

● *Shri Rām* ●

OUR SPIRITUAL SĀDHANĀ

IT'S OBJECTIVE, PREREQUISITES,
LANDMARKS AND CONSUMMATION

VOLUME ONE



SWAMI RAMANAND BRAHMACHARI

TRANSLATED BY

DR. (MRS.) LAKSHMI SAXENA

SWAMI RAMANAND

Born on 16 December, 1916 in Lalitpur (U.P.) in a middle class family of Hoshiarpur (Punjab) Swami Ramanand had a brilliant academic career. He was a student par-excellence as he broke all the previous records of the Panjab University. While studying in the Govt. College Lahore he had also acquired a deep understanding of many religious scriptures.



A life full of promise, position, and power lay ahead of him as he could easily have entered the Indian Civil Service. However, he opted for sanyas. The influence of Arya Samaj, Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi and his Guru Swami Satyanandji Maharaj proved vital in his decision of renouncing home at the age of 25.

He was a quiet and unassuming person who shunned publicity. He preferred to work in silence without any name or fame. He led a very active life-delivering lectures and discourses on Âdhyâtma, conducting Sâdhanâ Shivirs, writing letters to Sâdhaks, writing a number of books and undertaking extensive touring of the country. He gave 'Diksha' to many spiritual aspirants and propagated the path of 'Descent' for Spiritual Sâdhanâ on account of it being comparatively safe, effective and natural.

His books Âdhyâtmic Vikâs and Âdhyâtmic Sâdhanâ (Parts I & II) are excellent treatises in Spiritual Literature. The present English version is a translation of the latter books written for the benefit of English speaking people in their Spiritual journey.

Like the famous Adi Shankaracharya he passed away at a very young age in 1952 in Kankhal (Haridwar) U.P.

Our Spiritual Sādhana

It's objective, prerequisites, landmarks
and consummation

Volume One



Swami Ramanand Brahmachari

Translated by

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PREFACE

The present book is in continuation of *Ādhyātma Vikās*. It is a form of *Sādhanā* resting entirely on the perspective presented in *Ādhyātma Vikās*. And so without understanding it, it will be difficult to understand this one properly; *Sādhanā* creates thoughts and thoughts influence the path of *Sādhanā* which in turn again creates thoughts - afresh. So in the understanding of this work our *Sādhanā* is going to be of special assistance. There can be no doubt of this.

Very few works have been written on this theme i.e. on *Sādhanā*, relating to the path of descent. The work of Sri Aurobindo entitled "The basis of Yoga" has a special place of its own in this specific sphere. My thoughts and experiences have received confirmation - from time to time - from the writings of Sri Aurobindo. I am grateful for that.

In the formation of the outline of this specific mode of *Sādhanā* how considerable has been the contribution of my friends - whom I have had a special privilege of serving in the field of *Sādhanā*, they themselves cannot imagine. And how deeply I am grateful to Shri Swami Satyananda Ji Maharaja, who has initiated me in the path of *Sādhanā*, my heart alone knows of it, words feel shy and so fail to express it.

Ramananada Brahmachari

Ramakuti,
Digoli, at Almora.
21-9-45.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

All great things of life are to be had by the Grace of God who presides over the destiny of each person who is born in the world.

I consider it to be my special privilege to have had the darsana of revered Swamiji and to have listened to him when he delivered a three-day lecture on "Shāshwat Ānanda" (शाश्वत आनंद) at the Theosophical Lodge, Allahabad.

It was a rare experience for me which I cherish with a feeling of the deepest gratitude. It was probably the beginning of a new life for me, for I soon was made to realize that life is to be lived not as one wants to live, but as one is destined to live.

I had a few more opportunities to have his darsana and blessings when he visited Allahabad at our place and also at other places. My mother late Shyama Kumari Varma was a very devoted disciple of Swamiji and it was due to her that we had the opportunity of receiving him at our home at Darbhanga Castle Compound, Allahabad.

It was a stunning blow for us to have received one evening the sad news of his passing away at Kankhal on 15th April, 1952. The members of "Sādhanā Pariwār" felt cheated by destiny. It was an unexpected blow for them but they soon rallied around the dynamic leadership of Sumitra-Ma to build a memorial in his memory - known as "Swami Ramananda Sādhanā Dhām" on the bank of the river at Kankhal and to continue with Sādhanā on the lines set by the Master for them.

I had an opportunity of visiting Kankhal in April, 1954. The Sannyasins of the Ramakrishna Mission Hospital at

Kankhal had invited his devotees to their premises. They had decorated the room as it was at the time of his death in 1952; and had given us meals cooked and served by the sannyasins themselves.

It was a treat-wonderful-in all respects: As we entered the room, we could feel the presence of the Master. Those of us who were tuned to him could feel the benign vibrations of his hallowed presence for their hearts possibly yearned to see the Master in person.

The food that was served to us and the way it was served by the Sannyasins still has not faded in our memory though decades have rolled by. I consider it my great privilege to have been there and to have been blessed by that rarest of rare opportunity. It has probably assisted me in facing life - particularly, its vicissitudes in coming years. I have had the best of life and the worst of it too. But I have all along felt the imperceptible hand of the Master leading me gently forward.

During his life-time he had asked me to translate his book entitled Jivan-Rahasya. It was this mandate which was carried out when the translation was completed in 1956 and finally published in 1968.

And now when I am about to close my life I have again felt his mandate to translate his book entitled 'Âdhyatmik Sādhanā -in two parts an excellent treatise on the Path of Descent.

It has been extremely difficult for me to do justice to the thought of the Master while writing articles on his philosophy and Sādhanā for the Patrika. It is much more difficult to present his thoughts in a different medium on a subject of which I know very little at present. Possibly, it is the same mandate which has been received by me in-silence-in the

depths of my being. And I have joyously entrusted the completion of the work to it. Whether it has been done nicely or not?, Whether it is going to benefit the readers or the aspirants or not ? is not my worry. It has been done in faith and I am sure readers will not be disappointed, for I have tried to be close to the spirit of the original.

One thing deserves to be specially mentioned : important Hindi terms have been retained like Mahāsākti, Purushottama, Sādhanā, Mantra etc., for I have all along felt that these terms have their subtle nuances which it is difficult to convey through equivalent terms of another language.

Besides, the aspirants being fairly conversant with these deeply suggestive terms, it would put them to unnecessary strain if the same are translated. On the contrary, their natural empathy would not only assist them in understanding the theory behind Sādhanā, it would immediately transport them to the plane on which initiation into the spiritual path becomes much easier.

I dedicate this effort as I have dedicated my entire life to the Master who has gently but firmly led me forward to the position which I occupy today on the path of evolution and who alone holds the promise for any future forward step.

25th April, 1994.
University Campus,
Gorakhpur

Lakshmi Saxena

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My warm gratitude to the members of the Sādhanā Pariwār - especially our President Shri K.C. Nayar for having allowed this to be a publication of the Pariwār on the recommendations of the sub committee comprising of himself, Shri O P Gupta (Honourary Secretary) and Smt. Sheila Ghori (Member, Managing Committee).

I am also grateful to Col. Suresh Gupta (Retd.) S/o Shri O P Gupta for his painstaking efforts in arranging the proof reading, designing the layout and the ultimate publication of this book.

25th April, 1994.
University Campus,
Gorakhpur

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THE OBJECTIVE

Before entering into the path of Sādhanā it will be good if we understand as clearly as possible - its purpose. There is no doubt that as we proceed on the path our intellect will become clearer and we will be able to understand it all the more clearly. But an effort to understand as much of it as is possible - initially, is necessary.

Often from the very depths of our being there springs forth a 'call'¹ - a longing for something. It remains - at first - unmanifest: We cannot recognise it. It is indicative of a want. It is a void which none of the satisfactions of the world; its infinite range of intellectual activity and beauty cannot satisfy. So despite it that yearning from the depths keeps us restless and in anguish. And the more such a person keeps away from the world - sits absolutely alone in peace and tranquillity - it grows in intensity and makes him restless.

The demand of the body is satisfied when its bodily requirements are met. The Prāna or the vital desires multiple forms of satisfaction and is temporarily satisfied when these are met. The heart yearns for affection and beauty, for praise and self-surrender; and appears to be restful for some time when it gets these. The intellect demands a field for its self-expression, for its diverse activities, and is happy when it gets it. But that longing from one's depths is outside these. It is the longing of the self. It is satisfied in full only when one attains perfect unity with the Lord and when one is able to express one's latent potentiality of infinite power, knowledge and bliss. As long as one is not able to attain one's perfect unity with Purushottamā - the only ultimate reality of

1. 'Call', longing, yearning are in the present context used as synonyms.

the universe and is not able to manifest in full one's latent divine power, knowledge and bliss (Sat, Cit and Ānanda). this yearning cannot be silenced. And an attempt to satisfy it is the main purpose of our Sādhanā¹ and the yearning itself is its primary motivating force.

Curiosity associated with the dry intellect does not possess the ability to carry us forward on the path of spiritual progress : Those who depend on it alone can with superb ability, expound the existing systems of philosophy; can attain excellence in scholarship, can even propound new philosophies but cannot progress on the path of spiritual Sādhanā.

Those of us who are restless and in anguish due to the cravings of the heart or thirst of the vital make diverse efforts - natural and super-natural - for their respective satisfaction. Worship of the deity through prayers, sacrificial rituals etc. are all super-natural devices but these certainly are not spiritual means. The yearning of the innermost self has not as yet made its appearance. And the disquiet of the vital and the heart continues to hold us in its firm, cancerous grip.

As soon as the pangs associated with the cravings of the intellect, heart and the vital subside - whatever be the reasons for the same and pleasures connected with their gratification cool down, the longing reappears. And it entirely depends on the inner state of the individual - the particular step of the ladder on which evolution has placed him whether the intellect, etc. assuming supremacy over him will again drag him into their whirl or surrender before its irresistible

1. The term Sādhanā which means the spiritual practices and has been retained in original on account of its familiarity as well as its ability to convey the sense more effectively - Translator's note.

intensity.

In the course of one's evolution - at a particular point in one's life - this longing is bound to appear. Those of us who have not as yet reached the desired maturity in this life are sure to reach it in the next life or may be in some other life - in an entirely new body. The longing will arise in them and then will commence their effort for spiritual Sādhanā.

This longing is the admit card for Sādhanā¹. Sometimes on account of obstructive Samskāras it appears to have completely disappeared. Often even when the individual has made sufficient progress in Sādhanā - it looks as if it has absolutely disappeared. But this disappearance testifies to its powerful resurgence in future. And as soon as the obstructing Samskāras have completely exhausted themselves the longing is bound to return - this time with a greater intensity.

I have already stated earlier that this yearning of the depths can only be satisfied when we achieve perfect unity with the Lord or when the latent sat-cit-ānanda - in us is fully manifest. The two in truth are the same. They are the twin aspects of the self same state, are contemporaneous and achieved simultaneously. For attainment of God is at the same time an attainment of perfection and vice versa. It by no means an exaggeration if it is expressed like this. We shall try to explain it more fully.

1. It should not be forgotten that the entire life starting from the inanimate to the conscious; from the gross physical to the human is spiritual Sādhanā. But all that achievement is without any conscious endeavour on our part. It has been effected due to the propelling force of the cosmic Śakti. But the present effort points to the state in which the individual has awakened and employs his Śakti consciously- for his own progress.

What then is God ? I have sufficiently dwelt on this question in my book 'Ādhyātma Vikās'. He is the First cause of the universe. The world is His manifestation; His very form. But He simply is not this alone. He is beyond this. He is the world and transcends it too. For this reason He is known as Purushottama and Prakṛti is His Śakti. He transcends it too. He is the Determinate (Saguna) as well as the Indeterminate (Nirguna). He is the supreme reality.

The attainment of perfect unity with the Lord is not simply to be seated firmly in the Indeterminate form only for He is the Determinate also. So it is necessary to realize one's unity with His determinate form too. He who knows the supreme reality as something beyond Prakṛti how can he be said to know it in its entirety ? How can he who knows the supreme as an exclusive reality i.e. as one which cannot be related to the world in all its concrete manifestations be said to know Him fully ? In other words, how can he who knows the Purushottama only and not His Mahāśakti and whose experience is confined to Him alone and is not inclusive of the Mahāśakti, can he be said to have attained perfect unity with the Lord ?¹

For he has excluded the world - the entire manifest universe which is the play of Mahāśakti. His experience is incomplete and so is its value.

So he who has attained perfect unity with the Lord certainly is one who abides in the Indeterminate (निर्विशेष) the Attributeless (निर्गुण). And this state can never be disturbed. But along with that he also realizes his unity with the Mahāśakti and finds her active in himself as well as in the world outside. He finds Her vibrant in all the movements, vibrations and

1. He considers it to be illusory (mithyā) like the exponents of the doctrine of Mayāvāda or the doctrine of the illusionness of the world.

emotions springing forth from Her, being protected by Her and finally being absorbed in Her. His volition too is of the Mahāśakti and his activity too is divine. As the gunas (गुण) and within the gunas within and outside himself he finds Her playful and active. And the feeling of being exclusively oneself - of being a positive, separate reality is irretrievably lost in the concrete manifestations of the Mahāśakti such a one has realized his perfect unity with the cosmic rhythm. And it is, therefore, for him alone that it can be said :

वासुदेव : सर्वमिति स महात्मा सुदुर्लभ :

- Gita 7.19.¹

And such a one alone while being intensely active can be said to be free from all bonds.

And as the Purushottama - the Supreme Lord, firmly seated in oneself plays the sport-divine (Leela) but is never unseated therefrom, so also the person who has realized his perfect unity with the Lord does everything but remains - for ever stable within. We now have to see whether this perfect unity is at the same time an absolute manifestation of the latent-śakti, jñāna and ānanda of the self or not ? Or whether this absolute unity can be realized without it ?

The power of an ordinary person is limited. His knowledge and bliss too is limited. These limitations are different in different persons. We observe a distinct gradation in these. We also know that the energy of the Infinite manifests itself in man and assumes the form of human energy. In the same way human knowledge and bliss too is a manifestation of the Infinite Knowledge and Bliss. The gunas are limited or put differently it can be said that the limitations themselves are the gunas - the satva, rajas and the tamas. Without these

1. Rare is such a one who beholds that the Lord is everything.

it is not possible to conceive of a physical body, the vital, the heart and the intellect. So even the maximum manifestation of energy, knowledge and bliss through these is bound to be limited on account of the fact that the field itself is limited.¹ Their respective perfection consists simply in the fact that each one of these works properly, successfully and with an inner composure so that the entire activity be blissful. Also that there should be no confusion regarding their respective roles nor an inability to achieve fulfilment of their ends. It is also expected that none of these work for their personal gratification, rather each one of these should work for the self-situated beyond them and should find their respective satisfaction in it alone.

But this is not the entire story. Of the many elements dormant in us the intellect certainly is not the highest. Beyond this there is another - a higher kind of knowledge which gives us in a wonderful way a direct knowledge of things. It is known as samādhi - jñāna (समाधि ज्ञान). The intellect is analytical. It lives in the creation of distincts in separation of one thing from the other. Samādhi-jñāna is obtained by identity - by empathy : Whatever be the thing we know it is always something with which we are in a state of live unity and the same can be felt also. This also is a knowledge which is expressed through the intellect, for in the waking state the intellect is the only instrument of communication. And lo behold ! the mysteries of the universe - one after the other, stand revealed before this wonderful power of comprehension. The person can realize his oneness with each and every thing. And with it commences the knowledge of the basic, the fontal unity of life. In this knowledge we have both

1. If we expect that the intellect can enter into the Indeterminate reality and can describe it satisfactorily one is bound to be disappointed. The intellect is analytical and so its sphere is bound to be concrete or the determinate.

the experience of the One as well as of the many.

Further, beyond this there is another - the highest knowledge. It is the awareness of perfect unity. And one who has reached this state sees clearly everything in the One - the Supreme Reality. And obviously in this state of awareness - Oneness - is primary and the many is seen to be present in it. The awareness clearly is of the one peeping through the many and the same is seen to pervade both within and outside - the individual himself as well as the universe.

येन भूतान्यशेषण द्रक्ष्यस्यात्मन्यथो मयि

- Gita : 4/35¹

In the sphere of knowledge the emergence of Samādhi jñāna and this awareness which is even higher than that, is necessary for perfection. This highest knowledge will be known as the Mahā-Ācāitanyā jñāna (महा चैतन्य ज्ञान).

The true form of energy of śakti is volition: In a finite individual it is often defeated but many times it is successful also. With the full manifestation of the supreme energy volition becomes righteous. But this is not possible till one is free from egoism. Before the volition of a person who has attained perfection nothing can stand. And it is for the volition of such a person that it can be said that it is infinite.

Failure is impossible for it. One experiences happiness in the vital. But it is basically an animal pleasure. The pleasure associated with the palate and with sexual - gratification are of this kind. The happiness connected with the heart is of a superior kind and are of different categories. The pleasure one gets by inflicting pain on others, by winning a competition and the pleasure one gets from the removal of someone's suffering - are all of the heart but belong to

1. By which (knowledge) you shall see all elements in the self and in Me (The Lord)

different categories. The happiness born of tenderness of the heart - of paternal love for one's children, the love for one's beloved and the fondness for acts of self-giving are of the highest kind and each relates to the heart. But these do not prescribe its limits for the boundless ocean of happiness is situated beyond these and very tiny drops of it find expression through these tender feelings of the heart.

There is a happiness beyond the heart too. It is the one ensuing from peace, serenity and stability. It is the happiness born of one's awareness of one's self-within its immortality and pervasiveness. It is a serenity which words cannot express. If the language of silence can communicate - it may do so.

But beyond this too there is an inexpressible which possesses the peace and stability, the immortality and pervasiveness of the earlier state but possesses besides the joy of self-love and self-expression coupled with the joy of being placed in the joyous lap of the mother Divine - which is - certainly without bounds. And one instantly feels it is the acme - rather the consummation of Power, Knowledge and Bliss, an experience of self-fulfilment and is a Delight which embraces the entire universe in its radiance : It is an ocean of Infinite paths and probably it was this joyous experience divine which found expression in the following verse of the sage :

आनन्दाद्दयेव खल्विमानि भूतानि जयन्ते । आनन्देन
जातानि जीवन्ति । आनन्द प्रयन्नयिन्न संधिशन्तीति ।

तै० 30 भृगुवल्ली ॥६॥

"From Ananda do these (beings) emerge, by it are they sustained and finally in it do they pass away".

In such a state of perfection the knowledge permeates each one of the activities of the individual, his vibrations and the atoms of his being And likewise the supreme Ânanda too.

And in this perfection only he can remain permanently poised who has attained perfect unity with the Lord in his determinate as well as his indeterminate form. And from the powerful current of oneness with the lord none can escape- neither the heart nor the intellect, the vital or the body of the aspirant. And as he moves forward towards his destination he becomes increasingly aware of a change going on within himself- right from the physical body to the intellect, so that finally when the aspirant reaches the goal of perfect unity his gross body too undergoes a change and with its perfection both-Divine knowledge and Bliss permeate- the gross plane including his physical body too.

