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# Sahaj Marg Study Group

## *The Role of the Guru*

Set 5, Handout 6 (From 'My Master', pages 119 - 144)

The guru occupies and plays a fundamental, decisive and all-pervasive role in the spiritual life of an aspirant. He may appear to be a mere guide playing a limited role at the commencement of practice but, in a perfect and growing guru-disciple relationship, his role becomes greater and greater, and encompasses more and more of the aspirant's life. Finally a culminating spiritual condition is reached where the aspirant's life, in its entirety, is governed and motivated by the guidance of the Master. This is the generally accepted position under Sahaj Marg.

When we study gurus, as such, we find that they range from simple teachers of ritual and scriptural texts at one end of the spectrum to the Supreme Guru of spirituality, one worthy of being called a Master, at the other end. In between these two extremes there are gurus of all shades of practice and precept, filling variegated roles including those of teacher, priest, mendicant, astrologer and so on. Many head organisations of their own, called *mutts*, while a large number are nomadic and wander the length and breadth of the land. The latter are often novices themselves, undergoing prescribed penances and practices in their own search for salvation. But since they wear the ochre robes of the sannyasi they are universally revered as gurus. As a matter of fact the institution of *sannyasa* can often be confusing as far as differentiating between a student and a teacher is concerned. The sannyasis form the bulk of gurus in India. The householder guru is not much in evidence, thanks largely to the teaching of *Advaita Vedanta* which, as interpreted by famous gurus of the past, prescribes celibacy as a rigid pre-condition for embarking on the spiritual quest. It is an important aspect of my Master's teaching that he has set out to make God available to all. And not merely that, my Master teaches that the householder is the person who can be expected to have in him the growing spirit of true spiritual *vairagya* or renunciation. Master has time and again stated that it is in the family environment that true *vairagya* is developed, while performing one's duties. The sannyasi system, on the contrary, encourages runaways and drop-outs, who seek the system merely as a refuge from the demands of a family existence. *Sannyasa* thus encourages weakness, and adds to the already exceedingly large number of itinerant wanderers who live off society without contributing anything significant in return. This is a burden that, in the present context, society can hardly continue to bear, in terms of both materiality and the higher life.

The common run of humanity in India knows that the religious life cannot even be commenced without prescribed initiatory rites being conducted by a priest. Into every individual's life a priest therefore finds entry sooner or later, and thereafter the priest generally becomes the guru of the members of the family which he has

summarily adopted. Under the prevailing conditions it is therefore common to find that most persons in India claim a personal guru among their cherished possessions. The guru is rarely changed because of superstitious fears of bad luck, or a fear of being cursed by the rejected guru. Such a guru generally becomes a patiently borne burden, and the religious life degenerates into a hypocritical bargaining game, the householder struggling to minimise his expenses on rituals, while the guru or priest uses all his wit, persuasion and battery of scriptural armaments in an effort to maximise his own income. The family deity is a mute witness to this religious battle of wits conducted in His very presence but, having been imprisoned inside an idol, can say very little about it. There are priests who sincerely believe in the supreme efficacy of rituals, and who perform rituals with complete faith without greed or avarice, but they are few.

All this is somewhat confusing particularly to people from outside India, especially to those on their first visit, who, after studying our literature, come to this country with a pre-established veneration for the institution of gurudom. Most of them are mystified when they find a small fraction of the population claiming to be world-gurus, heads of *mutts*, leaders of cults and sects, and teachers of yoga - and therefore gurus not merely by divine dispensation but in their own right too. The confusion is further magnified when they see even the disciples of such gurus parading as lesser gurus. Such confusion on the part of overseas visitors is not surprising because only a small and minute fraction of the Indian people themselves seems to be aware of the real qualifications a person must possess before he can become a guru. The confusion is so great that mere reciters of prayers, ochre-clad mendicants and astrologers and occasionally even the boss in the office have been adopted as gurus.

