

BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

REPLIES
TO THE READER

By
K. M. MUNSHI

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BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN
CHAUPATY : BOMBAY

आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः ।

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side

—*Rigveda*, 1-89-i

BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

General Editors

K. M. MUNSHI

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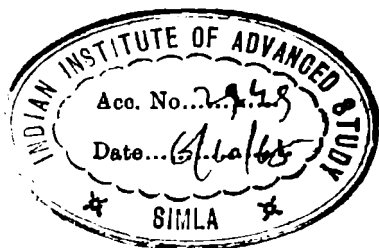
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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan—that Institute of Indian Culture in Bombay—needed a Book University, a series of books which, if read, would serve the purpose of providing higher education. Particular emphasis, however, was to be put on such literature as revealed the deeper impulsions of India. As a first step, it was decided to bring out in English 100 books, 50 of which were to be taken in hand almost at once. Each book was to contain from 200 to 250 pages and was to be priced at Rs. 2/-.

It is our intention to publish the books we select, not only in English, but also in the following Indian languages: Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

This scheme, involving the publication of 900 volumes, requires ample funds and an all-India organisation. The Bhavan is exerting itself to the utmost to supply them.

The objectives for which the Bhavan stands are the reintegration of Indian culture in the light of modern knowledge and to suit our present-day needs and the resuscitation of its fundamental values in their pristine vigour.

Let me make our goal more explicit:

We seek the dignity of man, which necessarily implies the creation of social conditions that allow him freedom to evolve along the lines of his own temperament and capa-

cities; we seek the harmony of individual efforts and social relations, not in any makeshift way, but within the framework of the Moral Order; we seek the creative art of life, by the alchemy of which human limitations are progressively transmuted, so that man may become the instrument of God, and is able to see Him in all and all in Him.

The world, we feel, is too much with us. Nothing would uplift or inspire us so much as the beauty and aspirations which such books can teach.

In this series, therefore, the literature of India, ancient and modern, will be published in a form easily accessible to all. Books from other literatures of the world, if they illustrate the principles we stand for, will also be included.

This common pool of literature, it is hoped, will enable the reader, eastern or western, to understand and appreciate currents of world thought, besides the movements of the Indian mind, which, though they flow through different linguistic channels, have a common urge and aspiration.

Fittingly, the Book University's first venture is the *Mahabharata*, summarised by one of the greatest living Indians, C. Rajagopalachari; the second work is on a section of it, the *Gita*, by H. V. Divatia, an eminent jurist and a student of philosophy. Centuries ago, it was proclaimed of the *Mahabharata*: "What is not in it, is nowhere." After twenty-five centuries, we can use the same words about it. He who does not know it does not know the heights and depths of the soul; he misses the trials and tragedy and the beauty and grandeur of life.

The *Mahabharata* is not a mere epic; it is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women and of some who were divine; it is a whole literature in itself, containing a code of life, a philosophy of social and ethical relations, and speculative thought on human problems that is hard to rival; but, above all, it has for its core the *Gita*, which is, as the world is beginning to find out, the noblest of scriptures and the grandest of sagas the climax of which is reached in the wondrous Apocalypse in the Eleventh Canto.

Through such books alone, the harmonies underlying true culture, I am convinced, will one day reconcile the disorders of modern life.

I thank all those who have helped to make this new branch of the Bhavan's activity successful.

1, QUEEN VICTORIA ROAD,

NEW DELHI:

October 3, 1951.

K. M. MUNSHI

PREFACE

The present book is a collection of my replies to the queries received from the readers of the *Bhavan's Journal* covering the period from July 1956 to the end of the year 1960.

I hope the book will prove of some interest.

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan,
New Delhi,
April 20, 1961.

K. M. MUNSHI

July 1, 1956

1: *Will you please explain in detail the reason which occasions all the differences in the destiny of God's creatures in the Universe? Is God partial to some of His creatures and impartial to others?*

There are two kinds of inequalities in life—inequality of status and opportunities, and inequality of tempers and aptitudes. It is erroneous to assume that God, like an arbitrary dictator, goes about creating these inequalities. There is the God's Law of universal transformation by which inert matter passes into life; then into mind and finally into the Spirit, through which God manifests Himself. The different inequalities arise because of birth, social circumstances and the inherent power of man to realize the Spirit in Himself. These are the results of past *Karma* and depend upon whether in earlier lives the creature had made that strenuous effort to rise from the lower into the higher scale of consciousness.

2: *What is the greatness of Hinduism?*

All religions are equally great. The special greatness of Hinduism lies (1) in its tolerant outlook towards philosophic, religious and social differences; (2) in certain fundamental values of life which, though found in other religious systems, have attained their fullest stature in it; and (3) in its postulating that man in this very life, by self-discipline, can attain Godhood.

3: *What is meant by 'Hinduism' ?*

Hinduism is very difficult to describe, but broadly speaking, it is the bundle of beliefs, traditions, rituals and practices which (1) have been shaped by the influences and processes peculiar to this country; (2) have for their background the philosophy and religious thought traceable to the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, the *Agamas* and the *Bhagavad-Gita*.

4: *What are the main differences between Hinduism and Buddhism ?*

(1) Hinduism maintains that God is and informs the creation, man has divine, immortal essence. Buddha remained silent on these questions. (2) In Hinduism Buddha is an *avatar* of God like Parashuram, Vyas, Ramachandra, Sri Krishna, etc. In Buddhism Buddha is the only Enlightened, and though treated for all purposes as God, is in theory a man who became all-perfect, omnipotent and omniscient. (3) In Buddhism the monastic order is taken to be the sole guiding authority. In Hinduism, it is not only the monastic orders, but Brahmans as well as Yogis, seers, saints and *bhaktas* irrespective of caste, who are sources of inspiration. (4) Buddhism denies the authority of the *Vedas* and though many of its concepts are drawn from the *Upanishads* and the *Gita*, it does not accept them as authoritative. There are many other differences, more or less superficial, but they arise because of accretions due to geographical and social conditions of India and the countries in which Buddhism flourished.

5: *Why did Buddhism disappear from India ?*

Basically, there is very little difference between His teachings and those of Vyas in the *Shantiparva* and Sri Krishna in the *Gita*. The disappearance of Buddhism, therefore, was a natural process of evolution. The probable causes of its disappearance were: (1) Buddhistic learning and practices were a factor which human nature could not tolerate for long; (2) the best elements of Buddhism had been absorbed

in resurgent Shaivism and Bhagavatism between the 3rd century B.C. and the 5th century A.D. (3) Buddha was accepted as an *avatar* of Vishnu in the Hindu pantheon, and no separate and exclusive allegiance to Him was necessary; (4) Buddhist monasteries developed disgusting practices. They were destroyed by the Huns, the Hindu Kings, like Shashanka of Bengal and, finally, by the Muslim invaders of Bihar and Bengal in the 13th century.

6: *Why has interest in Buddha been revived of late?*

India has thrown off foreign rule and is struggling to overcome alien cultural influence. In this process it is finding its soul by re-capturing the spiritual values of its heritage. This process has its landmarks in the restoration of the historic shrines of Somnath; in the re-consecration of the relics of Moggalan and Sariputra at Sanchi; in the unprecedented attraction which the Kumbha of 1954 had at Prayag; and now in the revived interest in Lord Buddha's personality, if not His influence, as a counterblast to the Godless materialism of the West.

Buddha has also added attraction in some sections of the present generation. Those who love short-cuts to drastic change are attracted by the revolutionary nature of His mission; (2) the secularists by His refusal to discuss the problems of God and Soul; (3) the new Asians because He represents the unity of South and East Asia; (4) the fear-stricken moderns, because He is the Prophet of abiding peace; (5) resurgent Asia, because He stands for re-capturing the religious and spiritual personality of Asia as against Western materialism. The last desire, however, has little appeal for New China.

July 15, 1956

7: *What is the difference between a Hindu and a Christian?*

A Christian in the strict sense depends (1) on the Bible as the only revealed book; (2) on Jesus Christ as the only me-

diator between man and God; and (3) on one or the other organized Churches for religious life.

On the other hand, a Hindu, though relying on the Vedas and Upanishads as God-revealed authority, also accepts other authoritative sources like the Sutras, the Gita, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. Secondly, he believes that salvation cannot only be attained hereafter, but God can be realized in this very life by appropriate discipline. Thirdly, he believes that to secure this end, he can draw assistance from the worship of any god and prophet or saint, whether living or dead. And lastly, he believes in the descent of God in life—what we call *Avatars*.

But in reality these differences are superficial, though undeveloped minds treat them as fundamental. Both Hinduism and Christianity have for their end self-realization in God, secured through (1) conquest of the lower instincts; (2) strengthening of fundamental aspirations like love, joy, beauty or peace, and (3) by a surrender to God.

8: *Why have you sponsored the 400th Anniversary of Akbar this year?*

Akbar came to the throne in 1556. He was: (1) the greatest foreigner who accepted India as the Motherland; (2) in an age of racial and religious wars, he tried to found a powerful national monarchy in India; (3) it was his catholic attitude which, in substance, created the Bhakti Renaissance in India, which kept India's soul alive and led to the literary resurgence in Sanskrit as well as in other Indian languages.

9: *Is it not high time that India should have no connection at all with any foreign country, much less with U.K., particularly when the policy of an institution (like the 'Kennel Clubs') is entirely guided from U.K.?*

Why this anxiety to sever all connections with U.K. or for that matter with any other country? Is not the world

growing into one and the nations of the world becoming closely inter-dependent? And with which country shall we have closer relations than with the U.K.? The destinies of England and India have mingled for well-nigh two centuries. In the English language we have a powerful instrument of national unity and international influence. The two countries parted as friends and since 1947 have been the best of friends. Why develop this inferiority complex of shunning everything coming from outside?

10: *Will you please enlighten us on the duty of the youth towards the cultural renaissance for which the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan stands?*

A young Indian should (1) study the Culture of India as a continuous process; (2) become familiar with Sanskrit which is the store-house of our moral and cultural foundations; (3) develop a sense of respect for teachers and a spirit of inquiry and service; and (4) appreciate and live up to the permanent values of the creative art of life for which India stands. Refer to the Bhavan's Objects which are printed in all the volumes of the Bhavan's 'Book University Series.'

11: *What is the essential characteristic of 'Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan' as distinguished from Shanti Niketan and Sabarmati?*

Shanti Niketan and Sabarmati Ashram: each bears the impress of a great personality and is an experiment in a distinctive kind of education. The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan takes modern education as it is and aims at re-integrating it with the fundamental values of Indian Culture as defined in its objectives. In doing so it draws upon Sanskrit, our past heritage and the old Indian Art forms, with due regard to modern taste and needs and the achievements of an atomic age.

12: *Why has been the column 'My Unforgettable Moments' cancelled from the Journal? Will it be resumed?*

No contribution worth publishing has been received of late.

13: *What is the purpose in advertising the 'Panama Cigarettes' in a cultural magazine like this?*

I am not a cigarette smoker. I would not like anyone to smoke a cigarette or a cigar. But why can cigarette not coexist with culture? Have we not seen some of the most cultured people in modern times enjoying a smoke? We must not confound culture with asceticism.

14: *What is the purpose in publishing the "Simhasana-Dwatrimtika" stories which are unbelievable and unnatural, in a high standard magazine like this?*

Simhasana-Dwatrimtika has fascinated generations for two thousand years because the stories, including miracles, have an eternal appeal to the human mind. I read these stories now, possibly for the fifth time, with the same interest as when I heard them from my mother sixty years ago. In the name of the natural and believable, do we want to reduce our reading to a drab, prosaic affair?

15: *Nowadays we daily read in papers about Israel. But we are too much baffled between Israel and Palestine. We take these two names as the name of one nation. Please remove the difficulty.*

The territory of the Republic of Israel, 8,050 square miles, forms part of the country called Palestine, the area of which is 10,429 square miles. The rest i.e. 2,379 square miles, comprises Jordan and a part of Egypt.

16: *"First vivisect me before vivisecting India," said Gandhi many times. Will a biographer be right if he wrote "Gandhi failed miserably in his goal"?*

When India was vivisected, Gandhiji was distressed beyond

words. But no man, however great, could fight all circumstances all the time. In spite of his efforts, the inherent fissiparousness in India ended in vivisection. We failed, not he.

17: *Can "SPIRITUAL-DEMOCRACY" be established as political democracy had developed now?*

The word 'spiritual democracy' is very vague. Politically, men are treated as equals in a democracy. In the realm of the Spirit, human beings are today in different stages of evolution. At the same time, if democracy has to survive, we must integrate social and economic welfare with moral and spiritual uplift; when so leavened by moral and spiritual values, it may be termed 'spiritual democracy'; for then men can hope to rise to their spiritual stature. The Sarvodaya concept, if properly developed, has sufficient elements to convert itself into a concept of spiritual democracy. But before that is done, the materialistic gospel, which now dominates notions of social and economic justice, has to be subordinated to spiritual uplift.

18: *Is spiritual touch useful for religious and cultural developments of men of twentieth century?*

Yes. We must be careful about the meaning and content of the words 'spiritual touch'. 'Spiritual touch' would mean that spiritual values provide the motive force to all our actions. Spiritual values, which are absolute, comprise an aspiration towards Truth, Beauty, Love, Joy, Freedom, Knowledge and the power which comes of Absolute Calm. Our aspirations for these values could easily be applied to all our thoughts and actions, if we would but try.

19: *When we talk of the spiritual touch, people abuse us and say that we are conservatives. Why is it so?*

'Conservative,' 'reactionary' and 'counter-revolutionary' are words of current political abuse, applied to those who disagree with us. Don't worry about them.

July 29, 1956

20: *You write in one of your letters that Kartikeya and Ganesh, the two sons of Shiva, are shown in a panel of the Ajanta Cave in which the marriage ceremony of Shiva with Parvati is carved. How could it have been possible?*

There is nothing wrong or objectionable in representing Ganesh or Kartikeya in the marriage scene of Shiva and Parvati. Indian artists sometimes tell a continuous story, anticipating subsequent events in the same panel, though normally they employ separate panels for the purpose.

I am not sure whether Kartikeya was in the same panel or in the next one. But I have a clear recollection that Ganesh was in the panel.

Ganesh and Kartikeya are called *ayonija* sons of Shiva and Parvati, but not born of the womb.

There are several accounts of their birth in the different Puranas. A variety of legends also account for the elephant-head of Ganesh. In one of the accounts, Kartikeya is also said to be the son of Ganga, not of Parvati.

In worshipping a deity we must not try to trace his ancestry too logically. Worship is an act of faith, not a question of heraldry.

21: *Only three doors are open for me. Either I should commit suicide and be free from all that goes by the name of worries in this life; or I should starve and see my poor and old parents starve; and, lastly, I should take to some unfair means to earn my living.*

I want to know what I should do, or what you would have done were you placed in similar circumstances?

You are not the only person who has faced, or is facing, such a crisis in life. Many of us have had our share of such trials, too, and without the facilities which you have up to now of studying up to M.A. securing a first division and possessing good health. Evidently, you have not the good

fortune to have the advantages which I had. (1) I had faith in God—faith that in His greatness He would lead me to the path that He has destined for me; (2) I was determined to stand up to the trials and succeed against overwhelming odds or die in the attempt; (3) I constantly fed myself on the inspiration of books which showed me how great men triumphed over heavy odds.

There is very little hope for you unless you read and re-read the *Gita*, acquire faith in God and draw inspiration from the lives of great men. Therefore, make up your mind to listen to Sri Krishna's mandate:

'Don't yield to impotence, Partha. This does not befit you. Discard the ignoble weakness of your heart. Stand up, O Parantapa!'

22: *Is there any possibility of lasting peace and prosperity (of the whole society at the same time) through the refined and cultured society?*

Lasting peace is not possible till greater attention is paid to the spiritual development of the individual and he comes to realise emotionally the unity of living beings. The unhappy peace which prevails at present and is likely to prevail for a long time, is inspired by collective fear, not by sense of unity.

23: *Would fear of war disappear from this earth?*

Fear of war will disappear when malice, wrath and fear will disappear from the collective life of men. This implies that educated men, who control the destinies of mankind, should come to feel that God is in All, and All is in God. But the way that we go about emphasising material wants and maintain an unhappy balance of selfish interests is not likely to eliminate this fear.

24: *How far educational career goes in achieving the golden ends of life? What is the easiest approach?*

An educational career which believes in securing promo-

tions, seeking elections in the universities and remaining perpetually frustrated for want of enough means to maintain oneself is not likely to achieve the golden end of life. Unless devotion to learning is associated with an effort to maintain an austere life and serve high purposes, the golden end of life cannot be achieved.

25: *Do you proclaim the validity of 'Introduction of Indian Mythology' in art and culture?*

The question is unintelligible.

26: *Is there one word in our scriptures to prove that the Aryans came anywhere from outside ancient India?*

I am not a learned man, but I have not come across any word in our scriptures which would show that the Aryans came from outside India. In fact, in the Vedas, Saptasindhu i.e. the Punjab, is taken to be the eternal home of the Aryans. Perhaps the only reference to migration if at all is the story of the great flood referred to in the *Brahmanas*. But recent finds of the Painted Grey Ware Pottery have however lent substantial support to the theory that the Aryans immigrated to India.

27: *Have we not blindly accepted the Western Historians just as we do about the age of Lord Buddha, who in fact lived in the 18th century B.C. and not in 6th century B.C.?*

I don't think that Lord Buddha lived in the 18th century B.C. There is little doubt now that He lived during the 6th century B.C.

28: *Does not the word 'Arya' in Sanskrit mean a noble person and not a race and 'Dravida' means a person living in the Southern portion of Bharat?*

In the *Vedas* an 'Arya' does mean a noble person. But the word is also applied to a race different from the *Dasyus*. I don't think 'Dravida' in the *Vedas* meant a person living

in the South of Bharat. I am not sure whether even the word finds a place in the text.

29: *If Aryans came from Central Asia, or Swiss lakes or North Pole, how is it their Sanskrit language has become completely extinct in those areas?*

The Vedic Sanskrit is the Indo-Aryan language derived from the original Aryan speech. From Lithuania westwards to India there are several pockets in which the language spoken even today is considered by eminent scholars to have been derived from this ancestor of Vedic Sanskrit.

30: *How is it that the so-called Aryan Culture is more firmly established in the South than in the North?*

By what you call the 'so-called Aryan Culture', you mean the Indian Culture. The Indian Culture as we know it has been evolved from the ancient Aryan Culture by a long process of mutual adjustment with other cultures. For centuries, the North was overrun by foreigners and its culture had to make more substantial adjustments with alien cultures; that is why there appears to be some difference between the North and South. Basically, however, the culture of India is one, a synthesis of diverse cultural patterns; its shades vary according to local conditions and historical exigencies through which the region has passed.

31: *What is Nirvana?*

It is neither easy to define the word 'Nirvana' nor to understand it. 'Nirvana' was originally conceived as a state of desirelessness. This was a negative concept. In its positive aspect, I see little difference between *Nirvana* and *Moksha*, *Kaivalya*, *Samsiddhi* and *Matsanathan*, as conceived by the *Yoga-sutra* and the *Bhagavad-Gita*. It is a state in which (1) the lower instincts of desire, wrath and fear are transmuted into a wide calm; (2) the thinking mind has developed

a supersensory intuitive perception; (3) the sense of right or wrong has been stabilised as Truth-Consciousness; and (4) the peace of the Soul enters unfading Joy and Beauty. To most aspirants it is an ideal to which they can only travel by strenuous efforts and slow, uncertain stages.

32: *What is (1) Advaita (2) Visishtadvaita (3) Dvaita?*

How can these concepts be given in a short reply? According to Advaita philosophy, Brahman, the impersonal Absolute, is the only ultimate Reality; Maya, its power, appears as the changing Universe; the Spirit in man is identical with Brahman.

In Visishtadvaita, there are three realities: God, Soul and Matter; but the last two are inseparable from and absolutely dependent upon the first.

In Dvaita, God is distinct from the soul, as also from matter; one soul is distinct from another and one form of matter from another. Read Sri D. S. Sarma's *Hinduism Through the Ages*, Bhavan's Book University Series.

August 12, 1956

33: *How long back this Journal was started and what is its aim?*

"The Bhavan's Journal" was started on August 15, 1954, with the object of implementing the object of the Bhavan, which is re-integration of Indian Culture.

34: *What is the noble aim of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan?*

The aim of the Bhavan, in short, is the re-integration of Indian Culture. Read the aims and objects in the Book University volumes.

35: *Our Hindu faith prescribes fasting and bathing and*

other religious ceremonies during eclipses. Do you approve of the criticism of this practice?

The Hindu practice of fasting, bathing and performing religious ceremonies during an eclipse began at a time when people believed that during an eclipse, the demons, Rahu and Ketu, swallowed the sun and the moon, whom they worshipped—and many worship still as gods. We now know that eclipse is a natural phenomenon. Such practices, which had their origin in ignorance, require to be altered in the light of present-day scientific knowledge. We should therefore enlighten our people. But if members of a family still hold the old belief, I would not offend their susceptibilities by condemning them.

36: *When does a man get peace?*

I take it that by peace you mean 'shanti'.

Such a peace can be acquired by (1) giving up desire for the fruits of action; (2) training oneself to consider every action as an humble offering to God; or (3) acquiring by Yogic practices, a wide calm, which knows no hurry, no worry, no expectation, no fear and no anxiety; or (4) by becoming an instrument of God.

(Vide verse 71, Canto II, the *Bhagavad-Gita*).

37: *What was between death and being born?*

Perhaps you can make the question a little more intelligible.

38: *Will you kindly state and explain the significance of the ten orders of Sanyasis?*

The ascetics in India, according to the religions they follow, may be divided into Hindu Sanyasins, Buddha Bhikshus and Jain Sadhus.

The Hindu Sanyasins are divided into several monastic Orders. The most important of them belongs to the Dash-nami Sampradaya, founded by Shankaracharya, and the

Udasina Sampradaya, founded by Srichandra, the son of Guru Nanak. Possibly, there are other Orders also.

The Dashnami Sampradaya has ten sub-sections: the San-yasin of each section bears a name ending in one of the ten names like 'anand', 'tirtha', 'puri', etc.

39: *What is the definition of a Hindu ?*

See answer to this question in the Bhavan's Journal dated July 1, 1956.

40: *Is it a fact that Bharat had attained political unity even in pre-historic times ?*

I do not think that at any time in history, Bharat, that is, India, ever attained political unity as at present.

41: *Why is it that there are no 'tragedies' (dramas ending in tragedy) in Sanskrit literature ?*

According to the canons of Sanskrit Dramaturgy, the drama should not end in a calamity.

42: *What are the ideals of the Sanskrit Vishva Parishad ?*

The ideals of the Sanskrit Vishva Parishad are:

- (a) Sanskrit is the language of India's culture and inspiration; that it is the world's classical language and the key to a true understanding of India's cultural and spiritual greatness and that through Sanskrit and its allied languages, particularly Pali and Prakrit, the world can realise the life of the spirit enshrined in them.
- (b) India's immediate and paramount need is to promote the study of Sanskrit so that this treasure-house of her past and the source and inspiration of her modern languages should become an intimate part of the life of the people; that research in Indology and other allied subjects keep pace with the advance of know-

ledge and thus the varied and manifold wealth of our heritage he made more readily available to the entire world;

- (c) To achieve these purposes, the Sanskrit Vishva Parishad was established to work in association with the Somnath Trust and all other agencies throughout the world that have similar aims to work in the same field.

43: *What is the difference between civilization and culture?*

Different authorities have described 'civilization' and 'culture' differently. Sometimes the words are erroneously used to mean one and the same thing. But 'culture' as I use it means a way of life which continues through time and draws its vitality from certain fundamental values, inspired by a Central idea. 'Civilization' is the material and social pattern of life at a given period, and largely depends upon the economic and technological conditions prevailing at the time. For instance, Rama and Sita travelled in a canoe; we now travel in aeroplanes. The civilization of their times was cruder than ours, but we cannot say that we are more cultured than they are.

44: *Gandhiji is a follower of 'Bhagavad Gita'. In 'Bhagavad Gita', Krishna asks Arjun not to bear in mind the fact of relatives, wife-side people and others, and battle with them and kill them as a Kshatriya will do his duty. Why Gandhi expressed himself against such killing when his favourite 'Bhagavad Gita' itself advocated killing and raising of arms against foreign power and enemies?*

Ahimsa, as taught by Sri Krishna and as understood by me upon reading the *Gita*, is a state of mind which knows no malice or wrath; if once such a state of mind is reached, killing might conceivably become a duty. Gandhiji took the view that *Ahimsa*, according to the *Gita*, implied both a

state of mind and an abstention from inflicting physical injury. But he always related his ideals to practice. I remember him saying that non-violence should be of the brave and in a righteous cause even violence was to be preferred to the non-violence of the coward.

45: *Why did Gandhi who spoke for and advocated the cause of Harijans not agree to intercaste marriages like Harijan and Brahmin, Muslim and Christian, etc.?*

It is not correct that Gandhiji did not agree to inter-caste marriages. There were several inter-caste and inter-creed marriages performed with his blessings.

46: *Now that there is an Indian Union having two crores of Muslims, I think that Hindu-Muslim problem has not been solved completely.*

The four crores, not two, of Muslims who are now in India are citizens of the Indian Union, which is neither Hindu nor Muslim. There is, therefore, no insoluble Hindu-Muslim question in India. The Hindu who thinks that a Muslim has no place in India, and the Muslim who thinks that he does not owe allegiance to the Motherland are both wrong.

47: *Can it be said that sacrifices in which goats, birds, etc. were killed were stopped by the Brahmins after Buddha gave his teachings?*

I do not think so. Even before Lord Buddha there were schools of thought in India which did not favour animal sacrifice; Lord Buddha only emphasized that point of view. Animal sacrifice continued even after Buddha. Even now, animal sacrifices have not disappeared from India.

48: *A Bengali Brahmin eats fish which is a meat, which a Tanjore Brahmin would not. Does Brahmanism in the North allow Brahmins to eat fish and meat?*

Eating of fish and meat has nothing to do with Brahmanism. "A man is *dwija* by his temperament and aptitude," says Sri Krishna. Food habits have differed, and do differ from province to province in India. The Maithili Brahmins, once reputed to be the most learned in India, loved, and still love, to eat fish above everything. If you take the whole of India, Hindus as a whole only draw the line at beef, unless of course a Hindu is lost to the scruples of his race and culture by an overdose of Westernisation.

August 26, 1956

49: *What are the feelings of a human being when he suffers adversities from the cradle to the grave?*

If the sufferer is a coward, he will go on complaining; if he is a hyper-sensitive coward, he will commit suicide. But if he is a hero, he will fight adversity to the end. If he is a man of faith, he will consider that adversity is a purifying process, from which he will emerge armed with supreme calmness given to him by the grace of God.

50: *Philosophers of every religion talk of 'Universal Truth.' Is this the truth we talk so often in our day-to-day life? Or else, what is that 'Great Truth?'*

We use the word 'Truth' in four different senses:

(1) Most of us are egotists and whatever we believe in, we call truth.

(2) Truth is often applied to things which we believe to be proved by reason or experiment, but reasoning and laboratory tests are limited in their validity.

(3) Truth in the higher sense is the dynamic compactness of word, thought and deed. It is the individual truth and if a man is prepared to back it up with his life, he leads a noble life.

(4) The Universal truth is Reality, *sat*, as we use in the word 'Satchidananda.' Behind all these fluctuating pheno-

mena that we see around us, there is the great Truth, Reality, God, who lives in all and in whom all live. That is the Universal Truth, taught by religions and philosophies.

51: *Do human beings do good to society (world)? How or why?*

Every human being has a *swabhava*, native temperament. What the *swabhava* is and how it prompts his actions has reactions on the society to which he belongs. If he has faith in God and is trying to purge his temperament of attachment, wrath and fear, what he becomes and what he does will do good to the society. But without such faith and without any effort to purify the temperament, the so-called 'doing good' is play-acting which does no good.

52: *If I ask the questions in Kannada, will you reply?*

I will reply a question in Kannada when I learn the language; but I am afraid I have too few years to live to embark on that venture.

53: *Will the world be ever without Adharma and Himsa?*

The world is in the process of transformation. This transformation takes the shape of a constant struggle between *Dharma* and *Adharma*, or rather to put it in concrete terms, between the fundamental aspirations of Truth, Beauty, Love and Calmness on the one hand, and attachment, fear and wrath, the instinctive urges of man, on the other.

What we call evil, therefore, is not something intrinsically wicked. It is only a process, like a churning of the ocean by the Devas and the Danavas. As a result of this, Dharma is progressively being established in this world and a new race of human beings with stabilised fundamental aspirations, is emerging.

54: *From which source are you giving the detailed story of Bhagawan Parashurama in an up-to-date manner and in*

which books we can get the entire history (as is being given by you) of Bhagawan Parashurama?

The episodes about Bhagawan Parashurama are found in a disconnected form in the *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas*. I have tried to piece them together in an imaginary story.

55: *Is it that Sita who became victim to the cruel hands of Ravana was only 'Vethavati' of Agni Bhagawan and has the incarnation of Lord Mahavishnu as Lord Venkateswara got any connection with that?*

My knowledge is too limited to give you an answer.

56: *Can you find any ideological difference between Lord Russell and Sri Nehru?*

There is difference.

57: *Can the political and social problems India is facing today, be solved by implementing the suggestions of Bertrand Russell?*

I am afraid, not.

58: *Is it your tradition to publish only the articles of great and popular figures? If you are kind enough to publish articles in your 'Journal' written by common people like me, may you publish my article on 'Astrology' (as I am an astrologer) if you find it good and publishable value. If so, I am going to send an article on Astrology.*

If your camel can pass through the needle which the editor uses for selecting articles, of course it will be published. Why not ask him?

59: *Can there be spiritualism in a Communistic country and if there can be, do the Russians believe in God?*

Quite a large number of Russians believe in God and are religious. Officially, the Communist Party is atheist and periodically denies and persecutes religion.

60: *Einstein wrote: 'I live in that solitude which is painful in youth but delicious in years of maturity.' How do you prove it? What is that solitude?*

The question had better be addressed to the spirit of Einstein, if you can find it. But without developing love for solitude, you cannot acquire calmness, nor live in an atmosphere in which you can know your true self.

61: *'If death is the end of life, then why life should labour be?'—Tennyson: which is the best answer given to this question from our scriptures?*

Death is not the end of life. Life should be one earnest effort to rise higher, which is true labour.

September 9, 1956

62: *What is a secular government? How far has India achieved it?*

Secular Government is not a Godless or irreligious Government. It is a government which respects all religions, accepts freedom of worship, and provides facilities to everyone to learn the way of reaching God in his own way.

63: *What are the teachings of Hazrat Mirza Gulam Ahmad of Quaidan? In what way Ahmadiyas differ from the teaching of Prophet Mohamed?*

I wish I knew.

64: *Buddha in one of his Dhammapada says thus: "Desire not a son either for thyself or for another." What does it mean? According to our Hindu Puranas a man should at least have one son for his attainment of Moksha. Please clarify this doubt.*

Lord Buddha addressed most of his teachings to the members of his monastic order. The Puranas are human docu-

ments, and their advice, if applicable to our age, is for ordinary men like you and me.

65: *How to be happier in this world?*

Try to transmute attachment, wrath and fear, acquire faith in God ever so little, and strengthening the love of Beauty and Calmness.

66: *In June 3, 1956 Journal in 7th para of Kulapati's letter the law of Marumakattayam is mentioned (now prevailing in Travancore). Please give all details of the law. I could not also follow the words "Here under this law husbands belong to their mothers and sisters." Kindly explain it.*

Will you please look up *Mayne's Hindu Law* or any other law book on this branch of the law? I have already indicated the broad aspects in the Letter.

67: *Sri Aurobindo's teaching and aim is the spiritual evolution of this earth. He says that life in the body and on this earth can be and will be made free from all darkness, chaos, suffering, etc. Is this teaching in accord with the Hindu Shastras or is it something beyond or outside them?*

The aim of Sri Aurobindo's teachings is in complete accord with the highest thoughts and aspirations in the Hindu scriptures. The *Vedas* look forward to a glorious life not only in the other world but also in this. The *Prithvisukta* of the *Atharva-veda*, one of the greatest hymns in the Vedic Literature, describes man as the son of the Earth (*Putroham Prithivyah*). The *Taittiriya Upanishad*, for instance, envisages the evolution not only of the Spirit of man, but also of the physical environments. The *Gita* not only points to self-realization of the individual in this life, but *Loksangraha* also.

68: *Your article 'Dedicated life—Sources of Strength—Life and Spirit,' in the Hindustan Times, has moved me deeply.*

Yet in one thing I have my doubts. Can reading and knowing the ideal of literature, the sacred books, make us human? We all know people with sometimes astonishing memories of what they have read, and yet caught in actions of brutality; of people for 2,000 years in Lord Christ's religion of love, with hearts as dry and hard as the inside of a stone.

Reading books is of little value. What is wanted is that scriptures and classics should be read again and again till they saturate the mind and change its content. To read, and even to know, is a very superficial process. Even to do works of charity is easy. The difficult thing is 'to be'. Scriptures and classics, read over and over again, are great aids to 'being'. Then knowing and living become one.

69: *What should be done to maintain the cultural unity among the Asian Countries?*

Indians should realize the value of the fundamentals of their own culture, acquire faith in them and have the self-confidence to stand by them. The unity of Asia will then follow, if they develop a feeling of kinship for all Asians and establish cultural contacts with all the countries of Asia. Today, the sense of unity is superficial, more an anti-western sentiment than a positive, well-crystallized emotion.

70: *Writing about Sadhus, Anil Kumar Mukerji from Calcutta writes in verse:*

*From an abuser's point of view one may say
A poor little Sadhu or an anchorite
Professing to have renounced the world today,
Is nothing but a do-nothing parasite.*

* * *

And not a few but we are toiling all day

*E'en for those bare necessities, may be,
Is he not then a parasite? Please do say
So that the matter clearly one may see.*

There are sadhus and sadhus, just as there are poets and poets and politicians and politicians. I agree that there is a large section of parasites among the sadhus. But quite a substantial number of them, all over India, are devout and learned men. They lead a solitary life pledged to high values and try to maintain God-mindedness among our people. If the spiritual values have any meaning in life, then the men who live for those values and preach them render great service to the community. Those who cater to the moral and spiritual needs of the community are not less important than those who cater to the economic or political needs.

71: *You seem to hoodwink Time by maintaining elasticity of youth in body and mind. What is the secret?*

I do not think I have been hoodwinking time. I wish I could. According to my experience, what keeps up the vitality of the body and mind is minimum of food, modicum of exercise and maximum of sleep, together with continued and unwavering interest in different aspects of life; more than anything else, considering regrets as a cardinal sin to be avoided at all costs and submission to the Will of God as the best of tonics.

September 23, 1956

72: *Bhagavad-Gita VIII 23 to 27 refer to Uttarayana and Dakshinayana, death in the one case leading to Brahma and in the other to re-birth in this mortal world. Apparently this cannot be so in every case and is in all probability bound up with some Yogic or psychic process, not revealed, albeit exemplified by Bhishma deferring his death till advent*

of Uttarayana. So will you kindly clarify and explain this dictum of our Holy Gita?

Uttarayana and Dakshinayana are astronomical phenomena. I cannot say why special sanctity came to be attached to Uttarayana by our ancestors—perhaps because the Aryans, according to Lokamanya Tilak, at one time, lived on the North Pole and had six months' day and six months' night. It may be that the Dakshinayana part of the year, with climatic conditions prejudicial to health, acquired a bad odour. The difference between the two parts of the year is so deep-rooted in our collective mind that it may be the outcome of some mystic experience, of which I have no clear idea.

73: What do you say about the method of religious preaching employed nowadays?

The method of religious preaching depends upon the character and vision of the preacher. Preaching can be by mere use of words of religious significance or by expounding religious ideas or commenting on texts. Preaching may take the form of utterances by one who has felt the truth of what he preaches. The highest preaching is through the media of words or parables or actions, or by the personality, which express the living Truths in which the teacher lives and has his being.

74. With regard to the controversy in 'Ramayana' and Vali Vada, I feel that we, finite ones, cannot explain the actions of an infinite Rama, however much they may seem incompatible with our own notions of justice and of reasoning. Please guide me.

Our notions of justice as well as reasoning are influenced by the standards of the age in which we live, the education which we have received, and the social conditions in which we function, all of which differ from generation to generation. They are no guides to interpreting scriptures which

are for all time. They are meant to change our mental content and give us moral and spiritual values, which are higher and more fundamental.

75: *Which is progressing (Sic) West with her Marx, Freud and Hydrogen Bomb, or the East with her inviolable faith in the ethics?*

To call the West progressive is to misunderstand values, for it has made little progress in the moral and spiritual spheres. It is equally wrong to say that the East as a whole has inviolable faith in ethics. The only difference is that the West has de-spiritualised ideologies by largely accepting the cult of materialism, and in some measure godlessness. While the East on the other hand still believes that the aim of life is spiritual and faith in God, a necessity of life; and the masses of some countries of the East are God-minded.

76: *Which chapter of the 'Gita' is good for morning prayer and which for evening prayer?*

I have found every chapter of the *Gita* good enough at all times. If at all a choice has to be made, I would prefer the Second and the Twelfth *adhyayas*, one for the morning, the other for the evening, or both on both the occasions.

77: *Do you accept the view of Macaulay that 'Puranas are absurd stories of impossible persons, inconceivable and fantastic legends and are hardly worth perusal by any sensible person'?*

Macaulay lived in the age of arrogant Britishers, who were ignorant of India. If you are a sensible person, why not start with *dashamaskandha* of the *Bhagawat* or *Shanti Parva* of the *Mahabharata*?

78: *Do you believe in Karma theory, and if so under what proof? It is my firm belief that a man's death is the total end of his affairs of life without any chance of rebirth.*

If your mind is not open on the question you have come

to the dead end to which materialistic outlook leads. If it is open, you might come to the conclusion that what you consider your firm belief is nothing but a hasty conclusion or a modern superstition. In order to understand the Divine Essence in man, which gives him immortality, you will have first to be humble; then, to study what has been said about the soul by men who have realized man's immortality; later, to think deeply about the evolution of matter through life, mind, conscience, and fundamental aspirations and their origin in God.

79: *Will you please let me know your views on the concept of world-citizenship?*

World citizenship would imply a world State. We have to go very far before we reach that stage.

80: *I am sure you have read about Mr. Garry Davis, the self-styled world-citizen now at Bangalore. How far, in your opinion, will he succeed in his mission?*

I do not know anything about Mr. Garry Davis.

81: *How does Sri Aurobindo stand in relation with the disturbances of Bombay?*

I do not know what Sri Aurobindo would have thought about the disturbances in Bombay had he been alive. Possibly, he would have thought that it is an inevitable struggle between the forces of good and evil in order to evolve higher goodness.

82: *What is the state of mind that lies between the rejection and acceptance?*

Vacillation.

October 7, 1956

83: *I am having strange experiences. On occasions, Mother Kali and Sri Sankaracharya talk to me through the*

planchette. A few days later, I sat against the planchette with a friend as the medium, called Kali and asked Her to explain Advaita. She said She did not know of it and she would send Sankaracharya to us. We accepted and she said Ranthow Jayanti. (I do not know Sanskrit; Kali, after a few days, said those words meant—she who prays succeeds!). Then the planchette spelt Sankaracharya and replied a number of our questions. Meanwhile I was very happy that Gods and Saints were so easily available for me! I thought of making good use of this opportunity! I requested Him to bless me with His Upadesa. He readily accepted and asked me to call Him on the planchette the next Sunday night.

Particularly Kali worries me very much. I hear strange voices. I feel sometimes that Kali is trying to kill me. I also get strange dreams. Sometimes I feel as if I am going mad.

I request you kindly to throw light on my experiences.

For many years I am familiar with what is called 'spirit-calling' through table-thumping, planchette and automatic writing. I have myself explored some of this 'spirit-calling' business under varying conditions. At first, this 'spirit-talking' strikes one as a miracle; but it is just an ordinary phenomenon—may be paranormal—which even school girls can bring into existence. By intense concentration and inducing a receptive mind, a fake personality is created which answers questions.

These fake personalities are not spirits or disembodied souls, much less gods or goddesses. They have no super-human vision or experience; nor do they possess intelligence higher than that of the persons calling them.

The answers given are either extremely common and often fantastic and are the product of some reflex psychic activities of the persons engaged in calling the 'spirits'.

Once you start calling the 'spirits' and begin to believe them as real, they obsess the mind. The mind then deve-

lops an oppressive sense that they are superhuman and their advice should be sought and accepted on every occasion. Once you come to this stage 'spirit-calling' becomes a very dangerous disease which unbalances the mind.

Goddess Kali and Sri Sankaracharya, who speak to you through the planchette, are just fake personalities. If Goddess Kali and the great Sankara could easily be got at by 'spirit-calling', there would be no necessity for prayer, tapascharya, yoga, self-discipline or surrender to God.

Excuse me, but you appear to be drifting in a very dangerous way. If I were you, I would stop calling the 'spirits', throw the planchette away and restrict myself to the preliminary kriya-yoga as prescribed by Bhagavan Patanjali: (1) You should perform Japa, that is, recite any inspiring formula you like at regular hours: say, 'I am calm, I am happy'. (2) Read the Gita or any other scripture you like as Swadhyaya; (3) Learn to surrender yourself to God in the form of Shanmukham or any other deity which appeals to you.

I do not rule out contacts with higher powers by developing paranormal faculties; be they gods, mahatmas or siddhas. But that requires long and arduous abhyasa, practice under a guru. But the sure test of your being on the right path in contacting them is that every such effort should leave you inspired, strong, pure, happy and unafraid. If it does not, it is a path which leads you astray.

If I were you, I would sit down quietly by myself in a solitary room, every morning and evening and develop cheerfulness; learn to forget worry, hurry, anxiety and fear; pray and develop calmness. This is the first stage in Dhyana. When you reach that calmness, which is Joy, you will be face to face with God. Your way, excuse me, is all wrong.

