



*The Path
of Unfoldment*

Savita Taylor

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An introduction to the Teachings of
GURURAJ ANADA YOGI

by
Savita Taylor

to
The Eternal Wanderer





THE INTERNATIONAL EMBLEM

The international Emblem expresses the universality and spiritual purpose of the teachings. Its nine discs represent some of the world's major religions. Starting at the top, and proceeding clockwise, they are as follows: The Vedic tradition, represented by the Aum symbol; Judaism, represented by the Menorah; Zoroastrianism, represented by a brazier bearing fire; Confucianism, represented by two tablets of philosophical teachings; Islam, represented by the star and crescent moon. The spiral, or Eternal Circle, represents a symbolic location for all individuals with self-styled belief systems, agnostic, or atheist positions. Taoism is represented by the Yin and Yang, Buddhism by the eight-fold wheel of life, and finally Christianity is represented by the Cross.

The nine discs rest on five golden cords, symbolising a musical staff with its five lines and four spaces. This suggests the idea that all religions and spiritual paths exist in harmony and are various avenues to the same goal. Gururaj, who designed this emblem, has often said that each person is his own individual path to Divinity. The religious traditions are recognised as man-made systems, forms of inspired belief, resting on concentric circles which radiate out from and seek to return their participants back toward the one formless light at the centre. The flame in the centre represents a formless reality which has been given many names: the Inner Light, the Light of Divinity, the Divine Truth, the Source, the Light within each of us – the goal to which all men and women aspire.

The basic idea and feeling portrayed by this emblem is that all paths exist in harmony and are different ways leading to the same goal of Self-realization or God-realisation.



Gururaj Ananda Yogi

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Foreword

This book contains the basic principles of the teachings of Gururaj Ananda Yogi (1932-1988), a mystic of our time. His teaching imbibes both the Eastern and Western systems of wisdom. It is based on his own spiritual experience gained with his guru, Swami Pavitrananda in his native India which led him to the highest state of Self-realization and, later, through living a Western lifestyle in his adopted city of Cape Town. In 1974 Gururaj gave up the householder way of life to devote himself to full-time spiritual teaching so that he could share his realisations with others throughout the world. His teachings are profound yet practical. The principle aim is to help ordinary people to realise their own spiritual potential within their daily active life, aided by what are possibly the most powerful personally prescribed meditation techniques available in the West today.

This practical guide to his teachings was compiled by Savita Taylor in 1979 from Gururaj's lectures, or satsangs, which he delivered to students all over the world. It is reprinted here in its entirety without alteration from the original text. However, some sections may seem to be out of date such as the description of how mantras are derived by Gururaj himself. It should therefore be remembered that before Gururaj died, he left instructions as to how this procedure was to be continued, and so the same principle applies today.

Gururaj spoke from the heart, drawing directly from his profound inner knowledge and experience. He never prepared his lectures, but answered questions spontaneously as they were asked. The content of his satsangs

ranges from mystical and philosophical concepts, to practical advice on how to live a full, happy and purposeful life. Gururaj dedicated himself to helping the movement of each individual along the Spiritual Path, no matter what their religion, belief or lifestyle. The tremendous love that shines through his teachings leaves us with a sense of trust that each one of us has the ability to draw upon that underlying source or divine energy and, by so doing, our spiritual journey is accelerated and enriched. The Path of Unfoldment is a book that inspires self-discovery.

Usha Forder
March, 1995

Experience and Understanding

To find a purpose and meaning in life is a task which all of us have attempted at some time or another. To live without knowing why, to suffer without understanding the cause of our suffering, to die without having really lived – no one would choose these things, and yet the vast majority of mankind is not able to rise above their own personal environment for long enough to find their solutions. Everyone desires happiness, and yet very few are prepared to really direct themselves to find it, and even fewer ever reach the point at which they can say that they are truly happy.

Spiritual teachers come to guide, to point the way to those who are seeking, and to share their own experience of the path with others. Gururaj teaches happiness and he explains how it is possible to become the master of ourselves and of our lives. At the same time he offers meditation techniques which can translate his teachings into a living reality for the individual student. A true master teaches on many levels: he teaches with words, by example, through silent communication, and above all by giving his students the tools with which to teach themselves.

Happiness cannot be gained through reading a book, nor simply by listening to the words of one who has found fulfilment himself. Each individual has to discover within himself the purpose of life, and to experience for himself the 'peace which passeth all understanding' which comes with this discovery. There exists a vast chasm between intellectual understanding and personal experience which in Gururaj's teachings is filled by meditation and spiritual practices. These practices cannot be taught in a book, for meditation is a very personal and individual thing and must be taught as such. However, a

book such as this which expounds the wisdom and teachings of a master can provide a framework into which we can fit our experience. Those who practice meditation will find that the level to which their spiritual practices take them is beyond that point where intellectual analysis is possible. By gaining an understanding of Gururaj's teachings we can translate a profound experience gained in meditation into practical terms, and thus help ourselves to use this in our daily lives. By learning of the goals of the spiritual path we can help to point ourselves towards them, and use the instrument of the mind to direct our energies into a higher and purer level of being.

Those who read this book will be doing so perhaps in order to gain some insight into those very basic questions which every human being asks himself at some point, as he tries to find the fulfilment he seeks: 'Who am I' 'What am I' 'Why am I here?' All philosophies, religions and spiritual paths are based around these questions. This whole book can only be an introduction to their answers for they contain the whole meaning and understanding of ourselves, and thus of the whole universe. If we can truly know ourselves, then we can know God, and if we can know God then we have reached total fulfilment, because we have become one with everything in the universe.

The most rewarding way to learn from a teacher is to accept the knowledge he gives, and to take it within ourselves where it can be stored and drawn from as we gain some firm basis on which to attach it. This incorporates both aspects of learning, that of learning from others and of learning from ourselves. Good teachers know that they can never really teach us anything – they can only give us the tools with which to teach ourselves. A sincere student will accept these tools gratefully, and acknowledge the one who gives them.

Parts of this book are aspects of Gururaj's teachings which I have

experienced, parts are aspects which I have not yet verified within myself. However, in the process of writing it I have come to understand the value of grasping the wisdom of a master, even if it is only on an intellectual level. It seems that such wisdom is in itself conducive to experience. For it is not the knowledge itself that is of such importance, but the method by which the master acquired it. All knowledge is interconnected, and the facts fit into an overall structure. What we need to learn are the connections themselves – if we can comprehend these then we have access to all knowledge. It is like a mathematician – his most important knowledge is the understanding of the nature of numbers, and the way numbers can be combined to reach various conclusions. A mathematician does not have the answers to every possible problem stored away in his brain, but with his knowledge of the use of numbers, he has the tools with which to find out the answers to all mathematical problems.

Facts are useful in specific situations, but they are not ultimately important. What is important is the connection between facts, the pattern from which facts emerge. This is the level of awareness and of perception from which springs a holistic understanding of reality. If we study the teachings of great masters we begin to attune ourselves to their minds, and to catch hold of that vital ingredient which is the essence of fact and the basis of true understanding. When this is grasped it is seen to be an experience, and goes beyond intellectual knowledge. So in fact it is possible to deepen and intensify one's own life through studying and absorbing the wisdom of one who is himself established in truth. Understanding can thus lead to experience, in the same way as experience, through meditation, can lead to understanding.

Knowledge is only useful if it produces a change in perception which has a constructive, uplifting effect on our lives. Gururaj always relates the deeper aspects of his philosophy to their application in everyday living. If an

understanding of philosophy were all that was needed to reach the state of enlightenment, that state where man has fully unfolded himself, then all professors of philosophy would be enlightened men. Clearly they are not. What is lacking is the practical application of their knowledge, and the experience of its reality.

In structuring this book I have followed the principle always used by Gururaj of combining theory with application. There are some basic concepts which have to be explained at the start in order that we can later apply the teaching on a practical level. These will be found mainly in the next two chapters – as the book progresses it will be seen how these deep premises can find expression in everyday living, bringing a harmony and fullness which gives a new meaning and purpose to our lives.

The Evolutionary Process

Every craftsman must have his tools, and every teacher must build his teaching around a basic structure. For one who teaches the art of living, this structure is an understanding of the workings and nature of the mind and of the soul – the instruments through which each one of us expresses himself in whichever way we can. By knowing and comprehending these we can begin to see the ways in which we can work with the forces of nature to bring harmony and fulfilment into our body, mind and spirit.

The Nature of the Soul

We will begin by examining the nature of the soul and the path it travels. What is the soul? Where did it come from? Who created it? Much is spoken of the creator and of his creation, the universe, but immediately the question arises: why did the creator create the universe in the first place? What in fact was the impulse which started everything off, and what was the purpose of the creation?

For the sake of explanation, let us look at this idea from another angle. Instead of the words 'creator' and 'creation', let us use the terms 'manifestor' and 'manifestation'. This makes the situation clearer. For it is the nature of the manifestor to manifest, just as it is the nature of fire to give heat, and of a flower to give fragrance. The manifestor cannot help manifesting, for this process is inherent within him. Manifestation does not imply an act of will, as creation does, but rather a spontaneous and inevitable

happening. The manifestor cannot exist without the manifestation, the absolute cannot exist without the relative. The two are so interwoven as to be inseparable. Divinity contains within itself the seed of the entire manifestation, just as the pattern of the oak tree is contained within the acorn.

The universal spiritual self, which we call God, is permanently silent. Its essence is transmuted as a subtle emanation in the form of kinetic energy which through various processes of replication, combination and permutation gradually assumes a more and more gross substance which science has termed matter. These many forms of energies in various states of condensation are generally known as and categorised in three levels, namely spiritual, mental, and physical. The spiritual, being even beyond the subatomic matter, is yet to be discovered by physicists. The mental is a grouping of essential forces of an ever-changing nature at a grosser level than the spiritual, and is known as soul. The physical is known as the grosser primal atom, and is also ever-changing. The latter two forms recreate, preserve and dissolve by their inherent qualities to form and reform again and again. Because of their inherent nature and changing quality, they take on their own individuality, thus creating the sense of separateness, though they in fact all form a continuum in spite of their graduations. All this constitutes manifestation and is confined within its own laws and classified as relativity.

As has been stated in the previous paragraph about the continuity or continuum of existence, the spiritual energy force pervades even when it is individualised as a soul. Indeed the soul or life-force exists even in the mineral kingdom. Through a continuous process of interaction with each other, millions of atoms gradually combine until they form the elements of the most basic state of evolution, the mineral world.

What we are saying then, is that everything has a soul, even the smallest pebble on the beach. Soul is simply the individualised form of the universal

spirit. It is the natural outcome of the inherent manifesting form. We must differentiate here between the spirit and the soul. Spirit, or the spiritual self of man, is all-pervading, whilst the soul is that very universal spirit taking individual form. The spirit is free of all ties and has no boundaries – it is an untainted, untouched neutral energy which flows through everything and at the same time is everything. Though the soul emerges from the spirit, its very individuality creates an apparent separation from it. The spiritual essence is cognised and activated within the soul to a greater or lesser degree, depending on its state of evolution.

The process of evolution is inherent in every soul. The soul passes from the mineral level to the plant level and on to the animal level in a steady and unimpeded flow. The spiritual energy, or universal life-force in each individual soul drives it forward along its evolutionary path, acting within the very pattern of manifestation. This process is natural and automatic until it reaches the level of man.

The mineral world is the first and most basic life-form, and yet even at this level individuality exists. In the plant world the soul has reached a higher stage of evolution. The plant has greater sensibility and responds more actively to outside influences and impressions. At the animal level this sensibility is intensified and the animal has greater instinctive powers of response and receptivity. When the soul reaches the highest level possible in the animal world, it can make the transition from animal to human.

At this point the nature of its evolution undergoes a radical change. In becoming man, soul unfolds the ability to think. This quality was always there, but it has now been activated and expressed. This, one could say, is where the problems start. For once the seed of thought is planted man starts becoming aware of himself; he starts exercising judgment over his needs and developing a greater form of individuality. This individuality brings man to assume a sense of 'I', of me and mine. In short, he develops the ego, and the

principal desire of the ego is to preserve itself. This sense of self-preservation was present in the animal, but in an instinctive form. In man it has become conscious. The conscious desire for self-preservation leads to a conflict within the mind of man. On the one hand he is driven forward by his inner desire to continue his progress along the evolutionary path; on the other, he is dominated by the desire of his ego to maintain at all costs his sense of individuality. In most people the need for self-preservation overshadows the greater quest, and man becomes lost in a mire of needs and desires. Through the development of the ego man has created boundaries between himself and the rest of the universe. He has produced a sense of separateness which on the superficial level may seem to give him security, but which in fact becomes the cause of all his conflicts and unhappiness.

As we have shown, there is no separation between the various components of the universe. They are like a string of beads – all individual in form, and yet made of the same stuff and held together with one thread. Because of his ability to think, man can be the slowest to evolve, or the fastest. He now has free-will – he can choose how he wishes to use his mind, whether he allows it to create a sense of separation or to flow with a sense of unity.

The evolutionary progress of the soul is now no longer a spontaneous and steady process. In human form the soul is given responsibility. Throughout the early stages, the worlds of mineral, plant and animal, there is a permanent awareness of ‘I am’ - ness. This is not a conscious thought – there is no thought or feeling of this nature in these states – but an instinctive knowingness. The world of nature acts and interacts in a perfect way, each element performing its duty to maintain the natural equilibrium. Each lifeform instinctively knows its place and the role it has to play. Man, because of his sense of ego, has lost this natural knowingness. The responsibility for its recognition is his own, and when discovered it will be on a far deeper level than the instinctive knowing of the lower stages. At this point the soul

can start the upward tum, and move on to the stage where it once more loses its sense of individuality and merges with its universality. This will emerge from a conscious knowing, an active and mindful understanding and participation of the workings of the universe. This state of total awareness, which is called enlightenment, is the completion of the soul's cycle of evolution, and occurs when the soul comes to the full realisation of its divine nature, and no longer allows itself to be influenced by the sense of separation that the individual's ego tries to create. At this point man's free-will, allowed him by his ability to think, merges with divine will, or the natural pattern of life. It is then that the soul can truly be said to have played out its part in the manifestation of the universe, through the realisation that the individual self, or soul (known in Sanskrit as Atman) is none other than the Universal Self, or spirit (Brahman).

The Nature or the Mind

Having discussed the nature of the soul, it is now necessary to examine the nature of the mind, in order to give a fuller understanding of ourselves and the way we function.