2

We now view the problem of spiritual Sādhana from the point of view of cosmic evolution. The same consciousness which was inherent in Prakriti has, in the course of evolution, evolved from a stone to a plant from a plant to an animal and from an animal it now expresses itself in the form of a man. The sole purpose of our spiritual efforts is to carry this evolutionary current forwards so as to attain the supra-human form of existence. We do not have to satisfy ourselves simply by being a good person - a good human being. We can transcend our present state of existence just as we have risen above animality to become a human being. There is no doubt that the same immanent cosmic Energy which is carrying the world - forward - is also forcibly carrying us towards that destination. But we have now awakened from slumber - as it were - and can now ourselves co-operate in this task. The aspirant specially invokes the self-same Energy (Śakti), allows it to work in him with considerable intensity and without any impediments, and does whatever is possible for him to do.

And it by no means is a selfish ideal : Just as efforts

to receive education or to keep one's body strong and healthy is by no means selfish - it simply has to be done, so also is one's effort put in for spiritual development. It simply is like stepping on the path set for one by nature. It is perfectly natural and is just like following the course of one's natural duty - one's dharma. But it by no means is an individual duty. Almost all the acts of an individual tend to influence the society. And so whosoever thinks that whatever he does is exclusively his own doing and for himself alone and does not harm anyone else has an extremely narrow vision. Even if his bad deeds do not directly harm society, firstly, since he is a member of society the extent to which he is bad society too is bad. Secondly by his doings he inadvertently strengthens the forces of evil and thus encourages others to emulate him. Similarly, whoever adopts righteous measures is sure to move forward on the path of divinity. He elevates society too and at the same time activates the cosmic Śakti which is working for the evolution of the super human in a way that its uninterrupted flow is ensured. Besides, others too can emulate him and with greater ease. Thus, unknowingly, he assists in the evolution not only of man, but of all living creatures. It is just like an explorer who even though he explores merely to satisfy his own curiosity, benefits through his explorations other explorers who come after him and even benefits the common man.

Selflessness is the vibrant direction force of spiritual Sādhanā. And so the newly awakened Śakti - the earned divinity of such a person can only be directed towards the good of man - never for his own personal ends. For whatever he had to achieve for himself he has already achieved. Spiritual Sādhanā, therefore, can only be for the good of the individual. It also is for the good of man - nay for all living creatures. The traveller of this path brings divinity closer to each human being

Almost all the Hindu scriptures start with an analysis of the nature of sorrow and speak of the means to rid ourselves of it. To Lord Buddha also the world appeared to be full of suffering and he - somehow - succeeded in finding out the means for putting an end - to it. That one should - through some means or the other - rid oneself of it, is the strongest - the most powerful thought of man and - to this day - we find that spiritual Sādhanā is directed towards the achievement of this single objective. Moksha or freedom from the cycle of birth and death, has been the central strain of our spiritual efforts.

In Âdhyātma Vikās we have seen that suffering is essential for our growth. It persists as long as it is useful and leaves us when it ceases to be so. But often it is believed that the world is a prison-house in which human beings are imprisoned by a cruel monster who inflicts all kinds of sufferings on us. And so we have to somehow effect a release from it. Those of us who desire to look upon the world like this are free to do so. But I have already said earlier that to me it appears to be more like a school, in which we have to be educated. Many students look upon the school too as a prison house and try to run away from it. But the life of such students remains singularly distressing, for as long as they are in school they are unhappy and if they run away from it, then too they are without education and their life is a poignant saga. But on completion of one's lessons in school one surely will on his own-move out of it. Of this there is no doubt. The world then is not full of suffering, our present state has made it so. We react to the world in a particular way and the result of it is sorrow. The same world becomes-gradually-blissful for the aspirant, for as he progresses on the path of Sādhanā his perceptions change. Finally, one who attains perfection sees

the same world as Sat-ċit-ānanda. And in each one of his thoughts, activities and in each one of the infinite atoms he feels the radiant presence of that - alone.

One who has attained perfection, who has attained his oneness with the Supreme, is neither scared of death nor of rebirth. He welcomes death in the same way as he welcomes any other thing: And even if one were to return to the world a thousand times - that would not be frightening to him. Put somewhat differently it can be said that if we were to find even the slightest nervousness in ourselves in the face of death one should know-for certain-that he has not attained the higher state of spiritual progress.

It is better to start with a positive goal in life : The attainment of perfect unity with the Lord and perfect revelation of Sat-ċit-ānanda in ourselves is the only beneficial objective of life. Liberation is a negative ideal. It makes one's perspective narrow, and exit from the world his sole concern. The journey of life becomes distressing and the world appears to be monstrous- always contriving to finish him. One cannot think of the world - a field - for the play and development of his diverse latent powers. There appears to be an unbridgeable chasm between the two worlds- the present and the world beyond. And ignoring this world we desire to build a mansion for ourselves in the world beyond. Those adopting this ideal evidently tend towards passivity which is in a sense natural for them also.

The traveller of the spiritual path is inspired by a very comprehensive ideal. He desires to make life integrally perfect, desires the maximum development of human potentialities and finally desires the attainment of divinity or the superhuman state itself. Full within and full without, full in activity and full in peace or passivity; full in divinity as also in humaneness. Full too in the physical body, the vital, the

heart, the intellect, and full also in the manifestation of the self beyond each one of these. Finally, full in the expression of both-the Indeterminate and the Determinate forms of the supreme.

This multi-facet Fullness is the stringing thread of spiritual sādhanā. For the achievement of this alone does the aspirant step forward on the onward march.



Longing Supreme

"प्रभो ! मेरी अन्तरात्मा में तीव्र उद्वेग पैदा कर दे।

वह कदापि शान्त न हो जब तक मैं तुम्हें पूरी तरह प्राप्त न कर लूं।"

- एक संत

"O Lord ! create an intense yearning in my heart which never may be satisfied till I am able to fully realize you".

-A Saint.

For a long journey preparation is necessary. The same is true for a spiritual journey too. There is no doubt that this longing is an admit card for the same. For without it, it is just not possible to step on the path. And if one decides to do so one is sure to slip down and get badly injured. There is bound to be a negative reaction and one will not like to step on the path-again.

This longing is indicative of one's youth. So when in the course of spiritual evolution one fully matures and is prepared to outgrow the human-category too, then this longing makes its appearance. It is indicative of one's maturity¹ for a specific purpose.

As long as the individual does not collect sufficient experience - on the respective planes of the vital, the heart and the intellect, his self continues to be in a state of slumber. How then can it long for anything ? This longing appears only in one who has attained a sufficient maturity relating to the vital, the heart etc. through experiences of the past lives. And such a one alone is equipped to be a traveller of the path.²

1. Such indications are present elsewhere too specially with reference to one's progeny : The sex-instinct is also indicative of one's maturity in a particular field.
2. One should not be disappointed. For each one of us at one time or the other is bound to reach that state.

In the first instance it comes for a short while and disappears. At this stage the vital etc. too crave for their respective satisfaction. Their violent longings engulf this tender yearning of the self. But with the passage of time as the individual makes perceptible progress the longing grows in intensity and one is compelled to pay attention to it. It keeps him in distress and he does not get peace till he enters the spiritual path. How then is this longing to be created in oneself? This is the prime question before us. For this a certain kind of maturity is needed. If the experiences of one's past lives have not given the required direction to one's consciousness the longing just cannot arise. But if one plunges headlong into the world of experience with a view to quickly collecting as many experiences as are possible then one can expect to reach the desired state fairly soon. For without obtaining experience upto a certain limit and without creating the required awareness in the vital, the heart and the intellect, progress is not possible. Sometimes, those who have not as yet reached this state, influenced by talks of renunciation, or study of books dealing with the subject desire to enter the spiritual path. But their effort is bound to end in failure. A fruit which has not ripened sufficiently on the tree, if plucked and put in the straw for ripening, just does not ripen. It decays instead. Similarly, the yearning for the spirit cannot be created overnight through artificial means.

As long as one does not hunger for the spirit, it would be better if one were to abstain from the path in one's own interest. It will be for his good if he directs his entire energy towards collecting such experiences as interest him most. This will provide him with the required maturity. And with quick, steady steps the journey is also bound to be traversed quickly. Those, however, who sometimes feel its pangs and hunger for it can, of course, intensify it. The mango ripens on the tree and also can ripen if placed in straw but only if

it has sufficiently grown before that. The dates are assisted to ripen early on the tree itself. So can such an individual intensify and strengthen his longing - through specially directed efforts.¹ The most effective device to strengthen it is the company of pious people. In the company of those who possess it in sufficient measure, it is not only bound to awaken but gradually gains in intensity and finally stabilizes. The influence of one is transmitted to the other, for through proximity an awakened soul is sure to ignite the dormant vibrations of the other. The influence, of course, is not perceptible. The more exalted the company the greater will be its impact on the new entrant.

Secondly, assistance can be had from books too. The biographies of saints and noble persons can assist in reinforcing this longing - as no other book can. But while reading such books one should concentrate on the intensity of the emotions with which they are charged and the authenticity of their yearning.² The life-story of Ramakrishna Paramhansa is unique in this respect³ - of this there can be no doubt.

Thirdly, assistance can be had from a reflective study. It has to be carefully done. Otherwise it is bound to just pass over one's head and have very little impact and the aspirant will continue to be just where he happened to be. One has to be firm in one's decision in such a reflective study : One has to be definite about the minimum time one sets apart -

1. One has to distinguish between a true and a false yearning. The individual can understand it himself. But the final decision rests with the expert of the field i.e. the doctor.
2. One should not emulate them - in the sense of copying them or trying to be like them. The course of evolution is different for each one of us and the ideals too.
3. The book recommended here is the one the Preface of which is written by Mahatma Gandhi.

every day - for it and also the amount of reading that has to be done - the limit, in this case, being the maximum one has to cover. For one has to have sufficient time for digesting whatsoever has been read. One should read only as much as can be reflected upon-in the same if not double the time taken for reading it. If one wishes to draw the maximum benefit from this kind of study it is best to utilize the spare time one has - just before retiring to sleep. These thoughts tend to influence one's dormant consciousness, and when the right moment comes can change our lives also.

Fourthly, assistance can come from prayers. Pray to God that he creates in you an intense, authentic longing - a longing which cannot be satisfied with the world or anything of the world. The aspirants pray to God to give them this anguish for it alone carries them to their goal. For, otherwise, one does not know in what jungle of desires one is likely to get entangled, and where and at what point one is likely to lose his way.

An intellect tied to rajas is sure to detain a person on the way. But an authentic longing cannot be detained : it cannot rest till the supreme goal is reached. It is an invaluable asset for the path of Sādhanā. For not only is it the admit card, but it is a steady and vigilant companion too. It is the inspirational force without which the engine cools down and with it too our Sādhanā. And to the extent to which one possesses it one can be said to be an aspirant of great merit.

2

What kind of a longing then must it be? Sometimes it is seen that persons get unbalanced, often insane, when they are seized with the frenzy to renounce the world. They lose their self-control and their food and general behaviour also gets funny and there are many who become absolutely use-

less - both for themselves as well as for the society in which they are placed. The aspirant of the spiritual path never desires such violent emotional upsurges rather he should refrain from it. His yearning has to grow in intensity, but it should not be of such intensity as to make him insane. It should be well under control so that he is able to do his normal work, with composure and with ease. It is usually seen that even an initial upsurge tends to have an unsettling, rather a disintegrating effect, on one's personality. But one who is able to control it is able to endure and assimilate it - in full - without allowing it to gain supremacy over himself. It gradually stabilizes and gains in serenity and poise. It is not a small race which can be covered at one stroke - instantly. It is rather a marathon race so that only he who has considerable strength and starts slowly, initially, is the one who goes ahead of the rest and wins the race. On the contrary, those who start with great speed soon get breathless and are left far behind. The aspirant will have to transform its intensity into peace and serenity so that the more this longing has steadied before the commencement of the journey the more it is likely to benefit in the long run.

Once stability and poise is effected intensity is sure to increase on its own and is useful too. It carries the aspirant forward and with considerable speed too. And since he steps on steady ground there is no danger of his fall. The longing should permeate our entire life. A longing which only occasionally makes its appearance at some particular time or place is not sincere. When, on the contrary, it pushes from the waking level of consciousness to the unconscious depths then alone is it truly authentic and remains forever with us. That is why in moments of peace when we happen to turn our gaze inwards, we find it always-present within in us.

I consider this longing far removed from strong upsurges of feeling. The world is very often deceived by it. For

one comes across persons in whom such upsurges of feeling are often seen and they are seen to pass into states of trance also. Such persons are embodiments of tenderness and humility but at the same time are far removed from authentic yearning. Feelings belong to the heart alone but this longing refers to a plane beyond it; it relates to the self within. It can create feelings but it can also stifle them too. It is also true that the feelings it creates are unique. They display a wonderful self-control. Therefore, whoever experiences such strong upsurges of feelings should direct his entire energy inwards. And it is bound to get transformed into an authentic yearning.

This longing, in truth, is an invocation of the deity. Just as the child longs for the mother so also the Âtmāśakti longs for the Mahāśakti: one's innermost self yearns for the beloved Rama. It cannot be satisfied by any other kind of satisfaction. In fact nothing else pleases it. And it persists - always - both in sleep and in waking state. It alone has the power to direct our energies towards the higher planes for it originates from a plane beyond these - the plane of the self itself. An authentic yearning alone is the quintessence of true renunciation. Without this one may due to some very strong reason or due to bitter experiences of life throttle one's basic interests of life - for a lesser or a greater duration, if he so desires. But such a renunciation is futile. It cannot achieve anything. It is nothing but a disquiet, a dejection arising due to life's harsh experiences; a timidity, and nothing else. It is impotent in carrying us towards divinity. If the energy wrongly spent in condemning the pleasures of life, in hating the world and in running away from it is directed, instead, towards constructive activity and assumes the form of this authentic yearning then alone will the individual benefit and his life become beneficent - both for himself as also for others. So it is not renunciation which is important. What

Appropriate disposition

To develop an appropriate disposition towards Sādhana is the second requirement of spiritual Sādhana.

While pondering over the objective of spiritual Sādhana we have already seen that it was for spiritual progress. Evolution takes place - rather slowly. Accumulation and assimilation take place instantly but not so evolution. The person has not to obtain anything from the outside. He has to radically change himself to transform and sublimate himself; to finally divinise himself. And for this the heart, the intellect and even the physical body have to radically change their respective natures. Then only can one reach the goal of self realization. The aspirant stands on the rungs of a ladder. He has to move upwards : some steps are above him while some others are below him. The aspirant has many propensities which have to be eradicated completely, while some others are to be strengthened. And alongwith it some new ones also are to be born. Just as for the proper growth of a plant the gardener has to do many things for its proper growth the aspirant too has to do many similar things. And this needs sufficient time, possibly the span of a single life-time-may be two or many more. But if it is worth doing it has to be done. How does it matter if it needs even a thousand lives? Once it is decided that it is worth doing why should the energy and time needed for its successful implementation be our concern ? In other words, once it is decided that we have to live for it then we have to place our entire energy and time at its disposal, of course, keeping in mind its propriety.

We have our own scales to determine the value of things. The scales certainly are not in our pockets, they are in our minds. And these are different for different people. For some it is money, for others self-esteem, worldly plea-

asures, knowledge and for some even art. Through these we evaluate our world - its people and events. But the scale with which the aspirant judges the value of things is entirely different. All his evaluations proceed just from one consideration and that is spiritual progress. And there, evidently, is no scale to measure it. For it is above all things. What is to be done ? What is not to be done ? Is measured from this very personal consideration.

The aspirant lives for spiritual progress. Any other kind of living - not useful from this point of view is absolutely useless for him. But by this is not meant that he renounces all worldly activities to devote his entire time to worship, remembrance of God's name and contemplation. But at the same time it is also true that if one were to ask him - even in sleep, what does he live for ? He would promptly reply; for this Sādhanā alone, for its consummation. But by this certainly is not meant that his life would be lop-sided. The ideal of Sādhanā is a lofty one. And the worldly activities are unavoidably included in it; are themselves part of his Sādhanā, and so indispensable for its consummation. For Sādhanā permeates our entire life. And so if some - one were to think that whatever is done as worship during the morning and evening hours, alone is Sādhanā and excludes whatever is done during the day, his perspective is narrow and his disposition certainly is not appropriate. For each one of the acts done with the correct attitude becomes particularly helpful in Sādhanā. Thus our whole life becomes a continuous Sādhanā. How can one achieve perfection in action without performing actions? So the aspirant has to weave his entire life, its multiple activities - renunciation and indulgences, evil and seeming goodness in one single golden thread of Sādhanā. And as long as there is room for even one single thing in one's life that certainly is an impediment in the path of progress. But it is equally true that each one of the diverse experiences

of life are sure to carry him forward on the path.

I have just now said that the aspirant lives only for spiritual progress. He will have to live only for that and never for any other thing - not for wealth, glory, one's near and dear ones, the welfare of man and certainly not for artistic excellence. In that ideal each one of these diverse things has its place but certainly not an exclusive one. It is a vibrant, dynamic and comprehensive ideal of which each one of these can be constituents, but certainly cannot replace it - assuming thereby the status of a sovereign for themselves. This alone is conveyed by the terms "ananyatva" (अनन्यत्व) or non-difference.

The second thing is that the world is a school. It is a field for spiritual development. We do not have to run away from it nor do we have to detest it. To think of running away from the world is to run away from Sādhanā itself, and that would be suicidal. The aspirant has been placed in a particular situation for which he possesses the necessary competence. He can move forward only by solving the problems which are related to it. He will have to understand both himself as well as the situation in which he happens to be placed, before he can make any perceptible progress.

So one neither has to run after the pleasures of life nor has he to be scared of them. He who does so is chased by them like a demon. One has to accept the worldly activities as part of one's Sādhanā and not consider them to be a burden. The body is the base of our Sādhanā : Whoever ignores it, harms himself and none else. The body verily is the field of one's Sādhanā. How then can one ignore it and not ignore Sādhanā itself at the same time?¹

1. All the chapters of 'Ādhyātma Vikās' can be helpful in developing in one the appropriate disposition towards Sādhanā.

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The third requirement of spiritual Sādhanā is confidence in oneself and faith in God.

On who does not have faith in oneself - in one's potentialities of knowledge, power and bliss, cannot be successful in any field. Our powers are not always manifest. It is only when an opportunity comes that these manifest and not till it happens can we be aware of their presence in us. Our faith regulates their manifestation. Just think of a pot full of milk while the owner thinks that it is empty and refuses to tilt it to draw milk out of it. Similarly we have infinite potentiality but we think we are devoid of it. How then will it manifest itself? What can we do? Just tilt your pot. If it has milk you are bound to get it. Just try to use your powers in any specific field. If you have it, it is bound to manifest itself. How can anything be achieved without faith?

