who *know*-without renouncing its critical powers and inherent zest for the Truth.

The specialized forms of meditation, on the other hand, imply and require something more than a purely intellectual approach to the

Truth. In the specialized forms of meditation, as in general meditation, the mind has an opportunity to have an intellectual understanding of the object of meditation. But in addition, they also help to cultivate mental discipline, develop capacities hitherto dormant, and unfold latent possibilities of personality. The problem in specialized forms of meditation is not theoretical but practical. Specialized forms of meditation are helpful for overcoming specific obstacles in the way of enlightenment and Realization; they aim at controlling the mind and going beyond it. Specialized forms of meditation are more like the desperate attempts of a person to break through the walls of a prison than like the idle speculative activity involved in forming opinions about the strength of the different parts of the prison walls or what may be visible after breaking into the open.

In spiritual life, even a sincere mistake taken seriously may have more value than halfhearted allegiance to theoretical or formal truth. The practical purpose in the specialized forms of meditation must sometimes prevail, even at the cost of formal and theoretical truth. Thus in meditation, while concentrating on a particular form or formula, no other form or formula can be allowed access to the mind—although, intrinsically, this other form or formula may have the same or even greater spiritual importance. If an aspirant has been meditating upon the form of one Perfect Master, he has to exclude from his mind all ideas of any other Masters, though they are as perfect as the Master on whom he is meditating. The formula of intensive thinking on the Master can be as helpful in achieving the goal as the process of making the mind blank.

As a rule, mixing up the specialized forms of meditation is not desirable, though theoretically they may all be equally directed toward different aspects of the Truth. The task of bringing together the different facets of the Truth and building up a whole and complete view of life is attempted by general meditation, in which thought is free, comprehensive, and receptive to all aspects of the Truth. Such general meditation has its own value and justification. General meditation is helpful before special-

**Specialized
meditation
is practical**

**Practical purpose
may prevail over
formal truth**

**Function of general
meditation**

ized forms of meditation as well as after trying them, but it cannot take the place of specialized forms of meditation because these have a different purpose and function.

The different forms of specialized meditation are comparable to different forms of bodily exercise, each of which may have some specific purpose. Exercise of the muscles is meant only to strengthen

**Both forms of
meditation necessary**

the muscles, but this does not mean that the muscles are the only important part of the body. All types of exercise are important for securing the general health of the body, although it may not be possible to take all of them at the same time. The functions of the different specialized forms of exercise have, however, to be correlated and governed in the light of one's knowledge of true health or proportionate development of the body. In the same way, the functions of the specialized forms of meditation have to be correlated with and governed by the whole and complete ideal of life. This the aspirant constructs through the process of general meditation, or unrestrained thought, which knows no law except that of finding the Truth in all its aspects. Just as specialized forms of meditation cannot be replaced by general meditation, general meditation cannot be replaced by specialized forms of meditation. Both are necessary and have their own value.

For enumerative purposes, the different specialized forms of meditation can be conveniently classified (according to the *third principle*) on the basis of those items of experience the mind tries to understand.

**Different specialized
meditations**

Human experience, in all its variety, is characterized throughout by the dual aspect of subject and object. Some forms of meditation are concerned with the *objects* of experience; some are concerned with the *subject* of experience; and some forms of meditation are concerned with the *mental operations* that are involved in the interaction of the subject and the object. Thus three kinds of meditation are defined.

All the forms of meditation that the aspirant (*sadhak*) might adopt can ultimately culminate through the grace of a Perfect Master in the goal of the *Nirvikalpa* state. *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*, or divinity in expression, is the experience of the *Nirvikalpa* state of uninterrupted, spontaneous Self-knowledge of

**Nirvana, Nirvikalpa
and Sahaj Samadhi**

a God-realized being (*Siddha*). It is preceded by *Nirvana*, or absorption in divinity. The Sadgurus experience *Sahaj Samadhi*, or divinity in action, which is preceded by the states of *Nirvana* and *Nirvikalpa*. *Sahaj Samadhi* is the effortless and continuous state of Perfection of the Sadgurus, while it is the very *life* of the Avatar.

Table of General Classification of the Types of Meditation

I	THE VARIED FORMS OF MEDITATION BEFORE A PERSON BECOMES AN ASPIRANT			
II	FORMS OF MEDITATION OF THE ASPIRANT (SADHAK)			
	A	General Meditation and the assimilation of divine Truths.	1	Philosophical thinking
			2	Hearing discourses from the Masters
			3	Reading the written expositions of the Masters
	B	Specialized Meditation, which selects some definite items of experience	1	Meditation concerned with the objects of experience
			2	Meditation concerned with the subject of experience
			3	Meditation concerned with mental operations
III	SAHAJ SAMADHI, OR DIVINITY IN ACTION, OF SADGURUS THE AVATAR		Nirvana, or absorption in divinity	
Nirvikalpa Samadhi, or divinity in expression				

The general classification of the types of meditation has been given in the *Table of General Classification*, which serves to summarize this chapter (Part III). Among the different kinds of meditation men-

**Table of General
Classification**

tioned in this Table, the varied forms of meditation that are encountered before becoming a sadhak have already been illustrated in the beginning of this Part. The different forms of General Meditation will be dealt with in Part IV. The different forms of Specialized Meditation, along with their subdivisions, will each be explained individually in Parts V and VI. Nirvikalpa Samadhi and Sahaj Samadhi will be explained in Parts VII and VIII.

The Types of Meditation

Part IV

Assimilation of the Divine Truths

Section A

Modes of General Meditation

The beginnings of spiritual life are marked and helped by general meditation, which is not concerned exclusively with selected specific items of experience but which, in its comprehensive scope, seeks to understand and assimilate the divine Truths of life and the universe. When the aspirant is interested in the wider problems of the ultimate nature of life and the universe and begins to think about them, he may be said to have launched himself upon such meditation. Much of what is included in philosophy is a result of trying to develop an intellectual grasp of the ultimate nature of life and the universe.

Limits of philosophical thinking

The purely intellectual grasp of divine Truths remains feeble, incomplete, and indecisive, owing to the limitations of the experiences that may be available as the foundation of the structures of speculation. The *philosophical* meditation that consists in free and unaided thinking does not lead to conclusive results. It often leads to diverse, conflicting systems or views; nevertheless, philosophical thinking is not without value. Besides leading the aspirant a certain extent into

the realm of knowledge, it provides an intellectual discipline that enables him to receive and grasp divine Truths when he happens to come upon them through those who *know*.

The more fruitful mode of general meditation consists in studying the revealed Truths concerning life and the universe. This mode of understanding and assimilating the divine Truths can start by hearing or reading expositions of the divine Truth, which have their source in the Masters of wisdom. The discourses or the writings of the Avatar and the Perfect Masters, whether living or of the past, are suitable objects for this mode of general meditation, because the assimilation of divine Truths revealed through them enables the aspirant to bring his life into line with God's purpose in the universe.

Study of revealed Truths

The divine Truths are most easily grasped and assimilated when they are passed on directly to the aspirant by a living Master. Such personal communications of the Master have a power and efficacy that can never belong to information received by the aspirant through other sources. The word becomes alive and potent because of the life and personality of the Master. Hence many scriptures emphasize the need for hearing the divine Truths directly through the spoken word of a Master. The mode of general meditation that depends upon hearing expositions of the divine Truths is undoubtedly the best, when the aspirant has an opportunity to contact a living Master and listen to him.

Value of hearing

It is not always possible, however, for the aspirant to contact and listen to a living Master. In such cases meditation through *reading* has some advantages of its own. For the generality of aspirants, meditation through reading has hardly any suitable substitute because it starts from written expositions, which are available at any convenient time. Meditation that starts from reading about revealed Truths has this special advantage of being easily accessible to most aspirants.

Advantage of reading

Section B *Reading as Meditation*

Meditation through reading has its handicaps because most writ-

ten expositions of the divine Truths are meant for intellectual study rather than for assimilation through meditation. The difficulties aspirants experience in this connection are due either to the fact that the method of meditation is not adapted to the subject matter; or to some flaw in the method, which makes it mechanical and uninspiring; or to the unwieldiness or vagueness of the subject matter used for meditation.

Handicaps of reading

All these causes, which vitiate meditation and make it unsuccessful, have been avoided in the specific meditation recommended in this Part. It is intended not only to explain the manner of carrying on

**Difficulties removed
by specific meditation
through reading**

meditation through reading but also to provide an exposition of divine Truths in order to fulfill the requirements of this form of meditation. The usual difficulties existing in meditation through reading have been removed in this specific meditation: by ensuring that the process of meditation and the subject matter are adapted to each other and to the conditions of intelligent meditation; by elaborating the different phases of the meditation that starts from reading; and by providing a specially prepared brief exposition of the divine Truths that is suitable and valuable subject matter for meditation through reading.

The form of meditation that starts from reading about the divine Truths has three stages:

1. In the first stage the aspirant will have to read the exposition daily and simultaneously think about it thoroughly.

**Three stages of
meditation through
reading**

2. In the second stage actual reading becomes unnecessary, but the subject matter of the exposition is mentally revived and thought over constantly.

3. In the third stage it is quite unnecessary for the mind to revive the words in the exposition separately and consecutively, and all discursive thinking about the subject matter comes to an end. At this stage of meditation, the mind is no longer occupied with any train of thought but has a clear, spontaneous, and intuitive perception of the sublime Truths expressed in the exposition.

Since intelligent meditation consists in thorough thinking about a particular subject, it follows that the best help for meditation would be

a brief and clear exposition of the subject of meditation. The following concise exposition of the divine Truths comprises the whole story of creation, as well as a complete account of the spiritual path and the goal of Self-realization. The aspirant can intelligently read the exposition and assimilate the sublime Truths it embodies.

This special form of meditation is extremely easy and useful because reading the subject matter and thinking about it have to be done simultaneously. Further, by making the exposition of the subject

Brief exposition for meditation through reading

clear and concise, the probability of any disturbance arising out of irrelevant thoughts is eliminated. It is extremely difficult to avoid the disturbance of irrelevant thoughts while meditating upon some lengthy essay or book, even if it is committed to memory. Spontaneous meditation about it therefore becomes impracticable. The appearance of irrelevant thoughts becomes very probable in lengthy meditation on abstract ideas or on some concrete object of experience. But irrelevant thoughts are extremely improbable if the subject matter used for meditation consists of a brief exposition of the supersensible Truth. If the aspirant meditates upon the following exposition of the divine Truths in the manner that has been indicated above, meditation will become not only spontaneous and easy, delightful and inspiring, but also helpful and successful. The aspirant will thus be taking a very important step toward the realization of the goal of life.