The guru is expected to take on the *karmic* burden of any person that he accepts as his disciple. In this *karma*-ridden land, people are generally very anxious to find a guru on whom to dump their accumulated load of *karma*. It would appear that almost anyone willing to accept this burden is therefore acceptable as a guru. People are unwilling to look deeper. There is rarely any positive aspiration to spiritual progress, the attitude generally being merely to get rid of accumulated *karma*. Since the office of guru traditionally carries pecuniary benefits and benefits in kind, the position is really attractive to a large number of persons who easily slip into this role. It is therefore not surprising that gurudom has deteriorated to a mere profession, and not a very noble one at that, attracting the least equipped persons to this high office. The majority are mere tricksters and charlatans who shamelessly deceive a gullible public, aided by a coterie of *chelas* or disciples whose sole duty is to loudly sing the glories of their lord and master while protecting him from the too inquisitive public gaze. This is the level to which this institution, once august, holy and venerated in the highest degree, has now degenerated. Notwithstanding the general corruption and lowering of standards, a few sincere and exalted souls do exist even today, who live disciplined and prayerful lives dedicated to the service of humanity.

However, all this in no degree reduces the real need for a guru of caliber to guide one's spiritual life and to aid in one's development. The need is as imperative as it ever was. But the search for a guru, in modern times, is a long, hazardous and complicated affair, which can even border on heart-break because it is worse than looking for the proverbial needle in the haystack! It is not surprising that many sincere souls have had to waste a considerable portion of their lives in such a search for a real guru.

One of our own associates from abroad told us of the saga of his own personal search, a saga of no mean proportions. He had come to India again and again some six or seven times with the sole intention of searching for, and locating, a person whom he could accept as his guru to guide him on his spiritual journey. On each of these visits he had spent several months visiting ashram after ashram, meeting guru after guru, journeying to holy places one after the other until, in his own words, he could hardly have missed a single ashram or guru of any importance or reputation between the Himalayas and Kanyakumari. His deep sorrow was that in this land renowned for spirituality he could not find one person whom he could whole-heartedly accept as his guru. He was on what he had decided would be his last visit to India, and had again gone around visiting ashrams and gurus. At the end of his travels, just 2 days prior to leaving this country for good, destiny led him to one of our preceptors, and thus his spiritual contact with Master was established. He has indeed been very fortunate in locating his guru, but for every successful search there are literally thousands where the persons have had bitter, frustrating and sometimes even tragic experiences. There are abhyasis with us who have spent a major portion of their lives in the search for a guru, many of whom have suffered loneliness, deprivation, impoverishment and even extreme humiliation before fate gave them the courage to break away and look afresh. Some have related harrowing tales of what happens within the closed confines of some of the 'ashrams', and the personal physical dangers that they had to face when breaking away from them. Some of these escapees have even been threatened with dire consequences if they did not give up their new association with my Master and return to the fold.

As far as finding a real guru of caliber is concerned, there is indeed poverty in this land of plenty, a land replete with gurus.

I had discussed this matter with Master on one occasion, pointing out to him the difficulties many of our abhyasis had to face. Master smiled quietly, but remained silent. I pressed him to say something. Master said, "The real search should be an inner search. A person may go from place to place all over the world, spending his whole life-time, and yet not succeed in finding a guru. The mistake we make is in looking, or searching for a guru. The right way is to **pray** for a guru. What should we do? We should pray direct to God, with deep longing in our hearts, that He may send us a worthy guide. And when we are ready for him the guru will himself knock on our door. I have told you how I got my Master. It is His Grace. So the search should really be one of prayer, an internal search, and then

success is assured." This should serve as an eye-opener to all who wish to follow the way of spiritual living and wish to look for a guide for this purpose.

One of our western abhyasis testifies to the efficacy of such an inward, prayerful search. This person had yearned for spiritual growth for many years but had been unable to find anyone to help. The person then fell into a mood of great despondency and despair. The divine spark in the heart was however quite active. The person made a solemn resolve to sit daily in prayer and to pray sincerely for a guru, and to do this exactly for one year. If the prayer should be answered, well and good. If not, well, the very aspiration to follow a spiritual way would be abandoned once and for all. The prayer was sincerely done every day. At this stage, 'miraculously' as the abhyasi said, contact was established with my father who was then in Rome. My father received a letter requesting him to go over to the abhyasi's home-town. How this person came to know of my father's presence in Rome was never divulged - it was, and continues to be, a mystery to him to this day. My father went there, gave this person several sittings, and established a center of the Mission at that place. This case is a clear and glorious testament to the efficacy of sincere and heart-felt prayer. The guru did come to the person. Agony was there, of course, as this person has told me again and again. But it was a personal and internal agony, cleansing and purifying in nature, capable of orienting the succeeding prayerful state in a definite direction. And success followed quickly. This clearly proves that what my Master told me is possible - if such proof should be needed.