Each one of us has faith in something or the other: A gambler has faith in his gambling skill but not in his strength to keep away from it. We have to ponder over the question from the point of view of spiritual Sādhanā. One should have faith in oneself that success in the field of spiritual Sādhanā is possible for him. Such faith is absolutely necessary.

The same Divine consciousness is present in each one of us. The potentialities differ on account of differences in evolution. Faith regulates their manifestation. That consciousness has infinite power. It is the reservoir of infinite strength. Given the time it is bound to manifest itself in each one of us and so in us too. In this way we are all in possession of infinite energy and surely there can be no doubt about this.

In our present state of evolution we are not aware of the capabilities which are dormant in us. For these to manifest

themselves in full, we have to have faith in their presence in us. Those persons who entered the field of spiritual Sādhanā were initially just like anyone of you - full of faults and capabilities and limited by ordinary limitations. They by no means were the privileged creations of God. If they have scaled heights and now are on the top - through their individual efforts, you too can. Efforts can change an individual and can manifest his latent powers. But without faith no effort is possible and if made is not fruitful.

It is natural for one who enters the path of spiritual Sādhanā to meet with failures in the initial stages on every step that is taken. He who does not have the required faith gets uneasy and leaves the path. But one who possesses self-confidence converts his failures into stepping stones for progress and moves forward. And for him his failures will be his guides. His enthusiasm is sure to grow steadily. But one who gets impatient, whose heart is filled with remorse falls down and finally runs away from the path of Sādhanā. One has to avoid it.

We are the children of God. Infinite potentiality is what we have been provided with. Divinity is our assured future and the present conflicts constitute the constructive path of our progress : The aspirant has to develop an undying invincible faith in himself which is not difficult to have - as our convictions grow from what we think and as they grow in strength they constitute stable ground and finally become the guiding force of our life.

But this in itself is not sufficient. Something more is needed. Faith in God and His benign Mahāśakti are the choicest - the most invaluable possessions for the path : We must have faith that God exists. He alone is the supreme existence is the Purushottama, the Mahāśakti who bestows Her Grace on the aspirant, permeates his being and carries

him gently on the spiritual path - just like the mother guides her child.

How then can we have it ? It has already been discussed in "Ādhyātma-Vikās" in the section on Supreme Reality. Experience is the only testimony. Those who have had the experience say so and those who inspire us to have it are the only proof. The intellect also can assist us in understanding it. And the presence of the authentic longing is positively indicative of the possibility of its realization. The intense longing of the self for its beloved - whose embrace alone can satisfy it is also indicative of His presence.

Who is He ? What is He ? Learn to find an answer to this question in the mute, silent language of the longing itself. He alone can know who has experienced Him in the depths. For the present it is enough to know that He exists and is our beloved; is the final destination of all our failures; is the ultimate limit of our aspiration and the perfect consummation of our life - breath of our life and life of our life.

He is of the form of Energy (Śakti). The Mahāśakti is its dynamic upsurge. And one can experience its descent in the form of Śakti as well as Knowledge and Bliss. The aspirant finds it working within him: This Śakti is the regulative principle as well as the inspirational force of life. She is the pervasive Śakti of the universe. She takes care of the aspirant like a mother and divinises him.

The infant who trusts his mother alone can suckle her breast and joyously relax sleeping in her lap. Similarly, the aspirant who trusts her can feel her benign presence and ceases to worry.

These two kinds of faith - faith in oneself and in the Mahāśakti - alone invest us with the needed strength to traverse the path of Sādhanā. Impediments of the way cease

to worry us. The path of Sādhanā becomes clear and easy. One should not forget to equip oneself with this necessary preparation.¹

This double-edged faith- faith in oneself which can turn failures into stepping stones for success and faith in the Lord and his Mahāśakti, not only removes the obstacles coming in the way of Sādhanā; but carries us to success. This faith is essential. Without it one is a pauper. This alone is everything - rather the only precious thing for the aspirant.

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1. In the beginning the aspirant has to think properly. But as one moves forward on the spiritual path these convictions are bound to get transformed into a real live, invaluable experience.

Mahāśakti : The Mother - Divine.

The dynamic aspect of the supreme self - the Purushottama - is called the Mahāśakti.¹ The two are not different. They are the twin aspects of the self same Reality. Is fire different from its heat ? Or sun different from its luminosity ? Fire without heat is not fire. And its heat cannot be thought of to subsist - on its own - without fire. If we eliminate radiance from the sun can it continue to be called a sun? This is known as the relation of non-difference. Similarly, the Lord and His Divine - Śakti also are One.

The idea of separateness is the creation of a gross intellect and is to a considerable extent necessary for comprehension. But the knowledge of Reality belongs to an entirely different realm - a realm beyond it altogether. We know that there is absolutely no difference between Purushottama and His Mahāśakti. The same consciousness when seen in its dynamic aspect possessed of Divine Energy and splendour is for the convenience of the coarse human intellect called the Mahāśakti.

It is a term which signifies the female. The formation of the body takes place in the womb of a female and the upbringing of the child is also her special task and is natural for her too. The motherly instinct makes her competent for the same. The Mahāśakti is for the universe what the mother is for the child. She is Prakṛti also in whom Purushottama implants the seed from which this rich affluent world originates. And it is because of this that she is expressed through a word suggestive of the female. It is a kind of a conviction - rather a thought determined by the limited range of comprehension of the human intellect. But

1. Mahāśakti is a term for cosmic creative energy. It signifies a female reality - Translator's note.

we have to proceed further to the Reality beyond it.

What does the Mahāśakti do ? It is a difficult question. And we can - at best - just suggest an answer to it. The task of creating Prakṛti and the infinity of atoms constituting all the planes - the gross as well as the subtlest of the subtle, are all Her doing. It is Her energy which creates the vast infinity of atoms which in turn create the multiple planes of existence. All manifest creation is possible only after that. This, therefore, is the first task of the Mahāśakti. It appears as life - as Prāna. And it is on account of Her that life is possible in the universe. She is the source - the origin of the entire life in this world. The manas - the heart and the intellect are also forms of Her Energy. And it is the same Energy which assuming this form gives rise to mahat under special conditions. The Mahāśakti is the Mahat - the cosmic mind too from which originates the entire universe. And she is also that which is beyond it - the one in which the entire universe is finally submerged.

The same Mahāśakti is the Śakti of the individual too. She is potentially present in him and is the sole basis of his self-expression on diverse planes. She is the inspirational force of the entire, evolving universe and she regulates it too.

And the multiple energies flowing from the one Infinite Energy carry out diverse functions and activities. We can recognise each one of these different forms and categories. There seems to be no end to their innumerable divisions and sub-divisions. And assuming a multi-facet appearance the same Energy is seen to execute various tasks on each one of the many planes of existence and accordingly is given specific names.

The aspirant has to invoke - in himself-this particular form of the Mahāśakti. He is concerned only with that particular form which presides over the evolution of the

universe, regulates it, and pushes it forward. The child invokes his mother - as a mother only - though she may be wife of someone or a sister or a daughter. She responds to us the way she is invoked : She comes as a wife to the husband and a daughter to the father. In the same way the Mahāśakti is capable of an infinity of responses and responds the way she is invoked by the aspirant.

It is better to call that form of the Mahāśakti which supervises and sustains the cosmic evolution as the motherly one. To provide a form to the individual jīva was entirely Her doing for without Her it would not have been possible. And then passing through various forms of existences till it now reaches the human form - on the path set and supervised by Her. All this evidently has been possible only because of Her competence to direct. Even now it is She and She alone, who is going to carry him forward : she verily is the Mother who has created the consciousness of the individual jīva, nursed it throughout and provided it with the required protection. It is the same - loving, caressing - attitude which shall carry him forward to the goal of self realization. So in future we shall continue to use the term Mahāśakti in the same sense, for this alone will be our sole concern in the following pages. What shall be its utility for spiritual Sādhanā ? This shall now be the point to be taken up in detail - by us.



Spiritual evolution and the Ātma-śakti

In the earlier section it has been stated that the Ātma-Śakti is one of the two forms of expressions (bhāva) of the Mahāśakti. It is also known as the Kundalini-Śakti. And the relation between the individual and his Kundalini-Śakti is the same as that which exists between the Purushottama and His Mahāśakti.¹ If the individual or the Jīva is a part of Purushottama, his Śakti is a part of the Mahāśakti. In fact, the Jīva is an image of Purushottama - the Lord Himself. In the same way our energy is related to the Divine Energy or the Mahāśakti. Of this there cannot be the least doubt. And just as the origin and sustenance of the universe is not possible without the supreme Divine Energy - the Mahāśakti, so too the origin and sustenance of the human body is not possible without the Individual Energy or the Ātma-Śakti.²

Again, just as from the Supreme Divine Energy originate different kinds of energies so also from this individual energy emanate many forms of energies.

In fact, the diverse upsurges or bhāvas of the Mahā-śakti find their manifestations through it alone. And to this extent it can be said that these are its powers for through these the Mahāśakti is seen to unfold itself.³

The regulation of the manifestations of the vital, the

1. As per definition the Mahāśakti is also expressed by the term the Mahā-Kundalini-Śakti.
2. A still born child is without it.
3. It should have been clear by now that different powers operate on different planes of consciousness both of the Jīva or the Individual as well as the cosmic Divine Energy of the Mahāśakti.

heart and the intellect as well as the planes beyond it is also due to it. Again, whatever we are and whatever we do is also entirely due to its latent activity in us. But we are not aware of its presence as we can not see the operating strings of the puppet show. But the way all this takes place is, of course, an interesting subject.

Whatever is seen by the naked eye is not all that is in the world. Behind the gross and closely related to it are the subtler of the subtle bodies belonging to related planes and arranged accordingly. Whatever is perceptible is the gross body constituted by the gross elements i.e. the gross atoms of food particles and so is known as the annamaya-kosha.¹ Behind and subtler than this is the Prānamaya - Kosha. It is constituted of the vital (Prāna) and is a field for its activity. Our earthly life depends on it alone. Subtler than this is the Manomaya - Kosha wherein the activities of the heart and the intellect take place. And beyond it there are other planes too. But for the present this should suffice.

The Prānamaya-Kosha constitutes the basis of the energy of the individual. The Mahāśakti resides - coiled up, at a particular place in it.

Just as in the cells of a battery electric current remains concealed so also in the cells of the Mulādhāra the divine energy (Śakti) of the individual remains imprisoned. It is said that it remains dormant and that all its diverse potentialities relating to diverse planes, too remain enclosed in it. Just as in a wooden casket meant for keeping ointments many small ones - the small in the big, and that in the bigger and that in the still bigger one and finally all are placed in the biggest one, or just as in the Godown of a big shop many things are stored, so also in the Mulādhāra all potentialities - capable

1. Kosha connotes sheath.

of working on diverse planes of consciousness, are potentially present.

The Mulādhāra is the source - the very root of Kundalini - Śakti of an individual. It is situated at the very bottom of the Spinal Cord. And just as a big shop contains separate rooms for the display and sale of various items so also for the manifestation of energy at different planes many centres are also built. They are carefully inter-connected with the Mulādhāra and the flow of energy is ensured by the network of set paths.¹ And a particular kind of energy is directed towards a specific centre which is built for its manifestation. These centres are spread all along the spinal cord - right from the Mulādhāra to the top of the head.

The samādhī - consciousness and the highest consciousness, i.e. Mahā - Āitanya - consciousness² also expresses itself through their respective centres. These centres are constantly active and consciousness flows through them in a circular motion³. And it influences co-eval planes only by initiating vibrations in the atoms of that specific Kosha or sheath. These are called Chakras⁴ and the Kundalini - Śakti keeps on flowing in them. It is natural that these sheaths change along with changes in the intensity and quantum of the flow of the Kundalini-śakti in them. And evidently it is through this flow of energy in these complicated organs that our personality is gradually shaped and finds its progressive manifestation and regulation as well.

It is usually said that the Kundalini - Śakti is dormant in the Mulādhāra. But the statement is not literally true.

1. These paths are known as nerves.
2. Mahā-caitanya is the Divine Consciousness.
3. For this reason they are called Chakras. They are called centres too.
4. In metaphorical language these are called lotuses.

Ordinarily all the centres are constantly active¹, for without it even the ordinary functioning of our system - life itself is not possible.

But just as the lion who can walk a quarter mile in a minute but limps only to two paces a minute can be said to be slumbering so too the Kundalini-śakti is also said to be slumbering. In fact its imperceptible flow continues - always - within us though we are not aware of its presence. For it is so nicely blended with our normal consciousness.

When things are seen from a deeper perspective it becomes clear that our spiritual progress is internally linked up with our Kundalini-śakti as well as the chakras. This extremely slow - almost imperceptible flow of Śakti is present, in the vegetative as well as in the animal kingdom - of course, at the vital plane only. Coming to - man - we find that the manas-the plane of the heart and the intellect - is also activated. And as we move from the savage to the civilized man we find that the centres relating to the intellect and along with it the entire manomaya plane seems to get intensely vibrant. In the animal the prānamaya or the vital alone is specially charged while the lower planes of the manomaya have just an ordinary vibration and the centres of the intellect are in a state of slumber. For there seems to be absolutely no activity in them. But as consciousness tends to develop - in diverse directions - the associate centres open up and with it the related planes too are activated. The aspirant starts getting signals - many a times - in his own life.

In man consciousness is primarily centred in the heart. And since the heart is the source of feelings, it is evident, that the average man is regulated by feelings. As he moves forward in the course of his evolution, the centres of the intellect get proportionately more activated and the intellect

1. Excepting those relating to Super-consciousness.

assumes supremacy over feelings and assumes the responsibility of regulating life.

We have already seen that along with evolution the activity of consciousness has risen to higher planes. And with this there is an emergence of new forms of consciousness and related capabilities. In the course of spiritual evolution too this forward stride has to be continued. The higher planes of Samādhi - consciousness and the supreme Divine consciousness have to manifest. And this is possible only when the related centres are activated. And with it everything will be possible which has been referred to in the chapter relating to Objective of Sādhanā. And so long as a total transformation is not effected the person continues to be just where he was and all external changes remain to be an imposition from the outside - and so lifeless. Evidently, therefore, without a radical change in consciousness progress on the spiritual path is not possible. It is an altogether different matter whether one understands or does not understand whatever has been stated above. And whatever be the course or order of our Sādhanā one thing is definite i.e. that as long as there is no change progress is impossible. This is the reason why aspirants since ages have considered the Âtma-śakti to be an invaluable possession and with a view to keeping its purity have kept its knowledge - a perfect secret.



The evolution of the Âtmaśakti

In the preceeding section we have seen that the two - evolution of the Kundalini-śakti and spiritual evolution, are very closely related. In fact, the two are the twin aspects of the self same reality : one relates to the internal while the other to the external form. To be able to penetrate the mystery of spiritual sādhanā it is necessary to understand fully the process of the evolution of this Kundalini-śakti.

We have earlier said that the prānamaya sheath is the base of the Kundalini-śakti. The energy centres as well as their diverse activities are only to be seen in this Kosha (कोष) and not in the gross body. Alongwith this it must also be known that each one of these centres is not made exclusively of the elements of the prānamaya. In the higher centres of the manomaya plane it is the manomaya which is dominant although the element pertaining to the prānamaya is also present. In fact, there is a close inter-relatedness between them. The grossest of the gross centres are primarily constituted of the prānamaya elements although it would be wrong to say that other elements are totally absent in them. And when we observe the higher centres we find that there is in them the dominance of the subtle and subtler elements while the lower elements remain relatively passive and subordinate to these. These are all, however, inter-connected through the paths in which energy flows.

And since in all the chakras (centres) all elements are present it is evident that these can influence one another. Through sympathetic vibrations these can be activated of themselves to lesser or greater activity¹. Thus can one

1. When two absolutely similar musical instruments are placed closeby and one is made to vibrate, the other also starts vibrating - catching up with the vibrations of the former.

sheath influence another.

How does the Kundalini-śakti ascend? How does the current of consciousness flow from one centre to another centre? When to a certain degree the mulādhāra is activated not only is the prānamaya activated but along with it the compresent, and inter connected subtle elements also start vibrating, of course on a slow note. And because this is the dominant element in the Swādisthāna, this too starts vibrating on account of sympathetic vibrations. These certainly can be felt as coursing within us, of course, slowly - very slowly. This kind of an activity draws forth two kinds of energy - currents one from the Mulādhāra itself and the other from its cosmic - counterpart - from the cosmic Swādhisthāna and is the current of the Mahāsākti Herself: The former enters into the spinal cord directly from below - and the other comes from outside the body and penetrates directly into the navel of the chakra. It appears as if the positive and the negative currents of electricity have entered and the flow of electricity commences. This enhances the intensity of the existing vibrations and the chakra starts transmitting the energy received by it from both quarters i.e. from the inside as well as from the outside. And because of this excessive flow of energy the activated plane gets all the more intensely charged. Thus by their respective vibrations both - the activated Kosha as well as the Chakra, influence each other and make them intensely active. And along with this increase in their vibrations the flow of the twin currents, i.e. of the Kundalini - śakti as well as the Mahāśakti increases activating thereby the Chakra too. This multi-facet mutual interaction¹ continues to increase the vibrational activity - both of the Chakra as well as the Koshas or the planes. And this increased vibra-

1. The fly wheel of an engine is needed to start the engine. But once it starts moving it, in turn, acquires a speed of its own. The same thing can be seen here to.

tional activity affects the other subtler elements compresent in the Chakra, which with the passage of time, due to sympathetic vibrations, initiate activity in the higher centre situated just above it. This process continues¹ and is known as the ascent of the Kundalini-Śakti.

Along with this, simultaneously, is to be seen another kind of activity going on within us. As the higher centre gets increasingly charged and so intensely active, it tries to activate the less subtle elements within the Chakra itself. And this activated element in the higher Chakra, through sympathetic vibrations, tends to influence the dominant element of the lower Chakra. Not only that, with a view to maintaining equilibrium between the centres special currents of the higher centres flow towards the lower centres and initiate changes in these.

These changes are of two kinds : Firstly, there is an increase in the quantum of the normal vibrations in the lower centre. Secondly, the elements constituting this centre get gradually purified. And with the passage of time the Kosha too gets purified. Besides, vibrations of similar elements present in the higher centre also tend to get purified due to the inflow of current of a superior quality in it. That is the reason why they are in a position to effect a change in the lower centres. This second kind of activity is known as descent. It is impossible-categorically, to say that the said change in the lower centre is effected simply by the inflowing current of the Mahāśakti coming from the outside. All that can be said of it is that the change in the lower centre is effected by an entirely new current created by the cumulative effect of the inflowing current of the Mahāśakti coming from

1. It is perfectly clear that as the Śakti gets increasingly active in the higher centres the quantum of its flow is bound to increase in the lower centres and the Mulādhāra will get automatically - more awakened and so more powerful.

the outside and those in the activated chakra,¹ itself.

