
Sahaj Marg Study Group

The Way of the Spirit

Set 5, Handout 4 (From 'My Master', page 79 - 99)

From time immemorial the religious life has been held up as the summit of human existence. This has been so in all the nations of the world, primitive and advanced. Religious activity has ever been described as the highest type of human activity, and the religious life *per se* extolled as the perfect culmination to all human endeavour. There has always been a special halo around the initiated aspirant, and naturally the ordained priests enjoyed a far higher special status of their own. The power and prestige of the priesthood or clergy was often of such magnitude as to eclipse that of the temporal rulers of the times. India has had more than its fair share of religions, having given birth to two of the world's great systems, Hinduism and Buddhism. India has also been one of those countries where religion has permeated into practically every sphere of human existence. The Hindu religion takes hold of the individual soon after his conception, and releases him only after he is dead, his body cremated, and his ashes ceremoniously offered into the water of a river or the sea. Every aspect of the individual's life in-between these two extreme situations is governed by rituals appropriate to the occasion.

The great seers of India, the rishis, have bifurcated the holy life into two distinct approaches to Reality, the ritualistic life, and the contemplative life. The texts of Hinduism are correspondingly categorised, and the *Vedas* themselves come under this categorisation. The earlier parts, dealing almost exclusively with rituals, are classified under the term *karma kanda*. The later portions of the *Vedic* text, the *Gnana Kanda*, deal mostly with the mental and higher aspects of man's approach to his Maker, and are commonly called *Vedanta*, translated to mean "the end of all knowledge." *Vedanta* does not merely mean that this part of the *Vedic* teaching comes at the serial end of the *Veda*. It means that here is contained such knowledge as can be considered to be the end of all knowledge, the very acme and essence of knowledge.

The rishis have also taught, very clearly and emphatically, that the ritualistic religious life is a lower aspect of man's existence, whereas the contemplative life is extolled as being the higher and purer one. The texts themselves are explicit in their statement that formal rules and restrictions apply only to the ritual performances, where strict prescriptions as to place, time and method of performance are to be implicitly followed. In the contemplative life such restrictions no longer bind a person. He has escaped out of the physical rigidity of ritual religious performance into the freedom of mental contemplation of the Divine.

With such a clear enunciation of principles of worship one would have expected to find the people able to follow them without difficulty. But it is mystifying to find that something akin to almost utter confusion prevails. The average person seems to prefer to stick to the bondage of the ritual life. It has this attraction that so long as one obeys the priestly injunctions for a stated period of time - generally curtailed to a few minutes a day - he enjoys a liberty that is almost permissive the rest of the time. In the contemplative life, or the life of the mystic, there is a freedom that does not exist at lower levels of existence, but this freedom appears unattractive to most persons, as it carries within itself the need for responsible action by the person. Such a person has to prescribe for himself the ethical and moral values that guide his life. No longer can he merely obey a set of rules often elastically interpreted by his priestly guide. Now the onus of leading a right life is on him, and on him alone. So the apparent freedom of the spiritual life seems to have hidden within it the greater bondage of self-discipline, self-control and so on, culminating in the principle of self-surrender. When this is understood, people seem to prefer the total lack of freedom during a specified period under the ritual life to the apparent freedom of the contemplative.

There was once an interesting discussion on this subject of freedom. An overseas preceptor had been listening to Master talking about the freedom that a spiritual life offered. Master had been talking about this for some time. When Master stopped, this gentleman asked, "But Master, to me it appears that the freedom is becoming less and less as we progress. You ask us to surrender to Master. Is it not then a total loss of freedom?" Master answered, "Yes, you are right. But I take charge of you only to finally hand you over to God. This can be done only under such conditions." The gentleman then asked, "But then the freedom does not exist as you say. What is the real freedom, Master?" Master answered, with a serious expression on his face, "Really speaking the only freedom is the freedom to do the right. There is no other freedom." I have brooded over this off and on over the years, and I have come to the conclusion that this is indeed the only freedom.

