
Sahaj Marg Study Group

Approach to Reality

Set 5, Handout 5 (From 'My Master', pages 101 - 118)

How and when does the search for an undefined goal really commence? In most cases the first faint stirrings of longing seem to be lost in the childhood memories of the individual. Many aspirants testify to this fact that the first spiritual stirrings, the memory of such stirrings, lies in their adolescence, but became buried under later pressures of worldly existence. In a few fortunate cases the reawakening appears to occur, or again once the person had settled down in life. In the majority of cases, however, the reawakening of spiritual desire had to await the onset of middle age, and in many such cases the reawakening appears to occur, or to have occurred, only at periods of personal crisis. In quite a few cases the first stirrings of late childhood lie dormant and latent, to find re-expression in old age. In such cases the chances of success are far less than in other cases unless they are able to attract Master's attention by love and devotion. Master once told me that he had done something really important for an aged abhyasi. He said, "Look here, he is an old man and so out of pity I have given him this as a gift. I did it because he is very devoted and sincere. Old people do not have much time to work, so I give them like this, but you young persons will have to work for your development."

Coming back to the question of the beginning of the search, this depends on the individual, and on the environment and the nature of its pressures on the individual. It is generally accepted that the seed is within the individual as part of his karmic or samskaric heritage. The seed however, has to find the appropriate environmental conditions for its germination. The subsequent conditions have to continue to be favourable for the seedling to grow into a tree of full stature. Such environmental conditions have to be created, first and foremost, in the family or domestic environment. Here in the cradle and by the hearth the seed may germinate, given right conditions. If this early environment is antagonistic to the germination of the karmic impulses to spiritual search, the later struggle, if it happens at all, is liable to be a long and bitter one. A study of the early life of the Grand Master and my Master reveals that they both had serenely pious parents, particularly mothers, with a positive attitude towards the higher life. Their respective family atmospheres were therefore congenial and fostered such development.

I remember my wife Sulochana once asking Master when a person should commence spiritual sadhana. She asked this because Master does not normally permit persons below 18 years of age to meditate. Master answered, "Really speaking the process should begin with conception. Lalaji used to say this, that this was the correct moment for commencing *sadhana*. But how to fix the moment of conception? It is not possible, and so the work cannot be practically

commenced then. Therefore what we do is to transmit to the mother while she is carrying, and the transmitted power will automatically reach the baby in correct dosage. One should never transmit direct to the child - this can be highly dangerous. But we should only transmit to the mother, to her heart, as we normally do." Cases where a mother is herself on the path, and thereby is able to confer the divine gift of spiritual training while the growing baby is still part of her, are very rare. But what Master said serves to emphasise the need for the real search to commence as early as possible - the earlier the better.

I had a friend and colleague who was interested in the spiritual life, but in a rather timid and distant manner. I had tried to get him to start meditation. He always kept putting it off saying that he was yet young, unmarried and had plenty of time for "this sort of thing." His objection to commencing spiritual practice was that he had yet to go through the mill of family life, and therefore *sadhana* of any sort would be premature until he had gone through that particular mill. He got married. I again spoke to him about *sadhana*, but his reply now was that as he had just been married, he needed some more years to get used to that life. He requested me to wait until he was 50 years old when he would certainly take up spiritual *sadhana*. The tragic part of the matter is that within two years of his marriage he suddenly passed away after a brief and minor illness. It is one of my great regrets that he could not be brought on to the path when the possibility was there.

A second case comes to my mind, more fortunate than the preceding one. This concerns an abhyasi who was, at that time, the only abhyasi from his city. He showed great interest in our system of meditation, and practised the meditation according to my Master's teaching. He was developing so well that Master had him in mind for future work in his city as a preceptor. Unfortunately he suddenly fell ill, and after a very short time he expired. I wrote to Master about him. Master replied that he had examined the matter and that he found the soul of the abhyasi sitting bewildered in a corner. He added, "I have done what was necessary for him. He will be reborn once more, and the next life will be his last." He ended the letter with a most significant sentence. "Had he practised our meditation for even a few months more there would have been the possibility of liberation in this life itself. As it is, one more birth will be necessary." I am referring to these two cases to drive home as strongly as possible the urgent need for **immediate action**. The possibility of liberation is **now**, in the present. Who can say what will happen in the future? 'Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today' is more relevant to spiritual *sadhana* than anything else.