On account of this two-fold influence the growth of the Kundalini-Śakti is just like the growth of any organic substance. The growth of a plant or that of a child is not simply a uni-dimensional increase. The tree does not grow simply upwards - at the top; nor does the child grow only in height. Each one of the many organs of the two grow simultaneously. In a tree the branches, the leaves and the root - all grow along with the height. And so too is the case with the child. He does not simply gain in height. He gets fat too. His thighs, arms and chest - all gain in volume. Similarly, when the Kundalini-Śakti increases its vibrational - activity in the higher centres the lower centres are also proportionately benefitted. And at every stage of one's evolution the integral character of one's unity is always preserved. Each one of the movements taken towards ascent is for the development of this integral unity and in it, therefore, lies concealed the power to effect it also. The two energies try to hold each other in balance.

The same thing is seen in the outer forms of evolution, i.e. in the changes one comes across in the developing consciousness itself. Each and every new form of consciousness originates only when the older form is radically changed and a new equilibrium is restored.² When, for instance, there is a rise of the human intellect, man's heart is not that of an animal nor are his instincts as brutish. If it were not so the imbalance would naturally result in a disintegration of his personality. This two-fold process is not confined simply to

1. It can be called its reflex action. It is similar to a magnet which when rotated electric currents start flowing.
2. For example when we study new things these do not remain separate. It exerts its influence on all the knowledge - earlier acquired by us. So there is a new synthesis effected every moment of our life.

the lower centre situated immediately below the higher. Otherwise a total unity or integration would not have been possible. Instead, each one of the higher centres influences all the lower centres as well as all the related lower planes too. And this means that alongwith the development of the Kundalini-Śakti the body as well as the Prānic-śakti too have to develop both in strength as well as in intensity. But what we see is just the opposite: The animal is more powerful than man in vitality and the uncivilized man more powerful than the civilized one.

This question leads us to another kind of transformation. Each one of the higher centres is subtler than the lower one. And because of this fact when it gets considerably activated it assumes a central position. As a result, thereof, its activity i.e. its vibrational activity, and the Kosha related to it all assume an ascendancy over others. And so the other lower centres have to unavoidably, get linked up with it. Put differently, all the lower centres will have to submit to its discipline and as far as possible all the tendencies - the propensities of the lower planes, will have to be in consonance with its requirements. But this is possible only when in due course of time evolution approximates to the ideal of perfection i.e. perfect integration. In the initial stages, however, mutual conflict persists. It is only when the highest centre is fully activated that perfect discipline can be established. But of one thing one can be sure, that since it is this centre which leads the rest, it naturally occupies a central place. So others have to necessarily submit to it and with this their energy is also bound to get depleted¹ in strength.

The same is true of spiritual evolution too. For on

1. Supposing there are three persons in an office and a fourth one is placed on the top, the position of the rest is automatically diluted.

account of the primacy of the intellect feelings cease to be so intensely violent, although they are seen to be more powerful and purer than what they used to be before. But when one is situated on the plane of Samādhi - consciousness the intellect meets with the same fate.

In the course of spiritual evolution we have observed that the following activities take place :

1. At the appropriate time the activation of the higher centre - through sympathetic vibrations.
2. The ascent of Śakti from the Mulādhāra to the higher Chakra and the descent of the Mahāśakti from the corresponding cosmic Chakra to the Mulādhāra.
3. An expansion of the Kundalini-Śakti in the Chakra and an increase in its vibrational activity on account of the multi-facet mutual action and reaction.
4. Through the descent of multiple currents of the Kundalini-Śakti - from the higher to the lower centres there is effected a coordination amongst the centres, also their transformation and sublimation and finally the creation of a new base. ¹

2

Evolution has progressed so far entirely due to the inner drive of the Mahāśakti. And the way it has reached the present state, without any conscious effort on our part, it, surely can further proceed to higher states also. And so just as, with the passage of time, human consciousness has evolved after the appearance of the animal consciousness, so too at a particular point in time the supra-human consciousness, i.e. the Samādhi - consciousness and the Divine consciousness, is bound to make its appearance in the entire

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| 1. Identical things can be seen to apply to spiritual evolution on the cosmic plane. |
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human race. And just as, in the course of evolution, the flowing current of the Supreme Spiritual energy has activated the centres of the heart and the intellect so will it activate the higher centres of Samādhi - consciousness and the Divine consciousness in someone. This would be the doing of the Mahāśakti Herself and certainly will be achieved. Nothing can stand in its way.

But evolution is a very slow process. One is placed in a certain situation and the problems connected with it compel him to act in a particular way. He acts and there is a reaction to it from the circumstances, in which he happens to be placed. Both have an impact on his consciousness as well as on the dormant Kundalini-Śakti. And on account of these actions and reactions there begins a slow - extremely feeble vibrations in the Koshas as well as in the Chakras. And in the course of ages will it be in a position to take a significant step forward. How very tardy and cumbersome this entire process is? The individual up till now had not awakened. He could not have thought of means or devices of moving forward and so could not have lent his co-operation. With the rise of human consciousness man has now developed this ability to co-operate. We have to see how it can be done? How can one co-operate? But before we understand this it is necessary that we understand some other related things also. We have to rightly understand the nature of the highest state to be reached by us - the Kundalin- Śakti in the course of its evolution.

In the earlier section we have tried to understand the process by which the Kundalini - Śakti evolves. And from the same it is also evident that its fully developed state should be as follows :

1. All the Chakras - from the lowest to the highest should be perfectly evolved.

2. The Sahastrār or the highest Chakra will have an absolute supremacy over all the centres and so all the lower centres will be linked up with it, nay get integrated through the descending current of the highest centre.
3. All the Chakras and the planes will have reached the highest state of evolution.
4. In the entire system of chakras - right from the Mulādhāra to the Sahastrār, such a wonderful equilibrium of forces will be effected that there will remain no scope for any kind of change in it. In fact, such a perfectly stable integration of the entire network of Chakras and planes is possible, i.e. can most certainly be achieved by us.
5. One should also know that the directing force of cosmic evolution is Maha-śakti herself. And she continues to cast her spell - always - on the Kundalin- Śakti - drawing her towards herself. The child may be anywhere in any part of the country, but the love of the mother continues to attract him towards her. Just as when a neutral substance (one in which electricity charges do not appear) is rubbed against another, there is created instantly in both separately positive and negative charges. And these tend to mutually attract one another which ends only when the two unite, or just as the twin poles of a magnet - the positive and the negative - continue to attract each other until the two get united, so too does the Mahāśakti continue to attract the Kundalini - Śakti and the Kundalini - Śakti attracts the Mahāśakti towards itself.¹ In the initial stages of spiritual evolution the attraction of the Kundalini Śakti is almost negligible, for it is dormant. It should therefore be clear that the

1. The stone becomes, in course of time, a plant, the plant an animal, the animal a man, man a spirit and finally the spirit a deity.

consummation of spiritual evolution can only take place when there is perfect union between the two- the Mahāśakti and the Ātmā-śakti, and also perfect equilibrium between the two forces - the individual and the cosmic. Hence there has to be perfect union between the two the Mahāśakti and the Ātmā-śakti, which comes to the same thing as saying that there should be a perfect equilibrium of the two forces too.

And when we consider the question from an external point of view we find that in their counterparts the same five characteristics emerge at the highest point of spiritual evolution :

- (1) The development of individual consciousness at all planes. And because all the centres associated with Knowledge and action are intimately related when these get perfectly evolved there is bound to be a maximum increase in one's ability to acquire Knowledge.
- (2) The Divine-consciousness permeates all planes and links them into a unity. The body, the vital and the mind come under its discipline and work only for it. All personal interests and satisfaction get lost in the one supreme satisfaction i.e. the fulfilment of the Divine will.
- (3) Not only does the consciousness develop, all the planes get elevated and sanctified. There is, therefore, effected, simultaneously, a purification of all the interconnected elements in the integral unity.
- (4) There is no conflict of any kind in one's personality. Harmony and serenity or poise remain supreme.
- (5) There remains absolutely no difference between the two- the Divine consciousness and the individual con-

consciousness. The individual volition coalesces with the Divine-volition. The same can also be expressed by saying that the individual volition gets absolutely lost or submerged in it. With it the Divine consciousness, which infests itself in the Sahastrār- becomes the normal consciousness of the individual. And it provides the basis for all human activity. No desire is left in that state and the individual finds himself blessed. It is a state of perfect unity with Purushottama - the Lord. But even when the individual consciousness is totally immersed in Him, his separate existence continues, for then the individual lives as an integral constituent of the Absolute Unity.



Paths for the evolution of the Ātmā-Śakti.

Ascent

For the development of the Ātma-śakti the paths of spiritual sādhanā can be divided into two divisions. The path in which stress is laid on the ascension of the developing Ātma-śakti; in which an effort is made to awaken the dormant śakti in the Mulādhāra or in any of the other centres, to carry it upwards towards the Sahastrār and to get it immersed therein-either through individual volition¹ or through any other means, is known as the path of ascent. In this path attention is centred chiefly on somehow raising the Kundalini-Śakti upto Sahastrār and to get it stabilized there-either permanently or atleast for sometime. Although it is not true to say that all aspirants make a conscious effort for the ascension of the Śakti, but if the efforts adopted by them lead finally to such a result then these should be considered to be paths of ascent. A stress on one's personal effort is the dominant note of this Sādhanā. And a fairly high degree of continence is needed before the aspirant can enter the path.

The awakening of the dormant Ātma-śakti is the first principal activity of this path. In the course of our study of the evolution of the Ātma-śakti we have already seen that even in an ordinary individual the energy currents continue to flow in some of the lower centres, albeit slowly, very slowly. But these are only fragmented, feeble, very partial manifestations of the main stream. This main stream is very powerful and relates directly to the Sahastrār and if there be no obstacles on the way it runs with an unimaginable speed towards the Sahastrār just as an electric current runs towards

1. Hath yoga, Laya yoga (Sabda yoga) Raja yoga, Jñāna yoga and Vishudha Karma yoga - all are included in this path. Freemasons, and theosophists also belong to this path.

the other current. And as it rushes towards the Sahastrār it rocks-terribly, all the intermediate centres and planes. This fact alone is the true edifice of the path of ascent.

For the aspirant, therefore, the following things are necessary.

1. Before the awakening of the Kundalini-Śakti a high degree of continence is absolutely necessary. For it is through continence that the centres and the sheaths belonging to the vital and the psychic realms get purified. And the awakened energy activates these Koshas and Chakras to such an extent that the residual propensities get intensely charged. If however the lower propensities of anger and sex get activated then through the awakening of the dormant Śakti these become so violent that it will be difficult to control them; and there is every danger of a fall for the person and sometimes even of a disintegration of one's entire personality. This is the reason why there are long preparatory courses for the aspirant. A long stay with the Guru for his service probably is meant only for stabilising continence in the aspirant.
2. The body - especially the nervous system, has to be kept very fit so that it is possible for one to endure the impact of the mounting pressure arising from the flow of ascending Śakti. This pressure is essentially due to the increase in the velocity of the flow as well as the obstructions which block it. So the second requirement is to keep the body healthy and disease-free by regulated diet, rest, prāṇayāma etc. A premature and an unnatural awakening of this dormant energy can lead to death and insanity is not an uncommon thing.

1. Just as a child separated from his mother for a long duration runs towards her.

3. A strong feeling of renunciation is necessary. The ascension of the Kundalini-Śakti often almost effortlessly, brings many kinds of Siddhis or Special Powers to the aspirant from which he needs to be protected. Continnence, is therefore, important. Besides, it constitutes the inner strength of one's volition - its motivating force, its power to elevate and sustain the aspirant. Finally, the dormant personal tendencies can also be controlled through it. Any kind of self - control effected through thought can never be permanent. Because thought does not have the power to radically change - either the vital or the psychic realm.
4. If there is any quarter from which help can be received it is from one's Guru - one's spiritual guide. But he will be able to assist him only to the extent to which the aspirant has reverence for him and is meek and humble before him. And in that case it is possible that through his volitional force he gives him the required forward push.

We shall now have to consider the possibility of this path from the point of view of the limits of an individual's evolution, i.e. with respect to the heights his evolving Śakti can reach.

An effort to effect a forced awakening of the Kundalini-Śakti through any of the many devices is bound to end up in an arrest of its serene development. If one were to forcibly try to bloom a flower out of a tender bud it would certainly affect its natural beauty. There is every possibility that the flow of the current from the higher to the lower centres may not get sufficient time for cleaning the centres and the associate sheaths of their impurities. As a result of which the mutual harmony of centres is bound to be disturbed. And proper co-ordination which confers serenity on one's personality is then just not possible.

A strong sense of renunciation too brings about complications in one's personality. All other values of life are ruthlessly extirpated. As a result of which there is neither any equation nor organisation in life.

A strong desire to direct one's Kundalini-Śakti towards the Sahastrār or a longing to realize the state of Nirvikalpa-Samādhi builds up an artificial pressure within the aspirant. And an attempt to forcibly stabilize one's Kundalini-Śakti in the Sahastrār results in a disintegration of the personality. And because the lower centres are not sufficiently evolved it slides, again and again, towards the lower centres. Just as it is not possible to build a big house on sand and keep it there for long, similarly the Kundalini-Śakti cannot stay in the Sahastrār for long in this path of Sādhana. This is the reason why in the path of ascent there is always the danger of a fall. It is just like an army which continues to indiscreetly move forward, like the Japanese army, without ensuring full protection of the conquered territories it leaves behind. A defeat in such a case is perfectly natural.

Perfection is only possible when the Kundalini-Śakti finds its natural home in the Sahastrār. And this is not possible till even the slightest trace of imperfection is left in the evolution of the lower centres. This imperfection persists like a burden on it and so it keeps on sliding to the lower centres. Looks like it shall have no peace till the work is done; for untill it is done it does not consider it proper to stay in the Sahastrār. And it is natural too. But how very difficult is this condition for the aspirant of this path i.e. the path of ascent. ? And even if one could arrest the sliding of the Śakti towards the lower centres through an exercise of one's volition it would not be a desirable state, for the Sahastrār is very closely related to the other centres. So without their perfect development its own perfect development is not

possible. The work can be complete only when not only its currents flow towards the lower centres but currents from the lower centres also can, with equal ease, flow towards it. Besides, for this kind of a forced stay in the Sahastrār price has to be paid: One will have to sever his ties with all the other planes i.e. planes of knowledge and of activity. And the experience at that plane will only be of the One Indescribable Reality which is beyond thought and speech. Put differently, it would be an experience of a complete submergence of the Manomaya. How and in what sense shall such an experience be rewarding, and what shall be its value? is so obvious and so not necessary for us to speak of it.

It is very difficult to achieve perfection on this path. It is for this reason that several devices are used by the aspirants to protect them from the dangers which beset the path. To awaken the dormant energy only in one specific centre at a time is one of the devices commonly used in many paths of Sādhanā¹ Accordingly, there are specific forms of initiations. The Kundalini-Śakti is awakened gently - very gently - so that the body comes to acquire the strength to endure its impact and evolution also proceeds along with it gradually.

For protecting the aspirants from these dangers the Guru is given verily the position of the Lord Himself and the disciple has to be under his perfect control. It is the Guru who initiates the disciple by a gentle awakening of the Kundalini-Śakti either through a mantra or even independently of it. In all the difficulties it is the Guru who protects him. Without such an invincible faith the Guru may feel helpless and may not be in a position to help him.²

1. The Free - masons do it.

2. Although it is difficult to achieve this state of perfect evolution in this path of Sādhanā, it cannot be said to be impossible.

Descent

The other path and diametrically opposed to it is the path of descent. The term literally means 'coming down'. We have already seen that in the process relating to the evolution of the Âtma-šakti the energy current not only flows upwards, i.e. from the lower to the higher centres, but it also moves downwards i.e. from the higher to the lower centres. This descent or downward movement is only possible when the energy current flows from a cosmic centre towards the aspirant. It appears as if somewhere from the outside world - energy current from some cosmic centre enters into the lower centres, purifies them and assists them in their evolution too. This descent takes place from all the centres including the Sahastrār. And since it is placed at the top the flow of the current from it towards the lower centres is bound to influence all of them.

This downward flow of the current has three functions :-

1. The evolution of the lower centres and increase in their vibrational activity¹.
2. Purification of the lower centres and along with it purification of the associated sheaths.
3. Their organisation : The current unifies all the lower centres and the related planes, so that these function as an organized unity. We have already seen that the Mahāšakti is the directing, the inspirational force behind the evolution of the Kundalini-Šakti. Its magnetic force draws it out of its slumber and continues to gradually develop it. Not only that, the evolving Âtma-šakti also exercises its magnetic spell over the Mahāšakti and continues to draw it towards itself.² And both these forces gradually coming close to one another

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. There can be no doubt that planes also get increasingly activated.2. Like the gravitational force. |
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finally attain an equilibrium in the Sahastrār. These facts constitute the edifice of the path of descent.

In this path the momentum of the activity of the Mahāśakti and the Ātmā-śakti is gradually increased and its flow is gradually inducted in the Sahastrār. The cosmic current will send its currents to all the lower centres and get busy in the task of developing, sublimating and organising the multiple centres into an organic unity. Obviously, therefore, once the flow of the current of the Mahāśakti is initiated with a considerable velocity, it will, of itself, complete the task of effecting finally a state of inner equilibrium in the aspirant. And along with it will start flowing, on their own, currents from the lower centres to the higher centres.

The most specific requirements of the path are :

1. Faith in the Mahāśakti : It is impossible to derive any benefits without it.
2. Longing for the mother : The mother cannot respond without it. The more intense, authentic and serene will the longing be equally intense, stable and sustained will Her response be.
3. Surrender : If the aspirant does not permit the Divine mother to operate in him, will not permit the flow of its currents towards the lower centres to work for their evolution, how then will it be possible for him to take the forward-step in evolution ?

We shall have to study the path from the twin aspects of the process of evolution i.e. of the evolution of the Ātmā-śakti and its final consummation in a state of perfection.

1. It is a very natural path for in it evolution takes place simply by an increase in the momentum of the flow of that Primal Force (Śakti) which is the directing principle of the entire cosmic-evolution.

2. This path is free from any kind of danger to the body for in it not only the awakening of the dormant, individual śakti, but its entire development rests with the Mahāśakti. She is the infinite in knowledge and is also a highly beneficent Mother. And because the process of descent continues unbroken and most naturally too, the equilibrium of the centres is not disturbed; there is no fear of a disintegration of personality and serenity and poise continue to grow steadily.
3. There is no danger of a fall in this path. And because of the initiation of the flow of the Mahāśakti in the Sahastrār and the evolutionary process proceeding in the most natural way i.e. the higher centres retaining their relative superiority over the lower centres, the lower propensities do not mislead the individual carrying him into undesirable channels.¹
4. Furthermore, because the activity of the Mahāśakti is very powerful, therefore, according to its appropriateness, evolution is bound to gain in momentum much more than what it would have been by the simple will of an individual.
5. And because progress is absolutely normal in this path one is sure to obtain - in the most natural way, the final state of evolution too.²

*

1. What it implies is that the vital cannot be more powerful than the psychical etc. In the same way one should understand the mutual relatedness of other centres.
2. The above is just an outline of the evolution of the dormant individual śakti. In truth the complexities seem to be endless.

