

The Meaning of Life in the Indian World of Thought

Walther Eidlitz

Into English by Bengt Lundborg and Katrin Stamm

© Kid Samuelsson, 2008

Swedish edition:

Livets mening och mål i indisk tankevärld,
Aldus, Stockholm 1972

German edition:

Der Sinn des Lebens – der indische Weg zur liebenden Hingabe
Olten 1974

Preface

This book was translated by God-brothers and God-sisters of Walther Eidlitz (Vāmandās), disciple of Svāmī Sadānanda Dāsa.

It is a revised edition, based on the Swedish as well as the German one, which was published after the Swedish edition and already contained some corrections by the author. Moreover, this English edition provides some additional explanations and translations from the Hindu Holy Scriptures by Vāmandās' guru Svāmī Sadānanda Dāsa, given in the footnotes by the translators.

We are deeply indebted to Vāmandās in many ways and hope that we will please him as well as our common guru, Svāmī Sadānanda Dāsa, by the attempt to render this exceptional work into English.

The translators,
Högåsa, February 2008

Contents

I. Who am I?

The Lost Notion of Man	8
Death and Reality	12
God's Māyā	17

II. The Structure of Man

Man	25
The States of Human Consciousness	33
Lust	45

III. Five Paths of Yoga

Karmayoga	52
The True Karmayoga	57
Niṣkāma-Karmayoga	63
The Yoga of Knowledge (Jñānayoga)	68
Bhaktiyoga, the Yoga of Service	84

IV. The Revelation of the WORD

The Sources	100
The Rediscovered Word	107

Appendix

The Avatāra	118
-------------	-----

Index

Computer users are referred to the pdf file
at www.sadananda.com
and the search function in Acrobat Reader

I. Who am I?

*Man is an obscure being.
He does not know from where he comes and not where he is going.
Little does he know about the world and least about himself.*

Goethe

...

...

*They languish, they fall
the suffering mortals
blindly
from hour to hour,
like water thrown
from rock to rock,
year after year
downwards
into an uncertain future.*

Hölderlin

The lost Notion of Man

Even a few hundred years ago a rather uniform view on man, with its roots in Judaism and Christianity (Old and New Testament) along with Greek poetry and philosophy, prevailed in the Occident.

“Nothing is greater than man”, the chorus exclaims in Sophokles’ *Antigone*.

Man is the crown of creation. All beings are subordinate to him. “Yet, You made him almost into a divine being”, the psalmist sings. (Book of Psalms 8. 6)

The Church proclaims: Once, man was made into the image of God. Then he tasted from the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge – he sinned – and was dethroned and fell. In His grace, God showed mercy to him and sent His only-begotten Son. He sacrificed himself, in order that those who believe in him may hope for a bodily resurrection and eternal life in union with him.

But the ancient view on man belongs to history. In our so-called culture there no longer exists any coherent view on the intrinsic nature of man. One says: man is good. The other says: man is evil. Man is no better than a beast. He is rather worse. In contrast to the animals he is equipped with an organ of logical thinking, which he has abused to the extent that by now he can let loose forces strong enough to extinguish himself and the entire globe. No animal is capable of doing anything alike.

The view on man of bygone times – perhaps only ostensibly uniform – seems to have gone up in smoke. What we find today, are the gruesome consequences of human experimentation and destructiveness. The nuclear bombs over Japan were just the beginning of a development, going from bad to worse. Every newspaper daily presents new instances of human evil.

This ever growing uncertainty about what man is or should be – accompanied by a continual swaying between attempts to smooth things over and total despair – is matched by an equally profound uncertainty about the goals of human life.

In severe competition the different ideologies contend for the masses. What in one place is considered the highest virtue, is elsewhere regarded with disgust. What here induces fear by the mere thought of it, is there the basis for welfare, security and peace.

“The American Way of Life”, a lifestyle which only a couple of decades ago, even here in Europe, was considered to have a great future and was seen as the guarantor for the continuance of the Western culture and democracy, today has gone on the rocks. “God’s own country” has turned out to be a country where hatred and fear prevail. On the pretext of defending democracy on Earth, the world power USA, as we now know, has methodically committed actions, which in terms of indifference to human suffering justly can be compared to the atrocities in Germany under Hitler.

By the end of the Second World War and during the subsequent period, people in Europe widely believed that the huge country in the West would not only provide material but also “spiritual” benefits. With the nylons that could be acquired at the black market, people imagined they had obtained not only a brand new commodity but also a new “faith”, a belief that man – provided acceptable economical circumstances – could act as the architect of his own fortune.

By the same token, the Soviet Union in many people’s eyes appeared to forebode a better future, although the present was full of hardships and the political means were admittedly harsh and bloody. The Soviet doctrine announced that through the revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat there would emerge a new type of man. This new kind of man would differ just as much from the man of yore as the New Adam of the Christian outlook differed from the Old Adam. Prior to this, man had been enslaved. Now he prepared himself, as a class fighter, to become a servant of the working people. It was also thought that the future Soviet Man would come to live in a realm of global peace. Criminality, poverty and all kinds of injustice would then belong to the past.

Also in this case a profound disillusionment could not be avoided. Likewise, over the whole world, many have lost confidence in the self-sufficient American self-made man as an ideal of the future man.

After the “free America” and the Soviet Union both revealed themselves as dubious models, more and more people have become bitterly disappointed and have lost all hope or have started to believe that the new communist China could be the ideal human society. In this third world power, where men in a way are seen as more important than machines, people believe in a continual revolution that should never settle down into a lifeless and rigid giant bureaucracy. When the tormented and exploited farmer no longer has to drudge for an estate owner, he will regain his human dignity. His whole life and all his work will receive a deeper significance through the conviction that he, too, is a little but important cog in the continually progressing revolution.

Even though the Chinese Maoists now and then proudly emphasize that their form of government can never be transferred to other, less developed nations, Maoism by its mere existence, in spite of the above-mentioned difficulties, still

exerts world-wide attraction. It has its influence on as widely differing groups as, just to give a few examples, the idealistically minded students of the Occident and the starving masses of Asia, Africa and America. Both revolt against the unjust division of the world's resources, the latter unwilling to endure the daily struggle for simple survival any longer.

To the major religions, with their conceptions of the purpose and goal of human life, new quasi-religious teachings have been added, which in the great struggle of collecting souls have the advantage of being able to promise liberation from pressing internal and external distress already in this life, and not just in the hereafter.

Torn between the conflicting propaganda of the world powers, the searching man stands today. He has little choice. Wherever he looks: struggle and fight. Even the proselytizing religions stand divided, undermined by the disintegrating forces of the world.

Nor does a total elimination of hunger and fulfilment of other material needs give any guarantee for happiness and peace or for a new culture, as is shown e.g. by the development in the Nordic welfare countries, which are often admired by the poorer countries and considered as a model. Lack of love – one's own inability to love and the carelessness of others –, loneliness, horror due to the lack of meaning in life, anguish at the thought of potential illness, or of old age and death – nothing of this is cured by means of a higher standard of living. Despite the fact that most of us find it inappropriate to talk about the process of dying, and although everything has been done to conceal the fact of our mortality, it seems that the secret fear of death today is stronger than ever. Also among physicians and priests one finds this perplexity and fear regarding the only thing certain.

Our agony is no less today than it was in Homer's days and no less than that of Solomon, who laments (Ecclesiastes 3. 21): "And it happens to man as to cattle; like cattle they die, too ... Who knows, whether the soul of the cattle goes downwards and that of man upwards?"

Even the darlings of the gods rarely escape this agony. The physician, Dr. Vogel, who witnessed the final days of Goethe, relates from the bedside of the poet, how he was seized by horror when realizing his looming death. In the face of imminent annihilation, Goethe's demoniacal self-certainty collapsed and he was, tragically indeed, thrown into a veritable state of terror. "A formidable anxiety and restlessness pushed the old man to and fro between his bed and his armchair. The pains, which were more and more centred on his chest, forced the aged man now to groan, and now to cry out loudly. His features were contorted, his eyes were hollow. His gaze expressed the severest agony of death."

The visions of technical progress, harboured by the aging Faust, have indeed by far been surpassed by the engineers of our time, but even if today man can travel into space and land on the arid surface of the moon, only minor changes have taken place in the consciousness of man. Despite the progress that has been made in modern deep psychology and astrophysics and despite the achievements in social sciences, modern man, when confronted with the question of the goal and purpose

of life or about his own true identity, is hardly able to give any answer. In such a position he feels helpless and usually repeats conventional phrases, which do not stem from the bottom of his heart.

The enigma of death is still unsolved – in the capitalist as well as in the communist countries.

One of the most sincere thinkers of our time, who was also a deeply religious person, namely Simone Weil, shortly before her decease wrote at the end of her last work: “Whatever mysterious significance death may have in heaven – on earth it implies that a being composed of a twitching piece of flesh and a thinking mind that desires, hates, hopes and fears, that wants and does not want, is turned into a small heap of inanimate dust.” (The Need for Roots)

As one of the first, Simone Weil already in the thirties and forties developed a mentality which is widely spread among many young people nowadays and which also included that her range of vision was not confined only to the traditional Mediterranean culture. The same sincerity, frankness and openness, with which she approached Christianity, she also observed when she let herself be inspired by unfamiliar traditions.

I believe that it is in the spirit of this believing and simultaneously sceptical mystic, who like few others had realized the inner and outer distress of the huge masses of the working people, the condemned ones of all countries and times, when we, today, make the attempt to consider the following questions in the light of the ancient Hindu revelation: *What is man and what is the purpose of human life – from the mundane as well as the eternal perspective.*

An attempt like this does not imply proselytizing, not conversion and is not meant to serve as an edification. With this book I simply wish to give an account of how these central questions, which affect all of us as soon as we find ourselves at the deathbed of a beloved friend, are answered in the Indian Holy Scriptures.

Whether you believe in this revelation or not – in our days, when nations and ideologies meet each other either in conflict or for the sake of mutual enrichment (in quite a different manner than just a generation ago), *some* knowledge of the view on man as conveyed by the scriptures of Hinduism is a prerequisite to realize our own condition.

Death and Reality

When you study the Indian Holy Scriptures, you discover in astonishment that the turning point which induces somebody to approach a guru, to subsequently become his disciple and be assigned a path to salvation, is often a catastrophe. The starting-point is often the worst state conceivable: a complete breakdown of one's whole life, externally as well as internally. Sometimes even death is a prerequisite for proceeding towards the ultimate goals of human life, indeed, occasionally Death himself may appear as a guru.

According to the Bhāgavatam, one of the central revealed scriptures of Hinduism, human life resembles the last steps of a man sentenced to death on his way to the execution ground. At different stations along the route he is offered amusements of various kinds: delicious food and beverages, music and dance, sexual pleasures. However, nothing of all this affords him happiness, because all the time his heart quivers with dread and anguish. Why – he knows that death is inescapable.

At another place in the same work a similar picture is used to illustrate the course of life, the journey from birth to death, namely the picture of a herd of cattle that is ruthlessly driven towards the slaughter-house by a butcher. The butcher is Time, urging on all living creatures. (The Sanskrit word for time, kāla, is deduced by the ancient Indian grammarians from the root kal: to push (on).)

The frame story in the Bhāgavatam, which comprises twelve books of altogether eighteen thousand stanzas, is also shrouded by the shadows of death: A king named Parīkṣit – the name means “the one who was proven worthy” – who has been cursed, sits in meditational posture by the shore of the river Ganges, awaiting his end. He knows that after seven days he will be struck down by a poisonous snake, and then he will inevitably die. In a wide circle around him, filled with reverence, the great ṛṣi-s of ancient India are seated. Then it just so happens that the youth Śuka comes along. “He came for no reason”, the text says. Whatever those who are eternally free, who wander about here on earth, do, they do it “without any purpose”. They roam around like innocent children and hand out what they carry within themselves: Pure Knowledge and Love of God. The king falls at the feet of Śuka and asks him: “What should man do in the face of his imminent death?” Śuka smiles and says: “You have asked a good question.” And then he starts to recount the content of the great Bhāgavatam.

What Parīkṣit now hears, makes him later on exclaim: “Although I have been fasting for seven days and seven nights and have not consumed a drop of water, I feel neither hunger, nor thirst. Why, I drink the nectar from your mouth. ... In the shape of a mortal spell God, Kṛṣṇa, has come to me.”

In the Kaṭha-Upaniṣat the lord of the law of cause and effect, the one who subdues all, Yama, Death himself, appears as a guru. The boy Naciketas, due to his courage and self-sacrificing devotion, has reached the threshold of Death. There he sits huddled up for three days, waiting before the closed gate: Death is busy. Having thus neglected the obligations of hospitality, Yama then grants Naciketas

the fulfilment of three wishes.

Naciketas' last and most important request reads: "When a man dies, two opinions prevail. Some say he exists, others say he doesn't. Who is right? To this I desire an answer!" (Kaṭha-Upaniṣat 1. 20) Death replies evasively: "Even the gods once were in doubt about this, and it is not surprising: these matters are hidden. Choose another favour, oh Naciketas, and don't beset me!" (Kaṭha-Upaniṣat 1. 21)

Yama offers the boy all kinds of mundane joys and pleasures instead. All such things, usually coveted by men, now are within reach for him: health, longevity, beautiful women, well-behaved children and grandchildren, unimaginable riches and power to rule the world.

Naciketas declines: "Keep your dancing and singing! Who knows whether these pleasures even last till the break of dawn... Why, life is short." Once more he demands to get instructions about what is beyond the realm of nature, beyond human ethics and the bounds of time: "Enlighten me about the knowledge that supersedes right and wrong, that is untouched by cause and effect and beyond past and future!" (Kaṭha-Upaniṣat 2. 14)

Also in the Bhagavadgītā death in the form of an imminent huge massacre provides the stage for spiritual instruction. Two enormous belligerent armies stand in battle array on the battlefield. On both sides most of the warriors feel that they are not going to survive this fight. Before the opening of the eighteen days' war of annihilation Arjuna, one of the greatest war heroes of that time, has let his chariot be placed in the space between the two armies. Previously, he had been convinced that he fought on the side of the good ones. Heavy-hearted he now perceives that close relatives of his are also in the opposing camp, – yes, he can see even his own beloved tutors there. He no longer knows what is right and wrong. Whatever action he takes, whether he fights or does not fight, he violates sacred law. In great despair he asks his friend and charioteer Kṛṣṇa for advice and enlightenment. – Only when the disciple has asked the appropriate questions, the guru can begin to instruct him. Else he remains mute. – While all around them ill omens of the approaching apocalypse are noted, Kṛṣṇa enlightens His disciple Arjuna about what is imperishable:

Know about This, *by which all is permeated*:
it is not wounded by the sword,
it is not moistened by water,
it is not burned by fire,
it is not parched by the wind ...
It is unfathomable, imperishable, eternal.

Bhagavadgītā 2. 17; 22–23; 24

These elements enumerated here contain – according to ancient Indian philosophy – all that is subjected to the laws of time and space. A guru of today could quite easily add: no hydrogen bomb is capable of blasting to pieces this Eternal, in which every living creature takes part in its innermost being and which pervades

everything.

Kṛṣṇa says:

There never was a time, when Me and you
and all these noblemen were not existing,
and there will never be a time,
when we shall cease to be ...

Just as childhood, youth and old age
befall the embodied one
so also the getting of another body (befalls him).
The wise man is not confused thereby.

Bhagavadgītā 2. 12–13

Just as a man discards his worn out clothes,
and puts on other, new ones,
so the embodied one
discards his withered bodies
and enters into fresh and new ones.

Bhagavadgītā 2. 22

Here, the knowledge of transmigration opens entirely new horizons. The belief, quite established in the West, that man is confined to live *one* life only, is seriously disputed. However, this broadening of the view is in no way the ultimate truth. According to Hinduism the great issues concerning right and wrong, guilt and penance can *not* be settled by introducing the concept of repeated existences.

The idea of reincarnation only broadens the scene in space and time. It makes it easier for us to accept the idea of living beings on remote planets and in times long gone by. Yet this broadening of the mind, introducing cosmic dimensions and a completely new concept of time perspective, does not make any change in principle. Another screen has to be removed to reveal a new stage. In the light of the Indian divine revelation the universe of measurable and calculable things, to which the Hindus also count all mental reality, appears solely as a perverted shadow image of the omnipresent and eternal fullness of the highest Reality. This implies, among other things, that in Hinduism the boundary between here and there, between this life and the hereafter, between holy and profane, good and evil, life and death, real and unreal, is drawn in a completely different way than we are used to according to our precepts and experience.

In the Kāṭha-Upaniṣat (II. 1. 10) Yama – Death as a guru – instructs the boy Naciketas:

What is here, is there,
and what is there, is here.
From death to death passes he,

who sees a difference between those two.

Similarly, in the Chāndogya-Upaniṣat (VII. 25. 1) it is said:

Fullness is in the East,
Fullness is in the West,
Fullness is in the North,
Fullness is in the South ...

The Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka-Upaniṣat explains:

“He, who in this world is unaware of the imperishable Eternal and offers oblations into the sacrificial fire to propitiate one of the gods – even if he sweats and strains for thousands of years, all his labour is in vain as the results of his sacrifice are perishable. He, who without knowledge of this imperishable Eternal passes away, is like a miserable slave, who was bought (by the gods), a truly poor man. He, however, who has realized this imperishable Eternal and departs from this world, he is a knowing one (he knows Reality), a (true) brahmin.” (III. 8. 10)

True knowledge concerning this sole, omnipresent, indestructible and eternal foundation of the world and of every living entity (and consequently not only of man), this true Reality – without which all that we on earth perceive as real, would not last even for a moment – constitutes the essence of all Indian divine revelation.

All that has a beginning and an end is not (the ultimate) Reality, Bhagavadgītā states. Only that which has neither beginning nor end is eternal and truly existing:

It is unborn, eternal, unchangeable.
It is not destroyed,
when the body perishes.

Bhagavadgītā 2. 20

This all-embracing Reality, which is not subordinate to the laws of Nature nor to the laws of birth, growth, decline and death, constitutes – viewed in the light of the Vedic knowledge – the *normality*; whereas what *we* call reality, i.e. all that we, aided by our senses and comprehension, daily perceive in this corruptible world, is an abnormal, only *relative* reality. This view – which is so unfamiliar to the Western approach that it demands a real revolution in the very way of thinking and an adoption of another set of values than the ingrained ones – must be kept in mind, if one wishes to understand the view on man in the Indian world of thought.

Even to Buddha, the perfectly enlightened one, who grew up within the Hindu tradition, and who, not unjustifiably, is considered to have founded an atheistic religion, even to him the existence of this unborn, eternal Reality appears as something self-evident.

Once he addressed the following words to his disciples:

There is something that is unborn, uncreated, not-made, not composite.
And if this that is unborn, uncreated, not-made, not composite did not exist,
then how could one escape from that
which is born, created, made and composite?

(Udāna¹ VIII. 1)

This imperishable something, which Buddha speaks about, is the same imperishable Eternal, which in Hinduism is termed the formless Brahma. And the state of nirvāṇa in Buddhism equals the state of brahma-nirvāṇa in Hinduism (see *Bhagavadgītā* 2. 75 and 5. 24–25).

Now the question arises: What is this veil or deceiving power that, according to the Hindu divine revelation, provides us the means to experience this cosmos and makes us believe it to be real – from the most remote stars and solar systems down to the tiniest elements of the ancient Indian atomic theory, including also the most crude and most refined mental processes within all living beings – but which conceals our true nature and the underlying fundamental and primary Reality to us?

¹ Translators' note: The Udāna is a brief compilation of the most ancient and central utterings of the Buddha, usually in poignant verses and accompanied by a sutta (description) of the occasion. It belongs to the "triple basket" (tipiṭaka), the oldest source of Buddha's teachings. Udāna means literally "sigh of relief", as these verses cause relief from suffering through understanding in the hearts of the listeners.

God's māyā

The mighty power that obstructs our vision and awareness of the eternal Reality, in India goes under the name of māyā². Already in R̥gveda (IV. 47. 18) it says: “Indra aided by his māyā swiftly assumes manifold shapes.”

Old Indian dictionaries give, as one of many explanations of the word māyā, also the following: magic power, conjuring trick, forming power, grace. The meaning that Western scholars usually associate with the word, namely *illusion*, only covers a small fraction of this comprehensive notion.

The ancient Indian grammarians, for their part, deduce the word māyā from the Sanskrit root mā: measure, calculate, assess.

The Śāstram-s finally, i.e. the Holy Scriptures of the Hindus, consider the entire measurable cosmos, including the biggest and the smallest objects as well as the physical and the mental components, as consisting of māyā, constituted of her substance and subject to her laws.

Māyā has two aspects. As prakṛti, the nature behind all visible nature, she is the primordial substance of everything in the universe. She is also called “the great ignorance” (avidyā), because she makes us believe that the perverted, fleeting shadow-images of the true Reality we perceive were the true and full Reality.

According to the Śāstram-s the knowledge about the three guṇa-s of māyā is of utmost importance as concerns the understanding of the world and man. Without insight into the concept of the three guṇa-s, the three qualities that determine the physical world as well as all the functions of our mind, the whole Indian science of the nature of man remains incomprehensible.

Common to the three guṇa-s, *sattva*, *rajaḥ* and *tamaḥ* is that they all consist of *desire*, though of different kinds. Tamaḥ is desire for darkness, bewilderment, for satisfaction of the basest instincts – easily attained, dirty lust. Rajaḥ is desire for the satisfaction of slightly nobler inclinations, like, e.g., hunger for power, a parching thirst for activity, striving for wealth, yearning for social status and craving for lust, even if it is hard to achieve. Sattva is desire as well, but desire for more refined pleasures, for such things as peace, knowledge, tranquillity, silence and harmony.

From tamaḥ emerges a sound-vibration. From this vibration space unfolds and from this, gradually, the different constituents of matter evolve.

The earth, uncountable suns and the stellar systems are all built mainly by the guṇa tamaḥ. In our senses³ and our intellect tamaḥ predominates, but it is there mixed with a fair amount of rajaḥ. The mind, i.e. the readiness to experience something and the ability to imagine and to desire, is characterized by tamaḥ joined with a fair amount of sattva.

The whole māyā-universe is the domain of the guṇa-s. The working of the guṇa-s permeates everything that consists of the substance of māyā. Already a thousand years before Galilei and even further back in Vedic times, the Indians were familiar

² Translators' note: As the word *māyā* refers to the Power of God that is considered female (appearing either as a person or as a formless power) it is referred to by “she”.

³ Translators' note: I.e. the *propensity* to perceive and act with the respective organs.

with the concept of countless worlds within this universe. In the Bhāgavatam, e.g., it says:

Like sunlit streams of specks of dust
flow through open windows,
so countless worlds flow in and out
through Mahāviṣṇu's pores.
(When He exhales they are born,
when He inhales they perish.
Eternally the worlds evolve,
eternally the worlds dissolve –
as Mahāviṣṇu never stops to breathe.)

Bhāgavatam X. 14. 11⁴

From God's point of view the emanation and dissolution of the universes compares to gentle breathing. It is only when we turn our gaze to a particular world system that the working of the guṇa-s becomes apparent. In the Bhāgavatam it is told that Brahmā, the architect of this universe, who is a servant of the Lord, shapes the structure of this world system and the coverings of men as of the other living beings out of the material of prakṛti, that is mainly predominated by tamaḥ, by means of the fiery force of rajo-guṇa. In the same way Viṣṇu, who is a part manifestation of the Highest, by dint of the harmonizing force of sattva-guṇa effortlessly maintains the world and all beings⁵. And when the time of the world's destruction approaches, the dark glow of tamaḥ breaks forth from the "third eye" of Śiva, consuming the universe and all beings.

Yet God Himself and His Eternal Realm, which alone are absolute Reality, remain unaffected by the struggle of the guṇa-s and independent of the creation and destruction of the world within the sphere of māyā. His inner life and His Realm are in no way influenced or disturbed by the simultaneous presence of a cosmos. Being unbounded by time and space He and His Realm are not subjected to the laws of nature and human logic.

From this omnipresent, eternal plane of absolute Reality, true Life flows into the shadowy realm of māyā, the Great Nature, prakṛti, at every act of creation. God explains in the Bhagavadgītā:

The great prakṛti is My womb.
Therein I sink the seed,⁶
from which all entities are born,
oh Arjuna.

⁴ Translators' note: Cp. Brahma Saṁhitā, 13.

⁵ Translators' note: "Viṣṇu establishes and maintains through *dharma*, promulgated through Avatāra-s like Matsya etc." (Svāmī Sadānanda dāsa: Corrections to "Die Indische Gottesliebe" by Walther Eidlitz).

⁶ Translators' note: Cp. W. Eidlitz: Kṛṣṇa-Caitanya, Sein Leben und Seine Lehre, Stockholm 1968, p. 57: transl.: "I impregnate her with My life-giving glance, composed of all the jīva-ātmā-s".

Whatever is taking shape,
in whatever womb;
the great prakṛti is the womb,
and I am the life-giving Father.

Bhagavadgītā 14. 3–4

From the point of view of the highest Reality, the following fundamental definition of māyā as given in the Bhāgavatam becomes understandable. The Primordial God talks to His servant Brahmā, as Brahmā is about to shape the world:

Whatever may be conceived of
leaving Reality (Me) aside,
and whatever cannot be conceived of
as being in God (the Ātmā),
that one should know
as the māyā of the Paramātmā.
This māyā is in relation to the Paramātmā
just as reflection,
just as darkness.

Bhāgavatam II. 9. 33

In the Upaniṣat-s and the Bhagavadgītā as well as in the Bhāgavatam, the demarcation between the perishable world, composed of the stuff of māyā, and the infinite, eternal, highest Reality is unrelentingly emphasized.

Neither the body, composed of earth,
nor the senses, nor the gods,
who are presiding over them,
nor breath, wind, water or light,
nor the mind, which needs nourishment,
nor reason, nor the heart (the “soul”),
nor the sense of I-ness,
nor ether, nor earth, nor the objects of the senses,
nor the amorphous primordial potency of matter,
nothing of all this is the ātmā.

Bhāgavatam XI. 28. 24

All things and emotions,
that originate in man or in nature,
consist of the three guṇa-s (of māyā),
and all that man perceives and experiences,
all that he hears and thinks.

...

The character of his actions,
that arise from these three guṇa-s,
determines his travel
in the transitory world of transmigration,
from birth to birth.

Bhāgavatam XI. 25. 31–32

Māyā's three guṇa-s correspond, regarding their effects, to different aims in human life, grouping them roughly into three categories. In a few people, the light guṇa sattva is predominant. In many people the restless activity and ardour of guṇa rajaḥ prevails. Most of us are chiefly dominated by the dark guṇa tamaḥ. It is, however, important to note that in the Indian science of man the three guṇa-s always appear together, as a specific individual mixture. This means that the one or the other guṇa can prevail, but no single guṇa can be completely in command of a person – or put in other words: there can never be a human being, who is entirely good or evil – and that the unknown, most deeply hidden eternal core in perishable man, the ātmā (upon whose existence no believing Hindu has any doubt, as it forms the very basis of Hinduism) is always fettered by these three guṇa-s, be it in different ways.

The Sanskrit word guṇa, strikingly enough, means among other things: shackle, chain, rope.

The following account of the guṇa-s' many different ways of binding the ātmā is to be found in the Bhagavadgītā:

Sattva, rajaḥ and tamaḥ tie to the body
the indestructible one, who abides in the body.

The guṇa sattva, completely pure,
as it is free from evil,
binds through attachment to happiness,
and, since it grants knowledge,
through attachment to knowledge.

Know, that rajaḥ is of passionate nature
and gives rise to thirst and temporary gratification.
It binds the indwelling one
through attachment to activity.

And know, that tamaḥ, born of ignorance,
deceives all living beings.
It binds through misunderstanding, inertia and sleep.

Bhagavadgītā 14. 5–8

Being completely surrounded and enchanted by God's māyā, one is easily led to believe that there exists nothing but her. It is as if māyā is all there is. She appears

as the great Mother, who gives birth to the worlds and who destroys them again, the grand Mistress of all existence – something that is reflected in some Indian cults. *He*, māyā's Master, Whose servant she is, seems to have disappeared completely. Yet other revealed texts tell explicitly, that it is all the time His will she is executing.

It is not unimportant for understanding Hinduism to realize that Hinduism knows this perspective, too. If one fails to take this perspective into account, all statements in the Sacred Scriptures about an absolutely supramundane Play of God and His eternal companions – in the Divine Realms, unbounded by time and space, to which māyā has no admittance – would be less impressive. This part of Hinduism, in which māyā appears and is worshipped as the sole and ultimate reality, is naturally the one the Westerner can most easily assimilate.

Already in 1782 the young Goethe formulated his experience of this newly discovered psychological aspect of nature:

“Nature, by her we are surrounded and encircled – incapable of stepping out or entering more deeply, too. Unasked and without warning she snatches us into the cycle of her dance.”

Much of Goethe's intuitive view, as expressed in his essay on nature, is confirmed and deepened in a startling way by the Indian revelation. Yet, there is one exception. The assertion that we are incapable of escaping nature, i.e. of leaving the sphere of prakṛti, of māyā, or of getting deeper into it, this assertion has no validity, as we will discover as soon as we have a clearer view of Hinduism in its entirety.

It is difficult to rise above God's māyā, this fact is often stressed in the texts. Nonetheless, man is not totally denied this possibility. For most people the objectives, knowledge, joy and the meaning of life may lie within the realm of the guṇa-s of māyā – but there are also objectives, knowledge, joy and a meaning of life that are not touched, not confined by the guṇa-s.