One of the roles of a true guru would therefore appear to be that of awaiting the call of a devoted heart, and responding to it. When one goes deeper into this matter, one finds that even this is a superficial view. What really happens is that Master "prepares the field," as he puts it, by continued work of a spiritual nature. Receptive souls are attracted towards him, and the contact becomes a direct spiritual contact. It would be appropriate to say that the aspirant, ready for the spiritual path, waits at home in a prayerful attitude inviting the guru to come to him. This is the simplest and the best way, as one can rarely know even where to seek the guru, should one set out on a journey to seek him. "All things come to him who waits," says an old proverb, and this applies most pertinently to the coming of a guru into a person's life. The guru, on his part, is putting out spiritual feelers, as it were, and when the feeler finds a receptive person there is information fed back to the guru. He then commences the preparation of the abhyasi forthwith, by transmission. Physical contact between the guru and the disciple may come very much later. The exact time of occurrence of the personal relationship is unimportant in so far as the abhyasi's preparation is concerned. Frequent personal contact is largely for the abhyasi's personal satisfaction, and lack of such personal face-to-face contact in no way interferes with one's progress when one has a Master of caliber, capable of transmission, and who is himself in *Brahmalaya*.

That this is what happens is borne out by Master himself. Master told me of how he had started ritual *puja*, followed by yogic methods and so on, finally praying to

God to grant him a capable guru. He came to the divine feet of Lalaji when he was 22 years old. Some time later he came to know that Lalaji, wishing to know who would carry on his work, had meditated on this, and my Master's face had come up in his vision. Lalaji had immediately commenced transmission to the person he had seen in his vision. This was many years before they met. Master, correlating the times, discovered to his amazement that the time when Lalaji started transmitting to him coincided with the time when he commenced his own boyhood prayers in the prescribed ritual fashion under his mother's guidance. Master told me, "Had not Lalaji commenced his transmission to me, even the prayer may not have been performed by me. It was his transmission which awakened the impulse in me, and put me on the road to spirituality."

In one of his public lectures at Allahabad, Dr. Varadachari spoke about this aspect of spiritual life. He said, "My Master has been able to pick his men from all strata of society. I say 'pick' even though it seems to us that we walk in. When we contact him then a direct relationship, after a preliminary cleaning, is effected with the Divine." He also stated in his lecture that Master had told him, "Not only do I choose the man but, having drawn him to me, I give myself unto him." So the very first lesson we learn is that one who is eager to follow a spiritual way of life, and earnestly wants to hand himself over to a guru, should sit in prayer day after day and seek the guru in such prayer to the Almighty. The guru will then come to him when he is ready for him.

This, then, is the very first role of the guru. He prepares the field in such a way that his spiritual power flows into the selected field, finding a place in the receptive hearts of yearning aspirants. In such hearts the power of the Master immediately commences the work of transformation. The aspirant is not aware of this work being done on him. The guru works in secret until the time for a face-to-face meeting between him and the aspirant comes. At this stage the aspirant becomes a disciple, and becomes conscious of the work his Master is doing upon him. The work, so far carried on in secret, now comes out into the open. The seed has germinated underground, and the seedling has now put out its head into the glorious sunshine of the outer world! It is of the nature of cosmic work that creative processes are carried on in secret, away from the prying eyes of all but Mother Nature herself. This appears to be a universal law. When the creative process is completed then only is the result of that work made manifest. Thereafter the process is one of growth. The creative stage is over, the growth stage of the work comes on. This is precisely when the work is brought out into the open. We thus see that the most important aspect of Master's work, the preparation of the field of the work, and the seeding of the individuals therein, is carried on in that very secrecy which veils Nature herself!

This explains why my Master's work needs no publicity or propoganda for its furtherance. He works alone, using the Divine power placed at his command. The work is secret in its essential, creative aspect. Not only is publicity and propoganda unnecessary for this work, they may very possibly damage it if used

in the early stages of the work. It is worth noting that from the time Master commences preparing the field, to the time that the work develops in a public manner, the time interval is, or rather has been in the past, of the order of 20 to 25 years. I would not say this is standard, by any means. As the work develops it is sure to gain momentum, but the 'visible aspect' of the work, as the earlier analysis possibly indicates, is the growth stage. It is therefore only at this stage, when the work has been revealed to the public gaze, that the question of publicity invites consideration.