Our path of Sādhanā

The path has been divided into three divisions

1. The Innermost - Âbhyantrika
2. The Inner - Ântarika
3. The Outer - Vāhya

Just as the individual consists of the self, manas (Intellect - heart) and the body (vital-body) so too are the above three from the point of view of Sādhanā.

And just as ignoring any one of these is fatal from the point of view of his complete manifestation, so too would it be fatal to ignore either the self, the manas or the body for success in Sādhanā.

- Sādhanā pertaining to the Innermost realm.

: Âbhyantrika Sādhanā

Mantra-Śakti and its utility

Mantra is the subject of a very deep study. An ordinary person cannot distinguish between an ordinary word and a mantra. Both alike are aggregates of words. That a mantra is a specifically charged aggregate of words can only be known after one has had a first hand experience through its successful use. But as far as the flight of the understanding is concerned we can certainly comprehend how it comes to acquire a special power and becomes specially useful to us for the purpose of Sādhanā.

What after all is word ? The experience of the specific changes initiated by the vibrations of the atoms of a particular medium is sabda or word : Whenever two objects coming close collide, the atoms of the air start vibrating with a certain intensity and assuming the form of a wave these strike the eardrum. This vibrational effect creates in us an experience of what is called a word or sabda, of course, these vibrations can be carried through other mediums like earth etc. also.

I would again like to ask: What after all is a word ? Is it just the vibration of the atoms of a particular medium ? Certainly not. This is just the essential form in which it can be expressed, and experienced, on the gross plane. Truly speaking it is an event-a phenomenon accessible to us through our inner experience exactly as our gross body is a necessary means of our self-expression on the gross plane. And, just as behind the gross-body resides the vital¹, also behind the

1. Like any other division this too rests on the key principle governing a specific category. In fact, there is everywhere in nature an unbroken continuity. And so in all cases like the colours of the spectrum, in the world of created beings and in other such things it is difficult to say where one category ends and the other begins.

vital resides the psychic body and behind it the self. The two - the vital and the psychic, are the essential means through which the self manifests itself on the two planes, and just as the atomic vibrations of the gross plane are the indispensable means for the expression of Sabda (word) on the gross plane so too the atoms of the vital and the psychic planes are the respective means for the expression of Sabda on these two subtle planes. Beyond these Sabda is unmanifest.

And because these multiple forms of expressions have no significance without the underlying reality seeking expression through them and since the two are very intimately related, the individual can be adequately conveyed only through these diverse manifestations taken collectively along with the self as an integral unity. Similarly, word (Sabda) can be adequately represented only as a totality of the diverse expressions on the multiple planes - right from its mute, unmanifest to the gross manifest forms.

But simply by presenting a few instances the existence of word (Sabda) on the vital and the psychic planes cannot be proved. For this we will have to reflect on its nature and also will have to enter the field of experience too. We have to first understand that the vital and the psychic dimensions of all words are not always vibrant just as the vital and the psychic planes of all forms of existents are not always perceptible.¹ In the inanimate substances such as stones etc. even the vital activity is seen to be absent and in plants and trees despite vital activity the psychic activity, i.e. the activity of the heart and the intellect, is seen to be totally absent. The same is true of words also.

If one were to carefully observe the activity involved in

1. In fact, no existence is without life. The terms jîva and ajîva have a special import. The term 'bhuta' is here used for it can cover all forms of existents.

the uttering of words it will be clearly seen that it involves the activity of the navel which is the centre of the vital and so unavoidably necessary. On the other hand, we find that the hearing of words too is similarly linked up with the vital and so brings about a perceptible change in it - so much so that sometimes we are thrilled. Music is seen to influence - particularly, through the vital. People have investigated and found that often it can cure many kinds of diseases. But this is possible only if it can influence the vital sheaths of our system. Diseases are seen commonly to thrive on the support of the vital, and so it is only by transmuting itself into the vital that music can influence the vital plane. It can, therefore, be clearly seen that words have a vital dimension too.

Feelings and thoughts primarily belong to the psychic plane. These can be conveyed through words and so through words we can understand the thoughts and feelings of others. This is indicative of the fact that words contain specific vibrations which can directly influence us on the psychic plane. And since the impact of vibrations can only be felt on the same plane, it can be said that words have psychical vibrations i.e. words have a psychical dimension too.

We have seen that words have a gross, a vital and a psychical dimension too. The same truth has been expressed by ancient grammarians when they speak of four forms of speech. These are Baikharî, Madhyamā, Pashyantî and Parā. The Baikharî (बै खारी) is gross, Madhyamā (मध्यमा) is the vital and Pashyantî is indicative of the psychical. Beyond this is the unmanifest and it is said to be Parā - literally signifying - the beyond. Baikharî implies the ordinary, i.e. the spoken language, Madhyamā is the middle one. They have not said anything of the Parā. Like the Brahman of Vedanta they have described it as the inexpressible. So since the second is placed in the middle of the remaining

three it is known as Madhyamā or the middle one. The term Pashyantī (पश्यन्ति) conveys the idea of seeing. For at the psychic plane speech expresses itself through colours and these can be seen. Speech, therefore, becomes visible.¹ Beyond this even colours are not to be seen. In fact, it is the same speech i.e. the Parā which expresses itself in the mode of Pashyantī through colours.

But how is it possible that all words necessarily possess vibrations relating to all planes? How can words originating from the collision of physical objects possess charges of the vital and the psychical planes? At best their impact could be felt at the vital plane and that too only - indirectly, because of the vicinity of the gross plane to the vital. A direct impact is only possible when words themselves possess those specific vibrations. And words can possess the subtle vibrations of the vital and the psychical only when these originate from a medium which possesses them. Evidently, therefore, human words alone can possess all of the said vibrations.²

From this it is also clear that we always try to influence the vital and the psychic planes of other persons as well as our own - through words. And if we so desire we can influence them in special ways too. This fact then is the first - the primary base of the science of mantras.

1. Of the vedic hymns it is said that they were directly perceived. This is possible only at the psychic or the manomaya level - in the speech known as Pashyantī-planes beyond the psychical also move outside the realm of the visible.
2. The sound produced by the drum beaters or others of the kind makes our hairs stand on ends and some rocks our system - rather badly. The subtler vibrations of the musical instrument like Sitar sometimes do leave their impression on the psychic too. But they do so - not directly but only indirectly, due to the close proximity of the sheaths.

At the psychic (Manomaya) Astral plane words are full of thoughts. In fact, their very essence is thought. It has a shape and a reality independent of the person from whom they originate : Just as the bubbles originating from soapy water fly away - independently of it, or just as the tables and chairs produced by a carpenter exist independently of him, so too thoughts generated by a particular mind continue to preserve their particular existence. As for the duration for which thought can continue to exist independently of the person who generated it, evidently depends on the potency with which it has come into being and the strength of the supervening thoughts which try to wash off its impact.

So on the psychic plane a word is nothing but thought. And becomes of its potential¹ strength it works exactly as a live person works. If we have love for some one and desire to help him our words assuming lovely forms will dash off - unawares - to him and encourage him. But it is to be remembered that in the entire process thought alone is important and not the lovely form.

We have the power to charge our thoughts - the way we like and take any kind of work we wish to take from them. Words and thoughts are closely related. On the gross plane its regulation and expression takes place only through gross words. This is the second base of the science of mantras.

A specifically charged thought then is the spirit of a mantra. It is expressed through an aggregate of words on the gross plane. Both are intimately related.

2

He whose spiritual energy is transmitted through the

1. This is because of the consciousness laden force or energy behind it. And this is possible due to the fact that it is the creation of a human individual - who himself is a conscious being.

mantra is known as the deity of the mantra. The influence of a particular mantra depends basically on the deity of the mantra and the quality of the volitional force concealed therein. This is the reason why there are all kinds of mantras and their respective impact too is so different : Right from the mārana (मारण) and Sammohan (सम्मोहन) mantras to those effecting individual good (आत्म कल्याण) stretches its vast realm. And just as one can influence the spirits residing in the gross regions (lokas) - through the mantras, so too can one influence the spirits residing in the subtle regions as well as the elemental essences connected therewith. In the vedic times through these mantras the divine forces were also invoked.

Presently, we have to find out how this mantra-śakti can be used for the purposes of spiritual evolution.¹ If we can

1. The use of mantra-śakti for spiritual evolution has been in vogue since times immemorial and is prevalent even now. There hardly exists a path which does not utilize the mantra-śakti. In the path of Ascent for the awakening of the dormant energy; for the activation of the multiple centres and finally for one's evolution - mantra is used. The followers of the Laya-yoga (Sabda yoga) for the awakening of the sabda, which is possible only with the awakening of the dormant Kundalini-śakti, have been using mantras and continue to use it even now. For protection from evil forces too the mantras are used in spiritual Sādhanā.

Whether any one has used the path of Descent-till now is difficult to say. Followers of the path of Bhakti try to obtain the Lords Grace through the mantra. There is no doubt of the fact that praise of Hari's name has been sung by them profusely. The main current of the path of ascent has influenced them to such an extent that it is difficult to say whether the Divine consciousness has been invoked or not. The saints of the Medieval period - specially the ones which belong to the tradition originating from Shri Ramananda to

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get such a mantra which could initiate the flow of the Mahāśakti in us then the spiritual progress of a person could be specially accelerated. For it is only through a mantra that there can be a descent of the Mahāśakti and it is through Her activity alone that the individual continues to make progress till such time as the evolution reaches its acme and there is established a perfect equilibrium between the two forces - that of the individual and the Mahāśakti. The use of such a mantra then is the basic secret of spiritual practice. We shall therefore have to discuss the way to obtain and practice such an effective mantra.

A mantra created by a person who has attained unity with the Mahāśakti alone has the competence to direct Her flow towards the aspirant and so he alone who enjoys Her unbounded Grace is competent to do this work.

The aspirant cannot on his own create a mantra for himself. For his mantra will just be a projection of his present state and so cannot direct the flow of the Mahāśakti towards himself. And if a mantra cannot do it then for our purposes it is absolutely useless, is merely an entirely impotent aggregate of words.

which belong Shri Kabir and which later on developed in many sects and sub-sects - and the support extended to it by the Sikh Gurus Shri Nanak etc. and their strain of surrender, testify considerably to the possibility that a central place was assigned in their Sādhanā to the Mahāśakti; and that they were the followers of the path of descent: and that this task was achieved through the mantras. Further, the importance assigned to (outer) renunciation in their path of sādhanā also testifies to this fact.

It should not be surprising then if in the Bhakti-cult there has always been a descent of the Mahāśakti through the chanting of God's name which functioned as mantra in their path of sādhanā.

So for the creation of this innermost device a person is needed who has the required competence to generate the flow of the Mahāśakti. If he possesses the required competence then only he can provide us with the mantra. If there is no flow of the Mahāśakti in him or if it is there but does not possess the required ability to initiate its flow in another through a mantra then it is difficult to benefit from this most useful innermost device. It certainly is a difficult problem to find and locate such a person. If anyone could succeed in doing it, it could only be by the innermost self of an aspirant, gifted with an intense longing for the supreme and charged with a passionate commitment for the goal. Nothing else could do it. With this basic requirement the other factor worth reckoning is time and often with this some supernatural forces by creating favourable co-incidences tend to assist us.

In whatever has been stated earlier transmission of the mantra has been accepted as a fact beyond doubt. But we have something more to know about it. We already have seen that at the psychic plane mantra is a specifically charged thought-entity and possesses the ability to function like a conscious individual. And the person with whom - due to vibrational harmony, the mantra is associated, continues to wield power over it and so regulate it. In the transmission of the mantra - a vibrant copy of the mantra which is a transmitted thought-entity, gets linked up with the aspirant who is situated at the receiving end. That new copy of the mantra possesses all the power and competence of the original mantra in possession by the Guru, but only in the form of a possibility. Through its repetition (Jap) the mantra gets activated, gains in momentum and with time the possibility gets translated into an actuality.

Two things are important in initiation : the volitional force of the person who transmits the mantra and the receptivity of the aspirant. Nothing else is important in spiritual

evolution - particularly the one in which the Mahāśakti is invoked and Her grace sought. If the volition of the person at the transmitting end is fairly strong and the other person is well equipped to receive it, then there can be an initiation through a mantra even though the two are distantly removed from one another. Of this there can be no doubt.

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The spiritual guide and his role

For learning the various skills of life a teacher is needed. The spiritual path is an unknown and an entirely new path. So it seems impossible to move on the path without a guide. Books can tell a lot about it. But to have a discerning eye, to pick out the relevant and then to translate it into life certainly needs the assistance of someone. And the difficulties coming in the way can easily be removed with the assistance of someone who is ready to assist us. But even if it were to be accepted that in the sphere of thought one could proceed entirely on one's own simply by reading books or from experiences gained in life, in practical life it just is not possible, for there are very few persons possessing the required competence. And if the few that there are were given the necessary guidance they surely would move on the path with greater speed. This seems to be certain.

But there is another - special reason for the necessity of a guide for the spiritual path. For spiritual discipline is not simply meant for acquiring a special skill in life. We just have to lift our consciousness from one plane to another and to get it stabilized there. And the speed with which the cosmic evolutionary force is working is just not enough. Its velocity will have to be increased if we are to succeed in our efforts. And if it were to be done entirely on one's own there certainly would be difficulties of all kinds. Besides, it would naturally take considerable time too. It is easier to light a candle with an already lit candle, than to first produce fire and then light the candle through it. Similarly, it is much more easy to divert the waters of an already constructed canal towards one's field than to first construct a new canal for bringing the water from a river to the field through it. Likewise it is easy to establish contacts with an entirely unknown person through

someone who is known to both.

The gaze of the Mahāśakti is tenderly fixed on us. A considerable effort and time is needed if one were to direct the flow of the Mahāśakti towards oneself - through faith and innovation, and entirely through one's personal efforts. The same could be more effectively done and in a much lesser time if one were to come in contact with a guide in whom the Mahāśakti already flows and who is possessed of the competence to divert the flow towards a competent person. Such a person can vitalise our contacts with the Mahāśakti but the quantum and speed of the flow coming to us will depend entirely on our endurance and receptivity. The practice of the Mantra will gradually increase the velocity of the flow.

The guide is not simply a person who shows us the way. More important than that is the task of implanting the seed of divine consciousness in us and of directing the flow of the Mahāśakti, the Mahāmāya, with Her grace in abundance towards it: The plant is already in the field. The gardener has to fix it firmly at the proper place and direct the waters of the canal towards it. The guide is just like the gardener.

The second task of the guide is to supervise the growth of the aspirant: Just as the gardener does not simply leave the plant unprotected after having planted it and initially cared for it by directing the flow of the water towards it, so too the guide protects it from fog, feeds it with manure and trims it too. Then only does the plant grow into a mighty tree. In exactly the same way does the guide supervise the growth of the aspirant by being the counsellor of his path. He tries to remove his difficulties and sometimes - at the appropriate time, tries to accelerate the pace of his growth. And so for the evolving Âtma-śakti, for the developing consciousness he is both a father and a mother. This second task is no less important.

This function of nursing and caring for the aspirant is partly effected due to the conscious endeavour of the guide. He guides him to the best of his knowledge after being conversant with his inner state, his actions and reaction to life, his multiple experiences, nay his entire life-style itself. He also provides suggestions for the removal of difficulties. And whenever he considers proper he tells him of his shortcomings too. In short, he tells him everything which is proper for him and can be beneficial to him.

Besides these many other things continue to happen-unseen. In fact, a very subtle bond is established between the two. Just as when both the transmitter and the receiver are on the same wave lengths, sound waves are duly received -unseen-whatever be the distance between the two, so too between the guide and the aspirant a harmony exists on the subtle planes and currents continue to flow from the guide to the aspirant and influence him too : Also, just as when two electric balls are connected with an electric wire the current flows from the one which is intensely charged to the other, similarly through sympathetic vibrations the aspirant is continually influenced. Besides, there is a conscious guidance too on the subtler planes and when required he is also protected from undesirable influences. This impact is a very important one and is useful in carrying the aspirant forward.¹

How much can the aspirant benefit from such an influence depends entirely on his receptivity. What happens in the waking state happens here too. We can receive from anyone only to the extent to which we are receptive to him. Similarly, on the subtler planes too we can receive from

1. To be accessible to someone's influence to this extent is not without its danger-especially when the other one is not so highly placed spiritually.

anyone only to the extent to which we are receptive to him. The practice of the mantra will of itself create this receptivity - of this there can be no doubt. But by developing a proper disposition towards it we can increase it too.

The more generous, free of inhibitions, and simple we become the more will this receptivity increase. The guide indeed is our friend on the spiritual plane and these qualities positively strengthen feelings of friendship between the two. And if this spiritual friendship be highly selfless and benign then no earthly relationship can compare with it. Love and trust are things which grow on their own. And if there is any kind of forced effort for the same then it would lose its spontaneity and be self-defeating in its objective.

It indeed is a friendship and just as there is present in any other forms of friendship a perfect freedom barring of course in a limited sphere, there ought to be complete freedom - here too. And just as there exists an equality between friends so too there ought to be a feeling of equality in spiritual friendship too. Such a feeling cannot thrive in any kind of coercion nor can there be a perfect development of the personality of the aspirant. He should also have the freedom to commit mistakes too - of course within certain limits; for these also help us in our development. There is no room for any kind of servility here : If service is offered it is always a free act of self-giving and obedience too comes freely - entirely on one's own. There should not be even the slightest feeling of coercion for it would be a deterrent to spiritual progress.

The master desires that the disciple grows like himself, and that if he were to excel him it would be better still: Just as a father yearns to see his son placed on a higher pedestal than the one on which life has placed him, just as the mother desires to see her daughter married in a rich home and live

like a queen and a friend delights in and is not envious of his friend's wealth so does a competent guide derive pleasure when he finds his disciple move towards a higher spiritual state than the one attained by him.

And this is not impossible. We have already seen that the task of the guide is simply to direct the benign flow of the Mahāśakti towards the disciple which is bound to grow with practice-in strength and velocity. And with it the aspirant too will continue to progress on the path of spiritual evolution. The primary guiding spirit behind evolution is the Mahāśakti - the mother Herself, and not the guide, for he himself is seated in her lap. And if she so desires she can through Her Grace, in course of time, carry the aspirant to a higher state than the one in which he is placed. The present state of the guide just cannot be a limit for his future progress. The master has simply handed him over to the Mother who holds him in Her arms. And just as at one time, She had undertaken the full responsibility for his growth, so She now takes the full responsibility of the progress of the aspirant. And when he i.e., the Guru consciously works for his good it is always as Her representative. It is, therefore, clear that between the guide and the aspirant there is established an authentic fraternal bond. And so born of the same mother the two are truly speaking real brothers.