The best thing would be to be balanced and regular in your food, enjoyment, sleep and dreams. If I were you, I would not try to read meanings into dreams or visions but adopt a healthy view on life.

If you follow this course for six months, you will get a

proper perspective and will be able to acquire the right attitude toward God.

84: *Simplicity of character is the natural result of profound thought. What is your comment?*

Not necessarily. Some of the finest men and women in the world, who have simplicity of character, have not been known for profound thinking; they act more by instinctive goodness. Sometimes too much thinking is known to have undermined simplicity of character.

85: *What are the main differences between Mukti of Hinduism and Nirvana of Buddhism?*

The Nirvana of Buddhism is a state of desirelessness, while Mukti is a positive state of consciousness in which Reality, Consciousness and Bliss are realised and Union with God is secured.

86: *Do you treat Krishna as Avatara of God or a perfect diplomat? It is my firm belief that Krishna did well as a diplomat perfect, but not as a god in Mahabharata.*

I believe Sri Krishna to be an *avatar*; for in Him human nature found its most triumphant expression and in His teachings the way to self-realization.

Why should God not become a perfect diplomat if the triumph of *Dharma* makes it necessary?

87: *What are the best political conventions most desirable to be practised in a nascent democratic State?*

There should be respect both for law and order as also personal liberty among the people; faith in non-violent methods of agitation in political party; and a keen sense of public duty among the politicians.

88: *Is it not high time that teaching of Sanskrit (or*

knowledge of Sanskrit), the richest language even from the primary school, should be started?

It is high time we did so; that is why the two States—U.P. and the Punjab—are starting Sanskrit Universities, several other States are sponsoring Sanskrit education and institutions, and some Universities have been restoring Sanskrit in their courses. The Sanskrit Vishva Parishad is also working with this aim. The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan holds examinations in elementary Sanskrit. There are several such organisations and institutions in the country which are working in this direction.

89: *Why no interest is evinced to propagate this language (Sanskrit) by Central or State Governments, when world admires the treasure this great and divine language possesses?*

Several State Governments in India are evincing keen interest in Sanskrit—in the study as well as the encouragement and promotion of Sanskrit. The Central Government, so far as I know, helps in research, but has not inaugurated a programme for the encouragement and promotion of Sanskrit.

90: *What are Fundamental Aspirations to which you refer so often?*

These aspirations do not arise from attachment, hatred, and fear, which are the lower instincts. Nor from the mind. Nor do they arise from conscience, which only distinguishes between right and wrong.

The aspirations have been common to men of refinement in all ages and all countries. They are not means to an end, like instincts or reasoning, but are an end in themselves. They never bring satiety, if you live in them, but lead to a higher sense of fulfilment. Therefore they are fundamental.

These fundamental aspirations seek Calm, Joy, Love, Beauty or Bliss which neither wavers nor fades.

To nourish and develop fundamental aspirations, so that they permeate and transform our mental content is to live in God, for they are nothing but the radiations of the spirit in man, and when realised, bring us face to face with God.

91: *Will you please tell us to what is the relationship between Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara?*

Brahma is the creative aspect of God, Vishnu the sustaining and Maheshwara the destructive.

October 21, 1956

92: *Are not faith in God and faith in Astrology incompatible? I think, a man who has faith in God must have faith in Astrology also. What is more, we must not try to alter any adverse course of future events, as seen from a reference to Astrology, by offering "Prayaschitta" to this deity or that, and at the same time have faith in God.*

1. I do not see how faith in God and faith in astrology are incompatible. The basic idea of astrology is that the planets influence the constitution, temperament and the progress of a person. It is only the application of universal law by which planetary bodies, in some way or the other, influence human beings on this earth.

2. To study this law in its application to particular human being is to study astrology as a science. In order to find out the correct application, it is necessary to see how far by planetary influences the past of a man could be studied.

3. Astrology, like meteorology, often gives wrong forecasts. Whoever, therefore, is guided in his action by astrology is sure to suffer, for no reader of planets can be perfect.

4. If in trying to find out the planetary influence on the future of a person, he finds that there is likely to be misery or a mishap it might become necessary to perform *Prayaschit*,

if for nothing else, for his maintaining faith in God from which alone the strength of mind springs.

5. If planetary influences can affect a man's life, I see no reason why there should not be some way by which the effects cannot be modified or warded off.

93: *Why the mark or cross of a Christian printed in the Dhoti which is supplied by Sankaracharya Swamigal with the footprint of Sri Krishna. Is it a sign of the mutual relationship which prevails in all religions?*

The mark on the dhoti, supplied by Sri Sankaracharya, cannot be a cross. Possibly, it is some innocent mark like dyer's or dhobi's mark. The foot-prints are symbolic of Pujyapads i.e. the sacred feet of Sri Krishna. These symbols do not mean any relationship between Hinduism and Christianity.

94: *While the "Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan" stands for the renaissance of the Aryanism and Sanskrit Culture, will it recognise simultaneously the renaissance of the "Dravidianism" (as distinct from Aryanism) in the South and particularly in Madras State in a non-political and academician's point of view?*

There is no Dravidianism and no Aryanism in India of today. Aryan Culture and the Dravidian Culture met in North India hundreds of years ago. They acted and re-acted upon each other and produced the synthesis which we call the Indian Culture, of which Sanskrit has been the vehicle and the instrument for 2000 years; hence I have also called it the Sanskritic Culture.

It is a complete error of history to think that the South has a different culture from that of the North. Who knows anything about the original Aryan Culture and who knows anything about the pristine Dravidian Culture? Even in the *Rigveda*, we sense a growing synthesis of races and cultures in India. Sri Krishna, the great representative, had

a non-Aryan mother; so had Bhagvan Vyas; and in the *Gita* we see a fusion of practices of Aryan and non-Aryan cults.

95: *What is the difference between Westernization and Indianization?*

Westernization is aping of Western manners, customs, habits and way of thinking and living in the belief that they are superior to everything found in India. Indianization means getting rid of this snobbery and trying to discover the genuine value and appropriate place for the habits, customs and ways of thinking and living, which are essentially Indian.

96: *What is meant by Communalism?*

Communalism is the group sentiment which makes men consciously vain of being members of a single community, and leads them to give the sentiment preference over nationalism by converting it into an instrument of power politics.

97: *How did prayer influence Gandhi's life?*

Gandhiji believed in the efficacy of prayer. He prayed morning, noon and night. It was the strength and inspiration of his life. Without it, he believed one cannot be "clean inwardly".

98: *Will you please explain to me in detail the relationship between the Ancient Aryans and the Arab people?*

Ancient Arabia was the land of the Semites and is supposed by some scholars to have been their original home. The Ancient Aryans belonged to the Indo-European stock from which Indians and Iranians are descended. But it will be wrong to believe that any of these races are ethnically pure today.

99: *Is it a fact that intellectuals are necessarily highly romantic?*

It is the other way about. High intellectuals have generally limited capacity for being romantic and romantic temperaments do not prefer intellectual exercises:

100: *In the Avatars of Lord 'Rama' and 'Krishna'—what is the difference between them?*

Why do you want to compare and contrast *avatars*? You should try to be the instrument of whatever *avatar* appeals to you or by dwelling in you gives you the highest inspiration.

101: *A great philosopher has said that 'Life is but an empty dream'. This has made me lose interest in my material prosperity. How can I reconcile myself?*

Which philosopher has said that 'life is but an empty dream'? It is very much real. It was on the battlefields that Sri Krishna told Arjuna to fight vigorously by becoming the instrument of God.

November 4, 1956

102: *Does philosophy solve any economic problem of the latest situation in the world?*

Economic studies have solved no fundamental problem of life, for it has denied the help of philosophy, which alone determines the aim and purpose of life.

103: *Is religion essential even to a business man who does not care for sin, injustice and leads a hopeless life?*

Religion is essential to a businessman as well as to a non-businessman; for, without it, life would be sordid. We need not assume that all businessmen do not care for sin or injustice, or that all non-businessmen care for sin or are just. Religion is needed in order to make everyone better than what he is.

104: *What is your opinion about Atom/Hydrogen Bomb experiments in U.S.A.? Does it lead to our progress of civilization?*

Please refer to my recent Kulapati's Letter, published in the *Bhavan's Journal*, No. 25 of July 15, 1956.

105: *What is the value and use of studying political science? What should be its place in our Universities?*

In countries which have representative Government and the programme of establishing a welfare state, the study of political science is essential. As a subject, it has found a place in our University studies; only the studies are superficial and devoid of any moral basis.

106: *What is the part to be played by the lawyers to develop the country?*

Lawyers, i.e. those who study social regulations, codify its canons, interpret them and help in justice being dispensed with according to them, are essential elements of every civilized society. In a democracy, lawyers are invaluable, for, they help in building up the tradition of justice, in upholding personal liberty and the Rule of Law, in vindicating fundamental rights, and helping to regulate social, political and international conduct.

107: *Which were the races existing in Pre-Aryan era? How should we distinguish them from Aryas?*

Scholars believe that before the Aryans arrived in India about 1500 B.C., the Dravidians had entered the country about 2000 B.C. There are also traces of aboriginal people, who lived on the banks of the Ganges before the Aryans arrived. There was also a fourth race in the South, whose peculiar characteristic was stone-burials. Even before these people came, there were older races in this country.

I do not think that the original Aryan stock has survived in its ethnic purity. There has been a lot of intermixing of

blood in this country during the last five thousand years; what survived of the culture of the Aryas is its vigorous Central Idea, essential fundamental values and social institutions, which still dominate the present-day Indian Culture.

108: *Will you please clarify as to how and when our religion and our country got the names, "Hinduism" and "India?"*

In the Rigvedic period, those parts of India comprising Afghanistan, North-West Provinces (Br. India) and both the Punjabs, where the Aryans had settled, were known as Saptasindhu, the Land of the Seven Rivers. A portion of this area was called Sindhu, and was annexed to the Persian Empire by Darius Hystaspes in the sixth century B.C. As the Persians could not pronounce 'S', they called it Hindu. Later, the Greeks, who could not pronounce 'H', called it Indoi, from which comes India. Later, Persians and thereafter, the Muslims called India as Hindustan and its people Hindus. The British coined the word Hinduism to indicate the religion of the Hindus.

109: *What is the highest law of life?*

The highest law of life is to lead the life of the Spirit by transforming our mental content by developing the Fundamental Aspirations, i.e. by living a life of unfading Joy, Beauty, Bliss, Love and Calm.

110: *What does Mahatma Gandhi mean by "Ahimsa?"*

Gandhiji considered non-violence as synonymous with love in the purest and widest sense of the term. Developed by the seers and saints of India, it was derived from an insight that the whole Creation is one. Its roots are in the *Gita*, in which Sri Krishna says, "See All in Me and Me in all." Gandhiji never understood by *Ahimsa* mere non-killing. He once wrote: "In my Ashram, we had a dying calf. He had

stinking sores and was lame. I put an end to his earthly existence by painless injections. I was bitterly attacked by some of my fellow-countrymen, who in my view have yet to learn that *Ahimsa* never meant that suffering which could be terminated should be permitted. I think that much of the animal suffering in India today is due to this travesty of what *Ahimsa* means.”

111: *What do you think would be the pattern of our religion (Hinduism), if science were brought into it? Does it already exist in our religion? If we omit the 'superstition' part of it, what change would be necessary in our present concept of religion?*

Science is the discovery and application of laws of nature. Religion deals with the laws. On the other hand, religion operates upon the fundamental features on which the life of the Spirit is based. These fundamental values and the way by which God could be realised and lived in are the eternal aspects of Hinduism. But Hinduism, as other religions, has beliefs, rituals and doctrines built up at a time when Science had not advanced so far. Naturally, these accretions will have to be got rid of.

November 18, 1956

112: *May I know the purpose behind the introduction of proportional representation and single transferable vote system in the presidential elections?*

The system of proportional representation by single transferable vote was devised to see that a candidate should get a majority of votes cast if need be, by a transfer of second votes where there are more than two candidates.

113: *It is said that the events happening in one's life are the result of his karma. It is also true in one's life that the Hastha-Rekha lined by Brahma which is read here by Jyotisies. Then how can the person do better karma to get*

the result better when he is bound by the kalam of Brahma? Then where is the Pradhanata of karma where there is the Pradhanata of Hastha-Rekha created by Brahma or vice versa?

It is said by the experts in the *Samudrika* Shastra that one can cast the horoscope of a man from the lines of his hand. I have also seen some men doing it. But the lines of the hands also change from time to time, as one evolves step by step.

114: *Can you recommend to start a Bhavan's Circle of Pen Friends in the Journal?*

No. I am afraid there is no space for the venture.

115: *What is the difference between Socialism and Communism?*

Communism believes in class war and violence; it negatives the doctrine of personal liberty and the rule of the law. It believes in the regimentation of people under the strict control of the party.

Socialism is based on equality of man, social justice and a welfare state, and is theoretically pledged to nationalisation, though it makes compromises in practice. It can also be consistent with personal liberty, representative Government and the Rule of Law.

116: *Some people are of the opinion that Sanskrit is a language, which is ununderstandable. I strongly oppose this argument. What have you to say in regard to this matter?*

The people who think that Sanskrit is ununderstandable require to be properly educated. Sanskrit has been the base or the enriching element in all our languages. To speak Sanskrit is easy if you know it a little and, for anyone who has a good knowledge of an Indian language, learning Sanskrit is not very difficult.

117: *What is your opinion about a secular state and how can a "Brahmin" follow his real ideal in such a state? Can you show a way?*

A secular State is not a Godless State. It is a State in which all religions are equally respected and all efforts at a noble, God-inspired life are encouraged. I do not see how a man is prevented from leading a pure life by which his lower nature is transformed into a higher one—as every Brahman whether born or not should try to—in a secular State, if it is a free and democratic one as ours is. For a man becomes a Brahman by purity and self-discipline.

118: *God created the world; but why is God not feeding the poor well?*

The rich and the poor, both are fed. By whom if not by God?

119: *What does Sivanandaji of Rishikesh mean 'Embrace all' in relation with Pondicherry Mother's saying 'In the name of love, thousand and one mistakes are committed'?*

I do not know in what context the Mother and Swami Sivananda have used the words you refer to. It will be presumptuous on my part to comment on them.

120: *Can we perceive God through intuition? If so, what proof you can give?*

God cannot be perceived by the senses or proved by intellect. He could only be known by experience, vision or realization. The only proof will be your own realization, if you humbly try to achieve by faith and surrender.

121: *Please let your readers know your personal views on 'Social Service' with reference to this subject as published on page 16 of the Bhavan's Journal of July 1, 1956.*

Social service is ordinarily undertaken as efforts to ameliorate the condition of others. Often it is accepted as a kind of profession or a passport to win public esteem; or worse, to gain a position in life. Essentially, social service must be based on the consciousness of man's spiritual identity with all human beings. Service will then cease to be a profession or a matter of calculation, and flower into the God-mindedness.

122: *Is it a fact that the Indian civilization is imitation of foreign civilization?*

If by civilization is meant the material equipment of life, then we have borrowed a lot from the foreign countries. But if by civilization is meant culture, that is, the way of life based on certain characteristic fundamental values, then Indian civilization is unique and, though it has absorbed foreign influences, it has never imitated.

123: *God is in our body. Every action whether it is good or bad is done by God. Then why are we punished?*

If God is in you, He has also given you the faculty to choose between right and wrong, between good and evil. It is only by exercising this choice that you can evolve to a higher stage.

124: *How does the Jiva look like?*

It is not visible to the physical eye. How can it have looks?

December 2, 1956

125: *Is there no remedy for the people who suffer?*

1. There are two kinds of sufferings: one is imposed by external conditions. The remedy for it is the activity of a Social Welfare State, increasingly equipped with power to produce wealth quickly and distribute it equitably.

2. Suffering, however, does not arise from external in-

dividual conditions. It mainly arises from the propaganda of discontent and a faint-heartedness, a weakness of character; principally because of lack of faith in God. No amount of external comforts can save man from this suffering. The only cure for him is to increase the development of the Spirit in man and evolve God-mindedness among as large a number as possible.

126: *Knowing full well that gambling is a vice, why did Yudhishtira, the just, indulge in gambling and stake everything that he had, even his brothers and Draupadi?*

The royal tradition of the age of Yudhishtira was that the princes should know gambling as an accomplishment and that if a challenge is given to gamble, it must be accepted. Yudhishtira gambled more from a sense of honour than on account of the attraction of gambling.

127: *It is my opinion that literature can be fruitful only when it is a satire on life and not an imitation of it. Am I correct?*

True, literature is neither a satire on life nor an imitation of it. It is the expression of the creative spirit through effective and beautiful words so as to evoke the sense of beauty in the reader.

128: *When the Head of the State, the President of India, is subject to the process of impeachment for violation of the Constitution, why is no such provision made for a Governor's impeachment?*

There is no need for the impeachment of the Governor; as one serving during the pleasure of the President, he can immediately be removed, if he loses the confidence of the President.

129: *According to Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the image worship is wrong, which is now existing in Hinduism. According to him God cannot take birth in any form, and*

the conception of so-called AVATARS as God himself is wrong.

An ordinary mortal, to acquire faith in God, needs a symbol—like a *Shivalinga* or a Buddhist *stupa*. The symbol differs according to the needs of each worshipper and the tenets of each religion.

Unless a man has reached a very high stage of evolution, he cannot do without a symbol. I do not think that a vast majority of men, however intellectual or advanced, can do without shrines, images or idols or some such symbols.

According to Swami Dayanand Saraswati's interpretation of the Vedas, the *homa* was the proper form of worship. It was to him a better symbol than an image.

130: *How far is it possible to believe in the Indian mythologies, for we find a lot of contradictions and vague imaginings in them?*

Mythologies are not facts which can be proved in a scientific laboratory or by a syllogism. Being symbols of the innate cravings of man, they exercise great influence on man and are therefore necessary for his development.

131: *Can we punish a 'so-called' religious-minded man, indulging in immoral act, unlawful profession, etc. or should we REFORM him?*

In the imperfect world in which we live, both reform and punishment will have to be adopted side by side.

December 16, 1956

132: *What is the actual definition of Nastic and Astic?*

An *Astik* is one who believes in God and has faith in Him; a *Nastic* is one who feels himself so important and all-sufficient that he can do without God.

133: *Mr. Stephen Spender finds the conception and evaluation of bourgeois Art different from those of the*

working class Art. Is Art divisible like this? Even if Mr. Spender's views may be correct, with respect to the Western Art, can they hold good in the case of our own Art? Or indeed, can Art be divided along geographical lines at all?

1. Beauty, which art is intended to represent, has no national frontiers and no class-war implications. To divide art as bourgeois art and working-class art is a Marxian myth.

2. An artist is born; whether he is born in a palace or in a hovel is a matter of accident. But, as things are, each artist gathers his experience and material from his own surroundings. Naturally, therefore, in his artistic creations he projects the outlook drawn from this experience and material.

3. An artist, born in a palace, therefore, would be inspired by his surroundings; and so would a workman from his own surroundings; but whether he is able to create beauty depends on his inborn sensitiveness, his creative faculty and the intensity of his yearning after the beautiful, not on his surroundings. A Mira, who is born in a palace, drew inspiration from distant Vrindavana, which she possibly must have visited only for a while. A Kalidasa in his *Meghaduta* describes the beauty of the whole of India. Some artists, therefore, easily outgrow the narrow confines of their surroundings in which they are born and brought up, and become universal.

4. Possibly, the author of the *Bhagavata*, one of the high watermarks of artistic achievement, was a poor Brahman, who lived on alms. Tulsidas, the author of the world's masterpieces, lived on precarious support in his earlier years. And some of the sculptors of the Khajuraho and Konarak Temples lived in comparative luxury. This division of bourgeois and working-class art, therefore, is fictitious.

5. In a superficial sense, art is divided along geographical lines. An artist of India and one of France, for instance, each has a different artistic and cultural heritage which would

naturally colour his technique and outlook. But in each one there is Beauty which is Universal. One can, therefore, admire the beauty of *Psyche* of Lord Leighton, the *Mona Lisa* of Leonardo Da Vinci, *Venus De Milo* of some ancient Greek artist, the *Mahishasura-mardini* of Mammallapuram, the *Devata* of the Raja-Rani Temple of Bhuvaneshwar and the Japanese paintings of dainty Geisha girls, irrespective of national outlook and technique of different countries.

134: *It is generally agreed by many people within and outside our country that Hindu religion and form of worship and scientific progress of India (based on the advances made in Western countries) cannot go hand in hand and that the two are poles apart. It is said that one can increase the hold on our people only by making us lose faith in the other. Christianity seems to have blended with the type of progress made in Western countries. Will you kindly explain whether our religion and the type of progress we are planning are really reconcilable?*

I do not agree with the view that Hinduism and scientific progress cannot go hand in hand in India. Hinduism consists of (1) a Central Idea, (2) certain fundamental values and (3) rituals, forms and beliefs which have changed from age to age. The rituals, forms and beliefs, formed in earlier ages, have to be changed to suit advancing knowledge and changing conditions. But the Central Idea and fundamental values are eternal and ever-inspiring. If they are vitalised, new rituals, forms and beliefs would be shaped to meet the needs of our age.

135: *Is 'linguistic loyalty' a danger to the progress and welfare of our country?*

Perhaps I was the first to bring into general usage, if not to coin, the word 'linguism' for what you call 'linguistic loyalty'. Linguism makes one's own language the basis of a group sentiment for power politics. It is an intolerant

and aggressive sentiment which, as I have repeatedly said, undermines nationalism and lets loose disruptive forces. We have seen how Linguism has been marring the fair face of our country during the last two years. And nothing distresses me more than the fact that, at the moment, several parts of the country are in the grip of this linguism.

136: *To the classic controversy of Machine Vs Human labour, do you think India can give a reply, India being on the threshold of a belated Industrial Revolution?*

1. There cannot be a categorical answer to your question. The relative place of machine and human labour in a country depends upon its peculiar conditions. In America, every able-bodied human being is employed, in spite of the fact that machines do a lot of work: in India, there is tremendous man-power available, and if work is automatised by machines all at once, people will starve.

2. There is nothing absolute about these discussions. It all depends upon the need of a particular country. Both machine and human labour have to be utilised so as to produce the maximum of benefit to the country and as widespread an employment as possible.

December 30, 1956

137: *Is there such a thing as motherless child?*

I cannot imagine a motherless offspring among the higher forms of animals. But amoeba, the most elementary form of life, has no father and no mother. One amoeba splits into two, and two into four. You can, therefore, call an amoeba a motherless child.

138: *Should Sanskrit be revived? Why?*

It is not a question of preserving or reviving Sanskrit as a language. It is a question of preserving our soul and the spirit of our race in the sphere of social relations as

also in that of the mind and spirit. For, Sanskrit is the basis of our unity, culture and vitality. The world can only be redeemed by a wider appreciation of what Sanskrit stands for, viz: faith in the integration of human personality, in the supremacy of the Moral Order and in the Divine Essence in Man.

139: *Why does not Bhavan's Kala Kendra stage the popular dance-ballet RAM SHABARI in Southern India just as in Northern India? Will you make it convenient to stage it in Bangalore?*

Why don't you write to the Secretary of the Kala Kendra of the Bhavan? I am sure, if the troupe is invited, it will come to Bangalore. It has just completed an extensive tour of Gujarat and is now touring Madras and later Calcutta.

140: *Will you please define morality? How is the moral code affected by changes in the social habits that take place from time to time?*

Very often the words 'morality' or 'moral code' are used to convey certain social conventions. But the true moral code is the Law of Moral Causation as defined by Patanjali: "Whosoever realises Truth, his work shall bear immediate fruit. Whosoever realises Non-violence, to him shall men come shedding their hostility. Whosoever realises Non-stealing, to him shall come wealth. Whosoever realises Non-waste shall obtain the vigour that fades not. Whosoever realises Non-possession shall know the how and where-for of his life." This law is as inescapable as the Law of Gravitation.

141: *Does the appointment of the Governor by the President and dependence of the former on the latter for his term of office weaken his position?*

On the contrary, the appointment of the Governor by the President strengthens his position. Not being a nominee of

his own government, he will be able to bring to bear an independent outlook on important problems and can take necessary steps in cases of emergencies. The Heads of the Republic and the States will also thereby be directly linked.

142: *When Brahma created one's fate to do accordingly, then how can the person make his fate good?*

Brahma did not create one's *karma*. It is created by one's own actions and one can escape from their effects by one's efforts.

143: *Have you found any king in the history of India, who did not punish the evil-doers of the land?*

Oh, yes. Quite a few dozen.

144: *What is the core of various religions on this earth?*

To transform the mental content by changing the lower instincts of attachment, wrath and fear into Godmindedness.

145: *When his freedom was secured by the boons granted to Draupadi by Dhritarashtra, why did Dharmaputra indulge again in gambling knowing full well that Sakuni was a treacherous adept in this art?*

Dharmaraj could not withdraw from the game of honour. Possibly Dharmaraj had faith in God and as an honourable man left it to God to decide whether he should win or lose the game.

146: *The introduction of Hindi by 1966 at all levels means hasty eradication of English. Please comment on this.*

1. As things are today, the introduction of Hindi by 1966 at all levels and the hasty eradication of English would be a national disaster.

2. While the Universities in the Hindi-speaking States have started a sudden switch-over to Hindi, the non-Hindi

States in some cases, have tried to substitute English for the regional language.

3. The rapidity with which English is being replaced by Hindi in some States of North India is developing two linguistic zones in the country. We have had enough experience of emphasising regional languages and the deleterious effect it has on the solidarity and unity of the country.

4. If the country, out of a sentimental urge, suddenly accepts Hindi as the language of scholarship and research, foregoes the use of English, a language of power which has built up standards of scholarship and efficiency, in favour of a weak and under-developed instrument, it will not help anyone, nor serve the cause of Hindi.

5. In my opinion, English in the Universities should continue to be the medium for the present, with Hindi as a secondary medium but not as a substitute; at the same time, the movement favouring the introduction of regional languages other than Hindi as the medium of higher education should not be encouraged.

6. English should be the medium of public service examinations, and knowledge of Hindi be considered essential.

7. The study of English however should be encouraged even after it has ceased to be the official language of the Union. It is an Indian language by adoption; it has its use in preserving unity, in developing higher expression in the Indian languages, and in maintaining standards of scholarship; it is our international medium. For a long time to come, English textbooks in Arts, Science and Law, cannot be dispensed with. The present sentimental insistence on removing English should therefore be overcome.

147: *I want to know why Sri K. M. Munshi writes the articles in the nick name of 'Kulapati'.*

Under the Constitution of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, its President is called 'Kulapati'; and the Letters which he wrote were originally intended to be addressed by the Pre-

sident to the workers and students of the Bhavan. With the growth of the Bhavan, his Letters have had the good luck to be read by a wider audience.

148: *Can we send articles to our Journal? Of what type?*

If you send articles which deal with Indian Culture,—well-written, short and interesting—I am sure the Editor can be wooed and won. But it is the Editor's unfettered discretion to accept an article or not.

149: *Mahavishnu's Mathsyavathara, Kurmayathara, Varahavathara, etc., are said to indicate man's evolution from a fish to a complete man. This is contrary to Darwin's theory of evolution of man from monkey. In my opinion I think that ants, peacocks, fish, lions, tigers, men; etc., co-existed even two lakhs of years ago and there is no question of evolution. What is your opinion?*

I think you have not clearly understood Darwin's theory, if you mean that he discovered that the man is descended from the monkey. It is only a popular view of the theory. The theory has also undergone considerable transformation during the last hundred years. We now know roughly the history of the earth and the creatures who have been living on it for a billion years or more.

2. There is no doubt that God's descents as the Divine Fish, the Divine Tortoise and the Divine Boar indicate in mystic symbols the progressive evolution of Life. It approximates to the scientific discovery of the evolution of life; but we need not try to see that every symbolic step advanced by inspiration tallies with every scientific discovery.

150: *What is the aim of Lord in creating this Universe?*

It is a very difficult question. But so far as I think, the aim of Creation is the transformation of Matter into Spirit, so that God, who permeates the Universe, can be consciously manifested in it.

151: *Why is it that when individual freedom and civil liberties are being so much talked about, we find that the State is getting simultaneously more and more powerful?*

By its very nature, a Social Welfare State which is pledged to raise the standard of living of its people swiftly, has to embark upon activities which regulate and influence most spheres of life. In that sense the State has to become more powerful. But the whole structure of Indian life is based on the recognition of human individuality. Expression of opinion in no part of the world is freer than in India. Religious freedom obtains here as in no other country. And if you see the records of the High Courts in India, you will see that civil liberties are fully maintained.

Your question arises not from an examination of actual facts.

152: *What are the exact implications of the Socialistic pattern of society for which the Government is working? Does it mean that the rich will become poor and the poor poorer?*

The expression 'Socialistic pattern of society' as used in reference to India, has to be understood in the context of the conditions of India as well as the policy followed by the Government. It implies a more equitable distribution of wealth, constant effort at raising the standard of living, the removal of social disabilities and the introduction of an ethical content in social work, so as to lead to better living, not only economic, but moral and spiritual. If the rich become richer and the poor become poorer, it is neither a socialist society, nor even a capitalist one as understood today in, say, a country like the U.S.A.

153: *Please enlighten us on the theory of Karma. Does the principle of Karma theory apply to the animal and in-*

sect kingdom? What is the first cause for the first birth of a human being?

The Karma theory is a vast process of transformation by which the soul, after one form or body is dissolved, takes another form or body. This is an evolutionary process by which Matter is transformed into Life; Life into the Mind; the Mind into the Higher Mind, till the Spirit completely transmutes the animal instincts into fundamental aspirations.

154: *Is the world progressing? Will you please say whether there has been a material as well as spiritual progress in the world or only a change? All change is not progress. Man is not happy today. I should like to have your views on this point.*

If by progress is meant the multiplication of material comforts, we have made considerable progress. If it is measured in terms of the number of men to whom opportunity for leading a better life is available, we have also made progress.

2. The world has shrunk on account of easy communications, and a world consciousness in favour of upholding the moral order is emerging on a worldwide scale, which did not exist before. In that sense also there has been a change for the better.

3. If by progress is meant that the human mind at its best has reached a higher level of moral strength, aesthetic perception or spiritual insight, there has been no progress.

4. In the past the life of the masses moved within the four corners of customary existence dominated by religious sanctions. People, therefore, were more contented and happier. Now that contentment has largely disappeared. Individual and collective selfishness is more expressive than before. Religion has lost its hold. In this sense, therefore, we have gone back.

5. If progress is measured in terms of greater regard for Truth, Love, Beauty or Joy, which only comes through God-mindedness or in the conquest of attachment, wrath and fear,

or in efforts to lead the life in Spirit, there has been a decided set-back due to organised propaganda of Godless materialism.

155: *Why did Dharmaraj stake his wife Draupadi in gambling? What do you think was the reason?*

According to one of the fundamentals of our Indian culture, a wife and husband are inalienable parts of each other. Draupadi was such an integral part of Dharmaraj. Evidently he staked her because he felt that it was dishonourable to withdraw from the game while leaving an integral part of himself, his wife, unstaked. Perhaps, he also thought that he must leave the issue to be decided by God, whether Draupadi should remain free or be a slave as he had become.

January 27, 1957

156: *How did the ideal of asceticism originate and develop in Ancient India?*

The root idea in asceticism is that man, in order to rise higher, must give up the pleasures of the flesh; and that in order to attain full development of the personality, wasteful indulgence in the attractions of the senses must be controlled. This leads to the doctrine of *Vairagya*.

2. Strictly speaking, *Vairagya* is not asceticism; it is really transmuting the lower instincts by controlling the lure of the senses. The fear that, if pleasures are not enjoyed, we shall be unhappy is wrong. From times immemorial, therefore, *Vairagya* was accepted as a principal pathway to *moksha*.

3. The negative denial of wordly joy led to the foundation of the cult of sadhus and monks. At the same time, the well-behaved sadhu or monk by his lifelong devotion to *Vairagya* creates, fosters and strengthens moral, religious and philosophic currents.

4. During the Era of Resistance, when life in India became stale, asceticism was a means of escaping from the

humiliations of the world. This introduced many elements of a decadent society in India.

157: *Is not Article 365 of our Constitution which states that when a State had disobeyed the directions issued by the Central Government, it shall be lawful for the President to hold that the administration of the State cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution vague?*

There might be many ingenious ways in which the provisions of the Constitution can be departed from or evaded. Article 365 is, therefore, purposely made sufficiently comprehensive to meet all contingencies which might lead to a departure from the Constitution.

158: *Will you kindly enlighten me as to what are the fundamental teaching of Vedas, and to what extent the practices in Hinduism now are contrary to the teachings of Vedas?*

The fundamental teachings of the Veda are very difficult to compress in a short answer. The Rigvedic Samhita envisages vigorous, heroic, aggressive life, inspired by intimate contact with the different gods, of whom one is the Supreme God. The principal Upanishads envisage Brahman, the All-pervading reality. Later philosophies and ritualistic schools have altered these concepts.

We cannot go back to the pure Vedic teachings; nor can we ignore them, as they are the source of our later outlook, both moral and spiritual. What needs to be done is to go to the vigorous outlook of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the *Gita* and in their light, change the prevailing practices to suit modern conditions. For this purpose, the *Gita* is the best Upanishad.

159: *Kindly let me know which philosophy among Dwaita, Adwaita and Vishishtadwaita is based according*

to the TRUE PRINCIPLES of Vedas and is most followed and admired?

These systems of philosophy are evolutions of the Vedic thought and faith through the ages. Each of these philosophies is admirable in its own way. But among those who think in terms of philosophic doctrines, I think, Advaita is more favoured in India than any other school. The ordinary man is concerned with prayer, devotion, faith, solace in this world and hope in the next; except in a theoretical discussion or in a crisis when some explanation is needed, he is very little interested in philosophic doctrines.

February 10, 1957

160: *What is the incentive to go on a pilgrimage to the sacred Himalayan shrines? It is said that there are spiritual vibrations in the Himalayas. If so, when you went to Badrinath, did you receive them? How one is to be aware that the spiritual vibrations are being received while one is there?*

I like to go on pilgrimage to our shrines because when I visit them (1) my love for the Motherland finds concrete expression in an emotional experience; (2) I find living contact with our heritage which they symbolise; and (3) I feel inspired by the devotion and faith which drew generations of our ancestors to these shrines, and feel them myself.

When I went to Badrinath, I felt uplifted by a sense of tranquil ecstasy, in which I experienced both joy and beauty. Anyone who feels like that will become aware of the spiritual vibrations, which are nothing but momentary but active realization of the Fundamental aspirations which come from the spirit.

161: *What is the place of women in Society? Is it necessary that they should leave their homes and enter the*

vortex of politics and other fields in order to usurp the place of men?

The position of women in society is equal, but not the same, as that of men. Physically, emotionally and mentally, they are counterparts of men; and find fulfilment in separate spheres of life. In other respects, they are as good, and in some respects better than men.

It is an erroneous idea that politics is a field of men only and if women came into it, it would be usurped by them. By nature and temperament women are the makers of the home. If they deserted the home for politics, it would be a social, cultural and biological disaster but they could while looking after the home help to mould the destinies of the nation.

162: *What is the true nature of a free country?*

A free country is one where an individual is not an instrument, but an end, of social existence; where his dignity is protected by the Constitution; where every religion is tolerated and respected; where, subject to the paramount loyalty to the Constitution and orderly progress, expression of opinion is free; where all differences are settled by peaceful discussion; and where free and unfettered elections permit of honest representatives of the nation to be returned to the governing body of the country.

163: *What is "Dharma"? How can one be a real "Dharmistha"?*

Dharma is what upholds life. Fundamentally, what upholds life is the Universal Law of the transformation of human nature, so that instead of being dominated by the lower instincts, it becomes inspired and informed by God, when one offers all his thoughts, emotions and actions to God by living as His instrument.

A Dharmistha is one who, in conduct, progressively transforms his lower nature into a higher one.

164: *When is "Ahimsa" to be practised ?*

Ahimsa, in the true sense, means that in performing your duty, you must not be guided by wrath, malice or repulsion.

165: *How to develop the moral sense ? What must we do to develop it ?*

Will you please read the *Gita*, if not the whole of it, the XVIII *Adhyaya*. If you have no time for it, recite at least verse 50 to 66 of the *Adhyaya* morning, noon and night and try to obey the teaching.

166: *What are gods and are we justified in having belief in them ?*

We are justified in believing in the gods for they are only aspects of the Supreme and their worship will slowly lead us to the ultimate worship of the Supreme.

167: *All sacred scriptures tell us about the advent of God in this Age (Kaliyuga). Please explain how we can identify Avatar if He is In our midst.*

The Puranas, if they are called scriptures, talk of the advent of God as Kalki in the Kaliyuga. If He is in our midst, it would not be difficult to identify him.

168: *The other day I was reading the holy book "Valmiki Ramayana" in the train. One of my friends, who was standing nearby, immediately asked me, "Why are you reading these old philosophical books in these days ?" If you were the reader at that time, what reply would you have given to the questioner ?*

If I were you, I would have told your friend that he should first know what he was talking about. *Ramayana* is not an *old* book; it is a human document which is a perpetual source of inspiration. It is not merely philosophical; it is living inspiration. It is not a book; it is a scripture. A wise man never passes judgment before studying the pro-

blem and, if your friend is wise, he should be asked to study the *Ramayana* before talking so flippantly about.

February 24, 1957

169: *My personal conviction and opinion is that prayer to God Almighty or any of the gods, whatsoever, is sheer waste of time and energy. If a man is 'himself', he is perfect and needs no praying. Am I the greatest idiot going to believe so—nay—do so?*

Where is the perfect man? But men are not perfect and need prayers as much as they need breath. But people who have been as near perfect as men can be, like Vyas, Jesus, Mohammad, Shankar, Ramakrishna, Sri Aurobindo, Gandhiji, believed in prayers and prayed all their life. And is it suggested that they wasted time and energy? I have prayed and those have been the most precious and fruitful moments of my life.

170: *Who is after 'Nehru'?*

Why worry? He is going to live up to the Vedic Age of a hundred years and will continue to lead India.

171: *Why has Bhavan adopted English as a medium of expressing its ideas and aims? Would it not be better, and the country better served if the Bhavan's publications and the Journal are published in Hindi?*

The Bhavan has adopted English as one of its principal media of expression because (1) it is the medium of higher thought and expression in India; (2) it is India's international language for one hundred and fifty years and there is no sense in abandoning it; (3) the Bhavan has its affiliations in several countries outside India.

The Bhavan has begun publishing a Hindi edition of the Journal from the 15th of August, 1956.

172: *Do stars foretell?*

The planets do. Apart from astrologers who read horoscopes, I have come across several books written some centuries ago, which prove astrology to be sound and worth developing by research.

173: *Do you think that 'Dharma' in this age of tactics and fraud, can bring prosperity, for obviously we see that simple and pure-hearted persons suffer while others gain?*

Simplicity and a pure heart are not shares and stocks of a Joint Stock Company, so that their value could be measured in terms of dividends. It is not true that simple and pure-hearted persons suffer while others do not. In respect of contentment, character and happiness, which come of being in tune with life, it is the pure and simple-hearted who are the gainers, as they escape the sordidness and worries of life.

174: *Is it true that Indraprastha, the capital of the Pandavas, is New Delhi?*

The site of Purana Qila at Delhi is identified as Indraprastha.

175: *Why is bloody sacrifice of innocent animals offered to Goddess Kali?*

1. The sacrifice of animals, at one time or the other in the history of our race, has been considered necessary to placate the gods. As man develops a better sense of religion, he sees the futility of this idea.

2. The revolt began from the days of the *Gita*. That is why the *Bhagavad Gita* says that if you offer 'a flower, a leaf or water' in the place of sacrifice, that would do. Buddha also preached against it.

3. But many men have not reached a stage when they would understand that this kind of cruelty has no meaning.

176: *I want to read books on philosophy and culture. But I have to read Engineering books. Which one of the two do you think better for me to read in the limited available time? And why?*

You may read Engineering books, so that you may become a good engineer. You may read books on Philosophy and Culture so that you may become a better man. You must be both a good engineer and a good man.

177: *Do the incarnations of Lord Vishnu indicate the gradual evolution of life? If so, how do they coincide with the theories of Natural Selection as propounded by Darwin?*

Some of the *avatars* of Lord Vishnu, as they are enumerated, indicate the gradual evolution of life, though, so far as Sri Rama, Sri Krishna and Buddha are concerned, this test is not fulfilled, for these three reached divine proportions each in His own way. I do not think the *avatars* have anything to do with the Law of Natural Selection.

178: *If we postulate God, how do you explain evil? Is not omnipotent God merciful? Why did he create evil?*

Good and evil are not unconnected. They represent the movements of an evolutionary process out of which the Spirit emerges triumphant. It is the churning of the ocean between the *Devas* and the *Danavas* which brings out both poison and nectar.

179: *Are there any students from foreign countries in the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan?*

There are several students from foreign countries in the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. Last year a student from Africa got the Best Student medal in the Bhavan's College.

March 10, 1957

180: *Many of the ancient seers used to eat flesh. But this habit is considered to be a bad one, and therefore, it is*

a matter of much controversy. What is your opinion, Sir?

Whether you take meat or not depends (a) upon the available food material in a place, and (b) social habits. Meat gives muscular power; grains and vegetables give tenacity of life. Cooking vegetables is cleaner than cooking meat, and many more people in an overpopulated country like ours can be maintained on a vegetable diet than on a meat diet.

181: *Can't we have a department of Theosophy and Religion in our Universities, just as we have the department of Mathematics or Sanskrit?*

We should have not only a department of religion in our Universities, but introduce religious education. But where are the academicians and politicians who have the vision to do so? And for want of such vision, our younger generation is going to pieces and must continue to suffer.

