



LIFE SITUATIONS

Many people have the notion that a spiritual life has no connection with a normal daily working life. What I always try to explain is that this is a false conception. This is not the case; in fact it is the exact opposite. A real spiritual man is more competent and effective in practical work than most other people. Those who run away from their worldly duties can never be spiritual.



Q: How does one identify one's own duty in situations?

A: Firstly, the spiritual journey has not started properly until one becomes aware of what one's duty is. There is a minimum requirement for the journey and that is that one should recognise one's duty. Even then, I can give you a clue. Duty is the action by the performance of which you feel satisfaction. It is an action that when you do not perform it makes you feel uneasy. If you neglect your duty, you feel uneasiness, and if you perform your duty you will feel relative calmness and peace.



Spirituality does not mean inaction. Spirituality does not mean ignoring worldly activities. Rather, the spiritual man, being really awakened, should be awake to every event. For example if there is something wrong in the company he is dealing with he may complain about it. However, there is a basic difference between a man who is on the spiritual path and a person who is not. The spiritual man or seeker will make a complaint where it should be made, but after making the complaint, he will not be concerned what happens about the complaint. If he has time he will think about the complaint in more detail than an ordinary person. In fact, an ordinary worldly type of person may lose interest in the matter, but the spiritual man will not. But in the case of the spiritual seeker, his sense of duty is the only motivating force, and, after performing the duty which was upon him, he feels no anxiety.



There are two types of events in life - those we like and those we do not like; events that we consider favourable to us and events that we consider to be unfavourable. Both types have their value but human beings generally learn more from unfavourable events.



When a person engaged in worldly activity does not react violently to what happens around him, he will be more successful and peaceful in practical life. Nobody can stop what happens around him or control the activities of other people but he can control his inner reactions. A person can discipline himself so that he does not react, or if he does, he does not react violently.



Disease or illness is on three levels: physical, mental and spiritual. The aim of human life should be to have physical health and mental health, and then to utilise them to achieve spiritual health.



When a close friend praises you, you are very happy. But he may tell somebody else that you are a fool. If you can remain calm in that situation, that is the real evolution!



Our effort should be to live as economically as possible, without unnecessary expenditure, and then to save for those who are both needy and deserving. One may need money for drinking or going to the cinema and that may be someone's need. However, the purpose for which the money is going to be spent should also be considered. So money should be given to one who is not only needy but is also deserving.



A judgment has to be made between need and desire. Everybody's need is fulfilled but there is no end to desires. Needs are limited. Food and clothes are required according to the season and the individual state of health. But then you say that you do not want food only to satisfy your appetite, but some delicious items, and not from this restaurant, but from that one, because they cook so well there. "These clothes will not do. I have to attend a party and there will be other friends. I need some new clothes." Desires! "How long shall I go on sitting in this useless old car? The neighbour is a useless man, and I am a good man, but he has purchased the latest model. I should have it too!" Needs are there and can be satisfied but desires have no end.



It is the misfortune of mankind to be running after money all the time. Money has its utility and I do not say that money is not required. But money should be our servant and not our master, and who is the master of money? Certainly it is not the person who possesses money. No! The master of money is only that person who can spend money correctly. A person whose tendency is to amass money is a slave to money. It is in this way that life should have priorities.



One should earn money but without dishonesty. You must earn money because money is needed for everyday living, but earning should not be done dishonestly or by deceiving others.



When you earn money for your own aggrandisement, for becoming famous and wealthy, and enjoying the pleasures of the world, you are a worldly man. But when you earn money without the element of ownership and the feeling of "this belongs to me" and instead you think "this belongs to the people", you are a spiritual man. If your attitude is, "God gave me an opportunity to earn more money than are my needs, and now I am a custodian, I am a trustee, I am a banker for this money, and it is my responsibility to see that this money goes to those who are deserving and needy", at once you are a spiritual man.



No one can evolve spiritually without the fulfilment of individual and social obligations.



Time is limited and in the same way energy is also limited. If time and energy are not used properly there can be no true development in life. Generally both time and energy are misused, and it depends upon each human being if he uses them or misuses them. God has given us a human body and the faculty for thought and discrimination, so those who do not use them cannot blame God for the miseries that they have. One has to take the responsibility.