Section C
The Divine Truths
(for meditation through reading)
The Journey of the Soul to the Oversoul

Atma, or the soul, is in reality identical with *Paramatma*, or the Oversoul-which is one, infinite, and eternal. The soul is in fact beyond the gross, subtle, and mental worlds. But it experiences itself as being limited owing to its identification

Soul and its illusion with the *sharir* (*sthul sharir*, or gross body); the *pran* (*sukshma sharir*, or subtle body, which is the vehicle of desires and vital forces); and the *manas* (*karan sharir*, or mental body, which is the seat of the mind). The soul in its transcendental state is *one*-formless, eternal, and infinite-and yet

identifies itself with the phenomenal world of forms, which are many and finite and destructible. This is Maya, or cosmic Illusion.

The phenomenal world of finite objects is utterly illusory and false. It has three states: the *gross*, the *subtle*, and the *mental*. Although all three of these states of the world are false, they represent different *degrees* of falseness. Thus the gross world is farthest from Truth (God), the subtle world is nearer Truth, and the mental world is nearest to Truth. All three states of the world owe their existence to cosmic Illusion, which the soul has to transcend before it realizes the Truth.

States of phenomenal world

The sole purpose of creation is for the soul to enjoy the infinite state of the Oversoul *consciously*. Although the soul eternally exists in and with the Oversoul in an inviolable unity, it cannot be conscious of this unity independently of creation, which is within the limitations of time. It must therefore evolve consciousness before it can realize its true status and nature as being identical with the infinite Oversoul, which is one without a second. The evolution of consciousness requires the duality of subject and object-the center of consciousness and the environment (that is, the world of forms).

Purpose of creation

How does the soul get caught up in Illusion? How did the formless, infinite, and eternal Soul come to experience itself as having form and as being finite and destructible? How did *Purusha*, or the supreme Spirit, come to think of itself as *prakriti*, or the world of nature? In other words, what is the cause of the cosmic Illusion in which the individualized soul finds itself? To realize the true status of the Oversoul-which is one, indivisible, real, and infinite-the soul needs consciousness. The soul does get consciousness; however this consciousness is not of God but of the universe, not of the Oversoul but of its shadow, not of the One but of many, not of the Infinite but of the finite, not of the Eternal but of the transitory. Thus the soul, instead of realizing the Oversoul, gets involved in cosmic Illusion; and hence, though really infinite, it comes to experience itself as finite. In other words, when the soul develops consciousness, it does not become conscious of its own true nature but of the phenomenal world, which is its own shadow.

Cause of cosmic Illusion

In order to become conscious of the phenomenal world, the soul

must assume some form as its medium for experiencing the world; and the degree and kind of consciousness are determined by the nature of the form used as the medium. The soul first

Evolution and degrees of consciousness becomes conscious of the gross world through a gross form. The consciousness of the gross world that it has in the beginning is of the most partial and rudimentary type. Correspondingly, the soul assumes the most undeveloped form, that of stone.*

The driving force of evolution consists in the momentum consciousness receives owing to the conservation of the impressions (sanskaras) left by diverse desires or conditions. Thus the sanskaras

Driving force of evolution cultivated in a particular form have to be worked out and fulfilled through the medium of a higher form and a correspondingly more developed consciousness of the

gross world. The soul, therefore, has to assume higher and higher forms (like metal, vegetable, worm, fish, bird, and animal) until as last it assumes a human form, in which it has fully developed consciousness—in all the aspects of knowing, feeling, and willing—of the gross world.

The manner in which sanskaras result in the evolution of consciousness, and the corresponding forms, has a useful analogue in ordinary experience. If a man has the desire to act the part of a king on the stage, he can only experience it by actually putting on the garb of a king and going on the stage. This is true of aspirations and desires; they can only be worked out and fulfilled by bringing about an actual change in the entire situation, as well as the medium, through which the situation may be adequately experienced. The parallel is very helpful in understanding the driving force of evolution, which is not mechanical but purposive.

The sanskaras are not only responsible for the evolution of the form (body) and the kind of consciousness connected with it, but they are also responsible for the riveting of consciousness to the phenomenal world. They make emancipation of

Identification with forms consciousness (that is, the withdrawal of consciousness from the phenomenal world to the soul itself) impossible at the sub-human stage and difficult at the human level. Since consciousness

*For earlier identification of the soul with gaseous forms see *God Speaks* by Meher Baba.-ED.

clings to the previous *sanskaras* and experience of the phenomenal world is conditioned by the use of an adequate form (body) as a medium, the soul at every stage of evolution comes to identify itself with the form. Thus the soul, which in reality is infinite and formless, experiences itself as finite and thinks of itself as being stone, metal, vegetable, worm, fish, bird, or animal, according to the degree of the development of consciousness. Finally, while experiencing the gross world through the human form, the soul thinks that it is a human being.

The soul has fully developed and complete consciousness in the first human form, and therefore there is no need for any further evolution of the gross form (body). The evolution of forms thus comes

**Reincarnation and
law of karma**

to an end with the attainment of the human form. To experience the *sanskaras* cultivated in the human form, the soul has to reincarnate again and again in human forms. The innumerable human forms through which the soul has to pass are determined by the law of karma, or the nature of its previous *sanskaras* (whether of virtue or vice, happiness or misery). During these lives the soul, which is eternal, identifies itself with the gross body, which is destructible.

While developing full consciousness of the gross world, the soul simultaneously develops the subtle and mental bodies. But as long as its consciousness is confined to the gross world alone, it cannot use these bodies consciously in wakefulness. It

**Subtle and mental
bodies**

becomes conscious of these bodies and the corresponding worlds only when its full consciousness turns *inward*, that is, toward itself. When the soul is conscious of the subtle world through the subtle body, it identifies itself with the subtle body; and when it is conscious of the mental world through the mental body, it identifies itself with the mental body; just as it identifies itself with the gross body when it is conscious of the gross world through the gross body.

The homeward journey of the soul consists in freeing itself from the illusion of being identical with its bodies—gross, subtle, and mental. When the attention of the soul turns

Spiritual path

toward Self-knowledge and Self-realization, there is a gradual loosening and disappearance of the *sanskaras* that keep consciousness turned toward the

phenomenal world. Disappearance of the sanskaras proceeds side by side with piercing through the veil of cosmic Illusion, and the soul not only begins to transcend the different states of the phenomenal world but also to know itself as different from its bodies. The spiritual path begins when the soul tries to find itself and turns its full consciousness toward Truth (God).

At the first stage the soul becomes totally unconscious of its gross body and of the gross world, and experiences the subtle world through the medium of its subtle body, with which it identifies itself. In the second stage the soul is totally unconscious of its gross and subtle bodies, and also of the gross and subtle worlds, and experiences the mental world through the medium of its mental body, with which it now identifies itself. At this stage the soul may be said to be face to face with God, or the Oversoul, which it recognizes as infinite. But though it recognizes the infinity of the Oversoul, which it objectifies, it looks upon itself as being finite because of its identification with the mental body, or mind.

Thus we have the paradox that the soul, which in reality is infinite, sees its infinite state but still continues to regard itself as finite; because while seeing its infinite state, it looks upon itself as the mind. It imagines itself to be the mind and looks upon the Oversoul as the object of the mind. Further, it not only longs to be one with the objectified Oversoul but also tries hard to fulfill that longing.

In the third stage the full consciousness of the soul is drawn still further inward toward itself, and it ceases to identify itself even with the mental body. Thus in the third and last stage, which is the goal, the

The goal soul ceases to identify itself with any of the three bodies that it had to develop for evolving full consciousness. Now it not only knows itself to be formless and beyond all the bodies and worlds but also realizes with full consciousness its own unity with the Oversoul, which is one, indivisible, real, and infinite. In this realization of the Truth it enjoys infinite bliss, peace, power, and knowledge, which are characteristics of the Oversoul.

In the beginning, because the soul has not yet evolved full consciousness, it is unconscious of its identity with the Oversoul. Hence, though intrinsically inseparable from the Oversoul, the soul cannot realize its own identity with it or experience infinite peace, bliss, power, and knowledge. Even after the evolution of full consciousness,

it cannot realize the state of the Oversoul-although it is at all times in and with the Oversoul-because its consciousness is confined to the phenomenal world, owing to the sanskaras connected with the evolution of consciousness. Even on the path, the soul is not conscious of itself but is conscious only of the gross, subtle, and mental worlds, which are its own illusory shadows.

Summary of soul's journey to Oversoul

At the end of the path, however, the soul frees itself from all sanskaras and desires connected with the gross, subtle, and mental worlds. It then becomes possible for it to free itself from the illusion of being finite, which came into existence owing to its identification with the gross, subtle, and mental bodies. At this stage the soul completely transcends the phenomenal world and becomes Self-conscious and Self-realized. To attain this goal, the soul must retain its full consciousness and at the same time know itself to be different from the sharir (gross body); the pran (subtle body, which is the vehicle of desires and vital forces); and the manas (mental body, which is the seat of the mind)-and also know itself as being *beyond* the gross, subtle, and mental worlds.

The soul has to emancipate itself gradually from the illusion of being finite by liberating itself from the bondage of sanskaras and knowing itself to be different from its bodies-gross, subtle, and mental. It thus annihilates the *false ego* (that is, the illusion that "I am the gross body," "I am the subtle body," or "I am the mental body"), While the soul thus frees itself from its illusion, it still retains full consciousness, which now results in Self-knowledge and realization of the Truth. Escaping through the cosmic Illusion and realizing with full consciousness its identity with the infinite Oversoul is the goal of the long journey of the soul.

The Types of Meditation

Part V Specialized Meditations That Are Personal

It was seen in Part III that specialized meditation is of three kinds: (1) meditation concerned with the *objects* of experience, (2) meditation concerned with the *subject* of experience, and (3) meditation concerned with *mental operations*. These three kinds of meditation are mostly intertwined with each other. The subject of experience, the objects of experience, and the different mental operations that arise as a result of their interaction are all inextricably interwoven. So these three kinds of meditation are not sharply defined or exclusive but often overlap each other.

Thus, meditation concerned with the objects of experience may often refer to the subject of experience, and also to the diverse mental operations involved in it. Meditation concerned with the subject of experience may often involve reference to the diverse mental operations and the objects to which these mental operations are directed. And meditation concerned with the diverse mental operations may often involve reference to both the subject and the objects of experience. Yet each kind of meditation, in a way, remains distinct because of some predominating factor. Hence the first kind of meditation remains predominantly concerned with the objects of experience, the

second kind with the subject of experience, and the third kind with diverse mental operations.

*Table of Enumerative Classification of the Forms of
Specialized Meditation*

A	Meditation concerned with the objects of experience	1	Meditation on the divine qualities of a Master	FORMS OF PERSONAL MEDITATION
		2	Concentration on the form of a Master	
		3	Meditation of the heart	
		4	Meditation of action	
		5	Meditation regarding the numerous forms of manifested life	FORMS OF IMPERSONAL MEDITATION
		6	Meditation regarding one's own body	
		7	Meditation on the formless and infinite aspect of God	
B	Meditation concerned with the subject of experience	8	Quest for the agent of action	
		9	Considering oneself as witness	
	Meditation concerned with mental operations	10	Writing down thoughts	
		11	Watching mental operations	
		12	Making the mind blank	

These three kinds of meditation can each be further subdivided into numerous specific forms of meditation according to the content of the meditation and the manner in which it is conducted. Out of these numerous forms of specialized meditation only those that are representative or important need particular mention. Thus, twelve forms of specialized meditation are given in the *Table of Enumerative Classification*.