God declares in the Bhāgavatam:

The exclusive knowledge of ātmā and Brahma
is of the nature of sattva.
The knowledge of man as a unity of body and mind
is of the nature of rajas.
The ordinary knowledge, only aiming at mundane happiness,
is of the nature of tamas.
Yet, the knowledge founded in Me,
is free of the guṇa-s.

Bhāgavatam XI. 25. 24

Of sattvic nature is the active conviction,
that the quest for the ātmā is the purpose of life.

Of rajasic nature is the conviction
that the purpose of life is to fulfil the duties, imposed on men.
Of tamasic nature is the conviction
that the purpose of life is to disregard those duties.
But the strong conviction that serving Me
is the purpose of life, is free of the guṇa-s.

Bhāgavatam XI. 25. 27

The joy that arises from the ātmā
is of sattvic nature.
The joy that arises from the sensory world
is of rajasic nature.
The joy that arises from lethargy and bewilderment
is of tamasic nature.
The joy that is founded in Me
is beyond the guṇa-s.

Bhāgavatam XI. 25. 29

Unrelentingly a line is drawn between the realm of māyā and that which lies beyond her. This partition even runs straight through the Holy Scriptures. A substantial part of the Veda, the Divine revealed Knowledge of the Hindus, as far as it offers reward and deals with religious and social duties, belongs to the sphere of māyā.

In the Bhagavadgītā, Kṛṣṇa instructs his disciple Arjuna:

The Vedas deal with the three guṇa-s of māyā.
Free yourself, oh Arjuna, of the three guṇa-s.
Stay aloof from the pairs of opposites (of māyā),
free from the urge of amassing and securing,
take root in pure eternal existence,
ground yourself in the ātmā.

Bhagavadgītā 2. 45

The dividing line between the world of māyā and that which is untouched by her, does however not imply a static here and there, but is rather a dynamic perspective, a question of inner orientation. When someone, through the grace of God, is granted the power of divine vision, the “Divine Eye”, then he becomes capable of probing deeper into the nature of māyā and of recognizing her true character. Although in the midst of life and the world he is now liberated and moves freely, without being subjugated to māyā’s guṇa-s any more. This is possible for him since – through the new faculty of vision that was given to him – he is capable of perceiving the eternal, Divine foundation underlying all the fleeting phenomena of the world of māyā: the ugly and the beautiful things, happiness and suffering. Accordingly, the goal is not at all abandonment of the world, instead it is

understanding and realization of its true nature.

In India it is considered – or was considered only a few years ago – the greatest fortune in life on earth to meet a guru, a spiritual guide, who knows about the perishable and the imperishable realm – and to be accepted as his disciple. Yet, it is also said that everyone finds the guru he deserves. The pupil who searches for pleasure, wealth and power, finds a guru capable of showing a path that leads to pleasure, wealth and power. A pupil who has a disposition to be content with half-truths and who shrinks back from the ultimate truth finds a guru who instructs in half-truths. And a pupil who deceives himself, meets a guru who deceives himself.

The believing Hindu is convinced that there has not been a single generation in India for ages, when not one or two or a few true gurus have been walking the paths and roads of their country. The classic definition of a bona fide guru reads: “He must belong to one of the old, never broken lines of disciplic succession. He must have received the truth in a genuine and unalloyed way from his own guru. Moreover, he himself must have experienced in an unmistakable way this eternal truth in his own heart.” The original guru, in these widely branched traditions, is always God Himself or one of His eternal manifestations.

When Sanātana Gosvāmī, the former head of government of the big state of Bengal, in the year 1516 after many hardships at last had found his guru he addressed him with three essential questions:⁷

Who am I?

Why do I suffer?

What is the cure of my suffering?

The answers to these questions form the main contents of this book. In order to probe further into these matters it must, however, first be related how the ancient Indian scriptures describe the structure of man.

The Hindu world of thought does often contain more subtle distinctions and has more levels of meaning than the Christian and Occidental philosophies. Therefore, there are usually no direct equivalences; word-for-word translations of Sanskrit expressions become misleading in multiple ways. In order to avoid presenting a too watered down picture of the Indian view on man, some basic definitions, according to the traditional Indian conception, are given on the following pages. These definitions can serve much like the notation of an unfamiliar kind of music and aid in bringing about a better understanding of the subsequent account concerning the nature of man and the meaning of life according to the Indian Holy Scriptures.

⁷ See W. Eidlitz: Kṛṣṇa-Caitanya, Sein Leben und Seine Lehre, Stockholm 1968, p. 453.

II. The Structure of Man

Man

When we now set out to try to gain an insight into the way the Holy Scriptures of the Hindus, the Śāstram-s, understand the essence of man or the purpose of human life, it is important that we do not let us be guided by our own, Western habitual ways of thinking. Today, we can hardly understand the true significance of, e.g., a tragedy by Sophokles without having at least some acquaintance with the view on man of the Old Greek, their notion of fate and their doctrine of the kingdom of the dead and the goddesses of vengeance. Similarly, it is totally out of the question that we, sticking to our world view, composed of Antique and Christian tradition as well as modern psychology, science and technology, would be able to gain even a lesser degree of insight into the Śāstram-s, the Holy Scriptures of the Hindus. The world picture and the view of man held by the Old Greek are certainly much closer to us than those of the Hindus.

In order to get a proper understanding of man, as he is presented in the Holy Scriptures of the Hindus, we must, above all, keep in mind – as has already been indicated – that not only what we in the West call the human body, but also what we usually term “soul” and “mind”, according to the Hindu revelation is considered something *physical*, i.e. something made of māyā-stuff. The concealed *Eternal*, the *ātmā*, who has taken his abode in man (like in all other entities), according to the view of the Śāstram-s, is something quite different, something intrinsically distinct from the “soul” and “mind” of Western psychology, and also belonging to a completely different category than the “eternal soul” of Christianity.

The Śāstram-s distinguish between a “gross” physical body, which corresponds to our usual concept of the body, and a “subtle” physical body, which comprises the whole mental life. The latter is thus, according to the Hindus, something basically physical, although of a considerably lighter and more subtle physical nature than the visible, weighable and measurable body.

According to the Śāstram-s “man”, i.e. the totality of the human structure, is composed of the following “parts”, forming the organic unity of a person:

(A) The physical body with the five sense organs of action (karma-indriya) and the five sense organs of knowledge (jñāna-indriya). The five sense *organs* of action are the organ of speech, the hands, the feet, the anus and the sexual organ. The five sense *organs* of knowledge are the ears, the eyes, the skin, the tongue and the nose.

This gross *physical* body is called sthūla-deha or sthūla-śarira in Sanskrit. It is pervaded by the vital force or vital air (prāṇa).

(B) The subtle *physical* body, which consists of five senses of action and five senses of knowledge (nota bene: *senses*, not sense *organs* composed of muscular tissues, nervous substance etc.) along with the “inner organ” or “inner agent” (antaḥkaraṇa), often also termed “manah” or “mind” in general. This “inner organ” corresponds to everything that we name soul, mind, consciousness etc. Also the

subtle physical body (sukṣma-deha or līṅga-deha, sukṣma-śarira or līṅga-śarira) is pervaded by vital force (prāṇa). The inner organ constitutes a unity, composed of four different layers or internal instruments with particular functions (vṛtti).

The conception that the mental body be equipped with senses is puzzling indeed. It contradicts our understanding of the psyche. Still, the Hindus find support for this statement. First of all, these subtle senses are experienced and used in dreams, and, secondly, although the two bodies are usually separated when man dies – which means that the gross physical body with its ten sense organs is then discarded – the deceased one can still see, hear etc. According to the Śāstram-s he then sees and hears by means of the subtle physical senses, because these still remain.

All that we in the West like to call the “mind”, “consciousness” or the “soul” and tend to juxtapose to “matter”, and even often enough regard as something eternal and therefore superior to the perishable, is here only designated as a subtler kind of matter. In order to clarify this, as well as the consequences of it, the Śāstram-s give an analysis of the structure and the contents of the inner organ or inner agent, the antaḥkaraṇa:

1. “Something is heard.” The *consciousness* receives an *impression*. Thus, the inner organ has the capability to receive impressions. It is – in one of its functions – receptive, passive and is therefore very often likened to a mirror or a reflecting water surface. The receptiveness of the mirror of consciousness gets enhanced along with its purity and calmness, in the same way as the calm water surface gives the most truthful reflection. The less that comes in between the mirror of consciousness and the object about to be reflected and to leave an impression, the more objective the knowledge is going to be. The prerequisites for the unalloyed perception of an object, such as it is, are: an unpolluted consciousness, a clear apprehension, an undistorted registering of the respective form and substance and the uncorrupted transmission of the sound from the physical ear via the nerves to the mirror of consciousness.

This mirror, the receptive consciousness, is called *citta* in Sanskrit. It is important to carefully distinguish between this *citta* and the concept of *Cit*. – *Cit* is that which *consists* of pure, direct (unmediated) Knowledge. *Citta*, on the other hand, does not consist of knowledge, but is, as it were, an organ that *acquires* knowledge by receiving impressions. The *citta* thus only contains *mediated* (conveyed) knowledge.

In theory, *citta* is pure, invariable, quiet and calm; in real life it is nevertheless filled with pleasant and unpleasant impressions (in Sanskrit: saṁskāra-s, vāsanā-s).

2. The second layer of the inner organ consists of the readiness, the wish to perceive. The consciousness is prepared to experience something. This preparedness leads to the desire to experience again and more intensely what has earlier been experienced as good and enjoyable, or at least to dwell on the pleasure-giving object in one’s fantasy – or else, in the case of a repugnant impression, to

lose oneself in pondering, to brood over it.

This *incessant readiness of the consciousness* is termed *manaḥ*.⁸ From *manaḥ* desire arises, lust, named *kāma*. It is the *manaḥ* that makes an object desirable and, as it were, lends colour to it, so as to make it appear attractive. On the other hand this *readiness* also contains the opposite of lust, i.e. loathing or *krodha*, the capability of rejecting all that is either experienced as repulsive, or stands in the way of the experience of something desirable.

3. “A sound is heard.” The consciousness establishes, after some consideration, *what* is heard, i.e., through the function of reason it becomes known what the object experienced in the *citta* is, where it is located, wherefrom it has originated and how it can be achieved.

This knowledge, according to the *Sāstram*-s, can contain:

- a) Direct perception, conclusion, comparison, to realize the absence of an object, self-evident truths (“the world exists”), probability, traditional beliefs, authoritative statements by genuine sages, hints, words (includes acquisition of what the *Sāstram*-s, that count as an absolute source of experience, have to say about the object in question)⁹. This is called *pramāṇa*, truthful knowledge.
- b) Delusion, or knowledge of a thing, such as it is by no means. This is called *viparyaya* (fallacy).
- c) Knowledge of a thing that merely consists of words but has no underlying reality, like, e.g., the horns of a hare. This is called *vikalpa* or *saṁśaya* (doubt).
- d) Memory, recollection, a knowledge that arises from impressions (*saṁskāra*-s) from an earlier experience (*smṛti*).
- e) Dreaming. This is called *nidrā*.

This capability of the inner agent to deliberate and consider is called *buddhi*.

4. “I hear.” To know oneself as an “I”, to feel and experience oneself as a unity, a person. This “I” or better: the subtle material basis or organ of the sense of I-ness (in Sanskrit: *ahaṁkāra*), is composed of the substance of *māyā*. This ego-organ, which is the issue here, is consequently a part of the subtle physical covering and therefore liable to be influenced by physical factors. This implies that the sense of I-ness can be eliminated by injury, abuse of alcohol etc.

The four layers that together constitute the *inner organ* or *mind* are accordingly:

1. The capability of experiencing something: *citta*.
2. The readiness to experience something: *manaḥ*.

⁸ *Manaḥ* in a narrower sense. Also the totality of the layers of consciousness is sometimes, as has been mentioned before, called *manaḥ*.

⁹ Translators’ note: the 10 ways of acquiring so-called correct knowledge are in Sanskrit: *pratyakṣa* (direct perception), *anumāna* (conclusion), *upamāna* (comparison), *abhāva* (absence), *arthāpatti* (self-evidence), *sambhāva* (probability), *aitihyā* (>itihāsa, based on traditional knowledge), *āṛṣa* (>ṛṣi, based on what the sages say), *ceṣṭa* (based on a hint), *śabda* (a word that has been heard/read).

3. The capability of establishing the nature of the object of experience as it is: *buddhi*.
4. The foundation that renders possible the emergence of a sense of I-ness: *ahaṁkāra*, (the I-maker).

This can also be expressed as follows:

The unpolluted consciousness, the purely receptive, passive: *citta*;

the emotion, the drive: *manaḥ*;

the reason, the intellect: *buddhi*;

and the personality: *ahaṁkāra* –

these form the content of what the Śāstram-s denominate the inner organ or *antaḥkaraṇa*, and what we in the West usually denote the mind or the soul.

These four layers, though, are not just theoretical structures, but are filled with concrete contents. Nor are they just functions or modes of action, but can rather be compared to “receptacles”, that contain something. They consist of subtle, vital matter. Like the gross physical body, so is also the subtle mental body permeated with “*prāṇa*” or life force – as a consequence of the connection of the bodies with an unknown something, an X.

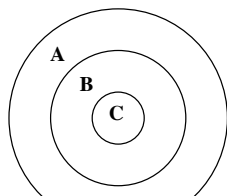
As it is not a “soul” or a “mind” that, as it were, brings life to the gross physical body and, moreover, also the “soul” or the “mind” are of material nature, there follows that both owe their lives to the presence of a hidden subject, to whom they act as coverings. This hidden subject is the *ātmā*, the true self, that consists of *Cit*, true Knowledge.

The mere presence of this *ātmā* within the two coverings (the gross physical and the subtle mental one) is the cause that *man* is alive and makes him realize himself as an individuality.

The *ātmā* can in no way become an object of experience from the side of the coverings, which means that the human mind, the “soul”, can never gain knowledge of the nature of the *ātmā*. This is because, according to the Śāstram-s, *Cit*, pure Knowledge, pure Spirit on the one side, and matter, *māyā*-stuff, the contrary of pure Knowledge, on the other, constitute entirely opposite categories. Cognition would presuppose a kind of similarity between the subject and the object of experience, yet, between *Cit* and a-*Cit* (non-*Cit*) there is no such similarity, they are absolute opposites. *Still*, the *ātmā*, being pure Knowledge, can perceive, know and experience that what is a-*Cit* or matter, but never the other way round.

The knowledge that there is an *ātmā* at all arises, according to the scriptures, from the *revelation* of the Word of God. One can infer the existence of the *ātmā*, take it for granted, only after first having heard about the idea of the *ātmā*.

Instead of dealing at once with the problem *how* the *ātmā* entered these bodily coverings, we shall first give a schematic account of the structure of man:



(A) the gross physical body with the ten sense organs and *prāṇa* (*non-Cit*);

(B) the subtle, mental body with the ten subtle senses

and prāṇa, together with citta, ahaṁkāra,
buddhi, manaḥ (*non-Cit*);
(C) the ātmā, the knowing, perceiving subject, who
consists of pure Knowledge (*Cit*).

Now the question arises how it can come about that (A) and (B) together with (C), the ātmā, an entity which is quite alien to them, can form a unity, the living man. How come that man is capable of experiencing himself as a unity, as a concrete unity when awake, and as a concrete unity also *after* sound sleeping or dreaming, when returning to the waking state?

As long as the ātmā¹⁰ does not know, who he is in himself – this is called the confined state of the ātmā (baddha) – he will transfer his true awareness of himself, i.e. the certainty of “I am ātmā”, to the gross physical and the subtle (mental) body and believe himself to be a human being. The basis for the sense of I-ness, the psychological ego-organ, which is composed of subtle stuff, on the other hand, is animated by the presence of the ātmā, and the “inner organ” (mind, soul), where one of the four layers can form the basis of the sense of I-ness, is now carried by the awareness or feeling “I am”.

The ātmā, *overwhelmed by ignorance*, thus makes the physical and mental bodies his *own*, due to his fallacious identification with the coverings. Hence, he attributes to himself everything that the physical and the subtle body experience, and claims that it is his (the ātmā’s) body, his mind, and that the ego, made of subtle stuff, represents his true identity. This is as if a gem, wrapped up in a cloth of silk and placed in a case, maintained that it (the gem) *was* the cloth and the case, and – as a consequence of this – as if the cloth of silk maintained: I, the cloth, am the gem and the case. Or as if someone imagined: I am my trousers, my coat, my shirt. And who he truly is, he has forgotten.

Hence, we arrive at the following notions of I-ness:

I, the ātmā, the Cit-ātmā, the knowing subject, who consists of Knowledge (*Cit*).
When an ātmā knows himself as “I” – then this is an absolute truth.

I, the principle of identification, rooted in the subtle material mental organ. This “I”, who knows itself as the unity of the gross physical body and the subtle physical mind, is true, for as long as the body and soul “live”.

I, the ātmā, who am identical with the subtle physical ego of the mind. This equality is mere *imagination*, entirely false.

In the latter case the ātmā is still there, but no longer experiences himself as such. The ātmā was pure *self*; now he is just there – without awareness of his true identity. The ātmā’s consciousness of his true identity has been paralysed, he has been supplied with a new identification and now believes himself to be the coverings. He confuses himself with those, which are merely his coats.

Based on this (I) – which we put within parentheses, because it is mere illusion – there now arises a corresponding *mine*, an attitude that makes us regard everything

¹⁰The word ātmā in Sanskrit has a masculine form.

as related to this (I), expressing possession. From this illusion of (I) and (mine), born of ignorance, no being in the countless universes is free, who considers himself to be a human being, an animal, a tree, a stone or in general: a member of the world of time and space. When it is already an illusion to believe oneself to be a human being, then it is only a further elaboration of this folly to consider oneself to be a man, a woman, old, young, poor, rich, diseased or healthy – and likewise to regard one’s body, mind, soul, house, children, wife, spouse etc. as one’s “own” and to fight, toil, love, hate and pray for their sake – or even to believe that the present personality is eternal and this (I) immortal.

The ātmā has lost his true self-consciousness and has received an illusory identification with the body and the mind instead; in other words: what the body and the mind experience, the ātmā misunderstands as *his* experience.

The ātmā, as has been said before, is *eternal, immutable*, true Life, full of spontaneous initiative, pure Knowledge and Joy. The proper object of cognition is he himself, and all that, like himself, is made of Cit, namely *the realm of the highest Reality, consisting of pure Being, pure Knowledge and pure Joy*, which is beyond the laws of time and space.

The (individual) ātmā, however, is very small and therefore his capacity to know as well as his will-power and ability to act are *limited*. Originally he possessed free will. *Before* he obtained his bodily coverings and his false ego he was free. He therefore had the choice to act according to his true eternal Cit-nature and serve God in the eternal Cit-Reality, *or* else to wish to experience the opposite world of matter and ignorance. If he decided upon the latter, he was equipped with bodily coverings and the false self-identification that caused him to identify himself with just these coverings. Matter (prakṛti), as the one mode of māyā, provides the ātmā with the coverings; the power of ignorance (avidyā), as the other mode of māyā, grants him a completely illusory and unreal ego. This “ego” prevents the ātmā from experiencing himself as well as the true world of pure Knowledge. Māyā keeps the ātmā locked out from the realm of true Knowledge to which he belongs by virtue of his own nature and keeps him tied to the coverings of matter by means of the clamp of the false ego (with the so-called “knot of the heart”).

When did this binding occur? The individual ātmā is eternal, without beginning. His constraint, his ignorance, his captivity in the coverings is likewise without beginning. As long as the ātmā is not subjected to the influence of māyā, time does not exist for him. Time begins as soon as the ātmā, under the influence of māyā, enters the world of time and space. Thus, the question “when?” goes beyond the bounds of *human cognition*.

What is the purpose of this binding? Without this binding, the ātmā would not be able to experience, i.e. *enjoy*, the world of māyā. The possibility of exercising his free will to experience, if he so desires, the physical and mental world, rests on his ability to forget himself, his true self. He must consider himself as belonging to this world of time and space, which is actually thoroughly alien to his nature.

Could this binding have been avoided? Might not the ātmā have been saved from this fatal application of his free will, so that he had chosen the realm of Knowledge

by necessity, without distorting his true nature?

This is a pointless question. Restricting the free will would be contrary to the nature of God. Free will belongs to everything that consists of Cit: God in His fullness as well as His intermediate śakti, of which the individual ātmā-s are tiny parts.¹¹ To ask for something like that, would be much like demanding the rays of the sun to be dark instead of light and to exist independently of the sun.

¹¹ Translators' note: The ātmā is not God and not a part of Him either in the sense, that God would become many ātmā-s or would consist of many fractions. The ātmā-s are part of God's higher (intermediate) (taṭasthā-) śakti. C.f. the Corrections to Eidlitz' book "Die indische Gottesliebe" by Svāmī Sadānanda Dāsa, p. 3: Sie finden dann in Gītā 7. 5: "Wisse, dass es Meine (im Gegensatz zu der Kraft, aus der die Materie stammt) höhere Kraft ist, die aus 'Seele' besteht. Sie ergreift die Welt zu ihrem Genusse." Transl.: "Know this to be My higher śakti (compared to the śakti that provides the primordial matter), that consists of souls. It seizes the world for the sake of enjoyment."

The States of Human Consciousness

Man usually constitutes the living unity of a gross physical body, a mental subtle physical body and the ātmā. The ātmā is like the fire that warms, i.e. animates, the two coverings. The human state of existence is made possible due to a strong clamp, the knot of the false ego. This identification makes man experience various natural states of consciousness:

1. Wakefulness (jāgrat)
2. Dream (svapna)
3. Deep, dreamless sleep (suṣupti)
4. Unconsciousness – a more exceptional natural state. One distinguishes between one state of unconsciousness, in which only the physical sense organs are put out of order (pralāya), and one in which also the mental senses are dysfunctional (moha or mūrchā).

1. In the *waking state* the sense of I-ness relates to the outer, bodily covering as well as to the inner, mental covering, i.e. to the entire actual man. Thus, e.g.: “I am Devadaṭṭa¹²”.

2. In the *dream state* the identification relates only to the inner covering, which is on its part affected by the state of the outer cover. This is a sense of I-ness that corresponds to the waking state, but is confined to a mental, subtle physical body that consists of dream-stuff, a transformed, almost unreal Devadaṭṭa. While dreaming, the *ego* leaves the physical world with its laws of nature – in order to acquire new experiences – and knows itself as a dream-Devadaṭṭa in a dream-world. This dream-world is by no means mere illusion. It is founded on:

(a) Something which – by way of the senses or in one’s fantasy – *either* has been experienced before in the waking state during this present life and has left impressions in the citta, *or* has been encountered in previous forms of existence and has likewise left impressions in the citta. It is these impressions that reappear in the dream.

(b) Sometimes also a more or less faithful vision of something which is going to take place in the future, then to be enjoyed by the senses. – Dreams often contain poems, mantras (certain formulas for prayer), instructions about certain medical drugs etc.

That dreams are by no means mere illusions, lacking connection to reality, can be realized already from the fact that there are dreams which leave such strong impressions on the inner organ (antaḥkaraṇa) that they – usually directly upon the

¹² Devadaṭṭa is an Indian personal name.

return from deep sleep to the more shallow sleep – reappear to the consciousness and exert a pressing influence on the waking life. Such dreams haunt a person in his waking state, be they pleasant or frightening, uplifting or depressing. The dream content is often influenced by the physical condition of the organic body. As is well known, during a brief awakening in the middle of a dream, one can easily repeat the same dream or enter again the dreamed course of events. Desire lies behind all this, and the dreamer – even in cases where he has assumed a supernatural, marvellous shape and accomplishes singular deeds – certainly does not act irrationally. For instance, he flees from danger and then tries to find the shortest escape route etc.

3. The sense of I-ness during deep sleep: During sound sleeping the ego is temporarily suspended. Certainly, the life force (prāṇa) pulsates in the body, but the mental activity of manaḥ and buddhi has ceased entirely. In the dream state, on the other hand, the inner organ (antaḥkaraṇa) was active; consciously or unconsciously something was experienced. In the dream state the ego could relate to something. In deep sleep, however, there is nothing to relate to, neither the experiences of a physical body, nor those of a mental body. The ego has disappeared. But at the awakening of the inner organ from deep sleep the ego reappears immediately, be it an awakening to dream sleep or to wakefulness.

During deep sleep the ātmā – who wrongly identifies himself with the bodily coverings, and through this erroneous identification meets the different worlds of the waking and the dream state – thus experiences *nothing*. He has then no awareness of his own existence. Still, he is not free from the shackles of māyā; he just does not realize them as such. The deep, dreamless sleep thus implies a kind of negative freedom, which he “enjoys”.

Strangely enough, at the awakening from sound sleeping, when the sense of I-ness returns, one declares: “I have slept well”, i.e. in other words: “When I was not present at all, when I was not there, there was well-being, there was joy, bliss”. Accordingly, not *only* a negative freedom is relished during deep sleep, but also something *positive*. This positive something leaves an *impression* on the mind which is recorded as something “good” and gives rise to the longing for a renewed experience of this profound rest, during which the activity of the antaḥkaraṇa was suspended. It is, even so, not only the peace and quiet, which so often and so painfully is missed in the waking state, that leaves this impression of joy. According to the Śāstram-s the ātmā is then “with himself”. And when he is with himself – even if he does not know it – he is not aware of his coverings, which he later, upon entering again the waking or the dream state, retrieves unaltered.

Unconsciously the ātmā has experienced something, which so far has not appeared in this account of the structure of man, something which is superior to the mere ātmā. In deep sleep he has indirectly experienced the presence of God, the *Paramātmā*, Who is a part manifestation of the *One* personal God, of Him, Whose very substance is pure Being, pure Knowledge and pure Joy, and Who, according to many texts, emits a formless luminous halo, called the *Brahma* (neuter).

Yet, the ātmā has not been able to meet God directly, “face to face”, but he “sensed”, without realizing it, *God’s nearness to him*. The Paramātmā, of Whom the ātmā during deep sleep received a vague impression, is thus a part manifestation of the Primordial God, of Him, Who is also named “the Sun of pure Being”.

This Paramātmā is:

1. The silent “*Witness*”. He observes all that the ātmā experiences, the ātmā who, in turn, is like *a particle of light from the sun of consciousness, of God*.
2. The “*Friend*” of the ātmā. He is close, but does not wish to *force* His presence upon the friend, who, exercising his free will, once has turned away from Him. The Paramātmā is careful not to disturb the ātmā in any way, nor does He ever abandon him. He accompanies the ātmā, who is roaming endlessly through countless human and non-human births, which he has to pass, before he can know himself as a human being again. The ātmā wanders through higher worlds and through lower worlds, i.e. he takes birth as superhuman beings and as subhuman beings, covering all possibilities of birth-taking within the limits of the māyā-universe. The Paramātmā, Who cannot openly embrace the friend, still grants him, during deep sleep, the joy of His presence.
3. Is the LORD, Who perpetually resides in the vicinity of the ātmā, but without touching him or being touched by him. As His obedient handmaid, māyā complies with His will. Māyā, as was mentioned before, has two functions. On the one hand, she is the material cause (prakṛti) of all worlds and beings, on the other hand, she appears as the great ignorance (avidyā), who conjures up a false “I” and “mine” for the ātmā.

As in the great cosmic processes of life, creation, maintenance and dissolution of countless world systems¹³ follow each other continually, the states of wakefulness, dream and deep sleep succeed each other in the individual course of the lives of men, beasts and gods.

When a world system lies dormant and all the various shapes matter had assumed during creation have dissolved into the formless primordial substance of this material universe (pradhāna), and this matter dwells near God, then the countless ātmā-s who have not yet gained knowledge of themselves or of the “eternal Friend” enter into a prolonged state of rest, resembling deep sleep. While they are dwelling in this state, they are enclosed by their subtle physical coverings, but are destitute of their gross physical bodies. This state lasts for the period from the emergence of a world system to its complete dissolution. In this cosmic night the ātmā rests, while his ego-consciousness is temporarily suspended.

¹³ See W. Eidlitz: Kṛṣṇa-Caitanya, Sein Leben und Seine Lehre, Stockholm 1968. p. 56 etc.

Encompassed by his subtle physical body he resides, together with countless other ātmā-s, in the vicinity of God.

Considering that God, according to the Śāstram-s, is neither subordinate to the laws of time and space of the world of māyā, nor to any other laws, be it physical or mental, that concern our world, then it is not difficult to imagine that God, as the LORD, is *transcendent* to the universe and at the same time, as the inner Friend, accompanies each and every ātmā, even when he enters the tiniest or shabbiest bodies.

There are countless ātmā-s, whereas the Paramātmā is *One*. Within the domain of māyā, under the jurisdiction of her laws, a person can only be at one place at a time, whereas the Paramātmā is not subject to this law. He, the One, is accompanying *every* single ātmā in the world of māyā, i.e. in infinitely multiplied individual forms of Himself. And yet, He is *one* person.

The LORD is near. His mere presence causes the ātmā, who has identified himself with his (temporary) coverings, to experience – be it in the external world (by means of his sense organs) or in the mental world (in his mind) – what is his due as a result of his earlier thoughts and deeds. The presence of the Paramātmā ensures that the ātmā – in inconceivable justice – always receives just those physical coverings and that his mind gets just the kind of individual character, that correspond to the results of his own, previous deeds (karma). As a consequence of his personal conduct, his conscious and unconscious desires, and according to his compliance or non-compliance with the system of gradual elevation the Śāstram-s teach (dharma), there arise impressions, strong impulses, that are constantly ready to spring forth. Still, these impulses only determine the kind of fruit the ātmā deserves due to his previous deeds; they do not *give* the results themselves as is taught by other – non-Vedic – Indian systems of thought, e.g. Buddhism. What you deserve is the consequence of your own deeds; and that you really receive it is a consequence of the mere presence of God, not requiring any special endeavour, activity or act of will from the Paramātmā’s side.