The word mind is used in many ways. Sometimes it is employed to mean the 'brain', or the 'intellect' or the 'thinking/feeling ability of man'. Gururaj's definition of the mind is much broader than any of these, as we shall see. First let us make a distinction between the universal mind and the individual mind. In the same way as the soul is the individualised form of the universal spirit, or divinity, so the individual mind is the particularised form of the universal mind. The universal mind is divine, it is omnipresent, it is omniscient. It forms the all embracing pattern of the universe, the structure into which everything is placed. For man to attune his individual mind to the universal mind is for him to reach that state of awareness where he spontaneously acts according to the natural law, and all his thoughts and

actions are uplifting and progressive in every way.

Man's individual mind is universal in essence. However, it has been subjected to millions of experiences during the progression of the soul through all its incarnations in the various stages of evolution we have described. Each one of these experiences has left an impression on the mind which is still with us. These impressions in Sanskrit are called samskaras. It is these very samskaras which draw veils in the mind and prevent it from seeing its true universal nature.

Imagine an ocean, moving free and without boundaries, millions of drops of water intermingling with each other and creating the whole. This ocean is pure consciousness, the universal mind. And now imagine taking a transparent plastic bag and filling it with water. The same water is inside the bag as outside, but now some of the water has been contained within a very fine sheath. This sheath is what gives the soul its individuality. Now let us wrap more and more layers round this bag until we reach the stage where the bag has become so thick that we cannot see the water inside, indeed are not even aware of the fact that it contains the very same water as that of the ocean. These layers are the samskaras – impression after impression that cloud the mind until we, from the superficial level, are no longer aware of our own intrinsic divinity.

The mind, says Gururaj, is an excellent tool but a hopeless master. He also calls it a very cunning animal. For the mind itself, being veiled in this way by samskaras, is unable to see the picture clearly. However, because of the power of the ego and its desire for self-preservation, the mind can persuade itself that what it sees really is the whole picture, and not only a tiny part. The mind can trick us into believing that we are just as we perceive ourselves to be, and, unless we are able to go beyond the mind, we can have no other point of reference.

The Conscious, the Sub-Conscious – and the Super-Conscious

The individual mind can be divided into three sections: the conscious mind, the sub-conscious mind and the super-conscious-mind.

The super-conscious mind can be compared with the clear plastic bag which has been filled with water. It is divine, it is universal, and yet it is individual. There is that thin sheath which separates it from the absolute and gives it form. It is the finest level of relativity, and yet it is fully aware of its divinity. The barrier between the super-conscious mind and the universal mind is thin and transparent. The full light of divinity can shine through and the super-conscious mind bathes in this light and is fully aware of this universal force. This is the core of our being, our very essence.

The sub-conscious mind is composed of the layers and layers of impressions, or *samskaras*, which have been imprinted upon it through the soul's cycle of existence. What psychologists call the sub-conscious is in fact only the upper strata of this sub-conscious mind, the full depth is unfathomable by the intellect and has been built up over millions of years, ever since the point of manifestation of the individual soul. This thick *samskaric* wall allows only the merest glimmer of the universal forces to penetrate through to the conscious level, where they could play an active part in our daily lives.

The conscious mind is the active, reasoning, decision-making level which we are aware of in everyday activity. It is governed, as we have said, by the sub-conscious, and to a far lesser extent by what little of the super-conscious awareness is able to filter through. Because of this, most of our thoughts and behaviour patterns spring from the sub-conscious and not from the super-conscious mind.

Every external impression we receive by our senses is transferred through the mechanisms of the brain, into the conscious area which then passes it on to the sub-conscious. It is then assessed in a process in which the intellect

plays an evaluating role, according to the impressions already stored in the sub-conscious. We may react immediately, according to the necessity of the moment. Alternatively, if the evaluation does not require active expression, the impression is added to the storehouse, where it adds a new element or strengthens a past impression.

In the vast majority of cases, then, we will be acting not from a purely spontaneous level, according to the true nature of the situation, but from a level of compulsive reaction, governed by our particular samskaras. Occasionally, however, something will filter through to the conscious level from the super-conscious, and at these times we do not act in a programmed fashion but in a truly spontaneous way. An example of this is the welling up of true love, not an emotion but an inexplicable overflowing of a universal love, one which has no limitations and is not dependent on the object of loving. Another example is a truly creative thought – one which suddenly seems to pop into the mind from nowhere and throws a whole new light on a particular situation. Powers of intuition also come from the superconscious level, for they involve the sudden knowing of something which could not have been reasoned out, or the cognising of something which is beyond the bounds of our experience, and therefore beyond the limits of the sub-conscious.

Emotions do not spring from the super-conscious, but are a product of our past experience. A situation which produces an emotional reaction in us does so because of a particular samskara which that situation enlivens, causing us to experience a certain, often irrational, emotion.

The Nature of Thought

Man thinks that he thinks, but most of the time he does not really think at all – such is the cunning nature of the mind. For pure thought, which comes from super-conscious level, is always creative. It wells up from deep inside, and is a continuous process of expressing the essence of

ourselves, re-creating from the limitless knowledge of the super-conscious a concrete thought on the conscious level. Such thoughts emanate from the super-conscious like bubbles rising from the bottom of a pond. When they reach the surface they are cognised by the conscious mind. How many of these bubbles reach the top depends on how clear the sub-conscious level is, and how much is able to filter through it.

Most of the thoughts that fill our mind spring from the sub-conscious level, and are conditioned and patterned by our samskaras. The impressions that each individual has collected in the past are different and unique to him. This is the reason why people react so differently to situations, and why a particular occurrence can upset one person very much and yet will not produce any strong reaction from another. We each see a different facet of relative truth. If we could function from the universal level, the super-conscious, we would see the whole truth, the underlying reality. We would still be individuals with our own sub-conscious and conscious mind which would always give a uniqueness to our thoughts and our modes of expression and behaviour, but we would no longer be dominated by these levels, but rather use them to express the universal awareness. At this stage we could say that our mind (or the sub-conscious and conscious levels of our mind) had become our tool and not our master, and the nature of our thoughts would be truly creative and free from any patterning.

Individual Responsibility

The previous chapter has shown us the nature of the mind and of the soul. The next step is to look at the implications this has in terms of our present state and the way we act in the world.

Samskaras

As has been seen, within the sub-conscious mind of each of us lies an entire structure of samskaras (impressions) left on the mind by past thoughts and actions. These samskaras now govern our conscious minds and produce programmed responses which dictate the manner in which we think and act. But who created these samskaras? We did. We did so by the manner in which we allowed our past to make deep and binding impressions on us. This is not to say that we were at fault in doing this – at the particular evolutionary status we were then in we might not have had the ability to do anything else. But we have created what we are today. We are the sum total of everything we have been in the past. The memory of this past is within us and has made us what we are now. This is a fundamentally important point, because the acceptance of this completely changes our view of ourselves. There is no one else we can blame for ourselves but ourselves. Not our parents, not our background, not our misfortune, not even God.

Put In such a fashion, this may seem a rather overwhelming thought, but in fact – as always – this knowledge can give us hope and determination. Because if we have the power to create our own reality, then we also have

the power to change it. More than this, we owe it to ourselves to do so, it is our responsibility.

Karma

Before exploring the idea of responsibility any further we must also understand another vital factor – karma – which forms the basis of samskaras. The immediate question which springs to mind when we say that we are responsible for ourselves is this: yes, it may be true that we have created the way we think and feel and react, but what about the things that happen to us from the outside, the problems life throws at us? Surely those are not our fault?

This is where karma comes in. The word karma means simply action. When we use the term karma we really mean the law of karma. The law of karma is merely an extension of Newton's Third Law of Dynamics, which states that every action must have its corresponding reaction. This may be fairly easy to grasp in terms of physics, but what if we take it further and say that it applies to every action which occurs in the universe, including the actions performed by man? Then it becomes a vast concept. What we are saying is that everything we do, and even everything we think, will come back to us in some form some time.

Negative actions and thoughts rebound in the form of negativity from others, or difficulties of other kinds. Positive actions in turn produce positivity. Whatever happens to us, we can know that we have done something to deserve it. And whatever we do, we can know that in universal terms we will not escape from the results of it – sometime, in some place, it will come back to us.

The Theory of Reincarnation

Despite this law, we all know people for whom life seems to throw up endless difficulties, despite their sweet and kind nature, and others whose lives seem to be made up wholly of actions which harm others, who nevertheless appear to be successful in everything they do. The explanation for this is that the law of karma does not necessarily work over one single lifetime. The soul carries its karmic debts with it from lifetime to lifetime, and hardships experienced in this life may be received in return for harm done by ourselves in a previous one.

Our lives are dictated by two factors: our samskaras and our karma. Our samskaras cause us to be the way we are inside; our karma governs our external environment. The important point is that both our external and our internal circumstances have been created by ourselves. Our karma is as much our responsibility as our samskaras. So not only do we have to learn to accept how we are as of our own making, but we also have to come to terms with the fact that we are the cause of what life brings us as well.

More than that, we actually chose the circumstances under which we were born as those most appropriate for our own evolution.

The Process of Reincarnation

In the time between lifetimes, when the soul has shed the physical body, what remains is the subtle body, that bundle of samskaras which we call the sub-conscious mind. The power of the intellect is still alive, the power of discrimination is still alive, but being unfettered by the physical body it can function at a much purer level, because it can draw more power from the spiritual level, that essence which we have called the super-conscious. Finding thus a greater clarity, the soul can begin a process of evaluating the progress it has made and the hurdles it still has to overcome. Accessing the

previous life and revising the entire existence of the individual soul, we decide which is the best possible way for us to learn the particular lessons we need to learn and to payoff the karmic debts that we have accumulated.

On the basis of this assessment we choose the body through which we will take our next incarnation, bearing in mind the parents we will have and their genetic structure, the environment we will live in, the various problems we are likely to encounter, and so forth.

The whole theory of reincarnation may seem to be hard to accept for one who is new to it, and indeed it is a vast concept to understand, for it brings an entirely new way of looking at all aspects of life. Proof of it is impossible to find, it can only be known through experience, and it is only at a very high state of consciousness that one is able to have a clear cognition of past lives.

However, the most difficult thing to accept about the theory of reincarnation is that it places the full and total responsibility for our lives squarely on our own shoulders. If we accept reincarnation then we no longer have the right to blame anybody or anything else for what happens to us. Thus when we base our lives on the principles of reincarnation we are not choosing a comfortable or easy solution. Reincarnation is not necessarily hard to accept intellectually, because immediately it explains the apparent unfairness in the world. It may nevertheless seem hard to accept in practice because of the tremendous onus of responsibility that it places on us as individuals. We are forced to start living a responsible life, and not a life of escapism where we are permanently putting the blame on other people. There is one big pitfall which it is all too easy to fall into when one believes in karma and reincarnation, and this is the belief that everything that happens to other people is their own karma and therefore not our responsibility. This is a gross misinterpretation. If we see someone suffering, and ignore them on the grounds that they have created their own suffering, then it is us, and not they, who will be incurring karma. They may be in that

situation because of their past actions, but we always have the responsibility to help alleviate others' suffering in whatever way we can and thereby reduce our own debt.

Pre-determination and Free-will

The concept of reincarnation raises a big question: is the whole pattern of our lives already determined at birth, or do we have the free-will to create our own destiny? The answer to that question, in a word, is: 'Both'. In choosing to be born under certain circumstances, we undertake to go through certain experiences. We have all incurred karmic debts, and we will be given the opportunities to pay these off within this lifetime. For example, we have certain strong links with other souls with whom we have been in the past. This explains why certain people produce very strong feelings within us (either positive or negative!) the first time we meet them. These people we are bound to meet during our life, because we need to interact with them in order to play out our respective roles. Such considerations do not necessarily mean, however, that we will behave any better towards them this time than we did in the previous life. And so – free-will comes in – for it is entirely up to us how well we live this life. If we come across somebody who brings out very negative feelings in us, we have the free-will to decide whether we are going to allow these feelings to dominate our interactions with the person in question, or whether we are going to try and sublimate them.

All patterns within the divine plan are no more than tendencies. Nothing is ever totally and irrevocably fixed. Because of man's free-will there is always the possibility of improvement or degeneration. To put it another way, it may be our karma to get a thorn in our foot, but this does not mean that we should not try and remove it. Man has the ability to think, and with this comes the ability to discriminate. Because of this he has free-will, and because of his free-will he has the responsibility to make decisions.

Dharma and Karma

To explain this further, let us look at the difference between dharma and karma. Karma we already know: because of the various positive and negative actions we have performed in the past, we will undergo certain experiences in this lifetime. Of that we can be certain, and there is no way we can avoid these – they are pre-determined.

Our dharma, however, is ours to make what we will of it. The literal translation of dharma is ‘duty’, but this does not mean duty in the sense of drudgery, or of doing things because we feel we ought to, even though our heart is not really in them.

Dharma means duty in the sense of an obligation to ourselves. If we fulfil our dharma then we are doing the very best that we can with the material that we have, which is our present state of evolution. We owe this to ourselves. We are all born with certain positive qualities, certain tendencies which if taken up and worked on can lead to a fulfilment of our true potential. Here effort is required as free-will comes into play. Karma is what we will have to do; dharma is what we ought to be doing if we are to fulfil the duty we have to ourselves and to others. We must never forget that whatever good we do for ourselves in terms of wilfully taking steps to improve the quality of our lives, that good will in turn reflect on others around us.

Universal Responsibility

Those who practice meditation or other forms of techniques for self unfoldment are sometimes accused of being selfish, of spending too much time in pursuits which are aimed at their own satisfaction instead of using that time to help humanity.

This is a completely false and superficial viewpoint: in fact the reverse is true. Humanity is but the sum of its parts – the state of humanity depends

entirely on the state of the individuals of whom it is composed. No fundamental and permanent change can be made in the world unless it also has its corresponding change on the level of individual consciousness. As long as human nature is dominated by its baser qualities – fear, greed, guilt, the desire for power, or for security, or for material possessions, all the qualities which emerge from the ego’s need for self-preservation – then society as a whole will continue to suffer.

Every individual within society has the responsibility to himself and to others to work towards the stage where he is no longer governed by the needs of his ego, but rather resides in that area beyond the ego, the super-conscious mind, so that his actions can truly be said to be self-less, rather than selfish. Then, without self-motivation, every action of his will be for the good of others rather than himself.