It should be noted that of these twelve forms of specialized meditation, the first four are forms of *personal* meditation and the remaining eight are forms of *impersonal* meditation. Meditation is personal when it is concerned with a person; and meditation is impersonal when it is concerned with aspects of human personality or something that falls outside the range of human personality as it is usually understood. The forms of specialized meditation that are personal will be explained individually in this Part, and the forms of specialized meditation that are impersonal will be explained individually in Part VI.

Personal meditation has some clear advantages over impersonal meditation. For beginners, personal meditation is easy and attended with joy, while impersonal meditation is often found dry and difficult unless one has a special aptitude for it. Moreover, forms of impersonal meditation are mostly disciplines for the mind or the intellect, whereas the forms of personal meditation are not only disciplines for the mind or the intellect but also draw out the heart. In spiritual Perfection the mind and the heart have to be fully developed and balanced. Therefore personal meditation, which helps the development and balancing of the mind and heart, has special importance. Impersonal meditation is especially fruitful and effective when the aspirant has been duly prepared through forms of personal meditation.

Personal meditation is directed toward those who are spiritually perfect. Just as a man who admires the character of Napoleon and constantly thinks about him has a tendency to become like him, an aspirant who admires one who is spiritually perfect and constantly thinks about him has a tendency to become spiritually perfect. A suitable object for personal meditation is a living or past Perfect

Master or the Avatar. It is important that the object of meditation be spiritually perfect. If the person selected for meditation happens to be spiritually imperfect, there is every chance of his frailties percolating into the mind of the aspirant who meditates upon him. If the person selected for meditation is spiritually perfect, however, the aspirant has taken to a safe and sure path.

**Meditation on the
spiritually perfect**

Personal meditation often begins with the admiration an aspirant feels spontaneously for some divine quality that he sees in a Master. By allowing the mind to dwell upon the divine qualities expressed in the life of the Master, the aspirant imbibes them into his own being. Ultimately, the Master is beyond all qualities-good and bad. He is not bound by them. The qualities he exhibits, while interacting with life around him, are all different aspects of divinity in action; and the expression of divinity, through these qualities, becomes a medium for helping those who are appreciatively responsive to them.

**Meditation on divine
qualities of Master**

Appreciation of the divinity perceived in the Master gives rise to forms of meditation in which the aspirant constantly and strenuously thinks of the Master as being an embodiment of qualities like universal love or complete detachment, egolessness or steadfastness, infinite knowledge or selfless action. Sometimes the mind may dwell upon such separate qualities or may dwell upon combined qualities that reveal their interrelatedness. This form of meditation is very valuable when it is spontaneous. It then leads to a greater understanding of the Master and gradually remolds the aspirant into a likeness of the Master, thus contributing toward his self-preparation for the realization of the Truth.

Dwelling upon the qualities of the Master often facilitates concentration on the form of the Master. In this type of meditation, the aspirant is aware of the spiritual Perfection of the Master; and he spontaneously fixes his attention upon the form of the Master, without analyzing his spiritual Perfection into any of its component qualities. However, though these qualities are not separately revived in the mind, all that the aspirant may have understood of them (through the preparatory meditation con-

**Concentration on
form of the Master**

cerned with the diverse qualities of the Master) constitutes the implicit background of such one-pointed concentration and contributes toward its efficacy and value. This form of meditation involves complete identification of the Master with the spiritual ideal.

Complete identification of the Master with the spiritual ideal is responsible for removing such barriers as might exist between the aspirant and the Master. This gives rise to the release of unrestrained

love for the Master and leads to the meditation of the heart, which consists in constant thinking about the Master with an uninter-

rupted flow of limitless love. Such love annihilates the illusion of separateness, which seems to divide the aspirant from the Master; and it has in it a spontaneity that is virtually without parallel in other forms of meditation. In its final stages, meditation of the heart is accompanied by unbounded joy and utter forgetfulness of self.

Love for the Master leads to increasing identification with the Master, so that the aspirant desires to live in and for the Master and not for his own narrow self. This leads to the meditation of action. The

initial modes of the meditation of action usually take the following forms: (1) The aspirant mentally offers the Master all that

is in him, thus renouncing all that is good or evil in him. This frees him from the good as well as the bad ingredients of the ego and helps him not only in transcending these opposites but also in finding a lasting and true integration with the Master. (2) The aspirant volunteers himself in the service of the Master or his cause. Doing work for the Master in the spirit of selfless service is as good as meditation. (3) The aspirant does not allow the ego to feed upon any of his actions—small or great, good or bad. He does not think, “I do this,” but on the contrary systematically develops the thought that through him the Master is really doing all that he does.

For example, when he looks, he thinks, “The Master is looking”; when he eats, he thinks, “The Master is eating”; when he sleeps, he thinks, “The Master is sleeping”; when he drives a car, he thinks, “The Master is driving the car.” Even when he may happen to do something wrong, he thinks, “The Master is doing this.” Thus he completely relinquishes all agency for his actions, and all that is done by him is brought into direct reference to the Master. This automatically and necessarily involves and entails determination of each action

in the light of the spiritual ideal as seen in the Master.

The four forms of personal meditation on the Master represent four main ascending stages: (1) perceiving the spiritual ideal in the Master, (2) concentrating upon the Master as an embodiment of the spiritual ideal, (3) loving the Master as a

Four forms of personal meditation represent ascending stages manifestation of the spiritual ideal, and (4) expressing the spiritual ideal, perceived in the Master, in one's own life. Personal meditation on the Master, in its different forms,

ultimately contributes toward the release of the creative life of spiritual fulfillment. Meditation on the Master is a meditation on the living ideal and not on the bare conception of Perfection. Therefore it generates that dynamic power that eventually enables the aspirant to bridge the gulf between theory and practice, and unify the spiritual ideal with everyday activity in his own life. To live a life inspired and illumined by the spiritual ideal, as embodied in the Master, is the culmination of all the forms of personal meditation.

The Types of Meditation

Part VI Specialized Meditations That Are Impersonal

Part V was devoted to explanatory comments on those specialized meditations that are personal. This Part will be devoted to those specialized meditations that are impersonal. It might be recalled that meditation is personal when it is concerned with a person, and impersonal when it is concerned with aspects of personality or something that falls outside the range of human personality, as it is commonly understood. In the *Table of Enumerative Classification* given in Part V, the first four forms of meditation are personal and the remaining eight forms are impersonal. Like the forms of personal meditation, the forms of impersonal meditation also individually deserve separate explanatory comments.

Distinction between personal and impersonal meditation Man's attention has a tendency to be riveted on his own body or on other forms independent of the spirit they manifest. This leads to illusions, entanglements, and other complications. Hence arises the need for a type of meditation that will enable the aspirant to develop a proper perspective concerning the real

Meditation on all forms of life

status and meaning of the numerous forms, and to cultivate a right attitude toward them. In this type of meditation the aspirant acquires the constant habit of regarding all forms as equally the manifestations of the same one all-pervading life and as nothing in themselves separately. This type of meditation aids disentanglement from the world of creation and furthers cultivation of the highest type of universal love, which regards the whole of humanity and all living creatures as members of an indivisible whole.

But the type of meditation concerned with the numerous forms of manifested life remains incomplete unless it is supplemented by another type of meditation that is concerned with one's own body.

Meditation regarding one's body One's own body-gross, subtle, or mental-is, like the bodies of others, a form of the one all-pervading life. Nonetheless, consciousness is fixed on one's own bodies by an attachment so deep that it identifies itself with them. Continued thoughts of detachment concerning one's own body help emancipation of consciousness and the dawn of true Self-knowledge. Meditation of this type is very fruitful for the aspirant. The gross, subtle, and mental bodies are all then regarded as cloaks that one can put on or off.

The type of meditation concerned with the numerous forms of manifested life and the type of meditation concerned with one's own bodies are both preparations for the form of impersonal meditation in which an effort is made to withdraw consciousness from all the numerous forms of manifested life, including one's own bodies, and consciousness is centered on the formless and infinite aspect of God. In the initial

Meditation on formless and infinite aspect of God

phases, this form of impersonal meditation has to avail itself of some symbols of infinity. It is actually more helpful to start with some image that suggests and signifies infinity than the abstract idea of infinity. The mind may be made steady on an image of sky, ocean, or vast emptiness; but once a particular image is chosen, the aspirant should stick to it throughout the period of meditation and not allow it to be replaced by another image.

From these symbols of infinity, complete and unlimited emptiness is difficult to imagine; however, the best symbol is that which one can most successfully bring before one's mind. Even when unlimited emptiness is used to signify infinity, in this form of meditation the

aspirant is not supposed to arrive at complete blankness of mind. Such blankness involves the cessation of all mental activity and having absolutely no thoughts or ideas; but in this form of meditation the mind tries to understand and realize the formless and infinite aspect of God by means of a significant symbol.

There is an important variation of this impersonal form of meditation. In it the infinity one imagines is not mentally externalized as if it were an unlimited stretch of something *outside* the aspirant. It is

**Picturing infinity
as being within**

more helpful to picture infinity as *within* the aspirant. After picturing infinity within, the aspirant should give himself the strong suggestion of his identity with infinity by

mentally repeating, “I am as infinite as the sky within” or “I am as infinite as the ocean within” or “I am as infinite as the emptiness within.” It may be even more helpful to use the bare formula “I am the Infinite within” and, while mentally repeating this formula, to grasp and realize the significance of infinity through the image that has been chosen. It is not necessary to repeat the formula in so many words; it is enough to cling to the thought expressed in the formula.

The “I am infinite” meditation may lead to a merging of the aspirant into the formless and infinite aspect of God. Some aspirants merge so completely that even if swarms of mosquitoes surround them, they do not hear them. Other aspirants might become restless or easily disturbed. They should not keep worrying about lack of success in meditation but should tenaciously persist whether they experience merging or not. A relaxed position is helpful for merging. The *final* merging, however, is impossible except through the help of a Perfect Master.

The forms of meditation thus far explained are predominantly concerned with the impersonal *objects* of experience, but some impersonal forms of meditation are concerned with the *subject* of experience.

**Quest for agent of
action**

One such important form of meditation consists in ceaselessly pressing the query “Who is it that does all these things?” The aspirant finds himself thinking “I sleep,

walk, eat, and talk”; “I see, hear, touch, taste, and smell”; “I think, feel, and desire”; and so forth. The searching question this form of meditation is concerned with is, Who is this “I”? The soul does not experience any of these things. The soul does not sleep, walk, eat, or

talk; see, hear, touch, taste, or smell; think, feel, or desire. Who then is the agent? The *source* of all these activities has to be discovered, and the mystery of all life has to be explained.