A motor car on the street has freedom, but only to go where it is permitted. It may not enter a one-way street from the wrong end; it may not exceed speed limits specified; it may park only in areas specifically set aside for this purpose, and so on. Within the framework of these regulations the driver enjoys complete freedom. Why are these rules, restrictive rules, made? They are for the safety of the driver himself. If there was only one car in a city the rules need not be so rigid. When there are more, then laws get progressively more in number, and more and more restrictive too. While on its rails a train is free. If it leaves the rails there is disaster. We think an airplane pilot to be a 'free' person, and we have, most of us, at one time or the other, been envious of the total freedom that the pilot apparently enjoys. We look on enviously, and wish we were up there in the sky, free to do as we please. But alas! this freedom too is illusory. The pilot is strictly controlled in virtually everything he does. His take-off time is controlled; his route is strictly charted and laid down; his speed is controlled; also his altitude

and so on. But within these limits he is free to do as he wishes. An airplane pilot has considerably **less** freedom than a car driver on the road has. When we see the working of the astronauts we discover, to our dismay, that the freedom of action has almost completely disappeared. Their every action is rigidly controlled. Not merely are the mechanical details such as the times of flight, route, etc., all rigidly laid down but even personal routines such as their sleep and rest periods, what to eat and when, are clearly stipulated. It is a matter of wonder that these persons have been able to so completely subject themselves to this rigid discipline and that they are able to perform as required. The reason is very clear. If they did not, they would cease to exist. The penalty for disobedience is the awful one of death, instantaneous death. At this level obedience of the total variety is what is imperatively necessary, as it decides whether a person will continue to exist or not! We thus see that freedom appears to carry the seeds of potential disaster within itself.

It seems clear that at lower levels of activity the apparent freedom of the individual is greater, while the activity itself seems to need a lesser degree of ability for its performance. As the plane of activity rises, the ability needed for its right performance is more and more, while individual freedom appears to become less and less, and simultaneously the need for stricter obedience increases stage by stage. At the highest levels the individual's freedom seems to be virtually non-existent, to have vanished! The need for obedience is now total; and the ability needed for the correct performance of one's duty is of the level of the *adept*. We appear to have arrived at the stage where the only freedom is indeed the freedom to do what is right! But, and this appears to me a significant point, the entire training to bring a person to the level of the adept seems, finally, to culminate in making that person **instinctively and completely obedient** to Master's orders. When a person has progressed to this level there is no thinking, no reasoning. When an order is given by the Master the necessary activity issues forth, almost at the level of a reflex action. This, I feel, is what distinguishes a real adept from a merely capable person who has not developed this ability for perfect, unthinking and instantaneous obedience.

Here we find a law working - as we rise higher and higher our freedom becomes less and less! At least this is apparently what happens. But is this really so? It all depends on our ideas of freedom, the ways in which we have been trained to think about it. After having examined this concept of freedom in quite some detail over many years of puzzled thought, I have come to the conclusion that the ideas I have held all these years are almost entirely wrong. The whole idea of freedom seems, to me, to be illusory. Or rather, to put it in another way, the lower levels of existence, of uncommitted existence, seem to enjoy some degree of freedom; but this progressively shrinks until, at the highest level, there is no freedom at all. But, and here lies the difference, **there is no bondage either!** The mistake, I believe, lies in identifying a state of non-freedom with a state of bondage. They are not identical by any means. This is the same mistake we make when we think of a person without wealth as a poor person, or of a person without

knowledge as an ignorant person. What we have to perceive is that there is an in-between state in every case, a sort of zero point, which is a totally unconditioned state, and this I believe to be the true state of spiritual existence.

To consider this a little further, suppose a person wishes to tell a lie, say about his age. He has considerable freedom in choosing a figure to mention as his age, but to tell the truth there is no freedom whatsoever since the correct figure can be one, and one only. Similarly the shortest distance between two points can only be one, but many longer ways can exist, and these can be as many as we care to choose. We thus see that to tell a lie, or to follow a wrong path, many ways exist. That is, there is apparently a great degree of freedom. Whereas for right conduct, right speech no freedom exists as there is only one way and we have to follow it. As a person evolves spiritually, and progresses to higher and yet higher levels of existence, the whole universe of unlimited choice that he had at the beginning has now become narrowed down to just one goal, with but one path to lead up to it. To tread such a path no skill or ability is required, perhaps no knowledge even is necessary. All that is now necessary is an unquestioning obedience of the Master's instructions. This alone will ensure successful, safe and early completion of the spiritual quest.