I will record a third case, narrated to me by my Master himself, to show how putting off the quest may delay it indefinitely, perhaps for many lives. Master said, "Look here, persons who come to me are generally at the first point. The *yatra* has not commenced. This is the normal thing. Once a person came to me, and what to say of him, I found him already at the fourth point. It was a high level of attainment and showed his work in his past life. He came to me once, but

never returned again. His *samskara* must have prevented it. If he had come back his progress was certain. A little cleaning would have made quick progress possible. It is a pity that he never came back. Now who knows how many lives he may need to find the way! It is the only case which came to me already so highly developed." This shows us the imperative need of achieving our goal in this life itself. We are here. Our Master is available to us, and this life is certain, whatever be its length. Our solemn duty to ourselves is to ensure that with his assistance we complete our journey to our destination within this life - the only one we can be certain of.

As Master himself explained to me on a different occasion, this life is one that we are sure of. We are living it. It needs no proof that it exists. As regards the past life or future lives, different religions teach differently about it. The important thing is that, for our purpose, the whole question of past and future lives becomes irrelevant to the issue of spiritual realisation. We are here living this life; the Master is with us; and the goal exists; a combination of the three factors must enable us to reach our goal in **this** life. This is the importance of Sahaj Marg teaching. I personally may believe in past and future lives. This has been the teaching of the religion into which I have been born. Such a belief may therefore be natural to me. But a similar belief in other persons is unnecessary as far as spiritual practice is concerned. All that concerns us now are the supreme and perceivable truths of our existence, of our Master's existence, and of the existence of a goal to be realised - here and now!

On yet another occasion someone raised the question of many lives being needed to reach the goal. He quoted the *Bhagavad Gita* where Shri Krishna says that even people of great knowledge reach Him only after many lives, Master said, "It may be so. But I am telling you an important thing. It is a sign of weakness to think that the goal is far off and the journey a very difficult one. I say at least start the journey, then you will know what it is really like. Otherwise it is only weakness to go by what others say. You take at least one step in the right direction and see how it is. Then decide. I am telling you another thing. Everybody who comes to me says this thing requires many lives. But why do you assume that this is your first life? Why don't you think this is your last life and therefore in this life itself the goal must be reached? You understand what I am saying? One is a way of weakness, the other is a positive approach. Who can say with certainty how many lives we have yet to live. I say it is in our hands to decide it. If we adopt the right process under the Real Master then there need be no future lives. So forget this idea of more lives. We must not look to the next life to continue our journey. Who knows in what environment we may be born, and how our life is going to be moulded? It is easy to lose the way. I say, once you find the Master and the method, stick to them. Bind the Master to yourself in such a way that the bond is a permanent one. Then success is assured."

Having examined when the search begins, let us see how it begins. Master has recorded his own personal experiments with ritual performances of religion, and

subsequent yogic practices advocated by hatha yoga followed, finally, by his graduation into the life of spiritual *sadhana*. He started his experiments even while he was a school boy. What we have to note carefully from his life is that his experiments were conducted sincerely and meticulously. When the methods proved insufficient for the realisation of his personal goal he abandoned them. He did not allow himself to be made a prisoner of methods which could not help him. The methods received a sincere and fair trial and, when found inadequate, were abandoned. He had the great courage to do this because he knew precisely what he was looking for. He was not for satisfaction of the ego, he was not for fulfilling society's dictates; he was not for name, fame or riches. What he wanted was God and God alone. So, having tried many approaches, he abandoned them, and resorted to direct prayer to God, praying that God should give him a worthy guru who could guide him to God Himself. The prayer, as we all know, was answered, and Master's contact with Lalaji was established. The way was at last found, and the quest achieved momentum, culminating in the supreme achievement of *Brahmalaya*.