There is a power that does all these things, and one must know oneself to be different from the power and be able to use it with detachment. The aspirant thinks that he walks; it is really his body that walks. The aspirant thinks that he sees, hears, thinks, feels, or desires; it is really his mind that does all these things through some convenient medium. As soul, the aspirant is everywhere and really does nothing. But it is not enough to think that, as soul, he is everywhere and really does nothing. He must *know* this.

Knowledge of the soul may also be approached through a form of meditation in which the aspirant tries to realize himself as merely a witness of all physical and mental happenings. After a person wakes from a dream, he realizes that he was not a

**Considering oneself
a witness**

real agent of the actions in the dream but that he was merely a witness of them. If the aspirant persistently practices considering himself a witness of all physical and mental happenings that he experiences in wakefulness as well as in dreams, he soon develops utter detachment, which brings freedom from all worries and sufferings connected with worldly events. This form of meditation is intended to lift the aspirant out of the bonds of time and to secure for him immediate relief from the fret and fever connected with the diverse expressions of limited energy. As a witness, the soul remains aloof from all events in time, and the results of actions do not bind it. All this has to be *experienced* and not merely thought about.

The forms of meditation concerned with the subject of experience, however, suffer from the handicap that the true subject of experience can never be the object of thought or meditation in the ordinary sense. Thus these forms of medi-

**Importance of stilling
mind**

tation can at best take the aspirant very close to Self-knowledge, which can only dawn in its full glory when the domain of the mind is completely traversed. Some impersonal forms of specialized meditation are therefore concerned with mental operations, and they ultimately aim at stilling the mind.

To acquire control over thoughts is to become fully conscious of what they are. They have to be attended to before they are controlled.

In ordinary introspection it is seldom possible for the beginner to devote adequate attention to all the shadowy thoughts that pass through the mind.

Writing down thoughts It is helpful, therefore, for the aspirant occasionally to write down all his thoughts as they come and then to inspect them carefully at leisure. This process is different from writing planned essays. Thoughts are allowed to arise without any direction or restraint so that even repressed elements from the subconscious mind have access to the conscious mind.

In a more advanced stage, an intensive awareness of the mental processes can take place while thoughts appear in the consciousness; and writing them down becomes unnecessary. Observations of mental operations should be accompanied by critical evaluation of one's thoughts. Thoughts cannot be controlled except through an appreciation of their value or lack of value.

Observation of mental operations

When the diverse thoughts that assail the mind are critically evaluated and the internal stirrings of *sanskaras* are faced, understood, and taken for what they are worth, the mind is freed from all obsessions and compulsions in relation to them.

A way is thus prepared for meditation that attempts to make the mind blank, which is one of the most difficult things to achieve. The mind is without any ideas during sleep, but consciousness is then in *abeyance*. If during wakefulness the mind has the idea of becoming blank, it is thinking about that idea and is far from being blank. However, this difficult trick of making the mind blank becomes possible by an alternation between two incompatible forms of meditation, so that the mind is caught between concentration and distraction.

Making mind blank

Thus the aspirant can concentrate on the Master for five minutes; and then as the mind is getting settled on the form of the Master, he can steady his mind for the next five minutes in the impersonal meditation in which the thought is "I am infinite." The disparity between the two forms of meditation can be emphasized by keeping the eyes open during meditation on the form of the Master and closing the eyes during impersonal meditation. Such alternation helps in making the mind blank; but to be successful, both forms of meditation have to be

Alternating between concentration and distraction

seriously pursued. Though after five minutes there is to be a change-over to another type of meditation, there should be no thought of it while the first type is going on. There is no distraction unless there is concentration. And when a changeover is effected, there should be no thought of the first type of meditation. The distraction has to be as complete as the previous concentration. When there is a quick alternation between concentration and distraction, mental operations are, as it were, cut through by a saw that goes backward and forward.

The disappearance of mental operations of all types contributes toward making the mind absolutely still without allowing consciousness to fall into abeyance. All thoughts that appear in the mind of the aspirant are forms of perturbation and have their origin in the momentum of stored sanskaras. The agitation of the mind can disappear only when the aspirant can so control his mind that all thoughts can be ruled out at will. Only in complete internal silence is Truth found. When the surface of the lake is still, it reflects the stars. When the mind is tranquil, it reflects the nature of the soul as it is.

**Truth reflected in
tranquil mind**

The Types of Meditation

Part VII *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*

The different forms of meditation practiced before consciously entering the spiritual path, as well as the different forms of general and special meditation adopted after becoming an aspirant, are preparatory to the attainment of the *Nirvikalpa* state (the “I am God” state). *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*, or divinity in expression, is the experience of the *Nirvikalpa* state in which the aspirant becomes permanently established after realizing the ultimate goal of life. The *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* of the *Siddha*, or God-realized being, is continuous with all the prior forms of meditation; and through the grace of a Perfect Master, it can be the culmination of them. However, it is unique and of an entirely different dimension.

The spontaneity of *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* must be carefully distinguished from the pseudo sense of spontaneity present in the usual meditations of the worldly person who has not yet entered the path.

Prespiritual meditation of the worldly The mind of the worldly individual is engrossed in sense objects, and he experiences no feeling of effort in meditating on these objects. His mind dwells upon them because of its natural interest in them and not because of any deliberate effort on his part. The sense of effort does not arise from allowing the mind to

dwell upon these diverse worldly objects but from trying to dissuade it from them. So the prespiritual forms of meditation seem to have some similarity with the culminating Nirvikalpa Samadhi of the Siddha in having a sense of spontaneity. But this resemblance between the initial phase of meditation and its final phase is only superficial, since Nirvikalpa Samadhi and prespiritual meditations are divided from each other by vital differences of great spiritual importance.

The sense of spontaneity experienced in prespiritual meditations concerned with worldly objects and pursuits is due to the interests created by sanskaras. Prespiritual meditations are the working out of

**Illusory spontaneity
of prespiritual
meditations**

the momentum of accumulated sanskaras of the past; and they are not only far from being the expression of true freedom but are actually symptoms of spiritual bondage. At the prespiritual level, man is engulfed in unrelieved ignorance concerning the goal of infinite freedom. Though he is far from being happy and contented, he identifies so deeply with sanskaric interests that he experiences gratification in their furtherance. But the pleasure of his pursuits is conditional and transitory; and the spontaneity he experiences in them is illusory because, throughout all his pursuits, his mind is working under limitations.

The mind is capable of genuine freedom and spontaneity of action only when it is completely free from sanskaric ties and interests, and this is possible only when the mind is merged in the state of Nirvikalpa

**True freedom and
spontaneity exist only
in Nirvikalpa**

Samadhi of the Siddha. It is therefore important to note that though there may seem to be a superficial resemblance between the Nirvikalpa Samadhi of the Siddha and the prespiritual meditations of the worldly, this resemblance really hides the important difference between illusory spontaneity and true spontaneity, bondage and freedom, fleeting pleasure and abiding happiness. In the prespiritual meditations the movement of the mind is under unconscious compulsion, and in Nirvikalpa Samadhi mental activity is released under conscious and unfettered initiative.

The different forms of meditation that characterize the life of the spiritual aspirant stand midway between the prespiritual meditations of the worldly individual and the final Nirvikalpa Samadhi of the Siddha. They also constitute the link between them. When a person's

primary acquiescence in sanskaric interests is profoundly disturbed by setback, defeat, and suffering, or is shaken by a spark of spiritual understanding, he becomes conscious of his bondage and the falseness of his perceptions. All the different forms of meditation that are then resorted to by the aspirant arise as parts of his struggle toward emancipation from the bondage of the deceptive desires of the worldly. The forms of meditation that are spiritually important begin when the person has become an aspirant, or sadhak.

Meditation a part of aspirant's struggle toward emancipation

The meditation of the aspirant in all its forms is *deliberate*, in the sense that it is experienced as counteracting instinctive or other tendencies inherent in the mind. The aspirant adopts different forms of meditation as means to an end, that is, because he looks upon them as avenues to the Truth. They are not working out of some given impulse but are parts of an intelligent and deliberate effort. Although these forms of meditation may be deliberate to start with, the mind gradually becomes habituated to them. The mind is also interested in the various aspects of Truth, which the different forms of meditation try to seize upon; and this increases spontaneity.

In none of the meditations of a sadhak are the elements of spontaneity more pronounced than in those forms of personal meditation that give scope for and require the expression of love. But utter spontaneity and true freedom remain unattained until the goal of meditation is achieved. Till then there is usually a mixture of a sense of deliberateness and a sense of spontaneity. The reaching out toward spiritual freedom is accompanied throughout by a sense of effort, which persists in some degree until all obstacles of false perceptions are overcome. Though effort may vary in its intensity, it never disappears entirely until it is swallowed up in the tranquility of final attainment.

In Nirvikalpa Samadhi there is no effort because there are no obstacles to overcome or objectives to achieve. There is the infinite spontaneity of unfettered freedom and the unbroken peace and bliss of Truth-realization. Progression toward the Nirvikalpa state consists in a transition from a state of

Progression toward Nirvikalpa

unquestioned acquiescence in the momentum of sanskaras to a state of desperate struggle with sanskaric limitations and finally to a state of complete freedom, when consciousness is no longer determined by the deposits of the past but is active in the undimmed perception of the eternal Truth.

The Nirvikalpa Samadhi of the Siddha is different from the meditation of the aspirant, not only with respect to freedom and spontaneity of consciousness but also with respect to many other important points. All the different forms of meditation that the aspirant might be engaged in, directly or indirectly, aim at securing a complete merging of the mind in the infinite Truth. However, they only partially succeed in this merging and fall short of the annihilation of the individual mind. They represent varying degrees of approximation to the spiritual goal, but not its realization. On the other hand, in the Nirvikalpa state there is realization of the spiritual goal, since the limited mind is completely annihilated and has arrived at a total merging in the infinite Truth.

The aspirant's meditation, in its higher flights, often brings a sense of expansion and freedom, as well as the joy and illumination of the higher planes. But none of these are abiding because in most cases, when the aspirant comes down from his exalted state of meditation, he is again what he was, namely, an ordinary person who is bound in the unyielding shackles of sanskaric limitations.

The incompleteness of the different samadhis of the aspirant may be illustrated by the story of a yogi from Gwalior, India, who was very greedy. Through yoga he had mastered the art of going into samadhi.

One day he sat opposite the palace of the raja and, before going into samadhi, thought, "I must have a thousand rupees from the raja." Then he went into samadhi and remained in that state for seven full days. During this period he took no food or drink but only sat in one place, completely absorbed in trance-meditation. People took him to be a saint; and when the raja came to know about him, he also went to have his darshan. The raja went near the yogi and happened to touch him on his back. That light touch was sufficient to bring him down from his samadhi; and as soon as he woke up from his trance-

**Individual mind
annihilated in
Nirvikalpa**

Temporary exaltation

Story of a yogi

meditation, he asked the raja for a thousand rupees.