This also helps us to see why, in Sahaj Marg, no qualifications are considered necessary in an aspirant. The sole qualification, as I have elaborated elsewhere, is that of willingness to follow the Master obediently.

In examining this idea of freedom we have been led to the conclusion that what we have thought of as loss of freedom is really nothing but a state of surrender to the Master's will. We have not lost freedom in the sense that we have been deprived of it. We have voluntarily, whole-heartedly and devotedly surrendered it to the Master of our Soul. We now see why the need for such surrender is paramount. Choice implies knowledge of how to choose, and will to enforce that choice. Our choice was exercised when we chose the Master and his way. It is like a bachelor who has virtually unlimited choice of a bride, but having chosen one and married her, the question of further choice no longer arises! The time for choice is over. At higher and higher levels of evolution the very idea of choice ceases to exist. A stage has now been reached where even knowledge is no longer necessary. Many great saints have testified from their personal spiritual experience that a stage is reached when we have to bid knowledge and the intellect good-bye. It is not that we abandon knowledge as being unworthy or incapable of helping us. It served its role, its part has been played out, and the time for it to leave the stage has come, that is all! All that we need now is will, will to act and will to obey the Master in every single instruction. To those who are fortunate enough to arrive at this exalted stage the Master is no longer a guide for spirituality alone. He has now become the Master of one's life in all its aspects of existence. He becomes the father, the mother, the son, the teacher, the doctor, in fact there is no role that He does not play in the abhyasi's life! He has

taken total charge of the abhyasi. So we see that only our surrendering to him can bring about a state where he can take total charge of us!

Analysing this further we find, surprisingly, that a great and unimaginable freedom is now conferred on the abhyasi. **It is the freedom from freedom itself!** It is the freedom of invulnerability. We may even say that it is the freedom of invincibility. We are no longer answerable for our actions. We merely obey. The person who issues the orders, the Master, assumes complete responsibility for everything we do. We are no longer vulnerable to the world. Therefore a great calm, a great freedom comes to us. Out of an apparent loss of a previous freedom, largely illusory as we have seen, we now receive as a Divine gift the true freedom of a spiritual state, a real freedom which some saints have called the "Great Liberation".

We thus see that where religion binds, spirituality liberates. The great seers and mystics of all religions have taught this, but few have followed them. Many read and hear but few understand. Of those who understand few are bold enough to shake off the chains of traditional bondage and undertake the quest anew. To these few comes the realisation that they have sought, and when it comes they wonder at the splendour and magnificence of the truth they have been seeking, which its own utter simplicity and proximity have kept hidden from us.

I have discussed the role of traditional forms of worship again and again with my Master. On one occasion I requested Master to elaborate on the drawbacks, if any, of traditional methods of worship. I asked Babuji, "Master, these ways have been followed for so many thousands of years. How can they be unsatisfactory? Have they not been responsible for our rishis and saints achieving the goal of unity with the Divine? I am unable to follow this. Kindly explain a little more in detail." Master answered, "I am not saying the traditional ways are bad or wrong. All that I say is that the method of approach must be correct according to your goal, and if your goal is Realisation then the way must be subtle and correctly followed. So the person, whoever it is, must first determine his goal, and only then arises the question of the way of achieving it. But the individual person has to decide the goal for himself. Nobody else can do this for him. Now suppose you have as your goal the earning of large wealth. You will first look for the person who can help you to earn it. If you want to develop a strong body you will go to a *pahalwan* or physical culturist. So the goal first, then the guide. The trouble is we see many persons around us who have attached themselves to one guru or another without knowing why. How many of these persons know what they are looking for? Is it then any wonder that they do not know what they are doing, and why? This is the difficulty, that we blindly do what others have done. I am telling you one thing. Discrimination is necessary. We must be able to decide for ourselves as to what is good for us. Confusion must be thrown aside. Then the goal can be easily reached. But I tell you, people find it difficult to change their ways. Change is always difficult if people have no discrimination or will to change. But as I have told you there can be no progress without change. People follow a certain way of rituals or worship. Everybody sees, and says, 'Look! What

a pious person this is. He is holy!' and so on. This gives great satisfaction. The ego is satisfied. Does such a person really want God or Realisation? Think it over! So you see, **why** we do something is as important as **how** we do it. You see the basic approach is itself not correct. How can there be success?"

