

# I AM THAT

## Excerpts

### 1. The Sense of 'I am'

Questioner: It is a matter of daily experience that on waking up the world suddenly appears. Where does it come from?

M: Before anything can come into being there must be somebody to whom it comes. All appearance and disappearance presupposes a change against some changeless background.

Q: Before waking up I was unconscious.

M: In what sense? Having forgotten, or not having experienced? Don't you experience even when unconscious? Can you exist without knowing? A lapse in memory: is it a proof of non-existence?

And can you validly talk about your own non-existence as an actual experience? You cannot even say that your mind did not exist. Did you not wake up on being called? And on waking up, was it not the sense 'I am' that came first? Some seed consciousness must be existing even during sleep, or swoon. On waking up the experience runs: 'I am -- the body -- in the world.' It may appear to arise in succession but in fact it is all simultaneous, a single idea of having a body in a world. Can there be the sense of 'I am' without being somebody or other?

Q: I am always somebody with its memories and habits. I know no other 'I am'.

M: Maybe something prevents you from knowing? When you do not know something which others know, what do you do?

Q: I seek the source of their knowledge under their instruction.

M: Is it not important to you to know whether you are a mere body, or something else? Or, maybe nothing at all? Don't you see that all your problems are your body's problems -- food, clothing, shelter, family, friends, name, fame, security, survival -- all these lose their meaning the moment you realise that you may not be a mere body.

Q: What benefit is there in knowing that I am not the body?

M: Even to say that you are not the body is not quite true. In a way you are all the bodies, hearts and minds and much more. Go deep into the sense of 'I am' and you will find. How do you find a thing you have mislaid or forgotten? You keep it in your mind until you recall it. The sense of being, of 'I am' is the first to emerge. Ask yourself whence it comes, or just watch it quietly. When the mind stays in the 'I am' without moving, you enter a state which cannot be verbalised but can be experienced. All you need to do is try and try again. After all the sense 'I am' is always with you, only you have attached all kinds of things to it -- body, feelings, thoughts, ideas, possessions etc. All these self-identifications are misleading. Because of them you take yourself to be what you are not.

Q: Then what am I?

M: It is enough to know what you are not. You need not know what you are. For as long as knowledge means description in terms of what is already known, perceptual, or conceptual, there can be no such thing as self-knowledge, for what you are cannot be described, except as except as total negation. All you can say is: 'I am not this, I am not that'. You cannot meaningfully say 'this is what I am'. It just makes no sense. What you can point out as 'this' or 'that' cannot be yourself.

Surely, you can not be 'something' else. You are nothing perceivable, or imaginable. Yet, without you there can be neither perception nor imagination. You observe the heart feeling, the mind thinking, the body acting; the very act of perceiving shows that you are not what you perceive. Can there be perception, experience without you? An experience must 'belong'. Somebody must come and declare it as his own. Without an experiencer the experience is not real. It is the experiencer that imparts reality to experience. An experience which you cannot have, of what value is it to you?

Q: The sense of being an experiencer, the sense of 'I am', is it not also an experience?

M: Obviously, every thing experienced is an experience. And in every experience there arises the experiencer of it. Memory creates the illusion of continuity. In reality each experience has its own experiencer and the sense of identity is due to the common factor at the root of all experiencer-experience relations. Identity and continuity are not the same. Just as each flower

has its own colour, but all colours are caused by the same light, so do many experiences appear in the undivided and indivisible awareness, each separate in memory, identical in essence. This essence is the root, the foundation, the timeless and spaceless 'possibility' of all experience.

Q: How do I get at it?

M: You need not get at it, for you are it. It will get at you, if you give it a chance. Let go your attachment to the unreal and the real will swiftly and smoothly step into its own. Stop imagining yourself being or doing this or that and the realisation that you are the source and heart of all will dawn upon you. With this will come great love which is not choice or predilection, nor attachment, but a power which makes all things love-worthy and lovable.

## 2. Obsession with the body

Questioner: Maharaj, you are sitting in front of me and I am here at your feet. What is the basic difference between us?

Maharaj: There is no basic difference.

Q: Still there must be some real difference, I come to you, you do not come to me.

M: Because you imagine differences, you go here and there in search of 'superior' people.

Q: You too are a superior person. You claim to know the real, while I do not.

M: Did I ever tell you that you do not know and, therefore, you are inferior? Let those who invented such distinctions prove them. I do not claim to know what you do not. In fact, I know much less than you do.

Q: Your words are wise, your behaviour noble, your grace all-powerful.

M: I know nothing about it all and see no difference between you and me. My life is a succession of events, just like yours. Only I am detached and see the passing show as a passing show, while you stick to things and move along with them.

Q: What made you so dispassionate?

M: Nothing in particular. It so happened that I trusted my Guru. He told me I am nothing but my self and I believed him. Trusting him, I behaved accordingly and ceased caring for what was not me, nor mine.