To illustrate this first stage of Master's work I would like to relate the case of a person who is now a senior preceptor of the Mission. It was about 15 years ago that this gentleman read a review of Master's *Reality at Dawn* in the newspapers. He wrote to Master, evincing interest in the Sahaj Marg method of yogic training offered by the book. Master replied that his services were at the disposal of this gentleman, and requested him to give the method a trial by sitting in meditation. Master requested this gentleman to give him prior information as to when he wanted to sit in meditation so that he could transmit at the appropriate time. Relating this story this gentleman told me, "When I got Master's letter I decided that while I would sit in meditation I would not give him prior information about it. After all he claimed to be able to impart the training by transmission. So why should I tell him in advance? In a sense I wanted to test him. Thinking like this I sat down to meditate the very next morning. It was a most wonderful experience. Within moments of my sitting I felt a tremendous power flowing into my heart. It was as if molten lead was being poured into me." This gentleman realised that Master was not dependent on his information to commence his work. His divine work had commenced much earlier. It was only necessary for the abhyasi to feel it by an act of conscious participation in the work.

In a sense this first stage is the most important stage of Master's work. In another sense it is also perhaps the stage which is easiest for him. At this level of functioning there is no resistance because the aspirant, being unaware of the work being done on him, cannot offer any resistance to the work. There is no conscious receptivity or co-operation called for since the aspirant is ignorant of the Master working upon him. His own yearning or craving acts as a powerful force which attracts Master's Grace into him, and this alone acts as the strong co-operative factor in enabling Master to work on him. The conscious wielder of spiritual power, the Master, has a degree of co-operation from his unknowing partner, the aspirant, which he but rarely receives in the later stages of his work. Once the Master's relationship with the aspirant becomes formalised and assumes the guru-disciple relationship the work comes out into the open. Then his problems really start. It is now that the disciple can resist the Master's work, consciously or otherwise. At this stage the disciple is aware of the fact that he is being worked upon. He begins to question the efficacy of the power, of the existence of the power, then the source of that power itself. He perhaps also begins to doubt the Master's ability. And so it goes on, doubt upon doubt, and then resistance grows. We see that at the conscious level the resistance can be

considerable. Yet it is not very difficult for the Master to overcome this resistance because conviction can be brought to the abhyasi by reasoning, by example and by asking him to observe the result of Master's work upon him. A degree of trust can thus be created which, as the work progresses from one level of consciousness to higher levels, from one level of being to yet higher levels, develops into faith, then into love, culminating finally in surrender. If, however, the resistance is subconscious then the work can be much more difficult and prolonged.

Master has aptly and graphically divided aspirants into two classes. One class is apparently highly co-operative at the conscious level, but the resistance is all inside, hard as a rock, and this class Master compares to the mango fruit which has a soft, pulpy exterior, but a hard stone inside. The other class of abhyasis are externally and consciously tough. It would appear that they do not agree with anything the Master says or does. Resistance appears to be considerable. Yet, inside, the co-operation is something extra-ordinary. Such individuals are compared to the almond which has a hard shell on the outside but a soft, sweet kernel inside.

If one is observant one can see this division among abhyasis clearly. There are abhyasis who are very pliant and soft, and apparently co-operate in the highest degree, but who make very slow progress, and in certain cases none at all. They stick on to the system year after year. In one such case I have even felt that a degree of injustice was being done to the abhyasi. He had been in the Mission for many years even when I first met him, but I found Master always very critical when talking to him. It was when I asked Master why such an apparently co-operative soul was being treated somewhat harshly that Master explained this point to me. "Look here," he said, "He is very soft and says he has surrendered completely to me. But inside he is like a rock. There is stubborn inner resistance. I have tried to help him but the transmission will not enter his heart. His heart is closed up. It is just reflected back. You see the problem? How to help such a person? It can be done but it is a very long process, and he has to be patient and try to create co-operation within himself." I was somewhat taken aback by this explanation. I asked Master how this sub-conscious resistance came up all of a sudden, particularly when the craving was strong enough to have brought him to Master. I could well understand that conscious resistance could crop up in one type of abhyasi. This is a normal occurrence in inter-personal relationship, and one which is easy to understand. But how could sub-conscious resistance crop up of a sudden? This was my perplexity. Master said, "I use the word sub-conscious merely as a common usage of this term to indicate that it is a state of mind of which the abhyasi is not aware or conscious. I don't like to use the word 'unconscious' because that has a different meaning altogether, though it is not really incorrect. I will explain it in a different way. It is the *samskaras* which are creating this resistance. Sometimes the *samskaras* are so deep that they are difficult to overcome. Regular cleaning is necessary for a long time. This is the effect of *samskaras* - I mean this resistance. So you see, such persons have to