A yearning for something, we know not what, exists in most hearts. Many of our abhyasis have confided details of their early search. Some were able to find the Master easily, and to come to him quietly with easy and immediate acceptance. Others had to go through long and tedious years of variegated disciplines, often with despair in their hearts, sometimes with danger too, until they came to my Master. Many of the latter have tearfully conceded that their early experiments were unnecessarily prolonged only because they themselves lacked the will and personal courage to abandon a way that had been found unhelpful, and which they knew could not lead them to their chosen destination. What kept them chained to a useless practice was the superstitious fear of possible retribution. It is a deplorable fact that there are gurus who add fuel to the fire of such superstition so as to keep their disciples chained to themselves in permanent bondage for selfish personal gain.

Master teaches that God is simple and therefore the way of attaining Him must also be simple. Master is very often requested to define God, or to describe God, or to give an idea of who or what God is. Master's characteristic answer on every such occasion is, "God is God. What else can be God? Now I tell you one thing. God cannot be known, but he can be experienced." This is a clear indication that knowledge cannot serve us where God is the object or goal of our seeking. The presence of God can be felt, can be experienced by us, and the technique to acquire this experience, to undergo this experience, is what my Master teaches as a practical path.

I remember a discussion about God at Hyderabad many years ago. Master had come to Hyderabad for a short visit. He was accompanied by his permanent companion Shri Ishwar Sahai. Talking about God, Shri Ishwar Sahai tried to show that the difference between man and God is neither one of form, nor of content. He described the difference in terms of purity and subtlety. He used, as

an example, the atmosphere covering our earth. "The air at the ground level is the same as that say 50 miles up," he said, "but that near the ground is heavy, dense and impure. As one goes up higher and higher the air becomes purer and purer, and lighter and lighter, until at the very top its qualities are characterised by such purity and lightness that the very existence of air is to be doubted." Using this analogy Shri Ishwar Sahai said, "Man is heavy, gross and impure whereas God is light, pure and subtle." This analogy gives us some idea that qualities or attributes of Divinity do not lie in the physical realm. All that we can do when trying to describe a divine spiritual experience is to use analogies. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Shri Krishna the *avatar* is himself driven to this contingency. When talking about himself to Arjuna, his devotee, he is forced to use analogies. He says that among rivers he is the Ganga, among birds he is the Garuda, and among men he is Arjuna...and so on! This clearly shows that not even God the Almighty can describe himself. He can however reveal himself to his beloved devotee, as Shri Krishna revealed himself to Arjuna. This draws attention to two important truths of the spiritual search. The first is that God or Reality cannot be known but can be experienced. The second is that this experience itself is possible only when the Ultimate chooses to reveal itself to its devotee, or to whomsoever it may choose to reveal itself. Master has often told me of the great importance of *attracting* divine grace towards oneself. Master said, "I am telling you a most important secret. All abhyas is purely preparatory. Abhyas by itself cannot give anything. It is only a way of turning His benevolent gaze towards us. Really speaking, only those persons get divine grace to whom He himself wishes to give it. This is a great secret I am revealing to you." I asked Master how to bring this about. How to make the Almighty Master turn towards us. Master laughed and said, "You are asking me to reveal to you one more secret. I tell you this is worth a lakh of rupees! There is only one way. Love Him so much that He begins to love you. You must knock on His door so hard that He hears and opens His door to you. Then your work is over. The secret is Love. Who can resist it? God is only waiting to give Himself but it is a pity that no one turns to Him. In this country the people were known for their spiritual achievements. Now look at the people. Gross materialism has taken command over the people. Who is responsible for this? The people themselves are responsible for it. They can improve only if they turn towards Him and adopt the right way of approach. Now I am telling you another thing. You will find everybody talking of God. In India it is the biggest topic of conversation and discussion. Everyone talks about God. Great numbers of books are written about such subjects. Also everybody prays to Him. Then why is there so much misery and corruption? I will tell you. The approach is wrong. The way of worship has to be changed."