Just as a prisoner who looks out of the window of his prison and gazes at the vast expanse of the sky may get lost in the vision of unlimited space, the aspirant who enters into trance-meditation may

**Analysis of
trance-meditation**

temporarily forget all his limitations while immersed in its light and bliss. But though the prisoner may have forgotten the prison, he has not escaped from it. In the same way, the aspirant who is absorbed in trance-meditation has lost sight of the chains that bind him to the world of Illusion, but he has not really broken through them. Just as the prisoner again becomes conscious of his bondage as soon as he gazes at his immediate surroundings, the aspirant becomes conscious of all his failings as soon as he regains normal consciousness. The ascending forms of trance-meditation may bring the aspirant increasing occult powers but not that unending state of knowledge and bliss that is continuously accessible in Nirvikalpa Samadhi to the Siddha, who has attained final Emancipation by breaking through the chains of Maya.

Another important difference is that in trance-meditation the aspirant is usually sustained by some object capable of exercising irresistible attraction. The lights, colors, smells, and sounds of the

**Nirvikalpa Samadhi
self-sustained**

subtle sphere play a part in alluring the mind from the worldly things it may have been attached to. Thus trance-meditation is not self-sustained but is dependent upon the object to which the mind directs itself. The Nirvikalpa Samadhi of the Siddha is self-sustained and is in no way dependent upon any object of the mind. Trance-meditation is more like the stupor of intoxicating drugs. The intoxication lasts only as long as the effect of the drug lasts. So the trance continues to exist as long as the mind is under the sway of the object it is sustained by. Nirvikalpa, which is free from the domination of the object, is a state of full wakefulness in which there is no ebb and flow, waxing or waning, but only the steadiness of true perception.

The different forms of general and specialized meditation resorted to by the aspirant are useful and valuable within their own limits. They must not be regarded as having the same value for all or as being equally necessary to all. They are among the ways that lead the aspirant toward his divine destination. For the few who are in an

advanced spiritual state, most of the ordinary forms of meditation are unnecessary. For those who are in direct

**Those in Sahaj
Samadhi as objects
of meditation** contact with a Perfect Master or the Avatar, many of the special forms of meditation are often unnecessary. It is enough for them to be under the guidance of the Master and to

love him. And those rare beings who have attained Self-realization and have become Perfect Masters themselves are always in the state of *Sahaj Samadhi*, or divinity in action. They not only do not need any forms of meditation but they themselves become objects of meditation for the aspirants. For they are then able to give their best help to those who meditate upon them.

The Types of Meditation

Part VIII *Sahaj Samadhi*

When the mind totally merges in the Truth, it experiences the Nirvikalpa state of spontaneous bliss of uninterrupted Self-knowledge in which the aspirant loses his limited individuality to discover that he is identical with God, who is in everything. By the grace of a Perfect Master, the Nirvikalpa state becomes the *culmination* of the earlier forms of personal and impersonal meditation and not their *product*. All forms of meditation followed by the aspirant as well as his other spiritual efforts, in spite of their differences, have only one aim, namely, to speed up the fruition of his longing to be united with the Infinite.

When this union is effected, the sadhak (aspirant) becomes a Siddha (one who has attained the Goal). The union with the Infinite that the Siddha achieves is referred to by the Sufis as *Vasl*. It is this state of Union with God that is described by Jesus Christ in the words "I and my Father are one." Many have written about this high state of consciousness, but it remains essentially indescribable. It cannot be expressed in words, and therefore it cannot be adequately explained. Though it can never be explained by one person to another, it can be

Culmination of meditation

Nirvikalpa Samadhi experienced after Union

experienced by one for oneself. This Nirvikalpa state when experienced by the Siddha is Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

To dwell in Nirvikalpa Samadhi is to experience the *God state*, in which the soul knows itself to be God because it has shed all the limiting factors that had hitherto contributed toward false self-knowledge. The God state of the Siddha

Body state

stands out in clear contrast with the *body state* of the worldly. The worldly individual takes himself to be the body and dwells in a state dominated by the body and its wants. His consciousness centers on the body. He is concerned with eating, drinking, sleeping, and the satisfaction of other bodily desires. It is for the body that he lives and seeks fulfillment. His consciousness cannot extend beyond the body; he thinks in terms of the body and cannot conceive of anything that has no body or form. The entire sphere of his existence is comprised of forms, and the theater in which he lives and moves and has his being consists of space.

The first step toward the God state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi is taken when the body state is transcended. Shedding the body state means entering the sphere of existence comprised of energy. The soul

Energy state

then dwells in a state that is no longer dominated by forms or bodies. It is lifted up to the domain of energy. Body or form is a solidification of energy, and to rise from the world of forms to the sphere of energy amounts to an advance toward a more primary and purer state of being. The *energy state* is free from many of the limitations that obtain in the world of forms. In this state, consciousness is linked with energy and continuously vibrates in and through energy.

In the energy state, the eating and drinking of the body state are paralleled by the absorption and assimilation of energy. At this level the soul acquires full control over energy and seeks fulfillment through its use. But its actions are still within the domain of spiritual limitation. It can see, hear, and smell many things that are inaccessible in the body state, and can perform many feats (for example, producing light in the dark or living for innumerable years only on energy), which seem to be miracles for those who are in the body state. The entire sphere of the soul's existence is comprised of energy and is dominated by energy. All that it can conceive of or do is in terms of energy and is achieved by means of energy. The energy state is the

state of spiritually advanced souls; but it is far from being the state of Perfection, which expresses itself through the Nirvikalpa Samadhi of the Siddha.

The second important step toward Nirvikalpa Samadhi is taken when the soul transcends the domain of energy and enters the domain of the mind. All energy is ultimately an expression of the mind;

Mind state

therefore the transition from the energy state to the *mind state* constitutes a still further advance toward the God state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi. In the mind state, consciousness is directly linked with the mind. It is in no way fettered by the domination of the body or energy, but it is mind-ridden. Advanced souls who are in the mind state can read and influence the minds of others. However, the mind-ridden state is still within the domain of duality and illusion, and it has to be transcended before the attainment of union with the Infinite.

The entire advance, from the very beginning, consists in gradually curtailing and transcending the working of the individual mind. The mind is functioning even in the body state and in the energy state.

Mind veils Truth

In the body state the mind thinks in terms of the body, in the energy state it thinks in terms of energy, while in the mind state it thinks in its own terms. However, even when the mind thinks in its own terms, it does not attain knowledge and realization of the Infinite because it becomes its own veil between thought and Truth. Though the mind may be unencumbered by life in the body state or the energy state, it is still limited by separative consciousness. It might be compared to a mirror that is covered with dust. The mind has, therefore, to be completely merged and dissolved in the Infinite before it is possible to experience the God state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi. Form is solidified energy; energy is an expression of mind; mind is the covered mirror of Eternity; and Eternity is Truth that has thrown off the mask of mind.

To discard the limiting mind is no easy thing. The chief difficulty is that the mind has to be annihilated through the mind itself. Intense longing for union with the infinite Reality as well as infinite patience are indispensable in the process of trans-

Transcending mind

tending the mind. One Master told his disciple that in order to attain the highest state he had to be thrown, bound hand and foot to a plank, into a river,

where he must keep his garments dry. The disciple could not understand the inner meaning of this injunction. He wandered until he encountered another Master and asked him the meaning of the injunction.

This Master explained that in order to attain God he had to long intensely for union with Him-as if he could not live another moment without it-and yet to have the inexhaustible patience that could wait for billions of years. If there is lack of intense longing for union with God, the mind lapses into its usual sanskaric working; and if there is lack of infinite patience, the very longing that the mind entertains sustains the working of the limited mind. It is only when there is a balance between infinite longing and infinite patience that the aspirant can ever hope to pierce through the veil of the limited mind; and this combination of extremes can only come through the grace of a Perfect Master.

To dwell in Nirvikalpa Samadhi is to dwell in Truth-consciousness. This God state cannot be grasped by anyone whose mind is still working. It is beyond the mind, for it dawns when the limited mind disappears in final union with the Infinite.

God state of The soul then knows itself through *itself*
Nirvikalpa Samadhi and not through the mind. The worldly individual knows that he is a human being and not a dog. In the same way, in Nirvikalpa Samadhi the soul just knows that it is God and not a finite thing. The worldly person does not have to keep repeating to himself that he is not a dog but a human being; he just knows, without having to make any special effort, that he is a human being. In the same way the soul, in Nirvikalpa Samadhi, does not need any artificial inducing of God-consciousness through repeated autosuggestions. It just knows itself to be God through effortless intuition.

One who experiences Nirvikalpa Samadhi is established in the knowledge of the Soul. This Self-knowledge does not come and go; it is permanent. In the state of ignorance the individual soul looks upon
Life in Eternity itself as a man or woman, as the agent of limited actions and the receiver of joys and pains. In the state of Self-knowledge it knows itself as the Soul, which is not in any way limited by these things and is untouched by them. Once it knows its own true nature, it has this knowledge forever and never again becomes involved in ignorance.

This state of God-consciousness is infinite and is characterized by unlimited understanding, purity, love, and happiness. To be in Nirvikalpa Samadhi—which for the rare few leads to Sahaj Samadhi—is the endlessness of life in Eternity.

Sahaj Samadhi, or divinity in action, is experienced by the Sadgurus and is preceded by two states: *Nirvana*, or absorption in divinity; and *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*, or divinity in expression. When consciousness is withdrawn entirely from all the bodies and the world of creation, it leads to *Nirvana*, or the beyond-mind state. But when consciousness again functions through the bodies without attachment or identification, it experiences the *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* of the Siddha. Here, though consciousness is attached to the bodies as instruments, it is detached from them inwardly by nonidentification.

The piercing of the mind amounts to the complete withdrawal of consciousness from the universe to its total absorption in God. This is the state where the universe becomes a zero: this is *Nirvana*. After *Nirvana*, those who become conscious of the universe experience it as nothing but God and remain constantly in *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*. *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* means a life where the mental activity of false imagination has come to an end, and the oscillations of the limited mind are all stilled in the realization of the unchangeable Truth.