"Master! What about those who are sincere and serious in their search?" I asked. Master said, "Yes, for them the goal is established as a real goal. Now we come to the *marg* or way. I have already told you that God is simple and the way of attaining Him must likewise be simple. I have written in *Reality at Dawn* that to pick up a needle we would not use a crane! My associates appreciate this very much. Have you read Kabir? He has written that if the water of the Ganga is holy then every crocodile in it should get *moksha*! You see this? A gross act cannot lead to a subtle result. We must try to understand this. We have become lost in our ritualistic way of life. It is generally easy to follow, and gives much satisfaction of having done our duty. But what we don't realise is that it is adding grossness to us. I will tell you of a case which came to me. A person had been doing puja for many years. He used to imagine that God was seated in his heart, and that he was doing *pradakshina* or circumambulation round him hundred times or thousand times, I don't remember. One day he came to me. Maybe Dr. Varadachari brought him to me. I don't recollect. I examined his condition. You know what I found? His heart was all wrapped up like a silk-worm in a cocoon! The heart was under great strain, which he did not feel. At first I did not understand how this had happened, but when he told me the method of worship he had been adopting then I understood. See what havoc it had done. Poor man, he thought he had been doing a very pious thing, but really he had put himself in serious difficulties. Do you remember the other experience I told you? The one about the monkey!" (with much laughter). I recalled what Master was referring to. Master had personally conducted satsangh at one of our South Indian centers. About forty or fifty persons were present and the sitting lasted about twenty-five minutes. Later, when we were alone, Master told me that soon after he commenced transmission he got the impression that a monkey was sitting in the group. He opened his eyes and found an abhyasi of long association sitting there. He closed his eyes and in a few moments the same experience was repeated - the monkey was again there! Master once again opened his eyes and found the abhyasi there. Master said, "You know, I could hardly control my laughter. When I opened my eyes this abhyasi was there, when I closed them a monkey was there. Do you know the reason? I will tell you. I examined the case and found that he had been doing Hanuman worship for a very long time, maybe in some past life, and the impressions were there, very strong and deeply buried. During cleaning the impressions must have come to the surface of the mind. Therefore I had the impression of a monkey sitting there!"

Master has given many similar examples of grossness arising out of wrong approaches to worship. In some cases the grossness is deeply embedded, and so hard, that virtually no help can be given. I asked Master how this could happen, that he himself was unable to help. Master replied, "I will tell you. I have

had some cases where the heart is surrounded by grossness so hard that it is like a rock. It appears as if the heart is embedded in solid rock. If you give transmission in such cases it will just come back to you." I asked Master whether, in such cases, nothing could at all be done. Was there no way out for them? Master answered, "Well, if the power is used it can be done. There is no doubt about it. But the danger is there that in breaking the grossness the person himself may be affected. The process will have to be very slow, and only complete co-operation on the part of the abhyasi can help him. In such cases I suggest that they pray sincerely to God daily for help. Later on the case can be taken up for deep cleaning." I related to Master a somewhat graphic experience I had had once with an abhyasi. I was carrying out the process of cleaning when, suddenly, a vision came before my eyes, and I saw a giant sewer, bigger than a man, pouring out sewage of such a filthy condition that I was momentarily nauseated. Master said, "Yes, that is the work of the preceptor. I told you a Master is nothing but a sweeper. But the whole problem is only when working in the heart region. Really speaking the heart region is the gutter of humanity. We have to dive into this and do the work. Yes, once the abhyasi progresses and rises to the mind region, then the work becomes a pleasure. After that not much effort is needed. A capable Master can do the work by a mere glance. Now I am telling you one thing. In my own interest I move people quickly out of the heart region. After all who would like to work there longer than necessary? But co-operation of the abhyasi can speed up the process, and save me a great deal of trouble and work."