In life we always have an aim, the objective that lies before one. Nobody can work without having some form of an objective before them. The mind is required to focus on the objective that lies before it, and not to care about the result. Swami Ramsukhdasji has stated on many occasions: “Be careful about doing and be carefree about the result of that doing.”



To start on the path one should at least accept the truth that the cause of all problems is not somebody else apart from one’s own self. Do not seek your peace of mind and solace in your partner. Anybody who depends on somebody else is a slave and slaves are never happy. Anybody depending on anybody is subject to slavery. You have to become independent and totally free.



By diverting your attention to your own self - analysing yourself you come to know that you have certain traits, tendencies, characteristics and habits which are the cause of your problems. If they are eliminated, then the problems will be solved. You discover: “Oh, I am a victim of over eating.” Then you must leave it. “Good clothes are the problem. I have so many clothes in my wardrobe that I can’t wear them all. But as soon as I see someone else wearing a new dress it comes to my mind that I must go to the store and get one like it!” But you already have several dresses! “I have in me this needless anger. I am ready to be angry with anybody at any place, any time.” Irritation is also an offspring of anger. You have this anger and irritation in you but you have to give them up. Also jealousy, greed and lust - these are the causes of all the problems and you have to eliminate them; give them up. Also fear of any possible future misfortune or bad luck - you should locate the fear and discover it in your own existence and then remove it.



There is no one in the world who does not have various situations or circumstances around him, but the important point is one’s reaction or response to these situations. For example, someone may have done something that I take exception to. In the beginning I may become irritated that this person has done something that I do not like. Any disagreeable action can cause irritation, but if I express my irritation, I will increase my bondage.



Someone may call you a mad cow and you become angry but in the evening someone may say, “Oh, here is a really praiseworthy girl”, and we are pleased by the compliment. This attitude means that we are influenced by other people’s opinion. We

are slaves to their opinion. Our happiness and grief depends on other people's opinion about us. When we are carried away by these opinions it means we have not evolved from inside.



There are very few people who learn lessons when circumstances are favourable. Fortunate are those who can control the mind when events are unfavourable.



Do not indulge in too much day-dreaming: "This will happen tomorrow, and after one month I will be like this!" This is not correct. Live today here and now in the present. God exists in the present. The more you are in the present, the nearer you are to God.



People who are on a very low stage of evolution are satisfied just by worldly desires and enjoy worldly pleasures. The reason is that they wish to satisfy themselves in any manner, whatever desire arises in their mind, they try for it. Day and night they pursue the pleasures of the senses. Men pursue women and women pursue men. People run after money, power or political influence thinking that, by having those things, they will obtain peace of mind. But peace of mind never comes to them because, even if they get those objects, they soon get tired of them, and then they start running after some other object.



There are failures many times but they alone are successful who do not give up the determination to raise themselves up again and again: "Let there be a fall, but I am going to get up again!" This is the real dignity of human life: "Come what may, I am not going to leave this path!". Whatever has happened, has happened, and you should not repent or regret it very much. Learn lessons from your mistakes but then do not go on brooding over them. What is gone is gone!



If someone calls you a useless pig or a lazy donkey, then you should smile if you can. Why should you smile? When they call you these names it is simply his or her opinion. By being called so you are not going to become a pig or a donkey! Why are you affected by such opinions?



Suppose somebody calls another person a donkey. Everyone would be enraged: "You called me a donkey? I am such a well-known person in the whole republic but you called me a donkey! I was decorated by the president of the country and you called me a donkey! – I will show you who I am!" This would be the general reaction, before one gains wisdom. After wisdom, if somebody calls one a donkey, there is just a smile. When the person who is called a donkey is not a donkey, then why should he get angry? What is the problem? But if he really is a donkey, then why should he get angry? A donkey should be called a donkey!