182: *In one of the issues of your Journal (Buddha No.) I read one essay contributed by Mr. Marshall. In that he refers to Jambudvipa and means that it is India. Then what are Bharata Varsha and Bharata Khanda? Please be kind enough to remove this doubt and oblige.*

So far as I know, Jambudvipa is Asia, for all references are that Bharata-Khanda is in Jambudvipa.

183: *Among the different faiths such as Buddhism, Jainism, Sanatana Dharma, Arya Samaj and Sikhism which, according to you, is the best and the soundest and most conducive to human welfare?*

Any religion which teaches surrender to God, which respects every man who follows his own religion sincerely and does not arrogate perfection to the ways of one's religion, is the 'best' and the 'soundest'.

184: *The stories under "Simhasana-Dwatrimika" are very fascinating no doubt but what light do these stories*

throw to prove the extraordinary powers as well as a super-sense for justice excepting that King Vikramaditya, the great, was luckily and accidentally in command of his "faithful Ghoul" and his inimitable minister, Bhatti, who used to guide the king through a number of intriguing situations and invariably accompanied him in his self-exile?

All stories need not throw 'light' whatever it might mean; they are primarily meant to entertain. There is hidden in the human heart a love of the miraculous, the unexpected, and the adventurous. That is why *Dwatrimika* has been popular for centuries.

185: *What is dowry? Describe its advantages and disadvantages. Differentiate voluntary and forced dowry. What are means and ways to root it out?*

1. Dowry is the price of a bride or a bridegroom paid by the parents of the other party. In some communities, it is difficult to get a good bride, and one has to pay the price in the form of dowry; in some communities, a good bridegroom is difficult to obtain, and the father of the bride has to pay it. The father of the girl pays the price because he thinks that his daughter's prospects would be improved by the marriage. And the father of the bridegroom pays the price because he thinks that he secures a very fine wife for his son.

2. The system has been so much abused that there are no advantages from the social and moral points of view. It is an evil; it may be that individuals might be benefited temporarily. But it degrades a sacred union into a purchase.

3. If the payment is voluntary, then it is a present, not a dowry. The system can only be rooted out when selection of brides and bridegrooms, by parents, in narrow communities, is replaced by a free choice of a wife or husband by the other party, without any bargaining by the parents.

186: *Can materialism and spiritualism co-exist?*

If materialism means the negation of God and of human personality as the expression of divine essence, then materialism and spiritualism cannot co-exist. If materialism only means that material comforts have to be achieved in order that man may be helped in the development of his fundamental aspirations and live in God, it can co-exist.

187: *From your writings you seem to be a Sanatanist. If so, what steps do you propose to absorb the learned men in Sanskrit (in a profession) turned out by Bhavan at Bombay and elsewhere?*

I am not a Sanatanist in the sense that I believe in the caste system as Divinely-ordained, or our rituals the only way to self-realization; I try to look at these things from their historical value. I am however a Sanatanist in the sense that I believe in the fundamental values of our Culture as eternal, as part of the universal law of the Spirit.

To the best of my ability I am trying to help Sanskrit scholars by serving the cause of Sanskrit, through the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, the Sanskrit Vishva Parishad and various other organisations.

188: *Are you afraid of the vastly increasing destructive weapons?*

I am not afraid of the destructive weapons. It is the first fruits of the effort by which man, urged by lust or fear, seeks to acquire mastery over the forces of Nature. In the first stage, he always uses this mastery to satisfy his animal instincts, *i.e.*, to grab more land, to exploit the weaker people, and to destroy those whom he hates. But in the wake of this effort, the spiritual values assert themselves, utilising mastery over Nature for purposes of a higher evolution.

189: *Do you believe that 'equality before law' propounded in our Constitution is being guaranteed in reality? If so, how would you reconcile the arrest of Sri Indra Prasad Bachhi of Hindu Mahasabha who undertook a fast against a decision on Bombay on a charge of attempting to commit suicide; and the non-arrest of Sri Morarji Desai who also undertook a fast to make the people of Ahmedabad to hear his words, on the same charge?*

There is no doubt that the Constitution guarantees the 'equality before law.' I don't know the *circumstances* under which Sri Indra Prasad was arrested, so cannot give a definite reply. Sometimes, popular opinion is so overwhelming or the cause for hunger-strike is so great that exceptions have to be made.

190: *When was the caste-system created in Hinduism, and who is mainly responsible for this cursed system?*

The caste system has to be changed in the light of modern conditions. But for centuries it was not a cursed system, but a powerful social organization, which protected society, culture and religion.

No single man created it. In my view, small tribes existed in India from early times. The Aryans evolved the *Chaturvarnya*—the fourfold order of society—with a view to co-ordinating the tribes into a cohesive, graded society, which enabled a caste to rise in the scale of the hierarchy if it developed appropriate qualifications.

Even in recent times, we have seen how the so-called low castes have been rising into higher castes by acquiring education and means.

191: *Kulapati's Letter No. 108, when read, I asked myself, "What! Are these answers given by Indians, who are supposed to be educated? . . ." If you don't take it amiss, I wish to ask you whether the samples of the New Knowledge*

given by you in the letter are culled out from various examinations. . . . What is the remedy you suggest for diverting the flow of this knowledge so that it may not contaminate at least the generation yet to come?

The answers quoted in my Kulapati's Letter No. 108 were given by graduates in the examinations held by the different Public Service Commissions in the country and found in the reports published by them. The only remedy is either for the universities, colleges and professors to raise the standards of education or for them to admit only a limited number of brilliant students.

192: *What is Evolution, Involution, Reincarnation and Realization?*

What is Mukti? Please enlighten this from the points of view of all religions.

(1) Evolution is the process by which the Spirit expresses itself through Matter, Life, Mind and Fundamental Aspirations, leading to successive stages of transformation. (2) Reincarnation means that the soul is the divine essence in man, of which the body is no more than an instrument; that on the dissolution of the body, the soul acquires another body; that when, through successive births, the man comes to stabilise his Fundamental Aspirations and begins to live in God, he attains realization. When such a man lives, moves and has his being in God and acquires complete *Samatva*, he attains *Mukti*.

193: *Can Yoga and family life be practised side by side?*

Certainly. The whole teaching of the *Bhagavad-Gita* is that Yoga can be attained easily by man who is well-regulated in life, enjoyment, action and behaviour. And family life is the basis of well-regulated life, enjoyment, action and behaviour.

194: *Who is the chief of "Vedas?" Where were they found first in the World?*

Rigveda is the chief among the *Vedas*. According to the old Hindu idea, Vedic *mantras* were God-inspired and were 'seen' by the Rishis. In fact, they were the inspired ritualistic chants of the early Rishis handed down from preceptor to disciple till Bhagavan Veda Vyas collected them in their present form. The age of Vyas is placed somewhere between 1200 B.C. to 4000 B.C. and even further back. The mantras must have been composed quite a few centuries before that time to acquire their sacred character when redated.

195: *Is it not unworthy of a great king like Vikrama, as told in "Simhasana Dwitrimika—24", to have so hideously disgraced the husband of the merchant's daughter, with whom he took liberties so unrighteously?*

Simhasana Dwitrimika is a collection of folk-tales which grew into shape from mouth to mouth, each story having a spicy ending. You should not apply modern moral codes to such folk stories. But the fact that this book has survived so many centuries shows that human mind at many levels delights in such stories.

196: *Sheep following their unwilling leader are illustrative of party politics. How?*

Persons who follow a political leader do it from various motives. Most do it because they feel it is fashionable; many do it because it serves their self-interest; some do it because they have the confidence that the leadership is necessary or useful to the country. A few do it, in spite of differences in outlook, because they realise that in these days, by being a member of a compact political party, a man can properly serve the great cause which he has at heart. Very few do it because they are personally loyal to the leader. There is very little sheepishness about it.

April 7, 1957

197: *What is the meaning of Life?*

Life is a transforming process by which the lower instincts of attachment, fear and wrath are transformed by progressive discipline into Beauty, Joy, Bliss, Love and Calm.

198: *Who is a "Brahmin?" How can one be a real "Brahmin?"*

There are several kinds of Brahmins—among them (1) the sons of Brahmin fathers and Brahmin mothers; (2) persons who, by self-discipline, try to transform their nature so that in this very life, they shed their limitation and live in God.

199: *Chief Justice Sri M. C. Chagla, who has "never sympathised with the sannyasi ideal", says that "fundamentally it is a selfish doctrine." Do you agree with him?*

I do not know in what context Chief Justice Chagla made these remarks. The ideal of sannyasa is *samatva*, equality, that sees God in all and all in God. It will be a selfish ideal only if *sannyasa* is taken with the object of running away from the duties of life and not undertaking the wider duties which *samatva* implies.

200: *What is the shortest way to 'Nirvana'?*

To live in God. If you cannot do so, then follow Yoga. If that is not easy to achieve, offer all your actions to God. If that is even not possible, do your duty without regard for fruits.

201: *It is said that Hindi is coming from Sanskrit and Urdu from Arabic. But Hindi and Urdu have a similarity in speech. How can it be possible?*

You are wrong. Hindi is an Indo-Aryan language; and so is Urdu. The basic colloquial language of both is the same. But for the purpose of higher expression and thought, the Hindi-speaking people draw their vocabulary from Sanskrit, while the Urdu-speaking from Persian and Arabic.

202: *Will you kindly tell me the particular person who was responsible to produce such a cultured Journal like this and his whereabouts?*

Why don't you take the trouble of looking up the imprint on the last page of the *Bhavan's Journal*? If you do so, you will find the information.

203: *Why should Hindi be made the national language? What harm is there in retaining English as it is?*

Hindi is the national language because more than forty per cent of the Indians speak it; another 20 to 25% can easily understand it on account of its common basis of Sanskrit. No other language can be a national language.

English cannot be retained as a national language, for even after 150 years of British rule only a very small percentage of Indians know it and that percentage is likely to fall in the future. It may be, and is, a supplementary Indian language, but can never be national language.

204: *Among men, who can be called a bachelor like Svami Vivekananda?*

You do not mean 'a bachelor'; you mean a *brahmachari*. A *brahmachari* is one who has sublimated his sex instincts into a vast creative force and for whom sexual indulgence has ceased to be a force in life. There have been, and are still, several such men in the country.

205: *In India there are many spiritual men, and were, who knew the Secret of God but they did not reveal and display the actual appearance of God to the world. If they strive for the above, can they display "God's appearance" to the world? If not, why?*

Men with great spiritual powers are not professional jugglers going about exhibiting their powers for the benefit of the godless or persons of little faith. God does not appear in life to those who have no faith. Why should men of

little faith not try to develop faith and try to be His instrument? Then they will see God manifest Himself in the world.

206: *What is the destiny of the human race in the Atomic Age?*

I believe in the ultimate and inevitable triumph of the Good. I look forward to the rise of a new race of men who would, by being God-minded, convert the Atomic Age into the Kingdom of Heaven.

207: *Is the act of reproduction a divine necessity?*

The Divine law is as much an act of God as God Himself; and as we see around us, the perpetuation and evolution of life-forms is essential not only for their survival, but to secure that higher beings, who lead the life of the Spirit finally emerge in the Creation and manifest Absolute Beauty, which is God.

208: *May I ask any financial help from your honour's private purse?*

No. It is already overstrained.

209: *Is the renunciation of worldly life necessary to deserve happiness?*

Happiness, except in some exceptionally gifted beings, can never be attained by the renunciation of the worldly life.

April 21, 1957

210: *Where is God? Is God present in this world or not?*

Seek and you shall find Him. If you accept my advice, sit down alone, morning and evening, by yourself, quietly every day; try to forget your egotism, surrender yourself to Him in all humility, may be for a minute, and pray for His

grace. Get into this habit and you will soon find whether He is present or not.

211: *What are the chief characteristic differences between "Jeevatma" and "Paramatma"?*

Why not refer to some book on Hindu Philosophy, for instance, *Hinduism Through the Ages*, published in the Book University Series of the Bhavan?

212: *What is the real purpose of the "human existence" in the world?*

The real purpose of human existence is to emerge from the life of the senses into the life of the Spirit, i.e. to develop and stabilise the Fundamental Aspirations, to see that they permeate and transform our mental content.

213: *Would it be possible to imagine what shape man will assume in the long run? Would there be a time when man as such will become extinct?*

Many authors have speculated as to what would be the future shape of man. I have not speculated on that problem so far.

Man will be extinct some day when the earth loses its present climate. But that will be many millions of years hereafter, and we need not worry about the time.

214: *When does a man forget humanity?*

Generally a man forgets humanity all the time, unless he is able to control his anger and fear and his blind attachment to things which are vulgar, trivial, wasteful and immoral.

215: *Can humanity hope for a little happiness in future?*

Why a little? Humanity, if it forswears the lower instincts of man, can have all the happiness. Man should perform his own duty to a perfection; that duty must be

prescribed by one's innate temperament; and the perfection of one's actions can only be attained by becoming an instrument of God. This is the only way to gain happiness.

216: *What sort of flower does your honour like much? Why?*

I like the lotus and the rose equally, for they are both beautiful. You cannot reduce beauty to statistical analysis.

217: *Who is the "Suthradhara" of Mahabharata?—Sri Krishna or Shakuni?*

Of course, Sri Krishna.

218: *Why are you not publishing the articles and speeches of the R. S. S. leader who always deals with Indian Culture and tradition?*

In the region of Indian Culture, for which the Bhavan stands, there are no political barriers; nor is the selection of articles made on the basis of political views. If the Editor finds a passage worth reproducing, he selects it from whatever source he can find it.

219: *What is your opinion about introducing Sanskrit as a compulsory subject in schools and colleges?*

If Indian unity and culture have to be preserved, Sanskrit must be made compulsory in secondary and higher education.

220: *I have seen almost in every crowd people saying "Bharat-Mata-ki-Jai." Who is this Bharat Mata?*

Have you been in India all these days without knowing who is "Bharat Mata"? Are you so impervious to the atmosphere of the day that you have never shouted "Bharat-Mata-ki-Jai" or never felt exultant when some one shouted it? I do not think so; you are doing injustice to yourself.

221: *Explain in brief the position of India in world affairs.*

Will you please look up my Kulapati's Letter No. 110 in the issue of the Bhavan's Journal dated September 23, 1956?
May 5, 1957

222: *Why did Sri Krishna who is omnipresent and omniscient, not come immediately and prevent the disgraceful disrobing scene as in the case of Gajendra Moksha in Bhagavatha?*

Critical times test the faith of a devotee. They are the fire of suffering through which all who have faith in Him must pass. He only helps those who are prepared to back their faith with life. Sri Krishna, therefore, naturally wanted to see to what wicked extremes Dushashana would go; whether Bhishma and others in their misguided loyalty to royalty would stand by truth or not, and how far Dharmaraja and others were prepared to stand by their pledged word. It was also the supreme act of faith on the part of Draupadi. Her prayer was most efficacious when her helplessness was absolute. That is why Sri Krishna intervened only when the last piece of cloth was left on her body.

223: *Who is your favourite author?*

There have been many favourite authors. But ultimately I turn to Veda Vyas, the author of the *Mahabharata*. As an old phrase has it: "What is not in it is nowhere."

224: *What is "devotion to duty?"*

Devotion to duty means, as a first step, trying to be perfect in whatever little act one has to perform in the ordinary course of life. In the second stage, it comes to discovering the duty which our innate temperament prescribes and doing it. Lastly, it means an unwavering determination to perform the duty even at the cost of life as an offering to God.

225: *Do you advocate world government to achieve world peace? Can it be achieved?*

There will be no permanent world peace unless nations voluntarily accept the unity of the world and the necessity for a federal World Government. If we do not progress towards a world government of some sort, the earth will be exploded by Hydrogen Bombs.

226: *"Dictatorship is essential at the early stages of Democracy." Is it true?*

When foreign rule is eliminated, democracy can function only if the society is capable of throwing up democratic leadership and party discipline. Where that is not possible, military dictatorship or monarchic rule is the only way to preserve independence.

227: *What makes nature promote and support Atheists though they are misers and hard-hearted, likewise punish and enjoy the sufferings of Theists though they are generous and kind-hearted?*

1. God would certainly promote and support the atheists if they live the life of the Spirit, of high aspirations dedicated to beauty, truth and love, though in their ignorance or arrogance they deny God.

2. Those who profess to believe in God, if they have no God-mindedness, no love for prayer and no aspiration for beauty, truth and love, would with equal certainty suffer. I do not think you are right in thinking that all theists are generous or kind-hearted or all atheists are not so. Quite a large section of humanity believes in God. Is every member of that section generous or kind-hearted?

228: *The deterioration in the standard of students is essentially due to the present-day type of education that they are getting. Am I correct? What type of education would you suggest to make students 'good citizens'?*

Again and again I have said that in recent years our education has been too informative. We have discarded formative education by neglecting the study of humanities, classics and religions. It is the latter kind of education which forms the character, shapes the ideals and strengthens the will to translate them into action. Without them, there can be neither men of character nor good citizens.

229: *Why is Bhavan's Journal named as Bhavan's Journal only? Is there any background or history behind it?*

The *Bhavan's Journal* is so called because it is the journal of the Bhavan. There is no other background or history behind it.

230: *About the title of the periodical is concerned I have been confused. The meaning of the term "Journal" is "a newspaper" or an account of daily transactions and events, a newspaper published daily. If such is the definition of "Journal" may your periodical be named as a Journal. I think it is not a Journal. "Bhavan's Journal" has the character of a magazine. So, may the title of your periodical be changed to "Bhavan's Magazine" from "Bhavan's Journal"?*

Originally the Journal was intended to be a sort of diary of Bhavan's activities. Then it grew into its present form. But the name can't be changed now.

When a man named Thanthan Gopal (the lord of absolute poverty) thought that his name was not good he began to search for a better. After a thorough search, he composed a verse in Gujarati.

"I found Laxmibai (Goddess of Wealth) collecting cowdung; Dhanpal (protector of wealth) begging in the streets; Amar Singh (the deathless Lion) dying. Then I saw that the name Thanthan Gopal was quite good."

May 19, 1957

231: *Why did Draupadi's appeal fall on deaf ears, especially when elders like Bhishma, Vidura and others were present on the scene?*

Why did Bhishma the great and virtuous warrior, fight along with the Kauravas against the Pandavas?

For a long time I have tried to understand the reason why Bhishma, Dronacharya and Kripacharya, noble souls that they were, stood by Duryodhan. The explanation that I have found for myself is this—I do not know whether it will satisfy you.

(i) The King of Hastinapur enjoyed the hegemony over all the Aryan kings; in a sense he was an emperor; and these three saintly warriors were pledged to maintain the empire. However wicked Duryodhan was, they appear to have felt that if his father could not control him, then even if they parted from him, headstrong as he was, he would follow his own policy, and the imperial fabric would collapse. It is clear in the *Mahabharat* that they admired the Pandavas and had sympathy for them, but they did not want to bring down the fabric of which they were the pillars.

(ii) Another reason strikes me, though it is not explicit in the *Mahabharat*. The Pandavas were not the sons of Pandu, but obtained by Kunti by virtue of *Mantras*, and perhaps Duryodhan for that reason did not want to give them a share. It is likely, therefore, that the saintly warriors who supported the empire of Hastinapur, did not like to break with the legitimate heirs, though their sympathies were all with the Pandavas.

232: *Will you kindly explain the Algeria issue in nutshell?*

In Algeria there are about 7,500,000 Arabs, fired by nationalistic fervour, who want freedom for their country. There are also about 1,000,000 of French nationality, settled

there for generations, who do not want to go out of French political influence, for they are afraid that in that case they will be destroyed by the Arabs. The Arab world would naturally want the Arabs to succeed. France would not like to leave such a large number of Frenchmen at their mercy. That is the issue.

233: *What is culture ?*

“Culture,” in the wider sense, must appertain to a well-defined people; it is their characteristic way of life; it is what makes them distinctive. To be a culture, the way of life of a people must have persisted in time; it must have flowed in time as a living stream, as an unbroken organic phenomenon, shaping their social institutions, and giving purpose and direction to their intellectual and aesthetic outlook.

234: *What is the contribution of Hindu asceticism of Indian religious and philosophical thought ?*

Hindu asceticism has contributed largely to the Indian religious and philosophic thought. Possibly the doctrine of Maya, looking upon the world as an illusion, arose from it as also the other-worldliness which characterises some of the Hindu sects. It is also one of the reasons why many Hindus take pride in ostentatiously disliking the legitimate joys of life. The ascetic ideal has, therefore, taken away the sense of power and joy and triumph which characterised Hindu life in the Vedic and the Gupta periods as also from some men in other periods who have not been able to look upon life as joy, beauty, truth and power.

235: *Why is your honour very much interested in Bhagawan Parashuram ? What is the use of his story in the present world ?*

Bhagawan Parashuram was one of the *avatars* of Vishnu, and overshadows the background in the *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana* and the Puranas. We must try to imagine what great

powers he was possessed of so that his personality came to impress the minds of countless generations.

236: *What is "Love for God?" (I mean its literal interpretation). How can we love God sincerely in our daily life full of ups and downs?*

You can love God in four ways: by completely learning to live in God; by creative concentration that is *Yoga*; by offering all your thoughts, instincts and actions to God; or by doing actions without the lure of results.

237: *I am a permanent reader of your Bhavan's Journal, but still I have not seen any passage of female author published in it. I have not found any passage pertaining to the untouchability in India or to untouchables' uplift performed by the Social Workers in India. Why this is so? Please let me know the reply.*

"Female authors" is a bad word. It should be "women authors". If you look up issue dated July 29, 1956, on page 54 you will find the writings of such an author. Perhaps it was difficult to find suitable passages. But why worry about such small matters? Enjoy the Journal, as best as you can.

Why is it necessary to have passages on "untouchability"? All the articles clearly show that untouchability is a man-made degradation; that an untouchable is a human being and entitled to full enjoyment of life as any other. The Journal is not a cyclopaedia.

238: *What is the literary meaning of INDIA apart from its geographical meaning?*

Saptasindhu was a geographical expression. It was corrupted into *Sindhu*; then into 'Hindoi' and then into India to embrace the country west of the Indus River. The other meaning of India, not exactly literary, is that it is our Motherland.

239: *Is it not a fact that Russia is industrially and militarily great because its people are poor and the same experience may be repeated in India despite all these Five-Year Plans and nationalisation of the means of production?*

India is not following the Russian or any other country's experience, so far as I can see; it would be disastrous if we did so. Our nationalised industries supplement and stimulate the private sector. At the same time if we have to survive, we have to catch up with the advanced countries and we cannot leave several sectors of industrial development to private interests which have neither the means nor the ability to enter them.

240: *What is the origin of the greeting "Namaste?" What is its meaning when it is said to friends, elders or to God?*

The two words "namah-te" mean "salutation" to thee. When addressed to a friend, you do it out of cordiality. When you address it to God, you do it with humility and prayerfulness.

241: *Will there be an end to this world?*

Yes, if collective hatred runs amuck and sets off a chain of H. Bombs. But I think man has better sense.

242: *What is your opinion in regard to the role of India in the Suez Canal problem?*

Respect for the sovereignty of each nation is the cornerstone of *Panch-shila* and therefore we stand against all aggression.

June 2, 1957

243: *Why is Aswathama, who is notorious for the killing of Upa-Pandavas when they were asleep, made a Chiranjivi, along with Bali, Vyas, Hanuman and Vibhishana?*

For, Aswathama was the most heroic soul of them all.

244: *Many think that a lot of importance is being given to Kulapati's Letters in the Bhavan's Journal, because you are the Editor. What do you say?*

You are mistaken. I am not the Editor of the *Bhavan's Journal*; he can, if he wants omit the Letters from the *Bhavan's Journal*. But, I also happen to be the Bhavan's Kulapati or President and I write the Letters primarily for the members, workers and students of the Bhavan, whose mouthpiece the Journal is. If you don't like to read the Letters, read the other articles.

245: *Why does Nehruji say that India is from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari in his article while he is condemning the Akhand Bharat slogan?*

Why quarrel with the Prime Minister? I was the most vocal protagonist of the 'Akhand Hindustan Movement'. But in 1947 the circumstances took such a shape that it was imperative that we should come to partition of the country. You must have seen that we have been immensely benefited by reason of partition, for we have been free to evolve on our lines, unhampered by separatist movements.

246: *Are you hopeful of universal peace?*

Universal peace will come. At present the animal instincts in man are manifesting themselves in worldwide movements. But this is the churning of the ocean of life. This universal churning brings out wickedness, which is the explosion of animal instincts. It also brings out beauty, which is the expression of fundamental spiritual values. As the churning proceeds, the life throws up poison, but in the end it brings forth nectar, too. This is symbolised in our Puranic story of *Samudra-manthana*.

247: *In our country there are many Bible correspondence schools to impart knowledge in Christian Doctrine and Religion [e.g. Voice of Prophecy (Seventh Day Adventists),*

Poona; *World of Truth*, Bombay; London Bible Institution, Mussoorie; *Light of Life*, Chalisgaon, etc., etc.]. Are there any such institutions which give free postal courses in the Gita ?

I do not know of any such postal courses in the Gita. But there are many books and magazines, booklets, etc. on the subject which are available free of cost. The Gita Press at Gorakhpur, so far as I know, is the best institution of the kind to mention.

248: *It is believed that Buddha, who is considered one of Mahavishnu's Dasavataras, is not at all concerned with Gautama Buddha, and is often identified with the latter? Which should be trusted?*

In view of his great personality and influences on the ages, Gautama was accepted as an *avatara* in Hinduism. The Puranas, at places, appear to refer to another Buddha as an *avatara*, but it may possibly be the result of some confusion.

249: *What is the difference between Nirvikalpa Samadhi and Nirvana?*

Nirvana, according to Buddha's teachings, is a negative state of desirelessness. Samadhi is a positively creative effort of concentration in which the mind attains identity with the object. Nirvikalpa Samadhi would also be a positive state woven out of Reality, Consciousness and Bliss.

250: *What are the differences between Bhagavad Gita, Qoran and Bible? Which is the greatest among them?*

Scriptures are works which stimulate and stabilise the Fundamental Aspirations in man and draw out and develop his Divine Essence. All scriptures, properly understood, are equally great.

251: *Our young generation of today is away from religion. If so, how can we bring it nearer to them?*

By insisting upon the knowledge and practice of moral and spiritual values in our educational system and acquiring humility by an approach to God.

252: *"A man without religion is a heart without soul." Do you agree with this maxim?*

A man without religion of even some sort has neither a heart nor a soul. He is an insect.

253: *What are the literary sources to which asceticism can be traced?*

The *Gita*, though emphasising Vairagya in its original sense of mastery over the mind, does not support an ascetic life. Sri Krishna repeatedly says that the food and pleasures should be balanced; the body should not be put to torture; and that *Prasanna-chetas*, joyful attitude towards life, is essential to reach Him.

254: *The Government celebrates Vanamahotsava every year with great pomp and show, but unfortunately I found almost all the plants dead afterwards for want of proper service and attendance. Why so?*

Evidently you are misinformed. After Vanamahotsava was started in 1950, about fifteen crores of trees have been planted of which 50 to 60 per cent. have survived.

255: *When are you going to open your Bhavan's Centre at Bangalore?*

When I find the Bangaloreans want it.

256: *Is it not good to have an essay on current sciences either medical or physical or chemical in every issue?*

I wish we had more space.

257: *What is the significance of prayer?*

Prayer purges the mind and the heart of the instinctive urges of attachment, wrath and fear and strengthens the

fundamental aspirations and brings us in the presence of God.

258: *Has God bound and tied Himself to prayer?*

No; but if you pray, He will tie Himself to you, and lead you on.

259: *Who am I in this world?*

A Divine essence which has to transform life.

260: *Would you accept Gandhiji as an avatara?*

No.

June 16, 1957

261: *What is the part of religion in a nation?*

Can a nation exist without religion?

There can be a nation whose members follow more than one religion. But if a nation or a society has no religion, that is, no spiritual outlook on life, it is a collection of individuals kept together by the brute force of a minority entrenched in power. It cannot last, nor can its people be genuinely free or happy.

262: *As per Gita's Chapter IV we know that the Varnas are created by God only, but in Chapter XVIII, He is saying Varnas are formed as per the ideas and character of the individual. Which is to be accepted?*

The *Varnas* are created by God, because the temperament of a man, *swabhava*, on which his qualities, attitudes and activities (*Guna* and *Karma*) are based, is given by God. There is no inconsistency.

263: *Is culture being revived through Indian films today?*

I am afraid, not.

264: *Why don't you publish articles of interest to College students in your Journal?*

All articles in the Journal, I think, are interesting to an intelligent student.

265: *Who is God and what is His shape?*

God is God. You can see His shape in all things around you; you can perceive the lines on which the shape is built when you carefully trace how He informs Nature, Matter, Life, Mind and Conscience. You can feel it when you let your Fundamental Aspirations seize your consciousness. You can live in Him, if you try to be God-minded and let Him live in you.

266: *Is it not possible for you to start "Reader's Views" Column in your Journal by giving them a particular topic to express their views?*

No space.

267: *Is it not possible for you to publish another journal from Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in South Indian languages like Kannada and Telugu, when you are publishing in Hindi?*

Not enough money; not enough men.

268: *Could the International Press work to mould the public opinion towards the establishment of 'world-government'?*

It can, but in view of the self-interest of nations, which have assumed a semi-religious significance, it will not, till technology makes the world one and shows the futility of national separativeness.

269: *What is meant by divine love with ladies?*

Divine love has no sex. It sees all in God and God in all.

270: *Concerning God, how does the Eastern mind differ from that of the West?*

At one time the East emphasized that its first concern was to see that the ways of man conform to the ways of God; the West on the other hand has placed the ways of man as its first concern. But now the world has shrunk into a small place and the distinction does not hold good. There are God-minded and godless materialists all over the world, though the countries of the West have more than their share of the latter, and the Communist countries take pride in being officially materialists and godless.

271: *Am I not right to believe in the following statement? "God is Almighty. He is the Supreme Power that governs every action in the universe. Not even an electron can move without His will. He is always just. Therefore whatsoever takes place in the world whether war or destruction is good."*

Whatever takes place in the world is not good, but the outcome, whatever happens, is bound to be good. War and destruction are really stages in a struggle between good and evil in an evolutionary movement, or, as we call it, the churning of the ocean. Ultimate good can only emerge from such movements, for, by this churning, good attains a greater vitality.

272: *Living in this world, human beings think for their own safety and gain, but not of others. Why?*

If human beings do not develop the sense of right and wrong, nor stabilise the fundamental aspirations of Beauty, Love and Calm; nor acquire faith in God, they are guided only by the instinctive urges of attachment, fear and wrath, and therefore, think in terms only of satisfying them: this we call self-interest.

273: *What is your conception of an ideal man?*

An ideal man is one who leads a dedicated life; who is calm and unperturbed; who is always full of joy; who loves all and whose outlook on life is a thing of beauty.

274: *Is there any hope for humanity to get its ends achieved soon?*

It is not a question of hope. I am confident that humanity will achieve its aim in transforming life so that man can everywhere live the life of the Spirit, in Joy, Beauty, Love and Calm.

275: *Why do the politicians of now-a-days mention our country as "India" though it has a beautiful name "Bharat"?*

The word "India," that is "Bharat", was accepted in the Constituent Assembly because internationally the country has been known as India; it was also recognised by the Nations a successor country to British India. There is no reason why we should lose that well-accepted name and the advantages which accrue by retaining it.

276: *Why was Mahatma Gandhi's suggestion that Ministers should not draw a salary of more than Rs. 500 and live in simple houses rejected by the Government whose Ministers always pay lip homage to the Mahatma?*

I don't think it is correct to say that the Ministers are living in luxury. For, as it is, what they draw is even not enough for maintaining themselves in anything like the life which they have to lead consistent with the position they hold and the efficiency required of them. Gandhiji prescribed Rs. 500 in 1937; even then most of us had to supplement our income from private means; the cost of living has gone up many times since. Personally, it is an old superstition that men who serve the country morning, noon and night should be denied the modicum of comfort and

convenience necessary for the efficient discharge of their duties.

June 30, 1957

277: *Is there any relation between culture and politics?*

Politics, in the true sense, is connected with culture. In fact, the politics of every country is largely influenced by its culture. Without it, politics is the law of the jungle.

278: *India being a mainly agricultural country, do you think that the investment of several crores of rupees in importing heavy foreign machinery to start steel factories, etc. will be of much use to the vast millions of village people who live on agriculture?*

In my view India primarily needs agricultural development and the economic reorganisation of rural life on a more intensive scale. We want not only self-sufficiency in food and agricultural commodities, but surplus to export for earning foreign exchange. But even the progress of agriculture depends on a certain measure upon industrial development. In addition, we have to be self-sufficient in those industrial products which are the basis of modern civilised life in a free country. Without steel, for instance, we cannot rebuild our country and without large-scale hydro-electric works millions of acres would remain unirrigated. I, however, agree that long term industrial schemes should not be embarked upon at the cost of agricultural development. And nobody, so far as I know, wants to do it.

279: *Why the three commentators differed and established separate "isms" under one common religion—Hindu? And how to reconcile them?*

What is the most effective method for giving wide publicity to the truths in the commentaries?

Each age has to interpret the fundamental doctrines of faith according to the needs of the times. In this way,

though the fundamental values of the Hindus are the same, they were interpreted age after age by commentators and the Acharya.

We must draw inspiration from the original scriptures and interpret them to suit our needs.

280: *Would it not be possible to introduce a 'Reader's page' in the Journal through which readers may discuss problems with one another?*

There is no space.

281: *What are the definitions of God?*

How can anyone define God? He is to be seen, felt, realised, lived in, and when you grow God-minded and live in unfading joy of self-realization, how can you trap this joy in words?

282: *Life in Spirit—it is difficult to follow the purport; will you kindly take trouble to mention such phrases differentially in the respective heads, paragraph-wise?*

Life in the Spirit is the life in which the Fundamental Aspiration has seized the mind of man and made him God-minded. This life can best be described through the joy that one sees, feels and aspires in communicating it to others. This joy could not be described in numbered paragraphs in the way the Penal Code and the Civil Procedure Code are written.

283: *What is meant by Bhagavad-Gita?*

Am I to believe that you are ignorant of what *Bhagavad Gita* is? It is the message which Sri Krishna delivered to Arjuna on the battle-field of Kurukshetra. In my opinion, it is the greatest scripture on earth and embodies, more than any single book, the fundamental values of not only Indian Culture but of all cultures which base themselves on the Moral Order and faith in God.

284: *Is religion opium for mankind?*

No. True religion is the only ennobling factor in life, for it tries to bring us to God.

285: *Of the three paths of salvation—Bhakti-yoga, Gnyana-yoga and Karma-yoga—which one should be selected?*

The path which one's temperament finds the easiest to take; but try all of them and you will find the path fit for you to walk on.

286: *What is your opinion on the improvement of our civilization?*

Modern civilization cannot improve unless it turns to the life of the Spirit. In India, I hope, our civilization will never be denied the inspiration for such a life.

July 14, 1957

287: *Do you think that the first Five-Year Plan has brought any improvement in the economic conditions of the vast majority of the people of this State or of India as a whole? Has it relieved unemployment among the educated and uneducated people to any great extent?*

There is no doubt that the first Five-Year Plan has been a great success in every respect. We have achieved substantial economic progress. But more than that, we have set the country on the path of greater economic advancement. It is true that there is unemployment. But you cannot get rid of it by magic. It will require great effort on the part of the Government, and enthusiastic will on the part of the people to work to produce more before unemployment can be brought under control in the course of several Five-Year Plans.

288: *What will be the position of Bharat after solving the linguistic problem? Will it be good or bad?*

It would shed its fissiparous tendencies and organically become a nation.

289: *What is the object of learning?*

To acquire a wide and catholic understanding of men and nature.

290: *What lesson does Bhagavad-Gita teach to the modern man?*

Gita shows different ways in which one can become instrument of God.

291: *What is the dispute between Egypt and Israel?*

According to some eminent Arab leaders, the state of Israel should be 'annihilated' or 'uprooted'. Israel, the land of Jewish refugees from all over the world, wants to survive.

292: *May I also request you to kindly enlighten me as to why there is so much of moral degradation?*

Because instead of developing moral and spiritual values, we ignore or deny them under pressure of materialists.

293: *What does the term 'Bhavan' connote?*

It connotes the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan which has its Headquarters in Bombay and Kendras in New Delhi, Allahabad and Kanpur.

294: *What is the main purpose of the human being?*

To transform life of the lower self into the life of the Spirit.

295: *Does Western psychology and Eastern philosophy go hand in hand? If not, what is the Indian view on the subject psychology?*

If you are interested in Indian psychology, there are enough books on the subject.

296: *Why should not this noble Journal start publishing 'Teachings and commentaries on sacred Gita, chapter by chapter in detail, to help the millions of young people searching for true knowledge of the Gita?*

No space.

297: *What is true philosophy?*

To discover the true aim and purpose of one's existence, that is, to live the life of the Spirit, that is to live in God.

298: *What differentiates sat-chitananda from Brahma-nanda?*

I do not see any material difference. *Brahma* is *sat* (Reality), *chit* (All-pervading) consciousness and *ananda* (Unfading Bliss). But *Brahma-anand* is also used to denote a man who delights in *Brahma*, that is, *sat, chit, ananda*.

July 28, 1957

299: *What is philosophy and what is Vedanta?*

Philosophy is the effort of the higher mind to understand and solve the problems and mysteries of the creation. Vedanta is that branch of Indian Philosophy which is based on the Upanishads. In its narrower sense, it means the branch of philosophy developed by Sri Sankaracharya.

300: *What is the exact difference between "Philosophy" and "Theosophy"?*

For philosophy, see reply to Question No. 299. Theosophy literally means the wisdom of God. It is largely an effort made by Madame Blavatsky and her followers to probe into the mysteries of the Universe by a comparative study of the mystic processes prevalent throughout the world.

301: *What may be the reason for the spread of Atheism in a majority of the people?*

There are four causes: (1) Influence of Western thought

and life which is primarily occupied with the pursuit of pleasure to the neglect of Fundamental Aspirations; (2) a disregard of the moral values likely to interfere with such pursuit of pleasure; (3) a conceit born of the triumphs of science that nothing that cannot be tested by laboratory methods exists or matters; (4) the world-wide propaganda sponsored by International Communism that all things could be satisfactorily explained by materialistic interpretation, of which immature minds become easy victims.

302: *Will you please tell me why our Government is not anxious to make Sanskrit a compulsory subject in high schools, Sanskrit being the mother of all our Indian languages?*

Most people who are in charge of our Governments, particularly in the Departments of Education, do not seem to realise the patent truth that, if India happens to lose the inspiration of Sanskrit, the unity of the country will be sapped and the moral and spiritual foundations of our people will be in danger.

303: *What might have been the purpose of Creator in creating this world?*

Some of our scriptures say that God created the world out of sport. My view is that creation is a timeless process of transformation which pervades the whole of the universe, the purpose being the progressive realisation of the Absolute or God in consciousness.

304: *Why do tragic pictures leave lasting impressions on the human mind?*

Because they appeal to our emotions more strongly than the others.

305: *What is the difference between truth and God?*

There is no difference between God and Absolute Truth. But what we generally call truth is, in most cases, a partial

or perverted truth. It partakes of Absolute Truth only when it is sought humbly and without being deflected by attachment, fear and wrath.

306: *If there is morality, is religion necessary?*

Morality without religion, i.e. without a living sense of the presence of God, has no backbone and cannot, therefore, be a creative force.

307: *Is there any relationship between philosophy and religion?*

Philosophy is a matter of thought; religion is a matter of faith and is, therefore, creative and possessed of a power to move the world.

308: *Are there ghosts and spirits in this world? If so, of what nature? How to get rid of them?*

(1) In most cases, what people see as ghosts and spirits are nothing but unfamiliar phenomena; on proper scrutiny they can be explained in a normal way. With some people, ghosts or spirits are nothing but the figments of their weak mind. (2) There is also the familiar phenomenon of 'calling the spirit' by automatic writing or table-thumping. But it is not such an uncommon affair as is generally thought of. Any two persons, by a little practice, can call a spirit. I have called such spirits for years. They are not disembodied human beings, nor are they more intelligent than those who call such spirits. (3) At the same time, if there is a powerful medium, it is possible to "call or bring into existence" a disembodied spirit, which not only carries on conversation with you, but can present you with material things. The most extraordinary case I have come across is of the spirit of a *sadhu* who not only asks and answers questions, but carries on correspondence with you, who writes without the aid of a visible agency and even gives you material gifts out of almost nothing. The spirit is so articulate that you almost feel that a living *sadhu* has come into your life.

So far as ghosts are concerned, a little courage to investigate the phenomenon will make them disappear. It is dangerous to indulge in the hobby of calling or consulting spirits.

August 25, 1957

309: *What is meant by true Civilization? And which is the most civilized country in the world?*

1) Civilization, as distinguished from culture, would mean the material equipment of life. In that sense U.S.A. would be the most civilized country.

2) If it is taken in the sense of culture, it would mean that the way of life is informed by fundamental values which leads man to a higher life.

3) If the fundamental values of courage, maturity, cohesiveness, and self-restraint, are taken into account, I would call England the most civilized country in the world, and after it, Germany and Japan.

4) If the values of non-violence, tolerance, kindness and God-mindedness are taken into account, I would put India as the most civilized country, in spite of a growing element which is bent on rooting out these values.

310: *What is your view on the present food situation in India? Do you suggest any measures for overcoming the shortage?*

1) What with a fast growing population and an under-nourished people, our country, though it is progressively growing more food, will find it hard to be self-sufficient for many years.

2) More of minor irrigation, more of labour and fertilisers and organic manure; more of modern methods of intensive farming; and above all, a concentration on increased food production in each acre of irrigated land without frittering away energy in discussion or over-emphasis on social improvement.

311: *What is national character? How much of it our people possess and how can it be developed?*

1) National character is indicated by the way in which a nation, as a collective unit, acts in the face of difficulties. The way may be daring or cowardly; it may be cohesive or fissiparous; it may be noble or mean; mature or immature.