Q: Why were you lucky to trust your teacher fully, while our trust is nominal and verbal?

M: Who can say? It happened so. Things happen without cause and reason and, after all, what does it matter, who is who? Your high opinion of me is your opinion only. Any moment you may change it. Why attach importance to opinions, even your own?

Q: Still, you are different. Your mind seems to be always quiet and happy. And miracles happen round you.

M: I know nothing about miracles, and I wonder whether nature admits exceptions to her laws, unless we agree that everything is a miracle. As to my mind, there is no such thing. There is consciousness in which everything happens. It is quite obvious and within the experience of everybody. You just do not look carefully enough. Look well, and see what I see.

Q: What do you see?

M: I see what you too could see, here and now, but for the wrong focus of your attention. You give no attention to your self. Your mind is all with things, people and ideas, never with your self. Bring your self into focus, become aware of your own existence. See how you function, watch the motives and the results of your actions. Study the prison you have built around yourself by inadvertence. By knowing what you are not, you come to know your self. The way back to your self is through refusal and rejection. One thing is certain: the real is not imaginary, it is not a product of the mind. Even the sense 'I am' is not continuous, though it is a useful pointer; it shows where to seek, but not what to seek. Just have a good look at it. Once you are convinced that you cannot say truthfully about your self anything except 'I am', and that nothing that can be pointed at, can be your self, the need for the 'I am' is over -- you are no longer intent on verbalising what you are. All you need is to get rid of

the tendency to define your self. All definitions apply to your body only and to its expressions. Once this obsession with the body goes, you will revert to your natural state, spontaneously and effortlessly. The only difference between us is that I am aware of my natural state, while you are bemused. Just like gold made into ornaments has no advantage over gold dust, except when the mind makes it so, so are we one in being -- we differ only in appearance. We discover it by being earnest, by searching, enquiring, questioning daily and hourly, by giving one's life to this discovery.

### 3. The Living Present

Questioner: As I can see, there is nothing wrong with my body nor with my real being. Both are not of my making and need not be improved upon. What has gone wrong is the 'inner body', call it mind, consciousness, antahkarana, whatever the name.

Maharaj: What do you consider to be wrong with your mind?

Q: It is restless, greedy of the pleasant and afraid of the unpleasant.

M: What is wrong with its seeking the pleasant and shirking the unpleasant? Between the banks of pain and pleasure the river of life flows. It is only when the mind refuses to flow with life, and gets stuck at the banks, that it becomes a problem. By flowing with life I mean acceptance -- letting come what comes and go what goes. Desire not, fear not, observe the actual, as and when it happens, for you are not what happens, you are to whom it happens. Ultimately even the observer you are not. You are the ultimate potentiality of which the all-embracing consciousness is the manifestation and expression.

Q: Yet, between the body and the self there lies a cloud of thoughts and feelings, which neither server the body nor the self. These thoughts and feelings are flimsy, transient and meaningless, mere mental dust that blinds and chokes, yet they are there, obscuring and destroying.

M: Surely, the memory of an event cannot pass for the event itself. Nor can the anticipation. There is something exceptional, unique, about the present event, which the previous, or the coming do not have. There is a livingness about it, an actuality; it stands out as if illuminated. There is the 'stamp of reality' on the actual, which the past and the future do not have.

Q: What gives the present that 'stamp of reality'?

M: There is nothing peculiar in the present event to make it different from the past and future. For a moment the past was actual and the future will become so. What makes the present so different? Obviously, my presence. I am real for I am always now, in the present, and what is with me now shares in my reality. The past is in memory, the future -- in imagination. There is nothing in the present event itself that makes it stand out as real. It may be some simple, periodical occurrence, like the striking of the clock. In spite of our knowing that the successive strokes are identical, the present stroke is quite different from the previous one and the next -- as remembered, or expected. A thing focussed in the now is with me, for I am ever present; it is my own reality that I impart to the present event.

Q: But we deal with things remembered as if they were real.

M: We consider memories, only when they come into the present The forgotten is not counted until one is reminded -- which implies, bringing into the now.

Q: Yes, I can see there is in the now some unknown factor that gives momentary reality to the transient actuality.

M: You need not say it is unknown, for you see it in constant operation. Since you were born, has it ever changed? Things and thoughts have been changing all the time. But the feeling that what is now is real has never changed, even in dream.

Q: In deep sleep there is no experience of the present reality.

M: The blankness of deep sleep is due entirely to the lack of specific memories. But a general memory of well-being is there. There is a difference in feeling when we say 'I was deeply asleep' from 'I was absent'.

Q: We shall repeat the question we began with: between life's source and life's expression (which is the body), there is the mind and its ever-changeable states. The stream of mental states is endless, meaningless and painful. Pain is the constant factor. What we call pleasure is but a gap, an interval between two painful states. Desire and fear are the weft and warp of living, and both are made of pain. Our question is: can there be a happy mind?