Children can start yoga from any age. Physical yoga can be good for everybody because the asana – the postures - are very scientific. They help in the proper growth of the body and create a harmony between the physical and the mental. Actually at a young age, the body is very elastic and if one starts from the beginning, then one

remains healthy for a very long time. The physical part of yoga has rhythm in it - a slow movement. It does not have that sudden jerk which we have in other exercises. Step by step children can be introduced to whatever exercise they can do. It is always preferable that these practices are learnt from somebody who is an expert in them. However, nothing should be imposed on children. Let them develop this interest themselves. Convince them, tell them, and then give them freedom, because children do not like imposition. Persuasion works better. One has to be friendly with them. Bossing them around does not work and they revolt against it. Psychological treatment is essential - it is one of the greatest tasks to bring up children properly, a very great task.



Suppose there is a problem of dogs barking in your neighbourhood. Some people may decide to move house in order to avoid hearing the dogs barking. But after moving to another place they may find even more dogs barking there and they would have to move house again. Where they lived before there were three dogs and now there are four! Should they move house yet again? No, you should go on living in the house all your life. The remedy is not to change the house. The remedy is: "Dogs are for barking, let them bark, my mind is focused on my work." The solution is for you to rise above your reaction against the dogs barking and not to change the house.



Food is divided into three categories: tamasic, rajasic and sattvic. If possible, one should try to eat only sattvic food and you should neither eat too much nor too little.



Foodstuff is of three qualities - tamasic, rajasic or sattvic. Therefore, those who want to become tamasic are free to eat tamasic food. Meat and alcohol are tamasic, and will create a tamasic tendency. Those who want to become rajasic are free to consume that category of food. Spiritual seekers should consume only food of the sattvic category. Milk, butter, wheat, fruit and vegetables are included in this category.



In nature, the type of food that is consumed is determined in all creatures by the physical development of three areas: the claws and nails, the teeth and gums and the intestines. In the animal world, the food of every animal is predetermined. Since animals cannot change their diet, they cannot evolve in the evolutionary process. Choice of diet is available only to human beings. Since freedom is available to human beings, they can evolve to a higher level or they can fall down to a lower level. If we relate to humans this principle - the formation of claws, teeth and intestines - we can see that human without the help of a tool such as a knife cannot kill any animal for food. The teeth and the formation of the gums are not suitable for meat eating but only for consuming fruit, milk, wheat and similar foods.



There is another fact which has been discovered during the last 50 years or so, and is now almost an established fact. The greatest medical men in the world tell us now that meat should not be eaten if people want to be healthy. They say that many diseases are found only among meat eaters. Now it is scientifically proved that meat-eating is not good for human beings. They say about eggs also that they can cause cancer. This is a new development and we are happy that scientists have come to this

conclusion. This is another point which leaves no argument. But there is another aspect. From the point of view of the need of mankind in the world today, meat eaters create problems for the whole world. Meat production needs large areas of grazing land which could produce a much higher yield with agricultural crops and thus feed more people. This is the latest research and there are many books written about this.



Those who want to develop spiritually should consume food which is different from that which the majority of people eat. A spiritual man is more law-abiding, more considerate, more compassionate towards everything. It is a contradiction in the spiritual field that a man wants to become compassionate and loving but the throats of goats are cut to provide his food. There is an incompatibility there.



Do not overeat when you find some delicious food but try to exercise control. Over-eating and spiritual evolution do not go together. Eating too little is also not good. There has to be a balance, and the balance has to be found out by the individual himself or herself, because it differs from individual to individual.



It is always good to eat vegetarian food since food is directly related to our thoughts. Medical science is also slowly becoming aware that meat, including eggs, is not a natural food for human beings.



Drinking of alcohol is a very bad habit. Those who drink cannot evolve spiritually. All spiritual development requires a sattvic brain. All our efforts on the spiritual path are directed towards becoming more sattvic and pure in every way. What happens when a person drinks is that his capacity for discrimination is overpowered by alcohol. The capacity for discrimination is the real key for knowing or experiencing Truth. Discrimination means knowing the difference between what is right and what is wrong, and the capacity to take the right decisions. A person who drinks heavily is unable to decide what is right and what is wrong.



In the morning you may feel very fine but after one hour you may start quarreling with your partner. When the peace keeps fluctuating and changing, it is not the real thing. When the real spiritual transformation happens you behave differently. Then, if your wife, husband or partner quarrels with you or abuses you, you simply watch the drama and undisturbed.