Master narrated to me another experience relating to cleaning. On that occasion he had gone to Benares, and unwittingly had strayed into a street with an unsavoury reputation. He instinctively felt that he was in the wrong place. At that moment he heard Lalaji's voice asking, "What are you doing in this place?" Master was nonplussed, and answered, "Saheb, I am here by mistake. I do not know where I am." Lalaji said, "Since you are here, let the people of this place derive some benefit from your presence. Clean the atmosphere of this locality as you go." Master laughed and added, "I obeyed Lalaji's orders. Now look at His greatness. He did not chide me for going there. But his love for humanity is seen in his order to me. We must always strive that wherever we may go, we must leave the light of Reality burning there. Lalaji Saheb was transmitting continuously all the twenty-four hours of the day. Even when travelling he would continue to transmit. Where can we get such a Master? Really speaking Lalaji is a prodigy of nature!"

Hearing this mention of Lalaji's name, I was curious to know from my Master whether Lalaji had himself practised any ritual forms of puja. Master fell into a ruminative mood. He said, "I will tell you one thing. Lalaji Saheb had the greatest respect for tradition. He would never criticise anything or anybody. He taught people what he knew was the best approach to one's goal, but he always did this without decrying other systems of puja or worship. That is why he was a very popular person, and people of all castes and communities used to go to him for advice and guidance. They had faith in him because he always gave the correct

guidance in all matters. But I tell you one thing, he was much against rituals. He had a very pious and religious mother, but she passed away when Lalaji was very young. In her time he used to sing for her. Lalaji had a most beautiful voice which all loved to hear. He used to sing devotional songs, and one of his favourite songs was *Dinana dukh haran Nath santana hitkari*. It is a great pity that in his days there were no tape records or such things. Yes, he never did ritual worship. But I will tell you one thing. One *Amavasya* day (new moon day) I saw him performing the *tarpana*. He was pouring water in the ritual fashion, offering it to his forefathers in the higher world. I immediately adjusted myself to see what he was really doing. It was wonderful to observe it. I found that he was transmitting the essence of the water he was offering to the higher world. Do you understand this? This is what should be done when offering *bhog*. Now I am telling you something. Suppose a person can transmit the essence of a thing, then it is useful to do *tarpana* and all these things. Otherwise what is the use? It is a mere ritual without any meaning or use. It is better to sit in meditation and think of the departed souls. Surely they will benefit more by it. And if a person is a preceptor he should transmit with the idea that the transmission will reach the soul wherever it may be. You see, the ways of helping are there. But what can we do if the people stick to the gross forms of rituals out of ignorance and fear?"

On one occasion I had a discussion with Master about temple worship. Master had told me that all religions depended on two instruments, and these were fear and temptation. To Master the idea of anyone approaching God out of fear was totally abhorrent. "When we are afraid of something, we run away from it. That is the natural reaction. Then how can we go towards God with fear of Him in our hearts! It is not possible. Fear can only turn us away from Him. I am telling you that any system which depends on fear will only turn people away from God. Now you see, to counter-act this they use the other weapon of temptation - temptation of material welfare, riches, health, and finally of *moksha*. Now this temptation works to some extent, but people only want what they can see or smell - physical things. So when they seek such *sansthas* they go only for material benefits. As a result religion has slowly become diluted. The ideals have fallen systematically. Now people have come to such a low level that they are prepared to do business with God. You know, I am told that some businessmen make God a partner in their business! Is it not something to wonder at? What foolishness is this? Everything in the universe belongs to Him and Him alone. What we get, we get from Him. But people have now begun to think that they have 'earned' what they have. This is ignorance. And they add to this by arrogantly offering God a share of their income. Look how foolish and selfish they are. They think they can bribe God to give them more and more so that He can get a bigger share for Himself! So you see all this has to be changed. A person must follow the right way of Love, and seek God for Himself alone, and not for what He can give us."