M: Desire is the memory of pleasure and fear is the memory of pain. Both make the mind restless. Moments of pleasure are merely gaps in the stream of pain. How can the mind be happy?

Q: That is true when we desire pleasure or expect pain. But there are moments of unexpected, unanticipated joy. Pure joy, uncontaminated by desire -- unsought, undeserved, God-given.

M: Still, joy is joy only against a background of pain.

Q: Is pain a cosmic fact, or purely mental?

M: The universe is complete and where there is completeness, where nothing lacks, what can give pain?

Q: The Universe may be complete as a whole, but incomplete in details.

M: A part of the whole seen in relation to the whole is also complete. Only when seen in isolation it becomes deficient and thus a seat of pain. What makes for isolation?

Q: Limitations of the mind, of course. The mind cannot see the whole for the part.

M: Good enough. The mind, by its very nature, divides and opposes. Can there be some other mind, which unites and harmonises, which sees the whole in the part and the part as totally related to the whole?

Q: The other mind -- where to look for it?

M: In the going beyond the limiting, dividing and opposing mind. In ending the mental process as we know it. When this comes to an end, that mind is born.

Q: In that mind, the problem of joy and sorrow exist no longer?

M: Not as we know them, as desirable or repugnant. It becomes rather a question of love seeking expression and meeting with obstacles. The inclusive mind is love in action, battling against circumstances, initially frustrated, ultimately victorious.

Q: Between the spirit and the body, is it love that provides the bridge?

M: What else? Mind creates the abyss, the heart crosses it.

#### **4. Real World is Beyond the Mind**

Questioner: On several occasions the question was raised as to whether the universe is subject to the law of causation, or does it exist and function outside the law. You seem to hold the view that it is uncaused, that everything, however small, is uncaused, arising and disappearing for no known reason whatsoever.

Maharaj: Causation means succession in time of events in space, the space being physical or mental. Time, space, causation are mental categories, arising and subsiding with the mind.

Q: As long as the mind operates, causation is a valid law.

M: Like everything mental, the so-called law of causation contradicts itself. No thing in existence has a particular cause; the entire universe contributes to the existence of even the smallest thing; nothing could be as it is without the universe being what it is. When the source and ground of everything is the only cause of everything, to speak of causality as a universal law is wrong. The universe is not bound by its content, because its potentialities are infinite; besides it is a manifestation, or expression of a principle fundamentally and totally free.

Q: Yes, one can see that ultimately to speak of one thing being the only cause of another thing is altogether wrong. Yet, in actual life we invariably initiate action with a view to a result.

M: Yes, there is a lot of such activity going on, because of ignorance. 'Would people know that nothing can happen unless the entire universe makes it happen, they would achieve much more with less expenditure of energy.'

Q: If everything is an expression of the totality of causes, how can we talk of a purposeful action towards an achievement?

M: The very urge to achieve is also an expression of the total universe. It merely shows that the energy potential has risen at a particular point. It is the illusion of time that makes you talk of causality. When the past and the future are seen in the timeless now, as parts of a common pattern, the idea of cause-effect loses its validity and creative freedom takes its place.

Q: Yet, I cannot see how can anything come to be without a cause.

M: When I say a thing is without a cause, I mean it can be without a particular cause. Your own mother was needed to give you birth; But you could not have been born without the sun and the earth. Even these could not have caused your birth without your own desire to be born. It is desire that gives birth, that gives name and form. The desirable is imagined and wanted and manifests itself as something tangible or conceivable. Thus is created the world in which we live, our personal world. The real world is beyond the mind's ken; we see it through the net of our desires, divided into pleasure and pain, right and wrong, inner and outer. To see the universe as it is, you must step beyond the net. It is not hard to do so, for the net is full of holes.

Q: What do you mean by holes? And how to find them?

M: Look at the net and its many contradictions. You do and undo at every step. You want peace, love, happiness and work hard to create pain, hatred and war. You want longevity and overeat, you want friendship and exploit. See your net as made of such contradictions and remove them -- your very seeing them will make them go.

Q: Since my seeing the contradiction makes it go, is there no causal link between my seeing and its going?

M: Causality, even as a concept, does not apply to chaos.

Q: To what extent is desire a causal factor?

M: One of the many. For everything there are innumerable causal factors. But the source of all that is, is the Infinite Possibility, the Supreme Reality, which is in you and which throws its power and light and love on every experience. But, this source is not a cause and no cause is a source. Because of that, I say everything is uncaused. You may try to trace how a thing happens, but you cannot find out why a thing is as it is. A thing is as it is, because the universe is as it is.

## **5. What is Born must Die**

Questioner: Is the witness-consciousness permanent or not?

Maharaj: It is not permanent. The knower rises and sets with the known. That in which both the knower and the known arise and set, is beyond time. The words permanent or eternal do not apply.