2) It can only be developed by developing a consciousness among the people which is able to take collective action characterized by courage and self-restraint, in the face of difficulties, resistance or defeat.

312: *Is it not true that Spiritualism is the outcome of the highest kind of pessimism?*

No. Without the life of the Spirit, man would have no hope, no aspiration, and no urge to rise higher. Spiritualism is, therefore, the outcome of the highest optimism for the progress of the individual, without which society cannot make any progress.

313: *Gita teaches us to perform Nishkama Karma. But is it quite possible to do this? As far as I can say every action performed by everyone has a definite purpose behind it. Even the war of Mahabharata had a purpose behind it. Please enlighten.*

Nishkama Karma is not purposeless action: its purpose is to make the action perfect by (1) treating it as an offering to God; or (2) by concentrating on making it perfect, irrespective of the benefit it might yield or of the fear that some benefit would be lost. And under no circumstances should it be inspired by selfish desire or egotism.

314: *What is "Om"?*

This sacred syllable is God. It is not His symbol, but by its repeated utterance you try to establish contact with Him. You must so train yourself that when you say it, you feel the presence of God.

315: *How can fear be eliminated?*

Be indifferent to praise or blame; be silent in the face of calumny; be satisfied with whatever you come by. Do not be attached to a particular house or position. Be firm to follow your duty. But all these steps may be short-circuited if you can develop faith in God and try to be His instrument. Then you are fearless like the kitten, for the Mother Cat then holds you in Her mouth, looking after you for all She is worth. If you do this you will be *vigatabhee*.

316: *What is conscience? Does it vary with persons following different religions during different eras?*

1) Conscience is the instinctive response of the Moral Order in an individual to a given situation.

2) Moral Order, or the Law of Moral Causation, operates on the plane of consciousness throughout the Universe. Its aspects are termed "Mahavratas" in the *Yoga Sutra*. The Law ordains that if you love, others will love you; if you are one in thought, word and deed, you will accomplish things, etc.

3) It is as inescapable as, if not more than, the physical laws. The strength of its response differs from individual to individual. This is because the consciousness of each one differs in its sensitiveness to the Law.

4) Conscience, therefore, has nothing to do with religion, but the sensitiveness of each individual to the Law differs according to the moral values inculcated by the religion he follows.

317: *When a man is truthful and just where is the necessity for him to think about God or repeat his name?*

A person who is truthful and just would necessarily draw his strength to be so from God, for God is Truth. If a man has implicit faith in truth and justice, it means he believes in the supremacy of the higher laws of the Moral Order, and this Order is but an aspect of God. I have not known a man

who has no faith in the Moral Order and still is truthful and just. If one can acquire firm faith in God or any of His aspects, one need not think about God or repeat His name, but it is very difficult to have such faith without doing so.

September 8, 1957

318: *People offer as offerings their hair, money, jewels, gold, etc. to Deities. What is your opinion about it and how did the custom originate?*

Worship from the earliest times has taken the form of *Yajna* in which some cherished thing is offered to secure a higher object. Such offering induces humility, strengthens devotion and brings us nearer to God. But as we rise higher in spiritual strength our offering must be higher at every stage and in the final stage, we should offer all that we are and do, to Him.

319: *What is the difference between Socialism and Communism? Are their ends identical? Is there any difference in their means adopted to obtain the common ends?*

Socialism in its substance is an ideology and programme which includes economic and social justice, respect for the dignity of man and a democratic structure of State and does not deny moral and spiritual values.

Communism implies the State ownership of all wealth, totalitarianism in which human dignity should be sacrificed to the State, the complete dictatorship of the party bosses, the negation of moral and spiritual values and acceptance of violence as an essential principle in human relations.

320: *What are dreams? Do they foretell anything?*

(1) Ordinarily dreams are the projection of impressions left on our minds, in the world of a fantastic unreasonability during hours of disturbed sleep.

(2) Sometimes our desires, fears and hatreds, repressed during waking hours, seek embodiment in this world.

(3) Very rarely, our aspirations, which had no scope in the waking hours, fulfil themselves by taking shape in this fantastic world.

(4) Psychologists have tried to read more into dreams but with very little success.

321: *Why has Buddhism less followers in the land of its birth?*

At no time in history, Buddhism had more than a small proportion of the following which Sanatana Dharma had in this country. Buddhism was a heterodox sect of Hinduism because it did not accept the authorities of the Vedas. The best elements of Buddhism were later absorbed into Hinduism; Buddha was accepted as an avatar of Vishnu. The heterodox sect thereupon ceased to exist.

322: *What is the difference between Culture and Civilization? Kindly illustrate it with reference to India.*

Though the two words are sometimes used as synonyms, they are different. Civilization is the material equipment of the life of a people and differs from age to age. Culture is the way of life of the people which though influenced by the civilization of the age, persists through time, because it is based on certain fundamental values. Civilization in India, for instance, is different in 1957 from the one in 1857 or 1757 and so on. Her culture in spite of changes is based on the fundamental values which inspired *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana* and *Manu Smriti*, though it was reshaped and re-integrated with fresh elements from time to time to suit the conditions of each age.

323: *Suppose some agreement on disarmament is reached among the bigger nations, how will they dispose of their powerful military weapons?*

If the Great Powers all agree on some policy of disarma-

ment, atomic energy could be released for peaceful purposes and the weapons could be melted. But the question is rather premature. They are not likely to reach that stage so early to make you worry about the disposal of the weapons.

324: *Some people say that it is written in the Vedas that the ancient Hindus sacrificed bulls and they ate beef. Is it true? How do you explain it in the context of Ahimsa of which we speak?*

(1) According to some scholars, certain words in the Vedas indicate that the Early Aryans were used to beef. This is as strongly controverted by other scholars. The former group is in a large majority.

(2) "Ahimsa" and meat-eating are not the same. Lord Buddha ate meat and yet was the greatest apostle of compassion. Many high-class orthodox Brahmins eat meat or fish. "Ahimsa" primarily means eliminating wrath, malice and hatred from one's mental content.

325: *What is the object of creating "Chiranjeevis"? Is it not for promotion of good and elimination of evil in the world?*

Aswathama, Bali, Vyasa, Hanuman, Vibhishana, Kripacharya and Parashurama are the seven Chiranjeevis of our tradition. They are so called because by virtue of their superior merit they are believed to be not subjected to death.

Obviously, the intention of this status has been to perpetuate the memories of these great personalities for all time to come, as their example would help promote meritorious deeds and eliminate evil. By long usage, the word has come to be used to indicate longevity.

September 22, 1957

326: *How did the VANA MAHOTSAVA idea strike you first? Is this Tree-planting ceremony prevalent in any other country?*

(1) When I was invited to the office of the Central Minister of Food and Agriculture which included Forestry, I was asked to fix a date for planting trees as a part of the activities of the Department. Then it dawned on me how our country was deprived of trees; how our culture was born in the forests; how trees were valued in the heyday of Indian glory and how it was necessary to revive tree-consciousness in the popular mind. It then struck me that the only way to do this was to start a National Festival.

(2) U.S.A. and U.K. had their Arbor Day or other similar days but mostly limited to students. After 1951, our Vana Mahotsava Festival was accepted by the F.A.O. of the United Nations and now similar festivals are celebrated in many countries.

327: *Can students enter politics? If so, to what extent?*

Students should study politics and be alive to the current problems. If they try to enter politics, they only waste the years which they should spend in acquiring knowledge, building up character and developing their faculties. And when they do so in their exuberance and youthful enthusiasm, they become easy tools in the hands of political parties.

328: *What is the full meaning of Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram? Who uttered these words and where?*

(1) Satyam is Truth and Shivam is Goodness or Benediction. The words are as old as Vedas. Sundaram, so far as I know,—I speak subject to corrections—was added by Keshub Chand Sen to complete the Western Concept of Truth, Beauty and Goodness. Our original word for absolute Beauty, if I am right, was *Rasah*.

(2) The words shortly describe the highest form of fundamental aspirations in man and their pursuit in life forms the best way to live in God.

329: *Why did the wise Yudhishtira agree to play the game of dice?*

See reply to Question No. 155 in the issue of the 'Bhavan's Journal' dated January 13, 1957.

330: *What is the difference between Imperialism and Capitalism?*

(1) In the nineteenth century, Capitalism connoted the control of the economy of a country by a closed group of industrialists and businessmen who made money out of sweated labour. That connotation has largely disappeared. Capitalism to-day means a system by which the economy of a country is predominantly run by free enterprise. Labour activities, labour laws and the concept of a Welfare State throughout the world make it impossible for free enterprise now to treat labour as in the 19th century.

(2) Karl Marx who flourished in the 19th century criticised the Capitalism of the 19th century. The Communists keep on attributing the same old connotation to the free enterprise economy of to-day and use Capitalism as a term of abuse by attributing to it the meaning which it does not possess now.

(3) Imperialism stands for a system and a policy of a State which acquires the control of other States; such subject States may or may not be accepted as separate entities by the overlord State. In pursuit of this policy the overlord State appropriates the territories and resources of the subject States to itself.

(4) Imperialism takes different forms. It may take the form of an empire, an alliance or a protectorate as in the case of Great Britain, France and the Netherlands. Like Soviet Russian Imperialism, it may take the form of incorporating other States in the overlord State, of establishing a nominal federation without giving equal rights to the Constituents or by imposing indirect control under the guise of a common ideology.

(5) Imperialism, as such, has no connection with Capitalism. In history, Imperialism has existed long before the birth of Capitalism. Communist propaganda, however, confounds Imperialism with Capitalism so that in the name of socialistic control its own imperialism may escape criticism.

331: *In our Shastras there is one conception of God as an ocean of pure kindness, love and pity. There is another conception in our scriptures that God is purely Sakshibhutha. I am not able to reconcile these two conceptions. Will you kindly point out the fallacy in my thinking?*

(1) Isvara is *Sakshibhutha*—Witness—to everyone and everything. As such, He remains unmoved, *Kutastham*, *Achalam*, *Dhruvam*, 'absolute', 'immovable', 'eternal'. But, in the last analysis, He is *Sat*, *Chit*, and *Anand*—Reality, Consciousness and Bliss. Bliss implies absolute Beauty and absolute Love.

(2) Every being has the fundamental aspirations bursting to sprout forth. Among them are aspirations for beauty and love: they emanate from Him. If a man develops these aspirations, absolute Beauty and absolute Love, which are Bliss, will come to him, if His grace descends on him.

(3) That is where the freedom of man lies. It is for him to mobilize his aspirations and seek God, which is Beauty and Love, or reject Him when He will only continue to watch him as a Witness.

October 6, 1957

332: *Does the right to perform Nitya Karma like Sandhya Vandan cease to operate when anyone travels by sea, air, etc. or in foreign countries (out of the Karma Bhoomi)?*

In my view, the strict rules as regards *Nitya Karma* have to be relaxed while travelling, not only to foreign countries but even in a large country like India. On such occasions, remembering the name of God or performing *Dhyana* even for a few minutes is quite sufficient. *Nitya Karma* is

only a daily training for offering all our actions to God. If that habit is cultivated, then one can perform *Nitya Karma* anywhere, at any hour of the day, while doing whatever task may be before him.

333: *What is an Avatar of God and what are your reasons for refusing to accept Gandhi as an Avatar?*

(1) An *Avatar* is God descended on earth as Man, perfect by his innate nature.

(2) No one was conscious of his limitations more than Gandhiji himself and none I knew had such humility as he had. He never made any such absurd claim nor am I sure if he were alive, he would permit anyone to make it.

(3) Avatarhood would lose all its value if every saint or saintly person is looked upon as an *Avatar*.

334: *On hearing Duryodhana's last words to Lord Krishna, Bhagavan Vyasa describes the scene that gods, rishis, siddhas and Gandharvas applauded Duryodhana by showering flowers, singing songs and sounding trumpets. How will you reason for this?*

The words of Duryodhana that you refer to occur in the *Gadayuddha Parva* in which Sri Krishna reminded him of his misdeeds. Duryodhana claims that like a true 'Kshatriya' he has fallen in battle and so dying, he has truly discharged his duties as a 'Kshatriya'. Duryodhana, however, selfish or wicked though he was, became a hero by performing the duty of a true 'Kshatriya' and as such was welcomed by the gods.

335: *Why is President Eisenhower called "Ike"?*

Because that was the pet name by which he was called during his military career.

336: *In my opinion a person should have also sufficient educational qualifications to hold the high post of a Minister,*

but irrespective of this cardinal point our Government allows any person to become one if he succeeds in election. Is this not an anomaly?

I do not agree with you that Government allows persons without sufficient educational qualifications to become Ministers. But there cannot be an absolute rule. There may be persons who may not be called 'educated' in the University sense of the term but who may be very capable and shrewd, with great power of organisation. Some historians consider that Akbar did not know how to write; that did not disqualify him from becoming one of the greatest emperors in history.

337: *Chiranjeevis are said to live for all times. At any rate, these days no one appears to have seen them in person. In what sense have they been styled Chiranjeevis?*

When I was a child, some old people of my caste claimed to have seen Aswathama in one of the forests. It was likely to be a case of wistful exercise of the imagination.

338: *It is said that Rishis in the forests pray God for years together without moving from a fixed place. How can they remain so? What do they eat?*

Ascetics have been known to live alone in the forest or a cave for years, seeing only casual visitors or none. A highly developed *yogi*, particularly if he has mastered *pranayama*, can sit in *dhyana* on the same spot for several days. I do not think they can do so for months or years, but that is a mere opinion.

339: *What can be the aim of people who observe Ekadasi Vrata? Is it true that if we fast on that day we will get Moksha?*

The aims are (1) Kayendriya Shuddhi, the removal of impurities from the body and the senses; (2) dedicating a day to the worship of God in humility and purity; (3) withdraw-

ing from the lure of the body and the senses, and preparing one's mind in such a way that the spirit might take control of our activities, leading us to God.

If you observe such fasts and observe such days as periods of purification, you would, if your energies are truly directed, come to live in God.

October 20. 1957

340: *From your novel Bhagavan Parashurama appearing in the "Bhavan's Journal", I find that Sage Viswamitra you write about, appears to be quite different from the one appearing in the Valmiki Ramayana. Will you clear this doubt?*

The original Viswamitra, the Rishi of the Gayatri, fought *Dasarajna*, the 'Battle of the Ten Kings' referred to in *Rig-veda*. Very little is known of what he did, except that during this war, he fought the Sage Vasistha.

(2) Thereafter, the names of Viswamitra and Vasistha came to be associated with several traditions. The Viswamitra referred to in the *Ramayana* by Valmiki could not be the original one who fought the 'Battle of the Ten Kings'. Sri Rama, for instance, and Janaka, the father of Sita, flourished a few hundred years after that event. The Viswamitra associated with them can only be a descendant of the Vedic Viswamitra.

(3) In writing this novel *Bhagawan Parashurama* I have tried to re-create the personalities of the original Vasistha and Viswamitra out of imagination. I have woven the materials contained in imaginary incidents and personalities.

341: *I feel that the Aryan-Dravidian theory contradicts our Hindu theory of the four Yugas according to which the events of the great epics took place lakhs of years ago. But modern historians date them only to 3000 B.C. Even then the epics are universally accepted. How to reconcile these?*

(1) There is no doubt that our Puranas, which accept the

theory of the four *yugas*, give lakhs of years to them. They have also their own Puranic chronology.

(2) Modern scholarship which takes historical sources and archaeology into account, has not accepted those dates. For instance, the excavations of Rupar and Hastinapur show that the Bharata War must have taken place about 1000 B.C. That is also the evidence drawn from the evolution of language.

(3) There is no possibility of reconciling these two methods of computation. If you take the scientific approach into account, the Puranic chronology cannot be accepted.

342: *Is it not possible to give a good dramatic piece in your Journal in every issue?*

It is possible to do so, but no appropriate dramatic piece has been forthcoming.

343: *Which is the oldest religion in the world and how it began?*

(1) So far as I have been able to judge, the oldest is the worship of the Mother Goddess who was known as 'ma' to the Asian and East Mediterranean people. Ultimately she came into the modern pantheon of India as 'Uma' and 'Amba'. Our 'Shakti' worship is based on this old cult.

(2) Worship of the Sun is also one of the most ancient religions.

(3) The testimony available from relics of Mohenjodaro and Harappa proves that worship of Shiva was also one of the most ancient in India.

(4) Among the religions of the world which prevail at present, Hinduism is the oldest.

344. *Do you think that the ruling party should respect the advice of Sri Vinobaji who prescribes age restrictions, political and educational qualifications for appointment to the responsible post of a Governor or Minister?*

I do not know what exactly Sri Vinobaji has advised. But

in my opinion there is no need to prescribe the age for a responsible job like that of a Governor or Minister. There is scarcely anyone in such posts who is not at least of middle age. In democracy, it is difficult to prescribe political qualifications for such offices, particularly for the office of a Minister. A Minister is selected because of his ability as much as for the influence he wields over the sections of his party. One would wish that there should be educational qualifications prescribed for a Minister. But higher education being at a discount, politicians would not be prepared to accept any such qualification.

345: *Through centuries has the world been dominated by Capitalists or intellectuals? Please give a straight answer.*

The intellectuals. At all stages, in the evolution of man, we find that the predominant forces of the age have been created, propelled and strengthened by them. The fact that they have been called sages, prophets, apostles, priests, seers, philosophers, literary men or scientists makes no difference.

346: *My friend says that Maurya (Chandra Gupta) and Gupta (Chandra Gupta) dynasties are the same. Which is correct?*

Your friend should look up some authentic history of India. Between the two dynasties there was a difference of 500 to 600 years and between the two Chandra Guptas a difference of about 700 years.

347: *What do you think of admitting a non-Hindu Bhakta into a Hindu temple for worship when he desires to do so?*

Every shrine, including a Hindu temple, is a house of God, and everyone irrespective of caste, colour or religion, should have free access to it subject to a uniform code of cleanliness and devout behaviour.

348: *Who are the best devotees of the Lord?*

In Canto XII, Verse 2 of the *Gita*, Sri Krishna gives us a description of those who have the highest devotion unto Him and on whom the Grace has descended. This devotion arises from three qualities:

- (1) They are *Shraddhayaa parayopeta*—filled with faith.
- (2) They are *nityayuktaa*—always poised in harmony.
- (3) They are *Mayyaveshya mano*—their minds have entered me.

349: *What is meant by nityayuktaa—poised in harmony?*

Nityayuktaa is to be poised in harmony. This quality has several facets.

To be *nityayuktaa*, the first quality is to be *yuktaahaara*—poised in food. Thus, the emphasis is laid on food building up the body, which, according to Charak, is the first instrument in attaining *dharma*. To be *yuktaahaara*, the aspirant must be in complete control of his tastes and food habits. He should avoid extremes.

- (1) 'Thou shalt not forswear food'—says the *Taittiriya Upanishad*. 'Whoever tortures the body by fast, tortures me', said Sri Krishna (XVII, 6). A hunger strike, except for purifying one's own mind and body, is therefore sinful.
- (2) The other limit is to be *laghvashi*, a small eater (XVIII, 52). One must eat less than what he ordinarily takes and never so as to develop a sense of fullness.

To be *yuktaahaara*, you must also look to the quality of the food. It must be tasty, digestible and balanced. You must eschew the lowest kind of food, i.e. what is stale, putrid or rotten. You must also learn to forswear the taste of things which are sour, bitter, saline, hot, pungent and dry; they produce pain, grief and disease. You must live

on food which increases vigour, vitality, strength, health, well-being and comfort; the food, therefore, should be tasty, nourishing, easily digestible and agreeable. (XVII, 8, 9, 10).

350: *What is the nature of a Welfare State? Whether the Welfare State which India proposes to establish fulfils all the conditions of a true Welfare State?*

A Welfare State has two aspects; in its economic aspect it signifies the establishment of economic conditions which make it possible for a man to maintain individual dignity, e.g. a job, living wage, a roof over one's head, etc.

The other aspect concentrates on creating conditions so that an individual may have an opportunity to develop moral and spiritual values and thereby secure self-fulfilment.

We have been emphasising the economic aspect ignoring the moral aspect.

351: *In what sense is the term sacrifice used in Chapter II (Slokas 10 and 13) of the Gita?*

In verses 9 and 15 of Canto III, Sri Krishna extends the scope and meaning of *yagna* (sacrifice) by not only including the ordinary sacrifices performed according to the Vedic rites, but also (a) actions performed without attachment for fruit, that is, *Karma Yoga* and (b) surrender to Brahman or God.

Further, the scope is made wider by identifying the *yagna* with the whole process of transformation going on in the Universe (*Parivartinam Chakram*). This process can be unpurposive as in Nature or it may be conscious and purposive as in man.

The idea underlying these verses is that, all creation is the result of some cherished thing being offered by way of sacrifice. The cherished thing may be rice or ghee; it may be desires or hopes as in *Karma Yoga*. The highest form of sacrifice or creative effort is to offer everything as a sacrifice to God, by surrendering all one's thoughts, actions, de-

sires and aspirations, so that one becomes His instrument for manifesting His power.

352: *How is Bhakti produced in a man? Is it due to worshipping of God or by his contacts and close movements with the devotees of God?*

(1) Bhakti is induced in a man by developing love for God as indicated in the *Bhagavad Gita*, which comes by remembering his name, i.e. *japa*; singing his praises, i.e. *kirtan*; worshipping Him by *puja* and keeping the company of devotees.

(2) Bhakti can also be induced by the methods prescribed by the *Gita*, like *Dhyana*; offering, with humility, whatever one thinks or does to God; performing all one's actions without being attached to their fruit; or complete Surrender, *Sharanagati*.

(3) Bhakti can also be induced by constant efforts to try to live in God by stabilising one's Fundamental Aspirations, i.e. by living in Beauty, Calmness and Light, and thereby spiritualising the Whole Existence.

(4) Each one has to find the appropriate ways to approach God which are best suited to his nature, aspirations and habits, though the first essentials are humility and faith.

November 17, 1957

353: *What is the difference between 'Swabhava' and 'Charitra' (character)?*

Swabhava is the temperament with which one is born. *Charitra* is character, which includes behaviour guided by principles. These principles depend upon temperament, upbringing, education, association of friends and a constant effort to put principles in action.

354: *In the series 'Rama Krishna Upanishad', Shri C. Rajagopalachari asks us to regard every woman as an incarnation of Devi. At the same time, 'Simhasana Dwatrimika'*

series contain anecdotes like falling in love with Apsaras and eloping with fair women. What path do you want your readers to follow?

Ramakrishna Upanishad, of course. *Dwatrimika* consists of stray folk-tales of India woven together by an ancient author for beguiling an idle hour.

355: *Do you think it is right on the part of our Government to bring legislation for registration as Sanyasis who have sacrificed everything. Does it not constitute deprivation of the fundamental rights?*

Registration of Sanyasis is the surest way to degrade their status. A Sanyasi by his vow and training gives up life to be free from social bonds. He is above the fiat of authorities. If he submits to the secular authority of the State he will no longer be Sanyasi and will not attract the faith and love of the people. He will also never be able to realise his mission.

356: *They say bathing in Ganga cleanses all sins. Do you agree with that?*

It depends upon whether you have the faith that Ganga is sacred. If you have, a bath will lift you out of your sordid self, maybe for a little while, maybe for a lifetime. That would depend upon the measure of your faith.

357: *What should a young boy do when he is losing interest in the world?*

Study hard and recite Sri Krishna's words: "Do not give way to impotence, Partha. This does not benefit thee. Leave this wretched faint-heartedness. Stand up, thou oppressor of foes."

358: *Why not publish Bhavan's Journal weekly, replacing Kulapati's letter with some other article on alternate weeks?*

Then perhaps the readers would find it hard to digest such a magazine in a week's time.

359: *As between Vibhishana and Karna, who do you think is better?*

The one, leaving his friend in the hour of need and the other putting forth his best even at the cost of his life.

Karna is the noblest and the most tragic hero of our Epic.

360: *Which do you think is the best of immortal writings on imaginative character?*

Yours is a difficult question. If the heroes and heroines of *Mahabharata* are treated as imaginative characters, the Epic would be the best of such writings. If they are taken as historical, I would put Shakespeare's Plays as the best.

361: *In the 'Ramayana' we find Rama and Bharata were devoted to each other so much that they could sacrifice their lives for each other. How is it that we find an ocean of difference among the brothers of to-day?*

Both parental influence and the influence of education fail to inculcate the noble ideals which governed the relations of Sri Rama and Bharat. Both our social environment and education develop the intellect but starve the noble emotions, with the result that, in many matters we tend to become more selfish, though more clever, than the savages.

362: *God has created human beings of his own accord or for his own pleasure. Why is it then that human beings should offer worship to him. Does it not amount to flattery?*

You offer worship to acquire the habit of lifting yourself out of the sordidness of life, and to develop humility, so that the ego, the source of our arrogance, selfishness, wrath and fear, may become weak. In this way worship and prayer would make us realize ourselves and lead us to God. The very fact that we fear that worship might imply flattery,

indicates that we consider our ego to be so important that it should not bend its knee before God who lives in all and is All-Perfect. This ego fabric is the result of ignorance.

363: *Thoughts differ from individuals, Why?*

I don't understand the question. Individuals are made up of different hereditary and environmental influences; temperaments differ from one to another; the Samskaras of the past lives differ, and so do experiences and circumstances. Naturally therefore the outlook and thoughts of individuals differ.

364: *In the issue of July 14, 1957 in the article, 'Vyasa, the Poet' a reference is made in the introductory note to his father Sage Parasara whose grandfather was Sage Vasishtha. So between Vasishtha and Vyasa it is a period of four generations—whereas Vasishtha appears in Ramayana and Vyasa appears in Mahabharata. This means Shri Rama and Shri Krishna lived within the time of less than 400 years.*

To add to this confusion in your article, 'Bhagawan Parashurama' also Vasishtha makes his appearance. Please explain.

(1) The Vedic Vasishtha was a contemporary of Vishwamitra and Jamadagni, Parashurama's father. Vasishtha was the great grandfather of Vyasa, as would appear both from the Vedic and Puranic references. The Vasishtha of the *Ramayana* may not possibly be the same Rishi.

(2) If chronology is measured by the finds at Rupar and Hastinapura, much less than 400 years must have elapsed between Sri Rama and Sri Krishna by assuming Vyasa's pedigree to be correct.

365: *Please give your advice on the date and text of the Gita as there are conflicting opinions on the same.*

In my opinion the present *Gita* is a later product but the original one composed by Bhagwan Vyasa (Chapter I, part

of II, XI and part of XVIII) might be dated a few years after the Bharat War. I am inclined to date the War about 1000 B.C. But different scholars give different dates to the War.

366: *In the Ramayana we read of the death of a Brahmin's son due to the penance practised by a Shudra. What is wrong in the latter practising penance? Is there any hidden meaning in this anecdote?*

Penance is inspired by (i) Purity or the will to realize God (Sattvic) (ii) the desire to gain something (rajasic) (iii) the ambition to inflict injury on others and to wish ill to some one (tamasic). If a man has the *shudra* temperament, his penance is more likely to be of *tamasic* nature and would hurt those who are seeking purity or trying to realize God.

367: *How do they say Sanskrit is the mother of all Indian languages?*

All Indo-Aryan languages have drawn freely from Sanskrit in structure, vocabulary and idiom. All Dravidian languages have been enriched by its vocabulary and idiom. And varieties of literature written in all of them have been influenced or inspired by Sanskrit literature.

368: *What is the meaning of Amrutamtu Vidya?*

Learning is Immortality.

369: *Is it true that Bombay is Parashurama Kshetra?*

After giving the whole world away in gift, Parashurama got the sea to give him Konkan to live in. Bombay is therefore certainly Parashuram Kshetra. In an old astrological book I found it referred to as 'Parashuram Nagari.'

December 1, 1957

370: (a) *How can one sacrifice sound and hearing?*
(Gita, Sloka 26)

- (b) *How can sacrifice be made of life-breath? (Gita, Sloka 27)*
- (c) *How can one sacrifice austerities or their practice, learning and knowledge? (Gita, Sloka 28)*
- (d) *What does the sacrifice of outward breath in the inner mean? (Gita, Sloka 29)*
- (e) *What is the sacrifice of life-breath in the life-breath? (Gita, Sloka 30)*

(1) You have asked me to write almost a thesis. Each question of yours requires detailed explanation and I do not think you expect me to answer all the questions in a detailed manner.

(2) In order to understand the significance of these questions, we must read all the verses from 24 to 32 of Canto IV of the *Bhagavad Gita*. In these verses, Sri Krishna teaches that *yagna* can be performed in many ways and the offerings can be of many kinds: *Bahu Vidha Yagna*. And they have been variously interpreted.

(3) Some persons offer ordinary sacrifice to the gods as prescribed by Vedic rituals; others offer similar sacrifice to Brahman. Still others offer sacrifice of the attractions of the form of taste, touch, smell, form and hearing by controlling them. This is done by developing *Vairagya* and *Pratyahara* (Verse 26).

(4) And still other persons offer all activities and control breath in the fire of Yoga; that is, in order to attain Yoga, control of 'life breath' (technically termed 'Pranayam') is necessary (Verse 27).

(5) Verse 28 refers to different kinds of sacrifices where something greatly cherished is given as an offering in spiritual *yagna*. Some offer all their possessions to the general good; others offer everything to Brahman, while still others concentrate on the recital and study of Scriptures. The Yatis practise vows of Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya and Aparigraha (Non-violence, truth, non-stealing and non-waste and non-possession).

(6) Verses 29 and 30 refer to the Hatha Yogis who practise *Pranayama* as an act of sacrifice. *Pranayama* is the regulation and control of the four processes of breathing, viz.: (a) intake of the breath, (b) holding the breath, (c) expelling the breath, and (d) remaining without taking any breath, with the lungs empty. In the different methods suggested, one or the other process is given prominence (Verses 29 and 30). This is a highly technical matter and requires long training under a teacher.

371: *What is the meaning of 'Khila' and how is it derived?*

'*Khila*' is something which does not belong to the original but is only a supplement. There are certain *Khilas* of this type appended to the *Rigveda Samhita*. Derivation is unknown. In the *Rigveda* itself the word is used in the sense of 'a barren land': 'waste land between cultivated fields', etc.

372: *Is there any definite logic in the sequence of letters in the alphabets of different languages? Or, do they simply indicate different sounds? For instance, the letters K, L, M, N are of the same significance in English, Arabic, Chinese and Russian.*

No logic in the sequence that I know of. The order in Sanskrit alphabet is phonetically based; the vowels as well as consonants are ordered according to their basis of articulation i.e. throat first palate, tooth, lip and so on from inside to outside.

December 15, 1957

373: *Is man's individual conscience responsible to God or society?*

To God. If society tries to suppress the conscience, man must be prepared to suffer martyrdom.

374: *Will it be possible to publish the book entitled 'Simhasana Dwatrimika' in the Book University Series?*

I think it will be taken up in the Series, when convenient.

375: *Which are more effective in solving personal problems of self-development—Modern Psychology, Epics, Religious Books or Lives of Great men?*

Epics first, lives of great men next; religious books, if you have faith, first of all; modern psychology least of all.

376: *What is your opinion about Widow Marriage? What do the Shastras say about it?*

Some Shastras permit widow marriage in emergencies. But if women are equal—and they are—there is no reason why they should be precluded from marrying again, when men go on marrying not twice but sometimes thrice and four times.

377: *Which are the countries that are enjoying true democracy?*

England, France, West Germany, Italy, Austria, Switzerland, Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, U.S.A., Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Turkey, Israel, India, Burma and Ceylon.

378: *Which will ultimately prevail—Science or Religion? Any conflict between the two is imaginary.*

- (1) Science can only deal with matters which can be tested by experiments and its field is sense perception. Its activities result in the conquest of natural forces.
- (2) Religion is a matter of faith and its field is supra-sensual and supra-mental perception, resulting in an experience of higher values like Absolute Love, Power, Light and Beauty, culminating in *Anand*, which is God.
- (3) Where science ends, religion begins; so both are

necessary to complete the strength and experience which man is capable of attaining.

379: *Who is the hero of Mahabharata and why?*

Arjuna. He is the man with genuine human qualities, best disciplined and well-directed.

380: *Can sincere prayer to Para-brahman change our destiny?*

Prayers can dissolve the bondage of attachment, wrath and fear, and strengthen the fundamental values like Love, Light and Beauty and bring you to God. They will enable you to be free from the bondage and change your destiny as you become more and more God-minded.

381: *Why do we chime the bells, play the cymbals or beat the drum, etc., while taking out Ganapati for immersion?*

When we worship God, we want to lift ourselves into a joyful mood and music played in company always induces such a mood.

382: *Are not the legislations like the Hindu Succession Act, Hindu Marriage Act, etc., bearing on Hindu religion contrary to the secular nature of our State?*

No. Social customs in the past have been changed by the *Smritis* of learned text writers. *Yajnavalkya Smriti* in terms authorises changes if approved by learned men. We must assume in this age that Parliament is a wise body, if not learned.

383: *How can we say that Hinduism and Buddhism do not clash when the existence of God which is an essential faith of Hinduism is denied in the other?*

I don't think Buddhism is atheistic. Anyway Buddhism invests Buddha with all god-like attributes. But Hinduism certainly differs in that Buddha is only an *avatar* of God.

384: *What are the duties, responsibilities and rights of the members of the Joint Family according to ancient traditions and Dharma Shastras?*

Will you please look up some elementary text-book on Hindu Law? According to *Shastras*, the joint family composed of male members and dependent women members, was the unit of society and the manager or Karta, the eldest male member, was its head.

385: *In our secular democracy, seats in professional colleges are being denied to Brahmin youths, even though they secure very high marks, even high jobs. How is it compatible with the Constitution?*

It is betraying the Constitution, and the Order of the Madras Government enforcing such a ban has been declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.

December 29, 1957

386: *Is it advisable to change one's religion for purposes of love or marriage?*

(1) No. One should live and die in one's own religion, while appreciating other religions.

(2) One's religion should only be changed if one feels an intense longing to change it for another. But the process bespeaks narrow-mindedness. All religions lead to God; no religion has the monopoly of truth.

(3) A change of religion for a worldly purpose is to barter one's soul for filthy lucre.

(4) If two persons love each other well and intensely, either of them will acquire the other's religion by the alchemy of love. But if this alchemy is not possible, the lovers should each keep to his and her own religion, and see a common God through mutual tolerance and understanding.

387: *Is it possible to live eternally through Yagas and Asanas?*

Not eternally, but certainly for over a hundred years.

388: *Can you enlighten me if Government has made any provision for the progress of Sanskrit during the Second Five-Year Plan period?*

It has not done so. That is my complaint.

389: *What do you consider the core of the Bhagavad Gita?*

I consider Canto XI, XII and last part of XVIII to be the core of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

- (1) Canto X introduces Arjuna to the universality of God and establishes that power, light, love or effulgence, wherever they are found, are but His radiations.
- (2) Canto XI, where Sri Krishna reveals himself as the Godhead, is the central theme of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Perhaps the original *Mahabharata* ended with this climax.
- (3) In Canto XII, Sri Krishna summarises the very essence of his teachings, each word having far-reaching implications. If Canto XI is the most inspiring, Canto XII is the most instructive. In that Canto, Arjuna asks as to who are the beloved of the Lord. The reply is given by the Lord in the remaining verses.

390: *What is 'Niyoga'? Is there any written sanction for it in the ancient scriptures?*

Niyoga is appointment of a wife or a widow to procreate a son by intercourse with an appointed male. Yes; it is supported and allowed in the old *Dharma Sutras* and *Smritis*.

391: *Is there anybody in the world who is completely not selfish? If not, how far is it needed for a man?*

Quite a few such men could be found. The second question may be worded clearly to enable me to answer.

392: *Do you believe in Tantric practices or witchcraft? Is it possible to do harm to others by those means?*

Tantric practices do not always do harm. It is claimed that some practices do harm but I have no personal knowledge of them. I think that such practices work harm by inducing auto-suggestion in the victim that he is doomed.

393: *What is Fate? Why do Hindus believe in it?*

Fate is the belief that whatever is predestined will happen. Hindus do not believe in fate; they believe in Karma. Karma is the working out of your desires, attitudes and actions in your previous births. You acquire hereditary influences, facilities, associations in order to work out your unfulfilled desires and the results of your past actions.

January 12, 1958

394: *In what way did Lokamanya Tilak differ from Mahatma Gandhi?*

Mahatma Gandhi's emphasis on *Satya* and *Ahimsa* distinguished his outlook on all questions from that of his predecessors.

395: *What is the important difference between Eastern and Western philosophies?*

The fundamental difference is that many schools of Indian philosophy emphasise the possibility as well as necessity of evolving out of the mind an instrument which can cognize and experience Absolute Reality. Western philosophy rejects that process and includes it in mysticism.

396: *Did Swami Vivekananda make any contribution to the political freedom of India?*

Swami Vivekananda made a great contribution to politics by releasing religious thought from the bonds of rituals and stratified social institutions. He also transferred emphasis

from individual salvation to the welfare of the people, thus paving the way for the programme of service.

397: *What is the difference between Sociology and Social Philosophy?*

Sociology is the science of social institutions, values and habits. Social Philosophy deals with an ideology based on one's reading of the contents of social institutions, values and habits and the direction in which they move, trying to discover first principles.

398: *Who is the founder of the Vaishnava sect and how was it spread in India?*

If you go to the root of the thing, Narayan Rishi who seems to have been connected with the earlier Panchratra Sampradaya, was the founder of the monotheistic Vasudeva cult. Later came Veda-Vyasa who, by composing the *Bhagavad Gita*, gave us the picture of Sri Krishna as Vasudeva as also a unique scripture.

(2) Vaishnavism also flourished during the time of the Gupta emperors, many of whom were devotees of Vishnu.

(3) Modern Vaishnavism had its beginnings with the Alwar saints of the South and the *Bhagvata Purana*, which after the *Gita*, is the fundamental scripture of most Vaishnava sects.

(4) Later on, the Vaishnava sect was founded by Ramanujacharya, Madhvacharya and Vallabhacharya. Chaitanya exercised tremendous influence on the Vaishnavism of the 16th century.

399: (i) *Does the conception of 'Ganesha' prevail in Western countries too?*

(ii) *Is there any particular reason or significance in Manthara suggesting 14 years for Rama's exile?*

(i) I do not know whether the conception of 'Ganesha' prevails in Western countries, but it is found in most countries of Asia.

(ii) I do not think Manthara was a logical person. She fixed 14 years because she thought that by that time Bharata would be well-established on the throne.

400: *Please explain the difference between National Extension Service and Community Development Projects.*

A Community Development Project implies a comprehensive development of a group of about 100 villages. N.E.S. Projects are not so comprehensive in their development programme, but are a step towards fuller development.

401: *I want to complete my post-graduate education, but I have no money. May I do so by taking a dowry or will it be a crime against society?*

You should not commit a sin for completing your post-graduate education. To take a dowry is to sell yourself for money. It is a crime against society and sin against God.

402: *Who invented politics? Has it done any good now or at any time?*

I suppose politics was invented by the first animal which tried to kill its rival and obtain ascendancy over the herd. No question of 'doing any good' can arise. Politics is an inevitable consequence of a struggle for developing progressively an ever-growing organisation in which personal ambition plays an important part. But for politics, the tribes would not have grown into a City State, or a City State into a Nation State, nor could we ever hope to have a World State.

403: *Lord Krishna in the Mahabharata war assured Duryodhana that he would not take up arms. Despite this, how did he wield the invincible 'Sudarshana' and thus commit a default? How are we to take it?*

A time comes in the affairs of men when words pledged under one set of circumstances can never be literally observ-

ed under a different set. A superior law always compels men to do their duty in the face of changing situations.

To save Arjuna and thereby save *dharma* was a higher law for Sri Krishna than merely a pledged word that he would not take up arms. Sri Krishna would not be the Protector of Eternal *Dharma*, if he hesitated in enforcing *Dharma* as the Supreme Lord of the Universe.

January 26, 1958

404: *Why does not our Government make Sanskrit the national language now since Sanskrit was the royal language in our ancient India?*

Sanskrit is the parent national language of India, but its knowledge is restricted to a few men in the country and in spite of its great elasticity, it has not the fluidity of the spoken language of the day. It can only serve as a reservoir of strength and richness for our national language.

405: *How do you justify the action of Draupadi in choosing five husbands and is it true Bharatiya culture?*

(1) Today, in the Himalayan districts, particularly in Jansan Bawar, there are several communities of staunch, orthodox Hindus, where custom sanctions one wife for several brothers. Kunti, having lived in the Himalayas, apparently thought that following that custom would provide a strong bond among her sons.

(2) Polyandry—one wife having several husbands—is customary in many old tribes in different parts of the world.

(3) The Pandavas as well as Draupadi held that the marriage tie is sacrosanct. This concept of marriage is a fundamental value of Bharatiya culture, and therefore Draupadi is recognised as a Sati.

406: *Kindly tell me what is actually meant by 'Swabhava' (Chapter V, Verse 17 of Bhagawad Gita). How has it been originated and how does it work?*

(1) Swabhava is the individual temperament of a man which determines his aptitudes, tendencies and possibilities. It may, by its native urges, aspire towards light, activity, acquisition or subservience.

(2) Swabhava is the basic material in the mental and spiritual make-up of a man and his principal instrument in developing himself.

(3) It is made by one's past karma and by heredity. It may be shaped or modified by early influences, education and the trials and struggles in later life, but its original pattern cannot change, except by:

- (i) self-discipline imposed by faith (*tapas*)
- (ii) prayer
- (iii) grace of God.

February 9, 1958

407: *What is the difference between Dvaita und Advaita ?*

How can I answer such a complicated question in a few sentences? Advaita is Monism, that God, the Absolute, pervades everywhere. Dvaita is Dualism, i.e. God and Soul are different entities. This is, of course, a very rough description.