And so there exists then a multi-dimensional relationship between the guide and the aspirant which is sanctified by the hallowed presence of the Mother. The life of the guide is one of a multi-facet responsibility.

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Mantra-Sādhanā

We will now have to consider some important facts relating to the practice of a mantra.

1. The significance of a mantra

The literal meaning of the words constituting a mantra is not its true meaning. These convey to us in the gross the subtle changes which shall be initiated through the practice of a mantra. When the mantra is repeated¹ the activity commences and gradually gains in momentum. This subtle activity on the subtle planes constitutes then the true significance of a mantra and is possible due to the transmitting force of someone who initiates it and for that reason is known as the presiding deity of the mantra. So the mantra is also indicative of this power too. In this way it can be said that the mantra is indicative both of the presiding deity of the mantra as well as of the activity initiated by it.

But looking at the way in which a mantra is used in our spiritual sādhanā, it can be said that Purushottama - the Lord himself, is the presiding deity of the mantra. And the inflowing current of the Mahāśakti - the Mahāmāya or the Divine-Śakti in the aspirant is Her activity. In fact, there is no difference between the Purushottama and the Mahāśakti. And so we can accept the Mahāśakti too as the presiding deity of the mantra. Of this there can be no doubt.²

2. The Form and its objective

The controversy between the Determinate and the Indeterminate - the Formed and the Formless Reality is fairly

1. Practice of Mantra.

2. Such a mantra alone can be called a consciousness or charged mantra.

an old one. From the point of view of spiritual experience it is clear that the forms start disappearing on the higher planes of the psychic or the manomaya itself. And as we move higher we find that these are automatically eliminated. So it is better to accept that the forms cannot - in the course of one's practice of a mantra, continue for long.

For the awakening of appropriate emotions, for concentration of one's attention and for creating the required receptivity in ourselves forms can be gainfully utilized, but they certainly are not necessary. If one feels within oneself the necessity of taking recourse to these forms or assistance from any other symbol - one certainly should seek their assistance, so that one could succeed in the desired objective.

But we should not try to hold on to these forms even if we have initially commenced our Sādhanā through them. If a form persists it is good, if not then too it is good. For any eagerness to continue with the form would unavoidably create tension in the nervous system as well as the mind and interfere with the activity of the mantra.

One should clearly understand that the vision of the deity is certainly not the goal of our mantra sādhanā. It only desires that the initiated flow of the mahāśakti should increase and gain in momentum so that a steady progress is ensured.

The objective of a mantra is just to ensure its vibrational effects i.e. the flow of its subtle sound waves. And so one has to completely drown oneself in it. And the more one gets lost in it the more will it gain in strength and intensity. Those, therefore, who take recourse to the image of a deity in Sādhanā should also give primary importance only to these vibrational effects and not the image. For the inner flow of consciousness concentrating on a particular form is bound to

make the form vivid, clear and lively while the one which concentrates simply on the vibrational effects of the mantra makes these effects clear and vibrant.

3. Focal Point of Concentration

It is a general practice with the aspirants to concentrate on some one specific point : Some concentrate on the middle of the eye-brows, some on the tip of the nose, some on the heart or some other part of the body. For our Sādhanā it is not necessary to concentrate on any particular point. The Mahāśakti herself - according to the requirements of the aspirant draws attention to the various parts of the body and also keeps on changing them too. So it is good if one simply makes an effort to drown one's consciousness in the vibrational activity generated by the mantra. The rest will itself come in course of time on its own.

4. Right Orientation (Dhāranā)

So in the initial stages it is necessary to begin with something which provides us with a proper orientation. Thought of God or of the Mahāśakti brings about the appropriate inner state which would be helpful for an effective impact of the mantra. And its effect could be enhanced through a song - charged with devotional feelings, a prayer or even an obeisance before the Mahāśakti.

It is good if one could feel the presence of the Lord of His Mahāśakti close to oneself, or if one could feel the descent of the benign current of the Mahāśakti within oneself: It would be still better if one could feel that one is sitting in the lap of the mother.¹

And as one grows in one's capacity to feel the presence

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| 1. In whatever way one can feel this closeness to the Divine the same can be used with advantage. |
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of the Divine within oneself one finds that the mantra-activity not only instantly starts with the chanting of the mantra but simultaneously grows in momentum too. And with the passage of time there seems to be no necessity for any conscious effort on the part of the aspirant: For he enjoys the continued presence of the Lord and can also feel the activity of the Mahāśakti working within him - always, at any time.

5. Chanting of the Mantra (Jap)

In a loud chanting of the mantra the gross activity is predominant and so its influence can only be felt on the gross plane. There is a subtle activity too but it remains for the most part secondary and so is very feeble. And since in this case the flow of consciousness (Cittāśakti) is mostly dissipated in the loud chanting and hearing of the mantra it does not sufficiently penetrate into the subtler depths; of one's being and so remains slow and ineffective for it cannot yield the desired result.

Besides, a loud chanting of the mantra prevents the body and the nervous system from relaxing and acquiring the needed restful receptivity for the operation of the mantra-activity on the subtler planes. So the mantra activity does not acquire the needed momentum for effecting transformation of those planes.

And since the subtle activity of the mantra alone is desirable the mantra-jap should be done in perfect silence. There should not be the slightest movement of either the tongue or the lips. There is no harm if, initially, before commencing the jap one does it loudly.¹

1. A loud chanting of the mantra some 7 to 8 times - is especially helpful in stabilising the vibrational currents emanating from the mantra. See also the section on concentration ; Its importance and Sādhanā.

6. The Rosary and Its Utility

It is said :

माला फेरत युग गया, किरा न मन का फेर,
कर का मनका छोड़ कर, मन का मनका फेर ॥

"Ages have gone by but the mind has not been purged of its impurities; Leave the counting of the beads of the rosary and concentrate on the beads of the mind; dear one."

There is no doubt that many who count the beads of the rosary remain unaffected i.e. absolutely without any change. But from this it does not follow that all who count the beads of the rosary remain like that.¹ If by putting one's hand in a vessel and counting the beads of the rosary is useful for changing one's mind, it certainly ought to be done.

In the initial stages the use of the rosary is essential, for with it the mantra-jap continues uninterruptedly², though, the unconscious mind keeps busy with its own activities. Such mantra jap is also useful for the reason that the vibrational activity continues on the subtle planes and these are benefitted by it too. And when it becomes enormously powerful it devours our mental power of resolving and counter-resolving.

Secondly, in the initial stages of Sādhanā the turbulence of the vital is quite natural. And so if one were to suddenly apply a brake to it then it would certainly pass on part of its noisy turbulence to the mind. But if it is given some work to do then to that extent it will get busy and would not create

1. The mantra-jap can be done for many reasons. And there can be many reasons for its not being ineffective too.
2. In the beginning it appears that our attention is vacillating. But gradually it becomes mechanical and does not require attention.

any turbulence in the mind. The use of the rosary provides such a work to the pranic energy and is of a kind which does not easily suffer distraction.

Thirdly, the counting of the beads of the rosary induces a special kind of rhythm in us. This rhythm tends to get linked up with the subtle mantra-activity in the same way as do the letters of the mantra. And just as the counting of the beads stimulates the vibrational activity of the mantra similarly does the prānic rhythm tend to stimulate the mantra. Hence the jap done with the assistance of the rosary considerably intensifies the activity of the mantra.¹

7. Constant Remembrance

We have just now seen that there can be a very close association between the prānic-vibrations and the subtle activity of the mantra. It is, therefore, possible that the individual keeps busy with some other work and continues at the same time with the mantra-jap which in turn continues to produce its vibrational - effects on the innermost planes of one's being. And if one were to regularly practise it, we would find much more time for the jap than is otherwise possible. It is difficult to find more than a very limited time for regular Sādhanā. But this way i.e. doing Sādhanā while keeping busy with the daily round of activities, we can continue practising the mantra-utilising thereby the whole day for Sādhanā. So of the various devices useful for our continual progress in Sādhanā this seems to be of special importance. In the initial

1. When one reaches a particular state, the use of the rosary is of itself abandoned. It will be a state in which the activity of the Mahāśakti will become so powerful that even conscious mantra-jap will not be needed - what to say of the use of the rosary; and just by the slightest of attention towards it, there will be an exceedingly strong - rather an over-powering flow of the Divine Śakti in the aspirant.

stages - whenever one is free, one should engage oneself in this activity. And for this purpose the tip of the fingers, the beads of the rosary in one's pocket or the breathing movements can be utilized.

But in subsequent stages on the slightest introspection one can feel that the mantra-jap continues along with other activities. It appears as if the mantra-jap is continuing entirely on its own and the individual does not feel that he has been doing it himself. This is known as Ajapa-jāp (अजपा-जाप) - a practice of mantra without any conscious effort on one's part- for doing it. And this is possible only when the higher consciousness is deeply steeped in the vibrational effects of the mantra. There are some who do not feel the rhythm of the actual words of the mantra but only their vibrational effects which is just the same. And through this constant remembrance the individual not only attains to the higher states of consciousness, he finds the same getting gradually stabilized too. Further more he feels that the flow of the Divine-Śakti continues for all times and with a considerable intensity too. From this alone one can very well understand its importance in the field of Sādhanā.

If one could develop the habit of doing mantra-jap just before retiring for sleep then our dormant consciousness too is bound to be affected by it and the jap will continue without break for the whole night. And on getting up in the morning the same could be resumed. In this way we could utilize the time for sleep too for Sādhanā.

8. The Time-schedule

Constant remembrance is possible for the whole day. But for regular Sādhanā it is necessary that a specific time is fixed. At the time we regularly sit down for meals, we begin

1. While one is walking one could take help from one's steps as one walks or any other thing of the kind.

to have an appetite for it and the stomach too longs for it. Similarly, if we were to sit down daily for Sādhanā - at the same time our Atman will long for it and the longing is bound to grow in intensity. And once it becomes a habit, it will not be possible for us to do anything else at that time and will have to forcibly sit for Sādhanā. Further more, just as nibbling between meals or taking it at improper hours is sure to upset our stomach so too is the case with Sādhanā. In the initial stages, therefore, a fixing of time for Sādhanā is absolutely necessary.

Secondly, if time is fixed it is easy to adhere to a rule. For persons, who are busy with their daily round of activities adherence to a rule - without fixing a time, is difficult. And to expect that one could succeed without following rules in this respect - would amount to a hoping without hope. If a tender plant is not watered even for a single day it dries up and it is difficult to revive it. It is the same with Sādhanā. Its neglect even for a single day means a lot.¹

The best time for Sādhanā is the early hours of the morning known as Brahma-Muhurta, (ब्रह्म मूहूर्त) i.e. two and a half hours before sunrise. At that time the atmosphere is peaceful. The body too is peaceful and calm. And at that time it is fairly cool in almost all the seasons. The devotees usually get up at this time and it is bound to assist one in Sādhanā. But I know that it is not possible for all to get up at this time of the day. There are many who retire to bed fairly late in the night and as for work they keep extremely busy. For such persons a fairly good amount of sleep is necessary.²

1. If it is impossible to sit down for Sādhanā one should atleast remember God's name at that time.
2. If one does not rest for a fairly good time one's Sādhanā is bound to be adversely affected. But we must not forget that with some effort - of course, within limits - we can change our habit too.

So for fixing the time for Sādhanā one has to keep just one thing in mind, i.e. that the earlier one can sit for Sādhanā the better it would be. Sitting along with sunrise also is found to be very useful. For at that time in the prānic sphere of the outside world there is a special kind of change which affects the individual too. Assistance for Sādhanā could be taken from this specific change too.¹ In the evening it is ideal to sit along with sun-set. The changes in the prānic sphere of the world outside are of the same kind as in the morning at sunrise. There is a special kind of equilibrium helpful for Sādhanā.

The final decision in this respect will have to be taken by the individual himself keeping in mind the requirements of his nature, convenience and suitability of circumstances.)

But to change or ignore it once the time is fixed, amounts to ignoring Sādhanā itself. We are just about to sit or are sitting for Sādhanā and our friends and well - wishers visit us and we change our time for them. The Lord, the mother of the universe - the Divine consciousness, is no less important than them. If we have an appointment with Her why must we cancel it for someone else ? This tests our sincerity along with the importance we attach to Sādhanā.

In the beginning there may be some difficulty in working according to Schedule. But it is a test of our resolve too. Soon the visitors will come to understand and there will be less of disturbance.² But while fixing the time one should try to find out a time most appropriate and at the same time one

1. Those who cannot find any other time should sit down for Sādhanā as soon as they get up in the morning and when they retire to bed for sleep.
2. We can apologise to those who are elderly and they will certainly forgive us too.

which could be relatively free of disturbances.

And while framing rules for oneself and following these rules one has to clearly understand that rules are for us, for our success in Sādhanā; we certainly are not for them. We have the absolute right to change them too. And so, if it be necessary for our inner requirements one should accordingly change them too.

9. The Place

The quieter the place the better it would be. Forests are the best place. But how many of us can go there every day for Sādhanā! The bank of a river; closeness to a lake or trees is also good, but it is not possible to get there - every day. So in whatever situation one is placed one should try to find out the best place possible.

It is good to have a separate room for Sādhanā and as far as possible it should not be used for any other purpose. For the room gets filled up with the vibrational - currents of the mantra as well as the vibrational effects of our elevating thoughts. And so as soon as we enter the room - through association these get revived in our minds, and our propensities change and we are easily protected from the undesirable impressions (Samsakāras) of the outside world.¹

It would be better if the place is removed from the noise and din of the world. Because it tends to produce unawares, a tension within the body, especially in the nervous system. But one should also remember that this is not at all necessary. I have seen people comfortably sleeping in factory premises - a place where an ordinary person would feel easily disturbed. Our body has a considerable adaptability, i.e. a

1. Pictures of noble persons and other like pictures which stimulate elevating emotions in our minds and pictures presenting scenic beauty increase the utility of such a room.

capacity to change according to one's requirements. So it is easy and beneficial to ignore such noisy distractions and not to give them any importance - otherwise one is likely to get irritable.¹

Many kinds of sunshines tend to influence our subtle body and our mind. There is no doubt that we can receive assistance from these too.

I have already said that there should be a separate room for Sādhanā. But this does not mean that Sādhanā should always be practised in a closed room. In summers it is good to sit in the open- upstairs or somewhere else. For there is a wonderful play of the Divine-Śakti in the open.

A frequent change of the place of Sādhanā is not beneficial. For wherever we sit for Sādhanā vibrational effects are left behind. Not only that, the effects of the inner state of one's evolving Âtma-Śakti are also left behind. So if one were to sit there assistance from these could also be had.

10. Âsana-The Sitting Posture.

The Âsana or the sitting posture should be such in which both the activities - the descent of the Mahāśakti as well as the ascent of the Âtma-śakti, takes place conveniently, i. e. freely and without any obstruction. A decision will have to be taken keeping this specific fact in mind. There is no other rule besides this. Some Âsanas are given below :

Sukhâsana : Sitting in a squatting position.

Swâdhisthâna : Sitting in a squatting position and placing the right leg on the left after stretching it a little towards the outside - or vice versa, the left on the right, then it is known as the Swâdhisthâna Âsana. (The hands are placed

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| 1. The distractions which can be easily avoided ought certainly to be avoided. |
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on the lap-one over the other, and palms of the hands facing upwards).

Veerāsana : Bending both knees one has to sit on one's legs. In almost all the pictures Laxmanji is shown to sit in this position. In Veerāsana legs are bent but one does not have to sit on them but outside these.

The rhythm of the inner activity is not the same in all Āsanas. In this position the ascent of Śakti is easy. Swādhīsthāna is good in all respects.

Often it is believed that the spine has to be kept perfectly erect and the body too should be kept straight. For the aspirants of the path of ascent it certainly is the correct position. But for the followers of the path of descent there cannot be any such rule. On the contrary, the more one could keep the body relaxed the better it would be for Sādhanā. The aspirant has to find out for himself - by shifting from one position to the other the one which is the best for him. And he will have to choose the one in which there is the least tension for the muscles.

The positions change because of the pressure exercised on one's system due to the changing requirements of the flow of the divine-śakti in the aspirant. Never try to stop it. The turn of the body towards any side, the tilt of the neck this way or that, above or below, and the drooping of the body towards any direction, is all possible. The changes come and they disappear too- entirely on their own. The spine too is sometimes erect and sometimes it bends low.

If the position is not in keeping with one's inner requirements one is likely to be restless. In such a case one should change the position in keeping with one's inner requirements. Even otherwise too the position ought to be changed for one tires of sitting in a position for long. Gradually, one acquires the ability to sit in one position for a longer duration.

The position of the hands certainly affects the activity going on within oneself. Placing them on one's knees is ordinarily not good for in that case the arms cannot relax. It is good if the hands are placed in the lap. These can be placed either with fingers of one hand interlacing with those of the other or even without it-just the two of them in the lap. But when the rosary is being used we will- certainly have to look to one's convenience first.

But there can only be two final rules in this respect: Inner relaxation and inner drive or motivation. All other things will have to be decided in consonance with these two.

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In whatever direction the mind turns it should be brought back under one's control.

Concentration : Its importance and the way to achieve it.

We have to reflect on the importance of concentration for this path of Sādhanā and how it could be achieved.

The Sādhanā relating to the path of ascent proceeds entirely on the basis of concentration. The flow of the powers of a concentrated mind-directed inwards, is the only way to proceed on the path of ascent. Without concentration one cannot move an inch. And when it matures it attains to its highest form-in Samādhi. And the way to achieve it most certainly is to extirpate all kinds of distracting resolves. The same has been nicely expressed in the following verse of the Bhagawad Gita :

यतो यतो निश्चरति मनश्चंचलमस्थिरम् ।
ततस्ततो नियम्यैतदात्मन्येव वंश नयेत् ॥

- Gita 6.26¹

Restraining the restless and fidgety mind from all those objects after which it runs, he should repeatedly concentrate it on God.

There is no doubt that by performing Sādhanā in this way the followers of the path of ascent achieve a high degree of concentration and finally Samādhi. But we have to think of the right means for the path of descent.

The Sādhanā of the path of ascent proceeds entirely on the basis of concentration, but the one relating to the path of descent proceeds entirely on the basis of the activity of the Mahāśakti alone. And so concentration can be important in this path to the extent to which it can be helpful in the furtherance of this activity of the Mahāśakti.

1. In whatever direction the mind runs it should be brought back under one's control.

We have already seen that the more powerful, the more concentrated be the flow of the Mahāśakti in the vibrations of the mantra, the more powerful will be its vibrations in the descent of the Mahāśakti and the ascent of the Ātma-Śakti and with a proportionate intensity will be the spiritual evolution of the aspirant. So concentration has its special importance in our Sādhanā too. Of this there can be no doubt.