be patient and try to create co-operation. There is one further difficulty. On the superficial or conscious level they are very anxious for development. But there should be no anxiety. Anxiety means doubt is combined with it. Craving is what is needed. A single-minded longing for realisation is what is needed. But these people mistake the surface anxiety for craving and co-operation, and so change of attitude becomes very difficult to bring about. When I tell them this thing, generally the resistance is further increased. Now what can I do? So I work in my own way - of course time will be taken for it."

This brings us to the second stage of Master's work - cleaning and purifying the abhyasi to make quick progress possible, and to consolidate that progress. What is it that is cleaned? Master's general answer is that the whole system has to be thoroughly cleaned. This includes the heart and the higher points one after the other. The main work is on the heart and the heart region where much of the *samskaric* residue lies buried in the form of grossness. Master teaches that when we act in any way - the word 'act' being taken in its widest meaning to include all sensory activity and mental activity - the action leaves an 'impression' which is called a *samskara* when it is very deep. It is clear that the superficial impressions are easily cleaned off. It is easy to wipe a slate and clean it. But it is not so with a gramophone record, for instance, where the impressions have been made deep enough to form permanent grooves. When we become 'involved' in our actions the danger of deep impressions being formed is much greater. The accumulated impressions which are in us form the *samskaric* burden of the past. This has to be cleaned by the Master by the use of his own spiritual power. As this cleaning proceeds the abhyasi experiences actual 'lightness' during his meditation sittings.

I had a personal problem in this connection which I once discussed with Master. When I first started meditation a great number of thoughts used to come up and intrude but, on following Master's technique of not attending to thoughts, the inrush of thoughts became progressively reduced until I could experience intervals of thoughtlessness. But, and this was my problem, after a few years of *sadhana* I suddenly found thoughts of a most sordid and vile nature coming during meditation. Naturally I was considerably perturbed because I was apprehensive that this might indicate not progress but regress. Master quickly cleared the problem up for me. He said, "You see, the dust that settles every day on the table can be easily dusted off. It is superficial and easy to remove. Suppose ink has been poured on the table and allowed to soak, then the cleaning is more difficult. So the nature of the impression makes the difference. Now I tell you one more thing. We sometimes have bad thoughts, I mean consciously. We feel ashamed and push them down. Now the very bad or worst thoughts are hidden away deep inside the mind. So in cleaning they may come up last of all. In your case this is what has happened. You should be happy that these vile thoughts have been removed at last. Progress will be quicker now. Do you understand this? It is like a pond. The leaves and dust float on its surface and can be easily removed. But heavy dirt sinks down, and effort is necessary. So in cleaning it comes up last. So there is nothing to worry about. But I am telling you it is important to remove the day's accumulation the same day itself.



Otherwise tomorrow it will have become a little more hard and solid, and require more effort. That is why I prescribe daily cleaning by the abhyasis themselves. This process, if correctly followed, will remove the day's accumulation. The rest is the Master's work. So you see the importance of daily cleaning?"

On one occasion, several years after I had commenced *sadhana*, I went to Shahjahanpur. Master had been telling me that my progress was good and that he was generally very satisfied with it. He gave me an individual sitting which lasted over half-an-hour. At the end of it he said, "Now I have cleaned your system and removed the grossness." I was a bit perturbed to hear this because I felt that there could not be much need for cleaning. I told Master that I had done nothing consciously which could have added grossness to my system. He had also been writing to me praising my progress. I requested him to explain how this grossness had now come into me to need cleaning. Master laughed and said, "You should not worry about this. It was not much, but you know I am a perfectionist and I cannot bear to see even a single dark spot in the system. I will tell you one thing. On a black shirt a dirty patch or spot will not show, but on a clean white shirt even the smallest drop of ink will stand out and invite attention to itself. Anyway it is my concern and you should not worry about it." But I pressed Master for an answer as to how this grossness came into being. Master replied, "However pure our action, some impression is always there. This is inevitable at the human level. I also get grossness, which my Master cleans whenever necessary. Another thing I am telling you. When we sit in meditation there is a craving in the heart for something. This creates a vacuum, and grossness from the surrounding atmosphere is attracted and becomes deposited on us. A person who is meditating properly therefore accumulates some grossness like this also. That is why if there is one saint of caliber in a country it is enough. He attracts all the grossness of the whole place and takes it upon himself. That is why I have said that a saint is the target for the world's sorrows! I will tell you another thing which is very surprising. Grossness can actually come from the parents and forefathers too! I have found this in several cases, where the grossness has been handed down like that. So you see, this can happen in several ways but you should not worry about it." This ended the discussion.