I requested Master to elaborate a little. "What is it that is wrong with the methods adopted, Master?" I asked. Master replied, "You know the spiritual way. You yourself are following it. Have you not noticed the change in you? You have also had experiences which you have not had before. This you have yourself reported to me. So it is clear, we must follow the right path. I have written in *Reality at Dawn* about this. Now people spend a lot of time and money on gross forms of

worship. But what is the use? They become grosser and grosser. It is what is happening. Anybody with eyes can see it. A gross form of worship can only lead to gross results. I have written that God is simple, and therefore the way to achieve Him must also be simple. But people like to follow difficult paths and spend a lot of time and money. Why do they do this? I will tell you. They get satisfaction from such worship. Now look here, people worship for **satisfactions!** Or if they are a little more developed they may do it to get peace of mind. See how much we have fallen. We do not worship to get God. We worship to get satisfaction or peace of mind, or some such thing. I will tell you another thing. Even a thief prays to his God before leaving his home at night to go for robbery. Look here, he prays to God to help him in this too! I was told that during the war all were praying for success in the war. In England the English people were praying in their churches for victory, while in Germany and Europe they were also praying for their own success in the war. You see this, how prayer is used."

"I have said prayer is begging. In prayer we do nothing else. It is all begging. God give me this, God give me that - it goes on. As we get more we want more, and so this begging is endless. I will tell you an enjoyable story. A sannyasi went to the Mughal Court to ask for some gifts from the Emperor. He was admitted but told to wait as the Emperor was at prayer. The sannyasi said he was himself a holy man, and so would like to sit by the Emperor if this was permissible. He was taken in and asked to sit outside the prayer room. He heard the great Emperor praying aloud, 'God give me victory over my enemies, give me more kingdoms to rule so that your greatness may be manifested on earth,' and so on. The sannyasi got up and started walking away. The Emperor turned round and asked him to wait, saying he would soon be free as his prayers were coming to an end. The sannyasi did not heed this but continued on his way. The Emperor asked him to stop and asked him why he was going. The sannyasi replied, 'I came to beg of you for some charity but I find you yourself are begging. What is the use of my begging from another beggar? I will beg from Him from whom you are begging!' And he departed." Master laughed hilariously when he concluded this story. Then he became serious and said, "Even when I joke there is meaning in it. You see this *tamasha* (joke) of a great Emperor being a beggar!"

Master continued, "You see, all this is a result of desires. Our desires have no limit. We get more, and then we want yet more, and this goes on and on. We only become bigger beggars, nothing else. So today we are a nation of beggars. We think of God only when we want something. God is never thought of for His own sake. Is this not foolishness? If we have God we will have everything, whereas when we possess material objects we only possess perishable things. Everything material will perish. It is only a question of time. We must look to imperishable things. Desire is not bad. I have said that *kama* or desire is not bad. Really speaking it is divine. Rather it is Divine creation. *Kama* and *krodha*, love and anger, are both divine. Only our desire must be for God and God alone. Then the desire is used rightly, as a force, to guide us to him. The same power of desire, if wrongly applied towards material possessions takes us away from Him.

It is so with all power. Power, by itself, is neither good nor bad. How it is applied or used is what determines the quality of its use. They say power corrupts, but I say power can elevate and liberate us if the power is used rightly. Power, by itself, neither corrupts nor makes us noble. It depends on the way power is used. That is why spiritual power is rarely given to persons until they are purified internally by the methods available in our *sanstha*. This is a very important thing. How can you blame a child if it cuts itself with a knife you have given it? That is why in our *sanstha* there are safeguards against misuse of power. In Sahaj Marg I may say this misuse is impossible. By Lalaji's grace we have a system of training where the abhyasi is purified as he progresses from stage to stage. What does this mean? As a person grows in spirituality he becomes purer too, so that at the highest levels he is absolutely pure. To such persons power can be safely entrusted. They will work under the guidance of the higher consciousness so that wrong use, deliberate or otherwise, is impossible. Normally you will find people applying power out of ego. Then power becomes dangerous. In such cases the power is used for self-importance and not for the good of others. You will see this everywhere. In such persons power of course will corrupt. To tell the truth it will add to the existing corruption. There has been no moral purification, no preparation of the ground. In fact such persons are not to be blamed. They work under the compulsion of their *samskaras*. Really speaking it is the fault of the persons who entrusted power to such people. You see how purity becomes very important for right work. Intelligence, wisdom, all these are good in their own way. They are also necessary up to a point. But purity is essential. Without it no real work can be done. You understand this? And here the heart alone can guide us. Just refer to the heart for guidance and it will give you the answer."