The First Step – Taking Responsibility

We have already explained that we all have free-will. Within the limitations put upon us by our samskaras we can choose the steps we take in our lives. Will they be progressive or regressive? No one else can decide this for us – we have to do this ourselves. We have, however, one vital force acting in our favour. Within the very impulse which originally manifested the individual soul is the continuing propulsion which drives us forward towards our ultimate goal – that of merging once more into divinity. We may well not be aware of this on the conscious level, but deep down it is there, slowly guiding and pushing us towards that goal. We are on a journey and the destination is fixed. But we have the choice of going by donkey cart, or by car, or by plane. Because of our free-will we can speed up the journey, and make it smoother and easier and more enjoyable, or we can slow it down, and endure all the bumps and sufferings on the way.

Individual responsibility may seem a rather daunting prospect, but it can

be a very exciting one. Because what it implies is that we can do something about our lives, we do not need to go on suffering all the ups and downs of life, being pushed this way and that by our emotions, our fears, our insecurities. We can become the master of our life, and not its slave. And what freedom this brings!

Taking responsibility – this is all it needs. The first step towards this freedom is simply accepting that we are the cause of our suffering and not the result of it, and then taking steps to do something about it.

Meditation

Having understood a little of our own nature and the process of evolution that has taken place to bring us to the point at which we now find ourselves, the next question must be: where do we go from here? From the last chapter it has been seen that the responsibility for our own growth lies in our hands, and the choice of what we do with our lives, and how much we are prepared to help ourselves, lies with us.

The root of our problems, as has been explained, is our inability to go beyond them, and thus see life and ourselves as a harmonious whole rather than a jumble of fragmented impressions. The solution, then, would seem to be to go beyond the sub-conscious mind, the storehouse of these impressions and our troubles, to that inner core of our own essentially divine nature.

Meditation is a simple, systematic process which gradually takes us beyond the normal thinking, feeling level of existence, and into the inner quiet, towards that pure centre within each of us, which has so successfully been covered up by the veils of impressions the soul has had imprinted upon it. Over a period of time, through regularly diving to these deeper areas of our being, our awareness becomes gradually established in these areas, and one by one the veils are lifted away, so that more and more of the divine spirit within shines through into our conscious mind. From this new level of awareness, our perspective changes, and life is seen from a different viewpoint.

Because samskaras are created by the mind – on both the conscious and sub-conscious levels – it is clear that the mind will find it very hard to eliminate the problems caused by them. Indeed samskaras can never really

be 'removed', because they are the mind, part and parcel of the structure of the soul, and without them we would not exist as an individual entity. Freedom comes through releasing ourselves from the binding influence of samskaras, rather than removing them, and this can only be done by going beyond the level where they are operative, and thus sublimating them. Various scriptures talk of burning the seeds of karma – the samskaras. They still exist, but can no longer grow into trees, and remain in seed form in a way that they no longer control us but become merely the vehicle through which we can express our real selves.

We will go more deeply into the effects that going beyond the mind have on samskaras at a later stage. The important point to realise now is that it can never be wholly possible to purify the mind with the mind, and we must instead use a method which transcends this level, activating an inner strength which is a force more powerful than the mind.

The practice of meditation activates this force, and the results are experienced on every level of our being. As we begin to establish ourselves more and more in the super-conscious, we become less and less attached to the other levels, which gradually lose their grip on us. The difference is like that between riding on a boat on the surface of the ocean and diving down to the depths. In the first instance one is rocked and buffeted by every wave that comes along; in the second one is not affected by the waves, though one is still aware of their existence. The effects that this has are so numerous and all-encompassing that it would be impossible to list them all. They are to be experienced, and will be by all those who practice meditation regularly over a period of time. In general terms meditation brings a gradual change from being the slave of life to being its master. We become more aware of the stable basis of our being and this acts as an anchor which holds us fast through all the buffeting of life. As this security grows, our fears and tensions diminish. We begin to sense a general feeling of well-being and fulfilment and a spontaneous flow of love and understanding towards those around us.

Many people find themselves being drawn to meditation without fully understanding why. There seems to be something fundamentally sound about what they have heard about it, and they have reached a point in their lives where they are becoming increasingly aware of a nagging feeling that there must be something more to life than what they know, and yet they can't seem to quite work out what it is. For some there is a definite desire to 'find God' or to 'know themselves'. For others it is simply an overwhelming urge to pull themselves out of the rut their lives seem to be in. But we must remember that deep down within us there is always this impulse that is driving us forward along our path of evolution, and though we may well not be aware of it, this force will inevitably drive us towards that which will progress our evolution, if we allow it to. So the precise conscious motivation is not important – what is important is that each individual has come to the realisation, whether consciously or unconsciously, that the root of their unhappiness or tension lies within them, and has very little to do with their external lifestyle or circumstances. In starting meditation we are taking that first step we talked about in the previous chapter – that of taking our life into our own hands and doing something about it.

The Meditation Practices

To be truly effective, meditation practices must be individually prescribed and individually taught. There are many types of meditation techniques and an infinite number of variations within each category. The precise practice or combination of practices that a person needs are dependent on many factors: the state of their subtle nervous system, the level of consciousness already achieved in this and in previous lives, the nature of their samskaras and the particular lessons to be learnt in this lifetime, the future potential of the individual, or their dharma, their personality and temperament, and so on. These factors are all of an extremely subtle and complex nature; things

that can only be assessed by someone who is able to tune in precisely to every level of an individual's being and thus know the nature and state of the soul in all its aspects. Only with this knowledge can meditation techniques be selected which are perfectly suited to the individual, and which will take him naturally and easily along his path without harming him in any way.

For this reason Gururaj personally chooses all the meditation techniques that are taught to his students. Only when the selection is made in this way can the student be sure that he is gaining the maximum benefit from the time spent in meditation, and that he will not be using a technique which is unsuited to him and could bring unbalanced results, or no results at all.

When a student comes to learn meditation he fills out a short form which is sent to Gururaj together with a photograph of the individual. The contents of the form give Gururaj some idea of the temperament of the student, his present state as he sees it, and his hopes and desires. The photograph, however, gives him access to much more. Using the photograph as a focal point, Gururaj goes into a deep state of meditation, called samadhi. In samadhi he enters a plane of consciousness where there is no time and space, where all is known and known to be one, and yet enough of the individual consciousness is retained to perceive and cognise the precise object in mind – that is the soul of the individual student. From this viewpoint all physical and mental barriers are removed; Gururaj is able to see the individual as a complete entity and thus select the precise tools which will lead that soul further along its evolutionary path to freedom.

The tools are the spiritual practices which are later taught to the student, following the precise instructions given by Gururaj to the teacher who is fully trained to explain all aspects of the various practices. These instructions form the initiation, or teaching session. The imparting of spiritual practices given by a guru to a chela, or student, is a very important step in the evolution of the student, and the atmosphere surrounding the

initiation must be one of seriousness and purpose. The teacher, who is acting purely as a channel for Gururaj, has to bring himself to as pure a state as possible so that the teaching can be done in a clear and selfless manner, bringing the greatest benefit to the initiate, or student. The whole process has a purifying and uplifting effect on the atmosphere which calms the mind of both the teacher and the student. In receiving guidance from a master, the chela (student) is both accepting a gift and acknowledging the greater wisdom of the guru.

The Different Types of Meditation

There are hundreds of types of meditation techniques and those specifically prescribed by Gururaj to a new initiate fall into several main categories. Each has a specific purpose and yet each one interrelates with the others, so that it is the whole programme of meditation techniques which is important and which produces the balanced growth and self-integration of the meditator. Described below are just a few of them.

Mantra Meditation

Mantra meditation uses a specific sound, or mantra, which is repeated mentally in an effortless manner and draws us within ourselves towards our spiritual centre. The mantra itself is of extreme importance and is a unique sound for each individual. The mantra is the most fundamental of all practices given by Gururaj to a chela, because the mantra is the totality of the vibration emitted by that individual on the subtlest level. If there were a mechanical device that could reduce our entirety – the body, mind and spirit – into sound value, then our mantra would be the sound that would be heard. Our own mantra is always harmonious to us because it is a reflection of our entirety through three aspects: the vibration, or sound, produced in the motion of the

individualisation of the soul; the present state of evolution, that is how much the spiritual self within us has been unfolded; and the range of that which is ahead of us in terms of how much we could achieve and fulfil.

Using the mantra we dive deeper into the mind, and come closer to the source of ourselves. As this happens the structure of the mantra on an audible level will change, and at the finest level the mantra becomes simply an impulse. At this point we reach the subtlest level of relativity, and from here we do not come back empty-handed but bring back to the conscious mind the power, energy and joy of these deeper regions. Just as after spending half an hour in a perfume factory we come out smelling of perfume, so as we contact the deepest level of ourselves, which lies beyond samskaras, we become immersed in spiritual energy, and this energy gradually becomes more and more of a conscious reality in our lives, thus weakening the hold of samskaras. As these powerful energies are brought to the conscious mind, the mind begins to expand in awareness which brings a clearer and more holistic view on life.

Chakric Techniques.

Techniques are sometimes given which involve the use of the mantra or some other force in conjunction with a certain chakra or energy centre. In order to explain these practices we will first have to define the word 'chakra'.

Up to this point we have spoken of the conscious mind, the sub-conscious mind and the super-conscious mind. These are only definitions, and we could also use the terms physical body, subtle or mental body, and spiritual body. The mind is contained within the subtle body, and uses the physical self as a vehicle of expression. Just as the physical body has various nerve centres and a whole interconnecting nervous system, so the subtle body has also a subtle nervous system with energy centres which are called chakras.

There are seven major chakras as follows:

- Muladhara chakru** Located in the vaginal passage near the entrance to the womb in women, and between the scrotum and the anus in men.
- Swadhistan chakra** Located at the coccyx at the end of the spinal column.
- Manipura chakra** In the area of the navel.
- Anhata chakra** In the area of the heart.
- Visuddha chakra** In the area of the throat.
- Ajna chakra** At the point between the eyebrows.
- Sahasrara chakra** At the top of the head.

A vital energy force flows between these chakras but it cannot flow freely because of the blocks which are contained within the various subtle nerve complexes and chakras. These blocks are the samskaras in the mind, or subtle body, which produce imbalances which in turn are reflected in the outward state of the individual.

A practice which involves the use of the mantra, which is the essence of the individual, in conjunction with a particular chakra, acts as a booster or an injection of a purifying force to the chakra which activates it and allows the energy to flow more easily. When such a technique is given to an individual it is to right an imbalance which Gururaj has perceived within their chakric system.

Tratak

Another form of meditation given by Gururaj is a visual technique which is called *tratak*. The purpose of this practice is to gather the scattered mental energies and develop the powers of concentration. Gradually, with practice, all the mental energies become focused, and the mind becomes still and totally one-pointed. The effects of this are the obvious – a focused and concentrated

mind in daily activity can make all the difference between success and failure. How many times do we not make the best of opportunities presented to us because we are unable to use our mind to its fullest capacity?

The practice of tratak also activates the ajna chakra, or the third eye as it is sometimes called, which is situated between the eyebrows. When awakened the ajna chakra, or inner eye, sees that which the physical eyes do not. In other words the powers of subtle perception are enlivened, powers which are sometimes called psychic, and include such abilities as clairvoyance and the perceiving of subtle energies.

But these abilities are very much secondary and do not play an important part in the true goal of meditation – that of spiritual unfoldment and growth. Because it focuses the mind tratak has a ‘grounding’ effect on the individual which complements the ‘expanding’ effect of mantra meditation. This grounding is important to keep us very much in the world, and not lost in an inner world of experience. Spiritual growth must always take place within and without – the expanding of consciousness within must be complemented by a growing awareness and ability to function well in the outside world. Tratak and mantra meditation complement one another to produce this effect. In addition to this the regular practice of tratak deepens the effect of mantra meditation because it concentrates the mental energies bringing more power to the use of the mantra.

Pranayama

Prana is sometimes thought to be another word for breath, but in fact prana is much more than mere inhalation and exhalation of oxygen and carbon dioxide. Prana is the life force or energy which exists both within us and outside us – breath is merely the grosser expression of prana. Through pranayama practices, which involve the control of breathing in specific ways to set a rhythm, we begin to receive the maximum effect of this life force, which invigorates and purifies the

whole system. On the physical level; this allows us to expel toxins from the system; on the subtle level, the chakras begin to vibrate at a higher frequency, clearing away the blocks of samskaras.

The rhythm used in the basic pranayama practice given by Gururaj correlates to the basic rhythm or vibratory rate of the universe, and in doing the practice the individual consciousness becomes more in tune with universal consciousness.

These explanations serve only to give a general idea of the different forms of meditation techniques used by Gururaj in his teaching. There are many, many more individual practices which are too numerous to mention in an introductory book of this nature. As an individual progresses with his meditation techniques, so he becomes ready for more advanced practices, and when this time comes the chela is instructed into further techniques chosen for him by Gururaj.

Effortless Meditation

The most important thing to remember when doing any of Gururaj's practices is that the meditation must be done in a completely effortless manner. We have all been brought up to believe that in order to achieve something we must try very hard, and that the harder we try the more likely we are to succeed, but in meditation this simply isn't true. Meditation is not a mind technique and it does not use the intellect, or even the emotions, in any way. It is a process more powerful than our minds, more powerful perhaps than anything we have tried to do before. And yet it is the simplest thing in the world to do. Our true essential being really is very simple – it is only our minds which try to manipulate and distort this simplicity in an attempt to control it and somehow to make it 'ours'. We have a tendency to try to do this with meditation also. Once we understand that it is this very desire to interfere and control which is the stumbling block, it becomes easier to allow the meditation to take us where it must.

It is to be made clear here that this does not mean that we lose control of ourselves during meditation. A subtle distinction must be made between our Selves, or our true being, and our little selves, or our ego. Meditation done effortlessly leads us to a state where we are very much in control, in the sense of being totally aware and at one with our Selves, and yet at the same time we can become the observer, and allow this flow to continue naturally, without trying to control it at all.

The Experience of Meditation

We must never forget that meditation is a tool; it is not an end in itself. This is extremely important. If we become absorbed in the nature of the paintbrush, in its shape and texture and how it feels to hold, we will not see the picture it is creating, the beauty of which far exceeds that of the brush itself. Proper meditation techniques bring harmony and happiness into our daily lives – this is what we are seeking and it is to this that we must turn our attention.