At a subsequent discussion Master emphasised the importance of cleaning as related to progress. Master said, "By Lalaji's Grace we have a method of training which I can say is of unsurpassed efficacy. Do you know what makes it such a wonderful and easy system? It is the cleaning process followed under Sahaj Marg. Really speaking it is our past impressions which hold us down and create patterns of behaviour which we are unable to modify. We are the slaves of our past. We think we are free to think and act as we like but, truly speaking, this is a fallacy. We are conditioned in everything by the past. Now how to change a person under these conditions? This is Lalaji's greatness that by this process of cleaning he makes it possible to completely remove the effects of the past, in stages of course. You see what a great boon this is. What is the use of telling a person he must change? Of course everyone would like to change, but it is not

possible. Why? Because the mind is conditioned by the past. So you see, change can come only by cleaning the mind of past impressions. This makes it possible for the abhyasi to be slowly liberated from his past. Really speaking this is our only bondage. Our past impressions create tendencies in us which we find difficult to change. When the impressions are cleared, the tendency can be changed easily and, in many cases, automatically. Then thought and action become correct and natural. Therefore to transmit is not enough. Cleaning is very important. Otherwise the abhyasi may progress but the danger of fall is always there because the impressions of the past can drag him back. If progress is to be made permanent, purification of the system is essential. That is why I ask our preceptors to pay more attention to this aspect of the work. It is a very important aspect. But much hard work is necessary particularly at the lower stages. So sometimes there is a tendency to ignore this, but then that is a dis-service to the abhyasi. We are here to serve the abhyasi, and if cleaning is neglected then we are not really serving him. This I tell again and again to our preceptors."

This subject of cleaning crops up again and again in my discussions with Master. It is a process to which he gives the greatest importance, and to which he also ascribes great efficacy. At one such discussion session I asked Master how long this need for cleaning would exist. Master laughed and said, "This depends on you. If there is complete co-operation then the work is easy. Suppose I go on cleaning and the abhyas goes on adding more and more grossness, than what can I do? So you see the abhyasi must co-operate too. He must modify his life in such a way that it is helpful to his progress. To remove past accumulations is the Master's work. But the abhyasi should be alert that he does not add more grossness by his own thoughts and actions. So this alertness is necessary. And if the daily process of self-cleaning is followed, then by Lalaji's grace a stage can be reached when the formation of impressions no longer takes place, and *samskara* formation stops. This is a very high stage, but really speaking it is but the start of the journey. Once *samskara* formation stops then the goal is in sight. The past accumulations may be there, some residue of it, but that is Master's responsibility. But I tell you one more thing. As long as we are in this body some grossness will always be there. If the system becomes completely pure then life cannot remain here. But (laughing) we should not create grossness in ourselves to prolong our lives! But when *samskara* formation stops it is a sign that the goal is coming near us. Then the person lives and works normally in every way but no impressions are formed. This is the condition which I have called the 'living dead!' But to arrive at this condition the abhyasi must co-operate. How to do this? I will tell you. Suppose I see a beautiful rose, I admire it. There is nothing wrong in it. But I must not look at it again and again and create strong impressions of its beauty. Then the impression forms on the mind. If the impression is strong enough we want to go back again and see it, and this further strengthens the impressions. Then the desire to possess it comes into play, and if we yield to it, action begins. So you see a simple thought, if allowed to go on unchecked, can lead on and on to action, and then its result, I mean the result of that action, must

inevitably follow. So a train of events is set up and we are caught up in it. That is why we must be very alert."