Q: In sleep there is neither the known, nor the knower. What keeps the body sensitive and receptive?

M: Surely you cannot say the knower was absent. The experience of things and thoughts was not there, that is all. But the absence of experience too is experience. It is like entering a dark room and saying: 'I see nothing'. A man blind from birth knows not what darkness means. Similarly, only the knower knows that he does not know. Sleep is just a lapse in memory. Life goes on.

Q: And what is death?

M: It is the change in the living process of a particular body. Integration ends and disintegration sets in.

Q: But what about the knower. With the disappearance of the body, does the knower disappear?

M: Just as the knower of the body appears at birth, so he disappears at death.

Q: And nothing remains?

M: Life remains. Consciousness needs a vehicle and an instrument for its manifestation. When life produces another body, another knower comes into being,

Q: Is there a causal link between the successive bodyknowers, or body-minds?

M: Yes, there is something that may be called the memory body, or causal body, a record of all that was thought, wanted and done. It is like a cloud of images held together

Q: What is this sense of a separate existence?

M: It is a reflection in a separate body of the one reality. In this reflection the unlimited and the limited are confused and taken to be the same. To undo this confusion is the purpose of Yoga.

Q: Does not death undo this confusion?

M: In death only the body dies. Life does not, consciousness does not, reality does not. And the life is never so alive as after death.

Q: But does one get reborn?

M: What was born must die. Only the unborn is deathless. Find what is it that never sleeps and never wakes, and whose pale reflection is our sense of 'I'.

Q: How am I to go about this finding out?

M: How do you go about finding anything? By keeping your mind and heart in it. Interest there must be and steady remembrance. To remember what needs to be remembered is the secret of success. You come to it through earnestness.

Q: Do you mean to say that mere wanting to find out is enough? Surely, both qualifications and opportunities are needed.

M: These will come with earnestness. What is supremely important is to be free from contradictions: the goal and the way must not be on different levels; life and light must not quarrel; behaviour must not betray belief. Call it honesty, integrity, wholeness; you must not go back, undo, uproot, abandon the conquered ground. Tenacity of purpose and honesty in pursuit will bring you to your goal.

Q: Tenacity and honesty are endowments, surely! Not a trace of them I have.

M: All will come as you go on. Take the first step first. All blessings come from within. Turn within. 'I am' you know. Be with it all the time you can spare, until you revert to it spontaneously. There is no simpler and easier way.

## 6. Meditation

Questioner: All teachers advise to meditate. What is the purpose of meditation?

Maharaj: We know the outer world of sensations and actions, but of our inner world of thoughts and feelings we know very little. The primary purpose of meditation is to become conscious of, and familiar with, our inner life. The ultimate purpose is to reach the source of life and consciousness. Incidentally practice of meditation affects deeply our character. We are slaves to what we do not know; of what we know we are masters. Whatever vice or weakness in ourselves we discover and understand its causes and its workings, we overcome it by the very knowing; the unconscious dissolves when brought into the conscious. The dissolution of the unconscious releases energy; the mind feels adequate and become quiet.

Q: What is the use of a quiet mind?

M: When the mind is quiet, we come to know ourselves as the pure witness. We withdraw from the experience and its experiencer and stand apart in pure awareness, which is between and beyond the two. The personality, based on self-identification, on imagining oneself to be something: 'I am this, I am that', continues, but only as a part of the objective world. Its identification with the witness snaps.

Q: As I can make out, I live on many levels and life on each level requires energy. The self by its very nature delights in everything and its energies flow outwards. Is it not the purpose of meditation to dam up the energies on the higher levels, or to push them back and up, so as to enable the higher levels to prosper also?

M: It is not so much the matter of levels as of gunas (qualities). Meditation is a sattvic activity and aims at complete elimination of tamas (inertia) and rajas (motivity). Pure sattva (harmony) is perfect freedom from sloth and restlessness.

Q: How to strengthen and purify the sattva?

M: The sattva is pure and strong always. It is like the sun. It may seem obscured by clouds and dust, but only from the point of view of the perceiver. Deal with the causes of obscurity, not with the sun.

Q: What is the use of sattva?

M: What is the use of truth, goodness, harmony, beauty? They are their own goal. They manifest spontaneously and effortlessly, when things are left to themselves, are not interfered with, not shunned, or wanted, or conceptualised, but just experienced in full awareness, such awareness itself is sattva. It does not make use of things and people -- it fulfils them.

Q: Since I cannot improve sattva, am I to deal with tamas and rajas only? How can I deal with them?

M: By watching their influence in you and on you. Be aware of them in operation, watch their expressions in your thoughts, words and deeds, and gradually their grip on you will lessen and the clear light of sattva will emerge. It is neither difficult, nor a protracted process; earnestness is the only condition of success.