Meditations should never be judged as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ according to our subjective experience of them. We must allow the meditation to do its work, and trust that whatever happens within a meditation is what is meant to happen, according to the particular state of our nervous system at that time. The scruffiest brush can paint the most beautiful picture. With our very limited knowledge of the nature of the workings of our mind we should never presume to understand the way in which meditation is unfolding it. So long as we practice our meditations regularly and conscientiously, they will lead us towards our spiritual goal. As Gururaj says: ‘The proof of the pudding is in the eating’. When we go to a physician we take the medicine he prescribes without questioning its contents. The sole criterion we have for judging either the physician or his medicine is whether we get well again.

Gurushakti

This chapter deals with a subject so subtle as to be impossible to explain fully, and yet so fundamental to spiritual progress as to make it the core of all Gururaj's teachings. Gururaj always says that gurushakti can be talked about, but never really explained. It can only be experienced. Nevertheless, an intellectual appreciation of it helps to open us to that experience, and for that reason we will attempt to explain the inexplicable!

What is Shakti?

If we take a vase, we can analyse that vase and say that it is made up of a certain number of atoms and that the particular combination of these atoms creates that which we call 'vase'. But what is the force which holds these atoms together? What is that vital missing ingredient which prevents scientists from creating a baby in a test tube from scratch? Life force. Universal force. Divinity. God. This is shanti. It is that universal force which is existent everywhere and pervades everything in existence. It is within us and within everything. It is creative, it is uplifting, it is progressive. And yet it is imperceptible. Its existence can only be proved by experience of the results it brings.

The Part the Guru Plays

We have already spoken of the individual mind and the universal mind. Let us now turn our attention to individual shakti and universal shakti.

Shakti is omnipresent, and thus by definition is within us, as well as being universal. But the shakti within us, or rather our perception of the shakti within us, is limited. By what? By the mind – that restricted, limiting force which prevents us from becoming one with the universal forces, and blocks the flow of shakti within which remains in a dormant form.

Now a guru, as we have implied, is not blocked by these limitations. A true guru has achieved a state of total integration between body, mind and spirit, and though living in the ordinary world he resides deep within himself and is established in the realms of the purest essence of his being. He has, through the processes described in the previous chapters, burnt the seeds of karma, His samsaras can no longer be activated; they therefore have no binding influence on him and do not block the flow of shanti, or spiritual energy, through him. The flow of this energy, which we could call gurushakti, when specifically directed or drawn upon, acts as a stimulant to the individual shanti within us.

Let us explain how this process comes about. The basis of it is a spiritual link, or channel, which forms between guru and chela. This link becomes congressed at the time of the initiation of the chela by the guru. This is the moment when Gururaj selects the individual practices for the student, and not, as might be thought, at the time when the student is taught these practices. which is merely an expression on the physical level of the link formed. When Gururaj enters the state of samadhi, using the chela's photograph as a focal point, he tunes in to the chela in the way we have described. At this moment he creates a spiritual bond between guru and chela – a bond which can never be broken and is activated every time the chela uses his meditation practices. This is particularly true of his individual mantra, which was born out of that moment and contains the essence of the merging of the guru with the chela in the state of samadhi. This link becomes the channel by which gurushakti can flow through the pure instrument of the guru to the chela, who feels the

benefits as the inner force within him becomes awakened.

So shakti is everywhere, it is a universal force, and yet it can be channelled and directed by the guru. To explain this more fully let us use an analogy. The atmosphere that surrounds us is filled with radio waves from broadcasting stations all over the world. They are everywhere, and yet we are not aware of them, and indeed cannot hear them if we do not have a radio. The guru acts as a radio – he is not the transmitting station, that is something else. In order to pick up sound waves the radio has to be in good working order – all its parts need to be functioning well and in co-ordination with each other. In spiritual terms one could say that the radio needs to be in an integrated state. A guru, a truly self-realized man, has reached this state of total integration in which there is complete harmony and co-ordination. He is therefore able to pick up the radio waves clearly and without distortion. He tunes himself to the transmitting force so that we, who are close to the radio, can hear the music.

So this is a purely natural process which spontaneously occurs in the case of a self-realized man. All the guru does is to set the process up by opening to the chela the channel through which the guruhakti can flow automatically. It is not necessary for him to be aware on a conscious level that this is happening, nor of the benefits it is bringing to the individual chelas. If he wishes, he can give an extra boost to the process by consciously focusing his attention on a particular chela and directing prayers and spiritual energies to him. This Gururaj does when he hears, for example through a letter, that a certain chela is experiencing some difficulties and is in need of extra help. Thousands of chelas have found their problems resolved and clarified in this way.

The Chela's Part

If we are sitting in a stuffy room and want some fresh air, we have to open the window. If we open it a little, then a little air will come in. while if we open it

completely then more air will enter. Gurushakti is an impulse of the heart. To receive its full benefits we need to open our hearts. To return to the analogy of the radio, in order to hear the music we have to unplug our ears. Opening our hearts is synonymous with unfolding our consciousness and becoming more and more aware of the spiritual level of our being. This is a gradual process and does not happen overnight. Our meditation practices themselves, being individual and so intricately intertwined with the guru-ichha link, will automatically enable us to begin to tune into this universal force. The biggest barrier to receiving the benefits of gurushakti is the mind. A rigid, narrow mind can create an almost impenetrable wall through which it is difficult for gurushakti to pass.

This does not mean one has to have blind faith. All that is needed is to keep an open mind. By keeping the mind open we allow the gurushakti to flow, and this in turn will bring the experience which will convert faith into knowingness. The proof of the pudding is always in the eating. No one is expected to believe blindly in gurushakti before they have had any glimpse of it – a mind that believes blindly is as closed as one that disbelieves blindly. The secret is to have a certain degree of attunement with one's teacher and to keep an open mind. Once gurushakti is experienced then it will be known. It will also be seen, as we have said at the very beginning of this chapter, that it can never really be explained.

The Guru as a Focal Point

Shakti being a universal power, it is almost impossible for an individual to cognise and draw from it when that individual has not reached the state of atonement with the universal mind. A human being needs a human touch, and this is where the guru plays his part. He is able to personify the abstract and thus make it more accessible. Rather than trying to locate the transmitting station, we concentrate on the radio. In the end the realisation comes that the

transmitter, the radio and the listener are all one anyway, all beads on the same thread. Until that stage the radio is our link, and we can use it in this way.

By focusing our attention on the guru, as the instrument through which the divine forces can flow freely, we draw these forces to ourselves. This can be done in a very conscious, practical way, by looking at a picture, or by keeping Gururaj in our minds and forming a very real sense of inner communication with him. This may start as a mental concept but with time the concept dives deep within to touch the inner core of our being, and the benefits are felt.

One important point must be made here. In this process we are not speaking of worship. Idolising or worshipping a guru is of no benefit whatsoever to either the chela or the guru. No true guru would ever demand to be worshipped, because he knows that he is only an instrument, a channel for divinity, and that without that divinity he would be nothing. The guru is merely an instrument to aid the chela to reach this spiritual essence. The chela is free to use him as such. The picture or mental concept of the guru becomes like a lever. Using a long rod, a boulder which is too heavy for us to lift on our own can be shifted quite easily. When a problem seems too difficult for us to overcome, we turn our attention to the guru, and the gurushakti acts as the lever.

The Effects of Gurushakti

As the link strengthens, through the regular practice of our meditation techniques and the conscious focusing of our attention on Gururaj, we become more and more aware of a force far greater than ourselves which is acting with us throughout our daily activity. There comes a recognition that we are not alone, that though we may not be strong enough by ourselves, there is someone with us. A sense of deep inner security develops and with it comes the feeling that though we may tumble sometimes we will never fall too far. There is a safety net, a protection, which is with us at all times if we allow ourselves to be aware of it.

Another word for gurushakti is grace. Our lives become grace-tilled and at the same time graceful, because there is a flow in them, a gradual easing out of the humps and tensions. This grace smooths our path. It can never remove the boulders – this we have to do ourselves – but it can show us the way to circumvent or diminish them. Our karma is always with us, and we cannot escape it. No guru can remove karma, but if there is sincerity on the part of the chela, he can ease the load of it.

Gurushakti and Growth

At the same time that it is supporting us, gurushakti is also pushing us onwards. The spiritual path is a forward path, and sometimes we need a little push to move us on over another hurdle. Before we start meditating what happens in our lives may seem very arbitrary – opportunities come our way and we make use of them, or fail to do so. Good times and bad times come and go – we are very much victims of circumstance. But as we follow a spiritual path a certain pattern seems to come into our lives and we begin to see a purpose behind what happens to us. Events become lessons through which we can learn to understand ourselves better and to come to terms with what we are.

This pattern was always there – it is the pattern of our karma – but we were probably not aware of it because we had a more limited perspective on life. In starting to meditate we take a very important step in our own evolution – the step of accepting responsibility for ourselves and doing something to help ourselves. It is always said that if we take one step toward divinity, then grace, that divine force, will take ten towards us. Grace puts out its hand and encourages us in our efforts. Shakti offers us the opportunities to grow and unfold. Life brings us challenges which help us to cast aside our weaknesses. The force of shakti acting in this way makes it very apparent to us that there are no coincidences. Just when we are strong enough to cope with it, we are met with a situation which enables us to go just that little bit further than we

have before. It happens like clockwork – the strength comes and the challenge arises to test it. Sometimes these situations seem hard – we may have to look at ourselves very honestly and overcome a weakness which we have been trying to hide from ourselves for years; we may have been lying to ourselves about a situation and suddenly be unable to lie any longer; our relationships with other people, our motivations for acting in certain ways, our fears of being rejected or made a fool of, our situation at work, with our family, our attitude towards money – all these things have to be cleared up at some point if progress is to be made, and through the power of grace we are faced with them at precisely the time when we could really take a step forward if we choose to.

During these times gurus hakti can give us tremendous support and guidance. At these moments it is particularly important not to put up walls of resistance, but instead to surrender ourselves to the power of divinity and thus learn the meaning of ‘Thy Will be done’. In this way our path is smoothed and we find ourselves able to let go of problems which have been smouldering away inside us for a very long time.

Confidence in the power of shakti to bring such a pattern into our lives enables us to accept all that occurs as valuable to our evolution, and we learn from every situation that is presented to us. Turning our attention more and more to Gururaj, particularly in difficult times, we become aware of a deep sense of security, a feeling that everything is all right. We are learning through everything – and life has become our teacher.

Grace and Karma

As we have said, no one can take away our karma. The law of karma is a natural law and no guru or divine force would ever act against the laws of nature. However, there is another law which can come into operation if the chela is sincere, and this is the law of grace. Grace cannot remove karma but

it can take the sting out of it. Perhaps we have killed ten people in past lives. If one applied the law of karma strictly this would mean we would have to be killed in ten lifetimes. But what if we became a doctor and saved ten lives? This would be paying off our karma, but in an easier and more constructive way. Grace allows us the opportunities to repay our debts in a positive fashion, where we actively take our karma into our own hands and resolve to pay it off.

If, as we progress on the spiritual path, we become more aware of our actions and of the harm we do to others, we may resolve not to act in this way again. But we find ourselves still governed by our samskaras – we are tied up in the vicious circle of karma and samskaras and our patterning causes us to act in the same way over and over and over again despite our good intentions, and we go on creating karma for ourselves. How many alcoholics genuinely want to stop drinking, but find themselves compulsively reaching for the bottle because of the chemistry now set up in their bodies? To cure us of our habits we need outside help, and that outside help is grace. If we are sincere in our desire to overcome our patterning but feel we are not strong enough to do so on our own, we ask for help through shakti. We surrender our problems sincerely to that power that is greater than ourselves. As soon as this thought is really felt as a burning desire to better ourselves. as a yearning within, we automatically tune ourselves to that focal point through which the grace can pass. In this fashion the load of our karma is lightened and we find help and support.

Gurushakti is experienced in countless ways, and many, many meditators have found that it has brought help, sometimes almost miraculously. These are individual experiences – every chela receives with time some personal proof of the power of gurushakti, and all become increasingly aware of the opening of the heart brought about by the activation of the shakti within them. These experiences cannot really be communicated – they remain an inner knowledge, but their light shines through and can be observed by others as an inner serenity which seems to underlie all actions.

Gururaj always says that only thirty per cent of the benefits we experience come from our meditation practices. The other seventy per cent is shakti. Meditation practices could be thought of as techniques which clear our entire being in a very systematic and scientific way. But the impulse behind them is gurushakti. Grace is a force which passes all understanding but which spontaneously opens our hearts and minds and allows that spiritual quality to shine forth.

Conscious Effort

In order to gain the maximum benefits from our meditation practices, and from guruhakṭi, it is necessary that we put in our 'ten per cent' of conscious effort. Meditating regularly twice a day is not enough. There must be a balance between the deeper levels of consciousness we are experiencing in meditation, and the unfoldment of our spiritual nature in our waking life. Meditation gives us strength, guruhakṭi gives us support. but we must use this strength and this support in a constructive way in our daily activities in order to fulfil our spiritual destiny. Meditation, shakti and conscious effort form the three aspects of our spiritual path. They each intertwine, and together they offer us everything we need to progress.

This chapter will show how best we can direct our minds in our daily activity so as to naturally lead ourselves towards higher and higher states of fulfilment and happiness. Much is said, in spiritual organisations, about growth. Indeed growth might be seen to be the natural title for a chapter dealing with the external aspects of the spiritual path. But to call spiritual unfoldment growth is a misnomer. Growth implies change – indeed all growth involves change, and ultimately it is not change that we are seeking. This may seem contradictory to what has been said before, and needs further explanation.

All ups have their downs, and all states of elation are followed by states of depression. The art of living is to go beyond these opposites and find the state of balance and rest. Instead of running from one end of the seesaw to the other we need to stand in the middle, from where we can control the balance of the plank. One who says he has changed may merely have moved from one end of the

seesaw to the other. The one who has truly evolved has no need to say that he has changed, because he has gone beyond the level where change has any relevance to him. Outwardly he may appear to have changed, because having control of the seesaw, he may choose to tip it more often to one side than the other. Through others' eyes he could be said to have changed. But this is on a relative level. In fact he has merely gone beyond the binding influence of the ups and downs. He has become his own master. It is this state of non-attachment which we are seeking in our waking lives, and it is towards this goal that we should direct our conscious effort.