Master has clarified that by impressions he means both good and bad ones. Good impressions are no better than bad ones. Both are equally undesirable as they create impediments to progress. This is a pointer to an important aspect of Master's teaching. A good life, one that has been conducted on principles of good conduct, charity, adherence to religious codes etc., is not sufficient to make 'spiritual progress' possible. For this something more than a life of mere social and ethical goodness is necessary. All these form *samskaras*. Such a life may grant a better future life, but our aim is liberation. So all these concepts are of no value to the abhyasi under the Sahaj Marg system. To what ultimate levels this applies was revealed to me when I once discussed the religious practice of reciting sacred *mantras* into the ears of a dying person. Such *mantras* are called *karna mantras* and are said to be highly effective in guiding the departing soul on its onward journey to its goal. The *mantras* are said to work even if spoken into the ears of an unconscious person who is dying. The only stipulation is that the person be not dead. I asked Master about this. Master became pensive. He said, "Because you are asking me sincerely I will tell you. There is no use in this for spiritual progress. Yes, it may grant the person a better re-birth, but what is the use of that? Our idea is not to be reborn, however good the next life may be. Our aim is liberation. Now I am telling you the correct thing. At death the mind should be made a complete blank. No thoughts must be allowed to come into it, not even of gods or anything like that. It must be made completely blank so that at death it can merge with the Source where the condition is that of nothingness. And I tell you, for the abhyasis of our *sanstha* this is very easy because this is what they are taught to do every time they sit in meditation. To us this becomes second nature. When we sit in meditation the mind becomes thoughtless, and so what we are experiencing, to put it in one way, is a condition somewhat like that at death. You may call it a condition of death-in-life if you like. So when the time comes we automatically get into this state of mind, and there is no impediment even at the last moment. Now you see how much harm this *karna mantra* can do? It is actually a method of dragging the soul back to this existence instead of allowing it to go on its way. If I tell this to the pundits they will pounce upon me! But this is the correct thing that I am telling you."

That the cleaning is not confined to the individual human system has already been apparent. A saint 'attracts' grossness from the atmosphere onto himself. He acts like a cosmic vacuum cleaner. So cleaning of the atmosphere is another important aspect of Master's work. As the environment is so purified the effect on people's minds is significant. Right thoughts come to people's minds, and so pure actions, or right actions, follow naturally. Thus by acting on a cosmic level the individual is benefited. In turn as the individual's spiritual condition improves he affects the environment. And so this goes on. What began at the cosmic level as field preparation culminates once again in the cosmic level after having gone through the level of the individual. What happens to all the grossness cleaned off in the process? Preceptors are instructed only to remove it and throw it out. What

then happens to this? Is there any way of destroying this? This was the question I asked Master. Master answered that such grossness could be burnt up, but only the Special Personality could do it! The Special Personality alone has the power necessary to burn it up and destroy grossness. All others can only remove it and throw it out somewhere.

Growth has to be nourished. There can be no growth without proper nourishment. This is the third role of the Master, that he 'feeds' the abhyasis with his spiritual transmission and nourishes them, so that growth continues to be strong and healthy. What we call transmission Master once defined as 'spiritual food.' The body lives and grows at the physical level, and so sustains itself on physical foods. The soul, being spiritual in nature, needs food of that plane. I once asked Master whether the transmission was the same in quality or whether it differed with the abhyasi's condition. Master answered that there could be no change in it as it is the subtlest force or power of Divinity, and hence unchanging. I was a bit puzzled as to how the same power could do everything Master claimed it could achieve, at all levels of development. I put this question to Master. Master laughed amusedly and said, "When we plant a seed we water it; when it comes up as a small seedling we water it; when it is a strong plant we water it; and we go on watering it all its life. The same water achieves the growth of the plant stage after stage."

On a different occasion Master described transmission in terms other than what I have stated above. He said, "The body is alive only because the soul is in it. At death the soul flies away, and then we say the person is dead, and call the body a corpse. So the body lives by the soul. How does the soul live? I will tell you. The soul lives by transmission which we can think of as the essence of Divinity. Dr. Varadachari has called this 'Soul of the soul.' It is a correct description that he has given. He told me in Sanskrit it is *pranasya pranaha* which means the soul of the soul. So, really speaking, without transmission the soul is like a dead thing. The very first transmission makes the soul alive. It is the touch of Divinity itself. I am telling you a wonderful thing. Even a single transmission can make a great difference in a person's future. One transmission from a Master of caliber can transform a person instantly. The power is the same. But the will must be there. **There must be an unfailing will.** Then the result is wonderful. Really speaking this is the most important thing, that a trainer in spirituality must possess an unfailing will. I am telling you one more thing. When we doubt the efficacy of the power of transmission it really means we are doubting our Master. Then the work suffers. The power can be given by the Master, but you have to develop will power yourself. After all, in using any instrument force has to be applied. Suppose you want to cut wood and I give you a saw. The saw has to be moved with the full force of your arm. Then only will it cut the wood. Do you follow this? So an instrument alone is not sufficient. You have to use the force of your will to make it work effectively. Really speaking whether I transmit or a preceptor transmits, the result should be the same. But if will is not behind the transmission then the work is not properly done. So the abhyasi feels the difference."