Nirvana and *Nirvikalpa* are similar to the state of *Moksha* (Liberation), but only in representing the merging of the individual soul in God and in yielding eternal bliss. *Moksha* is experienced *after* the soul

Moksha, Nirvana, and Nirvikalpa

has dropped its bodies, while the states of *Nirvana* and *Nirvikalpa* can both be experienced *before* giving up the bodies. However, though the states of *Nirvana* and *Nirvikalpa* are similar as to retaining the bodies and though they are also fundamentally the same in essence, there is a difference between the two. When the soul comes out of the ego-shell and enters into the infinite life of God, its limited individuality is replaced by unlimited individuality. As the limitations of the individuality are entirely extinguished, the soul knows that it is God-conscious and thus preserves its unlimited individuality. Though the unlimited individuality of the soul is in a way retained in the union with the Infinite, it nevertheless remains quiescent and absorbed in the experience of *self-contained*

divinity, that is, in the state of Nirvana. But when the soul, having entered the infinite life of God, establishes its unlimited individuality through the release of *dynamic* divinity, it is in Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

Sahaj Samadhi comes to the very few souls who descend from the seventh plane of consciousness as Sadgurus, while it is the very *life* of the Avatar. The poise and harmony of this state remain undisturbed

**State of Sadgurus
and the Avatar**

even while giving energetic response to the changing circumstances of life. Those who are in this state live the life of God and experience God everywhere and in everything. Their God state is therefore in no way diminished when dealing with the things of this world. Whether drawing a bow or using a sword on the battlefield, whether flying in an airplane or talking to people, or whether engaged in other activities that may require the closest attention—they are continuously in the state of conscious enjoyment of the immutable Truth. Such is Sahaj Samadhi, the effortless and continuous life of Perfection and divinity in action.

The Dynamics of Spiritual Advancement

Spiritual advancement begins when there is a radical change in the outlook of the worldly person. The worldly individual lives mostly for the body; and even in those pursuits that do not seem to have a direct reference to the body, in the last analysis

Subjugation of body for higher life

the ultimate motive power is to be found in the desires connected with the body. For example, he lives to eat; he does not eat to live. He has not yet discovered any purpose clearly transcending the body, so the body and its comforts become the center of all his pursuits. But when he discovers values in which the soul is predominant, the body is at once relegated to the background. The maintenance of the body then becomes for him merely instrumental for the realization of a higher purpose. His body, which had formerly been a hindrance to true spiritual life, becomes an instrument for the release of higher life. At this stage the person attends to his bodily needs with no special feeling of self-identification, like the driver of a car who fills it with fuel and water so that it may be kept going.

The very beginning of spiritual advancement is conditioned by the quest of that goal for which man lives—the goal for which he unconsciously loves and hates, and for which he goes through variegated joys and sufferings. Though he may

Quest for the goal

be stirred by the pull of this incomprehensible and irresistible divine destiny, it may take a long time before he arrives at the mountain top of Truth-

realization; and the path is constantly strewn with pitfalls and slippery precipices. Those who attempt to reach this mountain top have to climb higher and higher. And even if a person has succeeded in scaling great heights, the slightest mistake on his part might cast him down to the very beginning again. Therefore the aspirant is never safe unless he has the advantage of the help and guidance of a Perfect Master, who knows the ins and outs of the spiritual path, and who can not only safeguard the aspirant from a possible fall but lead him to the goal of Realization without unnecessary relapses.

The aspirant who attempts to reach the goal carries with him all the *sanskaras* he has accumulated in the past. But in the intensity of his spiritual longing, they remain suspended and ineffective for the

Obstacles to advancement

time being. Time and again, however, when there is a slackening of spiritual effort, the *sanskaras* hitherto suspended from action gather fresh strength and, arraying themselves in a new formation, constitute formidable obstacles in the spiritual advancement of the aspirant.

This might be illustrated by the analogy of a river. The powerful current of a river carries with it great quantities of silt from the source and the banks. As long as these quantities are suspended in water they

Analogy of a river

do not hinder the flow of the river, though they may slow it down. When the current becomes slower in the plains, and particularly toward the mouth, this bulk tends to deposit in the river bed and to form huge islands or deltas. These not only obstruct the current but often divert it or even split it into smaller streams and, on the whole, weaken the force of the mighty river. Or again, when the river is in flood, it sweeps away all obstacles of trees, bushes, and rubbish in its path; but when these accumulate to a certain degree, they can constitute a serious hindrance to the flow of the river. In the same way, the path of spiritual advancement is often blocked by the obstacles of its own creation, and these can be removed only through the help of the Master.

The help of the Master is most effective when the aspirant surrenders his ego-life in favor of the unlimited life that the Master represents. Complete self-surrender is most difficult to achieve, and yet the most essential condition of spiritual advancement is the decreasing of egoism to its minimum. The objective of spiritual

advancement is not so much “works” but the quality of life free from ego-consciousness. If the aspirant has many great things to his credit that he has claimed as his, his ego fastens itself upon the achievements; and this constitutes a formidable hindrance to life unlimited. Hence comes the futility of rituals and ceremonies, acts of charity and good works, external renunciation and penances, when rooted in ego-consciousness.

It is therefore most necessary for the aspirant to keep free from the idea “I do this, and I do that.” This does not mean that the aspirant is to avoid all activity through fear of developing this form of the ego.

The dilemma He may have to take to the life of action to wear out the ego he has already developed. Thus he is caught up in a dilemma: if he stays inactive, he does nothing to break through the prison of his ego-life; and if he takes to a life of action, he is faced with the possibility of his ego being transferred to these new acts.

For spiritual advancement the aspirant has to avoid these two extremes and yet carry on a life of creative action. Treading the spiritual path is not like riding a saddled horse but like walking on the sharp edge of a sword. Once a rider is on horseback, he is practically at rest, sitting with more or less ease and requiring very little effort or attention to proceed. Treading the spiritual path, however, requires utmost attention and carefulness since the path affords no halting places or room for expansion of the ego-life. He who enters the path can neither remain where he is nor can he afford to lose his balance. He is thus like one who attempts to walk on the sharp edge of a sword.

To avoid inaction on the one hand and pride of action on the other, it is necessary for the aspirant to construct in the following manner a provisional and working ego that will be entirely subservient to the

Constructing new ego subservient to Master Master. Before beginning anything, the aspirant thinks that it is not he who is doing it but the Master who is getting it done through him. After doing the task he does not tarry to claim the results of action or enjoy them but becomes free of them by offering them to the Master. By training his mind in this spirit, he succeeds in creating a new ego-which, though only provi-

sional and working, is amply able to become a source of confidence, feeling, enthusiasm, and “go” that true action must express. This new ego is spiritually harmless, since it derives its life and being from the Master, who represents Infinity. And when the time comes, it can be thrown away like a garment.

There are thus two types of ego-one that can only add to the limitations of the soul, and the other that helps it toward emancipation. The passage from the limiting ego of the worldly to the egolessness of infinite life lies through the construction of a provisional ego generated by wholehearted allegiance to the Master. The construction of a new ego entirely subservient to the Master is indispensable to the dynamics of spiritual advancement.

The aspirant has been accustomed to derive zest in life from his limited ego, and an immediate transition from the life of egoistic action to that of egoless action is impossible on one’s own and also not

Sudden transition to egoless life impossible

advisable. If the aspirant were immediately required to avoid all forms of ego-consciousness, he would have to revert to a state of negative passivity, without any joy of expression. Or he would have to seek expression through activity that is merely automatic, like that of a lifeless machine, and therefore he could not derive any sense of fulfillment. The real problem is that the aspirant has to abandon his life of the limited ego and enter into the limitlessness of the egoless life without lapsing into a coma, where there would be an ebbing of all life. Such a coma might give temporary relief from the limitation of the ego-life, but it cannot initiate the aspirant into the infinity of egoless activity.

This is the reason why, in most cases, spiritual advancement has to be very gradual and often takes several lives. Where a person seems to have taken long strides in his spiritual advancement, he has merely recapitulated the advancement already

Spiritual advancement usually gradual

secured in previous lives-or there has been special intervention by a Sadguru. In normal cases the advancement of the aspirant has to be gradual. The distance between the limited life of the ego and the limitlessness of the egoless life has to be covered by gradual stages of ego-transformation-so that egoism is replaced by humility, surging desires are replaced by steadily growing contentment, and selfishness is replaced by selfless love.

When the ego is entirely subservient to the Master, it is not only spiritually harmless but indispensable and directly contributory to the spiritual advancement of the aspirant, because it brings him closer and closer to the Master through the life of selfless service and love. The constant inward contact with the Master that it secures makes him particularly amenable to the special help the Master alone can give.

Ego subservient to Master ensures his help

The aspirant who renounces the life of an uncurbed and separative ego in favor of a life of self-surrender to the Master is operating, through this new subservient ego, as an instrument in the hands of the Master. In reality the Master is working through him. Just as an instrument has a tendency to get out of order while being put to use, the aspirant is also likely to go wrong during his working in the world. From time to time the instrument has to be cleansed, overhauled, repaired, and set right. In the same way the aspirant-who during his work has developed new problems, entanglements, and shelters for the personal ego-has to be put into working order so that he can move ahead.

The aspirant who enlists in the service of the Master may be compared to a broom with which the Master sweeps the world clean of its impurities. The broom is bound to accumulate the dirt of the world; and unless cleansed again and again and given a new tone, it becomes less efficient in the course of time. Each time the aspirant goes to the Master, it is with fresh spiritual-problems. He might have got caught in new entanglements connected with a craving for honor, riches, or other worldly things that allure man. If he pursues these, he might get them; but he might be far from the goal of experiencing God, on whom he had set his heart.

Need for recurring contact with Master

Only through the active intervention of the Master can such spiritual disorders be cured. This task of curing spiritual diseases is comparable to the performance of an operation by a surgeon, who promptly removes the very cause that had been sapping the vital energies of a patient. If a person develops physical ailments and complaints, he must go to the doctor; and if he develops spiritual troubles, he must go to the Master. Thus recurring contact with the Master is most necessary throughout the process of spiritual advancement.

The Master helps the aspirant in his own invincible ways, which have no parallel in the ways of the world. If the aspirant is to be the

recipient of this help, he must make a real effort to surrender himself to the divine will of the Master. The personal ego, which the aspirant renounced in his first surrenderance to the Master, may

Each resurrection of ego needs fresh surrender

reappear in a new aspect—even within the artificial ego meant to be completely subservient to the Master and create disorder in its smooth working.

Hence this new resurrection of the limited personal ego of the aspirant needs to be counteracted through fresh surrender to the Master. The series of successive resurrections of the personal ego have to be accompanied by a series of fresh acts of surrenderance to the Master.

Progress from one surrender to greater surrender is a progression from a minor conquest to a major one. The more complete forms of surrenderance represent the higher states of consciousness, since they

Last surrenderance is that of separateness

secure greater harmony between the aspirant and the Master. Thus the infinite life of the Perfect Master can flow through the aspirant in more abundant measure. Spiritual advancement is a succession of one surrender after another until

the goal of the final surrenderance of the separate ego-life is completely achieved. The last surrender is the only complete surrenderance. It is the counterpart of the final union in which the aspirant becomes one with the Master. Therefore, in a sense, the most complete surrender to the Master is equivalent to the attainment of the Truth, which is the ultimate goal of all spiritual advancement.