We must never dwell too much, then, on our apparent achievements, nor must we waste time judging and assessing our progress. This is one of the greatest pitfalls of the spiritual path – for instead of being bound by our weaknesses we become bound by our so-called overcoming of them. Our ego, our cunning mind, has merely become subtler in its manipulation. We must remember that self-realization, the going beyond the ties of samskaras, is a natural state, one which is the ultimate right of all souls. As this state begins to unfold we act in a more spontaneous and natural way, and in fact spend less and less time examining and assessing ourselves and judging our progress. It is only unnatural things which call our attention – a truly balanced natural state does not require analysis. It is this balance that we are seeking, and when we begin to find it we cease to become aware of it, and instead find our attention turning outwards to others rather than into ourselves. If asked, a person in this state would agree that he was happy, and uninhibited, and confident, and all the other sought-after qualities, but these things when achieved are so natural and spontaneous that though he is aware of this state he would not put great emphasis on it as it has now become his lifestyle.

Psychology deals with degrees of change, and cannot go beyond this because it is not able to go beyond the level of the mind. Delving with the mind into the deeper layers of the sub-conscious and trying to analyse the cause of

our samskaras cannot rid us of them, and can even activate them unnecessarily. When our shirt is dirty we do not put it under a microscope and try to analyse the source of each dirty patch. We simply throw it in the washing machine, and wash the dirt out.

As we have previously explained, samskaras are never resolved or dissolved. They must be sublimated, dissipated and rendered inoperative. Our samskaras are the substance or the mind – without them we would not exist. The aim of our conscious effort must be to aid the process set in motion by our meditation practices and by gurushakti. It must be directed not towards resolving our problems, but towards reaching the level of balance where we no longer see problems as problems. The basis of spiritual evolution is the altering of our perspective on life – by changing our perspective we change our view on everything, including our so-called problems. In this way events or situations which previously touched off samskaras no longer do so, and we are free to operate from the deeper spiritual level of our beings.

Self-acceptance

Self-acceptance forms the basis for finding the state of balance where we are no longer swayed by the ups and downs of our emotions and our insecurities. Real self acceptance brings total non-attachment to the self, and the self – that is the small self or the ego – loses its power. When true self-acceptance is achieved it is a process which develops slowly and quietly, and gradually unfolds as we learn its true meaning and master the ways to achieve it.

Before we can accept ourselves we must know and understand what it is we have to accept. So the first step towards self-acceptance is self-examination. We must always remember, however, that in examining ourselves we are using that same old tool – the cunning animal of the mind. The desire of the ego to preserve itself will always be working against us, and our mind can produce an endless variety of tricks to delude and misguide us in our attempt to understand

ourselves. For who is the 'I' that is experiencing the experience of ourselves? It is but the small I, the ego, which is itself supposed to be under examination. True experience of ourselves can only come when we can go quite beyond that small I and observe and experience from this level.

Nevertheless, some self-examination is necessary, even with these limitations. The important thing is that we should never attempt to make any judgment on what we see, and neither should we try to assess our progress in these terms. Perhaps the first lesson in acceptance is that of accepting the limitations of our own mind in this matter. This leads to humility which is a spur to further progress. Complacency or pride on the spiritual path are pitfalls we must always look out for.

We can start by examining ourselves as honestly and objectively as possible seeing ourselves for what we are, and accepting all that we see as part of us. For most of us this is not an easy process – we tend to live in a world of fantasy and daydreams. We try to project an image of ourselves of how we would like to be, or feel that we ought to be, instead of simply being what we are. The struggle to be what we are not, and the disappointment and unhappiness we bring upon ourselves when we fail to fulfil these dreams cause us endless suffering and frustration. We are constantly fighting against ourselves, and sink deeper and deeper into a mire of confusion and self-rejection.

Self-examination must be done with care. We must neither make justifications for our faults, nor plague ourselves with guilt about them. We are merely looking at the material we have in order to work out how best to improve it. Dwelling on our weaknesses will not remove them, and in fact will often accentuate them. There is a little couplet which Gururaj uses over and over again:

*Two men behind prison bars,
One saw mud, the other stars.*

Having once observed and accepted our present state we must always try to direct our minds and our lives towards the good, the godly,

the uplifting aspects of ourselves and of everything around us. We must remember that the conscious effort we put into our lives is serving only to help the flow which is already being initiated by our meditation practices and pushed along by the power of gurushakti. With these two forces working from beyond the mind, loosening from underneath the grip our samskaras have over us, it is not necessary for us to involve ourselves in complicated psychological processes of analysis. We need only accept, and move forwards from there.

The most fundamental requirement for self-acceptance is, once again, that of accepting responsibility for ourselves. We have already explained the process by which we chose the circumstances in which we were born, and created our present situation by our past actions which formed our karma. We are today the sum total of our actions of the past. We are creatures not of circumstance but of our own creation. Indeed we create the circumstances around us – through our own negativity we draw negativity to ourselves. Through love we draw love. Until we can accept this we cannot really accept ourselves, because we will always push the responsibility for our own nature onto others. Nothing is gained by observing our weaknesses and then blaming them on outside circumstances. They may be triggered off by others, but they are certainly not caused by them.

As we become more responsible, we become more accepting of ourselves. We stop fighting against our very nature, and this brings a certain quietness to the mind which enables us to be more discriminating in our thoughts and actions. It is no use trying to analyse the mind to find discrimination, for all forms of analysis are biased and patterned by our minds. True discrimination in what we do and do not do, say and do not say, begins to come from the pure, superconscious level of our mind, and we naturally and easily find ourselves working with the now of nature rather than against it. Spontaneous right action does not bring hurt to ourselves or to others, and creates only good karma.

At first, though, it is hard for us to use our powers of discrimination to the full because we have not found this stillness within ourselves. What to do? Gururaj has a simple maxim: do good, be good. Follow the teachings of all great masters, the advice found in all the scripture: 'Love thy neighbour as thyself'. 'Do unto others as you would have others do unto you'. These simple teachings contain within them all the answers – all we have to do is to learn how to carry them out.

And so we come to another important aspect of our conscious effort: self-discipline. We can only work within the limitations of our own weaknesses, but nevertheless through the proper use of self-discipline we can direct our lives towards the uplifting of ourselves and our environment. What may seem hard at first very quickly becomes automatic and spontaneous. The greatest effort is required at the beginning. It is all a question of changing our attitude towards what we do and how we do it. The first thing is to live in the present – to live every moment as our last, and to concentrate on the now. The past is past, and the future is yet to come. How much time is wasted worrying about our past actions, or anticipating future problems? We wash the dishes ten times in our minds before we actually get down to washing them, so the job becomes ten times as arduous. We relive past hurts for months afterwards, and the pain stays with us all that time. We cannot make the most of the present because we are busy suffering the past and the future. We must consciously try to put all we can into everything we do, and to find joy in all action. This requires disciplining the mind and repatterning it to find life a challenge rather than a drudgery. This is the path towards making all of life a meditation, for we can use action as a means of learning to discipline our minds. This attitude changes our perspective on life, and we begin to realise that it is our motivation that is important, and not the actions themselves. If we act merely to fulfil our needs we will never be content – our needs will multiply and we will always be striving to meet them. If we act for the sake of acting, as a service to ourselves or to others, then we discover that there is joy to be found in everything, and our

happiness no longer comes from outside, but from within. The nature of the action becomes unimportant, for we have found true motivation.

This process is begun in a disciplined fashion, by consciously repatterning our mind to look for the joy in action and not the drudgery. The same applies with our attitudes to other people – we begin to consciously try to see in others the work of divinity. When our minds begin to criticise or judge we gently turn them towards observing the positive qualities in others and trying to draw these out. At first this requires discipline, and must be done consciously, but gradually the process becomes automatic and we are able to discriminate easily and effortlessly in all our thoughts, words and actions.

So we accept ourselves. Then through conscious effort we draw attention away from the mud and toward the stars. We think positively, we act positively, we speak fairly, and suddenly we find that we are no longer aware of our problems – they have been sublimated through the process of self-acceptance, responsibility, discrimination and discipline.

Spiritual Commitment

We have spoken of discipline, we have spoken of conscious effort, we have spoken of responsibility. All these imply one thing: commitment. In our lives we are accustomed to having to make commitments to others – our partners, our jobs, our friends – but have we ever thought of making a commitment to ourselves? Commitment to the spiritual path is something which begins on the conscious level – we make the decision to take responsibility for ourselves, for our lives and for our own spiritual evolution. Sometimes we will have to tread ground we have not trodden before, and to accept aspects of ourselves we have always tried to hide. These are the times that we need commitment, for we have embarked on a long and unknown path. The commitment which started on a conscious mind level gradually sinks deeper and deeper into our being until it goes beyond the mind and becomes a silent inner knowledge that this is the path we have to tread,

and will continue to tread, despite the tricks and games our minds may sometimes play with us.

With time we see that the spiritual path is a serious path, and not something we play around with for a short while and then cast off when we tire of it for something new, like buying a new car or another set of clothes. Having chosen our path we must try our best to stick to it – jumping from one path to another and trying this technique and then another does not help our evolutionary progress, partly because it allows us to be ruled by our whims and not develop that inner acceptance that comes from true commitment. This very sense of purpose gives a clear direction to our lives, and fills us with that feeling of deep fulfilment and joy which comes when one knows where one is going, and has started off on the journey. One-pointedness begins with conscious effort and culminates in oneness with the point. When we say that the spiritual path is serious we do not mean that it is solemn – quite the reverse, the path to bliss becomes more and more blissful. But part of this bliss comes from our very commitment to this path – it gathers up our scattered energies and unites them in a single beam of power, which surges forward to truth, leaving light and happiness in its wake.

This is spiritual commitment – an inner strength and knowledge which overcomes all problems and scatters all doubts. The conscious effort that we put into achieving this will be rewarded a hundred times as truth unfolds and divinity is awakened within us.

Love and Relationships

We come in this chapter to what is the very core of Gururaj's teachings, the element that could justly be called the motivating force behind all his wisdom. Gururaj acts from love, and the spiritual practices he gives are designed to open the hearts of those who use them so that they too may experience this love within themselves. Gururaj is a teacher of the heart – his name, Gururaj Ananda, contains the word love – ananda, which in Sanskrit means divine love or bliss. The full meaning of his name is 'one who is in union with God and teaches the royal path of love'. The kind of love expressed in this word ananda is of a far deeper nature than that which we would normally call love. Universal love, divine love – which is bliss – is not an emotion but a state of being. It is the expression of the essence of ourselves; we truly know ourselves when we live this love – it radiates from us and pervades our whole being.

Love in this form is limitless, needing no expansion or development. It knows no such need, for it is self-luminous and exists by itself. It finds objects, not as support, but as a means through which to express itself. The objects do not spark off the love, but rather the other way round – the love flows spontaneously and touches all objects, enlivening them with its power.

This divine love springs from the super-conscious level, from the spiritual self, which we would call the heart. By the heart we mean not the physical organ, but that which is synonymous with the pure spiritual entity within man. This love cannot be defined. only experienced; as soon as we try to define it or quantify it, we are limiting what is limitless and its essence is

lost. Thus when we say ‘I love you’ we are describing an experience which is beyond description, because it is beyond the mind. In the moment of definition the experience is gone.

Pure love of this nature may seem a long way from the experience that we would commonly define as love. Most of us experience love as an emotion, as the fulfilment of a need within us. Something or somebody who gives us a sense of security, who makes us feel good and warm inside, who fulfils the needs we have, arouses in us an emotion which we call ‘love’. It can even produce a physical sensation – a kind of pleasurable pain around the heart, which intensifies when the object of love is near or is in our minds. This is not real love, however, but merely a reflection of love. It is conditional love – depending on the object. If the object changes, the love can change. One person can produce this love inside us, another does not. Why? True love,” bliss, wells up from inside and overflows ceaselessly, touching everything equally and unequivocally. It is like a pebble dropped in a pond – the ripples created spread outwards in ever-increasing circles and lap against everything in their path.

The Unfoldment of Love

Love is the essence of our being. It does not have to be created – merely discovered. Our hearts are filled with love, but we have built walls around our hearts. No one else closes up our hearts – we have done it ourselves, with our actions, our conceptions and our thoughts. Why have we done this? Hurts of the past have made the deepest impression of all, and these samskaras have created a fear in us which dominates us now. We built that wall on purpose, thinking that it gave us protection and security against future hurts. But in fact others cannot really hurt us – we ourselves create that hurt because we become dependent on others and on their love. Whenever we believe that it has been denied to us, we feel lost and rejected. If,

however, we could establish ourselves on the level of true love, then our love would not be dependent on the actions of others and we would therefore not be affected by them. Fear would go, and our love would flow freely and spontaneously.

How, then, can we allow our minds to cognise that which is experienced and expressed by our hearts, so that it becomes a conscious reality? Spiritual practices, meditation practices, are designed to work in two ways: they bring a spontaneous development of the unfolding of the heart by knocking down the walls which surround it, and at the same time allow the mind to gain greater and greater awareness. Meanwhile, it is vital that the basis of a spiritual path is love and the expansion of the heart. Techniques which do not work at this level can bring an increased awareness on the mind level which may be liable to misuse if not accompanied by a corresponding unfoldment of the heart. An expanded mind is a powerful mind, and needs to be motivated from the heart and not the ego. Society today places too much emphasis on the intellect, and the force of love is often lacking to guide the mind in a progressive way to constructive and not to destructive uses.

Powerful spiritual practices, chosen for us individually so that they can permeate the very core of our being, most inevitably work to unfold the heart. The deepest and most binding samskaras are always those of the heart – those which control our innermost feelings and emotions and affect the most sensitive areas of our outward personality. If these can be touched, then the heart can be released and its force – which is love – can now through the mind. If we can reach the stage of combining all that the heart can express and all that the mind can cognise, then we will truly have merged our freewill with divine will, and be flowing with nature rather than against it.

The ability to experience love, then, forms the basis of all spiritual development – the spiritual nature of a human being could be judged by how much he loves. It has rightly been said: ‘The greater the man, the greater his

love'. The force of this love is the primal energy that has brought about this yearning within us to better ourselves and to experience something which is beyond what we can cognise with the mind. This force brings us to meditation, and meditation in turn gradually allows this force to find the active expression it seeks.

Our interactions with others give us the opportunity to put in that element of conscious effort which is needed to lower the wall around our hearts. If we can knock out one brick from that wall by our actions, the force of love that comes through will make the opening bigger and bigger. Spiritual practices, combined with right living and right thinking, break down the barrier and unfold the heart – and when this love shines in its fullest glory, all becomes coloured with the light of love.