In India extremely idealistic interpretations exist that look upon the worlds of the waking and the dream state as “creations” of the individual mind. This theory is, however, rejected by the Śāstram-s. The waking world and the dream world are both, according to the Śāstram-s, composed of concrete stuff, that – gross or subtle – is, however, not a product of the human mind. The world, as defined by the Śāstram-s, is not a subjective world, but objective and concrete. It consists of the primordial substance or māyā (pradhāna). Since all matter is subordinate to God and without Him, Who is the ultimate cause of all existence, would not exist at all, the worlds of wakefulness and dream are eventually “creations” of God in the sense that their existence depends on His existence.

It goes without saying that the Paramātmā, Who is the Absolute, the Friend and the LORD, is beyond the limits of sensory experience, involving the outer or inner sense organs, to a much higher degree than the individual ātmā himself. As a consequence, man on his own can normally neither experience God’s presence, nor can he intellectually infer it, nor can he have an intuitive notion of it. An intuitive

notion or vague awareness of God's existence cannot be explained as the result of visionary seeing or an intuitive ability to understand, but is the result of having heard about the existence of God in a previous life, in several or even multiple earlier incarnations. The memories of this have been stored deep in the "unconscious" and are now, for certain reasons, "*flashing up*" again.

The already mentioned fourth natural, although exceptional state of consciousness is the state of a fainting fit. When, in this state, only the physical senses are paralysed, then the "ego" relates to the mind. When also the activity of the mind ceases, the "ego" is switched off for that period of time and the state is comparable to sound sleeping. The Śāstram-s designate this state of dead faint as a "semi"-state, it is only a *state of transition*.

The ego-concept thus comprises either

1. in the waking state: the whole man, from the gross physical body to the mind, and all that is experienced by him;
2. in dream sleep: the subtle physical body, and all that is experienced while dreaming;
3. in deep sleep and in the moha-form of dead faint: nothing.

The other functions of the "mind" or the "inner organ" are, as has already been mentioned, the receptive passive *citta*, the willing and emotional *manaḥ* and the intellectual *buddhi*.

According to their nature these three, just like the ego (ahaṁkāra), consist of subtle physical *matter*, which, as a result of the ātmā identifying himself with it, becomes alive and capable of action. Like the ātmā, owing to the clamp of māyā (the illusory sense of I-ness), imagines himself to be *one* with his coverings and obtains a new fictitious self-identification – through which his true potential nature becomes "twisted", is altered and distorted – in the same way also his other essential features – as *being* pure Knowledge, able to perceive an object as it is and receive unalloyed impressions, as possessing the power of genuine will and pure sentiments and as being capable of pure, lucid understanding, judgement and recollection – are obscured and paralyzed.

That which gives rise to alterations in an object, but does not entirely prevent the object from working according to its nature and only inhibits and distorts its functions, the Śāstram-s call "upādhi". Like moisture, added to firewood, is called an upādhi – it does not prevent the fire from burning, but it burns with a thick, stifling fume – similarly the coverings are called upādhi-s in relation to the ātmā.

The ātmā, who by himself can know, desire, feel and act without intermediaries, loses this ability, and knows, desires, feels and acts now only indirectly, i.e. by means of the inner organ or inner agent, the antaḥkaraṇa. His knowing, desiring, feeling and acting is now the knowing, desiring, feeling and acting of a *human being* and shares all the *deficiencies of the inner organ* – as well as those of the subtle senses of action and knowledge and the gross sense organs of the body.

These deficiencies are:

1. *Bhrama* – man can err (mistake a rope for a snake).
2. *Pramāda* – one aspect of something (gross or subtle, a fear or an idea) engages him so much that he disregards the others.
3. *Karaṇāpāṭava* – the *limitations* of the senses. The gross physical senses are not capable of perceiving certain phenomena at all, and the subtle senses are incapable of transferring parts of the experiences of the outer senses. And the inner organ or inner agent cannot transcend the narrow bounds, limiting his field of knowledge, and has to remain within the categories of time and space. It has to experience and think according to the laws of those categories, the physical and natural laws and the laws of *logic* and mathematics, all of which, according to the Śāstram-s, only pertain to the limited measurable world of *māyā*, but by no means to the Cit-Reality.
4. *Vipralipsā* – man, under the influence of certain impulses of volition and emotion, has a tendency to distort what he has actually – physically or mentally – experienced, to declare it invalid, because it does not appeal to him, because he wants to prove right, before himself and before others.

Consequently: apart from the *objective* deficiencies that afflict man’s outer senses, as well as his “subtle senses” and his “inner organ”, there are also *subjective* deficiencies that must falsify and distort his experience and cognition of the objects of his world.

The experiences of others may certainly help him to exclude certain sources of error, but since, in principle, the means of acquiring knowledge are the same for everybody, so this aid is incapable of giving him any *objective* knowledge of the world. Leaving out the knowledge of the world of the ātmā, the Cit-world, man does not even have any access to a clear and true perception of the material world. Why, all his knowledge is acquired only after reality has been distorted by being sieved through the filter of the deficiencies of his external and internal senses.

The *subjective* deficiencies, which differ according to the character and the qualities of each individual person, corresponding to the condition of its outer and inner covering, become apparent by an analysis of how the “inner organ” or “inner agent”, the antaḥkaraṇa, operates.

What is experienced and *how* – whether in a painful or a pleasant way – is determined by the tools of the antaḥkaraṇa. The sense organs – and consequently the underlying senses – that are directed towards the environment are “touched” by an object of experience. By the mediation of the senses, the objects of experience then touch the antaḥkaraṇa. To be touched implies to be transformed; the antaḥkaraṇa becomes affected. A warm bed affects the antaḥkaraṇa in a positive way and creates a feeling of comfort; not under all circumstances, though, but only if it is cold outside. One and the same object can thus induce a sense of comfort

under certain conditions, discomfort under others. What now creates distress, can be pleasing later. And one and the same thing is capable of evoking both extremes, joy and misery: in the one moment joy and the next moment pain. However, joy can never be experienced at the same time as misery, lust never at the same time as suffering, comfort never at the same time as discomfort. The antaḥkaraṇa makes definite experiences of what is giving misery or joy, lust or suffering, as the case may be. These experiences leave impressions, memories of what joy and sorrow, lust and suffering are, and which objects once caused the one or the other. All such impressions rest in the citta-layer of the antaḥkaraṇa. The readiness to experience something, on the other hand, is situated in the *manaḥ*. First the impression affects the antaḥkaraṇa. Because of this impression, the manaḥ then demands, consciously or unconsciously, to experience anew what has been experienced as something positive before and greedily ponders on the pleasure-giving object. *Lust, desire* (kāma) arises. But also such objects that gave rise to sorrow, pain, discomfort etc. leave impressions, and are vehemently rejected by the manaḥ. *Hate, loathing* (krodha) arises.

The antaḥkaraṇa comprises a unity, whose respective layers or functions are mutually dependent and affect each other. It is a multilayered *organ of knowledge*. The citta receives and stores the impressions. If the citta was “pure” like a clear mirror and solitary, unaccompanied by manaḥ and buddhi, the impressions would merely be recorded as they are, without any assessment. Manaḥ, however, “reacts” with lust or hatred, desire or loathing. Now the buddhi has to analyse the object that has instigated either sorrow or joy, i.e. investigate what it is, where it is and – if it is pleasant – how it could be achieved once again. Under the influence of desire, incited in the manaḥ, man starts to contemplate on and search for means to regain the object that has formerly granted him pleasure. It is the human intellect, the buddhi, that is in the service of the desires and is by no means “free” to recognize and assess things as they really are. So the desires multiply. The citta becomes more and more troubled and burdened with impressions, and the buddhi is forced to work faster and faster – and all this, to attain something favourable or to avoid something unfavourable. The intellect, buddhi, often serves as a lantern, that illuminates the path leading to enjoyment.

The human character is manifold, according to man’s natural disposition. In the Śāstram-s, three kinds of dispositions are dealt with, i.e. the three qualities (guṇa-s) of māyā: *sattva, rajaḥ* and *tamaḥ*. Three extreme examples are given. A serene man, in whom māyā’s great guṇa sattva prevails, finds his greatest joy in “noble” things and circumstances, and his lust consists of lucid, inner peace. The man of action, in whom māyā’s guṇa rajaḥ is most prominent, finds greater joy in objects that incite him, instigate him and stir him up; his joy is the unrest of life. An apathetic person, in whom māyā’s guṇa tamaḥ predominates, indulges in everything, that in any way induces drowsiness; he feels lust in dirty, low, easily won pleasures, lethargy and sleep.

All men are, however, slaves to their desires and wish – consciously or unconsciously, and with the aid of buddhi and manaḥ, which are both driven by

lust – to attain what they consider as their highest good.

The impressions of earlier experienced lust or distress, of suffered shame and humiliation, are called *saṁskāra-s* and *vāsanā-s*. They force *buddhi* and *manaḥ* into incessant activity.

Saṁskāra-s are deeply ingrained habits and manners of thinking, feeling and perceiving, which one generally is not aware of, but of which one can become aware by means of introspection. *Saṁskāra-s* originate from impressions in earlier lives. They belong to a domain that previously in the West was called pre-consciousness.

Vāsanā-s are located still deeper in the psyche, resting especially in the *citta*. These “seeds” of lust and hatred, too, originate from impressions in earlier lives. Consciously or not, whenever the opportunity arises, they stir up emotions in vehement waves of sympathy and antipathy, of fervent lust and equally fervent hatred. It is these *vāsanā-s* that determine a person’s fundamental and individual character. Through their influence on the function of *manaḥ* and *buddhi*, they instil impulses that lead to actions which often – even to the acting person – appear alien and inexplicable. These *vāsanā-s* rest deeply hidden in the *citta* and produce a coat of “grime” that prevents the mundane – and to an even higher degree the Divine Reality – from being faithfully reflected.

The pleasant as well as the unpleasant impressions from previous lives and the present life constitute an astonishing and tremendous force. At the outset of a course of life on Earth most of the desires – the conscious as well as the unconscious – are still in a dormant state. But as man grows up and the functions of the inner agent increase in vitality and strength, these desires manifest gradually and become a powerful urging force. As the *manaḥ* ponders on the sensory objects, is attached to them, anticipates them in its imagination, endeavours to attain them, perceives them with the eyes, hears of them etc. the yearning increases even more and reaches its climax, when man wallows in the most intense delight like, e.g., the orgasm. Yet, the feeling of satisfaction, of saturation, is only momentary. The previous impressions (*vāsanā-s*), reinforced by the latest impression, push for action anew. And man sees and hears, wherever he turns his attention, nothing but material for his delight, objects of his desire and his lust.

Desiring, I yearn for satisfaction;

Enjoying, I languish for desire.

Goethe

In the modern “science” of advertising, this never ceasing interplay between desire and delight has been closely scrutinized to the effect that, e.g., the urging effects of erotic pictures on the mind is nowadays exploited for economic purposes.

The *Śāstram-s* talk about “the wheel of the world of change” (*saṁsāra-cakra*). Without suspecting it, man is thrown onto this wheel, made to pass from one life to the next and being grinded like a piece of sugar cane. (*Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* VII. 9. 22)

For anybody who does not follow a path of salvation, there is no way of escaping

the wheel, because his power of discrimination (viveka-śakti, a function of the buddhi) has been enslaved by desires, and he does not see things as they are, but as they appear to him coloured by his yearning.

In the ancient Greek mysteries there was still a faint notion of this old Indian psychology. On the island of Samothrake, for instance, a vase has been found, on which is seen a wheel with sixteen spokes and the inscription “I have jumped off the wheel of Ixion.”

The craving for lust is the force that keeps the wheel turning. If this lust cannot be satisfied by means of the objects of the external world – either because they withdraw themselves, or because man is deprived of them by others – then the point of main effort shifts towards the inner organ, towards the antaḥkaraṇa. As a consequence, the manaḥ, with its power of imagination and in association with buddhi, from the gross sensory targets now passes on to the so-called higher subjects and begins to shape a mental world of poetry, art etc. When the human desires can no longer be discharged in concrete ways, they focus on a new field of activity, namely the mental and intellectual plane, and the antaḥkaraṇa experiences joy and sorrow in a mental world.

When somebody – either owing to the apparent decay of his physical body in the process of aging and the prospect of its approaching destruction, or to the bitter experience of the transitoriness of the objects of enjoyment – turns away from the world of sensory experiences, then the ineradicable desire for grosser or subtler pleasures compels the manaḥ and the buddhi to invent a mental, idealized world, a “higher” world composed of the same objects as the external world contains, although now in an idealized or sublimated form. In this world man now reencounters everything that earlier gave him feelings of well-being. He experiences the same emotions again, and again they leave strong, positive impressions, which later have to work out as new impulses.

These impressions (saṁskāra-s, vāsanā-s) – which keep record of all that was ever experienced during countless existences in perpetually renewed bodily coverings, from the first embodiment of the ātmā up to the presently living man – are a tremendously heavy inner *burden*. Certainly, these vāsanā-s are “exhausted” gradually as man fulfils his destiny; however, they are always replaced by new pleasant and unpleasant impressions.

In a waking dream I once saw countless people walking up and down underground staircases as in a railway station. They all breathed heavily by exertion, as they were dragging along heavy bags and trunks, yes, they were carrying enormous amounts of luggage. Through the gate of death they were hauling their burdens with difficulty, burdens of earlier impressions and desires, lust and hatred, from life to life.

To understand this picture one must first clearly know *what happens*, according to the Śāstram-s, *to a person at death*. The ātmā is not born, nor does he die; he is eternal. Without beginning and seemingly without end are the subtle mental coverings with prāṇa-s, the subtle senses and the inner organ, the mind. When death occurs, i.e. when the outer covering, the physical body, perishes, the mental

covering separates from the physical one. The sense of I-ness, due to which the ātmā believed himself to be one with his physical covering, is enfeebled and thereby also the feeling of “mine” as regards the own body and the external world. As soon as life, prāṇa – from the point of view of the bystanders – seems to have left the body, the identification with this physical body has ceased. Depending on the nature of the object the lust-driven manaḥ was most strongly fixed on and which consequently left the *impression* with the strongest and deepest impact, the mind now shapes – by means of the power of imagination – an image of a new body and thereby also produces a new ego.

Initially, it is only a matter of an imagined physical body. If, for instance, a person’s thoughts and intentions – consciously or unconsciously – were focused on the female sex, then, at the moment of death, desire will form the image of a woman by means of the power of imagination. The ātmā obtains a new false self-identification, relating to the so far only imagined outer “covering” of a woman, and only then does the ātmā, enveloped by his subtle covering, leave the body he has inhabited up till then. Like a caterpillar who does not abandon a leaf before it has got a foothold on a new one, so the ātmā with his subtle covering does not abandon the gross physical covering before a new body has been mentally seized. As a counterpart to the image of the female shape the ātmā will then obtain a female body. The multifarious roads the ātmā has to walk when he yearns for a new “birth”, the selection of the appropriate hereditary conditions, the new parents and the motherly womb, are thoroughly described in the Śāstram-s.

It is now quite impossible to know *what* has left the strongest impressions in the antaḥkaraṇa. This is hidden in the unconscious, where the buddhi does not reach. Even in the normal waking consciousness it is, evidently, impossible to know, which my real desires are that I cling to, or my cherished images, concealed also from myself.

Now it is indeed possible, by conscious practice, to enlarge the function of the buddhi, i.e. to widen the field of action of the buddhi and in this way transfer certain previously unconscious items into the domain of consciousness; a capability the yogi possesses to a high degree. From the multitude of impressions deposited in the unconscious, he can single out certain specific impressions and thereby become aware of the particular physical coverings he has worn in earlier lives, preceding the present one.

The impressions in the citta originate from countless physical forms. According to the Śāstram-s a human shape is something very hard to attain, and it is by no means common that a human form of life is directly followed by another existence in a human shape. The impressions ingrained in the citta derive from all conceivable ages of the history of our present world system, and from all periods of human culture, and any of these impressions can force their way from the unconscious into consciousness.

It is not only the present way of life and thinking, but the power of the silent Witness, the *Paramātmā*, that determines which impressions out of the sum total engrained in the citta are activated and urge the manaḥ to seize these impressions

and make them an object of desire. Which impressions become decisive, depends on the *potency* of the different *vāsanā*-s that have accumulated over countless lives in various shapes.

In the Śāstram-s less emphasis is laid on investigating the origin of certain impressions and the patterns they have created in the *citta*, be it from the present incarnation or from previous existences; rather the attention is devoted to the question of how the *ātmā* can escape from this blindly whirling vortex of existence:

1. How can the *ātmā* rid himself of the false self-identification, with regard to the physical and the mental body, which he is not at all? And how can he rid himself of the concepts – associated with “body” and “mind”, and likewise false – of “*mine*” and “*yours*” and “*his*”?
2. How can the *ātmā* free himself from the endless chain of extremely powerful impressions, instigating lust and the craving for its satisfaction – and thereby not only creating new “imprints”, but, moreover, tightening the “knot of the heart” (the false ego) even harder?

The difficulty lies in the desire in the *manaḥ*, which exploits the function of the *buddhi* (the power of reason) to sustain and further strengthen the fallacious conviction that there is no life but the present one, that this “ego” is the only and true ego and that there is no *ātmā* at all. To reject the *ātmā*, to reject God and the truth in the Śāstram-s, is an act of self-defence on the part of lust.

The Śāstram-s, the Holy Scriptures, are Divine revelation and are therefore considered to be the source of the knowledge of how the *ātmā* can be released. They teach the *ātmā* how to get liberated, in particular

1. ... from the captivity in the chain of lust, where one desire gives birth to another and desires fortify each other by mutual interaction;
2. ...from the incapacity of clear judgement and objective knowledge as well as from the tendency to depict the objects of experience in flattering terms and to act accordingly, which leads to fresh impressions, i.e. new material that gives nourishment to lustful desires;
3. ...from the illusion of the false “I” and “mine”;
4. ...from both coverings, from the physical body as well as from the mental body, which envelop the *ātmā* like a parching and seemingly unremovable Nessus shirt.

Before dealing with the paths that lead to the liberation of the *ātmā*, we shall point out one more thing. Since the *ātmā* was initially provided with a subtle covering, which houses the ten senses of action and knowledge, it follows that every *ātmā*

(also as an animal, a plant etc.) was also given the inalienable possibility to, some time, inhabit a *human* body. In this sense one can say that the creation aims at man, however, this must not be misunderstood as if the ātmā first was given coverings of primitive creatures and then successively received higher ones, i.e. an evolution in the sense of the Western natural science – from the algae, via the mammals, to men. The fact is that the ātmā already from the *beginning* obtained a subtle covering, capable of serving as the basis of an existence as a human being. Since it is a circle without beginning, there can be no question of a biological evolution. According to the statements in the Śāstram-s, men in ancient times were taller, more perfect, had much longer lives and their mental disposition was brighter than nowadays. The ātmā-s in an earlier epoch had earned better, more suitable bodies and mental dispositions by means of their deeds in previous lives, than those bodies and characters we presently meet on earth.

According to the Indian scriptures the dignity of man does not lie in possessing an eternal “soul” in contrast to the animals and other forms of existence, who have supposedly none. Every being in a bodily shell, from the highest to the most primitive, contains a droplet of Divine Life, an individual ātmā. The dignity of man lies therein, that he is able to consciously cultivate his karma, to go beyond it and reach true Knowledge and true Love, which does not demand anything for itself.

God says in the Bhāgavatam:

He, who having obtained this human body,
whose destination is to realize Me,
and who is founded in the dharma (sacred order),
established by Me,
he attains Me,
the Paramātmā, abiding in his heart
[dwelling close to his ātmā],
Whose very nature is Divine Bliss.

Bhāgavatam XI. 26. 1

Lust

It is a known fact that the Indians already some thousand years ago made the most wonderful discoveries in mathematics and in other scientific areas. Yet, this knowledge is only casually mentioned in the Indian revealed scriptures. What we term “modern science” and psychology is treated in the Śāstram-s only so far as knowing these facts and applying this knowledge affects the environment and society, as well as the body and the mind, in such a way that they become supportive on the path of salvation and promote the awakening of the ātmā.

Striving for the mere accumulation of knowledge, with a view to satisfying the thirst for knowledge or to achieving the greatest measure of undisturbed physical or mental pleasures and reducing the suffering to a minimum, i.e. all that men of today call “progress” – from the standpoint of the Śāstram-s, all this is just deplorable delusion. Within the Indian revelation the human form of life is viewed as a boat, intended to successfully cross a torrential river. For this purpose the boat must be kept in good order, but it would be a mistake to attach exaggerated value to the boat itself, and (in the sequence of countless rebirths) to decorate it in continually fresh styles. If the chance of human life is seized in the right way, it can become a gate to freedom for the enslaved ātmā. A wasted existence as a human being, on the other hand, becomes a trapdoor for the ātmā which leads down to an even more severe bondage, to a life in animal, vegetable or mineral coverings. In these states of consciousness the life force (prāṇa), the senses of action, the senses of knowledge and the inner organ (the mind) have exceedingly small prospects to unfold. In those acquired forms of dull existence even less of the freedom of will, the freedom to act and to know, which the ātmā still possessed to a certain degree as long as he possessed a human body, remains – even if he, who is pure consciousness in his essence, has lost his primordial power of will, action and knowledge long since.

As deplorable as a bewildered man, who imagines his shirt and his suit to be his flesh and his skin, just as deplorable is an ātmā, who confuses himself with the human coverings – the human soul, mind and body – that envelop him and considers himself to be just a man. And somebody who thinks that some part of himself – soul, mind or body – be eternal, is just as much in error as he, who considers his physical-mental human covering to be of particular value. Also a human covering is just a prison uniform, subjected to alterations and corruption. This prison uniform is worthless without the ātmā and must be discarded if the ātmā is going to become what he essentially is: a citizen of the eternal Divine realm, the realm of Cit. According to the prevailing guṇa or urging force of māyā – darkness (tamaḥ), restless activity (rajaḥ) or light harmony (sattva) – every man sets up a ranking list, consciously or unconsciously, for such objects and pleasures that appear exceptionally attractive to him. It can be sexual, biological, social, economical, moral, aesthetic, idealistic, philosophical or religious principles which become ideals and provide models after which man tries to shape the objects of his world so that they may grant him enjoyment – or which he projects as future ideals

into the hereafter.

The Śāstram-s consider anybody as merely an animal equipped with a higher intellect, an anthropoid animal (nara-paśu), who is ignorant of the ātmā and simply regards himself as a human being; one who does not follow any of those paths assigned by the Śāstram-s that offer the possibility to approach, step by step, the knowledge about the nature of the ātmā and to finally attain self-knowledge, in order to free the ātmā from the human covering. Certainly, this implies that, besides the grosser pleasures, this intellectual animal also strives for subtler, mental enjoyments, yet, like the lower animals, it is subjugated to the yearning for lust and, as a consequence, it cannot free itself from the fanatical belief in the putative reality of the illusory ego or the belief in its huge importance.

The intellectual animal does not care about those paths, on which by various methods – that are all described in the Śāstram-s – one can untie the “knot of the heart”, this knot, which holds the eternal ātmā confined to the human mind and the human body. It is just this knot that causes man not only to consider himself preeminent, but, moreover, to believe in something *eternal, immortal* in “man”, that is to say in a personal immortality, that he imagines as a continued existence of the earthly man in an idealized or transfigured form – his personal disposition preserved, only freed from all moral or physical defects and weaknesses – in a realm of immortality. According to the Śāstram-s it is the blind desire for lust that spurs the reason, the heart and the mind in such a way that man believes, thinks and imagines himself to be a unity, a whole. In fact, as has been pointed out before, it is a matter of two distinctly different categories – the eternal ātmā and the gross and subtle perishable coverings – that are kept together by the clamp of the illusory ego. As a consequence of this, the ātmā, who through God’s own power (Cit-śakti) is endowed with a genuine self-consciousness, with true Life, true Being, real Joy and an undeceiving, unpolluted mind (citta) that grants immediate true Knowledge, loses his genuine self-consciousness and the powers he naturally owns. Instead, he identifies with the coverings and lends to these dull coverings a life, which is a borrowed one only and which makes him a slave to the lust that in its turn makes him capable of abandoning everything – except his own ego.

In philosophical concepts where the ātmā is not clearly understood and consequently ignorance prevails concerning the structure of man, there is – from the point of view of the Indian scriptures – no chance to cut the “knot of the heart” and, for the ātmā, to reach salvation. The greatest blessing for man, according to the Śāstram-s, is his complete dissolution, including even the subtlest conscious or unconscious layers, which would only urge him to new embodiments, new bondage in human or non-human forms of existence. The ātmā must free himself completely from the nettlesome human covering, his physical and mental “dress”, that actually is a strait-jacket. This can only happen when man is taught who he truly is, so that he consequently realizes himself as a misunderstanding and is prepared to annihilate himself. This takes place gradually and by precise methods: through spiritually empowered understanding and thereby gained ability of discrimination the so highly treasured, yet illusory ego of the human personality, is

brought to wither away. By clear cognizance of the nature of the mind (manaḥ) and the unconscious (citta), these two thrones of lust, who want eternity, are shaken and brought to collapse. In their fall also the mightiest enemy, lust itself, is annihilated.

As long as the mind selfishly insists on maintaining itself and readily surrenders to its lustful desires in order to further boost itself, as long does it remain man's enemy. It becomes man's friend¹⁴, though, when it is prepared to concede defeat, starts to cooperate with the ātmā and serves his true interests, whereby lust is dethroned and destroyed.

However, passionate sympathy and antipathy, love and hatred (kāma and its offspring) are strong, and in order to assert and intensify themselves, they let the reason (buddhi) and the mind (manaḥ) invent a theory which flatters man, i.e. the lust that wants eternity, and this theory states: The value of a religion or a philosophy must lie in its capacity for enriching, expanding, refining and immortalizing human life and it must be practical in the sense that it is easy to apply in daily life.

According to their premises, the Śāstram-s have to criticize sharply any attempt to annihilate the physical body and subdue the living force for the sake of a mere idea, an abstract ideal, i.e. the concept of the so-called "soul", mind or "eternal in man". From the standpoint of the Śāstram-s, it is just as foolish to glorify the body and make it an end in itself, as it is to wish one-sidedly to glorify the mind, the "soul" and immortalize it. Likewise, the harmonious development of body and mind is considered absurd.

A metaphor: Materialism or idealism or the harmonious relationship between the two are all delusions; just as much as it would be a delusion to make the suit or else the shirt or the harmony of suit and shirt ends in themselves – and thereby forgetting about the man who wears them. The religion of the flesh, as well as the religion of the mind or the "soul" or of the harmony of flesh and mind, not only are *stuck* in error, they *are* nothing but a fallacy in themselves – all three are rooted in ignorance.

In non-Vedic cultures one may now and then meet with notions which, at first sight, remind of what the Śāstram-s tell concerning the world, God, body, soul or ātmā. When such symbols, practices and elements similar to the teachings of the Vedas can be found, it is because impressions of experiences in the Vedic culture from earlier human existences in Indian bodies still remain in the unconscious (citta). Such impressions of earlier lives can sometimes rise from the unconscious in later existences – also in people living far away from India – and can then be expressed in art, philosophy or theology. There is no need to explain the existence of this fractional knowledge and practices in the way that these Vedic cultural assets travelled, e.g. to the West, through external contacts. The theory that these Western concepts were actually imported from India, are very biased and often certainly false.

¹⁴ Cp. Bhagavadgītā 6. 5. – Transl.s' note: uddhared ātmānātmānam nātmānam avasādayet | ātmāiva hy ātmāno bandhur ātmāiva ripur ātmānaḥ || – "One should uplift oneself with the help of the mind, and not degrade oneself. The mind is the friend of the conditioned soul, and his enemy as well."

It is a huge mistake to believe that an ātmā, deprived of his genuine freedom of will, who is encased in a human shell (whose physical and mental life is effectively borrowed from the ātmā) could act as the basis for true inner freedom. Man, i.e. his body and soul, can only then become pure and free, when the ātmā has become free, i.e. when man understands that this ātmā is dwelling within himself, and that he contributes to the freedom of this ātmā to the same extent that he is capable of understanding himself as a perishable covering. When the inner organ (antaḥkaraṇa) – emerged from lust, in itself the quintessence of lust and totally made red-hot with lust – instead of working against the prosperity of the ātmā, promotes this prosperity and has become decontaminated from lust and causes the dissolution of the false ego and finally puts itself totally at the disposal of the ātmā – to serve the ātmā’s own functions – i.e., when the external world and the world of the mind, instead of being ends in themselves, become means to learn to know, serve and love God, then there arises quite *another* “culture”, *another* social structure, *another* art, *another* poetry and literature than what we find in non-Vedic cultures. One could say that when man as such has ceased to exist, when everything held in high esteem because it is considered to belong indispensably to human life, is burnt to ashes, only then man becomes a being in which flesh and mind neither fight and wish to smother each other, nor search to form a harmonious unity, but in which flesh and mind instead of being a strait-jacket for the ātmā, are transformed into a pure and light garment. The goal is, however, that flesh and mind finally, under the guidance of the ātmā, instead of being lost for God as they have been up till now, become willing to sacrifice themselves with every function, the finest and the grossest, in serving God through His Own Power of Knowledge and Love and thereby in this sacrifice reach their consummation by being “burned to ashes”.