I narrated a short version of a long discussion I once had with Dr. Varadachari at Tirupathi about temple worship. Some persons present were of the opinion that

we should not try to wean away persons from their own traditional practices as it might do harm. Others felt that temples had been with us for centuries and surely our ancients knew what they were doing when they built them, and established them as centers of prayer. Dr. Varadachari brought a new angle to the whole matter of temple worship. He explained that few persons were sufficiently developed to attract a living, personal guru. It needed a fairly high level of development before an individual could even think of a guru. What, then, were they to do? Such persons, who were at lower levels of development, formed the bulk of humanity. The great teachers of religion had therefore created the institution of temple worship for this large mass of humanity. To these people the temple acted as an inanimate guru. Saints of the past had consecrated these temples and charged the idols by filling them with power. Such charges were by no means eternal. They would last for a particular length of time, depending on the power and development of the saint who had charged the idol. Once the charge was exhausted the temple could no longer confer any benefit on persons who prayed there. Dr. Varadachari added that this was why some temples fell into disuse and became mere archaeological relics. He continued to say that the practice of taking a baby and having its head shorn in the temple was in the nature of an initiatory rite. The child was symbolically offered to the presiding deity of the temple, and thereafter the child became a disciple of that deity. Dr. Varadachari then made a very significant statement. He added that when the child grew up into a man, that person should seek a living guru suitable to his further development. And if he was spiritually ready he would certainly find a guru appropriate to his own level of development. At this stage temple worship had to be dropped and the higher spiritual approach taken up for further development in accordance with the guru's teaching. This was the gist of Dr. Varadachari's long talk on this subject.

Master agreed that temple worship had a place in the general scheme. "But", he asked, "where are the saints today who have the power of filling power into idols? If they can do it then there is some meaning in it. I will tell you another thing. If a person who is capable of transmission exists, should we receive transmission from him, or ask him to charge an idol and then pray to it for development? You understand this idea? We must go direct, follow the direct way. We should have no intermediaries between ourselves and God. Of course if one can find a Master who is himself in *laya* with God, then he can be taken as a guide. Otherwise it is no use. It is better to be without a guru than to be with a wrong person. Without a guru we may not progress, but with a wrong person we may go backwards and fall. This is the great danger. Now I tell you one important thing. Note it carefully. Idol worship is not entirely wrong. It is wrong only if done in the wrong way. What is the right way? We should not worship the idol, but should worship God whom it represents. That is the correct way. The idol is merely a figure or representation of God to remind the devotee and to help him to bring his mind to a contemplative state. What do we do? We worship the idol itself as God. This is the great error, and so grossness grows. Really speaking God has no form or name. It is we who give these forms and names to God. By doing this we impose