The Deeper Aspects of Sadhana

For most persons, spiritual *sadhana*, or practice, consists in the external observance of rituals and ceremonies prescribed by their own religion. In the initial stages such observance has its own value as a factor contributing toward self-purification and mental discipline. But ultimately the aspirant has to transcend the phase of external conformity and become initiated into the deeper aspects of spiritual *sadhana*. When this happens, the external aspect of religion falls into the background; and the aspirant gets interested in the essentials revealed in all the great religions. True *sadhana* consists in a life that is based upon spiritual understanding, and it comes to a person who is truly keen about spiritual realities.

Transition to deeper aspects of sadhana *Sadhana* must never be regarded as consisting in the application of rigid laws. Just as in life there cannot be and need not be strict and unrelieved uniformity, in spiritual life there is ample room for diversity of *sadhanas*. The *sadhana* that is useful

Diversity of sadhanas for a particular aspirant is bound to be related to his *sanskaras* and temperament; and so, although the spiritual goal for all is the same, the *sadhana* of a given aspirant may be peculiar to himself. However, since the goal is the same for all, the differences with regard to *sadhana* are not of vital importance; and the deeper aspects of *sadhana* have importance for all aspirants in spite of their differences.

Sadhana in the spiritual realm is bound to be essentially different

from sadhana in the material field because the end is intrinsically different. The end sought in the material field is a product that has its beginning and end in time. The end sought in the spiritual realm is a completeness that transcends the limitations of time. Therefore in the material field, sadhana is directed toward the achievement of something that is yet to be; but in spiritual life it is directed toward the realization of that which always has been, will ever be, and now IS.

Sadhana in spiritual and material realms

The spiritual goal of life is to be sought in life itself and not outside life; thus sadhana in the spiritual realm has to be such that it brings one's life closer to the spiritual ideal. Sadhana in the spiritual realm does not aim at the achievement of a limited objective, which may have its day and then ingloriously disappear forever. It aims at bringing about a radical change in the quality of life, so that one's life permanently becomes an expression of the Truth in the eternal Now. Sadhana is spiritually fruitful if it succeeds in bringing the life of the individual in tune with the divine purpose, which is to enable everyone to enjoy consciously the bliss of the God state. Sadhana has to be completely adapted to this end.

Goal of spiritual sadhana

In the spiritual realm every part of sadhana must aim at the realization of the spiritual goal of securing godliness in all phases of life. Therefore the different aspects of spiritual sadhana will, from one point of view, represent different gradations of spiritual Perfection. Sadhana is perfect to the extent to which it expresses the spiritual ideal, that is, the degree to which it resembles the perfect life. Thus the greater the disparity that exists between the sadhana and the ideal at which it aims, the less perfect it is; the less disparity that exists between sadhana and the ideal at which it aims, the more perfect it is. When sadhana is perfect or complete, it merges into the goal—a spiritually perfect life—so that the division of means and end is swallowed up in an inviolable integrity of indivisible being.

Perfect sadhana merges into the goal

The relation between spiritual sadhana and the end sought through it may be contrasted with the relation that exists between them in the material field. In the material field the end usually falls more or less entirely outside the sadhana through which it is secured,

and there is a clear disparity of nature between the sadhana and the end achieved through it. Thus, pulling the trigger of a gun may become a means of killing a person, but killing someone is essentially different from the pulling of the trigger. In the spiritual realm, however, the sadhana and the end sought through it cannot be completely external to each other, and there is no clear disparity of nature between them. In the spiritual realm it is not possible to maintain an unbridgeable gulf between sadhana and the end sought through it. This gives rise to the fundamental paradox that in spiritual life, the practicing of a sadhana in itself amounts to a partial participation in the goal. Hence it becomes understandable why many of the spiritual sadhanas have to be taken seriously as if they were, in themselves, the goal.

In its deeper aspects, spiritual sadhana consists in following (1) the yoga of knowledge (*dnyan*), (2) the yoga of action (*karma*), and (3) the yoga of devotion or love (*bhakti*). The sadhana of knowledge finds its expression through the exercise of detachment born of true understanding, the different forms of meditation, and the constant use of discrimination and intuition. Each of these modes through which spiritual knowledge is sought or expressed requires explanatory comments.

The individual soul is entangled in the world of forms and does not know itself as one with the being of God. This ignorance constitutes the bondage of the soul, and spiritual sadhana must aim at securing emancipation from this bondage.

Detachment External renunciation of the things of this world is therefore often counted among the sadhanas that lead to Liberation. Though such external renunciation may have its own value, it is not absolutely necessary. What is needed is *internal* renunciation of craving for the things of this world. When craving is given up, it matters little whether the soul has or has not externally renounced the things of this world, because the soul has internally disentangled itself from the illusory world of forms and has prepared itself for the state of *Mukti*, or Liberation. Detachment is an important part of the sadhana of knowledge.

Meditation is another means through which spiritual knowledge is sought. Meditation should not be regarded as some odd pursuit

peculiar to dwellers in caves. Every person finds himself meditating on something or another. The difference between such natural meditation and the

Meditation

meditation of an aspirant is that the latter is systematic and organized thinking about things that have spiritual importance. Meditation, as sadhana, may be personal or impersonal.

Meditation is personal when it is concerned with one who is spiritually perfect. A suitable object for personal meditation may be taken (according to the inclination of the aspirant) from among the living or past Perfect Masters or the Avatar. Through such personal meditation the aspirant imbibes all the divine qualities and the spiritual knowledge of the Master. Since it involves love and self-surrender, personal meditation invites the grace of the Master, which alone can give final Realization. So the sadhana of personal meditation not only makes the aspirant similar to the Master on whom he meditates but also prepares his way to be united with the Master in the Truth.

Impersonal meditation is concerned with the formless and infinite aspect of God. This may lead a person toward the realization of the impersonal aspect of God; but on the whole, this meditation becomes barren unless the aspirant has been duly prepared by the pursuit of personal meditation and a life of virtue. In the ultimate realization of Infinity there is neither the limitation of personality nor the distinction of the opposites of good and evil. In order to achieve Realization, one has to pass from the personal to the impersonal and from goodness to God, who is beyond the opposites of good and evil. Another condition of attaining Truth through impersonal meditation is that the aspirant should be able to make his mind absolutely still. This becomes possible only when all the diverse *sanskaras* (impressions) in the mind have vanished. As the final wiping out of the *sanskaras* is possible only through the grace of a Master, the Master is indispensable for success even along the path of impersonal meditation.

The sadhana of knowledge, or *dnyan*, remains incomplete unless the aspirant exercises constant discrimination and unveils his highest intuitions. Realization of God comes to the

Use of discrimination and intuition

aspirant who uses discrimination as well as his intuitions about true and lasting values.

Infinite knowledge is latent in everyone, but it has to be unveiled. The way to increase knowledge is to put into practice that bit of spiritual wisdom a person may already happen to

have. The teachings that have come to humanity through the Masters of wisdom and the inborn sense of values that the aspirant brings with him shed sufficient light upon the *next* step the aspirant has to take. The difficult thing is to act upon the knowledge he has. One of the best methods of adding to one's own spiritual wisdom is to make use of the knowledge one already has. If the sadhana of knowledge is to be fruitful, it must be implemented at every step by due emphasis on action. Everyday life must be guided by discrimination and inspired by the highest intuitions.

Karma-yoga, or the yoga of action, consists in acting according to the best intuitions of the heart without fear or hesitation. In sadhana, what counts is *practice* and not mere theory. Sound practice is far more

important than sound theory. Practice
Importance of action based upon right knowledge will of course
 be more fruitful, but even a mistake in a
 practical direction may have its own valuable lessons to bring. Mere
 theoretical speculation, however, remains spiritually barren, even
 when it is flawless. Thus a person who is not very learned but who
 sincerely takes the name of God and does his humble duties whole-
 heartedly may actually be nearer to God than one who knows all the
 metaphysics of the world but does not allow any of his theories to
 modify his everyday life.

The difference between the comparative importance of theory and practice in the realm of sadhanas may be brought out by means of a well-known story of an ass. An ass, who was plodding along a road

for a long time and was very hungry, hap-
Illustrative story pened to see two heaps of grass-one at
 some distance on the right side of the road
 and the other at some distance on the left side of the road. Now the ass
 thought that it was of utmost importance to be absolutely certain
 which of the two heaps was clearly the better before he could intelli-
 gently decide to go to one heap rather than the other. If he decided
 without thorough thinking and without having sufficient grounds for
 his preference, that would be impulsive action and not intelligent
 action.

Therefore he first considered the distance at which the two heaps were respectively placed from the road he was treading. Unfortunately for him, after elaborate consideration, he concluded that the heaps were equally distant from the road. So he wondered if there were some

other consideration that might enable him to make the “right” choice and speculated upon the respective sizes of the heaps. Even with this second attempt to be theoretically sure before acting, his efforts were not crowned with success because he concluded that both heaps were of equal size. Then, with the tenacity and patience of an ass, he considered other things, such as the quality of the grass. But as fate would have it, in all the points of comparison he could think of, the two heaps turned out to be equally desirable.

Ultimately it happened that since the ass could not discover any deciding factor that would make his preference appear theoretically sound, he did not go to either of the two heaps but went straight ahead-hungry and tired as before and not a whit better off for having come upon two heaps of grass. If the ass had gone to one heap, without insisting upon the theoretical certainty of having chosen wisely, he might perhaps have gone to the heap that was not as good as the other. And despite any mistakes in his intellectual judgment, he would have been infinitely better off from a practical point of view.

In the spiritual life it is not necessary to have a complete map of the path in order to begin traveling. On the contrary, insistence upon having such complete knowledge may actually hinder rather than help the onward march. The deeper secrets of spiritual life are unraveled to those who take risks and who make bold experiments with it. They are not meant for the idler who seeks guarantees for every step. Those who speculate from the shore about the ocean shall know only its surface, but those who would know the depths of the ocean must be willing to plunge into it.

Fulfillment of the sadhana of karma-yoga requires that action should spring from perception of the Truth. Enlightened action does not bind because it is not rooted in the ego and is selfless. Selfishness

Selfless service

represents ignorance, while selflessness is a reflection of the Truth. The real justification for a life of selfless service is to be found in this intrinsic worth of such a life and not in any ulterior result or consequence. The paradox of selfless action is that it actually brings to the aspirant much more than could ever come within the purview of ignorant selfishness. Selfishness leads to a narrow life that revolves around the false idea of a limited and separate individual. Whereas selfless action contributes toward the dissipation of the illusion of separateness and turns out to be the gateway to the unlimited life

where there is realization of *All-selfness*. What a person has may be lost and what he desires to have may never come to him; but if he parts with something in the spirit of an offering to God, it has already come back to him. Such is the sadhana of karma-yoga.