But it certainly is not our goal nor is its specific form of achievement or Siddhi. It just is a sort of assistance and nothing else. The goal in our Sādhanā is a super-abundance of the flow of the Mahāśakti. And if instead of that we busy ourselves in efforts to change ourselves, to extirpate the resolves and counter resolves of our mind, the energising flow of the Mahāśakti in the mantra is bound to get diluted. We do not have to create a void in our minds. This could lead to success in the kind of concentration needed for the aspirants of the other path. We simply have to fill our minds with the mantra-vibrations. Obviously, therefore, all efforts to eliminate mind's resolves and counter-resolves would all the more weaken the intensity of the flow. So that concerted combative device would not only be futile, it would positively create hurdles in our ways. And, therefore, we do not have to fight with these incoming and outgoing resolutions of our mind.

We just have to ignore them and not give them any importance if we have to achieve concentration in this path. Just as if we learn to ignore a naughty child busy with showing temper tantrums, he will of himself tire out and become quiet. So also is the case with the human mind. Undoubtedly, if it is ignored and one does not become impatient it will of itself, in course of time, become restful. If instead one continues to pay attention to it the conflict will continue and with it we will be in constant trouble.

We have now to see why these come. When we concentrate on a thing in which we are interested the entire energy of our mind gets unified (unified by that interest) and tends to flow towards it. And as soon as this control is relaxed the dormant impressions start rushing out - without any constraint: The dormant consciousness is virtually a storehouse of impressions, but because it belongs to the unconscious plane it is absolutely free of all kinds of rules and regulations. And so as soon as the conscious mind relaxes its control over them like naughty children of lower classes, who become noisy and restless as soon as their teacher moves out of the class, these too rush forth joyously, full of excitement. So when we sit down for mantra-jap the consciousness of the waking-state seems entirely to disappear, for the greater part of its energy gets absorbed in the doing of the jap. The unconscious mind gets a holiday and rushes forth into activity like naughty children. The rest of its energy gets busy in weaving trains of all kinds of thoughts. This continues endlessly. It is natural too that during normal waking hours these resolves and counter resolves do not trouble us as much as they do when we sit down for Sādhanā. It is natural. It should be like this, and it should be surprising if it does not happen like this. So resolves and counter-resolves should not be of any concern to us.

I have already said that cure from their ills does not lie in trying to drive them away. Whatever quantum of mental energy flows into the mantra - in the present state of our Sādhanā, is sufficient to draw the flow of the Mahāśakti into the whirl of resolves and counter resolves. And since this activity pours into us from a higher level¹ than the conscious plane, initially, we are not aware of its presence. But from this we should not think that it is not there and we are wasting our time in vain. The activity of the flowing current of the

1. From the super-conscious plane.

Mahāśakti is certainly there. Of this there can be no doubt. And as it grows in strength it shall influence not only our conscious plane but also the unconscious plane too. And with it both - the conscious and the unconscious mind shall gain in stability and the tendency to resolve and counter-resolve will of itself cease to trouble us. The mind gets unified in the higher strain of unity and gets peaceful for all times to come. From which it is evident that stability is something which comes on its own. One does not have to worry for that. Also that there is nothing which can stop it from coming. And if there is anything which can stop it from coming it can only be our curiosity and anxiety. There are some specific things which could be of assistance to us in obtaining it.

Right Orientation (Dhāranā) : Of this sufficiently has been written earlier. If we have the appropriate orientation we are bound to get lost-soon-in the vibrant flow of the Mahāśakti.

Invocation : (Prabodhana) : Before one sits for Sādhanā one has to tell the mind that it will have to sit for a specific period of time. Other things will be decided later on. If there is anything waiting for our decision it should be disposed off prior to Sādhanā. Those persons who have developed the habit of postponing the taking of decisions are likely to be in difficulty. For the same thing keeps on coming over and over again for the entire period. So one has to develop the habit of reflecting on the pros and cons of a problem - for once, and then to refuse to think of it again. If the time does not seem proper for a decision it is better to wait for the time and not to think of it then, for it would unnecessarily involve a waste of time and energy.

This habit is beneficial both for Sādhanā as well as for worldly activities.

Deep breathing : Along with reflection on the mantra some deep breathing in and out, relaxes both the body as well

the mind and so is helpful.

Relaxation : The more the body and the mind relax the easier will it be to attain concentration. Through one's decision, invocation and deep breathing the body gets relaxed. And with practice one does not need any effort for the same. A proper Āsana is also needed.

Bodily cleanliness : Sitting for Sādhanā after washing one's hands, mouth and feet assists in concentration. Of this there can be no doubt.¹

Quantum and momentum of Jap : The greater the duration of the Jap and the faster its momentum the easier will it be to attain concentration.

Patience is of the greatest importance. Concentration is bound to come on its own. Of course, one needs time for that.



1. If one can have a bath it would be better.

Self-purification : Development of Consciousness and bestowal of the Path.

How does the Mahāśakti descend and how does she work in the aspirant ? Is there anything which is to be done by the aspirant for its final consummation ? A discussion of these is necessary for us to fully understand the nature of mantra-sādhanā.

No sooner is the mantra received by the aspirant due to the transmitting power of the spiritual guide - the Guru, a relation is established between the Mahāśakti and the Sahastrār (सहस्रार) of the aspirant. And the establishment of the relation simply means that the flow of the Energy-current of the Mahāśakti has commenced. Initially, the flow is so feeble that many aspirants are hardly aware of its presence. But some have a definite awareness of it, for there is movement in the Sahastrār. Why is it felt ? To be able to understand this we shall have to know certain things about Śakti.

That the Mahāśakti, is the primal cause - the consciousness force, has already been earlier stated. The same resides in the individual as Ātma-Śakti. It is worth knowing the diverse forms in which it manifests itself. This śakti (Energy)¹ is of the nature of consciousness. So the various forms in which it comes to be experienced are also its diverse manifestations. The experience of peace, bliss, an infinite expanse of consciousness, of the presence of the Divine Śakti etc. are all experiences which come to us when the Śakti is intensely activated. Although of this there is no doubt that the primal source of all experiences of the normal and the unconscious plane, is the self-same energy; but the above mentioned experiences result only when this Energy is intensely activated. And this Energy is both Energy as well

1. This term is used both for Mahāśakti as well as for Her energy.

as force¹ or manifest-energy. The entire cosmic-energy which is expressing itself in the inanimate world as well as in various other phenomena - is the same. It manifests itself as electricity, magnetism (attraction), light, sound and motion. And the same manifests itself as the vital force too. All these experiences are of the vital and the mental plane. Beyond and above these are the experiences of consciousness which have been mentioned above. Its presence in an individual is made manifest only through these experiences and it is only through these that we can be aware of its activity in us, too. Therefore, it is evident that the awareness of movement in the Sahastrār is indicative of the descent of the Mahāśakti. In many there exists the feeling of some kind of pressure, while in others there is none. The only feeling that one has is that of a descent of peace, the feeling that something has entered into oneself from a hitherto unknown, unfelt plane. This feeling depends entirely on the quantum of the energy-flow along with the inner and the outer (the bodily) state of aspirant. It is also possible that initially in someone there may not be any such feeling because mind and body were not in the right state for its manifestation.

In this way, the descending energy in the Sahastrār, by its simple presence, sends forth currents towards the lower centres for the equalisation of pressure between itself and the lower centres, Otherwise pressure is bound to continue and when these currents reach the lower - centres these get activated and send by way of response- currents towards the Sahastrār resulting in the establishment of an equilibrium-between them.² From this it is clear that with the initiation

1. Energy is the mother of force and force a manifestation of energy.
2. An experience of these movements and their intensity depends on the subtle sensitivity of our body and the resistance encountered on the nerve-paths. When there is no resistance there is less awareness of the same.

the mantra-activity all the centres from the Sahastrār to the mulādhāra start functioning simultaneously-however feeble the activity may be.

With the attainment of equalisation of energy a new flow of the current enters the Sahastrār and the entire process is repeated and again there is an equalisation of forces. It is natural that along with each descent of Energy-flow all the centres get activated. The cycle continues without any break.

The currents flowing towards the lower centres are indicative of descent while those which flow in response from the lower centres, come within the sphere of ascent. Since the flow of current is from all directions and initially is not very smooth, there is bound to be a set back to its activity. As long as the currents flowing downwards do not acquire sufficient strength to push themselves-forward-they will not be able to descend and for the same reason there will be no ascent too. In such a situation there is bound to be some pressure. And because of this obstruction in the energy flow during the initial stages of Sādhanā, sometimes one experiences exclusively the descent of energy and sometimes only its ascent. The two follow each other in succession. In fact, a rhythm of descent and ascent is established which initially like the engine (on account of the piston movement) is not smooth but later on assumes a rhythmic flow. Finally, there comes a time when both the activities go on without any hindrance. One may, ordinarily, experience only one form of activity, but on inspection it becomes clear that both activities continue-constantly. But one is able to specially experience only that activity in which there is relatively a more interrupted flow.

From these on-going activities it becomes clear that the Sahastrār will attain the maximum growth and for that reason

strength too, and the lower centres relatively less development. And in the same order, under the leadership of the Sahastrār, coordination and a growing equilibrium of all the centres will continue to be maintained. The Sahastrār reflects the consciousness of peace, stability and detachment. So on the basis of this growing peace, stability etc the entire personality begins to get re-constituted. And because the Divine consciousness has to manifest itself only through this centre, this consciousness continues to pour its influence on us whether we are clearly conscious of it or not.

And since the lower centres will always remain under the control of the higher centres, tendencies likely to manifest themselves in the lower centres, like anger, sex, animosity, jealousy etc cannot become powerful with the awakening of the lower centres. Before one's initiation into the path, before the descent of the Mahāśakti, these centres alone were dominant and usually succeeded in harnessing the intellectual activity for their gratification. But now on account of this new change-these have been deprived of their supremacy and along with the intellect have started getting unified in a new effective bond of unity; so the danger which exists in the path of ascent on account of the awakening of śakti in the lower centres-just does not exist here. Contrary to that, self-restraint comes most naturally in this path. From this process it is also clear that no centre can attain perfection in isolation from the others. And so prior to the attainment of perfection the aspirant can be said to have attained, in each successive state, nothing and everything also. On account of an incomplete development of all the centres - of the lowest of the low centres and their associate sheaths, how can it be said that he has attained everything ? On the other hand, due to the activation of the Sahastrār,

1. Self-restraint is no special problem in this path. It is to be attained-entirely on its own.

which is the instrument of the manifestation of the Divine-consciousness, and on its getting relatively more intensely charged than the other centres, one cannot help saying that he has attained almost everything. The resulting experience of the aspirant too is like that. In some states he feels absolutely joyous and elated while soon after he feels absolutely dejected-thinking that he is lowly placed. This is quite natural till one reaches a particularly evolved state. It must be clear that one will attain perfection, simultaneously, in all the planes.

And because the activity commences from above and its force gets progressively depleted as it moves downwards, so its influence too is felt at first in the higher planes and then slowly - very slowly, in the lower ones. The first to be experienced then is peace, stability and detachment. The feeling that one is full of Energy is there, but is not specially manifest. Then comes the awakening of the wisdom-consciousness or the Samāshi-ċetanā. The aspirant can find instances of such a self-awakening (आत्म स्फुरणा) in his ordinary, daily activities and also other experiences connected with the plane, like, sound or light etc. Both of these are planes of the higher consciousness. After this one can feel its effect on the mind too. One comes to experience a supernormal-intensity in the intellect. The heart gets lost in overpowering waves of ecstasy. There seems to be a depletion in feelings of jealousy and envy. The aspirant begins to feel that he is more peaceful, blissful and energetic than before. One begins to radiate an increase in self-confidence and fearlessness. Thereafter, one feels the first impact of Śakti on the vital plane and health too is affected, accordingly. One experiences an excess of vitality and also an increased fitness. The body feels light. The face is lit up with radiance. The digestive system too is affected and all illnesses relating to the nervous system or to an obstructed

flow of Vital energy get instantly cured. This effect is often to be seen with the first activated flow of energy towards the diverse spheres of the system.¹

This first excessive flow confers a unique intoxication. The excessive flow of Energy in the Sahastrār, the strong, effective control of the Mahāśakti (through stable peace) which is constantly there-alone-keeps the aspirant under control. Otherwise, it will be difficult for the aspirant to keep himself under control. After sometime, there emerges on all planes-a unique serenity, an entirely new kind of activity. This process of intensification and stabilization gives birth - subsequently, to the period of purification of one's energy.

To us it appears similar to the nature cure system. The first impact on chronic patients-of nature-cure devices (like natural food, waist-bath, use of clay, anema etc.) is just wonderful but very soon it is seen to disappear. Thereafter, the activity of expelling the chronic foreign elements and a purification of the system begins. Diseases appear and soon are cured. There is again a recurrence of diseases and if the same means are employed, these get cured-on their own. The process continues till one attains to perfect health. This much is definite that after every cycle-of upsurge and cure, the patient finds himself better than before. He begins to feel that he has become perfectly healthy and that nothing else needs to be done by him. But a competent naturopath knows that many more upsurges are required and perfect health is pretty remote. This example applies also to purification effected through the use of innermost devices (आभ्यन्तरिक साधन)

The sphere of purification is one's mind and body. The

1. How much time is needed for the influence of this activity to manifest itself as one passes from one stage to another cannot be stated. It is different with each aspirant.

gress does not reach the planes existing beyond these; one has simply to awaken these. There, collect on their planes such substances, i.e. impressions and propensities, as do not harmonise with the divine life and so have to be expelled. We shall now see how the Mahāśakti performs this cleaning task.

The purification of the mind : At the appropriate time, the attachments relating to the intellect and the heart and other propensities like anger, envy and avarice etc gradually reveal themselves. Those which have already become manifest are given a severe blow by the first strong upsurge of the Mahāśakti and these get subdued. But those which are suppressed, for diverse reasons, and through several devices like shame, hate, fear and greed etc, gradually become manifest. A suppressed feeling of sex also begins to reveal itself. And by the same activity of the Mahāśakti it too gets subdued, if there be no fresh effort to suppress it again. With the passing away of one upsurge another comes which also passes away. It is a process which continues for an exceedingly long duration. The process continues till one is perfectly free of all impurities.

The purification of the body: When the Energy-flow is very powerful in the vital, the activity of bodily purification commences. The foreign-elements are expelled. Suppressed diseases are roused and of themselves these get subdued too. This process more or less continues till one achieves perfection.

This is also true that after every upsurge the aspirant finds himself purer and stronger than before. And often he feels deluded that the work is done.

Just as a competent doctor regulates these upsurges in consonance with the ability of the person's vital energy, so

too does the Mahāśakti always regulate it. The quantum of descent which regulates the momentum of self-purification, is in consonance with the individual's ability - both physical and mental; its intensity is such as can be borne by the aspirant. In this sphere too the mother truly works as the omniscient, omnipotent mother. She does not, in the least, bother about the impatience of the aspirant for quick results. Even as when the child starts crying the mother does not give a burning ember in his hands, nor when he feels sleepy give him food in excess of his requirements. The same is the story here.

Often on account of these upsurges the aspirants get impatient. They start thinking that they have debased themselves for they still have undesirable impressions and evil propensities arising in them. Desperately they try to suppress them or to completely extirpate them or pray to God to free them from their clutches. But the adoption of such measures creates more problems for the aspirants and present them with futile difficulties-on the way. And just as a patient frightened by such upsurges and desperately trying to suppress them - thereby - only increases the duration of the disease, so also is the case of the aspirant trying to suppress these upsurges. And just as the patient has to view peacefully and with detachment, the healing process - the drama of repeated upsurges and the process of their passing away, with full faith in one's vital-principle (Śakti), so too will the aspirant have to view the drama going on within himself. And by thus remaining peaceful, will it be possible for the Mahāśakti to do Her work-effectively, and to finish it at the earliest. And such an ability to be able to remain peaceful throughout is conferred by the Mother on the aspirant even before she starts the activity. The Sādhanā begins with peace and stability. If a person desires he can continue to have this feeling of detachment-throughout the course of one's Sādhanā.

On account of prevailing thoughts we have learnt to be frightened of, and to hate these baser propensities. For this reason these were suppressed too. These were always within us, but we were not aware of their presence. So without their becoming manifest, how is it possible to begin the cleaning of the inner-realm? The benign Mother-with a broom in Her hands-is going to clean not only the inner courtyard but the outer one, i.e. the body too. Do not be frightened. The entire hidden dross of innumerable past lives is going to be swept out. You will have to throw it out. You thought dear one, you were pure, dross-free and transparent. There is still a lot of impurity in you. Allow the mother to clean it-a little.

We do not have to do the cleaning. These tiny hands will not be able to do it even in ages. And the mother does not simply do the cleaning; she paints us, within and without, with her divine colour-too. Do not raise your hands nor lift your fingers or utter even a word of anguish. The Mother understands your sufferings and your well being too. And standing by your side, she invests you with the strength to endure it too.

The aspirant is not on the path of decline; he is on the path of progress. The path is through the valley-towards the rising peak before us.

With this process is associated the duel between peace and instability. There is an upsurge and it has-everywhere-an unsettling effect. The aspirant finds he has sunk deep into the pits of depression. His body is unclean; so too is his mind and he finds he is debased-in all respects. He feels distressed and in deep anguish: Just as after a fierce storm and downpour of lashing rains there reigns a deep, impenetrative silence, similarly, in such a state, the benign hand of the Mother - Her mighty flow comes and in a minute everything

is over. A mute stillness, a divine bliss spreads all over. The head and the heart of the aspirant bows before Her in gratitude. And reflecting on Her Grace, he gets overwhelmed. He curses himself for a while, for his lack of faith, his irreverence and for his mistake. This wonderful drama continues many a times. Then comes a time when the feeling of Her constant presence - the presence of the aspirant in the mother and of the mother in him, becomes lively and steady. There remains no room-then-for a recurrence of such experiences again.

The upsurge is indicative of the presence of impurities and the storm of the-ensuing-peace.

The bestowal of the Path : From whatever has been said above it must have become sufficiently clear to the aspirant whatever has to be-specially-done by him. He will have to present himself in his entirety, with respect to his intellect and his heart; his vital and the body before the Mother- without any reservations, just as the child undresses himself before his mother.¹ One will have to place everything - one's good and bad propensities, one's interest and attachments, one's definite opinions and promises nay his whole self, at Her feet- Praying to Her that she does whatever she desires to do with it. The mother will purify and divinise it. Evidently, after having surrendered everthing before Her, one does not have the right to interfere with Her ways.

One will have to recognise Her mandate and follow it. Often it appears in the form of a tendency. And as one moves forward on the path of Sādhanā it becomes powerful and the aspirant cannot easily ignore it; and the more one follows it the more it grows in intensity.

1. Since right from the beginning the Mother is the presiding deity, there is no fear that any other wicked spirit will take charge of him and lead him astray.