Personal Relationships

How, then, can we relate this concept of pure love to the experiences we now have in our relationships with other people? It may at first seem so far beyond what we know as love. Nevertheless, we must not belittle what we have now. It is our starting point – from here, from our level of emotional love, we can unfold more and more of that quality of divine love in our personal relationships.

We must begin by examining our attitudes, and by looking carefully at that which we call love to find the motivation behind it. How much of our love is selfless and motiveless, and how much is driven by need or desire? And how many of our actions and words to our beloved are truly done with his or her well-being and happiness in mind? Looking at ourselves in this way can be a very humbling experience. What right do we have even to talk of love when so much of our time is spent thinking of our own desires, and not those of our partner? Learning to love is a lesson we teach ourselves – it does not depend on the nature of the one we love. We must always look at

ourselves to find the faults, and not blame the problem on another. The other's faults are his or her concern – we must concentrate on our own. A development of softness and love and care in us will spontaneously produce similar qualities in the loved one. We should not wait for the other to make the first move, nor justify our own weaknesses by pointing to the weaknesses of our partner. If we can allow the quality of divine love to well up in our own hearts, then we will no longer be swayed by the attitudes and actions of others.

Our life becomes an offering to others and to divinity. We have no needs, so we offer ourselves in service to others – the true service which is the greatest joy of all. But so much is done in the name of service which is not service at all; it is but ego-motivated action done for self-gratification and aggrandisement. Service need not be a drudgery, for it is an art, and art brings freedom. If a husband and wife can learn to offer themselves to each other in love and service, then this bond becomes more powerful than the need to prove themselves right, or to assert their superiority over each other. Love always involves humility, but never servitude. Service and servitude are two very different things – one is freeing, while the other is binding.

If two people can learn to accept themselves and each other for what they really are, then competition ceases and strife ceases. Love transcends all these things. Love only becomes distorted when we try to project an image of ourselves upon another, or when we try to project an image onto another of what we think they ought to be. We end up with an image trying to love another image, and so it is no wonder that love so often breaks down. The problem is that we try to mould ourselves and others into a connected whole, because we need that connection to give ourselves security. True communication comes not from trying to look into another's eyes, but from training two pairs of eyes to look in the same direction. We are what we are – and together we will walk the path of life. There are no expectations, no

manipulations, no projections: just acceptance, which leads to surrender. By accepting ourselves, we begin to know ourselves and to discover the love within us – which enables us to offer that love to others. Then our love is selfless, because we do not need to offer anything in return. Then we are content in the very act of loving, for the act of loving itself becomes a spiritual practice.

We can learn to consciously develop this attitude of selflessness within our personal relationships. At first this requires discipline, remembering the need to check ourselves when we begin to try to prove ourselves to another – to prove our rightness, our superiority, our intelligence, our independence. We consciously begin to direct all our energies – mental, physical, and spiritual – towards the other. Through this concentrated one-pointedness we use the concrete, the object of our love, to approach the abstract, the universal love. Gradually the one-pointedness becomes more and more spontaneous and we recognise the true nature of love. We no longer have to analyse and calculate our love, because it becomes a natural state. One-pointedness towards the other denies us the chance of being one-pointed towards ourselves, and we find we can transcend our own needs and desires. This is the surest and most powerful way of helping our own evolution, for we are deliberately drawing ourselves out of our self-created world of problems and worries – the force of love for another acts like a laser beam to burn away the dross and dirt surrounding the pure light that is within us. We are enhancing the qualities of acceptance and humility and surrender, and at the same time serving another and bringing joy into their life, which inevitably will rebound back on us. This is an indisputable law of nature.

Becoming Lovable

For some the problem is not how to improve an existing relationship, but how to find one with whom we can develop this love. There is not a single person in this world who does not want to love and be loved, because that

quality of love is our inner nature. We are all driven to look for love, and for a means of expressing our love. And yet sometimes we find it so hard. Why?

In this situation we must again try to accept ourselves and take responsibility for our lives. Sometimes we tell ourselves that it is the fear of rejection which prevents us from giving ourselves; we prefer to hold back and keep ourselves apart from others. The truth, however, is that we are interested more in other people's motivations for love than in the act of giving love ourselves. We must begin to view love as an offering – one which does not need anything in return. Expectation leads to disappointment and the feeling of being rejected. What right do we have to expect anything from another? Love is not a business deal, where we 'invest' and are 'paid back', it is an appreciation of the art of giving. For two people, love must mean neither dependence or independence but rather interdependence. To love for the sake of loving spontaneously brings love in others, because the force of love awakens that force in everything it touches. Not because it needs to, but because that is its very nature.

Perhaps we demand too much of others. We who are imperfect nevertheless look for someone to love who is 'perfect'. We live with the false assumption that there are really very few who are worthy of our love, so that instead of evaluating ourselves we evaluate others. And how can we ever be satisfied? Only when we are perfect will we find the object of our love to be perfect too, because in our perfection we will not see the faults of others. There is much truth in the saying that 'love is blind'. True love is indeed blind – it transcends judgements and criticisms because it touches the inner core of the beloved and not the superficial exterior values.

Our attention, then, must turn inward – if we make ourselves lovable, then we will be loved. If we accept ourselves, then others will accept us too. As through our spiritual practices we begin to know ourselves and discover our

inner spiritual nature, we find that we no longer worry about gaining love and praise from others. We become ourselves, and as such we find that others are naturally drawn to us, because their inner being recognises the divine spark which has been enlivened within us.

Finding the Beloved

What is it, then, that attracts one soul to another? If we view relationships in the light we have just described, then it would be fair to say that it is possible to develop a loving, fulfilling relationship with any individual if both are willing to develop an understanding and acceptance of each other.

And yet sometimes a spark flies between two people, so powerful that it seems to come from a previous encounter. In these cases it is probable that it does. During the course of a relationship karma is built up between two souls, and if this is not all paid off within that lifetime, then the two are drawn together in future lifetimes to continue that which they have already begun. The nature of a relationship may vary from lifetime to lifetime; there is no truth in the idea that there is a 'soul mate', with whom we are paired in the same way in every life. Nevertheless we can be certain that there are some souls who we are sure to meet in order to rectify some of the mistakes we made in other lifetimes and to pay off past karma. Our karma binds us to the wheel of evolution – we are given, or rather we give ourselves when we choose the circumstances of our birth, the opportunity to make good our past actions to others. It is our responsibility to ensure that we do not run away from our duties to others.

There is a tendency within us to be drawn towards other souls which are of a similar evolutionary status to our own. There is an innate compatibility there which offers opportunity for true communication and interrelationships. Those moments when we look into another's eyes and seem to melt away into them are not created by the emotions or the mind.

The most important thing which occurs is an interchange of that life force, that divine energy, which, because of the compatibility of two souls, can flow easily between one and the other. Life with such a person becomes a three-legged run – each is independent and yet entwined with the other. It is this quality that we must look for in finding the one with whom we decide to share this life. If this link is strong, then the marriage has a spiritual basis from which to work, and incompatibilities on the emotional or physical level can be overcome. Every action is spiritually linked to every other in this energy field. Seeming incompatibilities can be overcome by spiritual practices which move these energy levels to a closeness so that love can be experienced by two sincere people in its individual as well as universal perspective.

The Physical, the Mental and the Spiritual

Every relationship, and in particular the marriage one, contains these three elements. All are important, and all can become means of deepening the closeness and oneness between two individuals. As we have just explained, the spiritual bond is the most vital, permeating and enhancing the other two.

Man has three aspects: the animal in him, the man in him, and the god-man in him. It is for him to choose which level he is going to operate on. Lovemaking, for example, can be created from lust, from emotion, or from the spontaneous merging of spiritual energies. By using the physical act of love as a way of merging with the beloved, we transform it from a purely physical experience into a deeply spiritual one. It can in itself become a meditation. Thus the way to transcend the animal in us is not through denying it. Celibacy is not the path of the householder, and can easily be used as an escape. We do not push down lust; rather we uplift it through consciously thinking of love-making as a means of expressing that divinity within us to another, to one whom we love. This may start on the mental or emotional

level – we turn lust into love, and from there we transcend all mental analysis of the act. Then it becomes a natural interflow between two souls. We have found the divinity in each other.

Love of God

To love fully is to know God, for love is God and God is love. Universal love is that divine force which is omnipresent and which connects every atom into a whole. By learning to love others, we are learning to love God – we are approaching the abstract through the concrete. Later on we will discuss how meditation relates to religious belief, and how through practical efforts in living we can find God, find that divine force in everything and everyone, and become one with it. Love is the key to this door. It transcends the mind, it transcends emotion – its force can pierce through all individuality and separateness and lead us to that state where the lover, the beloved and the love itself merge into a oneness which embraces them and which is also beyond them all.

The Guru

What is a Guru?

The word 'guru' is made up of two terms: gu, meaning darkness, and ru, meaning light. The definition of a guru is therefore one who leads the seeker from darkness into light. This task is, however, more complicated than might originally be supposed, since before it can be begun the teacher must know why the student is in darkness in the first instance, while the student must be willing to be led to the light and have sufficient confidence in the teacher's judgment of the best way for this transition to take place.

The guru must be both a teacher and a physician of the spirit. He must have walked the path himself in order to understand its nature and its pitfalls; he must have the insight to judge his pupils, and the knowledge to help them. He must be beyond all emotional involvement in his task, he must be beyond the point of being affected by criticism or rejection, his aim must always be purely unselfish. In a nutshell, to perform his duties as a spiritual teacher to the full, the guru must himself be self-realized. For it is only with self-realization that total non-attachment comes, and any degree of attachment would inevitably cloud the clarity of vision and spontaneous right action the teacher must have. The true guru is but an instrument of divinity.

Only an enlightened man can tune in so perfectly to the individual chela that the spiritual practices and meditations he selects will be precisely what the individual needs to progress at this moment, bearing in mind his past karma, present state, and future potential. In his state of enlightenment, the

guru can become a channel for grace, or shakti, the driving force which, as we have previously described, is supporting the chela at all times along his path.

The experiences of chelas of Gururaj have proved amply, to those who need proof, that he fulfils all these requirements and more. The grace of his shakti, the wisdom or his words, the power of his meditation techniques have enabled us all to benefit tremendously from becoming his chelas, despite the fact that for many the chance to be with him personally has rarely, if ever, arisen.

It is because of the size of Gururaj's mission, which makes it impossible for each chela to develop a personal, face-to-face relationship with him, that the significance and reasons for having a guru need to be very carefully examined.

The Role of a Guru

The classic role of a guru, as it has developed over thousands of years, has always been to select a small number of individuals and spend much time living in close proximity to them. In this way the guru is able to work personally with each chela, observe his weaknesses, test his strengths, and act accordingly.

Gururaj, however, has decided to offer his great wisdom to a much larger number of people, while at the same time encouraging each of them to experience a very personal and individual guru/chela relationship with him. What has enabled him to do this has been shakti. While normally it would be the guru personally who offered situations to strengthen the chela, to help him reach a higher level of non-attachment and to lead him to re-examine his weaknesses, in Gururaj's case the force of gurushakti makes life our guru.

The guru, it is said, is like a clean mirror in which we can look at ourselves. Our lives can become this same mirror. All we need is the

courage to look, and to see ourselves as we really are. We will never be forced to face more than we can handle, but little by little, as we grow in strength, we are offered more and more opportunities to grow. The guru cannot make us grow, any more than life can. The responsibility lies in our own hands. The guru can help, encourage, and sustain. His force and power will be our guide and our support. He gives us the key, but we have to unlock the door.

The meditation practices given by Gururaj form a large part of that key. Designed especially for us, they bring strength and stability, providing a firm and joyful basis to our life. It goes without saying that one of the first requirements of the chela is to practice his meditations regularly and in the way that they were taught to him. A garden which is not watered cannot be expected to grow, no matter how much enthusiasm the gardener has nor how many plans he has to develop and expand its beauty. The meditation practices, then, are the first gift of the guru, and the regular practice of them is the first sign that the student is on the way to becoming a true chela, with all the grace that this brings.

The Complex Nature of a Guru

One who claims to understand his guru must either be a fool or an enlightened man himself. The nature of enlightenment is unfathomable because it is divine, and by definition is beyond all laws and recognised patterns. Indeed it is these very laws which bind us to established patterns of behaviour which prevent us from recognising our intrinsic divinity. To try and establish a relationship with one's guru from the starting point of understanding him is therefore a mistake and will only lead to confusion.

The basic motivating factor of a guru, if it could be so called, is love. This is in fact not so much a motivation but a spontaneous and unstoppable overflowing which permeates all. Once the true self has been discovered, then love is everything there is. The basis of all the guru's actions, thoughts

and works is love – a love so great and powerful as to be called divine love. This love is not dependent on the object of its loving, but flows to everything and everyone equally. We may not always understand our guru's actions, but we can be sure that he is always acting in our best interests, because of his great love for us, even though we may not fully comprehend this at the time. For how can we, who are so far from enlightenment, understand the workings of divinity?

One of the most confusing aspects of a guru is understanding the manner in which this divinity works through a human form and personality. How much does the guru know on the conscious level? Should every word he speaks be taken as divinely inspired? These are questions which every chela must face at some time or another.

The more time one spends with Gururaj, the more one is convinced that the issue of whether he is consciously aware of all the facts of a particular situation is not actually that relevant. Obviously he does not keep in mind every detail of every chela's progress – this would be time-consuming and is unnecessary. Nor does he keep all his psychic channels permanently open to pick up every thought of every person he speaks to. If it is necessary he can pick up a particular piece of information, but usually this happens quite spontaneously, without his being aware of it. Often he will discover with surprise that the very thing he did or said was totally appropriate for the moment, although he was not conscious of it at the time. In short, his powers of intuition are such that they will often by-pass the conscious mind altogether, and he acts so spontaneously that even he is not aware of it until it is pointed out to him afterwards. One who is so in tune with divinity does not need to reason things out – they come to him from a level far beyond the mind.

In a similar way, there are countless occasions when great help has been brought through his grace, or shakti, when a chela has mentally asked for

assistance or strength at a particular time. Sometimes chelas have even seen Gururaj appear beside them, or have heard his voice, and yet he may have been six thousands miles away, completely without conscious knowledge of what was going on. He himself always says that he is but an instrument of divinity, and it is not always necessary for the instrument to be aware of how he is being used.