408: *Why is suicide sought to be prevented by our law ?*

Life is sacred: it is sinful to put an end to it. Suicide is a crime, for if an attempt at suicide is not penalised, people might try to kill themselves on the slightest provocation.

409: *How about your publishing a translation of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras word by word and the lives of saints ?*

In the Book University, we have published "Minstrels of God" which consists of the lives of saints. There are many translations of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*. Some day, if I

get time, I hope to publish my own version in the *Bhavan's Journal*.

410: *Is it true that life is but an empty dream? If that is so, I would like to become a Sannyasin. Please advise me.*

Life is not an empty dream. It is a living reality. It is cowardly to renounce it to become a Sannyasin unless one has a call from God.

411: *What are the practical methods of developing national character and is there any institution in the country which works with that aim?*

National character is built up by:

- (i) sense of national unity and loyalty to its tradition.
- (ii) emotional awareness of the nation's thought and collective achievements.
- (iii) great men whose memory inspires the pattern of conduct and provides and shapes the national way of life.
- (iv) collective resistance offered from time to time to disruptive forces.
- (v) the will of enlightened individuals to become and remain a nation.

The whole purpose of the Constitution of India, the Governmental activities, the Universities and the educational system are calculated to develop national character after this pattern. The literature and scholarship in the country also have been contributing to the making of national character.

412: *Has there been any connection between the religions and architecture of India?*

Almost all ancient and medieval architecture has been principally temple architecture; even during the Muslim period the architecture patronised by the Muslim kings was closely associated with mausoleums and mosques.

February 23, 1958

413: *What is the meaning of 'Upanishads'? How many are they?*

The word is derived from the root *sad* with *upa* and *ni* and originally meant 'sitting down near' a Guru; it then secondarily meant 'confidential, secret doctrine.'

The principal Upanishads are thirteen; but this number varies and collections of 108 or even 200 Upanishads are published or mentioned. The 13 principal Upanishads are:

(1) *Brihad-Aranyaka*, (2) *Chandogya*, (3) *Taittiriya*, (4) *Aitareya*, (5) *Kaushitaki*, (6) *Kena*, (7) *Katha*, (8) *Isa*, (9) *Mundaka*, (10) *Prasna*, (11) *Mandukya*, (12) *Svetasvatara*, and (13) *Maitri*.

414: *What happens to the soul when it leaves the human body? Where and how long does it stay?*

(1) When the soul leaves the human body, it takes another birth. That is the doctrine of re-incarnation of the human soul, and looking to all the circumstances, that is the only one which explains good and evil and the differing capability and the lot of men.

(2) Some of our Puranas (particularly *Garuda Purana*) discuss the various worlds through which the soul passes after death before taking birth. But I believe that re-birth would almost be immediate.

415: *Lord Krishna in a famous verse asks us to give up all Dharmas; at the same time Arjuna is being asked to fight to the end. How to reconcile these two statements?*

Sri Krishna says: 'Leave all *dharma* and surrender yourself unto me.' When a man surrenders himself to God in this way, *hē* has got a clear idea of what his *swadharma* is. He also becomes ready to stand by the truth of his *swadharma* at the cost of his life. When a man is thus ready

to stand by his Truth, which is God under all circumstances, even at the cost of life, God makes him invincible. Arjuna's duty was to fight *adharma* represented by the Kauravas. Sri Krishna, therefore, enjoins him to surrender himself to God and fight. There is no contradiction between the two.

416: *A person has sinned without knowing but has repented since having come to know that he was a sinner. Will he be excused by God?*

Yes. Repentance accompanied by prayer purges the soul of its impurities. Once a man becomes pure, the sins drop off.

417: *Why should we believe that when the whole Universe is guided by immutable laws, but man alone—this little insignificant creature living fearlessly on a very insignificant planet of one of the millions of suns in the Universe—is such a powerful thing that his consent is necessary before he has to come into the world or go out of it? More rational explanation is that he is one of the numberless expressions of Nature in which moral and spiritual forces have found limited expression according to eternal laws which we have not yet understood.*

I believe that there is an eternal law of transformation which transforms energy into matter, matter into life, life into mind, and then mind into conscience and spirit. What we call 'physical energy' is not the only form of energy in the Universe. There is in the Universe a mental and spiritual energy of which the physical energy is nothing but a stage. This eternal law of transformation continues to operate as an inseparable existence in which God is manifest.

March 9, 1958

418: *People belonging to many Holy Orders wear strange garments and have their heads shaved, etc. How is it so? Is it merely to differentiate them from others?*

The different Holy Orders prescribe different dress and different ways of keeping hair, because of certain traditions which have sprung up from ages past. The *sannyasins*, for instance, shave themselves, the Sikhs do not shave their hair. Each sect keeps its own distinctive way so as not to be mistaken for the other, but behind each way there is some significance attached to it by the founder of the sect.

419: *Let me know if we can avoid violent regional and linguistic agitations. Why are special efforts not made to put a stop to this loosening of anarchic forces and violent tendencies?*

(1) Disruptive tendencies are inherent in the collective mind of India. They are the remnants of a past where regional and parochial loyalties hindered a broad national outlook.

(2) Whatever unity India possessed in the past was the result of the activities of the Brahmans through Sanskrit and all that it stands for and the acceptance by the people of a common *smriti* law based on *varnasrama dharma*. Both these forces are out-of-date.

(3) The British created the unity of India by military occupation of the country and by imposing a unitary form of government supported by British bayonets. They have gone.

(4) The other forces which created unity of the collective mind during the British period were: (a) the influence of Sanskrit on University men, (b) the unifying medium of English, and (c) the influence of nationalism of the West which, when mixed with our love of the Mother-land, gave an emotional content to our new nationalism.

(5) After Independence we have thrown Sanskrit into the background and undermined the influence of English by emphasizing the need of regional languages. By over-emphasizing secularism, we have weakened the religious bond; by over-emphasizing only the economic aspect of our progress, we have deprived our nationalism of its emotional content.

Naturally, therefore, we are thrown back on our medieval particularism which did not believe in India as a whole, but treated it as a continent of warring States.

(6) The forces of unity today are the Indian National Congress, our Constitution and a Central Government with plenary powers, our integrated system of judiciary, the common Parliament, the single common army for the whole country and the organic effort to raise the economy under the leadership of a common Planning Commission. These factors are operating in strength, but the unfortunate disruptive tendencies of our collective mind are struggling to express themselves in the manner that you suggest. We must, therefore, wait for time to do its work. The constant pressure of nationalism, our common culture and the apparatus of our government and judiciary, are sure to overcome these tendencies earlier than most people expect.

420: *I think that the ultimate objective of our thoughts, words and action is selfishness. Am I correct?*

You would be correct if man was less than an insect, that is, if he had no higher mind, no moral sense, and no fundamental aspiration. But pure selfishness simply does not exist and the call of the higher mind and moral and fundamental values in some form or the other comes to every man.

421: *Why has not the Government of India opened a separate Ministry of Cultural Affairs like other countries?*

It is included in our Ministries of Education and Information and Broadcasting.

422: *In your book "Our Greatest Need" you have written that three Sanskrit books and several English books had given you guidance. What are those three Sanskrit books?*

(1) The *Mahabharata* and particularly the *Gita*. (2) Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*. (3) Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*.

423: *What is your opinion about 'Nai Talim' ?*

It is a bold experiment on basic education, but it is too early to say what success it has met with.

424: (a) *Why should we offer a leaf, a flower, a fruit, water to God and sing His praise by way of worshipping Him ?*

(b) *Does it not appear that God is selfish and that He expects something before doing favour ?*

(c) *Is it not sufficient for a man to engage himself in the work of his choice without desiring for the fruits of his own action and without spending any time over worshipping God ?*

(d) *Will he not attain Moksha without worshipping God but only by doing desireless actions ?*

(a) To develop humility, to purge the mind of its impurities and to become God-conscious.

(b), (c) & (d) God does not reject anything, nor does He sell his grace for a flower. But if a man wants His grace and His strength, he has to purge his self of egoism by purifying his mind. But can you do it without prayer, humility and efforts at God-consciousness? If you can do that, you are a greater Karma Yogi than any that I can think of. If a man can do so as you say, he will certainly attain *moksha*. But how can you follow desireless action without surrender unto God? It is only our arrogance which makes us think that we can reach God—in your words 'attain *moksha*'—by taking no account of Him.

March 23, 1958

425: *How did deity-worship originate in India ?*

Worship of a deity is one of the fundamental necessities of human nature. Without it man cannot develop humility, faith and aspiration nor can he purge his being of egoism. Worship of deities began with human nature. For instance, Russia tries to banish God and elevates Lenin in its place.

People congregate in his mausoleum, as in a church with the same reverence with which you or I would go to Kashi Vishveshwar or Somnath.

426: *What are 'Pancharatra' and 'Vaikhanasa'? If both of them belong to Vaishnavism, where do they differ?*

According to Vrddha Gautam (VIII, p. 564), these are two schools of Vaishnavas. The Vaikhanasa calls Vishnu by the names of *Purusha*, *Achyuta* and *Aniruddha*, while the Pancharatrikas speak of Vishnu as having four *Murtis* or *Vyuhas* viz., Vasudeva, Sankarsana, P̄adyumna and Aniruddha.

427: *We find in Puranas statements to the effect that gods were in the habit of travelling from one Loka to another like Satyaloka, Suryaloka, etc. Is it possible that there is some connection between our interplanetary travel of these days and the inter-Loka travel of those days? If so, do you really believe our Puranic India was so well advanced?*

I do not think that the age in which the Puranas were composed had anything like inter-planetary travel. But human imagination is very fertile and it did conceive voyages which modern science is likely to make physically possible.

428: *If Sita was an avatar why could she not have cursed the demon Ravana or for that matter, the cunning Maricha in the first instance without leaving things to her husband or others?*

God is omniscient and omnipotent in His Absolute Nature, but when He limits that Nature and descends on human body, He accepts the limitations to which it is subject. As an *avatar*, therefore,—as I conceive it—God only practises the art of human life expressing Beauty, Power, Love, Light or Calm, i.e. one of the fundamental aspirations to its highest possible degree. In Sita, love and the beauty of the soul were embodied in perfect measure.

429: *In what way does the modern Hindu differ from men of other religions?*

(1) The scripture of a Hindu is not restricted to a book but is Truth as found in ancient texts as also in experience and particularly by developing *pragna*, a perception unaffected by attachment, wrath and fear.

(2) A Hindu's concept of God is not exclusive. He sees God in All and All in God and accepts the truth of the saying of Sri Krishna 'Whatever God a man worships, he ultimately comes to Me.'

(3) A Hindu's ultimate aim is to purge egotism, attachment, wrath and fear from his outlook and thereby shed his human limitations.

(4) A Hindu has faith that God descends upon mortal body to destroy *adharma* and vindicate *dharma*, when the world is lost in materialism and wickedness.

430: (a) *How was the world created according to Indian mythology?*

(b) *How far can we accept the story in the present world?*

(a) The Supreme Brahman created the world from Itself beginning with *Akasa*. (b) Nothing to prevent you from believing it. This perhaps is a truer view of the creation than the changing theories of scientists.

April 6, 1958

431: *What is the difference between Intelligence and Wisdom? Please illustrate it also.*

Intelligence is what you are gifted with in the matter of learning by study and experience. Wisdom is the balanced vision which comes of progressive elimination of attachment, wrath and fear from one's outlook.

432: *Some people say that rebirth of soul is progressive and that man is the last of such births. Is that true?*

To be born as a human being is not the last of the births in the evolution of the soul. If a man has no capacity to develop his spiritual strength, he may have to repeat his birth cycle at the lower end.

433: *What are the differences between Autocracy, Plutocracy, Democracy and Socialism?*

(1) Autocracy is the form of government in which ultimate power vests in one individual. Democracy is that form in which ultimate power vests in a parliament freely elected by the people. (2) Plutocracy means the rule of the rich. It is not a form of government, but is applied to any form of government in which rich classes have a predominant position.

(3) Socialism is not a form of government; it is an ideology. It is a popular word into which many schools of politicians read different meanings. Its basic idea, however, is the equal distribution of wealth in the community.

434: *People have begun to complain that the standard of administration is deteriorating after the advent of independence. Congress Governments especially are charged with all kinds of malpractices like corruption, nepotism, favouritism, etc. Some thinking people doubt the ability and efficiency of democracy to give good administration especially in India. What is your opinion?*

(1) Unfortunately it is a fact that there is a popular impression that the Congress administration is corrupt. In this connection my views are given in Kulapati's letter No. 144 in the issue of the Bhavan's Journal of 12th January, 1958.

(2) (a) Democracy can be honest and efficient. It cannot be said that other forms of government are by their nature more honest or efficient; in them there is greater scope of corruption as there is no freedom of criticism. (b) Apart from this, individual dignity and freedom are values in themselves and cannot be bartered away for anything. It is, however, true that if a democratic government does not main-

tain a reputation for incorruptibility, people when tired of such malpractices reconcile themselves to an autocracy. But it is an escape, not a solution.

435: *Do you agree that socialism alone can solve India's economic problem?*

Any programme which inspires a people to release enthusiastic will to produce, will solve India's problem. Names matter little in the realities of life.

April 20, 1958

436: *What is the meaning of a perfect Jivan Mukta?*

A man who has converted his animal instincts into God-consciousness and lives in an undisturbed state of mind, dominated by truth, love, beauty and calm.

437: *It is accepted that Mahavira is the founder of Jainism. But it is stated by great historians that he is the twenty-fourth Tirthankara or Jina (deified saint). How can a twenty-fourth deified saint be the founder of Jainism?*

Lord Mahavira systematised Jainism but he was the head of an ascetic cult, which had several heads before him. He was, therefore, the 24th in succession.

438: *What is real freedom? Which is the best and shortest way to attain it?*

(a) Real freedom is to transmute our animal instincts of desire, fear and wrath into a state of mind in which truth, love, beauty, calm and bliss are stabilised.

(b) Learn to offer every act, however trivial, to God as one offers flowers to one's guardian deity.

439: *Why is Dr. Radhakrishnan called V.I.P. and how did it begin?*

.V.I.P. means a Very Important Person and for travelling

facilities, etc., certain dignitaries including the Vice-President are referred to in official language as VIPs.

May 4, 1958

440: *Do you consider the present position of Indian economy as balanced one or is it imbalanced?*

Our economy will be balanced only when Agriculture, including Animal Husbandry, Forestry and Land Reclamation, is given pre-eminence so essential to our existence.

441: *Will you please explain why you are known as Kulapati especially in 'Bhavan's Journal'?*

In the Bhavan's Constitution, the Sanskrit word for President is 'Kulapati'. Bhavan is a registered Society and a number of institutions are bound together, so to say, by the service of its Founder-President whom some people look upon not as ordinary office-bearer. I also try to develop towards the workers, teachers and students and even the members and the readers of the Journal a personal attachment. Therefore, they found the word 'President' insufficient to convey my relations with the institution. That is why they honour me as Kulapati—the head of the Ashram. As the Letters when they were first written were primarily intended for the workers, teachers and students, the Letters came to be known as Kulapati's Letters.

442: *Do you consider that dancing is conducive to good morals?*

Dancing is the expression of the freedom and joy of the soul. If sexiness is excluded, dancing is not only moral but ennobling.

Indian dancing is free from sexiness. Mixed Western dancing and recently introduced Latin form of dancing—rumba and rock-n'roll—are both sexy and ugly. I have never been able to see in Indian dancing these artless modes without a sense of shame at our national degradation.

May 18, 1958

443: *What in your opinion is the most remarkable occasion in Ramayana where the kindness and generosity of Sri Rama are revealed?*

When Rama was asked by Indra for any boon, Rama asked for a boon to restore the *vanaras* slain in the battle-field to life. He could have asked for any other boon, e.g. to make it convenient and easy for him to meet Bharata or for the boon of Sita living with him for many many years.

444: *What is the exact implication of the doctrine of Maya?*

In Sri Sankaracharya's *Advaita Siddhanta*, Maya plays an important role. Maya is not a negative thing; it is a positive one. It has two powers or *saktis*; one is *Avarana*, i.e. veiling and the second is *Vikshepa* i.e., making a thing appear as another. It is the material cause of the world i.e. through the association of Maya, Brahman creates the world. This is clear in dream and the rope-serpent. It is called *Anirvachaniya*, i.e. indescribable. It is not '*sat*' existent nor '*asat*' non-existent nor both non-existent and existent. It is something different from all categories.

445: *Is not idol worship a sin because the qualities of God are 'Sat', 'Chit', 'Ananda' and 'Sarvavyapak'?*

God is '*Sat*'—Reality, '*Chit*'—Consciousness, and '*Anand*'—Bliss, and is all-pervading. That is true. But we are full of our ego, we are driven by desire, fear and wrath. How can our little selves, so restricted and distracted become God-conscious without making a beginning with something concrete with which we can establish a personal bond? Try it and you will find that some symbol to begin with is essential. It is not the symbol but the devotion which you are able to concentrate on it that makes its value.

June 1, 1958

446: *Will you explain the philosophical interpretation of the passage in which Lord Krishna is said to have stolen the clothes of Gopis who were bathing in the river and bargained for their return?*

I do not try to read philosophical meaning into the early exploits of Sri Krishna. These exploits point to his being intensely human—a quality which raises man, an average man, into an infinitely lovable creature. When the *Bhagavata* described these exploits, the author wanted to describe the loveliest child which human imagination can conceive.

447: *How long can one tolerate violence? Is it not a mark of impotence and imbecility to endure violence endlessly, especially in critical modern days?*

Violence is an expression of the untamed instincts of man. We can only eliminate violence by love. But as things stand, men have not developed sufficient love to overcome violent instincts. Whether you tolerate or not, violence exists. It can only be got rid of by emphasising the fact that God is in All and All are in God. But we are too fond of the so-called secularism to develop that faculty which only comes from faith in God.

448: *They say that planets and stars wield influence on the destiny of human beings. Would I be right in presuming that the Russian Sputnik may start playing pranks with our lives?*

Sputnik is a tiny little particle compared to the giant planet. When the Sputniks are made of immensely bigger size—which is scarcely possible except in theory—you may worry over the problem.

June 15, 1958

449: *My experience shows that contentment, faith in God*

and elimination of the ego are the three successive stages in spiritual evolution. Am I correct?

I would put faith in God first. Contentment does not come till you acquire that faith and come to believe that whatever you encounter happens because of His Will.

450: *Is it correct to say that weeping over the dead body of a person makes the soul of the deceased rest in peace? Is there any mythological or psychological explanation for this action?*

I don't think weeping over the dead body brings peace to the soul. I have not come across any such view in any Purana that I could think of.

Weeping is the way to secure psychological release from the unhappiness which we feel when a beloved person dies.

451: *What do you mean by God-fearing and why should we fear God?*

(a) 'God-fearing' only means that what we do should be done as if offered to God. The consciousness of His presence is a necessary element in all noble actions. (b) If you are not 'God-fearing' in this sense, you will tremble before every petty tyrant that chooses to impose law on you. If you are so very brave as to object to the word 'fear', will you be satisfied if I say, 'You should love God'?

452: *Our Life Insurance Corporation of India has adopted the motto, "Yogakshemam Vahamyaham". Would you explain how far is it relevant?*

The phrase means 'I look after that welfare'. The Life Insurance Corporation wants to carry out this beneficent intention of God by helping you to save your money so that your family is provided for after your death.

453: *Is it possible to make all people equal in all respects? If not, what is the fun of socialism or communism?*

(1) No. Men are different by hereditary and environmental influences, as also by their nature, temperament, aptitude and ability. You might as well expect men to be equal in height, colour, and the size of their faces.

(2) Equality, an essential of democracy, implies

(a) that all persons, whatever their circumstances, should have equal opportunity,

(b) that there should be economic and social justice, that is, no one should be deprived of a reasonable share of the resources of a country and no one should be at a disadvantage due to social conditions.

(3) Socialism and democracy both envisage such equality.

(4) Communism is the dictatorship of the few, who have control of the resources of the country and who through democratic centralism—another word for dictatorship—use the party and the army as their instruments. There is no equality.

June 29, 1958

454: *What is meant by Advaita philosophy?*

Advaita is one of the schools of Vedanta philosophy. It believes in non-dualism i.e., absolute oneness of the great principle, viz. Brahman, which lies at the basis of the phenomenal world.

455: *What is the meaning of greeting each other with the word 'Namasthe'?*

I bow to thee.

456: *Are there any true and great Bhaktas in our country just now and do they benefit the country?*

There are a number of Bhaktas in this country in different spheres of life. If they were not, India would cease to possess moral and spiritual values and become a dunghill of insects.

457: *What do the 'Gotras' among Hindus signify? Do they help to find out the common ancestry?*

Gotra in Vedic times meant the family, the members of which tied their cows at one place. Later it meant the family of the Rishi from which one is descended. It, therefore, means that those who belong to one *gotra* claim descent from the same Vedic Rishi.

458: *What is the fundamental difference between Science and Art?*

Science is the study of laws which operate in nature and is the product of intellect. Art is the view of life with the aid of creative imagination in search of beauty.

July 13, 1958

459: *In the temple of Jagannath at Puri, the Natamandir contains sixteen obscene pieces of sculpture. What is the object of carving such figures particularly in a temple where thousands of men and women with religious bent of mind go for worshipping each day?*

At some stage in our architectural history, the motive of amorous men and women became woven into art. Perhaps those who laid down the canons of art were of the view that sex is the fundamental fact of life, and it would be an unreal presentation of life in the universe if its most fundamental factor was ignored or suppressed for fear of displeasing the prudes.

460: *What are the differences between the ranks of (a) Ambassador (b) Envoy (c) Charge d'Affaires (d) High Commissioner (e) Ambassador Plenipotentiary?*

Why don't you look up some dictionary? It is a good habit which you should acquire.

461: *How is that Radha who is stated to be so dear to Lord Krishna is not mentioned in Srimad Bhagavata?*

Radha appeared in the Krishna cult after the *Bhagavata* was composed.

462: *It is said that Rama of Ayodhya and Bhagawan Parashurama waged war on a certain occasion. If both of them were avatars, why should they fight against each other?*

Parashurama appears to have dominated his age, and the fight between the two only symbolises the disappearing of an old age and the rise of a new one.

July 27, 1958

463: *What is the definition of 'sin' and what is the biggest sin on earth?*

(a) Sin has two aspects (i) doing acts in defiance of the Moral Order, that is, in breach of the Law of Moral Causation; (ii) denying and failing to respond to the Fundamental Aspirations.

(i) The universal Law of Moral Causation may be summarised as follows:

A. If you develop *ahimsa*—non-violence—in you, that is, if you transmute hatred, malice and wrath into love, all will leave their hatred when they approach you.

B. If you develop *satya*—truth—in you, that is, if your thought, word and deed are as one, you will accomplish results.

C. If you develop *asteya*—non-stealing—in you, you will get riches.

D. If you develop non-waste of bodily, mental and spiritual powers—*brahmacharya*—you will gain vigour.

E. If you develop *aparigraha*—non-possession—you will get a true view of the real aim of your life.

If you commit an intentional breach of the Law, you commit sin.

(ii) The Fundamental Aspirations are urges which exist in all human beings and which make a man strive for the

realization of Light, Love, Beauty, Power, Calmness and Bliss—which are the radiations of the Spirit or God.

(b) The greatest sin is not to recognise the supremacy of the Moral Order and not to admit that the Fundamental Aspirations are spiritual values which are paramount in life.

In other words, the greatest sin is not to believe in God, who sustains the Moral Order and leads us to realise the Aspirations by His Grace.

August 24, 1958

464: *Is there any significance of the tuft which the Hindus are enjoined to wear? Is there any significance of the holy thread-ceremony by Brahmmins and the caste marks?*

(i) Tufts and caste marks were intended to distinguish castes and creeds. They have now lost their significance.

(ii) Sacred thread is the symbol of the initiation of a man into the sacred responsibility of one who wants to lead a life dedicated to Learning and Truth. The symbol may sometimes remind us as to what we ought to be and do, though in practice, in view of modern conditions, most people are insensitive to such reminders.

465: *What is the effect of the thread-ceremony—Upanayana—and why elders say that unless it is done, one is not authorised to utter the Gayatri mantra and what is the age at which the thread-ceremony should be done?*

(i) The thread-ceremony, *Upanayana*, is the ceremony of initiating a boy into studentship when he is to begin learning the Vedas. Then the boy becomes a 'dwija', as he 'is born again'. Studenthood according to us carries a sacred meaning, and sacred *mantras* were enjoined to be chanted by a student in correct accents when he has entered it.

(ii) Sastras enjoin *Upanayana* at the age of eight. It is the correct age when a boy's outlook on life will be duly impressed by a ceremonial entry into studentship.

September 7, 1958

466: *What is the meaning of 'Samvat Year' ?*

'Samvat Year' is the year of the Vikrama Era which is 56 years ahead of the Christian Era. Traditionally the era marks the victory of Vikramaditya over the foreigners. Some scholars are of the view that originally it was the Malav Era, which about the 4th or 5th century came to be associated with Vikramaditya, possibly Chandra Gupta II who bore that title.

467: *Whenever I start praying I sense a sort of tickling in between eyebrows. Why?*

It is only a nervous twitch. You must get rid of it. When you pray, your mind must be calm and body steady and easy. You must drop all anxiety, hurry, worry, impatience if you want to contact God through prayer.

468: *What is exactly meant by 'Moksha' ?*

God-consciousness so highly developed that you become one with God in this life or the next.

469: *Don't you think that the present-day education for women makes them forget their real duty in life?*

I don't think so. In spite of some exceptions, by and large, educated women perform their duties as wives and mothers splendidly, undeflected by the standards set by some sections of the West.

470: *Can Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan render any monetary help to Sanskrit institutions if started elsewhere?*

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan subsists on popular support and spends whatever it can on Sanskrit studies and aiding the Vishva Parishad. Each locality must support its own Sanskrit activities aided by Government, that is, the ordinary taxpayer.

471: *What is the difference between 'Prema,' 'Sneha' and 'Moha' ?*

(i) 'Moha' is fascination or infatuation. It is a blind, thoughtless, temporary attraction which discards all sense of proportion and responsibility. What young college boys would call 'love' is of this variety.

(ii) 'Sneha' is affection, steady attachment which is considerate and solicitous of the welfare of another. Sister's love for the brother is the best example.

(iii) 'Prema' is love; it is the surrender of one's all to another, making for a unity—more or less perfect—with another person. It makes you, to use the words of the *Grihya Sutra*, bone of the bone and breath of the breath with another.

(iv) what is called 'love' in the West in these days is the travesty of real love. It is a crossbreed between infatuation and farmyard mating.

472: *What is the meaning of 'Rishi' ?*

Rishi means a person of either sex who has dedicated himself or herself to Vidya and *tapas*, learning and austerity, lives according to the moral law of Truth, Non-violence, Non-waste, Non-stealing and Non-possession and has developed God-consciousness.

473: *Do you think that the Great Epics are historically true ?*

They have a core of history. Particularly, the *Mahabharata* is most valuable in reconstructing the history of India of the pre-Magadhan period.

474: *Is there any external force which controls our destiny ?*

I think the planets have a great controlling factor on one's life. The other external controlling forces are heredity, social environments, parental influence, education and ex-

perience. And the greatest factor of them all is God, whose Grace alone decides destiny, if one has the humility to seek His aid.

September 21, 1958

475: *Is there any difference between the Five-Year Plans of Russia and their Indian counterparts? Please enlighten.*

Very great and in many facets. In the Russian Plans industrialisation is accented to the subordination of agriculture. With us agriculture is of primary importance. The Russian Plan is worked by a totalitarian State, where the individual is of less significance. Ours is a democratic Plan which eschews coercion.

476: *Why do stars fall down from heaven now and then? Have they any effect on our lives?*

Stars are not known to fall. Meteors when they come within the gravitation pull of the Earth are drawn in it, and often in the process are consumed. We call them falling stars. They have, so far as I know, no effect on our lives though in many ages and communities the falling of stars is considered inauspicious.

477: *Question No. 393 refers to 'Fate' and 'Karma'. I personally find no difference between them. Can you explain?*

You had better study the difference between the two. 'Fate' presupposes that God has decided what we are and what shall happen to us. 'Karma' is the result of our own action, and its working can be altered by our actions.

October 5, 1958

478: *Don't you think that academic robes of our Universities require to be overhauled and replaced by another which is more in keeping with our status and dignity?*

I think academic robes add distinction to academic occasions. But they do require to be suitably altered to suit the national genius. But the substitutes found so far are unsatisfactory.

479: *Is there any difference between 'Atheism' and 'Agnosticism'?*

Of course. Atheism denies God. Agnosticism neither denies nor asserts; it believes that our instruments of knowledge are not competent to come to any definite belief about God.

480: *Do you agree with John Ruskin that Theology is a dangerous subject for women?*

No. Women have every right to every kind of knowledge which man can acquire. They are intellectually as capable as men.

481: *Our Guruji says that Sanjaya in Mahabharata had got the power of television and radio. Is that true?*

No.

482: *What distinguishes self-discipline from self-torture?*

Self-discipline is cheerfully invited under the urge of a fundamental aspiration and leads to joy. Self-torture is inflicted by an unnatural code of conduct, to which the temperament does not respond spontaneously. The latter leads to self-suppression and a stunting of one's personality.

483: *What is meant by 'Akarma' and 'Vikarma' and what are their differences?*

(1) 'Karma' is the action which is inspired by a higher urge, particularly, where its perfection is aimed at without caring for its results, or which is done as an offering to God.

(2) 'Vikarma' is action inspired by animal instincts and

is the outcome of a desire for gaining a selfish end or a sense of self-importance.

(3) (a) 'Akarma' is inaction which is invited because of a higher urge, without fear and in obedience to a mandate from God. Such 'akarma' is Karma. (b) Another form of *Akarma* is refusal to do one's duty out of pride, indolence, negligence or irresponsibility.

484: *What is Jnana-drishti and how can one attain it?*

'Jnana-drishti' is the perception given by true knowledge. True knowledge is acquired by:

(a) progressively eliminating attachment, wrath and fear from our way of looking at things.

(b) by developing by conscious effort to realise that God is All and All is God!

485: *What is the value of 'Sreya' and 'Preya' in life? Which of them should one accept while earning livelihood?*

Both ends should be harmonised. 'Preyas' should be sublimated to 'Sreyas' by a systematic pursuit of fundamental aspirations.

October 19, 1958

486: *How does a satellite of the earth stay in the atmosphere?*

We all know that the harder you throw a stone the farther it will travel before falling to earth. If you could imagine your strength so fantastically multiplied that you could throw a stone at a speed of 15,000 m.p.h., it would travel a great distance. It would, in fact, easily cross the Atlantic Ocean before the earth's gravity pulled it down. Now imagine being able to throw the stone just a little faster, say about 18,000 m.p.h., what would happen then?

The stone could again cross the ocean, but this time it would travel much farther than it did before. It would travel so far that it would overshoot the earth, so to speak,

and keep falling until it was back where it started. Since in this imaginary example there is no atmospheric resistance to slow the stone down, it would still be travelling at its original speed, 18,000 m.p.h. when it had got back to its starting-point. So around the earth it goes again. From the stone's point of view, it is continuously falling, except that its very slight downward arc exactly matches the curvature of the earth and so it stays aloft—or as the scientist would say, “in orbit”—indefinitely.

487: *What is 'Atma' and how to purify it?*

Atma is the eternal base of your personality which is not material in its composition and which will survive even after you are dead. You can purify it by transmuting your animal instincts in pursuit of fundamental aspirations e.g. Light, Truth, Calmness, Bliss and Beauty.

488: *While the name of Karna has become proverbial in Indian mythology, that of Mahabali is not, though the amount of sacrifice made by the latter is equally great if not more; why? Kindly enlighten.*

Proverbs grow because of the picturesqueness of the man and his deeds. Karna is perhaps the most pathetic figure in our literature. He was good, noble and great, generous, and yet fate was against him at every turn. But in spite of fate, he never became bitter, never jealous and never ignoble.

489: *I took an oath before Sri Bhagawan Paramahansa to be a vegetarian and follow the path of Ahimsa. Knowing this, my parents have been forcing me to break that vow. Please advise what I should do now.*

Why should your parents be so unreasonable? Quite a few millions in India are vegetarians. Gandhiji was one, so was Sardar Patel; so are many leaders of India. If your parents want a personal testimony, you may tell them that

I have never been anything but a vegetarian and have not felt the worse for it.

490: *If you think that personal and national well-being depends on spiritual evolution, how do you account for India's poverty and Russia's prosperity?*

(1) Russia became prosperous because it had self-government and had for several years after Soviet Revolution heavy American aid for developing itself. It is 40 years in advance of us and by its peculiar philosophy regiments its people and keeps not an inconsiderable number of workers in concentration camps.

(2) We were free only ten years ago; we have not had foreign aid in a measure comparable to the aid received by Russia; we have a democratic structure, which by its nature makes for slow progress, makes compulsory labour impossible.

(3) We are not poor because we treasure spiritual values. Russia is not rich because it denies them. The idea that we can become rich only if we give up spiritual values is one of the fallacies which has been made fashionable by Communist propaganda.

(4) Our aim is not to be secondhand Russia wading our way through decades of Stalinian brutality. We have our own way of life, and though colonialism kept us underdeveloped we want to develop the country and retain our spiritual values and our democratic traditions.

(5) Higher values should always dominate material comforts. Any other view would lead to our being turned into insects.

491: *What is the necessity of deciding the dates and texts of the Puranas and Epics? Does it help to understand the epic better? Is it not merely wasting energy and time, particularly when opinions differ on such a problem?*

It is essential to inquire into and determine the dates of the Epics and the Puranas. Without such inquiry it will be

impossible to find out their sequence, the portions interpolated in each age, and relate any particular part of the contents to a particular age. When the dates are finalised more or less approximately, it would be possible to trace the evolutions of our customs, beliefs and social institutions and to reconstruct the history of our race as also to extricate the basic philosophies of life from the accretions of later periods.

492: *When Christians and Muslims regularly go to the Church or the Mosque, why do Hindus feel shy of visiting Temples?*

Because they are cowards, and are afraid of being called reactionaries by pseudo-secularists who claim to have the secret of all wisdom.

November 16, 1958

493: *Do you think that politicians can establish world peace?*

A politician loves publicity. His whole training is to run the race for power. He therefore develops egoism; he cannot, by the very nature of the field in his work, uphold the supremacy of the moral law in all his dealings. It is the conflicting egoism of politicians which creates conditions which breed war. How can they establish world peace unless there is a world-wide movement to eliminate egoism?

494: *When the sacrifice of human beings and animals to God are opposed, how can the offering of flowers, fruits and leaves to God be justified when plants have life?*

Something which is beautiful and loved has to be offered to God to develop the habit of offering our all to Him. Flowers, fruits and leaves, are beautiful; people love them; offering them does not inflict any degree of harm on living things. The trees, which are living things do not lose their

life because flowers, fruits or leaves—which are sure to wither in the course of a few days—are taken away from them.

495: *What is the exact Hindi equivalent of 'Collective Unconscious', 'Classicism' and 'Romanticism' which I find you are using very often?*

There are no Hindi or Sanskrit equivalents to these three words which have complex associations which they have in the Western language. In Sanskrit, for instance, there are no two distinct literary movements as in European languages. Kalidasa is unparalleled in restraint and therefore he is a classical author; he is also very colourful in his imagery and may be classed as a romantic.

Many attempts are made by several authors in India to coin the equivalents of these words, but as they do not possess the associations of the English words, they do not connote the exact significance, and are only pale and ineffective renderings. I do not know how the Hindi authors translate these words. However, I might give approximate renderings for your satisfaction.

Collective Unconscious:

samudayika avyaktamanas

Classicism:

sishta sahityavada

Romanticism:

rangamaya sahityavada

Do they mean anything to you by themselves? No. That is why we must study the English language till our languages become fit vehicle for higher expression of modern thought.

496: *Do you think that Varnashrama Dharma would suit our country at this juncturē?*

(1) Varnashrama Dharma has two aspects: *Chaturvarnya* and *ashram* system. *Chaturvarnya* as we found it in the

nineteenth century with its rigid hereditary exclusiveness derived support from (a) Infant Marriage (b) The Prohibition of Inter-dining and Inter-marriage (c) Social Relations and Religious Ceremonials being restricted to small group. Im-mobility of communities, due to lack of travel facilities, was also a contributory factor to this rigidity. None of these factors is valid now. Large industrial towns create facilities for the rapid mobility of populations. *Chaturvarnya*, in that rigid sense, therefore, cannot exist in these days.

(2) *Chaturvarnya* has also an eternal basis in human nature. An enlightened temperament informed by aspirations for knowledge and peace is a Brahman temperament. An ambitious and active temperament is a Kshatriya temperament. An acquisitive temperament is that of a Vaishya; a subservient one that of a Shudra.

(3) Ashrams are also based on an appropriate division of life in stages of a student, a householder, a retired person and a person who has renounced the world. But in modern life people have no urge to do so as the world is too much with them and even if they have the urge they find it difficult to follow it. But the stages are inherent in life and they require to be adopted in some modified form.

497: *I am a follower of Mahatma Gandhi. I believe that Mahatma has attained salvation. I worship Sri Krishna in the Gandhian way. If I am faithful to Gandhiji's doctrines shall I attain mukti? Please enlighten.*

Worship Sri Krishna in any way you like. But whether your way is right or wrong will depend on your answer to three questions:

- (1) Is God a living presence to you?
- (2) Have you developed humility in a measure which will progressively eliminate your ego?
- (3) Do you always try to express in Truth, Non-Violence or Love, Non-Stealing, Absolute honesty, Non-Waste and Non-possession in daily action?

That way you will become an instrument of God, as Gandhiji always tried to be.

Mukti comes to the man who is an instrument of God in thought, word and deed.

498: *As it is, our country is full of discontent and disharmony. The employer and employee are discontented with each other, the teacher and the taught, husband and wife, etc. Do you think that this state of affairs will continue? Certainly this does not represent the Ramarajya as envisaged by Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of our nation. Kindly enlighten.*

(1) If peace, happiness and joy are paramount social ends, we must confess that all experiments made in modern times to secure them have failed. Economic progress, democracy, socialism, communism were all in their time proclaimed as panaceas for all human evils, and as steps which would lead to peace, happiness and joy. They have all failed. The twentieth century has been the most murderous period of human history, full of hate, distrust, conflict, fear and unhappiness. Why has this happened? Because according to the concept of modern cultures of the West only what is presented through the senses matters and therefore the west has pitched its faith only on materialistic advance.

(2) The needs and aims of modern social movements are mainly material; they seek self-fulfilment through a maximum satisfaction of these needs and aims. In effect, all these efforts have concentrated on bringing happiness through a modification of the externals. This is not Ramarajya of Gandhiji's conception.

(3) The concept for which Gandhiji stood has not been accepted by our country. The needs and ends of Ramarajya were mainly spiritual, that is changing the nature of man in the light of Truth, and Non-Violence. Their satisfaction of such needs and aims was its highest objective. This was to be secured:

First, by reducing the material needs to the minimum consistent with mental, moral and physical efficiency; and Secondly, by modifying the social and cultural conditions to serve spiritual ends.

During the last few years we have for all practical purposes given up the concept of Gandhiji.

499: *Why do people chime the bells that are hung in Hindu temples?*

Temple bells are rung as an act of worship. When they are so rung, their sound gets woven into our soul and awakens, by association, the slumbering purity in our heart and lifts it towards God.

500: *Why has Rajaji left Uttarakanda in his book on Ramayana?*

Many scholars consider the *Uttarakanda* to be a later addition to Valmiki's original 'Ramayana'. Perhaps that may be the reason. Why not ask Rajaji himself?

November 30, 1958

501: *Is it possible for the establishment of "world peace" at this present age if the countries like Russia and America continue to invent much more powerful and harmful atomic weapons?*

World peace will not be established till we change our personality, first, by stabilising our aspirations so as to express truth and love, secondly, by developing faith in God. Mere changing externals will never change the personality nor will it stop conflict and hatred and fear which breed war.

502: *Why do Hindus refuse to convert people from other religions,—as do Christianity and Islam,—back to Hinduism as other people are doing?*

This is the narrowness which descended on Hinduism.

When trying to defend itself against aggressive religions, it had to develop narrow rigidity. Hindu Shastras enjoin *samskars* for conversion and some Smriti expressly sanctions reconversion of converts to other religions by appropriate ritual. Dynamic Hinduism has never refused to convert followers of other religions though like some religions, it does not accept proselytising as a cardinal tenet. The Vedas say: "We shall make the whole world Arya."

503: *Will you kindly explain to me the theory of Grace? Is it the same as Kripa?*

Ishwara-kripa is the word of nearest significance to Grace. When a human being by experience or discipline becomes ripe for the favour of God, He lifts him out of his normal self and sets him on a higher path of self-fulfilment.

504: *What is the meaning of the Vedantic saying "Brahman is real, the Universe is unreal"?*

According to the Advaita school Brahman alone has real existence and the Universe though it appears to exist really does not exist. Hence the existence of the universe is empirical, not real and is called *Vyavaharika Sat*. Existence is the nature of the Brahman alone.

505: *Why Rama mantra is called Taraka mantra?*

It is stated in *Kashikhanda* that Lord Vishvanatha comes to the individual at the time of death and initiates the *Rama-nama* in his ear and the soul thereupon attains *moksha* and never turns to the mundane world. The meaning of *Taraka* is that which enables a soul to cross the ocean of *samsara*. Hence, Rama-mantra is called *Taraka-mantra*.

506: *The Bhagavad Gita teaches us that agriculture, cattle-breeding and business are the natural duties of Vaishyas and personal service of Shudras.*

Is it practicable in this modern age?

This verse enunciates an eternal division between human temperaments:

(i) The Brahman temperament which yearns for Light, Calmness, Truth, Bliss and Beauty and tends to develop inner *Shanti*, wide calm.

(ii) The Kshatriya temperament which yearns to be active and acquire strength and glory and tends to admire heroism.