The non-Vedic cultures keep to certain ethical and moral rules, commandments and interdictions, that assess the human actions and divide them into virtues and sins, duties and crimes and impose reward or punishment on them. Apart from these relatively few general rules, these cultures have rather little in common. Manners and customs diverge strongly from each other, and what is here considered a virtue, is there considered a vice. Indeed, even within one and the same culture an action can be now a sin, then a virtue – e.g. to kill. Moreover, these commandments and prohibitions are interpreted in various ways by different individuals. In the Divine Vedic Word revelation, on the other hand, an educational system is given, not subjectively formulated by men according to their moral views, but from the point of view of *God*, based on what according to *His* order is promoting or impeding for the liberation of the ātmā. This advice differs individually, according to the stage of maturity, i.e. depending on the degree of constraint or freedom of the ātmā – however, this sacred order itself is never altered, and if men were to forget about it or if the world would perish, then it would be proclaimed again in quite the same form as it had been on a previous earth.

Scrutinizing this sacred order, we see how it gradually leads to self-realization

and liberation of the ātmā, and to the possibility of *immediate experience* of the eternal Friend, the Paramātmā, Who, without the ātmā being aware of it, accompanies him on his endless wanderings and, through His mere presence, vouches for unfailing justice. The “Friend” never prevents the ātmā from carrying out the decisions of his free will nor from enjoying the fruits of the material world. The Paramātmā is impartial. And yet He helps the ātmā tenderly and in every way, as soon as he begins to strive for realizing his own nature and essential duty and agrees to be what he always is in his essence: a particle of Being-Knowledge-Joy (sat-cit-ānanda), meant to dwell in the realm of Cit and not in the material world of change.

The relation between the individual ātmā and the eternal Friend, the Paramātmā, who dwells as an inner Witness in the heart of every being, is indicated in the Indian revealed scriptures by the well-known metaphor of the two birds living in the same tree, the body:

Two birds, who are intimate friends,
have built their nest in the same tree (the body).
One eats the sweet berries
(the sweet and bitter berries of the sensory world),
the Other merely beholds,
but does not eat.

Ṛg-Veda I. 164. 20, Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣaṭ III. 1. 1

The one, the ātmā, has sunk deeply,
(he believes himself to be the perishable body),
and frets and grieves over his impotence.
Yet, when he discerns the Other,
(Whom he served), Who rejoices,
the omnipotent Lord and His Glory,
then he is freed from all misery.

When the seer beholds the One of Golden Lustre,
the Creator, the Divine Person, the Ruler of all,
the Cradle of the architect of the world, Brahmā,
then he receives Knowledge,
then he shakes off vice and virtue
(shakes off rajaḥ, tamaḥ and even sattva),
and immaculate
he attains highest harmony (with Him).

Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣaṭ III. 1. 2–3

III. The five Paths of Yoga

*The ultimate secret of Vedānta,
that was expounded during an earlier creation,
is not to be told to anyone
who has not attained peace,
who is not a worthy son
and not a worthy disciple.*

*For the abundance
(of the eternal Divine Reality)
only reveals itself
to the magnanimous one (mahātmā),
who has the highest Bhakti for God,
and as for God
so for the guru;
only to this magnanimous one
it reveals itself.*

Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣat 6. 22–23

Karmayoga

The ātmā has a long path ahead of him before being released from the “knot” that ties him to “man”. The first step on this path is a life according to *karmayoga*. This implies activities (karma) that connect (yoga) the ātmā with God, from Whom the ātmā had *detached* himself, as a consequence of his craving for lust, owing to the identification with his “coverings”.

Karma in this context, however, means neither work nor activities in general, nor fulfilment of one’s duty, i.e. fulfilment of what man in good faith considers his duty, but *such* deeds and obligations and *such* a conduct that God Himself prescribes in the Śāstram-s. God’s grace is expressed by the announcement of these duties. After most profound deliberation and according to good faith, cultural background and with the most honorable intentions, man may judge this or that as the highest good and the acme of morality. Yet, as he does *not* have any *knowledge* or *experience* of who the ātmā and God are, he cannot possibly know, whether what he regards as his duty brings him any closer to the knowledge of the ātmā and God, or whether it alienates him from this knowledge instead. Indeed, the different religions and philosophies of mankind, however noble, appealing and valuable they may be, are – in the view of the Vedic Scriptures – not even capable of establishing what is *good* and what is *evil*, i.e. what leads to the liberation and what to the enslavement of the ātmā. This is so, because they do not even have a clear concept of what the ātmā actually is, and permanently try to salvage a part of man from annihilation and transfer it into eternity, albeit in a sanctified, exalted and transfigured form, and to flatter his instinct of self-preservation with the concept of personal immortality. However, the *greatness of man*, according to the Śāstram-s, does not consist in a supposed divinity or eternity of man, but is rather due to the fact that this particular human covering offers the the ātmā the opportunity to gradually attain knowledge of himself and of God – presuming that he lives in a culture where he has access to the teachings of the Śāstram-s, which inform him about his duty and how it shall be fulfilled. The Śāstram-s announce:

“In Bhāratavarṣa (India) it can happen that someone, by taking births as a human being and by performing his assigned karma – white, red, black¹⁵ – after having passed through many births in gradual development, in ethereal, human and subhuman forms, *through this proper fulfilment of his duty*, finally attains the freedom of his ātmā.” (Bhāgavatam V. 19. 19)

The words of the “proper fulfilment of one’s duty” do not imply any general commands or prohibitions, nothing similar to an absolute moral code, binding for everybody, regardless of the character of their body and mind; the proper fulfilment of one’s duty rather varies individually. Depending on the prevalence of either of the three guṇa-s: the quiet lightness (sattva), the restless urge for activity

¹⁵ White, red and black do not point at the colour of the skin. “White” means a being in whom the guṇa sattva prevails; “red” means a being in whom guṇa rajas is strongest; and “black” means a being in whom the guṇa tamah dominates.

(rajaḥ) or the blunt dullness of a life of easy sense-gratification (tamaḥ) – that never occur alone and isolated but always in an individual mixture – each and every man, who recognizes the Vedas or the Śāstram-s as a binding authority, belongs to one of the four groups that are also denominated as “castes” (literally: varṇa, colours, colours of character) in the Vedic revelation. The basic (though not necessarily strongest) guṇa of a human form in general is rajaḥ.

When sattva prevails over rajaḥ and tamaḥ : brāhmaṇa-s.

When mainly sattva supports rajaḥ: warriors (kṣatriya-s).

When mainly tamaḥ supports rajaḥ: tradesmen, farmers (vaiśya-s).

When tamaḥ prevails over rajaḥ and sattva : śūdra-s, men of lowest character; servants of the other varṇa-s.

Now it must be noted that this institution does not exist in present India any more, since neither the Indian society nor the government recognize the Vedic scriptures as an absolute authority. Nowadays the affiliation to a specific caste is not based on the individual character, i.e. so that individuals with certain common features of character together constitute a group, but it depends on the affiliation to a certain family.

The Śāstram-s have allotted strictly defined duties to each of these original four groups. Violation of these is regarded as “sin”, adherence as “virtue”. This means that fulfilment or neglect of these duties always brings about certain consequences

1. ... already in this world, through direct effects on the own body and mind, or in the form of punishment by worldly jurisdiction, which upholds a certain moral standard,
2. ... or consequences that manifest only in the next birth. When man has led a virtuous life, the ātmā obtains a subtle physical body in the celestial but temporary realms of the deva-s, which, however, still belong to the universe of space and time. Or, as a punishment, the ātmā obtains a sluggish body in the world of animals, plants or the minor spirits (ghouls, demons) etc.

A human body lasts for just as long as those thoughts and actions from previous lives that resulted in the present body still exert their influence. As soon as this driving force is exhausted, man dies. In the same way, the body of a deva or an animal lasts for just as long as it takes to exhaust the karma that rewarded these coverings.

A major part of the prescribed duties comprises the propitiation of those deva-s, who preside over certain worldly goods. They are worshipped by sacrificial offerings, where the joined mantras, formulas of dedication and praise, form the essence¹⁶. It is the subtle substratum of these mantras and oblations that propitiates

¹⁶ The nature of the votive offerings depends on the character of the group the offerer belongs to. Animal offerings are for men of low character, in whom the darkness of the guṇa tamaḥ prevails.

the gods (deva-s), not the gross material.

On the first stage of karmayoga, man is taught how to perform these sacrifices, bearing in mind that these gods may well be able to speed up the ripening of his karma and the awarding of the fruit he deserves, but cannot grant anything that lies outside their restricted domain. In addition, it is stressed that these offerings etc. must be accomplished with painstaking attention to the rules, including most careful preparations and with much expenditure of time, energy and money – and furthermore, that the results of these efforts cannot bring about a permanent state of joy. For not only the terrestrial world and its objects, but also the heavens of the deva-s and their pleasures are subject to corruption. Irrespective of man's affiliation to one of the four groups (varṇa-s) or of his stage of life – whether he is married or unmarried, monk or hermit – *lust* is his perpetual motor. However, *this* man differs from members of other cultures as he regards the Śāstram-s as *the* binding authority in *all* matters, concerning material or spiritual life, man or God, and endeavours to act in accordance with them.

Still, although this man adheres to the Vedic commandments, he is completely unable to grasp what the ātmā and God are, or that *the ātmā and the deliverance of the ātmā from the human coverings is the true goal*. His citta is still imbued with pleasing impressions and desires, his buddhi is submitted to the power of the manāḥ, spurred by lust, his ego is quite strong. The Śāstram-s therefore make use of a stratagem: Man is promised a recompense for the loyal fulfilment of his duty, for conscientious obedience to the commandments. The hunger for gratification of one's lust then urges man to adopt the decreed, often very exacting, commitments. Thereby he learns that he has to give up a part of that, which he himself might have enjoyed and hand it over to someone else.

God (in the Bhagavadgītā) has promulgated a great cycle (cakra) as a binding law. If man aims at improving his fate in this world or aspires to a position in the celestial worlds, he has to fulfil certain duties; his actions must follow precisely determined rules. At this first stage, the decreed action is focused on the ritual sacrifice (yajña). This oblation is intended to satisfy the deva-s, the keepers of the worldly goods. Things that are cherished by man are offered into the fire; they reach the gods, who grant rain, nourishment, health – so it is told. What is immolated reaches the sun god, who sends rain with the wind, and to Indra, the god of the clouds, who administers the rain. The rain makes the crop and all plants grow, which maintain not only the one who has arranged for the sacrifice, but *all* living beings.

Man learns to understand that he is indebted to the deva-s, who keep watch over the natural forces and the good things of this world, to the seers of yore, the ṛṣi-s, who teach him mantras and rituals, to his own forefathers, to whom he owes his very existence, and to his fellow men and the animals, who aid him. Therefore he has to hand over their share of his riches to them.

To the deva-s he shall offer oblations. The holy ṛṣi-s he shall honour by studying the rituals, mantras and their application. He has to take care of the souls of his

deceased forefathers by observing the prescribed rituals. He should do charitable works in the form of donations of food, clothing, land etc. for those in need. Mammals, fish and birds he shall give fodder and water to drink and also protection against bad weather and other distress. In fact it is announced that all destruction of life of the lower creatures, although one may only happen to kill them by accident, and all suffering one unintentionally inflicts upon them, like for instance when one happens to crush insects under one's feet while walking, or in one's mortar while grinding grains, or with one's broom while cleaning one's house etc. – all such offences are wiped out by means of the so-called “five great sacrifices”.

Daily, man must purge himself of all such sins that he has consciously committed in neglecting the duties related to his stage of life. He must atone for them by doing penance or by offering a sacrifice. And since, despite his best intentions, he is committing these offences again and again, he will also have to purify himself over and over again. First and foremost among these acts of purification are visits to holy places, fasting and serving the itinerant mendicants, as well as all others who have reached a higher level of yoga than he himself. It is also of importance to listen to such Śāstram-s that are intended for *everybody*, irrespective of caste-affiliation, often containing tales which are delighting to heart and mind and that promote his spiritual progress by giving further instructions. The fulfilment of all those duties is a rather severe practice, and the question arises, whether the result is worth all the efforts.

A survey of this exacting path of sacrifices – the first stage of karmayoga – yields the following picture: Certainly man is still under the domination of lust, but begins to realize already that the roses of delight are blooming beyond the thorns of travail and abnegation of cherished possessions.

He has also learned that he is by no means alone in this world, but is a member of a greater community, formed by all living beings, including deva-s, humans, animals, plants... that are all *interdependent*. This fellowship of all living beings is maintained by *his sacrifice*, i.e. by his abstinence from certain pleasures on behalf of the prosperity of *the entirety*. Only by such abstinence can he further his own interests and advance.

At this stage *the dignity of man* is based on his vocation for *abstention*. The purpose of this training, the first step towards the liberation of the ātmā, therefore consists in his active recognition of the huge *cosmic fellowship of all living beings*, which requires reciprocal sacrifice (yajña) and mutual abstention for its preservation. This means: neither ruthless exploitation of fellow beings and nature, nor ascetic renunciation of the world, neither narrow-minded haughtiness and a superiority complex, that considers man as the lord of all things, nor egalitarianism, a mental approach that consists in regarding all men and all beings as basically equal.

The old Indian grammarians derive the Sanskrit word “śāstram” from the root *śās*; to restrain, discipline, keep on the right path. The śāstram is curbing, it calls to order and self discipline. At this first step the believing Hindu takes on the long

path of Yoga, lust gets attacked for the first time – although man is initially quite filled with selfishness and thirst for the preservation and strengthening of his ego. At the prospect of even greater pleasures, he submits to a certain restraint of his present enjoyment, a certain sacrifice. He now understands that he is neither a “lord” nor a mote of dust. With the prospect of multiplied lust in his next life, he is even prepared to consent to a modification of his very personality, i.e. the contents of his ego. – Then he is no longer “I, this or that man”, but he will have a *new* ego, e.g.: “I, Kumāra, a citizen of the celestial worlds”.

Thus a better understanding of the dignity and the purpose of human existence is achieved. Man becomes aware of his position within a cosmic entirety, to which all beings belong.

Looking forward to intensified lust in the future, the mind and the will consent to curtail the full gratification of lust for the time being. Moreover, the ego of the man in question becomes ready to concede that it is not at all invariable and permanent. The concept of the ego thus dissociates itself from the physical body, shifts from the ego as a unity of body and mind, towards the ego as a unity of the mental coverings. In other words: man becomes aware that he can exchange his temporary covering for a better one, e.g. – if he leads a virtuous life – for the light body of a celestial citizen (a body woven of māyā’s sattva-guṇa, invisible to the eyes), or – if he mostly commits sins – for the grosser and heavier body of an animal or a plant.

However, he also comes to know, that when the fruits of his virtues – his sojourn in the celestial worlds – are finally consumed, then he must inevitably return to earth; and as it is totally impossible to find out, which of the not yet exhausted effects of evil deeds in previous lives that still, in the form of “germs”, lie deposited in the citta may sprout and bear fruit, and as these effects of earlier actions are never completely consumed during a sojourn in the heavens of the deva-s, he gradually becomes mentally prepared to ask for a better path, for an answer to the pressing question: is there any escape from this circle of continually new physical coverings, from the cycle of repeated births and deaths? Since one is bound to sink down into lowly wombs and births again even from the celestial worlds, he now searches for a way that aids to attain a *new birth as man*, in order to follow a path that finally terminates these insatiable desires for lust, which again and again, not only bring joy, but also suffering.

Also the heavenly creatures are selfish, perishable beings. They are holders of offices, which one day they will have to relinquish in favour of other beings, who have earned them in turn. Also the gods live in fear of death. Also the gods adhere to objects and people they like and abhor everything that diminishes their enjoyment or causes them distress. The world is, however, arranged in such a way, that love and hatred, joy and sorrow, lust and suffering are inseparably mixed. All lust wants eternity – but the objects of lust are liable to change and so is the personality, the ego, that enjoys the objects and experiences lust.

If man has realized this, he is ready for the next step.

The True Karmayoga

Virtue and sin are like the two sides of the same coin – that is worthless. The gods are poor beings, though seated on their glorious thrones. And yet the irresistible desire for lust is there, that forces man to strive for happiness and to ask the question: “Where is lasting happiness? Who can grant it? How can my desires, that cannot be checked, be fulfilled in such a way, that the outcome is not merely an exchange of the outer covering? How can I live *in* this world and yet come closer to the true Reality? How can I take care of my human nature, i.e. satisfy my lust and yet prevent it from swelling by renewed delights, that act as oil added to fire? When already a few minor offerings and a little self-restraint yield pleasures in heaven that last longer than on earth, would not greater offerings and more severe renunciation yield a more lasting happiness? Is there anybody, if propitiated in the right way, who is capable of giving more than the gods (the deva-s)? And if I follow such a path and seriously endeavour, is there any guarantee, if I fail, that I will be reborn as a human being – in spite of my shortcomings – to have a second chance to improve myself by adhering more strictly to the injunctions of the scriptures?”

Karmayoga as a sacrifice (yajña) for Viṣṇu shows the way.

Instead of offering to the gods – who are enslaved by time and lust, who are, like you, only perishable coverings of ātmā-s, who have forgotten their true identity and who just like you are incessantly reborn in new wombs – you shall offer to Him, the One, from whom everything that is originates – such is the answer. Offer to Him, Who is beyond all universes, beyond space and time, but Who is still, in a concrete way, present in all things and beings in His aspect as “the silent Witness”, Who, unknown and untouched by the fabric of māyā, resides close to every ātmā; to Him, Who is everywhere and Whose positive omnipresence is in no way disturbed by the simultaneous existence of a world system; to Him, Who perceives everything, but Whom no one can perceive, unless He makes Himself known; to Him, Who is inaccessible to us, as our mind, our ego, our desires and our lust veil our vision. He is often named Viṣṇu. When His māyā-śakti, animated and quickened by Him, is unfolding herself, then lower aspects of His assume the functions of the manufacturer, the maintainer and the dissolver of the world¹⁷ – and yet He remains transcendental to all this. In His highest aspect, He resides in His Own abode, that is as supernatural as He is Himself, beyond of and untouched by the worlds of māyā. He is the cause of all causes, everything belongs to *Him*, is *His*. The gods only have delegated authority and occupy a temporary office. He alone is eternally the One. The gods can only give perishable gifts, and they grant them for selfish reasons, namely to tie the petitioner even tighter to themselves. And what they give only strengthens his false ego, intensifies his lust and enfeebles his capacity for understanding and judgement. *He* – on the other hand – is always

¹⁷ Translators’ note: Cp. Brahma-Saṁhitā, verse 15: “The same Mahāviṣṇu created Viṣṇu from His left limb, Brahmā, the first progenitor, from His right limb and, from the space between His two eyebrows, Śambhu, the divine masculine manifested halo.”

concerned about one's *true* welfare, i.e. the welfare of the ātmā, which consists in dispelling the ignorance of one's true identity. He is independent and free and, if He so wishes, able to bestow what you have asked Him for – irrespective of what you have earned by your previous deeds.

Perform cultic and ritual sacrifices, practise worship of God in order to please Him with His mantras and according to His regulations, and what remains after you have offered to Him, you offer to the deva-s, to the ancestors, to the ṛṣi-s, to all beings – and what is then left over, this is your share.

The Primordial God Himself, appearing on earth in His original eternal form as Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa, acting as the universal guru, instructs His disciple Uddhava about the inner attitude in which he shall henceforth perform the five great daily sacrifices: the sacrifice to the deva-s, the sacrifice to the seers, the oblations to the forefathers and the offerings to his fellow-men and the animals.

The emphasis of His instructions, which are related in the Bhāgavatam, lies on the words: “*To Me he shall offer*”. Why, He dwells as the inner Witness in all beings, in the deva of the sun, in the deva of the fire, in the deva of the wind ... in every animal, in every man and also in the one performing the sacrifice. To this Paramātmā he shall direct the offering:

- To Me – in the sun – he shall offer by Vedic hymns,
- to Me – in the sacrificial fire – by giving oblations,
- to Me – in the brāhmaṇa, the wise and learned one – by sincere hospitality,
- to Me – in the cows – by providing grass and fodder,
- to Me – in the votary of Viṣṇu, the bhakta – by treating him with reverence and fraternal affection,
- to Me – in himself, in the core of his heart – by unswerving and fixed concentration of his manaḥ on Me,
- to Me – in the wind – he shall offer by remembering that all beings owe their breath, their lives (prāṇa), to Me,
- to Me – in the water – he shall offer¹⁸ with ingredients for sacrifice, as flowers and Tulasī etc.,
- to Me – in the earth – by purifying the sacrificial ground¹⁹ where he worships My icon,
- to Me – in his own body – he shall offer by feeding himself (not to satisfy his greed, but being aware that his body is Mine and serves as My temple, as I dwell in the core of his heart).
- to Me – in all beings – as the Paramātmā Who resides in them, by considering their joy and sorrow as his own.

Bhāgavatam XI. 11. 42–45

¹⁸ Transl.s' note: ... he shall offer by *returning water mixed with* ingredients for sacrifice...

¹⁹ Transl.s' note: ... by purifying the sacrificial ground *both physically and with mantras* ...

Only at this stage man becomes aware why so much emphasis was laid on his inner attitude at the performance of these five great daily sacrifices. For instance, it is decreed that when offering a bone to a hungry dog, he should not carelessly throw it down to him, nay, respectfully and with a gentle hand he should place it in front of him on the ground as an offering. For also in the body of a scabby dog and within the coverings of all beings dwells the One as the inner Witness and walks unseen in our midst.

Accordingly, also offerings to animals and beggars shall be handed over respectfully, “upwards”, and not scornfully and arrogantly, “downwards”.

In our era of statistics one has tried to estimate how much of his income a Hindu, who faithfully wishes to follow the commands and whose economical situation is fairly good, should spend on the daily five great sacrifices. One has arrived at the surprising result that 75 % of his income would be consumed for this purpose.

Much is achieved by these prescribed daily sacrifices to the fellow men and animals: hunger and thirst are appeased, protection is arranged, destitution and hardships are mitigated. Yet, this is only *one* of the results of this practice. The other, even more important outcome is, that by constantly sacrificing things one would gladly have enjoyed oneself, a constant struggle against one’s own selfishness is initiated. Thanks to this, the snare of the *guṇa*-s, that keeps the *ātmā* tied to the material coverings, is relaxed more and more. These coverings become, as it were, more flexible, transparent, and the light of the inner Witness can gradually shine through.

On the outside, there is no change to be noticed in the day’s work of a man who has entered this stage of *karmayoga*. His daily conduct may be the same as before, yet, in all his activities he endeavours always to keep the commandment of the *Śāstram*-s in mind: Fulfil your human duties in accordance with your caste and your stage in life, but do always remember: all you are, all you “own”, all you perceive ... all this belongs to Him. Regard everything as His property. Abandon the thought that something could ever belong to someone else than Him, or that anybody was his own master. Everything and everyone belongs to Him. It is a misunderstanding to regard anything at all as “mine” or “yours”, to desire anything or to envy someone something. You desire possessions and benefits in this world – then act according to His decrees, and He may bestow them upon you.

You wish for happiness in a future world. He can grant it to you, here and in eternity.

This form of *karmayoga* aims at a man, who still feels and acts as a human being, who still nourishes selfish desires and squints at rewards for the submission to his prescribed duties in human society. Yet, already this form of *karmayoga* leads to a clearer knowledge of the world and of God and establishes a first connection to the Living God, Who is indeed the Lord of the worlds, but Who does not belong to the mundane sphere, Who is not an *ātmā* that has forgotten his true identity – like the *deva*-s – but Who is the abundance of eternal Being, true Knowledge and pure Joy (*sat-cit-ānanda*).

The disciple is still oblivious of his own *ātmā*. He imagines himself to be a man

or a woman. But to properly perform one's duty as a human being and to follow the decrees of God is the first step towards the goal, which is to please and serve *Him*. As soon as someone takes the first step towards serving Him – even if his intentions are still mixed with selfish motives, expecting reward – the inner Witness, the Paramātmā, Who dwells, unrecognized, close to every ātmā and Who is usually quite impartial and neither loves nor hates anyone, begins to show a living interest in this ātmā. The inner Witness becomes active, starts to act as the inner Guide or Friend and now leads this person into the company of such sages, who tell him more about the nature of Viṣṇu and encourage him on his journey on the path of karmayoga. *Initially* He grants his wishes. Little by little, however, He begins to withdraw such objects that tighten his bondage to the world, instructing him at the same time, so he may understand, that God's grace consists in depriving man from what he is too much attached to.

Gradually man realizes that his attempt to degrade God to a supplier of physical and mental goods and benefits was a mistake. Now he feels that he should do his duty without expecting any reward – not even in the form of feeling self-satisfied, due to have fulfilled his duty for the sake of duty itself – he must perform his duty solely with the purpose of pleasing God by following *His* decrees. Since man is, after all, unable to abandon *all* lust and all desires, the disciple continues to ask God for certain goods – although having realized this as a weakness already.

Through practices of this kind, in the course of one or several lives, the character of a man will be transformed. Instead of relying on his own lust, his own capacities and abilities and on the power of the gods, in order to further increase his welfare through work (karma), he is now – still hesitatingly and unable to part with his own false ego and his lust – relying on *Him*, the Lord, to Whom everything belongs. He has learned that everything belongs to Him, that the idea of “mine” is an error, that man is solely the keeper of the body, the mind and the things of the world – which he earlier assumed as belonging to himself with the right of blood and law, considering himself as their rightful owner. He is taught to yield all his possessions to Him, to offer all that he has come to know as his world to *Him*, as everything already belongs to Him anyway. By this means he may attain what he regards as his true welfare and benefit, and obtain those goods that he considers indispensable.

As he wishes to please Him, he is curtailing his lust according to the commandments in the Śāstram-s. And since God as the inner Guide assists him from within, he gradually realizes that the striving for a “mine” is a sin, an error. And with the fading of the sense of “mine”, the clamp of the “I” is also loosened a little. An “ego”, bereft of the sense of “mine”, is only half an *ego*. Yet, this “ego” still asserts itself. The ātmā still holds to his belief that he were a human being, but as a result of having heard about God's ultimate proprietorship from the Śāstram-s and practicing symbolically the surrendering of his own erroneous sense of ownership through various sacrifices, this clinging to his mind, body, home, spouse, children etc. begins to be somewhat less desperate. After all, everything belongs to Him, and it is an error to regard anything as “one's own”.

Man is now seized with confusion regarding his identity. He still maintains his human identification, but with a “bad conscience”. He wishes to proceed on the path he has entered upon, but lust still lingers inside him. The pleasant experiences from this life or earlier ones have left impressions in his citta, and as soon as he perceives the gross or subtle sense-objects of the world, desires well up. These desires tear at him and, against his better judgement, induce him to covet the well-being these things promise to give. Without suspecting that such desires for often low pleasures existed within himself at all, desires hidden in his heart and unknown to him repeatedly break forth, seize him and carry him away against his will, leaving him in consternation. He transgresses the commandments, the duties that fall upon him according to his caste and stage of life as stated in the Śāstram-s. He loses his head, “sins” and consequently feels unhappy – he experiences the struggle between the “two souls in his bosom”.

These “two souls” are:

1. The insight (buddhi) into the nature of things, into the nature of God and His commandments and into the plan of salvation;
2. The eternally agitated manah, which, fed from deep inside, makes him picture future pleasures in lively colours and drives him towards those objects that promise to grant these pleasures, even against his will.

He has already heard something about the nature of the ātmā and he has a hunch of his ignorance concerning his true identity. Yet he is incapable of understanding it correctly: “I, the human being, am in fact the self, the ātmā. The basis of my empirical ego may be impure, but I am yet a man. I only have to purify myself.” The desires dwelling in him and the deeply rooted habits of thought and conduct from countless births are strong and his power of discrimination is enfeebled. His buddhi in the service of his desires still always thinks: “I must work and care for my soul, my subtle mental body”.

Man now stands at the road fork of two paths. On the more rarely trodden path, he meets unforeseen with one of the great companions and co-agents of God, having descended from His transcendental Realm, who walks on earth, seemingly as an equal. If he likes, he can convey a quite new power to this person, a power that not even a free ātmā can have by himself. It is *the potency* through which God knows, understands and experiences Himself, a power that does not belong to time and space. This potency, which enlivens also this eternal associate of God, is *bhakti* by which man, i.e. the ātmā in him, is now touched.

As a consequence of this touch, as a first effect of it, this man’s intellect or buddhi gets gradually released from its slavery to lust and desires and quietly realizes instead: The meaning of human life and its perfection lies in *servicing* God, without *being able to* expect any reward. In this case man then treads the path of pure bhakti – free from any expectation for personal happiness.

The more common path is, however: Fulfilment of the *human* duties without

calculating on recompense, the so-called niṣkāma-karmayoga.

Niṣkāma-Karmayoga

Man performs his duty and delivers the result completely to God. It appears as if he did everything for his own sake, but in fact he is performing a sacrifice, i.e. he surrenders the fruits of his work. His conduct is the opposite to that of a pragmatist, who performs his work for the sake of practical benefit and tangible results. The man on the path of karmayoga gradually ceases to regard God as a supplier of *worldly goods, either physical/material or intellectual/“spiritual” ones*. The mere thought of exploiting God has become repugnant to him.

If, after fulfilling his duties and sacrifices, he receives poverty instead of wealth – although wealth is what he needs in order to execute his duties, e.g., as a tradesman – then he is still not disheartened. And when, in spite of a physically and mentally pure conduct as a Brahmin, he is besmirched by scoundrels, either literally (with faeces) or figuratively (his name and reputation) and thereby hindered from performing his brahminical duties, he is still not in despair. And if he fulfils his duties as a warrior by being victorious in a righteous war, then he does not rejoice. His attitude is as follows: “I have faithfully fulfilled my duty. By performing my duty I serve *Him* – so far I am responsible. The result, however, is *His* responsibility. I have a *right* to do my *duty*, but not to relish the outcome of its accomplishment.”