It is said in Bhagavad Gita that yoga (union with one Self) removes one of woe - all worries, all miseries, all disease. Everything that disturbs one goes away by means of yoga - the physical, the mental, the emotional or financial - all problems get solved by yoga. Yoga is such a force. It even removes problems with one's business, job, or relationships with your boss, with your junior staff, with your boy or girl-friend, husband, wife, or children. There is no problem in the whole world that is not solved by yoga.



All paths have their own truth in them and we respect them. There are several paths which lead to the same goal and we should not criticise them. There is for example a

path of complete fasting - a penance of fasting. But that is not the Gita path. I want to make it clear that we are following a path of balance - it is a path of activity. We do not exclude ourselves from worldly activity. We should lead a completely normal life. This is the path of the Bhagavad Gita - a completely normal life. Everything should be normal and then Self-realisation should happen.



Who will become a yogi? You cannot become a yogi without discipline in food habits. As long as you continue to over-eat you will not get the master-key for solving your problems. You also have to be regulated in recreation. It is important how much work you do, when you do it, what should you not do. You should not work so hard that you reach the point of complete exhaustion. Neither should you be lethargic and do nothing. When should you sleep, for how many hours and when should you get up? You cannot be a yogi if you go on watching the television until midnight. A person should not expect to be a yogi if he gets up late in the morning. The balance is to be achieved and one must change one's habits. Only then will one become a yogi.



When the situation is bad or undesirable, use it for your reformation. A bad situation will awaken the dormant energy in you. When there is a challenge, it is only then that the dormant energy rises up. We must be ready to face the challenge. We must remember that good times are more dangerous than bad times! To become wealthy is more dangerous than to become poor! When we have too much money, we generally indulge in bad actions. We forget the purpose of life and we have no challenge. And when bad times come and when there is no money, you have no means of doing bad actions. You have to worry about how you will spend your last dollar - and you cannot afford to see Frankfurt by night!



There are deeper aspects of life. When you are ill, previous sins are being wiped out and you have more time in your bed to remember the Divine. Suffering is definitely bad and I do not recommend it to anyone, but it will come and who can stop it? But remember that, when it comes, there is an opportunity to grow more in spirituality. You have nothing else to do while you are lying in bed. And then what else can you do except: *OM, OM, OM!* What else can you do?



Always remember that there can be no development in human life without a struggle. Struggle is an essential part of evolution and struggle should not be considered as undesirable. There is no evolution in any field without a struggle. This is true even in the life of a plant. If you analyse it, you will find how much a plant has to struggle. There is an unimaginable struggle from the time when the seed is sown to the ripening of the fruit. A plant has to struggle with pests, diseases and extremes of cold and heat. The greatest men on this planet Earth have been those who had the greatest struggle. You only have to study the history of mankind in every country to discover this fact.



When you are learning and listening on the spiritual path, transformation will not happen unless you adopt the teaching in your everyday life.



It is better for you to perform whatever you do wholeheartedly, without dividing your attention.



It is through love that everything happens. When you give love to your child, you yourself will have to pass through many trials. Sometimes you will get irritated when the child does not obey you. You must have patience and tolerance. Love is the most important factor, and you should practice it in your own life.



It is quite painful not to have a father, but there is no need to worry because the eternal father is always there with everyone. God is the real father so you should have faith in Him.



If you cannot learn during good times, you will have to learn during bad times. There has to be a learning exercise. This life has no purpose other than learning. Very few people learn voluntarily, willingly and happily.



You can do work of any type that may come your way. It is the inner attitude that is required to be changed not the work. We should be actively spiritual. We should continue with our work and yet remain inwardly peaceful. That is the real test of a spiritual life.



Most of the time we stay at home or in factories, fields, offices, etc. True spirituality means “spirituality all the time, everywhere and in every walk of life”. The test of spirituality comes when you are with your husband, your wife, partner or with your co-workers at the place of your work. It is in these places that quarrels start and we meet the real tests of spirituality. You should be as calm as you can be. When somebody calls you a mad cow, you should smile if you can - that is real spirituality.