If the aspirant is prepared to leave everything - even his interests and his attachments, and is keen to obtain Her guidance he will soon get it. And when he starts getting it, he is instantly placed above all rules. His only rule then is the Mother's command. That alone is the directing principle of his life. He does not get peace when he acts contrary to Her wishes and later on there does not exist for him even the possibility of his acting-contrary to Her wishes.

How long do we have to sit for mantra-sādhana and in what manner? depends entirely on the inner propulsion. And in matter relating to food too, how much and what is to be taken? Is decided by the same inner propensity. All external regulations become useless for him.

In the same way, by an absolute surrender the aspirant can present the Mother with an opportunity to freely work in him. In this alone lies the success of his sādhana too.

One should not think that the energy-flow commences only with jap (जप) or the practise of the mantra and at other times it is not there. When the flow attains a considerable momentum, it continues-constantly, without any break, day and night, whether the aspirant is aware of it or not.¹ And if there is anything which can stop it, it is simply-a want of reverence for Her, and that too is possible- only upto a certain stage, after which it continues unawares and for all the times. When the aspirant remembers the mantra the activity becomes intense and when, setting aside all work, he exclusively sits down for it - the activity becomes all the more intense.

We have to give absolute freedom to the Mahāśakti for Her activity. And the only way is to provide Her with a full relaxation on our part. The more one can relax one's body

1. The unconscious - jap (अजपा- जाप) is indicative of this fact.

and mind, the more freely will be the flow of energy in the diverse nerve-paths and the more intense will be Her purificational-activity within us. The most important thing about Sādhanā is that we attain a maximum relaxation of mind and body-which, otherwise, is not possible in any other state. The more this relaxation can be perfected, the more it should be done. This is the goal of surrender and the secret of the bestowal of the path, and the more comprehensive it is the more beneficial will it be to us.

And this surrender can only be stable when there is an unflinching faith, an invincible reverence and an unbounded love for the Mahāśakti. Only then can the aspirant remain peaceful, endure the violent upsurges of life and continue to remain relaxed otherwise, an agonising disquiet is natural. The child who has faith in his mother alone can endure-peacefully-the violent strokes of a massage of the body, otherwise, an effort to run away from her powerful grip is perfectly natural. A patient who has faith in the goodness of the doctor can endure surgery on his body.

And if the mother firmly holds the arms of the aspirant if the benign flow of mother's Śakti has overpowered him, if it has become sufficiently powerful, then even if he were to try to wriggle out he will not be able to free himself from Her grip. How can the mother permit the child to remain dirty? She will find out the way, even if it has to be forcibly done; for she is Infinitely compassionate.

*

Some Inner-most Experiences and their significance

While moving on the path of *Ābhyāntrika Sādhanā* the aspirant begins to have diverse kinds of experiences. A few of these will be described and an attempt made to decipher their significance.

The aspirant, who enters the path, should know that just as it is impossible to find two people identical, with respect to their inner and outer natures; just as it is difficult to find two fruits or two plants alike in each respect in nature, so too is it difficult to find two aspirants having the same experiences. Not only that, of the two people going to the same market, we find that the attention of one is directed towards one object and of the other towards-another. In the same way, the experiences of the aspirants differ-while traversing the same region.

The reason for this difference is clear. The inner state of each aspirant - the development of the sheaths, their mutual relatedness and experiences of past lives are different. In some the psychical is more developed, while in others it is the vital; in some the nerves (paths for the flow of energy) are purer while in others they are not so; in some the energy has to concentrate on some particular plane while in others on some other. In short, all such factors which account for individual variations can be said to be responsible for differences in experiences too.

So the aspirant should not try to see any similarity between his experiences and those of the other. His experiences are bound to be entirely his own. And at this stage he can try to understand them with the assistance of his guide. Later on, these will become clearer to him-on their own.

The next thing worth understanding in this respect is the importance of these experiences. Just as for persons moving on the road there are the milestones which tell him that he is moving ahead, so too are these experiences for the aspirant. The path is not so easy that one can know-as one does in the case of the milestones, that one has traversed this much of distance. All that one easily knows is that one is moving and that the progress is of this-velocity. And because development takes place, simultaneously, on all planes and in all spheres, it cannot be said-categorically- as is the case with the milestone that so much distance has been covered. Again, just as in the case of the growth of an adult it is difficult to say that he has attained the maximum growth so far as his breadth is concerned and will now grow only-vertically - i.e. in height, so too it cannot be said for the growth of the aspirant. All that can be said about it positively, is that he has since then grown so much, i.e. since the time he commenced his journey, last time he was so much then and now he has grown so big.

All aspirants do not have all kinds of experiences and its lack does not reflect any kind of shortcoming on his part. It entirely depends on one's inner constitution as to what kind of experience one is going to have. So to desire any special kind of experiences is to present hurdles on the way of the free-activity of the Mahāśakti. Those experiences which would be proper for the aspirant, would start coming to him on their own-without his desiring them.

In the last section, we had classified the experiences emanating from the free-play of the Śakti into two broad divisions :

- (i) Experiences centering around consciousness or those relating to consciousness.
- (ii) Experiences centering around energy or those relating

to energy.

Ordinarily, the two forms of experiences are of a mixed variety. We will have to consider them separately.

(iii) Other experiences.

Experiences centering around consciousness

The descent of peace and its spread-all over, the descent of bliss and the unusual intuitional flashes of consciousness which reveal in an instant-new secrets of life. Along with these and, sometimes, independently of these is the feeling of oneself existing-as a witness or beyond the mind and the intellect etc. This is an experience of considerable importance.

It is with the awakening of the Sahastrār that one begins to have the experience of peace and of one's transcendental existence. Gradually, one's individual consciousness gets stabilized in this awareness of detachment i.e.-of being a Śākṣi (साक्षी). This feeling is similar to the one which the aspirants of the path of ascent have in the form of self or Brahman-experience.

The descent of knowledge comes to be experienced when the lower plane i.e. the plane of wisdom-consciousness (Samādi-*chetnā*) is sufficiently activated.

The experience of bliss is indicative of a developed heart. When energy activates it for the first time one is intensely intoxicated. But, in course of time, it gradually gets purified.

These experiences are had sometimes-separately-and sometimes-simultaneously. There is a difference in quantity too in different aspirants. In the course of one's Sādhanā there is sometimes the dominance of the one and sometimes the dominance of the other - the difference being due to the

unique playful activity (Leela) of the Mahāśakti. Those experiences in which consciousness predominates are the necessary experiences of Sādhanā. These are experienced by all aspirants and they surely must be experienced also, for these are positively indicative of the development of consciousness.

Energy-centred experiences

Motion, electricity, light and sound are the original experiences of this plane. The Mahāśakti is the primal source of energy and when it is active in the aspirant, such manifestations are bound to be experienced.

Motion

While sitting for Sādhanā the feeling of ants creeping, or a tingling in the nerves, body becoming light and the feeling that one's asana (आसन) is raised above the floor or just the opposite feeling, that the head or the entire body has become heavy or suddenly-absolutely relaxed; or the movement of a particular part of the body, especially, the neck or the entire body-towards any one side; or the experiencing of shocks - are all central experiences of this kind. The body becoming extremely light is indicative of a special elevation of the Ātma-śakti and the experience of a pressure on the body or of its being relaxed is indicative of the special descent of the Mahāśakti. The feeling of ants creeping is due to the first jerky flow of the energy in the nerve-paths. And the special movement or turn of the body or its parts towards any direction is due to the increased momentum of energy in that particular part of the body. In such a state, the flow of the energy-current can be smooth and the increased momentum accounts for the movement of the body in specific directions.

The shocks received are often due to special reason. If

the energy-current flowing upwards from the lower centres returns to its former place-without doing its work, then these shocks are experienced. Impediments in the flow or an unwanted excess is responsible for these experiences. Divesting ourselves of all feelings, keeping the body perfectly relaxed and permitting a spontaneous free-play of the Energy is the best-the easiest-way to effect a cure.

Electric-Currents

One often feels the sensation of the flowing currents in the head or in other parts of the body. This is due to the flow of the energy current.¹ No sooner do the paths become pure and well equipped for the shouldering of the responsibility of the new task these of themselves gradually subside. But the cooling down of the feeling is not in any way indicative of the cessation of its flow. These currents purify the body and make it internally filled with them.

Light

The experiences of light are of different kinds. Sometimes it appears like flashes of electricity amongst thick spread of clouds in the sky, sometimes like a cool, peaceful spread of moonlight and sometimes like the bright, fiery glare of strong sun-rays. It is also seen on certain occasions as a very soft illumination, while on other occasions like the wondrous-perception of colourful splashes. Light is a form of energy. And when it is intensely activated we have very powerful manifestations in the form of light-flashes, whether we are able to see them or not. And on account of varying momentum light-perceptions are of different kinds, on different planes. The aspirant sometimes is able to see them and sometimes he is not able to see, just as even when there is sun we may keep our eyes closed.

1. Often the entire body is felt to be charged with it and all around-oneself-one feels the presence of nothing but electric-vibrations.

Sound

The subtle sound is known as Anahat (अनहत) which means sound-which is not produced by collision. In fact this does not amply clarify its nature. For there are human words-not born of tongue-movements. These are produced by the vibrations of the fibres of the vocal chords. The tongue simply confers on them-specific forms. Saints have called it Anahat. Because of specific vibrations produced by the energy-flow, on different planes-different words are produced. The expanding motion in the lower centres produces, different words and those in the already, charged higher centres-entirely different words. Along with this, in both kinds of centres, there exist different categories too. The subtler the plane on which the activity continues, the subtler will be the word generated by it.¹ To be able to develop the ability to listen to these words is of no importance in our form of Sādhanā. One has simply to seek the assistance of the Mahāśakti, who is the mother-the generating source of all words. If our consciousness is driven towards a particular word on its own there should be no cause for alarm. But there seems to be no reason why one should consciously try

1. Listening to super-normal words (Sabda) has been given special importance by the saints of the medieval period. Laya yoga proceeds entirely on that basis. It is natural that the activity of Śakti increases along with concentration on these words. And so even with the help of sounds (words) relating to the activity of ascent, one can effect the descent of energy-flow-too. This constitutes the basis on which those paths rest. People have also experientially described the sounds (Sabda) associated with the path of ascent which is indicative of the diverse planes on which ascent is effected. This is not possible on our path, because in it the activity proceeds on all the diverse planes-simultaneously. So often the various sounds (words) are heard, simultaneously.

to promote concentration by fixing attention on any particular word. Just as light is produced by energy vibrations-or put differently, it can be said that it is another form of its activity, so too is the case with sound. This also continues for all times, whether we are able to listen to it or not. When the special centres of hearing are activated sound (word) becomes audible, just as when centres relating to special perceptions are activated light becomes perceptible.

There are different kinds of words and the kind of word which is audible to the aspirant depends on many factors.

These energy perceptions are secondary and not at all necessary. Some have many kinds of experiences, while others have a few and still others-none. Their absence is by no means indicative of any imperfection in the aspirant. But almost all the aspirants have a few of these experiences at some stage or the other-of their Sādhanā. The aspirant will have to hand over fully the control of activities connected with Sādhanā in hands of the Mother. This-alone-is supremely beneficent for him. One will have to be satisfied with whatever she desires, instead of wanting to have any specific experience for one's satisfaction.

3. Other experiences

(1) Undulations or Tremors

In the path of ascent this is the first, the foremost experience. With the Mulādharā getting intensely charged the entire area around the navel gets terribly rocked. People call it the awakening of the Kundalini - Śakti. In the path of descent there is absolutely no place for such an unusual awakening of Śakti. In this path (of descent) the awakening is gradual and the release of Śakti is so regulated that there is no unwanted or undesirable pressure on one's nervous system. When tremors are experienced, it is necessary to

immediately inform the spiritual guide of it.

(2) Thrill and Shedding of tears

One experiences thrill and tears start flowing from the eyes, when the heart gets specially activated. It of-itself subsides too, when one moves higher.

(3) Vision of Siddhās

Sometimes in the initial stages of Sādhanā one sees Siddhās,¹ with matted hairs. This is because of the volition of those spirits who reside on the subtle planes (Lokas). One need not be scared of them, for these of themselves get away from one's life. One need not pay any special attention to them.

(4) Vision of subtle phenomena

The aspirant-while closing one's eyes, starts seeing mountains, forests, rivers etc. Those vegetations present a wonderful sight and the person feels intensely attracted towards them. Sometimes, the entire planetary system - along with the stars, the moon and the sun is seen. These are all sights of the subtle planes. The individual gets transported to those planes and so is able to see them.

It is not proper to pay attention even to these sights. One should try to concentrate wholly on the mantra-vibrations or the activity of the Mahāśakti.

(5) Travel etc.

Sometimes the aspirant feels that he has moved into another - a very high plane (लोक) or met someone who is no longer alive. This is the first experience of an expanded consciousness. One can come across persons who are dead

1. Sometimes one has the feeling that someone is sitting on the right or the left or even before one.

and reside in those planes. But the more one refuses to pay attention to such things, the faster will be the speed with which he progresses and the less will be the time and energy consumed by it. These experiences which have been described in the heading - "Other experiences" are neither natural nor necessary. These are seen to be experienced by some aspirants. But these have no special importance.¹

1. Only a few experiences have been described here. There is, however, no end to their variety.

Some special things

In the course of Sādhanā sometimes certain things happen which make the aspirant nervous and he begins to feel that his condition has deteriorated. These are to be discussed.

Some aspirants-even though they have done fairly well for a pretty long time start feeling that they are unable to concentrate. For many days after sitting for Sādhanā, they suddenly feel like quitting it. It becomes difficult for them to continue with it. There can be many reasons for the same. Often such impediments come on account of the following reasons :

1. Physical ill-health

An unhealthy body (specially due to fatigue in the nervous system or ailments of the stomach), does not present a proper field for the activity of the Mahāśakti. For in that state there continues to be tension in the body as well as the mind.

2. Mental ill-health

On account of an awakening of some special upsurge of impressions (Samskāras) or an awakening of some dormant propensity or for some other like reason, when the mind is affected-it becomes difficult for the inner activity to make any progress.

3. Fatigue

One gets tired due to an excess in Sādhanā. The mounting up of an unnatural pressure of a prolonged Sādhanā is bound to have-reactions. The nerve-structures do not have any further strength to endure such a pressure and so

they rebel against it. This rebellion is for self-defence. And in such a state the Mahāśakti too refuses to continue with her activity.

When, due to any reason, such a situation arises in the course of Sādhanā, one should not get upset about it. One should try to find out the reason for the same. If it be a reason relating to the physical body, one should try to remove it by proper food and activity. No special effort is required to resolve this state of mental ill health. One should simply try to understand that the sickness is just a violent upsurge and nothing else. Try to view it peacefully-with faith, a firm determination and detachment. It will of itself get diluted; Interest in Sādhanā will again commence. It is possible that such upsurges may repeatedly recur in the course of Sādhanā. The aspirant who can rise above these and can patiently endure them alone can free himself from their grip.

One should practise sādhanā only to the extent to which it does not extinguish the desire, and the body and mind do not get fatigued. Sometimes on account of the joy which come to him the aspirant gets tied up to it and commits excesses. Sometimes he becomes impatient too. These are the reasons for the reactions. It is necessary to avoid these and even when reaction takes place one should remain calm. After some time the interest is bound to revive on its own.

4. Sleep in Sādhanā

In the initial stages of Sādhanā sometimes drowsiness is indicative of Tamoguna. This can be cured by regulating one's food habits. But even when one is in an advanced state of Sādhanā, many times, one feels that while sitting for it he has slept, but when he wakes up he finds he continues to remember God's name and finds himself better than before. That sleep is uniquely different from ordinary sleep. In that state the individual finds himself elevated to a higher plane

of consciousness and for the time being his association with the waking state is completely-severed.

Sometimes, this kind of unconsciousness is also due to fatigue-specially in continuous, non-stop jap (अखण्ड जाप) when in the case of a new aspirant, the descent of Śakti is so powerful that he is unable to endure it and for some moments he becomes unconscious, as if the switch has been put off. Later on, when he returns to the former state the intensity is considerably lessened.¹

Sometimes, while doing the jap the aspirant feels like lying down. If there be a proper place there is no harm in lying down for sometime. But the Śakti functions very differently in that state.

A creeping sensation in the head is a very ordinary experience in jap. One need not be scared of it. It happens due to an intense activation of Śakti in the higher centres and of-itself it subsides too.

Sometimes, the head of the aspirant continues to remain hot. This is a danger signal and is indicative of the fact that the aspirant is crossing the limits. In such a situation he should at once reduce his Sādhanā. The use of clay-strips or oil will be useful. Walking in the open and physical activity also is helpful.

A change in the food one takes becomes natural when one progresses on the path of Sādhanā. One's interests change too. It is absolutely necessary that in keeping with the inner dispositions, one should keep on changing one's food etc. These are not the demands of the palate. These are the demands of the body and the vital sustaining it.

1. Even otherwise due to the increased intensity of descent and inability to endure it sometimes-momentarily too-such a state is possible.

These should certainly be met. To reject it just because of one's obstinacy or habit, is not beneficial for Sādhanā.

One should not try to reduce sleep-deliberately. In fact, the intenser the Sādhanā the more there is the need for rest. But when Sādhanā progresses sleep of itself will decrease. And one finds that within a very short time due to the play of the activated Mahāśakti, fatigue disappears so much that one comes to experience that if after relaxing one could do mantra-jap even for a short while, fatigue vanishes and one begins to feel refreshed to experience and induction of a new life in oneself.

If one does not have a full sleep concentration too is usually not possible.

The aspirant has to be-specially-cautious of a cocktail of Sādhanā. If instead of doing it with perfect devotion, one begins sometimes to do one thing and sometimes another like jap etc. then the inner activity and the path too is bound to get complicated. The available paths of Sādhanā usually are of ascent. And so there is every possibility of one's getting entangled-in diverse complexities, due to the mixture of incongruent, spiritual practices. Any attempt to awaken the Śakti in the higher centres-entirely-through one's own efforts of concentration etc. is not only improper but can prove obstructive and harmful-specially an attempt to awaken the Mulādharā.

The Siddhāsana is often used for Sādhanā by the followers of the path of ascent. While sitting in that Āsana concentration seems to come easily, but for the serene descent and development of Śakti it is absolutely improper. Similarly in Padmāsana the parts of the body cannot adequately relax. By keeping the spine erect the ascent of Sakti is easily obtained, but for us descent is desirable and ascent too. So Padmāsana is not useful. For the awakening

the Śakti and for experiencing of Sabda (sounds)-diverse postures (मुद्राएं) are also used. Infact, these are also not needed. When time is ripe one can experience them on one's own. When the mother considers it to be proper she will enable us to have them or any one of these entirely on Her own.

And as the aspirant gradually progresses there are bound to be diverse, extremely subtle changes in his mode of Sādhanā. It is impossible to fix any time for the same. One's inner disposition will of-itself effect those changes. All that is needed is simply to be fully prepared for the change.

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