(iii) The Vaishya temperament which wants to acquire possessions at any cost and tends to admire wealth and pomp. They might have cared for fields and cattle in one age; now they prefer motor cars to horses, and industry to agriculture.

(iv) The Shudra temperament, which wants to be dependent on someone and wants security at all costs. They tend to admire, flatter, and grovel before their masters, who may have been slave owners, and kings once, and are called business magnates and political leaders in this age.

507: *Has Mass Prayer as propounded by Gandhiji or the Congregational Prayer as is in vogue in Christian churches any sanction of Hindu religious text?*

Yes. From the earliest times Vedic hymns have to be chanted by assemblies of Brahmans. *Stavan* and *kirtana*, prescribed by the *Gita* and the *Bhakti Sutra*, are always to be performed by several people joining together: e.g. *satatam kirtayanto mam* (Gita, IX-14) and *stuvanti twam stutibhih pushkalabhih* (Gita, XI-21).

508: *In what ways do Religion and Mythology differ in defining the subject of Dharma?*

From a religious point of view, Dharma implies (1) a faith in God; (2) a faith that a human being is the essence of God; (3) a faith that the Moral Order is supreme; (4) a faith that by dedicating oneself to God one can find self-

fulfilment. Mythology consists of ancient narratives, symbolising the way in which Dharma works.

509: *What exactly is meant by calling India a secular State? In what way is it different from other countries? If there is no difference, why should it be particularised in the above manner?*

India is a Secular State inasmuch as there is no State religion and every person is free to follow his own religion and his freedom is protected by the Constitution. On the other hand, England, though secular in practice, has a State religion. It is therefore not a Secular State.

Secular State does not mean a godless State.

December 14, 1958

510: *Is there any reference in the Puranas about the language in which Ravana of Ceylon spoke to Sitamata of North India?*

If the evidence of *Ramayana* of Valmiki is correct, Sanskrit was the common language spoken by the Rakshasas and men; even the Vanaras were well-versed in it. At least there is no indication of interpreters having been employed.

511: *How many orders of Sannyasa are there? In what ways they essentially differ?*

There are four different classes of sannyasins: Kuticaka, Bahudaka, Hamsa and Paramahamsa, according to *Mahabharata, Anusarana Parva* 141, 89. Two more are added by *Sannyasopanisad* (13), namely, *turiyatita* and *avadhuta*.

512: *What is 'Mimamsa' and what is the difference between 'Purva Mimamsa' and 'Uttara Mimamsa' of which I hear so much from Pandits?*

Purva Mimamsa is concerned with the discussions as regards the correct interpretation of the *Purvabhaga* of the

Vedas consisting of *Samhitas* and the *Brahmanas* which prescribe sacrifices and other sacred rituals. *Uttara Mimamsa*—that is, the Upanishads—is concerned with a similar interpretation of the *Uttara bhaga* of the Vedas on a philosophical basis.

513: *There is a belief that Draupadi used to pass through a fire ordeal after a year's life with each of her five husbands in order to purify her physically, psychically and spiritually. Do you know of any Puranic authority supporting this belief?*

The *Mahabharata* does not mention it. No other authoritative source is known to me for this belief.

514: *What is the significance of the four hands of Lord Vishnu and emblems: Sankha, Chakra, Gada and Padma?*

I have no idea; but works on Iconography such as Gopinath Rao's may be helpful.

515: *Can you tell me why Vibhishana abdicated his functions and allowed others to usurp them?*

The question is not clear. Vibhishana left Ravana because he found that Ravana was acting in defiance of political considerations as well as moral, religious and spiritual codes.

516: *The Vedic mantras do not refer to the custom of tying the 'mangala sutra' round the bride's neck but only refer to Panigrahana, Saptapadi and Pravesha Homa. Why and when did the former custom start? Is there any reference in the literature to them?*

The custom is post-Vedic. The Dharmasutras do not mention it, though the commentators describe it. It has evidently a popular origin, later sanctioned by the Dharmashastras. For references, see Kane, *History of Dharmashastras*, Vol. II p. 537.

517: *Can you let me know if it was the poet Bharavi or Bana who wanted to kill his father when the latter abused him in the presence of others?*

No; this seems to be a fanciful tradition based upon some word or words in the poets' composition. But I am not aware of it.

518: *In that famous Gita verse, 'Chaturvarnyam Maya Srishtam' two words occur viz., 'Guna' and 'Karma.' Do these relate to the past or present birth?*

'Guna' and 'Karma' refer to the present birth, but both of them depend on the Karma in the previous birth.

519: *I have a feeling that in the Ramayana the statement that Hanuman's tail was set fire to has a yogic significance. The use of the word 'Udghata' in the text suggests the rising of Kundalini Power. Do you agree?*

No, the *Ramayana* is an epic and it is not right to read references to fully developed yogic technicalities in its words.

520: *What is the moral of the story of Ramayana?*

Truth triumphs.

521: *Can you tell me in a nutshell what advice did Krishna give to Arjuna in the Mahabharata?*

'Be My Instrument, O Arjuna' *Nimitta matrum bhava savyasachi.*

522: *How far is it true that Lord Krishna was having 16,000 wives?*

How do I know?

523: *Can you explain to me the significance of the ten avatars of Lord Vishnu?*

Evidently they indicate the progress of life on the globe,

and the fact that whenever there is *adharma* God descends on earth to rescue *dharma*.

524: *Please advise me as to how to stop worrying and start living.*

Pray regularly; read your scripture daily; try to keep the presence of God before you by *dhyana* and practise Truth and Love.

December 28, 1958

525: *Can you tell me how to remedy mental corruption?*

Corruption implies dishonesty in word, thought and deed. Sit down every morning and after a little prayer, close your eyes and try to be in the living presence of God which is Truth and Love. Then look into your heart, scrutinise your action and try to find how you have been dishonest. And offer your egoistic self to God—that is, *mayi arpita mano buddhi*, and make amends for your dishonest conduct.

526: (i) *If the theory of transmigration of soul is believed, then how is it that we do not remember the past lives?* (ii) *Secondly, the sole aim of religion is to seek pleasure and avoid pain. Would it not be better for us to search for pleasure in the present without caring for the future?*

(i) You don't remember your past life because the physical apparatus of your mind clouds the associations impressed upon the soul when it was in another body. But by Yoga it is possible to recapture impressions. I have seen only one case where a child of three or four years exactly remembered the house of her parents of her last birth and recognised the parents when she came across them. The little enquiry I could make led me to think that it was a genuine case.

(ii) Your question is based on a confusion of ideas. If you eat, drink and be merry, you may have pleasure, but

pain and unhappiness are sure to follow. What religion gives is not pleasure of the senses but the pure joy of having fulfilled your aspirations.

527: *People get cured of diseases like jaundice, muscular pains and also snake-bite and scorpion-bite by means of uttering mantras. Can you explain how that happens?*

By and large, most ailments follow from a state of mind. Sometimes even an ailment, physical in its origin, has a mental element. The *mantras*, if you have faith in them, mobilise the powers of the subconscious and cure the mental condition and thereby enable the body to recover from the ailment by its own recuperative powers. A large number of faith-cures are real cures and are of this order.

528: *Please let me know the significance of the following words which occur in your novel Bhagawan Parashurama: 'Bhrigu-kaccha' and 'Kankanas'? Are there any books on the latter?*

Bhrigu-kaccha was corrupted by the Greeks into Barugaza, and by the Muslims into Bhadoch. It is known by the name of Bharuch (Anglicised Broach). It is a town on the Narmada about 200 miles north of Bombay.

Kankanas from the Puranas appear to be a tribe of early Aryans settled to the south of Bhrigu-kaccha and have given their name to what is called Konkan now.

529: *The Gita (II-71) says: "That man attains peace who abandoning all desires moves about without longing, without the sense of mine and without egoism." But there is also the conception that it is cowardly to renounce life. How to explain these contradictions in these two accepted statements?*

The Gita does not ask you to renounce life. It wants you very much to live in the struggle of life, but with peace within, performing acts without a desire for their fruits and only

as offerings to God. The contradiction arises from your not appreciating the true meaning of the verse.

530: *Can you recommend to me any book in English on the subject of reincarnation? May I know whether you believe in reincarnation and whether Westerners believe in it?*

Any English translation of the *Gita* or any history of Indian philosophy will give you an idea of incarnation. As you are a Hindu, anyone of your elders will tell you what it is.

I believe in reincarnation. Many thoughtful men believe that the Karma theory alone can truly explain the inequality of temperament and circumstances which we see in men.

531: *How to secure emotional integration of the individual? Please suggest some ways and means.*

Humility, Prayer, *japa*, trying to live in the presence of God and offering all your actions to Him.

532: *If it is true that the time of one's death is fixed why should people spend a lot of money on treatment?*

Because they don't know when the fixed time is to arrive.

533: *Do you really believe that our ancestors believed in the existence of the three worlds of 'Swarga,' 'Martya' and 'Patala,' the Seven Seas and supermen like 'Sura' and 'Asura'? If you think that they are the result of their prolific imagination, why are they absent in the earliest history?*

I don't understand your question. Please make it specific. Who says that 'Swarga,' 'Martya' etc., were absent from what you call 'earliest history'? What is the 'earliest history'? How do you know they were 'absent'?

January 11, 1959

534: *What is the difference between Rural Industrialisa-*

tion and Khadi and Village Industries Board? What are their functions?

Rural industrialisation might mean setting up of industries in the village which may be run by machines and electricity. Khadi and village industries are predominantly hand-worked. The Board is in charge of the latter.

535: *Do you believe in 'Paraloka vidya' or talking with dead persons?*

I have seen persons who have been dead, purporting to give messages through a living medium. I have also come across the very rare phenomenon of *siddhas* appearing before a man. These occurrences belong to a field where it is very difficult to explain things by the natural laws as we find them in ordinary life.

536: *Can you tell me about the rules of 'Pranayam' so that I can realise peace of mind?*

The best thing is to consult Swami Kunalayananda of the Kaivalyadham, Chowpatty. The essence of Pranayam is to have measured intake, retention, out-take, and suspension of breath for a fixed period of time. By practice these movements of the breath become rhythmic when they help to control emotions and passions and lead to *siddhis*.

537: *Do you agree that Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Gautama Buddha are incarnations of God? If so, why do their preachings differ in essential respects?*

Buddha is an *avatar*. I don't know whether Ramakrishna is one. Anyway God descends on earth to remove *adharma* whenever it becomes rampant. The teachings therefore differ according to the needs of the period when the Descent takes place.

538 *May I know the difference between religion and morality?*

Religion is the way by which you stabilise your fundamental aspirations and become God-minded and through which you ultimately live in God by surrender. Morality is the manner in which you conform to the Law of Moral Causation, that is, you accept Truth, Non-violence, Non-stealing, Non-waste, Non-possession as the rule of life.

539: (i) *According to you, who wrote the Vedas and when were they written in India or at any other place?*

(ii) *Were the monkeys in the army of Rama the same as are found to-day?*

(iii) *How do you explain the 'Rakshasa' class?*

The Vedas were visualized by Rishis inspired by God. That is why they are called *mantra-drishtas*, that is, those who saw the *mantras*.

I don't think the Vanaras of the *Ramayana* were monkeys as we see them around us. Don't forget that Hanuman was learned even in the Vedas. They must have been men of a specially different race, maybe they were the men who occupied the southern peninsula over two thousand years ago or their predecessors.

Rakshasas were wicked men who committed atrocities on men.

540: (i) *'Ahimsa' is proclaimed to be a great Dharma but the butcher kills many animals each day as part of his business. Do you think he is doing adharmas?*

(ii) *What is 'Parakaya Pravesha'? Are there any persons who practise it nowadays?*

(i) Of course, he is.

(ii) It means your leaving body behind and entering into another's body. I don't know of any person who could do it.

541: *What are your reasons for and against making Hinduism attempt conversion and reconversion?*

Hinduism has never discarded conversion, but it has never

accepted it as a cardinal tenet. It is the duty of Hinduism to convert those who honestly come to believe in it or those who have been converted by force, fraud or bribe.

542: *Have you any convincing proof that Dravidians were different from Aryans?*

Aryans and Dravidian races have been mixed for centuries and there is no pure Aryan or pure Dravidian in the country.

543: *If Vibhishana is a 'Chiranjivi' where is he now? Can you tell me?*

If by 'Chiranjivi' you mean 'immortal', I don't think Vibhishana has been an immortal unless it be through Valmiki's immortal work.

544: *If the suffering of a person is on account of his past Karma, why should we take pains to remove any suffering at all?*

Because the effects of past Karma have to be cured.

545: *If both Rama and Krishna are Avatars of God, how do you account for Rama observing Ekapatnivrata and Krishna having many wives?*

Each *Avatara*, i.e. Descent, is for the age in which it arrives. If all *Avataras* behaved in the same way, there would be no need for more than one *Avatara*.

January 25, 1959

546: *What is the difference between a dictator State and a totalitarian State?*

(1) A totalitarian State controls and regiment the lives of its subjects. The Government manages almost the whole economic life: production, distribution and consumption. It also controls the family and the marriage relationships; the religious, educational, recreational, military and other acti-

vities and relationships. All the relationships are prescribed for the citizens or the subjects by the Government; for instance, what kind of occupation an individual may enter; what, where and when to work; where to live; what to eat, wear, use; what to believe; what rank or position to hold; what to think and say; what to approve or disapprove; what to learn; whether to marry or not, and if to marry, whom, where, and at what age; how many children to have; which of these children to allow to live and which to expose to death. It is a negation of human dignity and all higher values.

(2) Dictatorship is the concentration of political power in the hands of a single person like an emperor or a dictator, as during the days of ancient Rome, or the empires of the two Napoleons or it may be in the hands of a military junta as in Egypt or Pakistan. A dictator State, however, does not interfere with the life of the people in the way that a totalitarian State does.

(3) A dictatorship comes into existence because of threatened anarchy, or in times of war or to introduce efficiency or to root out corruption, where no incorruptible democratic leadership is available. There are instances in history where a nation has preferred an emperor or a dictator to being governed by corrupt and quarrelling politicians.

(4) Totalitarianism is more ruthless; it eliminates everything that comes in the way of its power, be it religion, science, art, ethics or law. Its aim is not to permit any other centre to exercise influence over the people. As soon as a faction seizes power and establishes totalitarian rule it abrogates or overrides all laws which are inconvenient to it and permits no rule of law assuming the control of all sectors of life. It prohibits moral or scientific beliefs, theories and opinions that go counter to it. It negatives the right to religious freedom and wants to suppress religion, for devotion to God is dangerous to its own claim to total loyalty. It tries to create its own ideology and utilises the educational system to indoctrinate the youth with it. It silences all op-

ponents through imposition of (a) penalties like imprisonment, death, or unlimited detention in 'slave camps,' (b) censorship and withholding from the public all means of communication like the press, radio, school or public assembly. Finally it uses all means of communication exclusively for propagating its ideological doctrines and governmental policies. Such a government denies sanctity to any value—religious, moral, scientific, aesthetic or cultural—other than its own fiat.

547: *Should one stick to a vow made (a) under certain circumstances or (b) to meet a certain situation, when the same have altered and a different course of action is called for?*

It is easy to take vows, but it is difficult to keep them under all circumstances. Vows, however, are good to prevent us from lapsing into error. At the same time, if we take a vow and then go on giving it up, it is not a vow at all, but a proof of our fickleness. The best thing would be to make solemn resolutions, and not to take a vow; but if we take a vow, we should stick to it at all costs. Otherwise vows will lose their sanctity.

548: *I want to study Law and become a lawyer but my parents ask me to look after the property from which a large income is obtained. What shall I do?*

You can do both. Law will help you to look after your property.

February 8, 1959

549: *What in your opinion is the essence of Hindu religion?*

The essence of Hindu religion is as follows:

(1) God lives in man and could become manifest by transmuting attachment, wrath and fear inherent in our minds which impose limitations on the divine essence in us.

(2) Non-violence, love, truth, non-stealing or absolute honesty, non-waste and sublimation, non-possession are the ways through which the Moral Order operates in the universe.

(3) God should be a living presence in our life by such steps as are congenial to us by absolute identity with Him; by Yoga; by offering all our actions to Him—by actions, uninspired by the fruits thereof. If these are difficult by *japa*, *swadhyaya*, *puja*, *yatra*, rituals, by anything which reminds us of Him.

(4) All religions are the ways to the same God and highest self-fulfilment is 'to see Him' in all and all in Him.

(5) The true self-fulfilment lies in making ceaseless efforts to translate Moral Order and faith in God into our actions.

550: *There appears to be a belief that Mohammad of Ghazni did not destroy the temple of Somnath. May I have your comment on this?*

The belief is unfounded. All historians are agreed that he burnt down the temple in A.D. 1024. While excavating the site, under my direction, we came to an underground temple which bore all the traces of having been destroyed and burnt.

February 22, 1959

551: *Can you give me an idea of the date of the Vedas and the Smritis? Were they written by anybody?*

(1) Vedas, it is believed, appeared before ancient Rishis. In their present form they appear to have been composed by Rishis some time between 2500 B.C. and 1500 B.C. and edited in their present form between 1500 B.C. and 1000 B.C. an act which is attributed not wrongly to Krishna Dvaipayana Veda Vyas.

(2) There are numerous Smritis and their age varies from Smriti to Smriti.

552: *How did religion start and why should man alone need it?*

(A) Religion started when man, first developing from the animal stage, began to possess an articulate thinking mind, a conscience, and a glimpse of the vast grandeur of the universe, and began to feel the aspirations towards Truth, Love, Beauty and Immortality.

(B) Man alone has it and not animals, because he has developed a higher mind, a conscience and spiritual aspirations.

553: *Do you really think it possible that one could lecture on philosophy in the middle of war in the manner Sri Krishna is said to have done to Arjuna?*

Sri Krishna talked to Arjuna on the battle-field; it must have been in a few words. But the terrific impact of the teaching on Vyasa's mind when he first narrated the incident to Vaishampayana must have led him to expatiate them. Upon this, age after age, comments were made till the *Gita* assumed its present shape.

554: *Can you recommend me a book on the subject of Hindu marriages?*

Why not read *Grihya Sutra's* chapter on marriages? Any old book on Hindu Law will give you some idea of Hindu marriages.

555: *Why did Nagarjuna, the leader of Buddhism, practise idol-worship contrary to the sutras of Buddha?*

So far as I know idolatry is not considered a sin, either in Hinduism or in Buddhism.

556: *Do you think that the conquest by man of nature has contributed to the benefit of mankind?*

It has contributed to the rise of the complex civilization, and enabled man to live in greater comfort. His intelli-

gence has also developed progressively with every important conquest of nature. The moral qualities have not improved necessarily by these conquests but they have been articulate. Improved means of communication have also added to the possibility of awakening and developing the conscience and spirituality among an increasingly widening circle of men. This also has led to the growth of a powerful public to combat anti-social and anti-religious propaganda.

557: *I am a student of Zoology. In the course of my studies I have to dissect various animals. Now under the circumstance how can I practise Ahimsa? Secondly, in allopathic medicines preparations from animal sources are used. For the protection of man, animals have to be killed. How to reconcile these?*

Ahimsa, in the sense of non-killing is almost impossible to practise. But Ahimsa as Sri Krishna teaches is not non-killing: it means the state of mind, when hatred, anger, malice, and envy are transmuted into love by purifying and training our animal instincts.

558: *Is there any tacit agreement between body and soul?*

If they disagree, the soul leaves the body and death follows.

559: *Can we see God with our mortal eyes?*

I think we can, if we go through the necessary discipline and learn to destroy egoism.

560: *Does the theory of past births answer to logic? Can you quote any substantial and tangible instances?*

In my opinion, it is the only theory which can logically explain the inequalities of birth and ups and downs of life. I have seen only one clear case of a child who was aware of

its previous birth and recognised the parents of its previous birth. The *Bhṛigu Samhitas* written centuries ago give the present-day life of an individual in detail. Why should their description of the past and future be disbelieved? .

561: *It is said that man's soul after releasing from the corporeal mould, if sullied, hovers round the astral plane. The Hindu scriptures maintain that such parted souls re-incarnate. Will you explain?*

I don't believe that souls hover about in the astral or spirit world. It may be that before being reborn they may be passing through some intermediate stages. But I am not sure.

562: *How is it that the red colour has come to represent danger? Why not other colours?*

I suppose it is so distinctive that men can make no mistake about its being recognised. It may be that the colour of blood might have something to do with it. I plead ignorance.

563: *I am a bad boy. How can I repent and change myself?*

You are not a bad boy because you have a desire to change yourself. Are you serious about changing? Then read a few verses of the *Bhagavad Gita* every day. Pray to God to give you the strength to change. Treat your parents and teachers as gods. And try to note down every day what mistakes you have committed. And you will change faster than you think you can.

March 8, 1959

564: *You write often that we should try to become instruments of God in worldly affairs. This appears difficult. For instance, if I have to recover my lost property, I have*

to proceed legally and this causes pain to the other. How in this case can I myself be an instrument of God?

The Gita says perfection in action is the best form of Yoga. If I do not proceed against the party who owes me, in the proper manner, how do I become entitled to Yoga?

There is no contradiction between what the *Gita* says and what I have written. In reality what I have been stating on this point flows from the *Gita*.

We have to aim at perfection in action—*yogah karmasu kaushalam*. But what is 'perfection in action'? To be perfect, my action must be *swakarma*, that is, an action indicated by my *swabhava*, that is, temperament, aptitudes and aspirations. To do that *swakarma* even at the cost of life is my *swadharma*, my mission in life.

In practice, whatever action I feel called upon to do, must be performed, however trivial or worldly it may be. But it should not be inspired by attachment, wrath or fear; then it would not be *swadharma*.

Now how am I to find out that the action which I am going to perform is *swadharma*? It is very difficult to find this out because attachment, wrath and fear are sure to mislead me if I have no test to apply.

The test applied is twofold: (a) Am I doing this as an offering to God in humility? (b) Am I doing it to the best of my ability? If I were to apply these tests to all my actions, I must learn to surrender myself to God and try to become His instrument. My action cannot approach perfection unless I do it as an humble instrument of God. You see, the conflict which you find is imaginary.

565: *In the light of the present communal hatred of the Brahmins by the Dravida Kazhagam, what is your advice to the Brahmins of the South?*

First, the Brahmins should not lose heart; the present dislike is a passing phase. It would be overcome only when the Brahmins recapture their old spirit of dedication in in-

dividual life by steadfastly adhering to the great values for which this caste once stood.

566: *What is the place of 'Saraswati' in the Puranas and in our life?*

Saraswati, in Vedic times, was the sacred river on the banks of which the Vedic Rishis lived and spent their life in pursuit of knowledge, devotion and self-realization. When the river disappeared Saraswati was looked upon as the Goddess of learning. To us she is the living embodiment of purity, beauty and light. Her daily worship would lead us to keep these qualities burning bright. If modern teachers worshipped Saraswati in this spirit instead of sighing for promotions and examinership, India would be able to recapture its position as the home of knowledge.

567: *My father always argues with my mother that he wants to renounce this world by leaving our family and going to the Himalayas. I disapproved of it saying that he could renounce the world even where he was by cutting all his desires and aspirations of material things and realise the spirit of penance. Do you agree with me?*

It is easy for you to talk of cutting off his desires. But it is a difficult thing to do. It requires great strength of mind to attain complete mastery while leading a normal life.

One may want to renounce life because he is badly treated by life and is not able to face it. Another may not get peace and would like to find it in solitude. A third may want to get away because no one genuinely cares for him. A fourth may find himself too weak to conquer attachment, wrath and fear while surrounded by worldly attractions or worries.

It is easy for you to ask your father not to renounce life; but, have you tried to understand his purpose in renouncing life? Have you made it possible for him to achieve his purpose while he is with you?

568: *I think that in so far as Sri Rama did not give Sita a chance to refute the allegations against her and in sending her into exile, he was undemocratic. How do you reconcile Rama's conduct?*

What is democratic and what is not? Sri Ramachandra sent away Sita, not because he believed that she acted wrongly. He sent her away because he held it his duty not to create the impression on his subjects that he, a king, was harbouring a wife who might have gone wrong. Those who occupy high office have to see that not only what they do is right, but that what they do is recognised by the people as right. Much more would the principle be held applicable to Sri Ramachandra who was accepted by the people as a divinity, who embodied the highest royal virtue.

569: *What is your opinion about Sri Aurobindo as a great poet?*

I hold Sri Aurobindo in the highest veneration, as a patriot, as a sage, as a thinker and as a mystic. His poetic powers were placed at the disposal of his higher mission to teach men how to reach divinity. Naturally, therefore, he would not come into the category of those poets to whom poetry is but the lark's spontaneous song.

March 22, 1959

570: *If high thinking and simple living should lead one to happiness, what happens to the man of mediocrity who wants to take to simple life?*

High thinking does not mean thinking in a learned way. It means thinking in terms of love, beauty, truth, light, in short, of God. Every man can think like that. The discipline of the *Bhagavad Gita* for instance is not for high intellectuals alone. It is for all.

571: *Is there any mention in the Vedas that we should*

worship God and can you give me a scientific description of God?

(1) Yes, there is.

(2) It is a tall order. What do you call scientific description? If scientific description means the description of a laboratory test, the laboratory as regards God can only be your mind and spirit, in which you must learn to try experiments by the methods prescribed by those who have found God.

If science implies truth, God is Truth; for nothing is more real to men than God, if they care to see it. But your question is wholly wrong. Science is the knowledge of what can be tested by senses; God comes only when you develop instruments of higher knowledge which transcend the senses.

April 5, 1959

572: People say that man cannot become perfect without marriage. Then can we call great men like Christ and the Acharyas imperfect men?

It is not a question of perfection. Normally man, however highly gifted, can find neither happiness nor self-fulfilment without a wife; he can only find perfection in the company of a loving, loyal wife. But there are extraordinary men, who have by birth or discipline so transcended the individual and social needs that they can find both happiness and self-fulfilment without personal ties of a wife and family. But such men are rare.

573: Is it possible for Purusha and Prakriti to have separate lives?

No. That is why even when they are given separate forms—Parvati and Parameswara—they are treated as one and indivisible.

574: Our Union is presently being seized of the vital

question of the medium of instruction in our institution and we would like to have your frank and considered views on this important and delicate issue, to enable us to act in the best interests of the Parsee students of the institution.

If I were you, I would solve the language problem in this way:

1. The mother tongue should be the exclusive medium up to Standard VII (old 3rd Standard) and Hindi and English as the second languages from the Vth Standard, if not from the beginning.

2. From Standard VII, though the general medium should be Gujarati, English should be progressively introduced as the subsidiary medium in subjects like English, History and Civics. Without such a subsidiary medium, the students will never acquire the capacity to speak, understand or write English.

3. It would be a mistake for schools, except in the case of specialised schools, to leave out Gujarati as the medium, for as things are, an educated person who does not speak and write his mother tongue well, is going to suffer for want of knowledge of the basic media for intercourse in his own life.

4. At the same time, Hindi is necessary, for in twenty-five years it will be the national language of India.

5. Again, at the same time, when the student goes up to S.S.C. he must have sufficient command of English to enable him to master higher learning, which in many subjects will have to be in English for a long time to come.

6. Parsees have to be an integral part of Indian society and if they continue, as some of them wish to, to keep to English as their only medium, they will suffer in the long run, for then they will form an isolated small island of people to whom a foreign language will be the home medium (the mother tongue being a mixed dialect). In consequence, they stand the danger of being socially isolated and economically handicapped.

575: *I am amazed that Tara and Ahalya are cited as examples of Pativrata. Can you explain this?*

I can't be definite, but I think the underlying idea is this: both Ahalya and Tara were devoted to their husbands; their actual acts were lapses through ignorance or compulsion. And they went through the appropriate penance, and their minds being pure, they regained their status.

576: *How many Hindu holidays are given in Pakistan?*

Why not ask the High Commissioner of Pakistan in Delhi?

April 19, 1959

577: *Why should anyone help a sufferer if he is destined to reap the consequences of his past deeds?*

But you have to prepare for the next birth, and if you are hard-hearted and cruel in this life, you will reap the crop of unhappiness in this life and the next. Kindliness, love, service and compassion are effective in themselves for your own good.

578: *Can Communism take deep roots in India?*

I am convinced it will not.

579: *The six-point code of conduct laid down by the Congress High Command includes inter-caste marriages. Don't you think that it goes against the Gita teaching on Varnasrama Dharma?*

Sri Krishna says:

Chaturvarnyam maya srishtam guna karma vibhagasah. 'I have devised the fourfold order of society according to the division of innate qualities and the sort of actions one performs.' According to the *Gita*, whatever the heredity, the man with a *sattwic* mind, that is, he who seeks light and peace and acquires self-control, is a Brahmana; the man with a *rajasic* mind with a *sattwic* base, that is, he who is active

and of ambitious temperament and seeks glory but has aspiring propensities, is a *Kshatriya*; the man who wants and acquires possession merely to enjoy them is a *Vaishya* and has a *rajasic* temperament with a *tamasic* base; and the man who is a *tamasic* in temperament, who is dull, parasitical, stagnant, is a *Shudra*. These temperaments have very little to do with heredity, though no doubt the family influence on a man might, in quite a few cases, influence the temperament.

580: *What do you think, in a nutshell, of the teachings of (a) Ramayana and (b) Mahabharata?*

They lead you out of your sordid self and put you on a path which will lead you to self-realization, that is, a life of Truth, Beauty and Love.

581: *It is possible to believe the existence of a Supreme Power—"The God"; but how to believe in "Past and Future Births"?*

If you believe in God, then, unless He is unjust, there must be some reason why one is born in happy circumstances and the other in poverty; why one has a noble temperament and the other a wicked; why one gets all he wants and the other fails to get them. Karma theory alone provides the appropriate explanation. These disparities are the results of our own deeds in past births.

May 3, 1959

582: *Will you please suggest a path to get natural freedom from lust?*

I think by lust you mean the sex-instinct. Here is the answer:

(1) Sublimate your sex-instinct and develop intense love for God and let your self float in the *bhakti* of the Gopi.

(2) If you cannot do that, begin to love your family, your friends and extend its scope to the whole mankind.

(3) If not—and I tell you the ways shown in paras (1) and (2) are difficult unless you receive the grace of God,—marry a decent, normal girl, love her as yourself by believing her to be a goddess, enjoy married life with restraint and wisdom by fusing ardent sex life with love for her and the children. There is no other way to secure legitimate freedom from the sex instinct.

583: *I read in Rajaji's Ramakrishna Upanishad that those who thirst after God will not go seeking new religious beliefs because their own religion seems contaminated, nor will they seek to find new religion for themselves. If this is true, why had the Buddha gone to the forest, spent seven years in meditation and finally tried to found a new religion?*

Lord Buddha did not seek a new religion. The aim of the Hindu religion, in which he was born, was to find a way to end human misery. For years Sakya Muni walked in the footsteps of the earlier masters. He found useful only one of the ways of Dharma as was taught in the *Upanishads* and the *Gita*.

Buddha never claimed to found a new religion. His was only a way. His followers founded a sect on his teaching. Later generations called it a new religion. It was not what He said He had done.

584: *How to become a successful orator?*

(1) You must study hard to acquire mastery over a language. Then study the great orators of the world, analyse them, try to find how they used words to convince or to move people.

(2) Learn to think coherently and logically. Write out model speeches. Cram some of them. Learn to speak distinctly, correctly and effectively before your glass. Finally try the effects of your speeches on smaller audiences. Acquire an attractive mannerism and a good voice which can

be modulated to suit different occasions. Then plunge into large-scale experiments.

(3) Study the ways in which the great orators acquired their power. Oratory is not a gift with which you are born. It is a hard-won acquisition.

585: *Why does Hinduism not allow non-Hindus to become Hindus? Are there any restrictions laid down in the Puranas, etc?*

It is a mistaken notion, which sprang among us in mediæval times that non-Hindus cannot become Hindus. Shastras like *Devala Smṛiti* enjoin reconversion from other religions and prescribe rituals. The Vedas have said, 'Make the whole world Arya!'

586: *What do you think of Vinobaji's Gramdan Movement?*

Just as Gandhiji mobilised the spiritual impulse of *ahimsa* (Non-violence), Vinobaji is trying to mobilise the spiritual impulse of *aparigraha* (Non-possession). Vinobaji, through *gramdan* movement, keeps our spiritual tradition alive, when it is being drowned by ego-driven solutions of economists and social scientists who want to change man without changing his nature.

May 17, 1959

587: *I read in an American book that Sankaracharya gave the first importance to experience, second to logic and only third to the Vedas. How is it then that the people equate his philosophy as being mainly supported by Vedas?*

I don't know on what grounds the American author of the book gives his opinion. You are an Indian. Why don't you read Sankaracharya's works yourself? To Sankaracharya, Vedas were the divine source of true knowledge. Logic only helps to convince that it is true, but the truth can only be tested as such by experience.

588: *Do you think that prayer is more important than action?*

Action without prayer is blind groping; with prayer it becomes honest and effective.

589: *People say that one should have faith in oneself. Don't you think it is selfish?*

Faith in oneself does not mean that you should work for selfish ends. It means

(1) that you should give up the habit of worrying, regretting and being afraid of consequences;

(2) that you should have courage to follow the plan of life made by you to the best of your ability;

(3) that you should be prepared to back up your solemn resolves with all you are worth, and in doing so, be indifferent to praise or blame;

(4) that you should have faith that God's will be done.

590: *How do you account for the clash of avatars of the same God as in the case of Rama and Parasurama? What is the meaning of the one disappearing and the other holding on?*

(1) God descends on earth to establish Dharma and remove *adharma* in each age. The needs and difficulties vary from age to age, and therefore, the *avatara* of each age has a different function to perform.

(2) Parashurama belonged to an age when the ruthless violence of kings had to be curbed. Sri Ramachandra came in an age when *adharma* had taken the shape of deceit and pride and what was required was the example of noble character.

(3) The clash of two *avatars* is a poetic representation that the needs of each age have to dominate the needs of the one gone by.

591: *There is a feeling that in present-day India the North dominates over the South in many fields, and that the South is neglected. Even in the Government news-reviews a longer time is taken by the North. Why this step-motherly treatment?*

The feeling is entirely unfounded. To-day at Delhi men from every State share power. Most of the news-reviews deal with what is happening in Government and the Parliament in New Delhi. Naturally, therefore, news comes from there, but the news has all-India character, not east, west, north or south.

592: *What is the easiest and cheapest way of becoming a political figure?*

There is no easy or cheap way to become a politician. It is a hard, hard way.

593: *What is your view regarding hydrogenated vegetable oils being used as substitutes for the familiar gingelly, cocoanut or groundnut oils? Some doctors say that the latter are any day better hygienically. Is that correct?*

I am not a doctor. I use vegetable oil. Try each one and take what suits you best.

May 30, 1959

594: *When did river Saraswati, which does not appear in the map, sink into the sands of Aryavarta? Please tell me if there is any authority.*

(1) During the Vedic times the Saraswati was a large river on the banks of which the great Rishis had their *ashrams*.

(2) Some time after the Vedic Age and during the lifetime of Veda Vyas, some changes appear to have taken place, like the following:

(a) The Saraswati as a flowing stream became a series of

lakes as in Kurukshetra. Her old bed is still there and is called Gaghar.

(b) Through some geological change the waters of the Saraswati which had flowed westward began to flow eastward and became the Jumuna which joined the Ganga.

595: *We read in Puranas that many of the Rishis went to the Himalayas to perform tapas. Would not they have succeeded if they had performed them in their own place, or even elsewhere?*

Have you ever tried, in your own place, to get rid of attachment, fear and wrath, anxiety and worry? If you have to get rid of them, you must train yourself in solitude, become *vivikta-sevi* as the Gita says, living in solitude. Then you can meditate better. Nobody became really great without seeking solitude.

But if at the same time you want to transcend the narrow bonds of life, you must go and live in solitary places full of natural beauty, where you can realise the immensity of the universe; where you can get the inspiration to be in tune with the Infinite, and where you may realise the Absolute.

June 14, 1959

596: *Is there any particular significance in the trunk of Ganapati curving up towards the left or right?*

As far as I know, it usually curves towards left; this is normal. But if it is found to curve to the right, this is considered specially auspicious, like the conch which has its opening on the right.

597: *Do you agree with the view that man by birth is a moral being and it is the environment that makes him otherwise?*

No.

598: *Will you please give me your notion on 'Indian Democracy'.*

Read the Preamble to the Indian Constitution.

599: *Do you think there are supernatural powers which can be tamed by magicians? If so, how do they accomplish it? Do you believe in witchcraft?*

(1) Magicians perform tricks. They have no supernatural powers.

(2) There are no supernatural powers. There are only powers which we do not think natural, because our knowledge of nature and spirit is limited. By Ycga and other practices one can acquire some control over the laws which govern various forces, which we think supernatural, but in reality are not.

(3) Some persons have native gifts by which they can operate these laws. When they do it for sinister purposes we call it witchcraft. But what is generally called witchcraft is again pure trickery imposing upon the credulity of man.

600: *Don't you think that the practice of birth control clashes with the duties of Brahma, the Creator?*

(1) No. 'Do not break the thread of progeny,' says the *Taittiriya Upanishad*. That does not mean that one should indulge in lusty procreateness and litter the country with weak and helpless population, who would be a burden on that country. (2) Birth control devices if used to remain absolutely childless or indulge in illicit pleasure would certainly destroy family life and go against the Moral Order and therefore would be sin.

601: *People venerate Sannyasis, because they are seeking Moksha, but I call them selfish, because they aspire to Moksha of their souls alone! What is your opinion?*

(1) What are you doing to save other souls that you should raise this question? (2) True *Sannyasis* are not selfish; for

they want to conquer attachment, wrath and fear and rise above sense attraction and egoism and in this way to attain Moksha. Whoever conquers his ego and rises above his animal instincts cannot be selfish, for the self (ego) would have been quieted if not rooted out.

(3) Once a person conquers his ego, he contacts God, that is absolute Love, Beauty and Truth. Then as the *Gita* says, 'They see Me in all and all in Me'! Can such a man be selfish? On the contrary, such persons radiate love and help others conquer egoism, which is the greatest service one can render to humanity.

602: *Do you think that India's great material prosperity helps the growth of our moral culture?*

If material prosperity is sought to be achieved without corresponding advance in our moral and spiritual stature, we would lose whatever cultural heritage we have. Unfortunately the so-called professors who think they know the secrets of material prosperity do not know this. Herein lies the greatest danger to our future.

June 28, 1959

603: *What is the object of celebrating festivals in temples?*

(1) Festivals are gatherings necessary for refreshing the spirit and enjoying life. Normally a man's life is filled with selfish or sordid activities; during festivals he rises above them and feels one with the crowd.

(2) When festivals are held in a temple the effect is more inspiring, for the joy is associated with worship; the vulgarities which flow from ordinary festivals like Holi cannot find a place. The company of devotees would also provide a group life of uplifted souls.

604: *Is there any Navy or Air Force College like Dehra Dun Military College? Please tell me about them.*

There are. Why don't you send inquiries to the Defence Ministry?

605: *Does Karma mean doing one's own duty?*

Ordinarily it is used for 'action' or work. Where the sense of duty has to be conveyed, some other word is used e.g. *svakarman*, one's own act, or *Karyam Karma*, 'the act which ought to be done'. Sometimes it is also used for duty.

606: *What is the difference between Karma and Fate?*

Karma implies that what befalls you is the result of something you had done or omitted to do in past life. You can also by self-discipline, *tapas*, and surrender, '*Iswar prani-dhan*', get out of the circle of cause and effect.

Fate implies that whatever you do is pre-determined and is changeless

607: *What is the difference between Itihasa and Kavya?*

Itihasa when used as Purana is a recital of ancient dynasties, their deeds and fortunes. When an episode of the Purana is made into an artistic creation, as in the cases of *Ramayana* and *Raghuvamsa*, it is a Kavya. The first is traditional history, the second is poetry.

608: *Why should God make innocent children, who commit no sin, suffer? Is it vicarious suffering for the parents as punishment for sins committed by them in their previous birth?*

Suffering is the result of Karma; of what one had done or omitted to do in past lives.

609: *Can you tell me whether the theory of transmigration of soul is real, or just an opinion?*

In my opinion it is real. Without it, you cannot make any sense out of what is life. And life is meaningful.

610: *Was Lord Ganesha married or not?*

According to some Puranas, Ganesha is married to Siddhi and Buddhi. Possibly Southern tradition is different, but I am not sure.

611: *Is not the Gita Govinda of Jaideo an erotic and allegorical poem of imagination? Why is it spoken of highly?*

It is not allegorical but erotic. It is a great piece of literature because of its style, lilt, imagery, and sentiment and lifts eroticism into a thing of rare beauty.

612: *What is your authority that Bhagawan Parashuram had a wife and child, as described in your novel of that name?*

(1) There is no authority to that effect in any Puranas or *Mahabharata*. I was not writing a summary of Puranic episodes about Parashuram. I was writing a novel. And as a novelist, I had to supply the human link. (2) Quite a few castes of Brahmans claim descent from Parashuram today; if the claim is correct, Parashuram must have had a wife.

(3) Do not forget that even ancient authors of Puranas supplied such human links.

613: *You have mentioned in your letter describing Hong-kong that Indian imitations of Americanism are hateful. Why don't Government ban them?*

How can Government ban social habits or habits acquired by imitation? If Government started banning all such habits it would cease to be democratic, and people will cease to be free.

614: *I am a chewing addict and my teeth have decayed. My friends advise me to stop the habit but in trying to do so I fear I may become an addict to smoking. Is there any*

way of leaving the first habit without recourse to the second evil?

Yes. Don't chew and don't smoke. Be firm, pray to God and even if you feel tempted, refuse to budge from your resolution.

July 12, 1959

615: *Can science and philosophy go together?*

Science is the search for the facts of nature; philosophy is the search for harmony in nature, or the truth in which nature has its being or for the ultimate Reality. Both can certainly coexist. Einstein, one of the greatest scientists, says: "It is a narrow spirit which limits knowledge to what could be tested by the senses."