limitations on Him. Then grossness begins to form. Look at this foolishness, we should try to expand and grow, but instead of that we are actually trying to limit God Himself! Can such practices ever lead us to the goal? I will tell you another important thing. People worship many gods, but we should worship the God from whom all these gods derive not only their power but their very existence. We should go to the Source. That should be our approach. Anything less than that will make us fall short of the goal and create grossness. I will tell you another thing. People do *tirtha yatra*. They go from place to place and spend many years and a lot of money in bathing in holy rivers and praying at famous temples. Some do this all their lives. But what is the result? Have they derived any spiritual benefit? They only get the satisfaction that they have bathed in so many places and worshiped in so many temples. That is all. I am telling you a very important thing. The real *yatra* is the inner *yatra* of the Soul. That is the true *yatra*. This is what we do in our practice. After all, in the spiritual journey it is not the travel of the body that takes us to the goal (laughing). It is the Soul which has become imprisoned in the heart that has to be made to move; and then to go up point by point until the destination is reached. This is the real *yatra*. I will tell you one more thing", Master went on to say. "There is no mention of temple worship in the *Vedas*. After all, we quote the *Vedas* as our authority for everything that we do. But they say nothing about temples. Dr. Varadachari has confirmed this. You know he has studied the *Vedas* and he is a philosopher. He told me that not only is there no mention of temples in the *Vedas*, really speaking during *Vedic* times temples did not exist at all. Does this mean that people did not pray in those times? What it really means is that temples are not *essential* for prayer. God is everywhere. We must also be able to pray anywhere and this is possible. Everything in nature speaks of the presence of God. Is there anything that does not speak of God's presence? The whole universe is His creation and He is in every atom of it. So prayer must be possible anywhere. The idea of setting apart a separate place for prayer is a much later development, when man grew away from nature. In Vedic times man was part of nature, part of his environment, and saw God in everything. That is why they worshipped rain and thunder and fire and all these things. It is a pity foreigners have misunderstood this, and said that the Hindus worship these material elements. This is not the correct idea. Really speaking the ancients saw God in everything and went into ecstasies, and prayed to everything as Divine. They did not worship fire but worshipped the God that fire represented, and similarly with other things. This is the same idea I told you about idol worship. But later these ideas became debased. Now I want to tell you a good definition of prayer. Our Master Saheb, Mr. Ishwar Sahai, was once asked what prayer is. Master Saheb said it is really an expression of gratitude to God for all that we receive. Now we eat rice and wheat and ghee and so many other things. We are naturally grateful to them. But can we say, 'thank you rice, thank you wheat' and so on? No! So we say thank you to the Creator of all these things, and that is God. So prayer should really be a feeling of gratitude in our heart, not begging for more things. If we ask for more and more it only shows ingratitude for all that we have already received, and I consider it to be the greatest crime against God."

Master continued, "By Lalaji's Grace we have an easy way of achieving our goal. It is the most natural and simple way that he has made available to us. It is really a Sahaj Marg - a simple and natural way of God Realisation. But I am telling you, few persons appreciate its efficacy because they wonder how something so simple and easy can yield such wonderful results! People have become used to following difficult methods, methods requiring long years of strenuous practices. And now when we say God can be easily attained, they are suspicious about it. But if we are wise we must choose the correct way to lead us to our goal, not the most difficult. They prefer to beg for more and more material benefits whereas in our method we **receive** Divine grace from the beginning. I have said prayer is begging but meditation is receiving. Why? Because when we sit for meditation we sit in a receptive attitude so that a vacuum is created in the heart. Only an empty vessel can be filled! Who can fill a vessel that is already full? You see the difference? They beg (laughing), while we receive! This is the greatness of our system. It is Lalaji's grace that such a simple system of greatest efficacy is available to us today. But few take advantage of it. What to say, many people even say they have no time! I prescribed one hour for the morning meditation originally. Now I have reduced it to half-an-hour. Even this people are not willing to do. I will tell you an enjoyable story. A person once came to me. He was a big officer of the government at Delhi. He came to me with one of our associates. he wanted to know something about our system and so I told him. When he heard that he had to meditate for half-an-hour he said it was impossible, as he was too busy to spare so much time. So I asked him to reduce it. He again said he was too busy. I then told him to do 10 minutes a day. Look here! He got angry. He said, 'What is this tamasha! I am telling you I am a very busy man and you are going on asking me to do it. I cannot spare even five minutes a day.' Now Lalaji gave me an idea. Look how he helps us! I asked this officer, 'Can you tell me whether there is anybody more busy than you?' He got angry again. He said, 'What a foolish question this is? Of course there are people more busy than I am. The Prime Minister is much more busy than I am!' I then told him not to take an extreme example but to think of someone just a little more busy than him. He said his neighbour was a bigger officer and more busy than himself. So you know what I told him? (exploding into laughter) I told him, 'Saheb, give me the difference between your busyness and his busyness. That will give some time for meditation.' Poor man, he thought I was making fun of him and he went away quite annoyed."

Master then told me another instance of like nature when a person claimed he was too busy to meditate. Master said, "You know what I told him? I told him God is to be blamed for not creating the day with more than 24 hours in it. It is God's fault. If he had created the day with 26 hours such busy persons would have had time for meditation." Master added, "I have told you, only **he** will get whom He chooses. So what can I do? Anyway we do our work and leave the rest to Master."