## 7. The Mind

Questioner: There are very interesting books written by apparently very competent people, in which the illusoriness of the world is denied (though not its transitoriness). According to them, there exists a hierarchy of beings, from the lowest to the highest; on each level the complexity of the organism enables and reflects the depth, breadth and intensity of consciousness, without any visible or knowable culmination. One law supreme rules throughout: evolution of forms for the growth and enrichment of consciousness and manifestation of its infinite potentialities.

Maharaj: This may or may not be so. Even if it is, it is only so from the mind's point of view, but In fact the entire universe (mahadakash) exists only in consciousness (chidakash), while I have my stand in the Absolute (paramakash). In pure being consciousness arises; in consciousness the world appears and disappears. All there is is me, all there is is mine. Before all beginnings, after all endings -- I am. All has its being in me, in the 'I am', that shines in every living being. Even not-being is unthinkable without me. Whatever happens, I must be there to witness it.

Q: Why do you deny being to the world?

M: I do not negate the world. I see it as appearing in consciousness, which is the totality of the known in the immensity of the unknown.

What begins and ends is mere appearance. The world can be said to appear, but not to be. The appearance may last very long on some scale of time, and be very short on another, but ultimately it comes to the same. Whatever is time bound is momentary and has no reality.

Q: Surely, you see the actual world as it surrounds you. You seem to behave quite normally!

M: That is how it appears to you. What in your case occupies the entire field of consciousness, is a mere speck in mine. The world lasts, but for a moment. It is your memory that makes you think that the world continues. Myself, I don't live by memory. I see the world as it is, a momentary appearance in consciousness.

Q: In your consciousness?

M: All idea of 'me' and 'mine', even of 'I am' is in consciousness.

Q: Is then your 'absolute being' (paramakash) un-consciousness?

M: The idea of un-consciousness exists in consciousness only.

Q: Then, how do you know you are in the supreme state?

M: Because I am in it. It is the only natural state.

Q: Can you describe it?

M: Only by negation, as uncaused, independent, unrelated, undivided, uncomposed, unshakable, unquestionable, unreachable by effort. Every positive definition is from memory and, therefore, inapplicable. And yet my state is supremely actual and, therefore, possible, realisable, attainable.

Q: Are you not immersed timelessly in an abstraction?

M: Abstraction is mental and verbal and disappears in sleep, or swoon; it reappears in time; I am in my own state (swarupa) timelessly in the now. Past and future are in mind only -- I am now.

Q: The world too is now.

M: Which world?

Q: The world around us.

M: It is your world you have in mind, not mine. What do you know of me, when even my talk with you is in your world only? You have no reason to believe that my world is identical with yours. My world is real, true, as it is perceived, while yours appears and disappears, according to the state of your mind. Your world is something alien, and you are afraid of it. My world is myself. I am at home.

Q: If you are the world, how can you be conscious of it? Is not the subject of consciousness different from its object?

M: Consciousness and the world appear and disappear together, hence they are two aspects of the same state.

Q: In sleep I am not, and the world continues.

M: How do you know?

Q: On waking up I come to know. My memory tells me.

M: Memory is in the mind. The mind continues in sleep.

Q: It is partly in abeyance.

M: But its world picture is not affected. As long as the mind is there, your body and your world are there. Your world is mind-made, subjective, enclosed within the mind, fragmentary, temporary, personal, hanging on the thread of memory.

Q: So is yours?

M: Oh no. I live in a world of realities, while yours is of imagination. Your world is personal, private, unshareable, intimately your own. Nobody can enter it, see as you see, hear as you hear, feel your emotions and think your thoughts. In your world you are truly alone, enclosed in your ever-changing dream, which you take for life. My world is an open world, common to all, accessible to all. In my world there is community, insight, love, real quality; the individual is the total, the totality -- in the individual. All are one and the One is all.

Q: Is your world full of things and people as is mine?

M: No, it is full of myself.

Q: But do you see and hear as we do?

M: Yes, I appear to hear and see and talk and act, but to me it just happens, as to you digestion or perspiration happens. The body-mind machine looks after it, but leaves me out of it. Just as you do not need to worry about growing hair, so I need not worry about words and actions. They just happen and leave me unconcerned, for in my world nothing ever goes wrong.

## 8. The Self Stands Beyond Mind

Questioner: As a child fairly often I experienced states of complete happiness, verging on ecstasy: later, they ceased, but since I came to India they reappeared, particularly after I met you. Yet these states, however wonderful, are not lasting. They come and go and there is no knowing when they will come back.

Maharaj: How can anything be steady in a mind which itself is not steady?

Q: How can I make my mind steady?

M: How can an unsteady mind make itself steady? Of course it cannot. It is the nature of the mind to roam about. All you can do is to shift the focus of consciousness beyond the mind.

Q: How is it done?

M: Refuse all thoughts except one: the thought 'I am'. The mind will rebel in the beginning, but with patience and perseverance it will yield and keep quiet. Once you are quiet, things will begin to happen spontaneously and quite naturally without any interference on your part.