Nevertheless, at the same time, Gururaj does consciously devote his entire life to the welfare of his chelas and those around him, and feels a very great responsibility for them. He will work selflessly and unceasingly to do all he can to ease their load, never refusing a sincere plea for help, sometimes at great sacrifice to himself. To be near him is to witness a man whose attention is always on others rather than on himself, and who is a living example of his teachings of love, service and happiness.

The Purpose of a Guru

When the world reaches the point of imbalance such that its very evolution is threatened, then the master comes to right the balance. This he does by gently leading people back onto the path, helping them to understand themselves, so that they will gradually understand and be in harmony with all beings. In a universal sense the master is there to redress the balance, both by channelling the tremendous spiritual force that works through him and by working from an individual level. No amount of social or political change, desirable as it might be, will ultimately have any long-lasting effect if it is not backed by a change in the level of individual consciousness. And it is very hard for us to bring about this change on our own. If we are on a car journey and we come to a crossroads, we need to consult a map in order to ascertain which way we must go to reach our destination. If the town we are heading for is not in sight, we have no point of reference with which to judge whether we are heading in the right direction unless we possess a map or a

compass. With his vast knowledge and perception, the guru provides our map. Having travelled the journey himself, and seeing at what point we are now, he is able to guide us step by step. We remain in control of the car, and we have the free-will to decide how fast we will go, or indeed if we wish to turn off the route into a side road to follow some whim, but the guru always holds the map. Indeed there is no reason to suppose that if we went on driving haphazardly for long enough we wouldn't eventually hit our destination, but having a guide makes the journey much smoother, easier, and, more enjoyable.

The spiritual path, or the path of evolution is a thousand times more complex than a simple car journey, and contains many more pitfalls. Our problems, as previously explained, stem from the mind, from the samskara imprinted there from past experiences, which produce our fears and insecurities and prevent us from seeing our true divine nature. This leads to confusion, which in turn leads to unhappiness and dissatisfaction. On our own, our only tool is the mind, which is itself the root of all problems. The guru's task is to guide us, through his wisdom and by means of meditation techniques which takes us beyond the mind, so that the power of the samskaras can be reduced by weakening their very foundation.

The greatest joy of finding one's guru comes with the awareness that one is at last on the right road. The journey may still be arduous at times, and will require effort and determination on our part, but at least we have the security of knowing that we are heading in the right direction.

The Role of the Chela

We have talked a great deal about the role and purpose of the guru, but what of the duties of the chela? The guru /chela relationship is not in any way a one-sided one. Firstly, let us clear up one common misconception – it is not the chela who chooses the guru, but the guru who chooses the chela.

We may think that we chose Gururaj as our guru, but we are wrong. He chose us a long time ago – it is simply that we have begun to recognise him. And we must never forget that we are truly fortunate to meet such a man. We have built up some good karma for ourselves to be blessed with such a guide in this life. But this is not an excuse to sit back and wallow in our good fortune. We must deserve the grace of our guru. For every step we take towards divinity, grace will guide us through ten more. But we must put in our ten per cent.

Some gurus make it extraordinarily hard for their chelas, refusing to offer any concrete help, in the form of advice or spiritual practices, for many years, until the chela has proved his sincerity. In this respect we are very lucky: Gururaj has chosen to scatter his seeds in all types of ground, and he leaves it up to us whether or not we allow them to take root. He gives spiritual practices to all who come to learn, and sets up a link at the time of initiation through which shakti can flow. He has now accepted us as chelas. Have we accepted him as our guru? If a question of that nature were asked of him, he would answer: 'I don't care. I just do my duty for the betterment of the chela.'

Many people start meditating without understanding the significance of having a guru. This is fine. The realisation of the importance of the guru comes gradually, and the very power of shakti and of the meditation techniques, along with the beneficial effects that they have on our lives, cause us to look more and more towards the one who gave them to us. After a certain length of time – minutes, years, or even lifetimes, for the link between guru and chela is never broken, and if it is abandoned in this life it will surely be picked up in another in the future – the chela takes the first faltering steps towards the open arms of his guru, and the true relationship begins.

Acceptance, Devotion and Surrender

The moment the chela truly accepts the guru as his guide and teacher in this life, the nature of the relationship changes. The sincerity and humility invoked in the chela through his acceptance of one whose wisdom and spiritual power he acknowledges to be greater than his own, open the heart of the chela and allow him to experience much more of the love and peace that flows from his teacher. The teacher himself, now that the chela has put in his ten percent, is free to give more to the chela, who in turn is more open to receive these gifts. The process is, of course, a gradual one, but more and more, as his acceptance grows, the chela find himself bathed in the light of grace.

Acceptance, however, is not an easy thing. We have already discussed self-acceptance, and how in the early stages some effort is involved. The same is true of accepting a guru. In fact the two go together, because the more we accept ourselves the more we are able to accept others. Acceptance becomes a way of life – not a passive or weak stance, but an active and positive acceptance of those things which cannot be changed, which is accompanied by the strength to change those that can be.

The guru, as might have been guessed, falls into the former category. In accepting our guru, we accept that his understanding is greater than ours. This does not mean that we have to agree with everything he says or does, and we should still question. But we should question in order to gain greater understanding, as seekers. The wise student listens to the words of his teacher to learn from them – if, while he listens, he is trying to formulate a defence, then he will learn nothing. Yet Gururaj always says: 'If you do not understand, ask and ask again.' In this way, when acceptance comes it will be based on understanding and not on blind faith.

In accepting his guru, the chela forfeits the right to judge him. He is always free to break the relationship at any time, if he so chooses, but as long as he considers himself a chela of his guru he must learn to accept him

as he is. At times he may be hard – but then as an enlightened man he is something of a law unto himself. The lesson learned through this acceptance is very important. The chela starts to operate from the level of the heart, and is not swayed by the cunning twists of his mind. With acceptance, humility develops, and the ego begins to lose its power.

When we develop these qualities to a greater or lesser degree, then devotion comes. Now devotion is not adoration, nor is it worship, nor is it an emotional state. Devotion cannot be forced – it is a spontaneous welling up of love from that deepest level within us. It is not a dependence or a weakness, but simply an expression of love. Devotion is another name for this expression of the joy within. A general sense of devotion to everything develops, and in order to expand this to a finer level we direct it from the general to the particular. If devotion is focused on a particular object, be it our guru, our partner, or some other thing, then we will achieve maximum results. The love becomes an interchange, an interdependence, and the two souls become merged.

This oneness which develops from the automatic unfolding of devotion is the true expression of surrender. Surrender does not mean the giving up of anything – one's ideas, one's freedom, one's individuality – for it is not an act of the mind. Surrender is the natural outcome of the merging of two hearts and the consequent experiencing of the oneness of all things. This is the culmination of the spiritual path, and the fruit of the tree of devotion. Nothing more is needed – two hearts beat as one. This is the true guru/chela relationship. When this occurs, then the role of the guru is complete, for he has awakened the internal guru within the chela and the realisation has dawned that the essence of the two are but one. This illumination is the ultimate surrender – not of the chela to the guru, but of the heart of the chela to that divinity for which his guru is but a channel. Then only do we understand the meaning of the words: 'Thy will be done'.

Spiritual Path

There are more than five thousand million people in this world, and therefore there must be more than five thousand million spiritual paths. Each individual has the responsibility and the choice to find his own path to divinity and follow it faithfully. All great teachers come for one purpose only – to help man find himself, his path, and to be there to guide him when he falters. A master has trodden the path and knows the pitfalls and the sidetracks, so he is in a position to advise others – this, as we have explained in the previous chapter, is the role of the teacher. We can use a master in this way, taking the teaching he offers and using it as a guideline for our own lives. Once we reach the goal, the job of our teacher is completed. As we have said, the role of an external guru is to awaken the internal guru within us. There is no one path, then, and no one teacher. Beware one who says he is the ‘only’ way. Any man who has himself experienced truth is qualified to teach others how to experience it for themselves. There are many ways to approach divinity, but they are like rivers all running into the same ocean.

The Different Religions

Universal truth is but one truth. It has always been the same and will always be so, eternally. What we may see as different paths or different teachings are all empowered with this underlying universal truth. Each great master has expressed this truth in his own way, according to the needs of the time and the environment in which he taught. Christ, Buddha, Krishna – all

experienced the same universal reality. We have taken their interpretations of this reality and have called them different religions. Man has even reached the state where he will kill to defend the 'absolute' truth of his own religion above all others, believing that followers of his teacher will be 'saved' while others will be 'damned'. This is a gross misinterpretation of the teachings of these great men. What we have done is to concentrate on the minor details and differences between the religions, the different traditions and beliefs that have grown up around the teachings of the master after his death. In this way we have lost the essence of the teaching – it is rarely taught and rarely experienced.

To follow the beliefs of the religion of the culture into which one has been born is a good thing, not necessarily because of the beliefs themselves but because of the sincerity and faith that the act of following a particular path produces in us. The path gives a purpose to our life and also, if followed sincerely, a humility which weakens the power of our little ego. We become aware that there is a power greater than ourselves, and we bow before the wisdom of the teacher who we feel to be the embodiment of that divine force.

One who claims that his religion or his path is greater than any other has missed the vital lesson. By stating that his path is the superior one he is also implying that he, who through his wisdom has chosen that path, is superior to those who have not. Where is the humility? Where is the sincerity, the truth seeking?

This is surely not what the great masters intended when they preached their message of love. The aim of any religious person must be to find the essence of their religion, the fundamental truths experienced by their master, who then sowed his seed so that others could reap the benefits. But how can we find these truths? And how can we experience them?

Meditation and Religion

Gururaj is always adamant that he has no desire to turn a person away from his religion. If a student is a Christian, he tries to help him become a better Christian. If he is a Buddhist, a better Buddhist. It is right and beneficial for us to follow the path we know – Gururaj merely helps us to understand more fully the basis of our own religion and to experience within ourselves that ‘peace that passeth all understanding’. To gain this knowledge, we need to transcend the trappings of religion – the rituals, the words, the beliefs. We need to reach the source from which the religions came. As we said in the introduction to this book, we need to find the connections between the facts, and then the facts become a living reality to us, because we are established in that level of universal truth.

The aim of all religions is to unfold that changeless quality which underlies all life, so that we can live life as it should be lived – with truthfulness, sincerity and love. Through meditation we give the inner self the scope to reveal its fullest glory to the mind, and through the mind to the body. By going beyond the mind we begin to experience the reality of our religion, because we are able to touch the pure spiritual level from which all the teachings sprang. The negative patternings of our mind become less powerful and have less of a hold over us, making us more able to follow the moral codes laid down by great masters. ‘Love thy neighbours as thyself’ – how easy that sounds, but how difficult it turns out to be in practice. The spirit is willing, but the mind is weak. We try so hard, but then our old patternings take over and we find ourselves reverting back to old habits. Before we know where we are, we are plagued with guilt about our failure to love our neighbour, and a vicious circle is set in motion.

Through meditation we can break this circle. We no longer have to try to love. Love cannot be forced. We find love welling up spontaneously inside us, and with a little conscious effort we find it easier and easier to obey the

laws of our teacher. For these laws are universal laws – they were given by one who experienced this universality. We too must begin to experience the spiritual self if we are to follow these laws effectively. How can our love for our neighbour be full if we cannot become a channel of love, a channel for that divinity to manifest itself fully within our selves?

So instead of leading us away from our original chosen religion, the practice of meditation draws us more deeply into it. We start to gain experience of the teachings of the master we follow, and thus to understand more fully the meaning of his message.

The Devotional Aspect

In the previous chapter we discussed the part devotion plays in the unfoldment of the spiritual self. Devotion is a spontaneous welling up of love from within which, in order to give it a means of expression, we focus on an object. This forms an important part of most religions, and Gururaj encourages those who are already following a particular path to strengthen their personal relationship with its master by using that master as a focal point. Love of a teacher such as Christ is really love of the divinity of which the master is an embodiment. Christ consciousness, Buddha consciousness, Krishna consciousness – the particular embodiment is not important. The important factor is the unfolding which takes place within us as our love unfolds; we use the embodiment as our ideal, and our heart and mind become surrendered to it. Surrender is part and parcel of love – we cannot really love without surrendering. What are we surrendering? The small ego self that we think is so important. Our ego likes to say ‘I do’, but when we surrender we realise that we are but instruments of divinity and can say ‘Thou doest’. This is the aim of all religions, and the purpose of all religious devotion. Let each man choose his own ideal, his own object of devotion, for if he is sincere in his choice, the results will always be felt.

The Power of Prayer

Prayer is another aspect of religious teaching which it is interesting to examine. Many people pray – but how many of them really understand what they are doing, and why their prayers are answered, or indeed not answered?

Bearing in mind the karmic and samskaric laws which govern us, the results of prayer will always fit in with these laws. There are no miracles which go beyond the law of karma. Sincerity in prayer brings results, but these results come not from outside – rather they come from within us. True prayer, the only form of prayer which can be called part of a spiritual path, involves self-surrender. The one who prays acknowledges through his prayer that the divine forces control everything. He asks not for his circumstances to be changed, but for strength to see his circumstances in a true light – that is as part of the whole pattern of life, which he himself has created. He does not use prayer as an escape from reality, nor does he bargain with God. What right have we to demand anything of God, when we persistently distance ourselves from Him through our own actions? Sincere prayer must never be directed towards our own well-being, for this is the ego trying to manipulate divinity. Prayer can be used in two ways – for the good of others, or as an act of surrender. Any other form of prayer is an act of hypocrisy.

Surrender can take the form of self-surrender, or of surrender to some higher power, be it abstract or personified. The results are ultimately the same. By consciously directing ourselves more and more in devotion to God we come closer to that source, and with this all else comes to us. The aim of such prayer is to find devotion, and in that devotion to find the joy and bliss of divinity. In this state problems lose their power, because the force of divinity flows in us all the time. Then we have no further need to pray, because we no longer need to achieve something. Life itself becomes a prayer, an offering. Prayer should always be performed in the spirit of offering.

We offer ourselves to divinity – we don't demand that divinity offers itself to us. First deserve – then demand,

The power in prayer is the power of thought. It is that same force which governs all universal laws. If we can attune ourselves to that universal energy, then our thoughts become more powerful and our prayers are answered. Through meditation and spiritual practices we gain access to these areas within our own minds, causing our thoughts to become purer and therefore more powerful. The conscious mind has the free-will to use its force in a constructive or a destructive way, but as it draws power from deeper and deeper levels our free-will is attuned more and more to divine will, which is always uplifting and constructive. As the mind gains more power, then, it automatically gains greater discrimination of how to use that power. Prayer becomes a natural, spontaneous process, and is always directed towards the greatest good. A thought from this level for a person who is sick, for example, will have effect, because the power of that thought impulse has been channelled through the practice of meditation and so has become more forceful.