“Pitiable are those, who have their eye on reward, those who fulfil their duty because they expect to gain something in return. Such is unworthy of man.” – Thus he concludes.

The question of *human dignity* emerges anew. Man’s greatness does *not* lie in his expertise to acquire goods for his sense-gratification or subtler enjoyments in a much more thorough, systematic, practical and intelligent way than an animal could, and to demonstrate, in competition with the animals, his mastery over nature and his proficiency in exploiting the world even more radically and rigorously for his own enjoyment.

The capability of complete surrender and performing a radical sacrifice – not to obtain something better in exchange for a temporary abstinence, but as the expression of one’s innermost nature – this is what raises man above the beast. Also a dog shows gratitude when he is fed. Also a dog expects gratitude and praise, when he succeeds in fetching something that his master has searched. He expects *gratitude* and is disappointed, if it is denied. A man on the path of niṣkāma-karmayoga provides a guest with food and drink without expecting any thanks. He is doing his duty *without* hoping for any recognition. He performs his offerings *without* expecting from God that He spares the life of his sick child or provides him with his daily bread in return. One single joy is his: the certainty that he pleases God, when he carries out his duty while being *indifferent* towards any reward.

This selfless commitment, however, is anything but *easy*, since the desire as such is still lurking in the unconscious. The impressions of things and events that had given rise to pleasant sensations in earlier lives, are still strong – and highly

disturbing. And the ego is still there; the ātmā still believes himself erroneously to be a man – as is expressed by “fulfilment of duty as this or that man” – and regards the unity of the mental coverings (buddhi, manaḥ, citta, ahaṁkāra) as his ego. Yet, this man has already understood that all actions that aim at personal profit or recognition, i.e. are carried out with the expectation of reward as a driving force, do bind the ātmā – about which he has a theoretical knowledge already.

What has to be overcome is the inner attitude to be always focused on one’s personal gain, to dwell on the mentally anticipated experience of the expected pleasures (saṁkalpa), which unfolds from the vāsanā-s, deposited in the citta, into a mental image with alluring colours. Already before the pleasure-giving objects are attained, they are experienced in the *imagination* and leave an impression; and they are experienced anew when they are actually relished by the senses. And in accordance with his present ways of thinking and acting, he earns the results in his following birth, like seed, resting in the ground, – also when the field is covered with snow for a long time – eventually germinates and shoots up. Man himself has sown the seed of his destiny in lives forgotten and long since past, his happiness or unhappiness, his health or illness etc. These consequences of past actions nobody can evade – as long as one considers oneself a human being, i.e. as long as the ātmā has not yet freed himself from the misconception of being a man. The impulse to prefer particular objects that inspire a sense of well-being and that give rise to expectations of renewed well-being, and to dislike or even hate certain things, people or circumstances that obstruct the experience of the pleasure that arises from enjoying these objects – these impulses may vary in content according to the character of the particular person, but are alike in *principle*. These impulses are deeply rooted; man is – without being aware of it – enslaved to impulses, originating in impressions of past lives in untold forms of existences and is in no way free, as he believes and imagines. He is not free, neither in the way he acts – his nature forces him to act in a specific way – nor can he live without acting at all. The person who acts according to God’s order and performs his prescribed duties, just fulfils his obligations (karma) according to his caste and stage of life. If he, moreover, is able to act without calculating on the goods he could attain and on the gratification they would bestow if he achieved them, then he acts without getting further entangled, i.e. without sowing new seeds of pleasant or unpleasant impressions. So the Bhagavadgītā and several other Śāstram-s declare.

At this stage man is taught that freedom from hedonistic activities implies by far a higher good than the enjoyment itself. Accordingly, he begins to restrain his outer senses, which have a habit of thoughtlessly connecting to such things that offer lowly pleasures.

Thus, man now offers not only a part of his earthly goods, that could have given pleasure to him, he offers them *all*. Also the performance of the strictly defined duties as a Brahmin, a warrior etc. turns into an offering (yajña). When the common man acts, he imagines that it is he himself who is acting, while it is strictly speaking only the guṇa-s of māyā that are acting; the gross and subtle stuff, which, thanks to the presence of the ātmā (who has forgotten himself and

erroneously identifies with his coverings), owns a borrowed life.

When the ātmā, who knows himself as a man, and who – although he has heard of it – is incapable of realizing that he is an ātmā instead of a man, fulfils the duty of performing the great sacrifice (yajña), which comprises everything in his life, and when he understands, that everything originates in Viṣṇu and belongs to Him and that he himself, therefore, does not own anything, and when he acts accordingly, then there arises a gradual brightening and purging of his citta (cittaśuddhi), a weeding out of the multifarious motives of egoistic desires. He is acting as a man, to be sure, but he is no longer bound by his actions.

This does not imply indifference to the world, not incompetence for cultural activity. It would be a sin not to take one's worldly duties seriously, a transgression of the commandments of God. Thus the fulfilment of duty becomes an offering, and all that man does, thinks and creates – within all conceivable areas of life – turns into expressions of this sacrifice. The Vedic society is arranged in an astonishing way. The different social levels and the allotment of dignities and rights correspond to the amount of duties and the level of renunciation of worldly enjoyments a man, according to his character, is able to accomplish. Thus the highest dignity or privilege to be achieved in such a society is the *right to let go*, to renounce, to give up the egoistic wish to monopolize certain goods for one's own enjoyment. One should not aim at the right of equality considering the free access to the objects of enjoyment others may relish, but at the right to renounce them.

Men at this stage hold a subtle, silent joy, as their hearts are no more torn by the passions to crave for one thing and to deject the other. They are not seized either by excessive joy, when certain worldly goods and benefits are awarded to them, or are overwhelmed with grief or pain, when the same goods are denied. Instead, they hold a peaceful confidence, that whatever Viṣṇu bestows on them, will be for their benefit.

Earlier, man had *learned* by bitter experience, how difficult it is to get hold of the objects for sense-gratification, without transgressing God's order, and how transitory and changeable such objects are. He also realized, how the gratification of lust does not appease it, but only intensifies it.

Now, however, it becomes clear to him, that his earlier habit of regarding things as *his own* was a mistake, and that he can become filled with a peaceful inner joy if he learns to regard everything as God's property and assigns it to Him. This subtle, peaceful happiness, on the other hand, also leaves an impression in the citta, and the longing grows for further and more lasting experiences of this kind of inner happiness. In this way healthy sat-vāsanā-s²⁰ are sown in his cittam. And thus man is ennobled; the light sattva guṇa begins to prevail.

Among those, who are actually prepared to subordinate their lives to a Divine order, the majority follows this path of niṣkāma-karmayoga (fulfilment of duty without claiming reward), a path which, as has been mentioned before, in general involves a continual purging of the citta. This implies that the mirror of

²⁰ See p. 36 f.

consciousness is still covered with a thin layer of ignorance and sat-vāsanā-s, the desire to become a truly refined and noble man, for whom every act in life is an offering. However, the thick, filthy layer of impressions of countless selfish pleasures is now removed.

How rapidly this purification of the citta (citta-śuddhi) is proceeding, depends on the vigour of his endeavours and the kind of people he keeps company with, i.e. whether he associates with people who themselves possess sat-vāsanā-s, or even receives the grace that those, who belong to the next higher stage, gradually instruct him about life at this stage he also aspires to.

The more purified the citta becomes, the easier the buddhi can realize that the “I” of man is solely the result of the ātmā identifying himself with the coverings, and that the conception “I am this or that man or woman” is actually a mistake, as the *ātmā* is the true *ego*. Still, however, this person regards himself as a unit of ātmā and material coverings.

At this stage of development, distaste for the objects of the sensory and mental world arises. As long as the illusory ego was strong and vāsanā-s still acted with full force in the citta and strengthened the illusion of the human ego, and the desires still provided the driving force, the buddhi was subdued by lust, incapable of realizing that all objects, sensory as well as mental ones, were māyā, the opposite of Cit and an obstacle for the ātmā on his way to realize his true nature as a dependent particle of God’s higher Power²¹, sharing the qualities of the Absolute in minuscule measure, i.e. pure Knowledge and Joy. The pleasant sensation, lust, lent colour (rāga) to the external and internal objects, with attachment to them as the result. Now, however, the power of discrimination is less impeded by the influence of lust, and the objects are perceived almost for what they are and how they are. They lose all their attraction and become colourless. This stage is called vairāgya (without colour, the fading of the colours). This does not mean ascetic rejection, no hard “no” to the reactions of the mind and the flesh, no mortification of the body and the mind, no violent suppression of the inclination for certain objects, but the things just fade away to the extent that they lose all their charm and potency to raise any interest.

At this point man has already almost “lost” himself. The previous unity of flesh, mind and ātmā is now breaking up. The ātmā is very close to realizing his true nature. Man now understands: “I am by no means this man. The true ego within me is the ātmā, who is no man at all, who is neither rich nor poor, neither male nor female, neither subtle thinker nor sturdy coolie. Consequently, I have only *one single* task: to give up all duties that the ātmā, up to now, has regarded as his own and conduct myself in such a way that the body, the senses, the mind and the vāsanā-s are no more a hindrance to the ātmā in his self-realization, but that manāḥ and buddhi, instead of being enemies to the ātmā, *become his friends*, implying, that they strive to eliminate themselves for the benefit of the ātmā.”

Thus human dignity is further heightened in that he sacrifices himself, totally consumes himself, in order to help the one to whom he owes his life, but *in whose*

²¹ Translators’ note: Cp. ann. 11.

way he is now standing: the ātmā.

The yoga path that now opens, the fourth path, is the path of jñāna, the path leading to the self-knowledge and self-experience of the ātmā, which liberates the ātmā.

The Yoga of Knowledge (Jñānayoga)

This fourth path of yoga is that of jñāna, the difficult path of ātmā-knowledge, which leads to the freedom of the ātmā. The account of jñāna given here, is entirely based on descriptions given in the Śāstram-s, whereas no regard has been paid to the often diverging accounts of this path, given by several great Indian spiritual preceptors (e.g. Shankarācārya) in their commentaries to the Śāstram-s during their own historical era.

The goal of jñānayoga is knowledge of the true ego, the ātmā. However, the achievement of this goal is impeded as long as man desperately clings to his illusory personality and treasures his present perishable human shell.

Only after having acknowledged that his conception of “I am this or that person” was just an ephemeral simulacrum, the individual ātmā, who had earlier identified himself with his coverings, can eventually achieve self-realization.

What, then, is the stimulus that makes a person impose the hardest possible sacrifice on himself, viz. the abandonment of his own illusory ego, which surely is regarded as one’s most valuable possession by everyone? The incentive for this painful self-effacement on the path of jñānayoga is the prospect of eternal imperturbable joy (ānanda), which essentially belongs to the nature of the ātmā.

This path to the liberation of the ātmā demands clear introspection, a scrupulous insight into the function of the “inner organ”, i.e. the greatest possible penetration of the whole complex of what we in the West call the unconscious or the subconscious. To gain a clear insight into the “workshop of the mind”, an uncompromising discrimination is a necessity for the disciple on this path of yoga, a clear perception that enables him to stick to the understanding he has dispassionately arrived at and to subordinate his will and his emotions to the insights of his reason.

This means that the man in question no longer pays any heed to the physical and mental objects of the world, nor does he take any interest in that aspect of God that is turned towards the world, from Whom the worlds emanate, Who is sustaining them and into Whom they will finally be absorbed again. The disciple is solely interested in those aspects of God that are totally disconnected from the mundane world, and among those the formless aspect in particular, whose very nature is composed of unbounded Knowledge and that is called the infinite light of consciousness, the formless Brahma in the Upaniṣat-s and the Purāṇa-s (Brahma, neuter; not to be mixed up with Brahmā (masculine), the architect of the world, who is a servant of the supreme transcendental personal God).

How can the individual ātmā, who has forgotten his true nature and has identified himself with the grosser and subtler material coverings, gain knowledge of himself? Only after all the functions of the coverings, including the functions of the “inner organ”, the antaḥkaraṇa, i.e. reasoning, feeling, willing, hoping, fearing etc. have been suspended – not unconsciously, as it always happens during deep sleep, but when they have been consciously laid to rest, only then the ātmā can

experience himself. This is the great experience of the so-called “fourth state of consciousness” (turīya; which means “the fourth”), which is mentioned at many places in the Śāstram-s. This experience is also called samādhi.

As soon as the ātmā knows himself as he really is, as ātmā, as true self, and experiences himself accordingly, then he is free from the triple ignorance of the waking state, the dreaming state and the state of deep sleep. Only then, in the fourth state of consciousness (turīya), he is untouched and unconstrained by the three guṇa-s of māyā. Neither the waking consciousness, nor the dream consciousness, nor the sleeping consciousness is capable of experiencing what the ātmā experiences in his free state. This fourth state of consciousness does not permeate the other three states (wakefulness, dream, sleep), but keeps itself absolutely aloof from them. In this state of freedom, the ātmā experiences himself as ātmā by means of a total exclusion of everything that is called either a physical external world or a mental, internal world. This fourth state of consciousness is an absolute awareness, which is altogether different from the other three states of human consciousness (wakefulness, dream, sleep).

When this extraordinary, supernatural state of consciousness fades away and the functions of the “inner organ” are gradually restored, man experiences the reflected splendour or “afterglow” of the ātmā in his citta, something of the effulgence of joy that filled the perfectly calm citta while the consciousness of the disciple was immersed in the state of turīya.

Here the danger lurks that the disciple strives to relish this joyful condition anew, that he starts to pine for this subtle enjoyment he experienced in his citta and that he thereby begins to bind himself again to that which the ātmā is *not*, but which only belongs to his coverings.

In the cryptic language of the Śāstram-s the ātmā is, in several places, termed “the smallest of the small” and in other places “the smallest of the small and the greatest of the great”. The former designation refers to the exceedingly small, individual ātmā, the latter to the infinitely great, formless Brahma. If the disciple forgets that his ātmā is only the tiniest particle of the eternal fullness, and that he needs God’s own power of Knowledge and Experience in order to realize the Divine world, which is beyond space and time – just like the bound ātmā needs the aid of the māyic force of “ignorance” (avidyā) in order to experience the world of māyā – then he separates his ātmā, isolates him and exposes himself anew to the oscillation between the two realms: the Divine world and the world of māyā. Then it can well happen that he relapses into ignorance again. This is another example of the great dangers the disciple has to encounter on the path of jñānayoga and of which the Śāstram-s warn him.

The individual ātmā constantly needs the connection to God’s fullness. Already on the path towards ātmā-realization he required the help and support of the “inner Guide”, of the “Friend”, the Paramātmā. The willingness to serve God, the focus of the heart on God, is also present in jñānayoga, but only as a *means* to lead the ātmā to liberation, i.e. to help the ātmā to attain knowledge of himself.

The jñānī (adherent of jñānayoga) has to analyze the working of the mind

dispassionately, and he must consciously eliminate all possibilities that could tie up the ātmā to his coverings again. His reason (buddhi) must not yield to tamo-guṇa and become dominated by inertia and lethargy (akarma), nor to the restless rajo-guṇa, the insatiable thirst for activity that desires new objects incessantly, but it should be turned towards the ātmā and thus become governed by the light, serene guṇa sattva. When the buddhi of the disciple is directed towards the ātmā, one says that it is turned *inwards*; in contrast to being turned outwards, as in the previously described states. To “turn one’s buddhi inwards” in no way refers to what, in the West, is called contemplation or introspection, i.e. being directed towards the subtle contents of the mind or the soul, as everything *that constitutes a human being*, and this also includes the most noble and subtle features of man, is still external in regard to the ātmā.

To revel in the delight of inner peace – a commonplace goal of the western practices of meditation – must also be conscientiously avoided, being antagonistic to what the Śāstram-s teach. Why, when the inner peace is experienced in the mind, there is still an experiencing subject, an ego, that experiences this peace. *In the state of turīya there is no subject of experience*. On the path of jñāna the ātmā experiences no object, only himself, and by no means anything that could manifest itself in the unconscious – no matter how subtle – in the form of joy. In the turīya state every physical and mental activity is suspended. And when the consciousness of the (illusory) ego is restored, after emerging from the turīya state, the citta and the other coverings certainly do not experience the joy that is founded in the ātmā himself, but only an afterglow.

To experience, presupposes an object that is being experienced. The ātmā, however, is never, under no circumstances, an object of experience on the part of the coverings. The ātmā is always *subject*. He is the *knower*, and he has the potential – when released from ignorance and the false ego – to know himself as pure consciousness, as Cit, and also know God as Cit. That which is non-Cit, on the other hand – i.e. the mind, the soul, the reason (buddhi), the coverings – is never the subject of cognition.

The buddhi is “turned inwards”: this means that the buddhi of the disciple reflects on, ponders over, what he has heard concerning the nature of the ātmā. Like the mind that muses upon the objects of the senses assumes their form as it were, likewise the mind that ponders over the nature of the ātmā and of its opposite, the nature of the not-ātmā, becomes intellectually completely filled up with thoughts of the ātmā. Still, the mind can never ever *experience* the ātmā.

When *misfortune* happens to the *jñānī*, he is not disturbed. His reason (buddhi) has realized that even the most elevated ideas and sentiments like all gross sensory objects consist of the stuff of the three guṇa-s, are perishable and necessarily unsatisfactory. The jñānī knows that misery is inevitable; it falls upon him as a consequence of the evil actions he has committed in this life or former ones and that have to bear fruit in his present existence; be it mental or physical pains caused, e.g., by the climate or by natural disasters or caused by other beings.

Before he had gained this insight, he cursed himself when noticing how he had to

suffer as a result of his own actions. He complained when it was too late. Now, however, he knows that “as you have brewed, so you must drink”, and he finds it meaningless to grieve for it or make complaints.

Likewise, when the *jñānī* experiences happiness and prosperity, he knows that this is the natural outcome of his own virtuous deeds in previous lives that manifest now. He does not aspire to such happiness any more, though. He notes that he experiences happiness, but he does not welcome it.

He cherishes no affection for anything. He knows that affection – even for the subtlest objects – arises from his own mistake of attaching attractive colours to the per se dull and colourless objects of the *māyā* world. Nor does he know any *fear*, i.e. he does not suffer from the fact that the things he earlier felt attached to could be taken from him any moment, without leaving a chance for him to change the course of events. Nor does he know any anger, wrath or hatred that could be directed towards those who deprived him of his favoured objects – for he just does not feel affection for anything at all.

In the *turīya* state the *ātmā* arrived at the experience of himself. “The knot of the ego” was cut. Even when the awareness of the mind and the body returns, the *jñānī* has no fondness whatsoever of anything that belongs to the perishable world.

Whenever a perfect *jñānī* wishes, he can withdraw from the experience of external and internal objects. Like a tortoise, who can at will retract his head into his shell and then stick it out again – so this capability is described in the *Bhagavadgītā*. This presupposes, however, that the *jñānī* has fully mastered not only his external and internal senses, but also the *manaḥ*, which is disposed for dwelling on the objects of the senses. That he is really capable of mastering the *manaḥ* is not only a consequence of his *ātmā*-knowledge – the knowledge that the *ātmā* is neither identical to the body, nor to the soul nor the mind – but has an additional reason. As the disciple does not rely on his own strength alone in his practice, but also on God and His invigorating force, his attitude is in harmony with “the inner Friend”. Therefore He supports the endeavours of the *ātmā* and uproots any possible inclination for the perishable world completely.

A *karmayogi* performs his duties with all carefulness and thoroughness, in fact with love, because he knows that in this way he fulfils the decrees of God, and he leaves it to God to provide him with the bare necessities of life and to aid him.

The *jñānayogi*, too, strives with all his might. He knows, however, that his own endeavours are not enough, that he needs the aid of the inner Guide to succeed in his striving for *mukti*, for liberation from ignorance.

Nowhere the *Śāstram*-s teach that the own efforts are sufficient to reach the goal. And nowhere they teach that the goal can be attained without one’s utmost of energy and determination, e.g. by merely trusting in the grace of God. On the contrary, the *Śāstram*-s teach that the helping power of God is conferred according to the degree of serious endeavour of the disciple. And corresponding to the empowerment by God’s own *śakti*, the endeavours of the disciple are quickened. Inactivity is characterized as *akarma*, darkness, *tamaḥ*, the death of true life.

Again and again it is stressed that the mastering of the outer senses is not

enough, unless the “inner organ” is also mastered. An unchecked manaḥ indulges in the objects of the senses. The result is a connection to them, an attachment. The objects appear to be charming and desirable. Lust awakens. As soon as resistance is offered, hatred springs up. The disciple loses his power of lucid discrimination, and the knowledge of what to do and what to leave. Soon enough, he forgets what the Śāstram-s have taught him regarding his duties and the consequences of neglecting these duties. His reason becomes a slave to lust anew. But when the manaḥ is kept checked, the senses of the disciple may enjoy the objects the body needs for its subsistence – as far as authorized by the rules and regulations of jñānayoga – without this enjoyment causing new excitations of lust, since the objects have already become unattractive.

The jñānī who has freed himself from all desires for outer objects – as well as from *the impressions* or *vāsanā-s* in his unconscious, which *were based on lust* – has got rid of the illusion of the ego and thereby also of the false notion of “mine” and “yours”. He no longer imagines that he can own or claim anything. He just has to face up to what has already begun to take effect in this life as a consequence of his previous actions, e.g. a diseased body, infirmity, a quarrelsome wife, poverty etc.

However, before a disciple on the path of jñāna has reached the goal of complete freedom from delusion and self-deception, he has to encounter serious obstacles, which he has to realize as such with a clear mind and to solve thoroughly. Man is a slave to his past, and this past determines his present character, his temperament. How can his will-power conquer his own inherent nature? How can he overcome the problem of “the two souls in his chest”, the battle between the instinctive striving for enjoyment and the aspiration for the liberation of the ātmā?

In the Bhagavadgītā (16. 6–24) it is asserted that also among men there are demoniacal natures (asuratvam) who naturally oppose the doctrines of the Śāstram-s – and noble natures (devatvam) who are naturally prepared to comply with the teachings of the Śāstram-s. Here we are only interested in beings of the latter kind.

When a śāstram prohibits some deed or activity, it also points out which inauspicious consequences would follow upon a possible violation of this interdiction. Such knowledge contains great power, since it makes one abstain from nourishing an inclination for this prohibited act. On the other hand, when a śāstram enjoins to do something, it also informs about the beneficial consequences that follow upon performing the enjoined activities, in order to prevent the arising of aversion towards those.

Faithful reliance (śraddhā) on the word of the Śāstram-s, i.e. a strong belief that everything proclaimed by the Śāstram-s is for the best of the disciple, impels him to carry out the actions enjoined by the Śāstram-s and to avoid the prohibited ones. The clear understanding *why* the Śāstram-s enjoin or prohibit something, turns into a force strong enough to cope with the human inclination for self-indulgence.

This knowledge presupposes, however, that the aspirant who is striving for mukti has clearly realized the origin of this inclination, which, against his will and better knowledge, compels him to act against his own interest, i.e. the interest of his ātmā.

He understands: lust (kāma) is the enemy of the ātmā. In order to defeat this enemy, the aspirant must know precisely where lust has its seats: in the senses, in the manaḥ and the buddhi, spurred by the vāsanā-s. Thus he must learn to master not only his senses, but also his manaḥ and his buddhi. And he is capable of mastering them to the extent that he is capable of overcoming the *five great obstacles*.

In the following account of the five great obstacles on the paths to liberation, in compliance with the Śāstram-s and applying to jñāna-yoga in particular, remarkable psychological insights are presented.

The five great obstacles are significantly enough called “sufferings” (kleśa), with reference to their capability of *evoking* suffering. They all bear witness to ignorance, to the lack of objective knowledge of reality. They are called sufferings, because they are tormenting the one who tries to follow a path leading to the liberation (mukti) of the ātmā. The fiery blaze of true Knowledge, however, i.e. ātmā-knowledge and Paramātmā-knowledge, is capable of burning this ignorance that evokes suffering in the shape of the fivefold obstacles, to ashes, of consuming it completely.

The five obstacles are:

1. “*Ignorance*” (tamaḥ/darkness; avidyā), which consists in
 - a) attributing eternal existence to perishable things;
 - b) attributing purity and beauty to impure things, e.g. to the human body, which is born out of repugnant ingredients (sperm and ovum), which emits repugnant products (sweat, urine, excrements), which in reality is repulsive and only, when “polished and refined”, turns into a – seemingly – aesthetically acceptable object;
 - c) holding evil actions to be good;
 - d) holding that which actually causes suffering to be beneficial;
 - e) holding the view: I am a man/woman, and this body is mine.
2. “*Bewilderment*” (moha; asmitā), i.e. the “black-out” of the self (ātmā), creating confusion about its true identity and obstructing the comprehension that the intellect (buddhi) is verily not the true self.²²
3. “*Huge bewilderment*” (mahā-moha; rāga), which deludes oneself to demand true happiness and prosperity, without really endeavouring for it.
4. “*Dark night*” (tāmisra; dveṣa) represents the expectation of well-being, although the actual conduct must necessarily lead to suffering.
5. “*Dark blinding night*” (andha-tāmisra) stands for the inclination to ardently cling to the body even though one knows it to be perishable and has

²² In contrast to the famous sentence of Descartes: “I think, hence I am.”

experienced over and over again the inevitable decay of the physical shell in previous lives.

The impressions from innumerable experiences in uncountable lives are, as has been described before, deposited in the citta. Even if these age-old impressions mostly just slumber in the unconscious, it may yet happen that they break forth and act with great force, determining man's future fate. The totality of all these impressions of one's deeds – be they according to what the Śāstram-s prescribe, or in opposition to the Śāstram-s – is in Sanskrit denoted karmāśaya (karma-āśaya). The word karmāśaya means: that, wherein the future destiny rests and germinates. The karmāśaya has arisen from the manifestations of “ignorance” (kleśa) explained above.

When, through clear insight, one succeeds in destroying these five tormenting kinds of ignorance (the five kleśa-s), then also the breeding ground of all suffering is destroyed as well as the secretly proliferating destiny, which sprouts up out of the karmāśaya – because when the cause is destroyed, then also the consequences are destroyed.

All that befalls us as “fate” or what is going to befall us in future, our sound or sick body, our general frame of mind and intellectual capacity, our conditions of living and social background, our fortune or misfortune... all this, according to ancient Indian knowledge, is nothing but the sprouting up of the seeds we have once sowed ourselves, the fruit or outcome of our own previous deeds, successively taking shape as our destiny.

Several times we have already mentioned the presence of “the inner Guide” in every heart, “the inner Witness” of all that happens, “the silent Witness of the most hidden thoughts”, Who faithfully accompanies the ātmā on his endless odyssey in the realms of god-adversity. The mere presence of this inner Guide causes the selection and the maturing of the dispositions that have laid dormant in the unconscious up to that moment, i.e. His presence (indirectly) determines the physical and mental character of the man in this life and in the coming ones.

Only a minor part of the “germs of destiny” a man is carrying will manifest in his present life – as suffering or as joy. This part of karmāśaya is denominated “the already experienced (literally: seen, dṛṣṭa) karmāśaya”. The greater part of the karmāśaya, which will work out only in later lives, is denominated “the not (yet) experienced (adṛṣṭa) karmāśaya”. No one can escape the consequences of his earlier actions; sooner or later they must take effect.

The part of a man's karmāśaya that has already taken visible shape in the form of the present body and character and the circumstances he was born into and that has thus become his fate, must proceed to its end, causing thereby, e.g., that the man in question cannot die – not even if he tries to commit suicide – until “the already experienced (visible) karmāśaya” is completely exhausted, until the fruit of the already active karma, which produced *this* body, is entirely consumed.

Even for a jñānī who has attained liberation (mukti), the part of his karma that has already become manifest must be exhausted. However, the amount of still

invisible, latent karma becomes immediately and completely annihilated when the jñānī attains perfection.

The fact that also a liberated man's destiny must proceed till its consummation, that he continues his life also after having attained liberation, without his body and mind being immediately destroyed, has the beneficial consequence that liberated ātmā-s, perfected jñānī-s, dwell among men as teachers and helpers. Without them, there would be no one in the world capable of teaching disciples who seek liberation about the real purport of the Śāstram-s and of giving them counsel and advice. Yet, it is emphasized in the texts that the liberated ātmā of the jñānī – even if he still dwells in the body and mind – is never ever touched by lust or pain.

Already the yogi on the path of niṣkāma karmayoga does not add any new karma to the totality of karma he has accumulated so far. To an even higher degree this is true for the jñānī. Whatever he does after having attained liberation from ignorance bears no fruit. His deeds do not bind him any longer.

The mirror of the citta, freed from all impressions, is lucid and pure, but it is still there. Yet, no more seeds will shoot forth out of this layer of the unconscious. The nature of the citta has turned into unpolluted sattva, but it still belongs to māyā's sattva-guṇa.

Likewise, the human *ego* is still there. The man whose ātmā has attained self-knowledge had earlier been of the opinion that his personality had an intrinsic value. Now he has realised that he will only last as long as the karma that has started working in him is not yet exhausted. After that he will cease to exist. The ātmā, the true ego, will then indeed abandon the coverings, not only the gross external bodily covering, which also the unawakened one discards at death, but also the subtle, invisible, mental coverings. And now he is not only temporarily laying them aside – as it could happen in the earthly life during the rarely experienced turīya state – but all the coverings to which the ātmā was tied are put aside forever.