The transmission is thus the only spiritually elevating power. This enables the abhyasi to grow from stage to stage, passing through region after region of spiritual existence, and so on to the Goal. Right through this divine journey the Master's active help and guidance are essential. This is unique in Sahaj Marg that the guru's role lasts until the abhyasi has been taken up to the highest level of spiritual existence open to mankind. In fact the need for the guru is progressively more as we grow. Master once explained why this is so. Master said, "As the abhyasi grows, the transmission and cleaning make yet higher approaches open to him. But at the higher approaches a resistance develops from above. It is as if nature opposes his development. Here the Master has to use the power at his disposal to take the abhyasi to the higher level. The abhyasi by himself cannot undertake this. There are certain regions where the abhyasi cannot even enter by himself. I will tell you one more thing. There are regions which no person can cross by himself. Only a capable guide who is in *laya* with the Ultimate, and who has traveled the path himself, can do it. At such stages the Master takes the abhyasi *inside himself* and crosses the region, and then brings the abhyasi out again to continue the journey under Master's guidance and supervision. Dr. Varadachari used to joke about this and say, 'The Master is like a kangaroo!' You know, the kangaroo has a special pouch into which it puts the baby kangaroo when there is any danger. So this is what the Master has to do for his abhyasi whenever it becomes necessary." This exposes to our understanding yet another role of the Master, that of protector.

We thus arrive at a broad understanding of Master's several roles which are those of field preparation, seeding of the individual's heart, nourishing the growth of the abhyasi, and protecting him on his spiritual journey until the goal is in sight. At this stage the abhyasi, according to Master, should have crossed into the central region, and also crossed several rings of the seven rings of splendour in that region. The Master takes him yet further until all the rings are crossed. After this nothing remains but to swim on and on towards the Center in what Master calls the Ocean of Bliss. According to Master, at this stage the abhyasi is put in direct contact with God. In so far as the abhyasi is concerned, this then is the culmination of the Master's role in his *sadhana*.

I however believe that even though the abhyasi may now be in direct contact with God his relationship with the Master does not cease to exist since, by its very nature, it is a spiritually and eternally enduring one.

I recently discussed this aspect of an abhyasi's link with the Master even after the Master has connected him to God. Master was not willing to give a direct answer, but suggested that at this stage it was up to the abhyasi to retain his link with the Master, or to go on by himself. Master said, "For those who need the Master's help even beyond that stage it is always available." With this pregnant statement he became silent! Sister Kasturi was present. She told me that even at the highest stages of spirituality the possibility of ego developing could not be ruled

out. And the direct link with God, established for the abhyasi by the Master, could lead to ego if the abhyasi was not careful and level-headed. "After all, how is the direct connection with God established?" she asked. "It is by the Grace of the Master alone that this is possible. So how does the question of severing one's link with the Master ever arise? I feel that when Master makes such a statement to an abhyasi, he is really testing the abhyasi. At this stage we have to be extremely cautious and see that we do not indulge in the supreme mistake of abandoning Master." She then related to me a vision of hers relating to this subject. On one occasion Master had told her that a certain abhyasi had been connected direct to God. However, when she studied the matter, it appeared to her in her vision that as the soul of the abhyasi approached God, it was thrown back to Master. When the soul of the abhyasi strove to approach God once again, the same thing was repeated - the soul was thrown back to the Master. Sister Kasturi said, "See, brother, this was a direct revelation that the Master's role never ends; not even after an abhyasi's link with God is established! Because the journey to the Goal is, in a sense, an endless one. We are always approaching the Center, coming nearer and nearer to it, but we can never be at the Center itself. That can happen only at the time of *mahapralaya* when everything is drawn back into the Center."

My own belief is that if an abhyasi has sincerely and devotedly loved the Master, then there can never be any thought of cutting his link with the Master. The true connection with Master is therefore an eternal one, whatever stage of spiritual growth the abhyasi may have attained, since the need for Master's help and guidance is ever present.