So prayer works in a similar way to the practice of gurushakti already described. Sincerity, humility, and to an extent faith, open our hearts so that the divine energy within us is activated and our thoughts and supplications are answered by our own force. Ultimately there is no separation between the real Self, the divinity within us, and the divine force all around us. They are one and the same.

Belief, Faith and Knowingness

The experience of all spiritual paths, and especially the traditional religions, is based on these three states of understanding. Religious teaching starts with belief, out of belief comes faith, and when our experience coincides with that which we are taught to believe, then we reach the state of knowingness. Belief is a product of the conscious mind; faith comes from a deeper level

and contains elements of devotion and acceptance; knowingness comes when the true spiritual self of man is awakened and he no longer needs to believe or have faith. He knows.

Christianity, for example, uses beliefs as its starting point. At the time of Christ the minds of men were less complicated. They found it easier to believe than we do now that there is so much emphasis placed on scientific proof or logical argument. Man today finds it much harder to accept the words of another if they are not backed up by some kind of scientific proof. For this reason Gururaj starts his teachings with meditation techniques which will further develop into a greater awareness of truth and understanding. Otherwise, if someone does have a strong belief it is often reinforced by a kind of blind faith – a deliberate narrow mindedness and refusal to question which stems from a basic insecurity, because it is not rooted in experience. People of this kind need to have faith in their belief because they identify with it very strongly, so much so that if anyone questions it they feel threatened and retreat more and more into its stubbornly-held principles. This is not in the nature of true faith. Faith emerges naturally from belief when some degree of love and acceptance comes, and when the heart opens towards the one who is teaching us. Something is touched within us, and without truly understanding why, our belief slips down into the level of the heart. We have reached the stage of surrender.

This surrender is what will lead us towards the final stage – that of knowingness. Knowingness is very different from knowledge. A clearer, though still inadequate, word for it would be wisdom. It is an understanding which springs from within, and not knowledge acquired from outside. Sometimes the knowledge of others can activate the process of knowing in ourselves; it can also provide a framework within which we can fit our own wisdom. But ultimately knowingness comes from within. It comes from experience.

At this point in our history, when man finds it so hard to accept the teachings of another if he can find no definite 'proof' for them, the practice of meditation becomes very important even for those already following the beliefs of a particular religion. Meditation allows personal experience, even without belief or faith. A person can start to meditate without, for example, believing any of the teachings of Gururaj put forward in this book and, if he is regular in his practice, within a fairly short period of time he will be experiencing aspects of Gururaj's teaching for himself. Here is the proof – now belief and faith are easy for him, because he has a certain degree of knowingness. His heart opens, and he just 'knows'. He does not need to prove that he knows nor does he feel threatened if others scorn his ideas. There is no need for conversion, there is only a gradual unfolding of truth – and the truth which he finds reaffirms his fundamental religious beliefs.

As we said at the beginning of this chapter, there are many ways to divinity. The path we follow does not matter so long as the teacher and his teachings are sincere and honest. The important thing is that we step deliberately on to the path of spiritual unfoldment. Our own commitment and faith and sincerity will lead us in the direction we need to go, which is always enhanced and made easier by proper guidance.

Unfoldment

Through his teachings Gururaj shows us the path. It is the path of unfoldment in which our own true nature, our real self, is gently revealed, as the veils which have covered it for so long are gradually lifted. It is significant that he has called his organisation the Foundation for Spiritual Unfoldment. For it is not a question of developing the spirit, but rather of unfolding it. The spirit is and always has been whole and perfect. It is complete and requires no improving. It resides within us, unknown and unrecognised, and our task is that of realising our own divinity. We do not have to become something which we are not, nor create a spiritual force in ourselves, because this is already there – it just needs activating. In essence the soul is none other than an individualised form of that universal energy, but our minds fail to see this, and it is because of this that we suffer. The simple essential underlying truth eludes us again and again as we fail to see beyond the workings of our complicated minds. As Gururaj says, it is so simple to be happy but so difficult to be simple.

The Three-fold Path

The way to these truths is three-fold: meditation, grace (gurushakti) and self-help. These three aspects working together lead us steadily and spontaneously to the realisation and experiences which make the ideals we have spoken about a living reality. The process of meditation is automatic – we are led deeper and deeper into the super-conscious area of the mind, to

the spirit within us, and our awareness gradually becomes established at this level, allowing us to be unaffected by the superficial disturbances of the mind. We become anchored in our true selves. Grace is the impulse, the guiding force which leads us along the path, sustaining and nourishing. We become more and more in tune with the pure awareness that is embodied in our teacher, who in turn is able to channel these energies to activate the spiritual force within us. Self-help involves that ten percent of effort by which we consciously direct ourselves towards a good and selfless life in every way possible. We learn to accept ourselves, our circumstance and those around us, and to gain as much as we can from everything that occurs, while at the same time striving to improve those areas within us which we see to be weak. This in itself draws grace to us, and enables us to integrate and use the strength given to us by meditation in a practical and fulfilling way as we live our lives.

The Goal

The goal of the spiritual path is the state of total integration which is called enlightenment or self-realization. The path may be a long one, but enlightenment comes in a flash. It takes many months to make and prepare a candle and a match, but illumination comes in an instant. Self-realization is just that: an illumination. A sudden, all encompassing realisation of the true nature of the self, and of the illusory nature of the dim reflection of self which we call the ego. The final veil is removed and the full force of the pure inner light shines through unimpeded into our whole being.

As we continue meditating and following our spiritual path we will begin to catch glimpses of what the experience of enlightenment is – certain changes take place within us as our perception changes and our awareness expands, and these we will examine more fully in a moment. Enlightenment itself, though, is not something which we should worry ourselves unduly

about. When we are ready, it will be there. To spend our time desiring it, or to try to assess how far we have progressed towards it produces the kind of spiritual game-playing which is of no value. If we are conscientious and sincere in our daily lives, and follow the teachings of our master carefully and with an open heart, then there is no need to concern ourselves with enlightenment. We must simply do for the sake of doing – if we start to see enlightenment as a kind of carrot to keep us on the path it is all too easy to slip into a subtle state of spiritual illusion from which it is hard to make progress.

The Ego

What is it that changes within us as we continue to meditate? In fact it is not so much that anything changes but rather that there is a shifting of emphasis. We have already said that instead of identifying with the real Self, the pure spirit within us, we identify with the ego. The ego, being part of the manifestation of the manifestor, is a reflection of the universal force. But it mistakes itself for the real thing, and in forgetting that it is but a reflection it identifies itself with reality, and tries to preserve itself, thinking that it is eternal, instead of a reflection of that which is eternal. When man recognises that his ego is but a reflection, his whole perspective of life changes. Once he loses the attachment to the ego it becomes so refined that the full spiritual force of the real self is able to shine through. The samskaras imprinted on the ego, which have produced the ups and downs, the pains and pleasures, lose all their power as the whole mind becomes flooded with spiritual energy.

There is an interesting point to bear in mind here: the ego becomes refined; it is not annihilated. It becomes like a piece of rubber which has been stretched so tightly that it is transparent. If you put a light behind a pane of glass it would seem that the glass has disappeared, and yet the identity of the

glass remains. The ego remains, but in a totally refined and non-binding form. For without it we could not exist in an incarnate physical form. We could not function in the world without the basic sense of individuality the ego brings. It is only when the enlightened man enters the state of maha samadhi, which is the voluntary shedding of the physical body forever (which we would call death) that his ego, the subtle body, being now totally pure and refined, disintegrates into its original elements, and the spirit merges finally into the Absolute. None else is left but divinity itself.

The paradox is that throughout the path towards this final merging man seeks to lose his ego. He comes to see, quite rightly, that it is his ego which is causing him to suffer and preventing him from realising his true self, because of its strong and dominating desire for self-preservation. But in fact it is not his ego itself which he has to lose, but the identification and attachment to it. When realisation occurs the ego is preserved, but it no longer seeks self-preservation. It becomes purely a functional tool, used to channel the inner light in all its brilliance and clarity. A man who is a surfer would categorise a wave as a separate entity when he wished to surf, but otherwise he would see the wave as part of the ocean, and not separate from it. In the same way the enlightened man can use the ego, and identify himself with his ego when it is necessary and useful for him to do so, but he always knows that the ego is but a manifested aspect of the universal consciousness.

At the beginning of this book we stated that the basis of all philosophies, religions and spiritual paths is the search for the answer to the question 'Who am I?'. Man seeks desperately to know his identity, to find and understand his purpose, what he is, why he is here. But who is the 'I' who asks that question? Who is the 'I' who needs to know his identity? It is the little 'I', the ego, trying to preserve its separateness by categorising its identity. It is that very sense of isolation which is driving man to try to experience himself. The big 'I', the real self, could never ask such a question. The real self is

questionless and answerless. No question remains because the self is not separate or apart, but a part of the whole, and the whole itself. When the question 'Who am I?' disappears, then the separation disappears, and the self is known. The man in a realised state sees no question to ask.

The Release of Samskaras

Samskaras, being the very stuff of which the mind is composed, can never be dissolved or resolved, Without them, the mind would not exist, and we would not exist. But they can be sublimated, and through this process we release ourselves from their binding influence. In this way we are cleaning the glass. The glass remains, but now we can see through it, and appreciate what is beyond. When this happens we can use our sub-conscious mind as a means of expression of our inner love and joy, just as we use a window to keep us warm. But now we know the nature and workings of our mind, and we have become the master of our samskaras. They can no longer condition and pattern our lives, and our suffering ceases.

The Three Gunas

The enlightened man is one who has reached a state of living in which he becomes entirely free, What is it that he has become free from? From the very laws and mechanics of the universe.

The relative state is governed by three qualities which are called in Sanskrit the three gunas. The gunas are 'tamas', which is darkness or inertia, 'rajas', action, and 'sattva', refinement or light. Between the two opposing forces of tamas and sattva comes rajas, the activating force which brings motion in the universe.

In man the conscious mind is governed principally by tamas which represents the grosser aspects of life – hatred, lust, fear, greed, etc. The super-

conscious on the other hand is the sattvic quality in man – love, joy, bliss. Between them lies the sub-conscious, the rajaistic, activating force which can lead us to greater darkness or greater light. According to his level of evolution, a particular guna will be predominant in man: in the grosser, less refined man tamas will dominate; in the more evolved man, sattva will be the stronger force.

By meditation and spiritual practices, by right living and right thinking, by self-help and helping others we are led gradually to greater refinement. As we are drawn to that section of the mind which is filled with light we experience more and more of the quality of sattva, and that of tamas diminishes. Now sattva, being light, has the power to reflect, whilst tamas, being darkness, does not. Whilst we are engrossed in the tamassic area of our mind we are unable to reflect that divine quality which is beyond all the gunas. But as we become centred in sattva, we become like a mirror from which the pure unmanifested spirit is reflected throughout the whole range of the mind. In this way we transcend the finest level of relativity, and are freed from the laws of opposites. We are taken beyond the level of the three gunas.

Non-duality

When man transcends opposites, he enters the state of non-duality. In this state he is beyond the depths of pain or pleasure, beyond the ups and downs of the sway of emotions. To him they are all equal. He brings all polarities together into a central point from where all opposites can be seen as true:

The realisation that all we previously called true was only one facet of relative truth comes gradually – we slowly become able to see past our own prejudices and presumptions until we reach the stage where all of the relative world is seen to be a play of the three gunas – in some places sattva dominates, in others tamas, but ultimately there is no good or evil.

The enlightened man becomes a law unto himself – he is not governed by the laws of opposites, but instead is motivated by love, by purity, by spiritual force. He resides in bliss, and experiences the divinity in all things. Hatred and fear and anger have no hold on him, because these things are created by man's mind. Good and evil are relative terms – divinity itself is a neutral force. There is no good or evil outside the mind of man. Only love.

Non-attachment

To be in the world, and yet not of the world; to be established in self and observe the body and its environment functioning and see it all as a divine play: these are the qualities of the man of God. These things imply one thing: non-attachment. Non-attachment can only come when the ego self can be regarded to be illusory and changing. Whilst we are governed by the changing quality of the ego, which makes us happy at one moment and depressed at the next, we remain attached. Non-attachment is simply a letting go, a releasing of ourselves from the binds of the little I. It must not be confused with detachment. The realised man can be very much involved in the world – he lives each moment to its full, and because of this one-pointedness he is able to experience a much deeper level of emotion, and to be totally immersed in every action he performs. But he is not driven by need, and he is not bound by suffering. He has ceased to be a pleasure seeker, and therefore automatically ceases to be a pain seeker as well. Emotions are experienced intensely, but momentarily. They are not absorbed and pondered upon, and therefore make no impression on his sub-conscious mind. He always remains centred in the super-conscious, and this allows him the nonattachment to the external world – to events, to people, to material possessions. His reality is beyond all these things, and therefore he can remain changeless while all the world around him is in a state of flux. His experience is one of permanent love and bliss which is beyond description.

Freedom

The enlightened man is not bound by samskaras, and neither by karma, because he has fulfilled all karmic debts and is no longer caught up in the wheel of life. He has completed the cycles of birth and rebirth, and all that remains for him to do is to finally drop the physical body and merge once again into the Absolute.

But some, by choice, decide to relinquish this final freedom, and remain incarnate in order to serve others. These are the masters who come because of their love and compassion for mankind, to help others to experience something of this joy. For though the state of enlightenment is reached by very few people on this earth, the fruits along the path are many, and the road to bliss is itself blissful. I hope that this book has given some insight into the teachings of a man who has reached this goal, and who is now leading others along the path of unfoldment.

I should like to end with a poem of which Gururaj himself is very fond. It expresses a state which is the birthright of each and every one of us.

“IF”

by Rudyard Kipling

*If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good nor talk too wise;*

*If you can dream – and not make dreams your master;
If you can think – and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with triumph and disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stop and build 'em up with worn out tools;*

*If you can make one heap of all your winnings,
And risk it on one turn of pitch and toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings,
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the will which says to them: 'Hold on!'*

*If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with kings – nor lose the common touch;
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you;
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it
And – what is more – you'll be a Man, my son!*