"This is the reason why we start with the heart in our *sanstha*. If the heart is purified then that purity extends throughout the system. The circulation is controlled by the heart. Really speaking this is where the process must really commence. Other points are there as have been taken up by other systems, such as the point of the nose, the point between the eyebrows and so on. But we start with the heart. We take up the heart for our work. Other points for concentration may be good for *siddhis*, for acquiring powers and for limited growth. When we take up the heart under our system we ensure that purification goes on side by side with spiritual progress. This cleaning is very important. Really speaking, at the earlier stages of *sadhana* under our *sanstha* it is very important to do this cleaning regularly. As the purification goes on by removing the impression of past *samskaras*, the possibility of progress is opened up. So this cleaning is very important. You remember the example I gave you of a case where I had to clean the impressions of a previous life? You see how deep these *samskaras* lie? It may be necessary to go back even more. That is why I say a true preceptor or trainer is one who can read the past life. Of course this may not be necessary in every case."

When Master spoke of the safeguards within the system I recalled an experience I had on the 15th February 1967, the day following Vasant Panchami. On Vasant

Panchami day I had been granted Provisional Permission by Master to transmit and train people in spirituality. This was at Shahjahanpur. The next day I arrived at Lucknow. One of our abhyasis from Lucknow came to know of my having been granted permission and requested me to give him a sitting. He wanted to be the first person to receive a transmission through me. I agreed, and we sat in meditation. I did not know what to do. I prayed to Master that the transmission may begin and whatever was supposed to happen may happen. After about ten minutes I suddenly had a vision which was as clear as if I was seeing it with my open eyes. I found myself sitting with the abhyasi in front of me. A wall was on my right. It had a door in it, which now opened to admit Master. Master walked through the open door with a chair in his hand, set the chair near me and sat down on it. He then proceeded to keenly observe what I was doing. After some moments the vision vanished. I recalled this to Master and Master said, "Yes, wherever a preceptor may work it always goes on under the Master's supervision. The power itself is the same whether I transmit or some other person transmits, but it is released according to the need of the abhyasi and according to the ability of the preceptor. It is a mighty force, and has to be carefully regulated. But you see it can do no harm. You have seen this yourself."

Master then related to me an experience of his own. Master had been greatly impressed by the love and devotion of one of the abhyasis who was even then a senior preceptor of the Mission. This abhyasi's love attracted Master very strongly towards him, and Master was restless to do something for him. Master said, "This person has great love for me. He is a man of great love and devotion. My heart was restless to give him something. He came to see me when I was at Vijayawada. I asked him to sit in meditation. I wanted to raise him seven points. Look here, seven points!! Do you understand what that means? Several lives are necessary for such progress. But his love was very great and I determined to do it. I moved him up one point, then two points. I had taken him up three points when I heard Lalaji's voice. Lalaji was angry with me. 'What are you doing?' my Master asked me. 'Do you want to destroy him? Stop this nonsense!'" Master laughed and said, "Of course I had to obey the Master. It was a direct order! Now you see the care that Master takes in the work? It is a very potent force, our transmission, and has to be used very carefully. But the checks are there. No harm can ever come from it! Later on the abhyasi wrote to me and said that for one month he had been having headache which was almost unbearable. But you know what he wrote? He wrote to me that even though he was suffering from the headache he prayed to me not to remove it because there was also some enjoyment in it! You see, in my excitement I had done this and it was too much. So Lalaji was taking care. I often do this in my eagerness to prepare persons. But the checks are there. No harm can ever come from it!"