Q: Can I avoid this protracted battle with my mind?

M: Yes, you can. Just live your life as it comes, but alertly, watchfully, allowing everything to happen as it happens, doing the natural things the natural way, suffering, rejoicing -- as life brings. This also is a way.

Q: Well, then I can as well marry, have children, run a business... be happy.

M: Sure. You may or may not be happy, take it in your stride.

Q: Yet I want happiness.

M: True happiness cannot be found in things that change and pass away. Pleasure and pain alternate inexorably. Happiness comes from the self and can be found in the self only. Find your real self (swarupa) and all else will come with it.

Q: If my real self is peace and love, why is it so restless?

M: It is not your real being that is restless, but its reflection in the mind appears restless because the mind is restless. It is just like the reflection of the moon in the water stirred by the wind. The wind of desire stirs the mind and the 'me', which is but a reflection of the Self in the mind, appears changeful. But these ideas of movement, of restlessness, of pleasure and pain are all in the mind. The Self stands beyond the mind, aware, but unconcerned.

Q: How to reach it?

M: You are the Self, here and now Leave the mind alone, stand aware and unconcerned and you will realise that to stand alert but detached, watching events come and go, is an aspect of your real nature.

Q: What are the other aspects?

M: The aspects are infinite in number. Realise one, and you will realise all.

Q: Tell me some thing that would help me.

M: You know best what you need!

Q: I am restless. How can I gain peace?

M: For what do you need peace?

Q: To be happy.

M: Are you not happy now?

Q: No, I am not.

M: What makes you unhappy?

Q: I have what I don't want, and want what I don't have.

M: Why don't you invert it: want what you have and care not for what you don't have?

Q: I want what is pleasant and don't want what is painful.

M: How do you know what is pleasant and what is not?

Q: From past experience, of course.

M: Guided by memory you have been pursuing the pleasant and shunning the unpleasant. Have you succeeded?

Q: No, I have not. The pleasant does not last. Pain sets in again.

M: Which pain?

Q: The desire for pleasure, the fear of pain, both are states of distress. Is there a state of unalloyed pleasure?

M: Every pleasure, physical or mental, needs an instrument. Both the physical and mental instruments are material, they get tired and worn out. The pleasure they yield is necessarily limited in intensity and duration. Pain is the background of all your pleasures. You want them because you suffer. On the other hand, the very search for pleasure is the cause of pain. It is a vicious circle.

Q: I can see the mechanism of my confusion, but I do not see my way out of it.

M: The very examination of the mechanism shows the way. After all, your confusion is only in your mind, which never rebelled so far against confusion and never got to grips with it. It rebelled only against pain.

Q: So, all I can do is to stay confused?

M: Be alert. Question, observe, investigate, learn all you can about confusion, how it operates, what it does to you and others. By being clear about confusion you become clear of confusion.

Q: When I look into myself, I find my strongest desire is to create a monument, to build something which will outlast me. Even when I think of a home, wife and child, it is because it is a lasting, solid, testimony to myself.

M: Right, build yourself a monument. How do you propose to do it?

Q: It matters little what I build, as long as it is permanent.

M: Surely, you can see for yourself that nothing is permanent. All wears out, breaks down, dissolves. The very ground on which you build gives way. What can you build that will outlast all?

Q: Intellectually, verbally, I am aware that all is transient. Yet, somehow my heart wants permanency. I want to create something that lasts.

M: Then you must build it of something lasting. What have you that is lasting? Neither your body nor mind will last. You must look elsewhere.

Q: I long for permanency, but I find it nowhere.

M: Are you, yourself, not permanent?

Q: I was born, I shall die.

M: Can you truly say you were not before you were born and can you possibly say when dead: 'Now I am no more'? You cannot say from your own experience that you are not. You can only say 'I am'. Others too cannot tell you 'you are not'.

Q: There is no 'I am' in sleep.

M: Before you make such sweeping statements, examine carefully your waking state. You will soon discover that it is full of gaps, when the mind blanks out. Notice how little you remember even when fully awake. You just don't remember. A gap in memory is not necessarily a gap in consciousness.

Q: Can I make myself remember my state of deep sleep?

M: Of course! By eliminating the intervals of inadvertence during your waking hours you will gradually eliminate the long interval of absent-mindedness, which you call sleep. You will be aware that you are asleep.

Q: Yet, the problem of permanency, of continuity of being, is not solved.

M: Permanency is a mere idea, born of the action of time. Time again depends of memory. By permanency you mean unending memory through endless time. You want to eternalise the mind, which is not possible.

Q: Then what is eternal?

M: That which does not change with time. You cannot eternalise a transient thing -- only the changeless is eternal.

Q: I am familiar with the general sense of what you say. I do not crave for more knowledge. All I want is peace.

M: You can have for the asking all the peace you want.

Q: I am asking.