This happens smoothly, without agony or fear, because the ātmā knows that he returns home to himself from foreign land, that he enters his true eternal homeland. And what happens to the mental, subtle physical coverings of that man? He knows that he will be extinguished, like a candle-light is extinguished by lack of oil. The ahaṅkāra, the subtle material basis of his illusory ego and also citta, buddhi and manaḥ – as well as the gross physical body – can only live as long as the ātmā stays connected with them and grants them life. When the ātmā leaves, life terminates in the gross as well as in the subtle bodily coverings. They become what they are according to their nature: gross, inanimate stuff, respectively subtle inanimate stuff. And they return to the elements from which they have originated.

Unconcerned the ātmā endured this final, superficial connection with the coverings that more and more he learned to regard as something totally alien to himself, as the mere products of his karma.

The disintegration of the physical and mental body, the annihilation of “man” who was nothing but a concealing mask of the ātmā, was preceded by:

1. The silencing of and gradual dispensing with the eternally restless mind (*manah*), driven either by attraction or aversion.
2. The fading and final eradication of the *vāsanā-s*, these innumerable impressions, based on lust or hate, which were dwelling (vas) in the citta and which *spontaneously*, without conscious intent, broke forth and exerted an “instinctive” influence on man’s thinking and acting, and which often caused that he was emotionally and wilfully spurred to perform certain actions, without actually wanting to.

To these *vāsanā-s* is counted, according to the Śāstram-s, everything in the history of mankind that has been brought to light from deep within in the form of artistic and religious “*inspiration*”. Such manifestations are, seen from the viewpoint of the ātmā and the eternal Reality, nothing but impulses arising from impressions, remaining from experiences in earlier lives on earth. Seen from the viewpoint of the ātmā, they are really like a kind of froth, finally rising to the surface after having fermented in the unconscious (citta) for a while.

For example, the feeling of being cared for, protected, comforted and fondled by a mother is something every being has experienced countless times as giving a sense of well-being. From the impressions of this positive experience derive, according to the Vedic scriptures, those *vāsanā-s* in the unconscious that are instigating an instinctive yearning for the “Mother” – a yearning, which inspired manifold artistic-religious works in all cultural epochs.

To give another example: The recurring painful experience of dying, which is settled deeply in the layers of the citta, has certainly contributed to the development of the notion of resurrection and eternal life for the subtle physical coverings and the illusory personality – and even for the gross physical body; properties that they can in no way possess according to their very nature. It is a notion that is completely justified for the ātmā, but in no way for what we call soul or personality. According to the teachings of the Śāstram-s, the ever changing individuality, life after life, is only brought about because the immortal ātmā, erroneously identifies himself again and again with new bodily coverings, after having cast away the former ones. None of the impressions rooted in the citta, none of the *vāsanā-s*, which fortify, enrich and expand man’s ego or idealize this ego by declaring it immortal and translating it to a future life on a more elevated level, contribute in any way to the liberation (mukti) of the ātmā. They merely strengthen man’s misconception that his perishable personality should hold an intrinsic value, which ought to be maintained, increased and idealized. All those *vāsanā-s* are collectively denoted as “*vāsanā-s* belonging to the realm of illusion” (*asat-vāsanā*) by the Śāstram-s .

As neither the karmayogi nor the jñānayogi is normally capable of reaching the goal – the liberation of the ātmā from his gross and subtle coverings, as well as from his illusory ego – in one single lifetime, there will be yogis who have been striving towards this goal under constantly renewed efforts during several lives.

Such efforts leave impressions of *sattvic* nature in the citta that are denominated *sat-vāsanā-s*. These *sat-vāsanā-s* possess great force. They compel the man in whom they act – sometimes even without him consciously wanting to – persistently to follow the path of karma- or jñānayoga assigned by the Śāstram-s. All that he had heard concerning the nature of the world and concerning God and the ātmā in an earlier existence, long since past, and then tried to understand – all that has left impressions in his citta. In the form of *sat-vāsanā-s* these impressions now arise from within and are then often believed to be an “inspiration” from God Himself. Whether they are indeed *sat-vāsanā-s* or not, cannot be decided by the intensity of the experienced “inspiration” nor by the accompanying experience of bliss, or the outcome of this experience in the future – because man on his own can never judge objectively the nature of his own “inspirations”. Here the word of the Śāstram-s stands as the only source of knowledge. It states clearly and explicitly what *sat-vāsanā-s* are and how they express themselves in particular in man’s way of life and frame of mind.

Empirical religion, i.e. religion based on the experience of historical personages, is, like mythology, essentially different from the teachings of the Śāstram-s. According to their own statements, *the Śāstram-s are in no way accounts of the experiences of seers and sages in past or present times*, which were then systematically compiled. Instead, the Śāstram-s state that they, as “*the eternal Word-form of God*”, existed already before the birth of man and any seer or sage. According to statements of the Śāstram-s themselves, they do not derive from man, but are pre-human (a-pauruṣeya). To the believer, the absolute authority of the Śāstram-s rests on this very fact. They are founded in themselves; they themselves are proof, and therefore they need not be proven – so it is said. According to the view of the Śāstram-s, man as such has no chance whatsoever to prove or verify the truth, validity or veracity of the statements of the Śāstram-s. Yet, to the extent that the mundane personality fades and the (illusory) ego is dissolved, the ātmā attains knowledge of himself – and then “man” and his personality are revealed as solely a “myth”, born of *asat-vāsanā-s* and a fallacy. Only when the human coverings and personality have ceased to exist will it become apparent that the Śāstram-s tell the truth about themselves, regarding the nature of the ātmā and the paths that lead to the liberation of the ātmā.

A religion or a philosophy that tries to establish the continuity of what is called the human “personality” is disastrous from the viewpoint of the Śāstram-s. Such a religion is a hindrance in the undoing of the knot of ignorance, which is tightened harder and harder through karma. It strengthens the misconception of one’s true identity and propagates the myth of personal human immortality.

As the mental, subtle material covering has accompanied the ātmā for such an exceedingly long duration – namely from time immemorial till the untying of the knot of the heart and the final abandoning of the coverings – it goes without saying that this prolonged existence appears to the ignorant one as a continuity. What is preserved from life to life is, however, only the subtle material basis for the ego-consciousness together with the structure of buddhi, manaḥ and citta. These are,

furthermore, accompanied by the driving forces of the instincts, personal inclinations, predilections and antipathies that derive from earlier lives and like a fermenting layer of dirt cover the citta. The actual contents of the individual lives are, however, not preserved.

Since every identification on this mundane plane is an illusion, comparable to the result of hypnosis, it is misleading to speak disparagingly about an “egoistic”, selfish ego (ahaṅkāra) in opposition to a more altruistic ego. It is, anyhow, only a matter of different degrees within the same illusion. From the point of view of the highest Reality it is fairly unimportant, whether this ego is selfish or altruistic. According to the Indian revealed texts, the *ego* in itself is only a consequence of *ignorance*, be it a selfish or an altruistic ego.

Views on life that regard physical culture and intellectual culture as opposed to each other, as well as concepts that aim at a predominantly materialistic civilization or a predominantly intellectual one, and even world views that strive for “harmony between body and soul” are all, according to the Śāstram-s, just different modes of thought, that are based on ignorance and are spurred by vāsanā-s – fantasies. None of these views on life represents any true humaneness. True humaneness implies that man recognizes his very human existence as transitory only; then the Śāstram-s teach him how he can prepare himself for his own extinction as “man” – in order to pave the way for the ātmā.

In the spiritual history of India, theories have been proposed, maintaining that the ātmā itself was incapable of suffering, that in reality just the body and the mind were affected by distress. According to the Śāstram-s, these theories are false. The ātmā definitely suffers when he erroneously identifies with the coverings, which have been granted a borrowed life due to his presence and which would be merely dead matter without him. Even if someone just dreams that he is torn to pieces by a tiger, he is still subjected to agony.

Likewise – according to the judgement of the Śāstram-s – that theory is in error that states that the coverings, the body and the mind are *nothing at all*, but can be compared to the “horns of a hare”²³ – and that these coverings are only a particular form of “nescience”. No – the Śāstram-s teach that these coverings consist of real, concrete substance and are not just mental projections or illusions. Illusory, erroneous, untrue is only the concept of the ego (ahaṅkāra), which induces the ātmā to identify himself with body and mind and to develop the sense of an individual personality.

The Śāstram-s strongly emphasize that one may under no circumstances tread the path of jñānayoga before one has passed the preceding stages of learning, and before the internal and external objects, as a consequence of this preparatory curriculum, have lost all their attraction.

Without the experiences from these necessary preliminaries, the human ego will *split up*. The buddhi, the intellect, is still so much under the control of tamo- and rajo-guṇa that it cannot properly grasp what it is being told concerning the ātmā.

²³ A well-known metaphor from the Indian logic, employed to denote something utterly unrealistic.

Instead, the consciousness desperately tries to maintain that it, itself, *is* the ātmā. And man declares: “I am ātmā”, discovers, however, the next moment, that he is still urged by lust and desires, now in one direction, then in another, and that he has still another “I” within him. And then he begins to lead a double life that neither allows him a complete human life, nor gives the ātmā any chance to attain self-knowledge.

Now, however, there arises a concern: what would happen to the marvellous occidental culture, if all ātmā-s were to attain self-knowledge and no longer were enticed by the objects of the physical and mental world?

The question lies near at hand – but is based on a mistake.

The ātmā in its subtle mental covering receives from the parents – in accordance with the unfolding of his karma and as a result of his actions in previous lives – a genetically conditioned physical covering, which he has deserved. The parents, on their part, receive a child – in accordance with the merits of their own ātmā-s from earlier existences. Which of the particular inner predispositions, vāsanā-s and saṁskāra-s, are going to emerge in the child’s life does however not depend on the parents. If the parents as well as the child have deserved it, they will be alike, otherwise, they may be fundamentally different. Hence, the theory of heredity is not falsified completely by the statements of the Śāstram-s, but rather deepened and revised.

Also in a society whose members were really willing to entirely subordinate themselves to the commands of the Śāstram-s, there would always be only a few who were qualified to walk the hard path of jñānayoga. There is thus no “risk” that all men would ever abandon their worldly duties and joys in order to become jñānayogis.

Every culture on earth is the resultant of two forces pulling in two very different directions: the force of the few, whose lives and aspirations are nourished by an elevated ideal; and the other force that sways the vast majority of men and mainly pulls them towards animalistic carnal delights. The higher the ideal and the more people that gather around this ideal, the more likely it is that a genuine culture will arise in that country; at best a culture illuminated by, formed by and based on ātmā-knowledge. Experience shows, however, that in this parallelogram of forces, the force pulling downwards into carnal pleasures and animal lust is usually predominant.

This dominance of the downward pulling forces is the reason why advanced cultures, which strived for a harmonious balance between spiritual ideals and physical pleasures, perished owing to abuse of the senses. Those cultures, which – although trying to gloss it over – in actual fact only focus on carnal pleasures and the scientific and economical exploitation of nature are, from the viewpoint of the Śāstram-s, nothing but highly intellectual and well organized herds of cattle.

Idealistically and materialistically inclined cultures do not constitute opposites. Idealistic and materialistic cultures on the *one* hand and cultures aiming at ātmā-knowledge on the *other* constitute the true opposites. Idealism and materialism are just twins with “ignorance” as their common mother. This ignorance concerns the

nature of the ātmā, the question what dignifies human life and the meaning of life on the whole.

Lust wishes to keep the ātmā chained within his coverings, which are alien to his very nature, misusing the human form of life and taking it as a pretext to maintaining itself. According to the Śāstram-s, though, the human condition should be the instrument for freeing the ātmā from his coverings.

The question arises: What does the inner Guide (antaryāmī), the Friend, do for the jñānī? And where does the Friend go, when the ātmā becomes free?

Already when we were discussing karmayoga we mentioned that the inner Guide, Who silently accompanies every being, starts to take a real and active interest in the ātmā from the very moment this ātmā, i.e. the man with whom the ātmā identifies himself, is willing to subordinate himself to the regulations given by God and to please Him – Whom he does not know yet and Whom he has only heard about – by earnestly striving henceforth to mould his entire life into a sacrifice (yajña).

The ātmā of a jñānī receives an even more active support from the inner Guide.

In the same way as the man, who has not yet discovered that he is nothing but a shell, feels himself as belonging to the world of time and space, the world of matter – so does the ātmā, who has been released and is of Cit-nature, know himself as belonging to the Cit-world. The sun-like ātmā feels that he belongs to the Sun of Knowledge, and that he himself is nothing without this affiliation to the World of God. *True ātmā-knowledge hence includes God-Knowledge.* And also before the ātmā himself reaches this knowledge, the man who walks the path of jñānayoga receives instructions as to who and what God is, and that ātmā and God to their substance have something in common: they are both Sat-Cit-Ānanda, Being-Knowledge-Joy. They are thus alike as regards their nature, although enormously different regarding the degree of fullness: the ātmā being exceedingly small and God infinitely large. When the ātmā discovers what he is, he consequently also discovers to whom he belongs, and realizes: “I do not at all belong to this material world as I believed, while identifying with my false ego. I am not of material nature – I am of God’s nature.” This is the original meaning of the words “tat tvam asi” – “you are that”, which is thus no formula of identity, as it has often been considered to be, both in India and in the West.

This ātmā-knowledge thus *requires* God-Knowledge. The inner Guide, the hidden Friend, all the time resided in the vicinity of the ātmā, unnoticed. The material coverings shrouded the ātmā. Surely the ātmā ought to discover Him, as soon as the veil of ignorance around him is torn apart?

No – māyā, neither in her aspect as provider of matter, nor in her aspect as ignorance, is ever capable of concealing *God*, who is the Lord of māyā. It is God’s Own highest power of Knowledge and Joy that makes Him invisible, although He, the Omnipresent, is everywhere.

God speaks:

Shrouded in yoga-māyā,

I am not evident to everyone.
The deluded world does not know Me,
the Unborn One, the Unchanging One.

Bhagavadgītā 7. 25

This implies: God is never an *object* that can be perceived, no matter how much one prepares oneself. Whenever He makes Himself known, it happens on *His* initiative. And He does not make Himself known one moment before the ātmā really desires it, i.e. before the ātmā, fed up with experiencing the world of māyā, uses his free will to strive for gaining knowledge of God.

When the ātmā wished to enjoy for his own pleasure, it was māyā – fulfilling the will of God, Whom she is subordinated to – who offered the ātmā the material coverings and the false ego as instruments for the accomplishment of this wish. And it is the same māyā – still obeying God’s will – who gradually withdraws and eventually releases the ātmā, as soon as he resolves to serve God.

Freedom as a gift would be an incomplete freedom. God does not intend to circumscribe or hinder the free will of the ātmā in any way, nor does He wish the ātmā, whose very nature is Being and Knowledge, i.e. spontaneous life, to lose his own eminence and dignity, just *passively* depending on the grace of God alone. Every genuine path of yoga requires earnest endeavours on every step. The disciple is constantly subjected to all kinds of temptations of māyā. At any time the disciple has the opportunity to change his mind. All according to the degree of sincerity of his striving towards God, there follows *His* grace, His aid – and the fading of the false ego.

There are Indian interpretations of the concept of karma maintaining that the fruit of one’s deeds ripens in a process of natural development, all according to the nature of one’s deeds and without there being any need for God. There are even theories of later masters of jñānayoga asserting that if only man endeavours sincerely enough, he may realize by means of his own unaided efforts that he, as man, is just the covering shell around the ātmā; and the ātmā may realize his own true nature, without requiring God as a helper.

Both these teachings are *human opinions*. The Śāstram-s teach the opposite. These atheistic teachings turn up again and again in Indian spiritual life, and for that reason the Śāstram-s themselves have analyzed and rejected them, as being in disagreement with reality.

The mere presence of the inner Guide causes that the individual ātmā (jīvātmā) always receives just those coverings he deserves. Similarly, it is the presence of the inner Guide that causes this ātmā to become free from his coverings, with which he erroneously identified himself and helps this ātmā – who believed himself to be a human being – to become free from ignorance. This happens all according to the earnestness of one’s endeavours.

The decision rests with *His* grace. The ātmā who has got rid of ignorance does no longer perceive the world, but *himself*, he knows himself. And with this knowledge goes inevitably that he has perceived the “eternal Friend”, i.e. that God

has made Himself known to him.

Some Upaniṣat-s, drawing on Ṛigveda, describe this act of cognizance. The already mentioned (p. 45) famous metaphor of the two birds, the two intimate friends, who have their nests in the same tree (the body), describes the relationship between the individual ātmā, encased in material bodies and in a state of paralysis, and the Ātmā over and beyond all ātmā-s, God, the Lord, Who dwells invisibly as the inner Guide in all bodies, together with every ātmā, and Who accompanies the ātmā on his endless odyssey through various bodily coverings.²⁴

How can the impotent individual ātmā, clothed in layers of matter, perceive Him, Who indeed dwells close to him, but Who is yet beyond the reach of the senses, untouched by matter and unbounded by space and time? To make this possible, the paralyzed ātmā must be granted Divine vision, power of the power through which God knows and experiences Himself. This happens when God *chooses* the ātmā who strives to reach Him.

“Only by him, whom He chooses, He can be attained”, proclaim the Kaṭha Upaniṣat (II. 2. 23) and the Mundaka Upaniṣat (III. 2. 3).

Without this God-knowledge, the ātmā’s awareness of himself would be highly imperfect. Without God-knowledge, the liberated ātmā would stand, as it were, on the boundary between homeland and foreign country, between knowledge and ignorance. He would have regained only a negative freedom. True, inalienable freedom in the eternal Realm of Freedom, in the realm which is Being-Knowledge-Joy – unassailable by the menace of becoming obscured by bodily coverings again – can be attained by the ātmā only when he recognizes the nature of God, i.e. *when God makes Himself known to him*. Only when the ātmā was granted knowledge of his primordial basis, God-knowledge, he may obtain complete self-knowledge. Knowledge of the sun is the prerequisite of true knowledge of the nature of sunbeams.

Where does the ātmā go after having attained God- and ātmā-knowledge? The answer can be easily given: As God in His fullness *is* always and everywhere, the ātmā, as it were, already finds himself in the right place. The Realm of God is beyond every limitation of space and time.

It is a ridiculous presumptuousness on the part of man when he believes that the empirical laws of thought and experience that his brain has deduced from the world of māyā should apply also to the Divine Reality of God’s Own Realm. Such a belief would be sheer anthropomorphism.

The ātmā of the jñānī has reached his goal: the certainty and safety of being affiliated to God. Like a sunbeam which belongs to the Sun, he can now experience the nature of the Sun (ātmā-rāma). Like a droplet of knowledge in the infinite ocean of Knowledge (God), he can now “lose” himself – i.e. the consciousness of his individuality – in experiencing the aura of the Spiritual Sun, the formless

²⁴ Cf. Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣat 4. 6–7; Kaṭha Upaniṣat I. 3. 1. Also the entire thirteenth Chapter of Bhagavadgītā deals with the relationship between the individual ātmā and the inner Guide. The two “intimate friends” are there called “the knower of the field” and “the knower of the field of all fields”.

infinite Brahma-aspect of God. This is the final, great sacrifice on the path of jñānayoga: that the ātmā – after having experienced what he really is – sacrifices himself, attains nirvāṇa, eternal stillness, and loses the awareness of his individual existence. He has *subjectively* “merged” into the huge Brahma, a tiny spark, a tiny particle of fire in the infinite fire.

In so far as he was aware of the fact that everything depended on God and His grace – his personal liberation included – he willingly served God through His Own Power of Knowledge and Love. This bhakti, however, he only used as a means to his liberation (mukti). Even his sacrifice was, in reality, an altogether selfish sacrifice. It was undertaken for the sake of the happiness of his ātmā, for the sake of his eternal safety and certainty of Knowledge. So at this point the spirit of self-sacrifice is exhausted, it has reached its respective limit on this path of yoga. This is not yet the ultimate sacrifice.

Bhaktiyoga, the Yoga of Service

Unalloyed Bhakti: God's Own Power of Service, Knowledge and Love –
the Ultimate Sacrifice

*I am aware that human love, at heart, is to me an attempt,
to escape the futile search for God.*

Bertrand Russell, Memoirs I

We will now consider the fifth path of yoga, the path of bhakti, *God's Own Power to serve, know and love*. In its purest form this bhakti is still unknown to the Occident. What is known here is bhakti as a means (an unparalleled means) on the path of karmayoga and also on the path of jñānayoga, a means to attain worldly happiness or liberation. This form of bhakti is expressed e.g. in the Bhagavadgītā.

The so-called “*unveiled, unalloyed, unpolluted*” bhakti, i.e. the “bhakti, not veiled by karma and jñāna”, has always, not only in the West, but also in India, been quite hidden. This, in spite of the fact that the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa, a central Holy Scripture, already in its opening stanzas proclaims this unalloyed bhakti most emphatically:

Here, in this Bhāgavata-Purāṇa,
one finds the supreme religion,
the religion that is free from any kind of “deception”
(i.e. free from all ogling at reward and profit
and also free from ogling at salvation, at mukti).
It is the religion of those,
who do not cause suffering to any single being
(who are free from envy, wrath, lust,
greed, pride and every form of infatuation),
the religion of the Real Ones,
(who are established in absolute, unalloyed existence).
Here is found the living Life
(of the Supreme Reality),
that grants Divine Joy
and roots out the threefold suffering.²⁵
Whoever (drinks) of this Bhāgavata-Purāṇa,
which was proclaimed by the great Muni (God Himself) –
what need does he still have for other Holy Scriptures!
Here God Himself is tied with the bonds of love
in the hearts of those who have an inner urge,
who desire to listen, to obey and to serve,²⁶

²⁵ The threefold suffering:

1. Suffering that roots within oneself.
2. Suffering inflicted by other beings.
3. Suffering caused by natural disasters like floods, earthquakes etc.

promptly, instantly.

Bhāgavatam I. 1. 2

The first indication that somebody has entered upon this most hidden path of yoga and that pure bhakti begins to manifest in his heart is called *śraddhā*, a firmly held conviction and deep confidence. However, in this case it is a matter of a quite particular kind of *śraddhā* or faith. In fact, there are several different forms of *śraddhā*, i.e. of inner convictions that a particular way of acting and thinking is conducive to what I consider as my objective in life. It is an obvious fact that nobody is capable of living and acting without such an inner certainty, not even the titanic gods (asura-s), who revolt against God and of whom the Śāstram-s give various accounts, not even the most ferocious villain, sensualist or criminal. Without *śraddhā*, nothing can be obtained, except a dull, half-conscious, vegetating life.

In the Holy Scriptures, *śraddhā* is broadly described as fourfold:

1. The conviction that a conduct, quite opposite to what is ordained in the Śāstram-s, is conducive to achieve my purposes: *tāmasika-śraddhā*.
2. The conviction that a dedicated and restless fulfilment of what the Śāstram-s prescribe as my duty as *man*, is favourable to my objective in life: *rājasika-śraddhā*.
3. The conviction that clear knowledge of the *ātmā* (and of the *Paramātmā* and the *Brahma*) acquired on the path of *jñānayoga*, is propitious to my highest ambition, the liberation of the *ātmā*: *sāttvika-śraddhā*.
4. The conviction that Service of God through His Own Power of Knowledge and Love *in itself*, without expectation of any other result than the happiness inherent in the service itself, is the true aim of man as well as of the *ātmā*. Here it refers to an altogether supra-mundane kind of *śraddhā*: *nirguṇa-śraddhā*.

The bhakti texts emphasize that unwavering faith in pure bhakti can never sprout out of a heart, mind or intellect, be it ever so refined, but is something that is *eternal* and not a mere function of the mind or inner agent (*antaḥkāraṇa*). This *śraddhā* in bhakti is the consequence of the *ātmā* having received the first touch of God's Own Power of Knowledge and Experience, which, like God Himself, is

²⁶ *śuśrūṣu*.

Cf. Kṛṣṇa's admonition (speaking as the guru of Arjuna) at the end of the *Bhagavadgītā* (18. 67):
You must not disclose this to anyone,
who does not fight against his selfishness (*tapasvin*),
who is no bhakta,
who does not desire to listen, to obey and to serve (śuśrūṣu),
to none, who blasphemes Me.

(In the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* the teaching of *Bhagavadgītā* is continued and considerably deepened.)

beyond space and time and exists everywhere and forever – but it becomes manifest through someone who is a bhakta already, who is imbued with that power of bhakti.

This magnificent force of bhakti can touch even someone who does not follow any of the previously described paths of yoga when a bhakta *pleases to confer it* to him. The sacrifices (yajña) successively executed on the three steps of karmayoga, as well as the knowledge gained on the fourth path (jñānayoga), can provide good preliminaries for attaining firm reliance on pure bhakti. However, often enough one finds no tangible *reason* why this happens. The force of the unobscured bhakti can even seize someone who is totally unprepared, who is sluggish or even fiendish. This transfer of power thus essentially happens *without any cause*. True bhakti is without any causal connection, it is “sunder varumbe”²⁷. It is without any purpose, and for him who receives it, it is an amazing wonder. The person himself does not know *what* is urging him forward, or *why* it urges him on, or why he can do nothing but cooperate with this force.

Then the question arises: Does God not infringe upon the free will of the ātmā and man here? Does He not exert an influence on man, without man wanting Him to? No, this is not so, as the first impulse of this power of bhakti is usually very, very gentle, like the touch of a butterfly’s wing. At every moment man can withdraw from it, he can isolate himself from it, like he shuts off an electrical current using a switch. Free will cannot be executed unless everything is presented to man to *taste* and to *choose*, unless he has free access to all the different paths.

During his wanderings through the perishable worlds, the ātmā, encased in human coverings, will again and again be given opportunities for bhaktiyoga. The ṛṣi-s, the muni-s, the mendicants, the Śāstram-s speak about this path, and man is led into its vicinity automatically, by faithfully following the duties and regulations pertaining to his respective stage in life. Again and again, he will be gently touched. It rarely happens, however, that someone responds to this touch, as pure bhakti demands a great sacrifice, a sacrifice by far greater than the other paths of yoga. Also through bhaktiyoga the ātmā gets liberated, but this inconceivable event which was the much desired principal aim on the path of jñāna – on the path of bhakti becomes a mere by-product of secondary importance. Several times it is emphasized: unalloyed, unveiled bhakti that is not desecrated by being used as a means to an end attracts God in an irresistible way. Bhagavān, the Beloved, God in person, Who exists forever and everywhere, is no longer able to stay out of reach of His bhakta, who desires to serve Him. He reveals Himself, “how He is and Who He is, according to His very essence”²⁸, in order to offer the bhakta an opportunity of direct service.

Already long before this miraculous event, which enkindles the bhakti of the bhakta even more, the disciple has made the astounding experience that what the Śāstram-s state – often contrary to all human logic – concerning God, His Own

²⁷ Meister Eckhart.

²⁸ Bhagavadgītā 18. 55.

Realm, His Eternal Companions and His Plays is Truth. He has also become aware that these accounts in the Śāstram-s not only want to lead to knowledge, but that they altogether *consist of Knowledge*.

The disciple on this level notices that neither the objects of the external world, nor those of the inner, mental world, appeal to him any longer. They gradually lose all their glamour and attraction. Still, the disciple does not vehemently reject them, he simply does not let himself be disturbed by them any longer.

Those Śāstram-s that are dealing with bhakti give detailed instructions as to what the novice has to do in order to take the first steps on the path of bhakti, how he can serve God with hands, feet, eyes, ears, with his mind, with every word that he speaks. On this stage of the beginner, it is only a matter of indirect service. For instance, it can be to sweep the floor of a temple, to carefully polish the temple bell, or even to perform the simplest domestic work, conscientiously and attentively, focusing on Bhagavān – the Centre of all Existence – filled with the intense longing to dedicate everything to Him in order to please Him.

The following words from the Bhagavadgītā, spoken by God Himself, in the role of a yoga teacher, to His disciple Arjuna – and actually still belonging to the instructions on karmayoga – indicate the direction:

Whatever you do,
whatever you eat,
whatever you offer,
whatever you bestow as a gift,
whatever you deny yourself
(in battle with your egotism),
oh Arjuna, –
consecrate all this to Me.

Bhagavadgītā 9. 27

What on the path of karmayoga is still a strenuous effort, on the path of bhaktiyoga becomes a continuous, spontaneous, loving sacrifice. The firm faith, held in one's heart, that serving God is the sole purpose of life, is the only precondition required for walking the path of pure bhakti.

This presupposes that the disciple, by listening to his guru and to the Śāstram-s, has already received the clear knowledge of who this supra-mundane God is, where He dwells and what His nature is – He, Who is unbounded by space and time and Who declines to be touched by either the senses or the mind. By means of this instruction the disciple has understood that neither his body of flesh and blood, nor his mental instruments, nor the striving of the noblest heart can ever reach God and serve or worship or pray to Him. He has realized that his senses as well as the mental subtle organs of his “inner organ” are composed of māyā-stuff and can therefore only relate to objects that are likewise formed of the stuff of māyā. God, however, according to the revelations of the Śāstram-s – in contrast to the opinions held by later philosophical systems – does never, neither in His Own

transcendental Realm, unbounded by space and time, nor when He appears as an avatāra for a brief time in this world, attire Himself in any covering of māyā, however subtle.

The disciple must thus have received exhaustive instructions from authentic sources and must have understood what the Śāstram-s tell about God, His Realm, His Plays and His Eternal Co-Players, and he must be aware of the difficulties he, as a human being, will encounter, who has neither the power of Cit, nor Cit-organs, but only māyā-coverings at his disposal – and yet intends to serve God.

This bhakti is exceptional, because, from its very beginning, it is not only the desire to serve and love, which is gradually growing stronger and purer, but it also bestows the capability to experience who God is.