Even more important than the sadhanas of knowledge (dnyan) and action (karma) is the sadhana of love (bhakti). Love is its own excuse for being. It is complete in itself and does not need to be

Love

supplemented by anything. The greatest saints have been content with their love for God, desiring nothing else. Love is not love if it is based upon any expectation. In the intensity of divine love, the lover becomes one with the divine Beloved. There is no sadhana greater than love, there is no law higher than love, and there is no goal that is beyond love—for love in its divine state becomes infinite. God and love are identical, and one who has divine love already has God.

Love may be regarded as being equally a part of sadhana and a part of the goal. The intrinsic worth of love is so obvious that it is often considered a mistake to look upon it as a sadhana for some other end.

Through effort to effortlessness

In no sadhana is the merging in God so easy and complete as in love. When love is the presiding genius, the path to Truth is effortless and joyous. As a rule sadhana involves effort and sometimes even desperate effort, as in the case of an aspirant who may strive for detachment in the face of temptations. In love, though, there is no sense of effort because it is spontaneous. Spontaneity is the essence of true spirituality. The highest state of consciousness, in which the mind is completely merged in the Truth, is known as *Sahajawastha*, the state of unlimited spontaneity in which there is uninterrupted Self-knowledge. One of the paradoxes connected with spiritual sadhana is that all effort of the aspirant is intended for arriving at a state of effortlessness.

There is a beautiful story of a *kasturi-mriga*, or musk deer, that brings out the nature of all spiritual sadhana. Once, while roaming about and frolicking among hills and dales, the *kasturi-mriga* was suddenly aware of an exquisitely beautiful scent, the like of which it had never known.

The scent stirred the inner depths of its soul so profoundly that it determined to find the source. So keen was its longing that notwithstanding the severity of cold or the intensity of

scorching heat, by day as well as by night, the deer carried on its desperate search for the source of the sweet scent. It knew no fear or hesitation but undaunted went on its elusive search, until at last, happening to lose its foothold on a cliff, it had a precipitous fall resulting in a fatal injury. While breathing its last, the deer found that the scent that had ravished its heart and inspired all these efforts came from its own navel. This last moment of the deer's life was its happiest, and there was on its face inexpressible peace.

All spiritual sadhanas of the aspirant are like the efforts of the *kasturi-mriga*. The final fructification of sadhana involves the termination of the ego-life of the aspirant. At that moment there is the

**Goal of sadhana is
Self-knowledge**

realization that he himself has, in a sense, been the object of all his search and endeavor. All that he suffered and enjoyed—all his risks and adventures, all his sacrifices and desperate strivings—were intended for achieving true Self-knowledge, in which he loses his limited individuality only to discover that he is really identical with God, who is in everything.

The Avatar

Consciously or unconsciously, every living creature seeks one thing. In the lower forms of life and in less advanced human beings, the quest is unconscious; in advanced human beings, it is conscious. The object of the quest is called by many names-happiness, peace, freedom, truth, love, perfection, Self-realization, God-realization, union with God. Essentially, it is a search for all of these, but in a special way. Everyone has moments of happiness, glimpses of truth, fleeting experiences of union with God; what they want is to make them permanent. They want to establish an abiding reality in the midst of constant change.

This is a natural desire, based fundamentally on a memory-dim or clear as the evolution of the individual soul may be low or high-of its essential unity with God. For every living thing is a partial manifestation of God, conditioned only by its lack of knowledge of its own true nature. The whole of evolution, in fact, is an evolution from unconscious divinity to conscious divinity, in which God Himself, essentially eternal and unchangeable, assumes an infinite variety of forms, enjoys an infinite variety of experiences, and transcends an infinite variety of self-imposed limitations. Evolution from the standpoint of the Creator is a divine sport, in which the Unconditioned tests the infinitude of His absolute knowledge, power, and bliss in the midst of all conditions. But evolution from the standpoint of the creature, with its limited knowledge, limited power, limited capacity for enjoying bliss, is an epic of alternating rest and struggle, joy and sorrow,

love and hate-until in the perfected person, God balances the pairs of opposites, and duality is transcended.

Then creature and Creator recognize themselves as one; changelessness is established in the midst of change; eternity is experienced in the midst of time. God knows Himself as God, unchangeable in essence, infinite in manifestation, ever experiencing the supreme bliss of Self-realization in continually fresh awareness of Himself by Himself. This Realization must and does take place only in the midst of life; for it is only in the midst of life that limitation can be experienced and transcended, and that subsequent freedom from limitation can be enjoyed. This freedom from limitation assumes three forms.

Most God-realized souls leave the body at once and forever, and remain eternally merged in the unmanifest aspect of God. They are conscious only of the bliss of Union. Creation no longer exists for them. Their constant round of births and deaths is ended. This is known as *Moksha* (ordinary *Mukti*), or Liberation.

Some God-realized souls retain the body for a time; but their consciousness is merged completely in the unmanifest aspect of God, and they are therefore not conscious either of their bodies or of creation. They experience constantly the infinite bliss, power, and knowledge of God; but they cannot consciously use them in creation or help others to attain Liberation. Nevertheless, their presence on earth is like a focal point for the concentration and radiation of the infinite power, knowledge, and bliss of God; and those who approach them, serve them, and worship them are spiritually benefited by contact with them. These souls are called *Majzoobs-e-Kamil*; and this particular type of Liberation is called *Videh Mukti*, or liberation with the body.

A few God-realized souls keep the body, yet are conscious of themselves as God in both His unmanifest and His manifest aspects. They know themselves both as the unchangeable divine Essence and as its infinitely varied manifestation. They experience themselves as God apart from creation; as God the Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer of the whole of creation; and as God, who has accepted and transcended the limitations of creation. These souls experience constantly the absolute peace, the infinite knowledge, power, and bliss of God. They enjoy to the full the divine sport of creation. They know themselves as God in everything; therefore they are able to help everything spiritually and thus help other souls realize God, either as *Majzoobs-e-Kamil*, *Paramhansas*, *Jivanmuktas*-or even *Sadgurus*, as they them-

selves are called.

There are fifty-six God-realized souls in the world at all times. They are always one in consciousness. They are always different in function. For the most part, they live and work apart from and unknown to the general public; but five, who act in a sense as a directing body, always work in public and attain public prominence and importance. These are known as Sadgurus, or Perfect Masters. In Avataric periods the *Avatar*, as the Supreme Sadguru, takes His place as the head of this body and of the spiritual hierarchy as a whole.*

Avataric periods are like the springtide of creation. They bring a new release of power, a new awakening of consciousness, a new experience of life-not merely for a few, but for all. Qualities of energy and awareness, which had been used and enjoyed by only a few advanced souls, are made available for all humanity. Life, as a whole, is stepped up to a higher level of consciousness, is geared to a new rate of energy. The transition from sensation to reason was one such step; the transition from reason to intuition will be another.

This new influx of the creative impulse manifests, through the medium of a divine personality, an incarnation of God in a special sense-the *Avatar*. The Avatar was the first individual soul to emerge from the evolutionary and involutionary process as a Sadguru, and He is the only Avatar who has ever manifested or will ever manifest. Through Him God first completed the journey from unconscious divinity to conscious divinity, first unconsciously became man in order consciously to become God. Through Him, periodically, God consciously becomes man for the liberation of mankind.

The Avatar appears in different forms, under different names, at different times, in different parts of the world. As His appearance always coincides with the spiritual regeneration of man, the period immediately preceding His manifestation is always one in which humanity suffers from the pangs of the approaching rebirth. Man seems more than ever enslaved by desire, more than ever driven by greed, held by fear, swept by anger. The strong dominate the weak; the rich oppress the poor; large masses of people are exploited for the benefit of the few who are in power. The individual, who finds no peace or rest, seeks to forget himself in excitement. Immorality in-

*Every advent of the Avatar (the God-Man, the Messiah, the Buddha, the Christ, the Rasool) is the direct descent of God on earth in human form-as the Eternal Living Perfect Master. The five Sadgurus of the age precipitate this advent once in a cyclic period of 700 to 1400 years. For details see *God Speaks* by Meher Baba.-ED.

creases, crime flourishes, religion is ridiculed. Corruption spreads throughout the social order. Class and national hatreds are aroused and fostered. Wars break out. Humanity grows desperate. There seems to be no possibility of stemming the tide of destruction.

At this moment the Avatar appears. Being the total manifestation of God in human form, He is like a gauge against which man can measure what he is and what he may become. He tries the standard of human values by interpreting them in terms of divinely human life.

He is interested in everything but not concerned about anything. The slightest mishap may command His sympathy; the greatest tragedy will not upset Him. He is beyond the alternations of pain and pleasure, desire and satisfaction, rest and struggle, life and death. To Him they are equally illusions that He has transcended, but by which others are bound, and from which He has come to free them. He uses every circumstance as a means to lead others toward Realization.

He knows that individuals do not cease to exist when they die and therefore is not concerned over death. He knows that destruction must precede construction, that out of suffering is born peace and bliss, that out of struggle comes liberation from the bonds of action. He is only concerned about concern.

In those who contact Him, He awakens a love that consumes all selfish desires in the flame of the one desire to serve Him. Those who consecrate their lives to Him gradually become identified with Him in consciousness. Little by little their humanity is absorbed into His divinity, and they become free. Those who are closest to Him are known as His Circle.

Every Sadguru has an intimate Circle of twelve disciples who, at the point of Realization, are made equal to the Sadguru himself, though they may differ from him in function and authority. In Avataric periods the Avatar has a Circle of ten concentric Circles with a total of 122 disciples, all of whom experience Realization and work for the Liberation of others.* The work of the Avatar and His disciples is not only for contemporary humanity but for posterity as well. The unfoldment of life and consciousness for the whole Avataric cycle, which had been mapped out in the creative world before the Avatar took form, is endorsed and fixed in the formative and material worlds during the Avatar's life on earth.

The Avatar awakens contemporary humanity to a realization of

*For details see "The Circles of the Avatar" discourse.-ED.

its true spiritual nature, gives Liberation to those who are ready, and quickens the life of the spirit in His time. For posterity is left the stimulating power of His divinely human example-of the nobility of a life supremely lived, of a love unmixed with desire, of a power unused except for others, of a peace untroubled by ambition, of a knowledge undimmed by illusion. He has demonstrated the possibility of a divine life for all humanity, of a heavenly life on earth. Those who have the necessary courage and integrity can follow when they will.

Those who are spiritually awake have been aware for some time that the world is at present in the midst of a period such as always precedes Avataric manifestations. Even unawakened men and women are becoming aware of it now. From their darkness they are reaching out for light; in their sorrow they are longing for comfort; from the midst of the strife into which they have found themselves plunged, they are praying for peace and deliverance.

For the moment they must be patient. The wave of destruction must rise still higher, must spread still further. But when, from the depths of his heart, man desires something more lasting than wealth and something more real than material power, the wave will recede. Then peace will come, joy will come, light will come.

The breaking of my silence-the signal for my public manifestation-is not far off. I bring the greatest treasure it is possible for man to receive-a treasure that includes all other treasures, that will endure forever, that increases when shared with others. Be ready to receive it.