M: You must ask with an undivided heart and live an integrated life.

Q: How?

M: Detach yourself from all that makes your mind restless. Renounce all that disturbs its peace. If you want peace, deserve it.

Q: Surely everybody deserves peace.

M: Those only deserve it, who don't disturb it.

Q: In what way do I disturb peace?

M: By being a slave to your desires and fears.

Q: Even when they are justified?

M: Emotional reactions, born of ignorance or inadvertence, are never justified. Seek a clear mind and a clean heart. All you need is to keep quietly alert, enquiring into the real nature of yourself. This is the only way to peace.

## 9. Responses of Memory

Questioner: Some say the universe was created. Others say that it always existed and is for ever undergoing transformation. Some say it is subject to eternal laws. Others deny even causality. Some say the world is real. Others -- that it has no being whatsoever.

Maharaj: Which world are you enquiring about?

Q: The world of my perceptions, of course.

M: The world you can perceive is a very small world indeed. And it is entirely private. Take it to be a dream and be done with it.

Q: How can I take it to be a dream? A dream does not last.

M: How long will your own world last?

Q: After all, my little world is but a part of the total.

M: Is not the idea of a total world a part of your personal world? The universe does not come to tell you that you are a part of it. It is you who have invented a totality to contain you as a part. In fact all you know is your own private world, however well you have furnished it with your imaginations and expectations.

Q: Surely, perception is not imagination!

M: What else? Perception is recognition, is it not? Something entirely unfamiliar can be sensed, but cannot be perceived. Perception involves memory.

Q: Granted, but memory does not make it illusion.

M: Perception, imagination, expectation, anticipation, illusion -- all are based on memory. There are hardly any border lines between them. They just merge into each other. All are responses of memory.

Q: Still, memory is there to prove the reality of my world.

M: How much do you remember? Try to write down from memory what you were thinking, saying and doing on the 30th of the last month.

Q: Yes, there is a blank.

M: It is not so bad. You do remember a lot -- unconscious memory makes the world in which you live so familiar.

Q: Admitted that the world in which I live is subjective and partial. What about you? In what kind of world do you live?

M: My world is just like yours. I see, I hear, I feel, I think, I speak and act in a world I perceive, just like you. But with you it is all, with me it is nothing. Knowing the world to be a part of myself, I pay it no more attention than you pay to the food you have eaten. While being prepared and eaten, the food is separate from you and your mind is on it; once swallowed, you become totally unconscious of it. I have eaten up the world and I need not think of it any more.

Q: Don't you become completely irresponsible?

M: How could I? How can I hurt something which is one with me. On the contrary, without thinking of the world, whatever I do will be of benefit to it. Just as the body sets itself right unconsciously, so am I ceaselessly active in setting the world right.

Q: Nevertheless, you are aware of the immense suffering of the world?

M: Of course I am, much more than you are.

Q: Then what do you do?

M: I look at it through the eyes of God and find that all is well.

Q: How can you say that all is well? Look at the wars, the exploitation, the cruel strife between the citizen and the state.

M: All these sufferings are man-made and it is within man's power to put an end to them. God helps by facing man with the results of his actions and demanding that the balance should be restored. Karma is the law that works for righteousness; it is the healing hand of God.

## 10. Witnessing

Questioner: I am full of desires and want them fulfilled. How am I to get what I want?

Maharaj: Do you deserve what you desire? In some way or other you have to work for the fulfilment of your desires. Put in energy and wait for the results.

Q: Where am I to get the energy?

M: Desire itself is energy.

Q: Then why does not every desire get fulfilled?

M: Maybe it was not strong enough and lasting.

Q: Yes, that is my problem. I want things, but I am lazy when it comes to action.

M: When your desire is not clear nor strong, it cannot take shape. Besides, if your desires are personal, for your own enjoyment, the energy you give them is necessarily limited; it cannot be more than what you have.

Q: Yet, often ordinary persons do attain what they desire.

M: After desiring it very much and for a long time. Even then, their achievements are limited.

Q: And what about unselfish desires?

M: When you desire the common good, the whole world desires with you. Make humanity's desire your own and work for it. There you cannot fail.

Q: Humanity is God's work, not mine. I am concerned with myself. Have I not the right to see my legitimate desires fulfilled? They will hurt no one. My desires are legitimate. They are right desires, why don't they come true?

M: Desires are right or wrong according to circumstances; it depends on how you look at them. It is only for the individual that a distinction between right and wrong is valid.

Q: What are the guide-lines for such distinction? How am I to know which of my desires are right and which are wrong?

M: In your case desires that lead to sorrow are wrong and those which lead to happiness are right. But you must not forget others. Their sorrow and happiness also count.

Q: Results are in the future. How can I know what they will be?

M: Use your mind. Remember. Observe. You are not different from others. Most of their experiences are valid for you too. Think clearly and deeply, go into the entire structure of your desires and their ramifications. They are a most important part of your mental and emotional make-up and powerfully affect your actions. Remember, you cannot abandon what you do not know. To go beyond yourself, you must know yourself.