Thus, the disciple does not have to learn step by step how to assign first a fraction of the objects of his enjoyment, then all of them, and finally all his actions as an offering (yajña) to God, nor does he have to learn how to cut through the tight knot of the heart by self-denial (vairāgya), by gradually emptying his citta of the vāsanā-s and by finally realizing and experiencing the ātmā, but the might of the willingness to serve takes care of this just “by the way” – if man is prepared to be seized and guided by this force.

The endeavours on the paths of karmayoga and jñānayoga were directed towards a goal and ceased naturally and were abandoned as soon as the goal was reached, whereas serving God on the path of bhaktiyoga has no goal to be reached beyond the service itself: *the service itself is the path and the goal*. The goal, as it were, is a continual enhancement and intensification of this service.

In jñānayoga the incentive is the prospect of the liberation of the ātmā from ignorance and bondage, the experience of himself as Being, Knowledge and Joy and his eternal well-being, while in bhaktiyoga the incentive is solely the *joy of service itself*.

A man who does not follow any of the yoga paths experiences the material and transitory things of the world of time and space as pleasing to his senses, but only as long as he, in ignorance, ascribes a charm and desirability to the objects of the sensory world that they don't own in reality. Thus he enjoys the delight of indulging in and exploiting the world.

The jñānī is negatively disposed towards mundanity. He seeks salvation from the torment of being forced to experience this world. To be released from this mundane world and instead be rooted in the certainty of the imperishable connection and unity of his ātmā with the formless Brahma, is his happiness.

The bhakta considers the objects of this material world as ingredients of his service to God (an only indirect service at first). And his happiness *is* his service.

For a true votary of God the joy of being allowed to serve is so great, and the will to serve so strong that this man as a bhakta does not have any time at leisure for his private concerns nor interest in his personal affairs any more – he is not even particularly worried about his ātmā, reflecting on his present state of ignorance etc., etc.

This alacrity to serve has one single purpose: to please God. And since the

bhakta has heard and understood, that this force of bhakti is God's Own Power, he is sure that this Serving-Power of God actually reaches Him. The bhakti-Śāstram-s inform him in detail, what this service is constituted of. Initially his service consists, above all, in the willingness and capability to listen properly, to correctly understand what has been heard and to take it seriously. The disciple longs to let himself be more and more filled with this force.

A man who is "obsessed" with something is entirely subjugated to this obsessive force and is acting compulsively, contrary to his own free will, whereas *the power of bhakti backs up and invigorates the free will* by means of purifying his intellect (buddhi) from the compelling forces of the vāsanā-s and from lust, even freeing it from the merely negative aspiration to liberate the ātmā. It thus becomes capable of clearly distinguishing *three realms*:

the realm of māyā;

the realm of mukti, i.e. the realm of the formless Brahma, which is without any attributes;

and the Realm of God in concrete person (with transcendental attributes), unbounded by time and space and called Vaikuṅṭha.

The buddhi of the disciple becomes free from the attachment to lust in both negative and positive sense, i.e. free from negative and positive attachment, free from the attitude: I do not want to indulge in lust, or: I do not want to serve. The disciple becomes free from every striving for worldly pleasures, as well as from every ambition to escape the suffering of this world. A genuine free will can only be based on dispassionate, objective knowledge of Reality, the relative as well as the absolute. The buddhi is incapable of any objective judgement as long as it is under the compulsion to affirm or reject the world of māyā.

While the ignorant person affirms the world and despite all its deficiencies even loves it, the person who knows the ātmā disowns it. As long as he perceives this world he becomes increasingly bored and disgusted by it.

The ignorant person exploits the world of māyā physically and mentally on behalf of his lust. The jñānī rejects her as a seductress. Neither of them is capable of realizing what she is in herself, i.e. *from the point of view of God*. The bhakta, on the other hand, has received the willpower to serve, the power of *pure Knowledge*, since bhakti *is* the power of Knowledge. Aided by this power he realizes that the world is not an end in itself nor just a hostile curtain. He realizes that the world can become perfectly transparent to the extent that it enters – in its entirety as well as in detail – into the service of God and thus becomes an instrument for this purpose, being "redeemed" in this way.

This does not mean, however, that the bhakta and the relations to his fellow beings, as well as all that takes place in the world in the form of physical and mental activities, now becomes consecrated, and that everything remains as it was, only hallowed with the glory of sanctity or spirituality and turned into something more harmonious and noble. For the bhakta there can be no self-satisfaction,

however subtle and noble; an aesthetic and sanctified māyā-world would be just as much māyā-world as a world sullied by brutal sensual lust. Bhakti, however, teaches that the world is *dangerous* and able to ensnare the ātmā only as long as one estimates and measures it by the standard: what *intensifies* my lust and what *impedes* it.

Whereas the niṣkāma-karmayogi regards the world as Viṣṇu's property and himself only as a caretaker, who has no right to lay claims to it, the bhakta just perceives "material" to be used in *His* service, to *please Him*, i.e. not only Viṣṇu – that part manifestation of God, Who is the root-cause of the emanation of the worlds – but God in His Fullness, the primordial God, Who resides in His boundless, eternal Realm, and Who assigns the emanation, maintenance and dissolution of the worlds to His part manifestations.

As long as the disciple is on the first stage of bhakti, he still knows himself as belonging to *human society* and *the universe*. Yet, he is not meant to execute the duties as this or that man in society any longer. No matter who he is, regardless of his position in life, his caste and sex, he can now serve God. Although he appears to be a member of a particular caste etc., he is exempt from the obligations of this social order. He knows himself solely as a servant of God and is unaware of all that he could either regard as an object of exploitation or an object of abnegation. The only thing that fills him with aversion is, when something is used for another purpose than serving God.

It is not lust that works in him, but bhakti, that breathes, eats, walks, stands, bathes, works and thinks. A true bhakta does not eat, breathe, bathe etc. for his own sake, but to please God – even his eating is service.

As he wishes to please God exactly in that place where he is actually dwelling now, and because it is God's satisfaction alone he aims at, he is not bothered at all whether he lives on earth, in the celestial worlds of the devas, the netherworlds or God's Own Realm. As his service here, in this temporary world, within the limitations of time and space, often enough gets interrupted, he certainly yearns to serve in God's Own Realm continually. Still he lightheartedly leaves the decision up to God, where He wants him to serve Him – as long as he is allowed to serve at all and live in the company of fellow-bhaktas.

It is not so that somebody who has heard about the Realm of God, about God Himself, His eternal Form and His Divine Character discovers certain features and charms therein that appeal to his lust and instigate him to come closer to these appealing objects to be able to indulge in their vision. This would be "māyā" indeed, an exchange of lower objects of enjoyment for higher and highest ones and only another form of self-serving, the opposite of bhakti – nay, it is just the other way round: the initial impulse is given by the power of bhakti itself; this impulse manifests in the wish to serve that leads to Knowledge of God; and this loving serving Knowledge of God enhances the wish to serve – not the wish to "see", to have a vision of God.

The power of bhakti is omnipresent. It becomes manifest via the immaculate bhakta, the one who belongs to Reality, the *Real One*, whose words do not just tell

about God and impart the knowledge of genuine Service to God and the nature of God, but whose words *are* Knowledge in themselves. In the Bhāgavata Purāṇa God says:

In company of bhakta-s
and while serving them
discourses take place
that are uplifting the heart and captivating the ear
as they bestow the power to serve.
The words of those bhakta-s
are Knowledge and *give* Knowledge
of My inner Might and Being.
And so, in due course,
the firm conviction that My Service is the path and the goal
and the determination to act accordingly (śraddhā) develop,
followed successively by becoming deeply rooted in Me (niṣṭhā),
the dawning of Divine Love (rati)
and the full rise of the sun of Love of God (prema-bhakti).
(Bhāgavata-Purāṇa III. 25. 25)

The guru explains:

“It is the grace of the bhakta-s that they utter the words of Pure Being, Knowledge and Joy, overflowing from their hearts, pouring out through their mouths, entering the ears of the aspirant who yearns for the privilege to serve, till they reach his heart and touch his ātmā.”

The Inner Witness is always close to the ātmā. As the ātmā was averse to God and shrouded in māyā, He remained hidden. And even when the ātmā is no longer obscured He still remains concealed as long as He wishes to stay unseen. The revelation of His presence is an act of grace on behalf of the Inner Witness Who is a part-manifestation of the Primordial God.

The bhakti-texts tell: when the Primordial God Himself in His Fullness reveals Himself He does not only become manifest in the core of the heart, but also “outside”. He appears above all in the five following ways:

1. As His Own image (wherein He is invited by a bhakta and is worshipped in the temple) (mūrti).
2. As the revealed scripture, the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa, where He is manifest in the words that tell about Himself and which is therefore called “God’s Word-Form” (Padma-Purāṇa).
3. As God’s Eternal Associate.
4. As God’s Name.
5. As God’s Eternal Realm, that occasionally manifests on earth (e.g. in the area of Vraja) when God “descends” to the mundane plane to display His Eternal Play on earth.

The bhakta thus focuses his service preferably on those five manifestations of God. This implies that his service is no longer confined to consecrating physical and mental functions of his māyā-coverings, as he had done while practising karma yoga, but that he has become completely imbued with the power of bhakti, and is now serving the mūr̥ti of the Lord, the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa, God’s Eternal Co-Players, His Name und His Realm with hands, feet, senses, mind and all his possessions. All those five manifestations are according to the revelational scriptures forms of the Primordial God and therefore essentially and completely beyond the limitations of time and space. Yet they appear to those lacking God’s own Power of Knowledge (= bhakti) as a mere idol, a book, a human being or a geographical district in India.

As long as the bhakta has not reached the level where bhakti, i.e. the Power to Serve and to Know God, reveals the transcendental nature of those five “items”, he *believes* them to be transcendental. And as these “items” are in fact of transcendental nature – i.e. being Pure Being-Knowledge-Joy – completely identical with the Primordial God, an astonishing force is transmitted when one is connected to them through Service. Actually those five Cit-items take the initiative to reveal their own nature to those who approach them in a serving, loving attitude (i.e. with bhakti).

In the degree of of bhakti, which is particularly intensified by serving those five items, Knowledge will deepen and finally develop into *prema*²⁹, the highest form of bhakti. This Power is so strong that, just by the way, it *burns* all vāsanā-s, the totality of all impressions of previous lives (karmāśaya) and the false ego or knot of the heart (that is tightened by every act and thought that is driven by desire), thereby liberating the bhakta from his coverings, the consequences of his karma, even from the karma that has already become manifest in the form of his present coverings. But who is this “bhakta”? – *Is it the person who was touched by bhakti, or is it the ātmā?*

In contrast to the introspective jñānī, who consciously tries to dissociate the ātmā from “man”, i.e. the physical and mental coverings and the false ego, by observing and analyzing himself, the bhakta focuses on serving God, so that his service may become perfect, i.e. be performed in accordance with the injunctions of the Śāstram-s and free from offences that could weaken or even annihilate his connection to the Power of bhakti.

A person who has become a bhakta by the touch of the Power of bhakti, experiences himself *subjectively* as an organic whole. The only objective sign consists in the fact that anything he does is done under the premise that it is favourable to his service of the mūr̥ti of God, the Bhāgavatam, the bhakta-s, the Holy Name and the Holy Realm (Vraja) and that he sorts out everything that is not directly supporting his service.

This kind of Service therefore does *not* consist in a general mystic and vague attitude of mind or behaviour, where one could imagine or pretend to oneself and

²⁹ Direct service of God, when He reveals Himself to the bhakta.

others, that one's *own* eating, sleeping, drinking, talking, defecating and having sexual intercourse (either physically or mentally) would be a way of serving God; e.g. to experience "God" by means of poetical inspiration or in dreams etc. On this level true Service means to employ one's senses, body, mind, possessions etc. for the only sake of serving the mūrti of God, the Bhāgavatam, the bhakta-s, the Holy Name and the Holy Realm (Vraja) in a very clear and concrete way. Whenever impulses from previous lives (vāsanā-s) make him do, feel and think things that are not favourable to the Service of those five manifestations of God, he is no bhakta; then it is not the Power of bhakti that acts, but desire, the driving force of the māyā-man. And the person, who is a bhakta and wishes to become an even better bhakta, clearly recognises those deviations, as the Service on this stage requires strict adherence to the rules prescribed in the Śāstram-s. There is no need for the bhakta to examine *himself* by means of mental introspection, but he has to carefully inspect the quality of *his Service*. Yet, when such deviations happen, he does not pine away from self-reproaches, but follows the advice the Śāstram-s give for his case. He decides to serve better in the future and that is achieved most likely when he listens more eagerly and fervently when the true bhakta utters God's own Word-Form, i.e. the words that describe His Play (līlā) and His Being. He increases the number of the Names of God when he tells his beads etc., as the more he offers and serves, the more Power to serve and to know is bestowed upon him and the more the deviations, caused by the vāsanā-s in his citta, disappear.

The Power of bhakti thus engages the whole human being. Hence there is no danger that the ego of the concrete person is demanded to isolate itself from the true self, the ātmā, or that one has to labour hard to dissociate the true self, the ātmā, from the human ego. *Without* bhakti the cit-ātmā, the true self, and the human ego, the māyā-ego, stand opposite to each other, forced together by the clamp of ignorance. On the bhakti path, however, the cit-ātmā-self and the human māyā-ego work together with the same goal, as the inner organ (antaḥkaraṇa) and the human senses, though being made of māyā-stuff, have become infused with bhakti-śakti as an iron rod starts to glow red-hot when staying in the fire for a while. The inner organ, consisting of māyā, that cannot imagine or think anything that is of cit-nature, not even the spark of Sat-Cit-Ānanda, the individual ātmā, not to speak of Viṣṇu or other aspects of God or even the Primordial God Himself, is enabled by the cit-śakti or bhakti to deliberate over and understand what God is and what belongs to Him. Nay, on an even higher level the bhakta's eyes, imbued with this cit-śakti, are empowered to *see* God; as such powerful cit-bhakti-śakti does not only enable one to see God, but in the form of prema this cit-śakti pleases God so much that He is attracted by it and is "forced", so to say, to reveal Himself.

It is not man who sees God, but the prema-bhakti-śakti, *God's own ability to see*; it originates in Him and flows back to Him through the medium of the bhakta in the form of prema-bhakti. Consequently God only experiences His own Power and nothing but Himself and by no means the māyā-śakti.

So even if it is the Power of bhakti that makes the bhakta think, act, breathe etc., it does not take him by surprise but lets him believe that he himself is the actor, as,

otherwise, what truly matters, his joyful initiative to serve, would be extinguished. Here as well God does not touch the dignity of free will but enhances it.

In the course of the yet indirect form of Service, the *asat-vāsanā-s* vanish by the way as well as the restlessness of the *manaḥ*, that easily gets distracted by ever new gross or subtle objects of enjoyment that promise gratification and appear tempting to the *manaḥ*. Furthermore the *buddhi* starts to understand reality as it truly is, and effortlessly ignorance and the false ego, born of ignorance, of god-adversity and the mania for (gross or subtle) sense-enjoyment, dissolve. By means of cultivating the wish to serve and actually serving God in a living relationship, ignorance dissipates naturally.

If the *bhakta*, who is so immersed in the dynamic liveliness of his Service that he pays no heed to his internal transformation, had the leisure to analyse his inner processes, he would notice that his *ātmā* has awakened and, on this stage (of *bhakti*) completely identifies with the human ego and *citta* which are now totally charged with *bhakti-śakti*.

Accordingly, the *bhakta* should know himself as a *cit*-personality, but he only sees the materiality, the lethargy and infirmity of his body and the fatigue of his mind. Are they really suffused with *cit-śakti*? And indeed they have not become *cit*, as iron does not become fire even if the fire transfers its nature to the iron rod; it remains iron, though suffused with fire and glowing.

The *bhakta* observes that also his body, his mind ..., like in all humans, are liable to suffer old age and death according to the laws of karma. And as soon as his desire to serve declines, the fiery power cannot express itself properly any more and he feels like a wretched man, smitten with the “knot of the heart” and the false ego.

This is necessarily so, as

1. ...the fire uses the “iron”, but only as long as the “iron” is needed. Then the fire leaves the iron and the coverings go the way of all flesh.
2. ...the *bhakti* has not reached the stage of *prema* yet. The *bhakta* must still experience the downfall from the heights into the abyss, so that his wish to serve with love in spite of all obstacles gets fortified.

What was still human, is already superfluous, yet the *bhakta* has no interest in making the *ātmā* leave the coverings. His sole interest is in Service. Now he does not only serve the five great transcendental manifestations of God in full knowledge of their true nature, but additionally his *manaḥ*, that is now completely under the guidance of the *cit-śakti*, is able to visualize the Play of God with His Eternal Associates as it is described in the *Śāstram-s*. Then the eternal *cit*-body and *cit*-mind of the *ātmā* of the *bhakta* manifest in the *bhakti*-charged mind, and visualizing this *cit*-form he mentally serves one of the eternal Coplayers of the Primordial God in loving subordination.

By means of practicing this Service in the mind, the *bhakti* of the aspirant

becomes even stronger and the bhakta now manifests the following characteristics:

- Nothing, not even looming death, can disturb his mind.
- He has no interest in anything else but his Service.
- He has no time for anything else but Service or for what supports his Service.
- He is absolutely sure that finally he will be allowed to serve without interruption.
- He is always eager to intensify and to expand his Service.
- Yet he knows that bhakti has no limits either in intensity or extensiveness and that he himself has just taken the first steps.
- To hear and to sing the Holy Names is his sole joy, and in his mind he dwells incessantly where the Divine Play takes place.

And more and more bhakti unfolds. The bhakta understands that he belongs to God and that God belongs to him. He sees that his true self is neither the human personality nor a mere spiritual spark, the ātmā, but he realises himself as that cit-personality the bhakti-śakti had anticipated before in his mind, that transcendental form in which he would one day serve his ideal Servant and Co-Player of God factually.

When the mind of ordinary man, which is made of māyā and not of cit, imagines something, it is nothing but imagination, but when the cit-saturated manaḥ of the bhakta creates a cit-form, because the bhakta is so eager to serve in a better way (to please God even more), then it is a cit-image and true.

Finally, when prema has increased to such a level that it becomes unbearable for the bhakta not to be able to serve without interruption in his cit-form, then the ātmā leaves the subtle and gross human coverings; and together with the ātmā also the cit-bhakti-śakti leaves the human shell. The shell remains behind. It is mere matter, but hallowed matter as it has been used in the Service of God. The ātmā now receives the formerly just anticipated spiritual form. This form is no longer alien to his own nature but his subtle and gross coverings now consist of cit as he does himself. He is equipped with cit-senses and cit-sense-organs etc., that are fused with the ātmā in a single entity, as they are made of the same spiritual substance (cit).

Ordinary imagination is an illusion. The imaginative power of bhakti, though, consists of the Power of Pure Knowledge that is able to *create* what it imagines, i.e. a *cit-form*. In this cit-form the ātmā henceforth serves God in His Eternal *Realm*.

Even before death, i.e. before entering the eternally unfolding Play (the līlā of God), it was revealed to the ātmā in sudden flashes. This happens in the *turīya-state* of the bhakta, which is substantially different from the turīya-state of the jñānī. But this state of bhakti-turīya is very rarely found in those who, after repeated lives dedicated to more and more intense Service, still have a human shell and no cit-form.

To *experience God* directly, i.e. to serve Him directly with prema, is not possible in the ordinary state of wakefulness within the human coverings. Even if the iron

has become saturated with fire, it is still iron and cannot enter the Realm of the Eternal and participate in Its Play. In the turīya-state it is possible, though, since in that case the ātmā is isolated from the “iron” and beyond the realm of time and space.

The ātmā of a human being that was touched by the bhakti-śakti hardly ever reaches the goal, i.e. to serve God directly in a cit-form, within the time of one life span. But in the same way as there exist asat-vāsanā-s and sat-vāsanā-s, there are vāsanā-s beyond the guṇa-s of māyā. They are called *bhakti-vāsanā-s*. Impressions caused by serving on the beginner stage of bhakti, give rise to impulses to serve in the citta – and to serve in a particular way. Those bhakti-vāsanā-s are very precious, and due to them a person will be born as a human being again so that the respective ātmā will receive new and better opportunities to serve God.

As life follows life the bhakti-vāsanā-s accumulate while the wish to serve becomes stronger and stronger. In the course of many lifetimes the following happens:

1. The bhakti-śakti destroys all flaws, i.e. anything that impedes the will to serve and the actual Service, including the false ego and all asat-vāsanā-s and sat-vāsanā-s.
2. As the citta has been completely purged, the inner organ, the whole antaḥkaraṇa, becomes resplendent with cit-vāsanā-s, impulses for uninterrupted Service.
3. The Bhāgavatam and all it says about God generates deep affection.
4. Only the company of those who share the internal mental Service of God gives delight.
5. The joy of the Service of the lotus-feet of Bhagavān becomes the sole purpose of one’s life.
6. The forms of mental Service by means of the anticipated cit-form in the Eternal Realm of God have been thoroughly practiced.
7. The special Service he renders in the Eternal Realm in his cit-form, imagined through bhakti, becomes more and more dense and starts to radiate as it is nourished by bhakti-vāsanā-s from previous lives and the present one.
8. In the turīya-state, when bhakti has reached the intensity of prema, the bhakta serves God directly.
9. The bhakti bursts into flame when in the course of Service on the stage of prema-bhakti God and His Eternal Play (līlā) are directly perceived by means

of the Power of Knowledge. Physical symptoms arise due to the experience of certain extraordinary situations of the Play in the course of spontaneous loving Service.

When the citta, overwhelmed by prema, in a certain situation of the Play, totally surrenders to the stream of life (prāṇa) and the discriminative intelligence (buddhi) is disengaged, the pulse of life that permeates the body gets seriously disturbed and the following different physical symptoms manifest: rigidity of the body, sweat, change of colour, hairs stand on end, trembling, breaking of the voice, tears, fainting. In the līlā-literature those symptoms, called sāttvika-bhāva-s, are described in detail and it is explained how one can distinguish them from symptoms that look alike at first sight, but originate from mere sentimentality etc. (cp. Bhakti-Rasāmṛta-Sindhu II. 3. 15).

As bhaktas who still own a human body rarely enter the turīya-state, they show such symptoms very seldom. The Co-Players of God and those bhaktas who have become Co-Players in the course of their Service and walk this earth like (seemingly) ordinary men, very often exhibit those sāttvika-bhāva-s, though.

It is important to note that the bhakta, as long as he still dwells in the human shell and has not yet received cit-coverings (which have nothing to do with his human character and appearance etc.) experiences the joy of Service, but not the concrete life in the Realm of Divine dynamic Play – with the exception of the very rare states of turīya (where the bhakti-śakti uses his ātmā, not his body).

Therefore God, His Glory or (in other revelations) His incredible Loveliness, His Plays and His Eternal Associates can only be truthfully described by those who have no human coverings, including human consciousness and the unconscious, any longer. Only when the sum total of the citta, the asat-vāsanā-s and the sat-vāsanā-s, manaḥ, buddhi, ahaṁkāra – and therefore the root cause of this aggregate, the fallacious ego-conception, born from ignorance – is completely *burnt* to ashes, then a factual encounter with God may take place; prior to this event, one cannot describe Who God is, as He has not yet revealed Himself in the course of ones Service.

In the same way as shadow and darkness are the opposite of light, so the māyā-body and the māyā-world are the perverted shadow of the cit-body and the cit-world (turned up-side-down so to say).

In the world of māyā:

- exploitation
- error
- coverings
- to be a slave to the laws of time and space that cause change and decay
- niggardly clinging to oneself and the objects

In the Cit-world:

- Service
- objective Knowledge of Reality
- core, essence
- free Eternity

- joyfully and without reserve giving oneself away in Service

And between these two stands man, performing his sacrifice (yajña), from the first step of karmayoga to the last step of bhaktiyoga, where he performs the ultimate sacrifice.

IV. The Revelation of the WORD

The Sources

So far in this book, apart from a few exceptions, we have refrained from comparing phenomena of the Indian world of thought with seemingly or actually similar ones in other cultures as e.g our own. Such comparisons, though tempting, are most often misleading, especially when it is not possible to examine all the details that show in particular where the true similarities and differences are. Moreover, the historical perspective and the discussion of chronological problems was left aside. The focus of this work was on describing Hinduism, a cultural phenomenon that embraces thousands of years, from within – not on describing it as an intellectual or cultural evolution perceived from the outside.

To an even greater extent than all the other world religions, Hinduism contains such an immense variety of sacred literature, manifold lines of tradition with diverging opinions and opposing philosophical systems that any seemingly objective overview would imply simplification and end up in general but vague statements. Nonetheless there is unity in this variety. The unifying factor between the diverging systems is the common reliance on the authority of the Revelation, the Veda, although this does not result in a general binding dogma for all Hindus.

Yet, even when dispensing with the historical dimension for the sake of presenting the internal structure, it remains a difficult task to describe this profound religion in general terms.

The only way to do justice to this subject, to present the meaning and goals of human life according to Hinduism, I saw in giving the whole overview from *one* point of view, namely that particular ancient line of tradition³⁰ I have become familiar with during my many years of studying in India.

This tradition naturally relies on the Ṛgveda, Yajurveda, Sāmaveda, Arthavaveda, the Upaniṣat-s, the Bhagavadgītā, the two great epics of ancient India, the Purāṇa-s and the Brahma-Sūtra-s as all the other Hindu traditions do, whose lists of names of guru-s fill the scriptures. However, the central revelational scripture of this particular line I was allowed to come in intimate contact with is called the “Bhāgavata-Purāṇa” (Bhāgavatam), incorporates twelve books and 18,000 stanzas, and is praised as the essence of the Veda in other sacred texts. The Garuḍa-Purāṇa tells:

“The Bhāgavata-Purāṇa is the most important one (sama) among all Purāṇa-s. The Bhāgavatam was uttered by Bhagavān (God) Himself... It gives the essence and explanation of the Brahma-Sūtra-s, it reveals the meaning of the Mahābhārata, it is a commentary on the Gāyatrī. It contains the essence and the explanation of the Veda-s.”

Similarly the Padma-Purāṇa says:

³⁰ Cp. my publications “Bhakta, eine indische Odyssee”, Hamburg 1951; extended new edition in Swedish: “Den glömda världen”, Stockholm 1972; English edition: “Unknown India”, London 1952, New York 1953. “Die indische Gottesliebe”, Olten 1955; Swedish edition: “Krishnas leende”, Stockholm 1955. “Der Glaube und die heiligen Schriften der Inder”, Olten 1957. “Kṛṣṇa-Caitanya. Sein Leben und Seine Lehre” Stockholm 1972. English edition in progress.

“The Bhāgavatam is the pure essence of the Veda-s and the Upaniṣat-s.”

Furthermore the Padma-Purāṇa declares:

“Bhagavān poured the fullness of His Own Power into the Bhāgavatam. He made Himself invisible and entered the ocean of the Bhāgavatam. Therefore the Bhāgavatam is the immediate form of Hari, consisting of (transcendental) Sound.”³¹

Along the same lines the guru of my guru, Bhakti-Siddhānta-Sarasvatī (1874–1937), remarks: “If all Indian sacred texts, including the Veda-s, the Upaniṣat-s and the Bhagavadgītā, had been lost and only the Bhāgavatam had been saved, verily nothing would have been lost – apart from the teachings of the ancient Indian atheists – as the quintessence of all texts is contained in the Bhāgavatam.”³²

There are few problems of human life that are not discussed in the Bhāgavatam and few aims to whose achievement no way is indicated. A war in the time of yore is described where the main weapons are missiles racing across the Indian subcontinent. A single one reduces Benares to ashes. The material and driving force of the weapon, however, is no material known to us but consists in the power of the magical word. A recount of a great space-ship is given that is circling around the earth, navigated by the will-power of a yogi and even proceeding beyond the regions of the gods (deva-s). It was designed for the pleasure of his wife and to show her the miracles of the earth (Bhāgavatam III. 23. 12–43): “To offer his beloved wife the full delight of human lovemaking, which she was pining for, he (the great yogi) assumed nine-fold form of his own and indulged in erotic plays with her for many years which they felt as if they were a moment only” (Bhāgavatam III. 23. 44).

An ugly girl learns how to achieve beauty and find the right husband. Who searches for lust is counselled how to increase his lust. Who looks for wealth is shown the way to riches. Who aspires to power is taught how to obtain power. The childless father, who yearns for a son, receives the son he longed for. And then the child dies; everywhere it is emphasized: if such goals are eventually attained they prove empty.

Several times the attempt to establish a timely social order on earth is described. A demoniac tyrant tries to enforce a world order based on the guṇa tamaḥ. He has conquered the whole planet, moreover the netherworld and the transitory heaven of

³¹ Translators’ note: The guru of Walther Eidlitz, Svāmī Sadānanda Dāsa, gives an additional commentary to this verse: “Purāṇa-s other than the Bhāgavatam contain elaborate descriptions of the līlā of Kṛṣṇa, but the melodies of these Śruti-s are by no means on the level of the Bhāgavatam, because it is Bhagavān Himself Who has *entered* into the Bhāgavatam.”

³² The Bhāgavatam is first mentioned in a work of Gauḍapāda (approximately 500–550 A.D.) in his commentary to Uttara-gītā. He quotes a verse from the Bhāgavatam (X. 14. 4) with the explicit note “so it says in the Bhāgavatam”. However, the final record of the oral tradition is rarely helpful to determine the age of a text, because, as it is known, the sacred texts have been orally transmitted from guru to disciple through the ages thanks to a now hardly imaginable capacity of memory. And while the mantra-s have been preserved in their ancient form, the textual frame changed in the course of time. In India the Veda is never called “scripture”, but *Śruti*, “that which was heard”, i.e. the Divine WORD.