616: *I saw a discrepancy in the Bhavan's Journal dated May 17: Dr. Ramaswami Aiyar writes that Sankar did not teach that the world was unreal or a figment. In the same issue Sri M. P. Pandit writes, 'Sankar preached that the world is unreal.' Will you please explain this discrepancy?*

Different scholars have understood Sankar differently. Anyway, in my view Sankar did not teach that the world was unreal; he taught that once a man realized the nature of Reality, the world would appear unreal; but so long as he is in and of the world, he has to treat it as a real world.

617: *How far could the legal profession and spiritual quest be reconciled?*

I don't think they are irreconcilable. If law is studied and practised in the spirit of Karma Yoga; it may by itself become a step in the spiritual progress. If, however, law is practised, not in pursuit of truth or justice, but only to get money or success for the client, they may be in conflict.

618: *Taking birth, living and dying—why does this*

eternal cycle go on indefinitely? What exactly is the purpose of man's creation in this world?

(1) This question has been asked again and again and has never received a satisfactory answer. It is the mystery of the Universe.

(2) The purpose of man's creation, as I understand it, is that he should develop himself, and shed his limitations of attachment, wrath and fear and become an instrument of God.

619: *I have got my own apprehensions regarding the outbreak of World War III in a struggle between the two World Forces, America and Russia. What is your opinion regarding the outbreak of World War III?*

I don't think the powers possessing nuclear weapons are likely to precipitate an atomic war. They will continue to oppose and frighten each other till either an equilibrium of cold war becomes the normal condition of life or man changes his nature.

620: *Parashurama showed his deep devotion unto his father by matricide. What sort of Dharma did he earn?*

Do not take these episodes literally. It only embodies the truth that a father's word is an irresistible mandate; that a mother's loyalty to the father should be above suspicion; and that a dutiful and noble son can help overcome a father's jealousy and mother's temporary lapse.

621: *I came here to study in this University. I am staying in my relative's house. For the past four months I did not go home which is in Madras. How to remedy my homesickness easily?*

By constantly thinking that you are studying hard so that some day you may provide a better home for your parents, wife and children. Think of your people who are undergoing any amount of sacrifice that you may study properly.

Also think that devotion to learning is the first duty of a man and that anything which comes in its way is weakness. Study the lives of those who have studied hard under difficult conditions.

622: *I firmly state to my friends that the great 'Ramayana' was written by Valmiki before and then only the story actually happened. Many do not agree. Can you say if I am incorrect or correct?*

Whatever the tradition, Valmiki, the incomparable poet, wrote an epic from the tradition which preserved the exploits of Sri Ramachandra.

623: *Is it possible to raise the economic level of the Indian people by co-operative farming?*

No, unless the farmers willingly and cheerfully take it up under the influence of an ideological urge. Under existing conditions it is not going to grow food, but is certainly going to ruin family-farming, destroy the rural structure, undermine family life, and bring in totalitarianism.

624: *Is there a continuity of life beyond the grave?*

There is.

625: *Sri Aurobindo had predicted the re-union of India and Pakistan. Do you think it will ever come?*

He did predict. I don't think it will come in my lifetime, nor perhaps in yours. I don't think it is worthwhile thinking about it.

626: *They say 'Love thine enemies'. They also say that 'Loving too much is bad'. Can you explain?*

When you love truly and wisely it is always good for you and others. When you love foolishly, as many parents do, without regard for the interest of the person loved, it is bad.

627: *Will you kindly help me in finding an educated girl to marry me?*

Do you think I am a marriage-broker?

July 26, 1959

628: *What is the difference between 'Intellect' and 'Mind'?*

Don't ask me dictionary questions. Why don't you buy one and look it up?

629: *Is dreamless sleep necessary or indispensable and how to achieve it?*

Such sleep is necessary for rest and refreshment. You can get it only if you train yourself to leave all your affairs to God.

630: *Our Hindu religion preaches Ahimsa; but the great sages are said to be seated on the tiger skin or deer skin. How to reconcile this?*

Ahimsa means conquest of hate, malice, repulsion, anger and distrust. It does not mean non-killing, otherwise you might have to give up eating lest you kill some germs.

Why don't you try a little Ahimsa instead of posing questions to show that everybody has been illogical?

631: *Do you welcome the formation of the Swatantra Party as announced by Sri Rajagopalachari?*

Do you agree with its aims and policies?

Formation of a party which would fight for the Constitution and for stability, and which would defend democratic freedom against all trends towards totalitarianism is necessary. If Swatantra Party stands for this programme it should be welcome. I will have to wait for fuller explanation before I pass any judgment on its aims and objects. But I entirely agree with its emphasis on moral and spiritual

outlook and on its antagonism to co-operative farming through political, legislative and economic coercion leading to the elimination of farm and the family.

632: *I can read English, understand it and also write fairly well, being a college student, but I am unable to speak fluently in that language. So I want to develop that faculty. Will you help me?*

How can I help? You alone can help yourself. Practice makes a man perfect.

633: *What is the difference between behaviour and character?*

Behaviour relates to conduct in relation to others, character relates to the moral and spiritual values which go to form your personality.

634: *In the Parashuram story you had been writing, Vasishtha dies. Is it true? If so, is he the same Vasishtha who defeated Vishwamitra?*

The Vasishtha I have described is the one who is actually described in the *Rigveda* as having fought the Battle of Ten Kings and defeated King Purukutsa whose high-priest was Vishwamitra. The other Vasishtha, who is possibly of a period a few hundred years later, must be a descendant, or a member of the same *gotra*.

635: *Is there any equivalent in Hindu mythology for Adam?*

No.

636: *According to the teachings of Bhagawan Buddha Nirvan is the goal of human life. But where will the soul go after it attains Nirvana?*

Buddhism does not recognize a permanent soul. *Nirvana* is absolute freedom from misery; it is a negative idea and not a positive one.

637: *Who are the parents of Sanjaya of Mahabharata and how he derived the faculty of narrating events in the way he did?*

Sanjaya's father was Gavalgana. So he is often called Gavalgani by Dhritarashtra. (Neelakantha on 1.1.222). He derived this faculty by a special favour of Vyasa, so as to be able to narrate everything that happened on the battlefield to Dhritarashtra without being actually there. The faculty is called *Divyachakshuh* and was limited only to the battlefield happenings. (Bhishmaparva, Adhyaya 2, 9-12).

638: *Is there any rule in the Hindu Sastra either to grow beards or get them shaved?*

For a student it is optional; for a householder, it is essential that he must have his hair cut; this includes beard.

639: *I saw in a Telugu paper that Mandodari married Vibhishana after the death of Ravana. Is there any authority for this statement?*

None in the *Valmiki Ramayana*.

640: *Please explain with illustrations the difference between enjoyment with a spirit of renunciation and enjoyment with attachment.*

Enjoyment with attachment is really a search for pleasure, that is satisfaction of the senses. It brings satiety, disgust, frustration, and misery. When you remove attachment, wrath and fear from your actions and are not lured by the enjoyment of the senses, or to use the word of the *Gita*, when you develop *anasakti*, the action becomes perfect. Then the joy of doing the perfect act becomes yours. It stimulates fundamental aspirations for love, power, joy, peace, light and freedom. Then you find the unfading *anand* of having fulfilled yourself.

641: In your recent statement about the Kerala situation and working of the Communist Government there, I happened to read your comments about the text-books published under the Communist regime wherein the following sentences appear: 'Christ was the son of a carpenter, etc., etc.' and from what I gathered, if I am correct, is that you have taken an exception to such sentences. How do you compare this with the sentences appearing in the Convocation Address delivered at the Aligarh University by our Minister in the Union Government for Culture: 'Krishna, the author of the Gita, was an aborigine,' etc., etc. and for which the whole of India including your goodself does not seem to have taken any exception. Will you please enlighten me?

1. I do not know whether the Minister of Culture—do you mean Sri Humayun Kabir?—who knows Hinduism well, stated what you say he did. If he did, perhaps he was not aware of the fact that the *Yadu* clan to which Sri Krishna belonged was among the five *Aryan* tribes mentioned in the Vedas. Anyway, the Minister did not impeach the fact that Sri Krishna is held by the Hindus as an *avatar* and sometimes as God Himself in the pantheon.

2. It is no use comparing what the Minister said to what the Communist Government did in Kerala. The Minister did not give expression to his views in a text-book to be taught in schools to children of those who believe Sri Krishna to be divine, nor did he want them to be indoctrinated with his views.

3. To be an aboriginal is not a sin and it would be sinful to say that God, if He ever descended on earth, would not be born to an aboriginal mother.

4. The *Aryans* married freely with non-*Aryans*, and to make a claim that anybody in India is a pure blue-blooded *Aryan* is nonsense. There were many inter-marriages be-

tween *Aryans* and the non-*Aryans* during the period Sri Krishna had flourished, and some of the great epic heroes were the products of such alliances. For instance, no one would dispute the fact that Vyas, the first and the greatest prophet of Hinduism, was born of the *Aryan Rishi* Parashara and a fisher-girl Matsyagandhi, who would certainly not be an *Aryan*; that the same fisher-girl was married to King Shantanu of Hastinapur and gave birth to Chitrangada and Vichitravirya, the grandfathers of the Pandavas and Kauravas. Matsyagandhi was not the less venerable by reason of her parents' race.

5. Don't worry about race purity; the divinity is in the man and is not the result of ethnic purity, for none such exists.

642: 1: *Who has influenced you in your creative work?*

2: *What is your opinion on contemporary literature in your own country?*

3: *What is your opinion on contemporary world literature?*

4: *What do you intend to say in your works?*

5: *What would you like to include in an anthology from your works?*

1: In order of influence: *Mahabharat*, Shakespeare, Kalidas, Shelley, Dumas, Hugo, Goethe.

2: There are experiments in creating new forms and technique, but as yet the new post-freedom (1947) literature has not found a soul. The old Renaissance literary tradition of India (1885-1937) still continues, except that it is now more concerned with the everyday life of the ordinary people.

3: My reading outside English (in original and translations) is nil. But I am distressed to find that recent authors are mostly obsessed with sex and crime, and thereby indicate a growing decadence in the realm of literary art.

4: I have never tried to 'say' anything consciously in my works. I have tried to portray life and through it to give an idea of the struggle—sometimes ending in failures and tragedies—of men and women to realise what I call 'fundamental aspirations' towards Love, Truth, Freedom, Power, Calmness, Joy and Beauty.

5: It is a difficult question. Is the anthology to include works or parts of them? If it is the latter, I would include the following, most of which have been included in symposia:

- (1) Real politik and Ideal politics—(Dialogue from the novel 'Gujarat no Nath').
- (2) The execution of Prithvi Vallabh—(from the novel 'Prithvi Vallabh').
- (3) The camel-ride through the desert—(from the novel 'Jaya Somnath').
- (4) The death dance of Chaula, the temple dancer—(from the novel 'Jaya Somnath').
- (5) Naimisharanya—The forest university of ancient India (from the novel 'Bhagwan Kautilya').
- (6) Gandhi's Alchemy—(Speech from collected works).
- (7) Gandhi's Power through Truth—(an episode from the novel 'Tapasvini').
- (8) Hunger-strike unto death and the conquest of ego—(from the novel 'Tapasvini').
- (9) Lopamudra's wooing—(from the play 'Deve Didheli').
- (10) The Path Divine—(from 'Bhagavad Gita and Modern Life').

All except 10, which is in English, are written in 'Gujarati', my regional language.

643: *Is the Swadharna of an individual based on his birth or temperament?*

Swadharna depends upon a man's *Swabhava*, that is, his temperament, aptitudes and aspirations. *Swabhava* is formed principally by heredity, but also by family and school

environments later. Its shape may be changed due to the influence of friends and the outlook of the society in which he moves; but the basic texture of *Swabhava* remains the same. But *Swabhava* has first to throw up the characteristic activity. Now all activity is corrupted by attachment, fear and wrath. When these are conquered steadily, the Karma or action becomes *Swakarma*, pure action born of *Swabhava*. When one dedicates one's life to performing *Swakarma*, it becomes *Swadharna*.

644: *How to conquer 'desire' ?*

By Karma Yoga.

September 6, 1959

645: *I have been a subscriber of Bhavan's Journal for about one year and as such have read many an article in the issue of the same written by you which I have found cultural and profound in every respect. I have a problem of mine and I think you will be able to solve that. The problem is:*

You well understand that these days dowry is considered to be an important aspect of a marriage, but in its true sense it has caused a great hurt to humanity.

Keeping the above-mentioned things in view, I think that this dowry system should be abolished and for this it is necessary that modern youths should disregard the dowry. In this respect, I want to become a demonstration for the society. As such I think that I should not accept dowry, but my parents are insisting on it. They say that if there is no dowry, the society or the relatives will think it bad. I am on the horns of a dilemma and do not know what to do.

So I request you kindly to guide me in this behalf.

Refuse to marry if your parents insist on dowry, or go to your would-be father-in-law and straightaway marry the

girl. And if your parents treat your wife badly because she did not bring any dowry, go and live separately.

646: *When honest attempts too result in disappointments, what is the remedy?*

There can be no disappointment if an attempt is whole-hearted and honest; for the deed itself is its own justification.

By 'disappointment' you mean failure in securing the object you had in view. You think such failure a disappointment because you have no confidence in God. But, perhaps it may be a lesson or a guidance given to you by Him. Your right and duty is to do the best you can, trusting Him for the appropriate consequence.

647: *Is the law of Karma applicable only to human beings, or to animals and plants too which are said to have souls of their own?*

Law of Karma applies to all created beings.

648: *What is the notable difference between an Easterner and a Westerner?*

A Westerner believes material comforts as the sole reality. An Easterner believes that Reality is of the spirit and transcends the senses.

However, there are exceptions among Westerners and Easterners. In the West there are men with Eastern outlook, and in the East there are men with Western outlook. But in each case the exceptions are limited in number.

649: *When the Vedas and other scriptures say that God is omnipresent, why do we build temples, mosques, churches, gurudwaras, etc., etc.?*

Because the human mind is so made that it can only proceed from the concrete to the abstract and from the symbol to the reality. You also want an atmosphere in which you

feel the presence of God. Temples and shrines are intended to serve this purpose.

650: *The Vedas are the oldest books in the library of mankind. They contain all knowledge required for all people for all time. Such being the case, what is the necessity of sending prophets, sages and rishis, and Avatars in every age?*

All knowledge may be in the Vedas, but it is not in every heart. Prophets, sages, rishis and saints—even Avatars—have to be in our midst to help us to bring out this knowledge in us.

September 20, 1959

651: *I have the greatest handicap of losing myself in reveries while reading. Since I am a student this means much. Can you tell me any way to escape it and thus help to concentrate?*

You are not losing yourself in reverie; you are becoming absent-minded. That means you have not developed the faculty of controlling your mind. The only way is (a) to practise attention and (b) to shun everything which distracts your attention. Practice comes of long and steady effort.

652: *Can you tell me who is a real teacher? If there is, who is he?*

The real teacher is God. He lives in you, if you try to find Him. But the way to find Him is first, humility; second, constant study and recital of a scripture like the Gita.

653: *What is your advice to the young men and women to eradicate caste?*

Forget to think in terms of caste. In practice the caste system is going, but what is needed is to uproot the caste complex.

654: *How can a man prevent the entry of foul and impracticable thoughts and can give space to noble thoughts in his mind?*

Think of beautiful and noble things; read the lives of men who have lived in beauty and nobility. Read a scripture like the *Gita* every day; keep away from vulgar things, particularly books and films which deal with crime and sex. If you honestly and humbly try, you would succeed.

655: *Kindly let me know how to have peace of mind in spite of the disturbing elements around us?*

Learn to overcome fear, hate and greed and try to learn how to surrender yourself to God. He alone can give you peace.

656: *What is the greatest wealth?*

Love of God which impels us to surrender ourselves completely to Him and makes us see all in Him and Him in all.

657: *What is the significance of "the Flute" and the "Plume of Peacock" on Krishna's head? What does his Saffron Dhoti signify?*

Krishna is the essence and embodiment of Absolute Beauty. His dress and flute, as described in the Puranas, are indicative of the beauty of colour, form and sound associated with Him.

658: *Kindly let me know what is 'Gandhian Culture' through your worthy question columns.*

(1) There is no 'Gandhian Culture'. There is only the Gandhian attitude on life which has for its basis truth and non-violence, not only as practised in individual life, but also in collective life. This led Gandhiji to forge the famous technique of non-violent Satyagraha to fight evil. (2) Gandhian idea is based on a surrender of individual ego to God

through prayer and asceticism. (3) Gandhian philosophy is largely drawn from the *Bhagavad Gita* and Tolstoy's doctrine that evil should not be resisted by physical force.

October 4, 1959

659: (1) Can you suggest to me a quick and sure means of realising Brahman? (2) Is it possible to realise Brahman for persons following Grihastha Dharma?

You seem to be wanting to realise *Brahman* by a short-cut. But it is a difficult and long process.

Sri Krishna, in *Adhyaya XII* of the *Gita*, showed the easiest way, which is to perform your acts without regard for fruits.

660: If one is habitually cruel, can cruelty be justified as his Swadharma?

No. A cruel *Swabhava* has to be purged of wrath and hate, attachment and greed before its Karma becomes *Swadharma*. Then will no cruelty be left.

661: If misery is the result of one's evil actions in the previous birth, how do you account for the kind of suffering of Rama who, being the Lord Incarnate, could not have performed any evil action, even supposing he had a previous birth?

The Lord when He descends as an *avatara*, has to live a human life and pass through all its difficulties and trials. If that were not so, His example will not be of any use to man who has to face difficulties and trials.

662: If a woman is compelled to maintain her family by evil ways, can she be said to be a sinner?

Of course. There is no excuse which would justify evil ways. Right is right and wrong is wrong, whatever excuse there may be.

663: *Who do you think is the hero or main character of the Mahabharata and why?*

In my opinion Arjun is the hero. You take him out, and *Mahabharata* will fall to pieces.

664: *What is the main policy of your Journal? Is it to propagate Hindu religion or merely to benefit cultured people?*

The *Journal* is the mouthpiece of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan which stands for the reintegration of Indian Culture to suit modern conditions and for integrating personality, truth, beauty and love in life.

665: *Will you please tell me what is the meaning of Gayatri?*

Gayatri is the name of a Vedic metre. A Vedic stanza (*Rigveda* III. 62-10) is generally known as Gayatri, as it is in the metre: It contains a prayer to Savitr or Sun-God. Its meaning is: "Let us meditate on that inestimable lustre of the divine Savitr who may stimulate our mind."

666: *Why is man considered to be the manifestation of God? What is the convincing proof?*

Because he has fundamental aspirations, which are His emanations.

The proof is that you have these aspirations. But God can't be proved; He can only be felt, seen, contacted in experience if you try.

667: *On what grounds, moral, ethical, political or diplomatic, etc., do you justify Sri Rama killing Vali?*

On political and diplomatic grounds which override one's *dharma* on occasions.

October 18, 1959

668: *What do you think of the movement which agitates for the replacement of Sanskrit Mantras and initiate the use of Tamil words for the worship of Deities and other sacred rites?*

It is nonsense. *Mantras*, apart from the mystic qualities associated with them, have associations with race-memory and evoke psychological reactions, which their translations in another language can never do. I am familiar with the translations of some Vedic *mantras*, but when I hear them recited with appropriate accents, I feel their impact. I find peace, inspiration, a sense of spiritual exaltation. If I speak or hear them in translation they would lose all their mystic power to create faith.

669: *Is it a fact that Siddhasana is not advisable for householders inasmuch as it will stand in the way of happy married life?*

I don't think so. But Siddhasana has merit of controlling unruly passions.

670: *Can you kindly suggest a programme for graduates returning to their villages after their study—how they can improve the villagers' lot, including the removal of many superstitions?*

If a graduate wants to improve the villagers' lot, first he must forget

- (1) that he is going to improve anybody;
- (2) that he is city-bred and a degree-holder and therefore superior to them;
- (3) that they are superstitious and he is the embodiment of wisdom;
- (4) that urban life is the last word in human perfection;
- (5) that he knows more about villages than the villagers.

Let him enter into the spirit of the village. Then only he can serve the villagers. Perhaps, then, they will improve him!

671: *We are fighting today for clean motion pictures. What shall we do about the nude sculptures found in places of worship?*

(1) Nude sculptures in old temples are specimens of old art of a bygone age. They are placed in symbolic surroundings and unless we are sex-obsessed, they are not likely to evoke sex impulses. You don't see them except when you visit the temples and that only if you, out of curiosity, want to see them.

(2) Some of the modern pictures present daily lessons in vulgarisation of sex relations, stimulate sex impulses and leave behind impressions which lead to sex obsessions, the curses of modern civilization.

672: *Would it not be advisable to reject advertisements of feminine faces in Bhavan's Journal with due consideration for the economic aspect?*

There is nothing wrong about faces whether masculine or feminine if they are so depicted as not to lead to sex obsession. I admit that modern advertisement has been commercialising women's faces, and even other parts of anatomy to attract customers. *Bhavan's Journal*, however, is careful to see that no such advertisement conveys sexuality.

673: *Will you consider extending the facilities of the reduction in the price of your Book University books to bona fide teachers also?*

I wish Bhavan had the necessary funds. Even at the normal price, the Book University is practically non-profit-making.

674: *When do you think the people of Goa will be saved from the Portuguese?*

When Portugal will find it unprofitable to waste men and money to continue their precarious hold over Goa.

675: *Can you tell me how the Vedas originated? How they came to be almost lost and how they came to be codified later?*

(1) Scholars differ from each other as regards these questions.

(a) According to Apaurusheya School of scholars Vedic *mantras* were mystic symbols of eternal truth which the Rishis saw with their superhuman vision and embodied in immortal accents.

(b) Most modern scholars, following Western scholars, through the interpretation of Sayana, consider them to be ritualistic hymns composed by Vedic Rishis.

(2) If the view (b) is correct—and I am of the view that it is—a time came when catastrophic changes, historical, social and even geological took place in Sapta Sindhu (Punjab and Afghanistan) and the Vedic culture disintegrated.

(3) After the distegration some or the other school of Vedic Rishis collected the hymns, redacted them and gave them the accents which have come down to us. Krishna Dwaipayana Veda Vyasa is traditionally believed to have done this.

676: *I come of an orthodox brahmin family. But my health is poor. My friends suggest to me to take non-vegetarian diet to improve my health. But I don't have the courage to do so. I seek your advice.*

(1) To say that non-vegetarian diet improves health is pure nonsense. Gandhiji and many who led a strenuous life were strict vegetarians. I am a strict vegetarian and had a delicate health from birth and yet I have led a fairly strenuous life including three periods of jail life.

(2) If milk and pulses are not taken in sufficient quantity, vegetable diet may prove deficient in protein. A proper balance, therefore, should be maintained.

677: *I have heard from my elders that Rishis performed tapas to attain perfection. Would you explain to me what tapas consists of so that people like me also may attempt.*

Bhagavad Gita thus defines *tapas*:

‘Worship offered to the gods, the learned, to one’s teacher, purity of body, conforming to the rules of nature, sexual control, non-violence, form *tapas* of the body.

‘Speech which causes no annoyance, is truthful, pleasant and beneficial, the sacred recital of the scriptures—these form *tapas* of speech.

‘Cheerfulness, equanimity, silence, self-control, purity of mind—these form *tapas* of the mind.’

678: *I am suffering from nervous debility, and I have been doing various japas for the last two years. Still I am no better. Do you think that Ramanama can cure chronic illnesses like mine? This is not of academic interest but of real interest to me.*

Your *japa* is not properly performed. With every *japa*, you must train yourself to develop the corresponding mental attitude. *Ramanama* can cure you only if, with every recital, you project your mind to surrender yourself to Sri Ramachandra as the Source of all strength.

679: *After reading Matthew Arnold’s Forsaken Merman I am inclined to doubt the wisdom of inter-racial and inter-religious marriages. Do you agree with me?*

I have forgotten all about Matthew Arnold’s *Forsaken Merman*. But ordinarily inter-racial and inter-religious marriages tend to be unhappy unless the husband and wife maintain their unity of the spirit at white-heat.

680: *I believe that the mind is resting when we sleep. If that is so, how do dreams appear in a vivid manner and how do we remember it?*

Mind does not rest while you sleep. You are not conscious of its activity except when you are dreaming.

681: *Was Lord Buddha justified in leaving his wife to seek realisation? I am asking this because many others would justifiably throw their families into streets and take sannyasa, and that I am told is sin.*

(1) *Sannyasa* is not sin. It is a state of advanced development of the personality in which self-fulfilment is sought by renouncing attachment, fear and wrath, and trying to realise the Absolute.

(2) But it is a very difficult state to attain and for most of us, true *sannyasa* is Karma Yoga—doing our duty in the life before us without worrying about their fruits.

682: *Will you explain to me how the continuity of life beyond the grave is possible?*

I can't explain the 'how' of it. But the experience of generations has established that there is continuity of life after death.

683: *Is it harmful for a man belonging to one religion to follow the principles, prayers, etc. belonging to another religion inasmuch as God is said to be the same for all?*

No. Religion requires absolute faith and you can't follow one religion and observe the principles of another. But fundamentally all religions teach the surrender of the individual ego to God and to the laws of the Moral Order. It is therefore possible for a man to follow his own religious practices and yet appreciate another religion by rising to that common religious attitude.

684: *What are your views on Hell and Heaven? Do they exist at all, and if so, in what form and where?*

(1) Heaven is there in this life for the man who develops

Truth, Love, Power, Beauty, Calmness and Light. He, to whom these are not accessible, is in Hell.

(2) I don't believe that there is a separate heaven or hell to which one goes after death. But I believe in rebirth, and as you act in this birth, so you make heaven or hell of this life as also of the next.

685: *Is it possible to change our destiny by prayer?*

Certainly.

November 29, 1959

686: *Referring to your recent article on Veda Vyasa, please enlighten me on the following points:*

(1) *There is a tradition that the Vedas are apaurusheya. But others say they were sung by Rishis. How to reconcile these?*

(2) *While Veda Vyasa is traditionally believed to be a Chiranjivi you state that the Brahmanas were composed after the death of Vyasa.*

(3) *While you say that Lord Shiva is a non-Aryan God we find benedictory worship of the same Lord in the Rig-veda and Yajurveda.*

(4) *Are there any proofs for the statement that Vyasa was blessed by Lord Shiva to bear the bereavement of his son Shuka?*

(5) *Why have you not included 18 Puranas and Brahma-sutras in reference to Vyasa?*

(6) *How would you examine the statement that the Mahabharata as such was not composed by Veda Vyasa, but is a collective composition of ascetics of Vyasa order?*

You are asking me to write a book on thorny problems of Indology. I will content myself by answering your queries briefly to indicate what I believe:

(1) The Vedas are *apaurusheya* in the sense that they were inspired songs by the great Rishis who, first in the history

of the human race, felt the urge to uplift their souls and merge in the Divine. The urge is *apaurusheya*: the songs are the composition of men, no doubt highly gifted.

(2) Vyasa is *Chiranjivi* in the sense that he outlived his son Pandu, grandson Arjuna, great grandson Abhimanyu and great great grandson Parikshit. He was alive during the Sarpa Satra of Janmejaya. His date, I reckon about 1200 or 1000 B.C. The Brahmanas in their present form were composed some centuries later.

(3) Rudra was a storm-god of the Vedic Aryans. Shiva or Pashupati as we see in the terracotta in Mohenjo-Daro was a god of other races. When the two races became one by fusion, the attributes of the two gods became one, and in the Brahmana period, we see Shiva as Ishan emerging as the God of all gods.

(4) Vide the *Mahabharata*.

(5 & 6) In my opinion, Vyasa did not compose anything but the original of the *Mahabharata*. Then Vaishampayana and a host of other sages, Pauraniks and philosophers went on adding to the original, century after century. Vyasa's name came to be so revered that when the 18 Puranas were composed they were all attributed to him. The age of the Puranas varies from centuries before Christ to the 15th or 16th century after Christ.

687: *You supported the recent Kerala agitation. May I know your stand in supporting the opposition parties who had created trouble in communal colour?*

The opposition parties in participating in the Liberation Movement in Kerala were not actuated by communal motives, nor were they fighting for communal gains. They were fighting for free democracy.

December 13, 1959

688: *I have a problem which I request you to solve for me. I come from a well-known Brahmin family. My*

mother is very orthodox. But my father is completely European in his ways. Somehow I have been given a sacred thread, but I have not much belief either in the thread or in caste. Would you let me know if I can remove the sacred thread inasmuch as I have no faith in it, or should I continue to have it?

If you have no faith in the sacred thread, you might discard it, but if your mother wishes you to keep it, you *should*. A parent's wish has to be held sacred, unless a greater duty demands that you should disregard it. And there is no duty to discard a sacred thread. If your father adheres to European ways, you should by your truly Indian conduct convince him that Indian ways are in no way inferior to European ways.

689: *I am told that it takes twelve years to master each Veda. If that is so, how could Swetaketu, son of Uddalaka Aruni, study all the Vedas in twelve years?*

I don't think each Veda takes twelve years to study unless one is practically dull. If a person is extraordinarily gifted in memory and concentration, he could study all the Vedas in 12 years. We have the examples of Shankar and Dayanand Saraswati who mastered the Vedas in less than 12 years.

690: *What place does an atheist occupy in Hindu society? Should he not enjoy all the facilities given to other members?*

Hindu society is tolerant, and will tolerate an atheist in practice. I would however scarcely call him a true Hindu. By his negation of God he has forfeited his claim to the great heritage of Hinduism which sees in God-realization the highest goal of man's efforts.

691: *When a man of impeccable character becomes a*

victim of scandal, what must he do in order to rehabilitate himself in society?

Nothing. He should rise superior to praise and blame, and by his character shame the scandal-mongers into silence.

692: *Why is Lord Krishna depicted in blue colour?*

It is difficult to say why. He was sky blue in colour. I wonder whether there was some physiological reason for his blue veins being so prominent as to give his darkness a shade of blue.

693: *Although the Creator Himself, what made Brahma marry His own creation or daughter, Sarasvati?*

Sarasvati is supposed to be a celibate. Sometimes she is portrayed as Brahma's spouse. How can I reconcile mythical stories of different ages?

694: *I know I tell many a lie in the course of a day and I must say I gain something by this. But my conscience says I must stop telling lies and speak truth only. But when I try to speak the truth I come into difficulty. What should I do?*

Stand by truth, and you will achieve something much greater than when you speak an untruth. Truth that is dynamic compactness of thought, word and deed, is the instrument of accomplishment.

695: *We are a young couple and are sincere and devoted to God. But a few days back we lost our only son. Why should we receive this shock in the threshold of our life? How shall we modify our way of life in order to gain peace of mind?*

Trials are sent by God to train you to lead a higher life of strength and mutual love.

696: *If destiny becomes law of Karma, how far can destiny be mitigated or averted by appropriate prayaschitta according to Karma Kanda?*

(1) Law of Karma is not destiny; it is the law of cause and effect applied to our actions from one life to another. Under this law, the effect could be altered by suitable change in mental content and appropriate actions. (2) *Prayaschitta* should not be a soulless ritual. It is a confession of one's lapse as also an humble effort to make amends for it. The best *prayaschitta* is to confess one's fault, seek forgiveness of the party sinned against, and pledge oneself before God not to repeat it. But this *prayaschitta* of the heart is difficult, and in ordinary men, requires a ritual.

697: *In what ways the present-day teachers can inculcate and develop a sense of morality and sincerity among the students?*

(a) The teacher should adopt the Guru attitude which consists in taking a personal interest in the student; inspiring and encouraging him to achieve distinction in his studies; entering into his life with a view to form ideals and remove psychological obstacles; and creating in him a spirit of consecration; and

(b) the adoption by the student of the Shishya attitude by the development of (i) respect for the teacher, (ii) a spirit of inquiry, (iii) a spirit of service towards the teacher, the institution, Bharata and Bharatiya Vidya.

698: *Our ancient philosophies have promoted fatalism in the minds of the millions and destroyed all incentive to work. How do you account for this?*

Our philosophies have not advocated, nor fostered fatalism. On the contrary, they have enjoined a life of right action. Haven't you heard of Karma Yoga? Did the Lord teach Arjuna to be fatalistic in the *Bhagavad Gita*?

Our incentive to work was weakened by political subjection, which also had the effect of making our social structure rigid in order to resist alien and disintegrating forces.

699: *If the killing of animals for purposes of food is prohibited, how can we justify using vegetables for our food since they too have been proved to have life? It appears that the law of life demands some form of violence. Do you agree?*

(1) As far as I can judge, our ancestors had two motives in disapproving the taking of animal food. One was to render us humane by upholding the sanctity of life; the other was to establish oneness with the living world. It was believed that all animals had souls, while vegetation had none, and therefore, could not be the victim of violence. Some, however, did extend non-violence to trees and sprouted food.

(2) There can be no absolute rule of non-violence at all times and under all circumstances in practical life. Vegetarianism is good, whatever our view of vegetables possessing souls. First, it develops sanctity of life, and secondly, it is economic. With a vegetarian diet, many more people can be provided with food in a country.

700: *Was Ravana a Brahmin or merely a Pandit?*

He was born a Brahmana and was well-versed in the Vedas. However he lacked the true Brahman temperament (*Swabhava*).

701: *Our epics say that the Sun and the Moon are the two eyes of God. If so, how is it possible for scientists to conquer them physically?*

The epics treat the Sun and the Moon as gods. They are sometimes called 'eyes' as a figure of speech. We know now that the Sun is a star and the Moon a satellite of the

earth. But in so far as they powerfully influence man, they may be called divinities.

It is not correct to say that the scientists have conquered the Sun and the Moon.

702: *What happens to free will when a person is guided by a higher power as in the case of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa?*

In life one follows the law of Karma. There is, however, the freedom to modify the working of the law by appropriate self-discipline. When grace of God descends on a man, the law of Karma does not operate, though often such descent is the result of previous Karma.

703: *What is the significance of Sri Krishna's Viswarupa in the Gita?*

It is the revelation of the all-pervasive cosmic consciousness expressed in poetically inspired words.

704: *What is the overall effect of science on society? Has it been beneficial or otherwise?*

Science is neutral; it can be beneficial as well as harmful. Atomic energy in curing diseases is beneficial; in helping to build bombs is harmful. It depends upon the quality of the man who uses it. If the human mind is filled with Truth, Beauty and Love, its effect is beneficial. If it is filled with attachment, wrath and fear, the effect is otherwise.

705: *I am a government servant and I have some leave which I would like to utilise for activities beneficial to the nation. Can you suggest to me a cultural or religious institution in northern or central India where my service would be welcomed?*

You can help the Sanskrit Vishva Parishad to popularise Sanskrit. If you want to, please let me know.

706: *Why is socialism an improvement on both capitalism and dictatorship?*

Who told you it is? Capitalism of the nineteenth century, which was based on exploitation, also did good, but now simply does not exist; it is broadening out into economic humanism.

Socialism varies from Chinese totalitarianism to Gaitskell's socialism and the socialism of the German Socialist Party. In the sense in which it is used in India, it has meant Statism, i.e. dictatorship of some kind or the other run by political oligarchs, controlling all spheres of life.

Dictatorship is the total power of one individual over others.

No government is good which does not respect human dignity. Any 'ism', whether Socialism or not, which does not build on a free and voluntary co-operation of the people, is bad.

707: *Is it right to drag persons from one party to another party in our political life?*

If man is free, he must be free to change his views and to seek affiliation with such party as appeals to the views he holds. In a democracy men are not dragged from one party to another; they leave one party for another with which they find greater affinity.

708: *Mahatma Gandhi wrote in his Key to Health, "I hope to place before the public some of my experiments with Brahmacharya some day if they succeed to my satisfaction."*

Did Mahatma Gandhi ever publish his experiments? I shall be grateful for this information.

I do not know.

January 10, 1960

709: *What gives meaning and value to life?*

To live in search of fundamental aspirations: Love, Beauty and Truth.

710: *Does the law of Karma apply to inanimate things, particularly to man-made machines?*

The law of Karma postulates a soul. I do not know that man-made machines have a soul, or that it migrates from one machine to another.

711: *What is your advice to the people of India about the tension between India and China?*

Be strong enough to resist China but restrained enough not to precipitate war.

712: *What are the ways of loving God? Is it going to the temple daily for praying or is it by doing good to others?*

(1) The highest way is to learn to live in Him. But if we cannot follow it, we should take the ways of *bhakti*, which involves complete surrender to Him.

(2) Seeing Him in all men and serving them is also loving God.

(3) Going to the temple for daily prayers is one of the ways by which we can learn to love God. If done with sincere faith, it may teach us to surrender ourselves to God.

713: *Will you kindly explain in simple terms 'Prakriti' 'Purusha' and 'Moksha'?*

Prakriti is nonsentient matter; Purusha is the sentient soul, and release or Moksha is the realisation of his separateness from Prakriti by the Purusha or soul. This is the view of the Samkhyas. The view differs from Acharya to Acharya. I am not a philosopher. I accept Purusha as the Atman or soul, the immortal essence of the Universal Spirit which underlies our body. Moksha is attained when this Atman transmutes attachment, fear and wrath, to which

as animals we are heir, and realises Truth, Beauty and Love as stabilised principles of life.

714: *What is the difference between Saivas and Veera-saivas?*

Saivism is a general term comprising all systems which regard Siva as the Lord of the world; it is contrasted with Vaishnavism.

Veerasaivism is a branch of Saivism. It is supposed to have originated with Sri Basava. One of its special features is *Lingadharan*.

715: *I am unable to differentiate between 'Prarabdha' and 'Kriyamana'. Can you kindly explain?*

Both are *karman*, which is of three kinds: *Sanchita* or collected; *Prarabdha* or that which has started to bear fruit; and *Kriyamana* or that which is being stored up for future.

716: *Can you tell me who is the wife of Janaka, King of Mithila?*

He had four wives, of whom the chief was one called Sumati, according to Kalikapurana, Adhyaya 38.

717: *I have heard it said that Ahalya, Droupadi, Tara, Kunti and Mandodari are remembered as 'Pancha Maha Kanyakas' (Five great spinsters). Having been legally wedded, how could they be called spinsters? Will you kindly clear my doubt?*

Kanya used in a broad sense is a young woman. There is, however, one reading '*Panchakam na smarar nityam*'. A man should always remember this group of five persons.

718: *What are Ashta Vasus and Pancha Banas? I think Dhruva was one of the Vasus; I have not been able to find the others. Kindly enlighten.*

The eight Vasus are Dhara, Dhruva, Soma, Aha, Anila, Anala, Pratyusha and Prabhasa.

The five arrows of Manmatha, the God of Love, are Aravinda, Asoka, Choota, Navamallika and Neelotpala.

719: *Is it possible for a human being to alter his destiny even in the slightest way by the exercise of his volition?*

Volition is given to man to lead him to spiritual growth. If therefore he submits his will to God's will, he will be able to alter his destiny, not otherwise.

January 24, 1960

720: *It is but natural for you, being a top-ranking novelist, to be intimately acquainted with the elements of novel and its component factors. Would you please point out as to how far local colour and regional outlook form indispensable elements in the making of a novel?*

The elements of local colour and regional outlook cannot be avoided in the making of a novel. The mind of the author cannot but move in the local atmosphere and environment; it cannot possibly outgrow them. For instance, my novel 'Gujarat No Nath' is a 12th century romance, but by the limitations imposed upon the human mind, I cannot possibly know what the local colour and regional outlook of Gujarat were in the 12th century. If I had merely to draw upon history, it would have meant writing a history book, not a novel. My effort, therefore, can only project my impressions of contemporary life into an imaginary 12th century atmosphere.

721: *You happen to be one of the pioneer literary leaders in awakening the regional cultural consciousness among the Gujarati-speaking people through your novels and writings in Gujarati language. Would you please throw some light upon the local colour of your novels as distinguished from the local colour of other regions?*

The life of royal courts in my historical novels was, consciously or unconsciously, drawn in the colour of Rajput tradition. This tradition being common to other parts of India, there is no particular Gujarati colour or outlook in such life as regards social life. There is a considerable difference. My imagination cannot but help creating the social atmosphere on the basis of contemporary Gujarati life and whatever little I know of Gujarat's social life in the Chalukyan period. Women in Gujarat, for instance, both at present and in the past, were free compared to women in Rajasthan and U.P. Some part of my creative effort in shaping women characters might also have been coloured by my reading of English and French authors. The ways of my heroines, therefore, might appear strange to the readers of the old generation in India outside Gujarat. However, they would be appreciated fully by those of the younger generation who have had the benefit of English education.

722: You also happen to be one of the sponsors of mutual understanding among the regional languages in India and the evolution of an all-India national consciousness among our people as a whole. Would you kindly point out as to how far this object can be achieved through the creation of regional novels in the various languages of India?

So far in India the regional literatures reflected literary traditions common to the whole country. There were two reasons for this. The first was that Hindu life was more or less patterned throughout the country on the lines prescribed by the Smritis. The second was the influence of Sanskrit and later that of English. National aspirations also provide, and will continue to provide, the bond of a common outlook. We have also many things in common—for instance, democratic forms and institutions, political and social ideologies and religious unity and the desire to fight common enemies. All these factors cut across regional loyalties. In my opinion, therefore, the literary traditions

will continue to evolve on common lines throughout the country in spite of the difference in regional languages.

723: *Do you think that the novels, when written in regional languages, can only be really touching and powerful? On the other hand, do you think our novelists in regional languages would do better to write such novels in Hindi for our national literary enrichment?*

The inner richness of man can be reflected in creative literature best through the medium of the author's mother tongue. In spite of familiarity with English, I have found it impossible to express my inner self in English as well as in Gujarati. Some novels written in English even by Indian authors educated in England or America have scarcely done justice to their creative power.