Q: What does it mean to know myself? By knowing myself what exactly do I come to know?

M: All that you are not.

Q: And not what I am?

M: What you are, you already are. By knowing what you are not, you are free of it and remain in your own natural state. It all happens quite spontaneously and effortlessly.

Q: And what do I discover?

M: You discover that there is nothing to discover. You are what you are and that is all.

Q: I do not understand!

M: It is your fixed idea that you must be something or other, that blinds you.

Q: How can I get rid of this idea?

M: If you trust me, believe when I tell you that you are the pure awareness that illuminates consciousness and its infinite content. Realise this and live accordingly. If you do not believe me, then go within, enquiring 'What an I'? or, focus your mind on 'I am', which is pure and simple being.

Q: On what my faith in you depends?

M: On your insight into other people's hearts. If you cannot look into my heart, look into your own.

Q: I can do neither.

M: Purify yourself by a well-ordered and useful life. Watch over your thoughts, feelings, words and actions. This will clear your vision.

Q: Must I not renounce every thing first, and live a homeless life?

M: You cannot renounce. You may leave your home and give trouble to your family, but attachments are in the mind and will not leave you until you know your mind in and out. First thing first -- know yourself, all else will come with it.

Q: But you already told me that I am the Supreme Reality. Is it not self-knowledge?

M: Of course you are the Supreme Reality! But what of it? Every grain of sand is God; to know it is important, but that is only the beginning.

Q: Well, you told me that I am the Supreme Reality. I believe you. What next is there for me to do?

M: I told you already. Discover all you are not. Body, feelings, thoughts, ideas, time, space, being and not-being, this or that -- nothing concrete or abstract you can point out to is you. A mere verbal statement will not do -- you may repeat a formula endlessly without any result whatsoever. You must watch yourself continuously -- particularly your mind -- moment by moment, missing nothing. This witnessing is essential for the separation of the self from the not-self.

Q: The witnessing -- is it not my real nature?

M: For witnessing, there must be something else to witness. We are still in duality!

Q: What about witnessing the witness? Awareness of awareness?

M: Putting words together will not take you far. Go within and discover what you are not. Nothing else matters.

## **11. Awareness and Consciousness**

Questioner: What do you do when asleep?

Maharaj: I am aware of being asleep.

Q: Is not sleep a state of unconsciousness?

M: Yes, I am aware of being unconscious.

Q: And when awake, or dreaming?

M: I am aware of being awake or dreaming.

Q: I do not catch you. What exactly do you mean? Let me make my terms clear: by being asleep I mean unconscious, by being awake I mean conscious, by dreaming I mean conscious of one's mind, but not of the surroundings.

M: Well, it is about the same with me, Yet, there seems to be a difference. In each state you forget the other two, while to me, there is but one state of being, including and transcending the three mental states of waking, dreaming and sleeping.

Q: Do you see in the world a direction and a purpose?

M: The world is but a reflection of my imagination. Whatever I want to see, I can see. But why should I invent patterns of creation, evolution and destruction? I do not need them and have no desire to lock up the world in a mental picture.

Q: Coming back to sleep. Do you dream?

M: Of course.

Q: What are your dreams?

M: Echoes of the waking state.

Q: And your deep sleep?

M: The brain consciousness is suspended.

Q: Are you then unconscious?

M: Unconscious of my surroundings -- yes.

Q: Not quite unconscious?

M: I remain aware that I am unconscious.

Q: You use the words 'aware' and 'conscious'. Are they not the same?

M: Awareness is primordial; it is the original state, beginningless, endless, uncaused, unsupported, without parts, without change. Consciousness is on contact, a reflection against a surface, a state of duality. There can be no consciousness without awareness, but there can be awareness without consciousness, as in deep sleep. Awareness is absolute, consciousness is relative to its content; consciousness is always of something. Consciousness is partial and changeful, awareness is total, changeless, calm and silent. And it is the common matrix of every experience.

Q: How does one go beyond consciousness into awareness?

M: Since it is awareness that makes consciousness possible, there is awareness in every state of consciousness. Therefore the very consciousness of being conscious is already a movement in awareness. Interest in your stream of consciousness takes you to awareness. It is not a new state. It is at once recognised as the original, basic existence, which is life itself, and also love and joy.

Q: Since reality is all the time with us, what does self-realisation consist of?

M: Realisation is but the opposite of ignorance. To take the world as real and one's self as unreal is ignorance. The cause of sorrow. To know the self as the only reality and all else as temporal and transient is freedom, peace and joy. It is all very simple. Instead of seeing things as imagined, learn to see them as they are. It is like cleansing a mirror. The same mirror that shows you the world as it is, will also show you your own face. The thought 'I am' is the polishing cloth. Use it.