Indra. The gods have deserted their realms. He makes everybody worship him as the one and only deity. Nobody has to suffer hunger under his rule. Nonetheless all creatures moan under the pressure of his dominion. One of the main subjects in the elite school, where his most beloved son receives his education, is politics: how to use the urging forces of men for one's own advantage, how to spread discord amongst them to control them; all in all: how to see through them. The second subject is the science of how to obtain maximum sexual gratification. He rules the world but finds no peace himself. While he indulges in hedonism, the so-called six inner enemies – anger, lust, greed, pride, jealousy and delusion – ravage his heart.

One of the main themes of the Bhāgavatam is the repeated effort – in contrast to the just mentioned demoniac world order – to found a society based on the light guṇa sattva. This kind of world order is called “dharma” and requests that man should fulfil his religious and social duties. It is said that dharma upholds the world. Care and protection of the helpless and suffering, of the children and old ones, the weak and the ill, the refugees and those imprisoned are elements of dharma. Hospitality, according to dharma, does not only include man and beast alike (as formerly explained), but honours the guest as if he were God Himself – as indeed the *one* God dwells, deeply hidden, in every being as the Inner Witness and Friend. This is charity according to Hindu dharma.

The great background story of the Bhāgavatam commences with the attempt to establish a society on earth based on dharma. The attempt fails. The Mahābharata reports another try to instate the supremacy of dharma. Also this effort ends in death and devastation. The Rāmāyaṇa gives an account of how the Divine avatāra (descent) Rāma – whose name means “Divine Delight” – in human-like form walked the earth and “rescued and redeemed the fallen ones”, while endeavouring to reinstate the dominion of dharma. Even today the people of India talk about the legendary kingdom of Rāma, Rām-Rāj. However, even the endeavour of Rāma eventually failed.

Taking into account the teachings of the Veda-s, which aim at the education of man and are also woven into the Bhāgavatam and other revealed scriptures of Hinduism, it becomes clear that there can be no just world order based on the false ego. Science that lacks clear knowledge of the ātmā, is regarded as knowledge of the mere surface of life. Religion that does not progress from human religion to the religion of the ātmā is, from this point of view, just a conjecture about true religion, tainted by rajaḥ and tamaḥ. Consolation, care of and help for the oppressed ones, the weak and the suffering ones – though essential – provides just temporary relief. To uproot the cause of all calamity and give true relief, one must transcend the guṇa-s of māyā and know the Eternal Reality. All struggle for lower or higher ideals or goods, be it true justice, freedom from pain, real lasting joy or genuine love, compares to a fleeting lustful or painful dream as long as man remains encircled and chained by māyā.

The Upaniṣat clearly explains:

Only when man rolls up the space like a hide

then there will be an end of suffering
if he has not realized God.

Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣat 20. 6

The verse does not at all express resignation in the face of an impossible task. According to the Veda-s space is nothing but a manifestation of the tamaḥ guṇa of māyā, that shrouds the god-averse ātmā in ignorance and drives him even further away from the Centre of all Being. When an ātmā yearns to turn to God and when the centripetal power of Knowledge and Love takes hold of him and carries him, the veil of (material) space is *indeed* withdrawn or “rolled up like a hide” and the Eternal Reality, to which the ātmā belongs by his very nature, lies open before his eyes.

What appears as a tragedy, a catastrophe or a total break-down from the point of view of the māyā-world, can be the greatest fortune from the point of view of Eternity. A violent shock may break the human shells – that encase and tie up the ātmā like a strait-jacket – and create a fissure through which light from an essentially other dimension may enter.

After long years of thorough study of the Bhāgavatam the impression arises that even the wars of extermination and annihilation of all existence, as described in the Bhāgavatam and in the Mahābharata, are actually meant to help man to shift his perspective. A shift from believing “I am this particular mortal human being and I belong to the world of māyā” to “I am ātmā, unborn, eternal and I belong to God”.

How profound this change of perspective and consciousness must be, is hinted at by the following verse of the Bhagavadgītā:

What is night for all beings
is day for the self-controlled one.
What is day for all beings
is night for the wise one, who *sees*.

Bhagavadgītā II. 69

Like a leitmotif on the paths to new dimensions of consciousness (the paths of yoga) sounds the following short prayer, that is recited by the aspirants of the great secret teachings in the solitude of the forests:

From non-reality
(the relative reality of the perishable world)
lead us to Reality.
From darkness
(the duality of light and shadow in this world)
lead us to (eternal) Light.
From death
(from death and rebirth in this perishable world)
lead us to Immortality.

Only if the ātmā knows himself, man can understand that the loneliness he suffered in this world was actually the loneliness of the ātmā who was away from home.

So it is necessary to tread a path of yoga to find oneself. Yoga means connection; not of the perishable man with the Eternal, but of the individual ātmā, the spark of eternity encased in the human shell, with one aspect of the fullness of Divinity.

But the path is demanding. The Upaniṣat-s compare it to the walk on a razor's edge. This is expressed in the obscure verses of the Īśa-Upaniṣat, the one Upaniṣat with which, traditionally, the guru commences his instruction about the secret teachings of the Upaniṣat-s. The term "Īśa", with which the Upaniṣat starts and to which it owes its name, means: the Almighty, Whose Glory is founded in His Own Being, Who is rooted in His Own Majesty; Īśa-Upaniṣat thus means God-Upaniṣat. The following verse deals with ignorance (avidyā), i.e. knowledge merely about the mundane³³, and knowledge, i.e. [incomplete] knowledge (vidyā) about the Eternal³⁴:

In blinding darkness enter those
who are dedicated to ignorance;
but into even deeper darkness enter those
who are devoted to [so-called] knowledge.

Īśa-Upaniṣat 9

The Upaniṣat continues:

Yet he who knows them, both together,
by knowing ignorance he transcends death,
by gaining (true) Knowledge he becomes immortal.³⁵

Īśa-Upaniṣat 11

As formerly pointed out, there is no partition in the way that on one side there is the mundane world and on the other side there is the eternal world; nay, the perishable measurable world is interwoven and surrounded and imbued with the scent of Eternity (cp. Īśa-Upaniṣat 1). There is no need to change one's location only one's perspective. How to achieve this change of perspective is taught on the

³³ Explanation by Svāmī Sadānanda Dāsa: Ignorance about the nature of the ātmā or the misunderstanding that fulfilment of one's own duty with selfish motives would be a path of yoga.

³⁴ Explanation by Svāmī Sadānanda Dāsa: Either māyā, i.e. the opinion that the ātmā was bound and is now liberated, or the seeming knowledge that the path of karma-yoga is the highest and that there is no yoga-path beyond.

³⁵ Commentary by Svāmī Sadānanda Dāsa: By understanding the avidyā-aspect of māyā, which is the cause for death and rebirth, one can be liberated from the cycle of repeated births and deaths. When one realizes true vidyā, i.e. Knowledge of Bhagavān, Paramātmā and the ātmā, then the *ātmā* [not man] attains the Eternal.

paths of yoga.

But which one of the yoga-paths shall the searching man choose?

There are many paths of yoga. One is called *Haṭhayoga*, which is not treated in this book. This form of yoga deals with body control and control of one's breath. By this means the body will not become an obstacle on the long spiritual path the aspirant intends to tread. It is a preparatory discipline to other forms of yoga, though not necessary in all cases. Yoga, as it is taught in most of the schools of yoga in the Occident nowadays, is a very simplified form of this original *Haṭhayoga*. It is a splendid kind of gymnastics and can even help to increase the mental power of concentration. The managers of major enterprises in Switzerland, who are quite able tradesmen, willingly send their secretaries to such schools of yoga to learn to focus their concentration and consequently make fewer errors in their work.

I have repeatedly noticed large advertisements in Swedish newspapers, depicting a pretty young girl, sitting smilingly with crossed legs in meditational posture. The text running below the picture announced: "Practice yoga in the yoga-school... and you will get rid of unnecessary fat and attain a handsome figure."

This has little to do with the original aims of yoga. Also peace of mind, success in professional life etc. are not the genuine goals of yoga, nay, they even often strengthen the illusory ego.

A very ancient and important form of yoga is called "Rājayoga", the royal yoga, also called the "Yoga of Patañjali". It combines various methods and offers a kind of short-cut to the yoga-path of Knowledge. In its undiluted form it demands highest inner and external purity of the practitioner, meticulous regulation of his digestion, frugal meals, strict vegetarian diet, perfect chastity in deeds, words and thoughts, even in his dreams. Considering the present circumstances of living in the Occident, this discipline is hardly practicable – apart from exceptional cases.

In the *Bhāgavatam*, Kṛṣṇa as guru presents three major paths of yoga, the preparatory *karmayoga*, then *jñānayoga* and *bhaktiyoga*, and precisely describes the required character of the aspirant who wishes to enter one of those paths and be crowned with success:

"To offer a method for man to attain the highest good I have distinctly prescribed three methods:

Jñānayoga, the yoga of Knowledge, is meant for those – in correspondence with their *saṅkalpa* (resolve) – who have become indifferent to the indulgence in pleasures in this life and in coming ones and hence have developed a genuine aversion towards fruit-bearing activities.

Karmayoga is meant for those – in correspondence with their *saṅkalpa* (resolve) – who lack such an aversion, who strive after comfort and hanker after the fruits of their actions, as they are attached to this world.

Bhaktiyoga, the path of loving selfless Service, is meant for those – in correspondence with their *saṅkalpa* (resolve) – who are neither completely detached from this world nor too much attached to themselves, their body and the

sense-objects and who are *without cause* endowed with firm conviction in what is told about Me (Bhagavān and māyā, ātmā etc.).”

Bhāgavatam XI. 20. 6–8

Karmayoga, fulfilment of one’s religious and social duties, as prescribed in the revealed texts, is a method to relate everything one does to God, i.e. God in His aspect as Paramātmā, Who sustains all worlds and beings by His mere presence.

Jñānayoga, the yoga of Knowledge, is a method to connect the tiny spark of Eternity (the individual ātmā) with God in His aspect as unlimited Pure Consciousness (the formless Brahma).

Bhaktiyoga is a method to connect this tiny spark of Eternity (the individual ātmā) with God in His eternal Form as Bhagavān-Svayam. This is accomplished by bhakti, God’s Own Power to serve know and love, that is not of human origin.

The rediscovered WORD

In Hinduism lives the conviction that there exists an inaudible permanent sound vibration, secretly pervading everything and representing the source of all manifest sound in the form of words – whether there exists a manifest universe within the limits of time and space or not. The true vedic WORD is a form of the *One* God. It is as old as He is, i.e. without age, eternal.

Uttering, listening to and knowing this Word are one. All abilities of eye, ear, speech and mind fall into one in this Word. “It is the ear of the ear, the mind of the mind, the speech of the speech, the vital breath of the vital breath, the eye of the eye. Neither the eye, nor speech, nor the mind can grasp it. What cannot be expressed by speech but is the cause of speech..., what the mind cannot comprehend but through which the mind is known; this you should know as Brahma, not what is worshipped here.” (Kena-Upaniṣat I. 1–5)

This Word, the sound-form of Brahma (śabda-Brahma), is the true Veda. It is essential to keep in mind that all texts of the Veda-s we can read in the form of manuscripts or books, listen to with our ears or comprehend with our mind, are considered a mere shadow of the original Veda. However, anyone who knows this eternal Veda, recognizes this true Word even in its reflected shadow and is also able to detect interpolations and distortions.

In a famous hymn of the Ṛgveda (X. 125) this Word, this voice (of the Absolute) praises its own glory; that it sustains all gods, that it pervades heaven and earth and that it gave the initial impulse for creation.

Before composing the cosmos out of the primordial ingredients, Brahmā, the architect of this universe and the first-born of every creation, perceives this transcendental Sound, which saturates his heart. Empowered by it, he is then able to fulfil his task: to shape the coverings of all beings and their planes of existence within one universe out of the substance of māyā according to the Divine order – not only once, but 36,000 times.

What is the essence of the Veda, this Word, this transcendental Sound? The Bhāgavatam replies: It is *Bhakti*, God’s Own Power to serve, know and love.

The pressing questions arises: Why are there so many seemingly opposing statements about the meaning and the goals of human life in the Veda-s? A diversity that is even multiplied by the commentaries and philosophical systems of later saintly scholars. Kṛṣṇa Himself, who declares: “I am the only knower of the Veda, and the origin of the Vedānta am I” (Bhagavadgītā 15.15), explains in the Bhāgavatam the reason for this variety to Uddhava, His disciple and friend:

In the course of time, during the final dissolution of the universe,
this Word, called the Veda, was lost.³⁶
At the beginning of the new creation³⁷

³⁶ Translators’ note: According to Svāmī Sadānana Dāsa this refers to Uddhava’s previous statement: “You (Kṛṣṇa) have explained the path of bhakti, leading to Yourself.” So “*this* Word” refers to what Kṛṣṇa has explained to Uddhava as “bhakti” before. Accordingly, the *knowledge* of the religion described in the Veda, i.e. *bhakti*, was lost, *not* the Veda itself.

I clearly pronounced it in front of the present Brahmā.
It's essence or religion aims at Me.

Bhāgavatam XI. 14. 3

Brahmā proclaimed it to his first-born, Svayambhuva Manu,
and Manu passed it on
to the Seven Seers of yore;
and those fathers passed it on to their sons,
i.e. to deva-s, demons and men...

Yet they all are influenced by rajaḥ, sattva and tamaḥ,
and their predispositions are manifold.
According to the prevailing guṇa
the beings differ in their character
and hold different opinions
about the meaning of the Veda,
and their statements vary.

Bhāgavatam XI. 14. 4-7

And so it happens that men
due to different dispositions
though referring to the same tradition
hold divergent views
on the meaning of the Veda.
Some even deny God.

Bhāgavatam XI. 14. 8

So it comes that people
whose intelligence is bewildered
by My Power of māyā (in the form of the three guṇa-s)
consider different paths and goals as the highest,
corresponding to what they consider rewarding,
following their personal predilection.

Bhāgavatam XI. 14. 9

Fulfilment of man's duties
according to caste and stage of life;³⁸
fame;³⁹
sense-gratification;⁴⁰
sincerity, curbing the senses and the mind

³⁷ Transl.s' note: According to Svāmī Sadānana Dāsa: Brahmakalpa, i.e. when the present Brahmā of our universe assumed his office.

³⁸ Transl.s' note: According to Svāmī Sadānana Dāsa: Philosophical school of Karma-Mīmāṃsā.

³⁹ Transl.s' note: According to Svāmī Sadānana Dāsa: Poetical schools and theoreticians.

⁴⁰ Transl.s' note: According to Svāmī Sadānana Dāsa: School of Vātsvāvana etc.

and inner peace, some declare;⁴¹
others: lordliness
and renunciation as the means to reach it;
others again proclaim ritual sacrifice,
self-castigation and donations,
observance of fasts, checking the senses,
the mind and the breath.
And they are devoted to those things
to achieve self-gratification
(for the sake of their own ego).

The worlds that await them
have a beginning and an end.
They were attained by means of selfish deeds.
They are filled with pain,
they are miserable, defective, with poor pleasures,
prone to grief,
as they root in darkness.

Bhāgavatam XI. 14. 10–11

Here Kṛṣṇa sums up most of the ideas about the meaning of life, the objectives of man and the paths leading there. However, one should not interpret the words “according to caste and stage of life” in the present-day decadent way, but according to their original meaning, where the affiliation to a certain caste depended on character or qualification, resulting in corresponding duties and responsibilities, not on the physical line of descent. Still, Kṛṣṇa calls the worlds that can be attained by the described means “miserable, defective, with poor pleasures and prone to grief as they root in *darkness*.” This implies: almost all paths of salvation and cherished objectives of the various ideologies are brushed aside. Why, not only what originates in the gloom of *tamaḥ* or the passion of *rajaḥ* is considered darkness, but – from the viewpoint of Eternity – even the manifestations of the light *guṇa sattva* are darkness.

If so, what remains of the paths and goals of human life? Nothing but the prayer for True Love, a Love that originates in God, free from any gross or subtle self-interest and even from the desire for the eternal bliss of perfectly untainted love. Kṛṣṇa now explains this kind of Love to his disciple and friend, a Love compared to which all human love known on earth is a mere perverted shadow:

He has nothing but Me, and nothing else he desires,
checked are his senses,
as he has become indifferent towards the sense-objects,
completely serene is his mind,
as it roots firmly in Me.

⁴¹ Transl.s’ note: According to Svāmī Sadānana Dāsa: Schools of yoga, e.g. yoga of Patāñjali.

Any place where he stays is the same to him,
as his heart is satisfied by Me,
and therefore all places
are equally pleasing to him.

He is not interested in the glory
of Brahmā, the creator,
nor the throne of the king of the heavens, Indra,
nor sovereignty of this world
or the netherworlds,
nor emancipation from repeated births and deaths.
He, who has completely surrendered to Me,
desires nothing but Me.

Bhāgavatam XI. 14. 13–14

Then Kṛṣṇa describes how the great ones, who have received this Divine serving Love, the ripe fruit of bhakti, prema, bless and purge the whole world. God declares:

I always follow the foot-steps of him,
who does not care about anything but Me,
who always bears Me in mind,
who cherishes no enmity towards anyone,
who holds anything but Me as equally unimportant.
I do so, so that the world may be purged
by the dust of his feet.

Those who know nothing but Me,
whose hearts are dedicated to Me
in ever new serving Love,
who are firmly rooted in Me,
the truly exalted ones,
who are filled with loving kindness for the ātmā-s in all beings,
whose hearts are untainted by desire of whatever kind,
only they are filled with My Joy
and know what this Joy of Mine is,
because they seek nothing else
not even release from saṁsāra.

Bhāgavatam XI. 14. 16–17

A startling sentence appears in the verse quoted above. It does not say: “Who are filled with loving kindness for all beings”, but “who are filled with loving kindness for the ātmā-s in all beings.”

Here the theology of bhakti, as it has been explained in this book, differs from

the theme of “love of God” in other religions. What seems to be astounding from our point of view is not that God is the source of all true love and that real charity must root in God’s own Power of Love, but that true love for one’s neighbour eventually must aim at the ātmā within the human coverings, not at the human individual.

Then Kṛṣṇa gives an account of the beginner on the path of bhakti who has not yet attained full Divine Love:

Even if My bhakta,
his senses not completely under control,
is affected by the objects of the senses,
they can hardly overpower him
because bhakti (which is My Own Power)
is very strong (even on this stage).

O Uddhava,
just as a blazing fire
reduces a pile of fuel to ashes,
so does bhakti to Me
consume all kinds of sin and misery⁴².

Yoga, Sāṅkhya, fulfilment of man’s duties,
study of the Veda-s, ascetism, austerities
do not win Me over;
But this powerful bhakti to Me
(that originates in Me),
wins Me over.

I am likely to come under control
of exclusive bhakti alone
characterized by strong conviction (in serving Me).
I am all the bhaktas have
and their Beloved One.
It is bhakti, deeply rooted in Me,
which purifies even the dog-eaters
from the defects of their low birth.

Bhāgavatam XI. 14. 19–21

As gold is purged from contaminations by fire
and regains its unalloyed true nature,
so does the ātmā discard
any other desire, apart from serving God;

⁴² Translators’ note: Commentary by Svāmī Sadānanda Dāsa to this verse: “Sins and unhappiness are the inclinations to want something else than serving Him, which originate from the actions in previous lives”.

and then he serves Me verily in serving Love.

By listening to and singing the Holy Names and songs
that deal with Me
the heart is purified
and then it can see the most subtle things
(Me, My Play, My infinite Realm, My Co-Players,
which it could not see otherwise);
like the eye,
treated with collyrium
(that does not only keep away illness,
but also grants improved eye-sight).

A heart that contemplates the sense-objects
will become attached to these sense-objects.
A heart that constantly commemorates Me,
eventually adheres to Me permanently.

Therefore stop mulling over
the empty prattle
(the argument of the scholars).
It is like mere dreaming
and wishful thinking.
Immerse your mind,
imbued with personal Serving Love,
in Me completely.

To him who desired to know all this
(the eternal bhakti),
and now has come to do so
there is nothing more
that he wishes to know;
to him who has tasted the eternal nectar
there is nothing else (apart from this nectar)
that he wishes to drink.

Bhāgavatam XI. 14. 25–28; XI. 29. 32

The living God, “the Truth of the truth, the Reality of reality” now addresses Uddhava, reminding him that he need not worry at all about the different forms of religious discipline because the highest object of Divine serving Love is personally present before him.

Kṛṣṇa declares:

The fourfold objectives of man
 (acquisition of virtue through fulfilment of one's duties
 according to caste and stage of life,
 wealth, satisfaction of the senses
 and liberation)⁴³
 attained by men through
 the yoga of Knowledge (jñānayoga)
 fulfilment of the enjoined duties
 for one's own welfare (karmayoga),
 the yoga (of Patañjali)
 and supremacy over others,
 O beloved one,
 all this I am to you.⁴⁴

When man has given up all activity for his own sake
 and has dedicated his self to Me,
 and wants to be active for My sake,
 then he proceeds to that which is eternal
 and becomes fit to become his real self
 in My company
 (as a subordinate servant of My Co-Players in My Realm).

Bhāgavatam XI. 29. 33–34

Peace (śānta), according to Kṛṣṇa and the Bhāgavatam, implies a mind that is firmly rooted in Bhagavān (cp. Bhāgavatam XI. 19. 36), not what the world considers to be “peace”, i.e. mere freedom from suffering, disquiet, worry, fear, disease or death etc. – all this is irrelevant for the bhakta who strives on earth and is not necessarily bestowed upon him.

He has no intention to escape the activities and worries of this world, but tries to perform or solve them in a way that is favourable to his serving God. He tries to see the Eternal underlying the ephemeral phenomena and live on the power of God (by staying connected to Him through Service).

Without this background the world and life within it appear as a painful image in black and white, here good and there evil etc. Should lust be experienced in this world, surely pain follows at its heels. Only when God as Paramātmā, Who is immanent and transcendent at the same time, is experienced here and as the “closest of the close”, the indwelling Witness or Friend in every fellow-being – not as a remote aim in the hereafter, to which one could escape from the pains of this world or whereto one could retreat by means of abnegating the mundane pleasures – then the variety of human objectives and paths, their interrelations and their inner

⁴³ Dharma: Conscientious fulfilment of one's duty according to caste and stage of life as enjoined by the Scriptures to maintain the Divine Order of society. Artha: wealth and prosperity; Kāma: lust; Mokṣa: emancipation from suffering and ignorance.

⁴⁴ Translators' note: This means that one with whom the Lord is pleased easily gains these four pursuits. His bhaktas attain all these easily without any labour, as a side effect.

purpose (step by step to shifts man's focus from himself to the Centre of all Existence) can be understood properly. Only then the question, what to do and what not to do – in this or that particular age or stage of consciousness, in this or that external or internal situation – can be asked and answered in the right way. Then good and evil are no longer empty words, whose content changes in compliance with the respective circumstances, but simply relate to what is favourable or unfavourable to the Service of God. Only when, with every breath, man sacrifices all his deeds and renouncements to God with bhakti, life in this world ceases to be an alternately lustful or painful dream.

In the Bhāgavatam, Brahmā, the creator, standing in front of Kṛṣṇa, characterises the world he himself has built out of the ingredients of māyā with the following words:

Therefore this whole universe
possesses no real (eternal) Existence,
it is like a dream
devoid of true Knowledge
and filled with heavy, repeated misery.
In Thee, Whose own unlimited forms
that are eternal and consisting of Bliss and Pure Knowledge
this universe however *appears* to be real.
(Even though the universe consists of māyā,
it can become effulgent *like* true Existence
when it is used as an instrument in Thy Service).

Bhāgavatam X. 14. 22

The conduct of the highest bhakta is described in the following verse of the Bhāgavatam:

The highest bhakta is he
who sees in all beings Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa
in the form of the Ātmā of the ātmā
(in the form of the Paramātmā)
and sees all beings in Śrī Kṛṣṇa
in the form of the ātmāsvarūpa of their ātmā
(in the eternal cit-form of the ātmā in relation to God).

Bhāgavatam XI. 2. 45

On the path of bhaktiyoga man realises that the lack of love he suffered was due to his ātmā having turned away from God and thereby isolating himself from God's Own Power to serve, know and love, a power that attracts the ātmā towards God as well as God towards the ātmā.

Some centuries ago, when America was discovered, the high renaissance flourished

and the reformation act split the Christian church, a personality appeared at the border of today's West-Bengal and Bangladesh, who became known under the name of *Kṛṣṇa Caitanya*.⁴⁵ He stayed on earth from 1486–1533 and initiated a renaissance of the bhakti-cult and related arts and culture all over Bengal and India. Even today millions of Indians commence their chronology with the full moon night when He manifested in the town Navadvīpa on the banks of the Ganges – similar to us, who count the years starting with the birth of Christ. Kṛṣṇa Caitanya is considered to be the Primordial God Himself in all contemporary biographies and in the manifold works of His disciples (and was also foretold as such in the Śāstram-s). He is called the hidden golden avatāra of the Age of Discord (kaliyuga).

One of the verses of one of His most intimate disciples goes:

To bestow the unalloyed Divine Serving Love to Himself,
effulgent in direct actual Service to Himself (rasa),
that was never bestowed before (on this earth),
God made Himself manifest out of compassion
in the Age of Discord.

Caitanya-Caritāmṛta I. 1. 4

In another verse it says: “Out of the desire to experience the nature of His bhakta, God Himself became avatāra (in the form of His own bhakta)” (Bṛhadbhāgavatāmṛtam I. 1. 3).

Once Kṛṣṇa Caitanya explained the paths and goals of human life, according to the Bhāgavatam, to a disciple of His:

Countless beings err through the universe, birth after birth.

In the sum total of all beings, humans represent a tiny minority, and among them all those are counted who are ignorant of the Veda.

Among those who recognize the Veda as binding authority, one half only adheres to the rules externally; they do what the Vedas forbid and fail to fulfil the duties enjoined to them according to their character.

Among those who fulfil their duty, there are many who only have their own profit in mind while performing those duties.

Among millions of men who perform karmayoga as just described, there may be a single person who treads the path of Knowledge (jñānayoga).

⁴⁵ For further information please consult: W. Eidlitz, *Kṛṣṇa Caitanya – Sein Leben und Seine Lehre*; Stockholm 1968. (Translation into English in progress)

Among millions of those seekers of Knowledge, only one will reach salvation (mukti) in the end.

Among millions of mukta-s one has to search with scrupulous attention to find one single (genuine) bhakta of Kṛṣṇa.

Caitanya-Caritāmṛta II.19. 125–131

On another occasion Kṛṣṇa Caitanya gives an example of how to pray in the right way. In the mood (bhāva) of His Own bhakta, deeming Himself to be an ordinary man, devoid of bhakti, expressing deep humility, He prays:

Oh Lord of the world,
I do not aspire after wealth nor descendants
(nor followers)
nor a beautiful woman nor poetic skills.
Yet, may I partake in one thing only:
birth after birth,
unalloyed bhakti
to You, oh Lord.

Caitanya-Caritāmṛta III. 20. 26

Appendix

The Avatāra

By “avatāra” the Indian Revelation, the Śāstram-s, understand “descent”, descent from the boundless realm of freedom (cit) to the world of time and space of the great māyā (mahā-māyā), without any substantial change in God’s nature (avatarati: he descends). It is *not* a matter of *incarnation*, to become flesh. God is by no means subject to the laws of the world of māyā, even when He descends to it, nor is He in need of any fleshly covering in order to make His original transcendental Form visible on earth, nor are His eternal Divine part manifestations, all of which consist of true *Being*, pure *Cognition* and transcendental *Joy* (sat-cit-ānanda). This is what the Śāstram-s declare about the avatāra-s. Even the term “the descending” is adopted to suit the comprehension of the novice.

To Him, there is no interior and no exterior,
no anterior and no posterior.
Still, He is,
what is before, and what is after the universe,
its exterior and interior.
He ‘is’ the universe itself.

Bhāgavatam X. 3. 13

The purport is: without His Existence, the universe would not exist. God does not have to descend in order to make Himself visible. In His eternal transcendental Figure He *is* always present, everywhere.

The “coming” of an avatāra means: For a short period of time the veil of māyā becomes transparent, and the Omnipresence of this Supreme Reality shines through. The living God becomes manifest. Those who have been granted God’s Grace now perceive: In the deep of night, a Divine Child is “born”, i.e. becomes visible on earth. He grows up, performs many marvellous deeds – sometimes even acts as a guru, teaching the paths to Himself – and finally He “dies”, i.e. He becomes invisible on earth and returns to His Own Kingdom. Once again, the veil of māyā has become impenetrable and dark. Nevertheless, Bhagavān’s Divine Play with His Own eternal Co-Actors goes on, without interruption, in all eternity, and manifests in innumerable other inhabited worlds, as well.

According to the Indian Revelation of the Word, one purpose of the creation of the world is to create new scenes for the ever increasing drama of the Divine Play.

In the Bhāgavatam (I. 3. 26) it says:

The avatāra-s of God,
Who Himself is the Foundation of eternal Existence,
are innumerable;
like from an inexhaustible lake,
thousands of rivers flow.

Other attempts at translating the word “avatāra”, e.g. Redeemer, Saviour, Liberator, are also insufficient; to them is attached the limitation of the human mind, the selfish question: What does God do for us? The more God reveals His inner Life to the eyes of a bhakta, who is empowered by bhakti (God’s Own Power to know and experience Himself), the more a bhakta understands: God Himself never does anything for a special purpose. It is the outer part manifestations that perform creation, maintenance and dissolution of countless universes. All God does, even when He dwells on earth as an avatāra, is without purpose, without cause, without motive, “without why”, i.e. spontaneous Play. His nature is playfulness. *He Himself is the unlimited Play.*