To illustrate that the Master's supervision also works in the other direction of knowing the abhyasi's needs, I relate a personal experience of my own. Master had come to Madras and was staying with his son Chi. Umesh at Besant Nagar. I had gone there one morning to spend some time with him. We were just three or

four of us there. Master was preoccupied, morose and very taciturn. In fact he had been like that for the past few days and we were all worried about it. He is normally so cheerful and gay and lively that his moodiness worried us. We had been sitting silently for about an hour. Suddenly Master got up, with signs of urgency, and asked me, "Are you free? Can you come inside for a few minutes?" I was of course free and followed him into his bedroom. Master closed the door, spread a bed-sheet on the floor and asked me to sit on it facing his cot. Then, surprisingly, he himself put on his cap and sat down in a corner, also facing the cot. Master said, "Sit in meditation. Lalaji Saheb is here (pointing to the cot) and wishes to transmit to you!" I was awed, and sat in meditation. The sitting was one of the briefest, lasting hardly 3 minutes. Master said, "That is all," and I opened my eyes. Master appeared ecstatic. He came to me and said, "Sabash! I am very happy today. You know, I have been wanting to do something for you for the past three or four days, but I did not know how to do it. I was thinking about this when Lalaji said, 'Why are you worried about this? If you cannot do it send him in to me for a few minutes. I shall attend to it myself!'" Master was immensely pleased. He hugged me and said, "I am very pleased that you have been able to attract Lalaji's attention towards you. May you grow spiritually." I was too moved and choked with emotion to reply. I merely touched his feet in adoration. This was the first occasion when I had a direct transmission from Lalaji, the Grand Master. I am relating this to show that Master's watchfulness is not merely a negative check to prevent misuse of power. It is, on the contrary, a positive awareness to ensure correct and timely use of the Divine power for the spiritual benefit of the abhyasi. This is the sole consideration.

Several years ago I was made to participate in an event which dramatically emphasised this aspect of my Master's work - the care with which an abhyasi is looked after, and his inner needs satisfied. I had gone to Tiruchirapalli on some work and, having completed the work in the forenoon, I had the afternoon to myself. I decided to visit my maternal uncle who was then residing at Tiruvarur, about 50 miles away from Tiruchirapalli. I left Trichy at around 11 o'clock in the morning and arrived at Tiruvarur at 1 p.m. I started to hunt for my uncle's residence, which was not easy as I did not have his address. I had assumed that I would be able to easily locate his residence as I was under the impression that Tiruvarur was a small town. I had not visited Tiruvarur before. However, the job of finding my uncle proved more exhausting than I had expected. After inquiring at half-a-dozen post offices, and after calling at several addresses suggested by the postal authorities, I had to call off the search. I finally decided to leave Tiruvarur as it was already 4 o'clock, and I had to motor a long way back to Madurai.

I left the center of the small town, and took my road back. While driving through the market place I stopped for a drink as I was feeling very thirsty. I bought a drink from a small betel shop and, while I was drinking it, I was approached by a person whom I did not remember to have met before. He greeted me, and said that he was an abhyasi of the Mission. He said that the whole of the previous

night he had felt miserable and abandoned, and that he had spent the whole night weeping and praying for Master's Grace. Even as he was telling me this tears welled up in his eyes. He added, "Sir, you do not remember me. But I have seen you in Trichy two years ago when you came with Master. Here there is no center, and I feel totally abandoned. I feel that my tearful prayers of last night have brought you here. I am grateful to Master for sending you to me. I request you to kindly come to my room and give a sitting." I accompanied him to his room and gave him a sitting. He was profusely and sincerely grateful for this sign of Master's Grace.

After I left him and started on my way back to Madurai, I thought about this apparently trivial occurrence. I marveled at the whole matter, as it became evident to me that the whole thing had been planned, though not by me! The idea came to my mind that workers of the Mission and of the Master are really like mobile police squads, who are sent where required. I had come to Tiruvarur on my personal business, but Master had diverted me on His! Such is my Master's love for his abhyasis. This episode revealed to me that where there is true craving and yearning in the heart of an abhyasi, the Master's help is ever present, and unfailing in its work.