724: *How is it that in spite of the difference in regional atmosphere, good novels appeal to people of all regions?*

In all good novels, there ought to be a regional atmosphere in order to secure what is realism. It is more pronounced in social novels than in historical novels. Even in the same region, those who are influenced by urban atmosphere write differently from those who are saturated with rural atmosphere. Again, I found, for instance, that when writing my *Tapasvini*, the atmosphere in our big cities like Bombay differed from that of the smaller cities and towns. But, in essence, whatever the atmosphere, first and last it is the human nature with which the author is dealing. The atmosphere is only the outer covering. That is the reason why, if the novelist provides human nature in its native richness, the novel would appeal to everyone, irrespective of local colour or regional outlook.

725: *I have ventured to write a little book on 'The Regional Novel and Local Colour'. Would you please bless*

this attempt of mine being the first of its kind in this branch of research and criticism?

It is not possible for me to go through your manuscript due to pressure of time. However, I wish success to all those who make an effort towards reaching a higher standard of literary criticism.

February 7, 1960

726: *It is said that God's laws are immutable and when they are broken misery follows. Could you let me know what these laws are and where are they given?*

God's Law is the Moral Order. Its components are as follows:

(a) Truth is attained when your word, deed and thought are the same; then accomplishment follows. If they are not one, your life becomes a failure and you lead a frustrated life.

(b) Non-violence is attained when you expunge wrath and malice from your mind. Then you attract love. If you are not non-violent, you evoke dislike, hatred, and anger in others.

(c) Non-stealing is attained when you do not acquire anything for your benefit by dishonest means. Then you have the strength of the rich. If you steal, you will be distrusted or removed, and you will remain in continual fear of leaving what you have.

(d) Non-waste is attained when you do not indulge in sex or any other pleasure unless as an integral part of activities which strengthen fundamental aspiration; then only, you develop vigour. If you indulge in pleasures for their own sake, you lose vigour.

(e) Non-possession is attained when you develop a non-attached attitude to worldly goods and material comforts. Then you discover the character and the goal of life. If

you do not develop non-possession you will just live an aimless life.

727: *Often I see pictures of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa with right hand towards the sky with two open fingers and the left hand near the chest with half open fingers. Is there any particular significance in this?*

I don't know whether there is any significance in this gesture of Sri Ramakrishna. But why worry? Is his life not significant enough?

728: *I read in one of the epics that the Matsya Yantra was 83 furlongs from top to bottom. Do you think that Arjuna won Draupadi by this Matsya Yantra?*

I don't think so.

February 21, 1960

729: *Is there any difference between a sannyasi and a yogi?*

Of course. *Sannyasi* ordinarily is one who has given up worldly life and taken to the vows prescribed by certain orders. *Yogi* can also be a Karma *Yogi* who lives a worldly life in acts which are consecrated.

730: *Am I right in saying*

- (1) *that destiny is dispensation of justice by the eternal laws of Truth or God-head;*
- (2) *that destiny and past Karma are inter-related to each other as cause and effect;*
- (3) *that prayer is either praise of God, or an appeal to God for mercy or for material or spiritual benefit;*
- (4) *that if prayer is to alter destiny then there is ego in God, and failure of the laws of the Eternal Truth;*
- (5) *that prayer can only benefit future by bringing about good conduct, and cannot retrieve the past?*

(1) Partly yes.

(2) Karma is a causal chain, by which in another life you reap the fruits of your action in this life. It is not fate, nor destiny. In this sense it is the working of the moral law of cause and effect.

(3) No. Prayer, to be true, is the effort of one's body, mind and speech to surrender oneself to God.

(4) You have not realised the true end of prayer. Prayer leads you to live in God, and thereby manifest God, Who is in you. It is a part of the cosmic law that when we begin to live in God, the chain of Karmic cause and effect is broken and a new chain reaction starts.

(5) Prayer can change the present and burn up the roots of the past.

731: *Whom does Lord Shiva meditate upon?*

He has not to meditate on something else, for He himself is *Sat-Chit-Anand*—Reality, Consciousness, Bliss.

732: *Is Lord Brahma a non-Aryan God?*

Who told you that? Gods have no races, except when historians and religions indulge in theories. So far as I know, Brahma is an Aryan post-Vedic god.

733: *Although I am a Hindu, I hate Hindu religion for the following reasons: (i) it denies equality to all; (ii) it disgraces and denies life to the widow; (iii) people in higher classes ill-treat and even kill those who belong to the lower classes as illustrated in puranas (Sri Rama killed Shambuk). Am I right in my estimate?*

(1) You say you are a Hindu. Have you studied the *Bhagavad Gita* or the *Upanishads* or the *Smriti* texts to understand what it is? If not, is it right to condemn Hinduism without understanding what it means?

(2) First, men are unequal on account of heredity, social

position, temperament and ability. There is no absolute equality among men.

Secondly, which is the country where men are equal in the absolute sense?

Thirdly, *Gita* has laid the true position that men differ on account of their qualities and actions. However, it does not sanction inequality by birth. Inequality of function exists everywhere in life.

734: *It appears to me prima facie illogical to presume that the human kind will be annihilated either due to over-growth of population or shortage of food and things of that kind. According to Yoga, the universe is made of single matter and man cannot either create or destroy. Am I right?*

You are right. If the world is blown up by an atomic war, we will all remain as some kind of elements flying in space. But we won't be as we are.

March 6, 1960

735: *What is the salvation for a man who has burnt both the ends of the candle and could not achieve his ideals in life?*

(a) What is the meaning of burning both the ends of the candle? If he has done so, he is dead if not physically, at least morally. And no one is morally dead, unless he has no fighting grit left. (b) No man can achieve his ideals, if he is a visionary and entertains ideals that are unrelated to the practical shape of things which faces him. (c) Real salvation lies in sublimating your attitude towards the practical affairs of life and dealing with them with faith in God.

736: *Will humanity avert another world war in this atomic age?*

Man wants to live, and therefore, will not launch another

World War. But there is no limit to man's greed and fear, and insanity may follow.

737: *What is the significance of free will?*

It means that your Karma determines the conditions under which you have to live, but that being gifted by fundamental aspirations towards Truth, Beauty, Love, Calmness, and Light, you can strengthen and change the working of causal law.

738: *How to become an amiable man in this world?*

Try to conquer greed, anger, malice, hatred and fear.

739: *I think political equality without economic equality is of no use. Do you think so?*

Political equality is an indispensable step to achieving economic equality. There cannot be economic equality without political equality.

740: *I have read a passage of Swami Vivekananda which says: "Through foot-ball alone, one can attain Mukti." Will you kindly explain what this quotation actually means?*

Give me the reference, please.

741: *Character and Destiny—which of these do you think is more powerful in shaping the man's life?*

Karma, not destiny, creates the conditions under which a man works; character is the quality of the man, in the light of which he deals with those conditions.

742: *I read in an issue of the Bhavan's Journal a quotation from Gandhiji stating that "My Rama, the Rama of our prayers, is not the historical Rama, the son of Dasaratha, the King of Ayodhya, etc." How can we reconcile this statement with the prayer song of Gandhiji's Ramanama in which Rama is evidently the son of Dasaratha, the husband of Sita?*

Gandhiji used the word Rama to mean God in the impersonal sense. In Tulsidasa's *Ramayana*, the poet describes Dasaratha's son as God Himself, and thus the Ramanama gives inspiration to the man who needs invoke an *avatar*, as well as to the man whose devotion has developed a loving sense of the Formless God. Gandhiji freely used the prayers which had an appeal for men in different stages of development.

743: *Is it not possible to restore the ancient Gurukula system of education in India?*

It is not possible to revive the ancient *Gurukul* system. But the system can be modernised in the light of our problems and intellectual advancement.

744: *People talk of controlling a disembodied spirit and make it perform strange things. Does it mean that there is a spirit in man besides his soul?*

(1) In my opinion what are called 'spirits' are not the spirits of departed men. They represent some power, which somehow expresses itself through sensitive men and women, whom we call 'mediums'. (2) There is no spirit in a man besides his soul.

745: *Recently, you have joined the Swatantra Party and taken the all-India leadership through the party channels. Are we, the readers of the Bhavan's Journal, to expect you to enter the political field?*

I have never left the political field. At the same time I have never ceased to serve literature, culture and spirituality. The *Bhavan's Journal* stands for culture in its widest sense, and is not a political journal. Most of my writings published are not written as a political worker, but as a student of life and literature who, according to his humble light, is trying to help in the reintegration of the fundamental values of our culture.

March 20, 1960

746: *Is there any possibility of making the physical body of man immortal on earth either by tapas or God's grace?*

No. Birth and death are a part of God's Law.

747: *Recently you said that man can alter his destiny by prayer. If that is so, is it possible for any one to achieve his desired end by means of whole-hearted prayer?*

Whole-hearted prayer with complete faith in God will achieve marvels. It may be that in the course of your practice, your own idea of the 'desired end' might change.

748: *Is killing of a snake or a bug or a tiger sin in the eyes of God?*

I don't think so, unless you do it out of pleasure or love of violence.

749: *May I know whether the Hindu Aryans in ancient days had any surnames and if not when and how their present surnames came into existence?*

Surnames were originally names of the families or tribes to which a person belonged e.g. Kavya for Shukracharya, Pandavas or Kauravas for the heroes of *Mahabharat*, Varshneya for Sri Krishna. Then surnames were taken from the professions, Vyas, Puranik, Pandit, Vajapeya, etc.

750: *In your 'Tapasvini' you wrote that Rawa's father undertook terrorist activities under the behest of Sri Aurobindo and lost his life in a police encounter. Sri Aurobindo repudiated during his trial that he had any hand in terrorism. How do you reconcile these two statements?*

Sri Aurobindo was my professor in English in the Baroda College, and when there, he founded a secret society. If I remember right it was called Bhawani Mandir. His brother Barindra was the leader of a terrorist party. Though Sri

Aurobindo had no hand in terrorist activities, he did inspire young men to worship the Motherland by inviting martyrdom through violent means.

751: *What is the supreme function of Art?*

To make us live in Beauty.

752: *Do you think that the elaborate rituals of Hinduism harm the cause of Hinduism as some reformers think? Is it a fact that Vedic religion is devoid of such rituals? If so, when did they come to be associated with Hinduism?*

Rituals of some sort are indispensable to religious functions. At no time was Hinduism without rituals.

753: *Acharya Bhave started the Bhoodan Movement. It has spread itself and do you think it will serve the purpose of the people?*

(1) It has stirred the moral sense of the people, and in that sense it has served a spiritual purpose.

(2) It has released land for the use of the landless and that too without state coercion. It has therefore served an economic purpose.

754: *In a recent issue of your Journal I read Sri Aurobindo's article that "If you have to serve at all, then serve the Divine; not the society." In the same Journal, a few months ago, I read the article of Swami Vivekananda saying "Him I call a Mahatma whose heart bleeds for the poor." How can I reconcile these two statements?*

Both are right. In Aurobindo's dictum 'Serve the Divine' itself implies that you must see all in God and God in all. Swami Vivekananda's view is only a practical corollary from that dictum.

755: *What is the significance of rishis and other sacred men performing japas seated on cheeta or deer skin?*

It may be that the practice started when the best seat available was the skin of a deer or tiger. But our racial memory has associated purity with such a seat, and thus it produces a state of mind suited to prayer.

756: *What exactly is the function or the purpose of life in the scheme of creation?*

The purpose of life is to integrate one's personality and surrender one's self to God.

April 3, 1960

757: *It is common knowledge that temple priests do not perform their functions properly and temples themselves are kept unholy by them. Under the circumstances, do you think I am justified in avoiding these temples and preferring to meditate at home?*

You are not justified in avoiding temples on the grounds you mention, if going to the temple inspires you with purity or devotion. It is the quality of *your* devotion which matters, not the real object to which it is directed.

758: *Does it not affect the reputation of a national leader to change parties, particularly when the new party happens to be against his own previous party?*

No. This is a free country. Every citizen has a free right of association. The first duty of every person is to live by his truth. And if anyone feels that the party of which he is a member has come to represent an untruth, it becomes his supreme duty to leave it. The party is an instrument of a free man; man is not the instrument of his party. That would be totalitarianism.

759: *It is stated in the Bhagavata and by the Alwars that Brahma came from the navel of Vishnu, and Shiva from the third eye on the face of Brahma. Is it true?*

I know that Brahma is mentioned in the Puranas as coming out of the navel of Vishnu. I do not know whether Shiva is said to have come from the third eye of Brahma. These are poetic imageries, not scientific truths which could be tested in laboratories.

760: *Mahatma Gandhi has stated that a teacher who teaches from text-books does not impart originality to his pupils; he himself becomes a slave of text-books and has no opportunity or occasion to be original. Do you agree?*

I cannot say whether you have quoted Gandhiji correctly. But it is a fact that if one only relies on a text-book, originality may suffer. But without a text-book you cannot lay the foundation of any teaching, as we know it in schools. And even originality can only grow out of one's study of text-books.

761: *I am afraid that some cowards who fear death and punishment for their sins try to escape them by using God's name. There is no God as such. Do you agree?*

How did you discover that there is no God?

762: *It appears from the series of articles by Sri Rishabhchand that every supernatural agency tends to oppose man's effort to reach truth. Is there no factor at all which helps him achieve it?*

Why not ask Sri Rishabhchand?

763: *Don't you think it was wrong against Kshatriya Dharma for the Pandavas to have kept quiet when Draupadi was pleading for rescue from the clutches of Dushasana?*

(1) Unless it is a question of morals, each age has a set of characteristic conventions. According to the convention of their own times, the Pandavas acted rightly; then the eldest brother's word was law, and many things were done

which would shock us. Conventions have changed and we judge differently.

(2) If the Pandavas had heard that respectable men and women pay heavy prices for tickets to see naked or quasi-naked women dancing in 'strip-tease' shows, perhaps they would have been shocked. In that age good men were shocked at the forcible disrobing of a woman, and Sri Krishna intervened to stop it. In this age a woman disrobing herself to make money secures money, applause and newspaper fame.

764: *In the Puranas, the trinity of deities like Brahma are said to have given boons to wicked people like Ravana. Should they not have avoided doing so?*

When they received the boons, they had performed *tapas-charyas*. It was only when they got them that they misused them.

What about graduates who use their knowledge for dishonest purposes?

765: *I read in Sudha Mazumdar's Ramayana that Mandodari married Vibhishana immediately after the latter's succession to the throne. Inasmuch as the scriptures say that the eldest brother is next to one's father, should Vibhishana have been justified in marrying Mandodari?*

Customs differ from age to age, and there have been societies permitting a younger brother to marry another brother's widow.

April 17, 1960

766: *To my mind it seems that research into 'Nadis' will be a mere waste of time, energy and money; Sri Rama-krishna Paramahansa has warned us against contacting the 'Nadi' media which he has said really exist. What is your conclusion on this subject?*

I have come across Bhrigu Samhitas and Nadis. Refer to my two Kulapati's Letters Nos. 138 and 199.

767: What was the age of Karna at the time of Bharata Yuddha?

He was older than Yudhisthira and traditionally very old at the time of the Great War. I have yet to calculate his age by piecing together all evidence, which I have to do in connection with Krishnavatar. But I have a feeling that the traditional age of the Mahabharata heroes is not correct.

768: In reply to a question, 'Can I help the world', asked by a visitor, Sri Ramana Maharshi is reported to have answered, 'Help yourself and you will be helping the world.' Will you kindly give an illustration to the above indicating a way that can be put into daily practice?

Love God and you would have loved the world, and it cannot be helped without love.

769: What is the easiest way to attain God-realisation in this age?

Live in Love, Beauty and Truth and you would have lived in God.

What is the quintessence of Lord Krishna's Gitopadesa?

"Leave aside other Dharmas and surrender thou to Me", said the Lord.

770: Which is the shortest road to see God?

To offer all your deeds to Him as offerings and thereby to be His instrument.

771: Is there any reason and/or history for naming Bhavan's Journal as such?

Because it is Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's journal.

What is real happiness? How can we be happy when misfortune surrounds us?

Real happiness comes of the peace of mind. Peace of mind comes by faith that you are in the hands of God, and by accepting whatever befalls you as being the result of His will.

772: *Sindoor is the sign of a married woman but what is the sign of a married man?*

Constant solicitude and love for his wife and children.

773: *Do you think that by strengthening our spirituality our nation can prosper materially as other nations do?*

Certainly, if spirituality is rightly viewed as the way to transform life by developing the strength and power of the spirit. It will enable the nation to further material advancement, though it will destroy godless materialism.

May 1, 1960

774: *According to the Vedas, the earth is said to be an egg of Brahma and all the living beings of the world come from Brahma. But, according to Biology, the sun, the moon and the stars, etc., are forms of fire. Please give your opinion in this regard.*

The Vedic imagery was a poetic expression for the process of creation. It only describes the idea that creation came out of some cosmic seed.

775: *I have great faith in truth, purity of the heart, righteousness, justice and kindness, and faith in God. I dislike envy, greed and selfishness. I don't have full faith in the Vedas, Puranas, Samnyasis, etc. Do you think my attitude is right? In fact I hope that social and economic upliftment is a better way to achieve greatness than by taking to Samnyasa. Please enlighten me.*

I am glad you have that faith. You are on the right path.

If you have faith in God, then you need not have faith in any scripture. But it will be very difficult to have full faith in God, unless you continuously recite some scriptures. True Sannyasis are persons who have dedicated themselves to God. If you meet a true Sannyasi you must respect him. That will give you humility and lead you to God.

Working for economic and social uplift of people can only give you freshness, if you come to believe that God lives in all, and all in God. Social and economic uplift as a career or a publicity does not lead to true love and bring greatness.

776: To a person who has got an inborn aptitude to become a Yogi by leading a simple life and high thinking and his family affairs obstruct him in doing so, what would be the quickest and easiest way for him to attain Nirvana, the everlasting bliss?

A person with an inborn aptitude for becoming a Yogi has to perform his *swadharma*. This *swadharma* has to begin by conquering *raga* and *dwesha*, attachment and wrath. This he can best do by making first experiments in the family circle.

May 15, 1960

777: What measures do you suggest to root out the widespread corruption in the country today?

(1) Courage to stand up to corruption and to expose it; and (2) effort to lead an incorruptible life, even in some measure.

778: How to overcome disappointment in friendship, spiritual practices and secular success in life?

Learn to have faith in God. You will get it (1) if you make *japa*—that is the name of your guardian deity or any

inspiring formula, (2) if you recite some part of a scripture, say a chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* every day, (3) if you time and again practise to develop an attitude of mind in which you leave everything to God.

779: *Do omens have any effect in life?*

(1) Omens, if you believe in them, have a psychological effect on a man, and therefore on his life. (2) If a man does not believe in them, there is no such effect. But if once you come to feel that you have come across an omen, it will strengthen your mind if you give consideration to it.

780: (1) *Will you please give me an ideal routine for a college student who has spiritual aptitude providing, of course, a Sunday rest?*

(2) *Do you think it helps to refresh a student's faculties by seeing pictures?*

(1) First he must recite a chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* every day; next he must decide to make all his acts as perfect as he can; then he must develop an attitude of surrender to God.

(2) We should not give up seeing pictures. Some of them are works of art. But seeing all kinds of pictures, instead of refreshing the mind, destroys the spiritual aspiration towards Truth, Beauty and Love.

781: *How did Sri Krishna's teachings get the name Gita?*

The name is *Bhagavad Gita*, the song of the Lord.

May 29, 1960

782: *What are the differences between Buddhi, Jnana and Manas according to the Gita?*

Manas is the mind. Buddhi is higher perception which comes of controlling the mind and transmuting attachment,

fear and wrath into transcendent equanimity. Jnana is the conquest of ignorance which confounds Reality with appearance.

783: *Is evolution the same as revolution? If so, in what sense are they identical?*

Evolution is the orderly and steady process of transforming life. Revolution is an abrupt and sudden attempt at forcing transformation.

784: *Does forgetfulness go with intelligence?*

These two are entirely different. Intelligence in man may or may not go with forgetfulness. Forgetfulness may go with stupidity; even good memory may be associated with lack of commonsense.

785: *The grief of Arjuna appears to show the attitude towards non-violence while the teachings of Krishna are an exhortation to violence. Therefore Arjuna's is the higher morality than that of Krishna. Am I right?*

I don't think Arjuna is inspired by non-violence. He is inspired by weakness of resolve and a failure to perceive his duty.

786: *What do you think of religions other than your own? How far are they true in your view?*

(1) I respect all religions. I may not approve of some religious doctrines or rituals, even if they appertain to my religion, Hinduism.

(2) The basic truth in every religion is to rise out of sordidness and to surrender one's self to God.

787: *In my simple life I have always understood 'truth is not telling a lie' and if I am to believe the Gandhian attitude by the observance of this truth, I must be happy and get peace of mind. But in practice I do not find that ob-*

servance of this truth leads to either happiness or peace of mind. My husband who has never uttered a lie and who is always leading a straight, frank, and upright life and who often says that 'God is within you if you realise it', has never been able to get peace of mind. He is always miserable and unhappy. Can you enlighten me?

From your question it appears your husband lacks a cheerful outlook, though he leads an upright life and believes in God. A man, even if he holds to truth, will never have peace of mind if he has no *faith* in God. Absolute faith in God would make him indifferent to praise or blame, happiness or misery.

788: *Is the Constitution of France Presidential or Parliamentary?*

It is Parliamentary. The President of France has less power than the King of England or our President.

789: *Why do we worship a cow and not a buffalo though both serve the same purpose of providing milk?*

The cow is intelligent and gentleness itself; she can be most affectionate and her milk is more refreshing. She can be maintained more cheaply; her offsprings serve agriculture and traffic. And thousands of years of racial habit has made her a social part of our life, which gives us the sense that all life is one.

790: *How to avoid worrying?*

Trust in God. Do your duty; stand by truth. And leave everything else to God.

791: *What constitutes 'Violence'?*

(1) Violence in a narrow sense may mean inflicting physical injury.

(2) In a broad sense it may also mean inflicting pain, bodily or mental.

(3) In its widest sense it includes hate, malice—anything which prompts an attitude of mind which obstructs the development of love.

792: *Can you tell me, is he the same Sage Narada who has been moving in all the four Yugas? And if so, where is he today? Is he an individual or represents merely a function?*

Narada, as I understand the conception, is the universal conscience which reminds men, in their sane moments, that their duty is to conform to Dharma, that is the Moral Order, which sustains the Universe.

June 12, 1960

793: *Stressing about "Unified Discipline" you wrote in Bhavan's Journal dated 19th October 1958: "When knowledge is fragmented, and isolated disciplines are emphasised, the totality of human relations is disturbed and human beings pay the price in blood, in tears, in regimented slavery or in complete loss of truth, beauty and love. . ." I am actually coming across the said atmosphere since the idea of decentralisation emerged in Andhra Pradesh. Will you please give any of your experiences in this field?*

I feel the truth of what I had said every day as I see how India is drifting towards greed and ugliness. It is, therefore, necessary to spiritualise all affairs of life.

794: *Why do saints and Sannyasis leave their beards on their cheeks so long? Why do they mat and twist their hairs on their heads?*

They don't care to shave as they have outgrown the lure of personal beauty.

795: *We have heard that Lord Parashurama killed his mother Renuka, while in your book Bhagawan Parashurama,*

page 408, Renuka is not killed but united with her lord, Jamadagni. Will you please account for this difference?

Even according to our tradition, after Renuka was killed, Jamadagni revived her. I have tried to shape the tradition in a way suited to a modern work.

796: Does the present educational system of our country require any drastic changes? If so, what should be the changes?

The present educational system requires to be overhauled. I have often spoken and written about it. How can I compress all that in one answer? In short, education, to be genuine, should lead us towards *Satyam, Sivam, Sundaram*—Truth, Love and Beauty.

797: "There is no God, if there is, I am the God," an atheist said once. If people believe it, what will be the future?

The earth will be a hell full of egotists tearing one another to pieces.

798: Gayatri Mantra is considered to be the most powerful, the most sacred and the best mantra. Is it true? Please tell us something about it.

Gayatri Mantra, the *Mantra Drishta* Rishi of which is Vishvamitra, is a prayer to God Sun to stimulate our intelligence. It sums up the truth that the sun is the source not only of our life, but of our intellect, conscience and spiritual inspiration. It is most sacred, for it reminds man of his destiny as an instrument of the Spirit which pervades the Universe. It also teaches us to be humble, inasmuch as it teaches that human intelligence is only the expression of cosmic energy.

I have got a theory why *Gayatri Mantra* was singled out as the best of Vedic Mantras. Rishi Vishvamitra, as Vedic evidence shows, stood for absorbing all peoples, whatever

their racial descent, into the Aryan fold, and this *mantra* became the magic chant which made every person who chanted it to develop Aryan qualities, whatever his race or colour.

June 26, 1960

799: *What is the origin and derivative meaning of soul and Atma?*

How can there be an origin of soul or Atma? It is an unmanifested divine essence in man, and God has no origin. I do not understand what you mean by 'derivative meaning' of soul or Atma. God is eternal, omnipotent and absolute. But in the scheme of the universe, the divine essence appears in human form which we call a 'soul.'

800: *What is 'Japa Mala'? Why do the performers of 'Japas' count the beads of the mala?*

Japa means the repetition of a name or a formula undertaken as a step in developing God-mindedness or self-protection. (1) As a first step, *japa* steadies the mind, detaches it from the worries of the world, and leads to concentration. *Yogasutra* calls it a 'primary exercise in developing *Yoga*.' In the next phase, *japa* has to be accompanied by concentration on the meaning of the word or formula repeated. It means that with the repetition of a name or *mantra*, the mind must learn to visualize what it stands for. In this way *japa* becomes a step towards developing *dhyana*, an essential step in *Yoga* or even in worldly self-perfection not associated with *Yoga*. (2) These are technical explanations. To a man unfamiliar with these terms, I would explain it in this way: we want to achieve a certain result; we exercise our will to reach that objective, but often our subconscious power, through imagination, opposes it. For instance, suppose you want to give up smoking, you exercise your will to give it up, but you cannot do so because

all the time that you are exercising your will, your imagination has been raising a picture of how uncomfortable you would be if you gave up smoking. In the end the imagination wins and the will fails, and you would go back to smoking. The underlying principle of achievement is that when the will and imagination conflict, imagination wins and the will loses. (3) It must be remembered that imagination is not fancy; it is a powerful medium through which the strength of our subconscious power, and even the soul, is expressed. Therefore, if you want to give up smoking, you must develop your imagination that you will be very happy as a non-smoker. Ordinarily when you have got a fixed habit, imagination will not obey you. Your imagination will picture you as a man suffering from ill-health or discomfort if you gave up smoking. The best way of training the imagination to obey your will is to go on repeating that 'I do not like smoking,' 'I do not like smoking,' 'I hate smoking,' 'I hate smoking.' If you go on repeating it day after day, your imagination will be mobilized; it will support your will and you can easily give up the habit of smoking. (4) This is an elementary example that I am giving you. The same thing would apply to higher things. (5) If I want to be God-minded, I should go on repeating that 'God is everywhere,' 'I am the instrument of God,' 'I surrender myself to God,' 'I surrender myself to God,' '*Sri Krishnah saranam mama,*' etc. By constant repetition of this formula, all our mental, emotional and spiritual power will be canalised to develop the quality of becoming God-minded. That is why our *yogis* train their imagination and evoke the hidden powers of the soul by *japa*.

801: *Is it right to say that "Ahimsa" applies to harmful animals also?*

Ahimsa is not non-killing. It is removal of wrath, hatred and malice from our mental make-up. If animals—and

even men—become incurable danger to life, killing them would not be *himsa* if it is done from a pure motive of saving life or *dharma*.

802: *My friends always say there is no God. They also try to make me a 'Nastik'. As they are very close to me, what shall I advise them?*

Tell them that they are mistaken; that they should study the lives of God-minded men; that they must learn to be humble and not arrogant in such a matter as faith in God, which makes life worth living.

803: *If God is one, why do we have so many Gods in our Hindu religion? Some deny that Rama and Krishna are Gods. According to history (they say), they were simply kings and no more. What is your opinion in this respect?*

(1) God is one, but human beings differ in their attainments and needs. Therefore, each one is free to worship the god towards whom he is attracted. But as *Gita* says, whatsoever the god one worships, the worship goes to God, if it is characterised by appropriate devotion.

(2) Sri Rama and Sri Krishna were men no doubt, but God manifested Himself through them; that is why they are considered *avatars*—as God descended on earth as human beings.

July 10, 1960

804: *How can we achieve success in life?*

By trying ceaselessly to achieve perfection in all our actions and by having faith in God.

805: *Giant Kamsa was the uncle of Lord Krishna; but why didn't Krishna have Rakshasamsa?*

Wicked men are called *asuras*. Therefore, Kamsa was called an *asura*. He was not a *rakshasa*, but a Yadava.

806: *What is the best motto which one could paste in one's study so that one could see it daily in the morning so as to help make one's life prosperous, happy and contented?*

Karmanyeva Adhikaraste. Your duty is the demand of the law, to perform it is your only right.

807: *What is meant by Swadharma and Paradharma?*

'*Swabhava Niyatam Karma.*' Action prompted by one's temperament and aptitude is *swakarma* or one's duty. When *swakarma* is one's duty and is performed as an offering to God, it is *swadharma*, one's own dharma, the mission of one's life. When an action is done which conflicts with temperament and aptitude and without submitting to God, it is *paradharma*, and it is *bhayavaha*, full of danger.

808: *What is the difference between a spirit and a devil?*

A spirit is a disembodied personality. Devil is wickedness, conceived as a superhuman force trying to bring about man's fall. There is no conception of the devil in Hinduism.

809: *What exactly is meant by 'Fasting'? Does it mean going without food completely for the entire day or does it allow milk and food or tiffin, etc.? In either case do you think it will help us in the matter of health?*

(1) Fasting is first a curative purifying process. Ordinarily we eat far too much and a weekly or a fortnightly fast will correct the system undermined by overeating.

(2) Fasting on occasions is a spiritual effort to gain control of the body and mind.

(3) Fasting might be by giving up food during the day, or giving up one meal. Milk and fruit diet if carried on for a few days might serve as a gratified fast.

(4) But self-controlled eating—*Yuktahara*, as the *Gita* says,—is the best. It means eating only such minimum quantity as would sustain the body and mind in a balanced state. It requires great control to do so day by day.

July 24, 1960

810: *Is it a sin to humiliate a harlot who turns men to hell?*

Such women should be shunned. While they should not be glorified as some people do, they should not be humiliated. There is no sense in humiliating them, for they are the products of social, economic, moral and spiritual maladjustments in society. They are more to be pitied, they should not be victimised.

811: *When I read Bhavan's Journal dated 3rd April, I was very much interested in the article entitled "Jyotirlingas and Panchatatvalingas" and appreciate the purity bestowed in these Lingas. When I come in contact with members of other communities, viz., people belonging to other religions, they say, 'What, you Hindus are so blind as to perform puja at Shankar's Linga?' To this remark I have to keep mum. Will you therefore very kindly give an answer to the above question?*

(1) Why do you suffer from an inferiority complex? Each religion has a symbol of divinity; it might be stone, wood, bone, which evokes devotion; the symbol acquires sanctity by the devotion which is offered to it.

(2) It is 'Western' myth, to say that what we call 'lingas' are representations of the human phallus; this nonsense is perpetrated by sex-obsessed foreign tourists. Has any Siva worshipper, from Vyas and Shankar to you and me for over three thousand years ever thought of the 'God of gods' Mahadeva in terms of a human organ?

(3) The 'linga' is the symbol of the Eternal in its aspects of Siva and embodies Love in its highest form.

812: *What kind of difference is there between Spirit and Matter when God is present in both of them?*

In matter, the underlying consciousness is shrouded.

When matter is transformed into life, the consciousness becomes somewhat articulate. Then it unfolds itself progressively as the mind, the higher mind, the conscience, and finally the Spirit. Spirit, when well attuned to fundamental aspirations like Love, Power, Beauty, directly contacts God and manifests His power.

August 21, 1960

813: *How am I to develop love for God when I am not conscious within myself that God is the doer, He alone is doing everything, I am doing nothing?*

It is very difficult to be conscious all the time that God is the doer. That is why it is necessary to do *japa* and pray to God. It will develop faith and make you God-conscious.

814: *What is civilization and culture? Is modern India cultured and civilized?*

Civilization is material equipment of life. Culture is the way of life of a people informed by certain fundamental values inspired by a central idea. Please read Kulapati's letter No. 210 dated July 24, 1960. We are more cultured than the so-called 'Advanced Nations,' though less civilized. Our Five-Year Plans which aim at material advancement, ignoring our cultural needs, are designed to make us more civilized, while depriving us of our culture.

815: *Will you please shed light on how to look through and appreciate paintings in modern art exhibitions? How would the splitting of different colours in a disorderly and obscure manner become the famous paintings of the world? Do they not unduly tax the layman's imagination?*

I have no patience with the so-called modern art. It is a jumble, reflecting the confused mind of the modern artist.

It not only taxes one's imagination, it stifles it and passes off ugliness as beauty.

816: *Are there any religious commandments in "Sanatana Dharma" like the Ten Commandments in Christian religion? If so, please list them.*

"The Ten Commandments" of the Bible are certain aspects of the Moral Order, presented in telling sentences. Our scriptures are full of them. If you read the last few verses of Canto XVII of the *Bhagavad Gita*, you will find all the aspects of the Moral Order presented with great clarity.

817: *Who is a true Hindu?*

A true Hindu is one who has faith that God lives in all created things; who accepts the life of the Spirit as the final goal of human efforts; who tries in however humble a way to conquer attachment, fear and wrath; who tries to draw inspiration from the teachings of the *Upanishads*, the *Brahmasutra* and the *Gita*; from those of Vyas, Sri Krishna, Sri Ramachandra, Buddha, Mahavira; of the Acharyas, Sants and Bhaktas; of Ramakrishna, Dayanand, Sri Aurobindo and Gandhiji.

818: *Will you kindly suggest some of the ways to develop good memory?*

Try to refresh your memory again and again of what you want to remember.

819: *Would it not be proper to declare Sankara Jayanti Day as a National holiday in the same way as Buddha Jayanti?*

It should be, but our rulers, some of whom are allergic to Hinduism, are ignorant of the legacy he left behind.

820: *I am quoting from p. 29 of the Bhavan's Journal*

dated 20th March, 1960, describing the love affair in Krishnavatara as follows: "He felt her cheeks, His hand moved on her breast. . . ." Is it fair to attribute such words to a pair whom you have so often described as Divine, who are supposed to be united in universal spiritual love as against physical unions of mortals?

If Sri Krishna stood for anything, He stood for the affirmation of life. He has enjoined *Yuktaharavihara* 'Well-regulated food and enjoyment'. He never taught the negation of life nor spurned the joys of the flesh, if they were sublimated by a higher impulse and indulged in under the guidance of a wise regard for the Moral Order. Who said that the joys of a man and wife are undivine? I never said it.

September 4, 1960

821: *What is the meaning of duality? Can there be duality without comparison? Is it possible to view things without duality? If so, under what conditions?*

(1) By duality, I take it, you mean the sense of opposites, heat and cold, pleasure and pain, desire and aversion. This sense brings about misery. To escape it one must be *nirdvandva* i.e. rise superior to duality.

(2) It is very difficult to view things without being affected by a sense of duality. But one can rise superior to duality if one trains oneself to develop *samyama*.

(3) *Nirdvandattva* can be developed in some measure by *titiksha*, endurance, which is explained as follows:

To bear all misery, without trying to conquer it and getting rid of anxiety and frustration—that is called *titiksha*. *Titiksha* comes easily if we can become conscious that we are the imperishable, unalterable, eternal Self—*achaloyam Sanatanah*—either by Yoga or by developing *Samattva*, the sense of equality.

822: *To what extent would the practice of shouting at*

a distinguished national leader to make him deliver his speech in Hindi serve the purpose of making Hindi the national language of India?

(a) Trying to force Hindi by shouting at leaders who do not speak it will only rouse antagonism and retard its progress as a national language.

(b) Apart from this, such expression of narrow-mindedness would destroy the unity of the country. Our emphasis on language exclusiveness is our current danger.

823: *The statement "you are born to be kissed by the rising sun and to spread fragrance of joy" given under 'Krishnavatara' in Bhavan's Journal dated 20th March 1960 seems to me paradoxical. How is it relevant to the context, will you very kindly clarify?*

Have you never seen flower buds being kissed by the sun in the early morning? If not, you have lost a great joy of life. It is after the sun kisses the bud into a flower that it spreads its fragrance. You should think of beautiful things to appreciate beauty. These things cannot be 'clarified.'

824: *Though Gayatri is a woman, why are women excepted from Gayatri mantra?*

(1) *Gayatri* is not a woman; it is a Vedic metre. But when *Gayatri mantra*, the sacred hymn, was composed in the *Gayatri* metre, the hymn came to be called *Gayatri*. Then those who held the *mantra* in sanctity deified her as a goddess.

(2) In Vedic times, there were women Rishis who composed hymns themselves. Lopamudra, the spouse of Sage Agastya, was one such. Later, women studied the Vedas; they were given the sacred thread too. But in the days of darkness, there was a mixture of races. Women of no education and little culture came into learned families. It was feared that in their mouth the Vedas would be mutilated.

Then it came to be prescribed that they should not be taught Vedas.

(3) Dayanand Sarasvati was the first to break this medieval taboo and enjoined the giving of the sacred thread to women and teaching them the Vedas.

825: *When Lord Krishna placed the chariot between the two armies, Arjuna became physically a coward and was unwilling to fight. Was there any influence of Krishna on Arjuna to become so, resulting in having to tell Arjuna the Bhagavad Gita ?*

How can Krishna make Arjuna a coward? On the contrary, he calls Arjuna's fright 'cowardly and un-Aryan.'

826: *I have heard it said that 'thinking' of sinful acts amounts to committal of higher sins than their actual commission. Will you kindly elucidate whether 'thinkings' which occur during dreams (without one's knowledge) amount to sin ?*

I don't think so. Sometimes dreams in which we commit wicked deeds purge our subconscious thoughts of wickedness.

September 18, 1960

827: *One of my teachers said that a "wife is a knife to cut your life." My friend, however, insisted that a "wifeless life is a moonless night." Will you kindly give your views in this matter so as to assist me in coming to a decision for getting married myself ?*

Your teachers—if what you attribute to them is true—are fond of playing on meaningless words. Your friend also wants to rhyme wifeless with moonless. Life is incomplete without man and wife discovering harmony of the body, emotions and spirit. When they are united as Parvati and Parameshvara, to use Kalidasa's simile, like word

and sense—*vagarthaviva sampriktau*—life attains its fulfilment.

828: *Can one become a Sannyasi without proper Guru-padesa?*

Unless we are inspired by a Guru and for a few years live in his company, it is very difficult to change our mental content. Unless it is so changed Sannyasa does not become real.

However, there have been gifted souls who have taken to real Sannyasa without a Guru, but those souls have been very rare.

829: *According to St. John 14: 6, Jesus sayeth unto him, "I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me". How far can we believe this statement?*

Jesus Christ was one of those, in whom, according to me, God had descended, as in an *avatar*. His way was the way of love, which is both Truth and Life. When he used the words 'no man cometh unto the Father but by me', he only meant that without realizing Truth and Love—which he represented—no one could attain God, or, to use the words of Sri Krishna, "Live in Me".

October 2, 1960

830: *If the Swatantra Party gets elected to the Legislature, will it have a whip? Will there be freedom of vote?*

All parties have some common platform and members have to accept some discipline. The Swatantra Party will also have to have such a discipline through a whip. Outside such fundamental policies, members ought to be free.

831: *What is the difference between mind, life and soul?*

Life makes physical activity in man possible. Mind is the stuff which cognises, thinks and reasons. Soul is the

element from which aspirations for Truth, Beauty, Love, Calmness, Bliss arise and is not destroyed even after the body and with it the mind come to an end.

832: *What is 'soul?' Where does it go after death?*

Soul is the unmanifested spark of Divine Consciousness, which radiates fundamental aspirations of Truth, Beauty, Love, Calmness, Bliss in us. After death, it is reborn.

833: *What do you think of Sri Vinoba Bhave's mission in the Chambal Valley?*

I think it was a setback to the law and order situation in the state.

834: *Why don't you publish the Bhavan's Journal, which is of very great value to Indian people, in all Indian languages and at a low cost?*

We are publishing it in Hindi and Gujarati. Give me money and I will have it published in all languages.

835: *How is life beyond death? Can you suggest some books on that subject?*

(1) I believe in the Karma theory of rebirth, and have had no time to look into the life beyond death other than rebirth.

(2) I have had some experience of calling spirits. I do not think the so-called spirits are disembodied souls. They are entities created by the will and imagination of those who call them and give responses as if they were independent centres of consciousness.

(3) Ask some spiritualist about books. Our *Garuda Purana* gives a detailed account of what happens to a man after death. But it is not wholesome reading.

836: *(a) The Hindus believe the ultimate realisation is the Parama-purusha. That being so, why should there be*

conflicts between Saivism and Vaishnavism in the Puranas and one God superior to the other?

(b) Do you think the constant repetition of the name of one's Ishta Devata can help one overcome wrath, envy, evil passions, etc. and lead him along the correct path?

(a) Different Puranas were composed by members of different sects, and each one tried to show that the godhead of his sect was the highest form in which God manifested Himself. But all the Puranas give place of pre-eminence to Shiva and Vishnu.

(b) Yes. I have repeatedly explained the value of Japa.

837: *Why don't you take steps to publish selections from Koran and Bible also, since there are many readers belonging to other religions who like your Journal?*

We must have competent men who could make appropriate selections from scriptures other than of Indian origin.

838: *How is it possible to agree with Lord Buddha's statement "What a man thinks, that he becomes"?*

We are always shaped by what we are thinking about. It is concentration which releases the creative activity in man. If appropriate creative activity is released, it will shape the man.

839: *For the last five years I have been resisting certain evil powers at work in my official work which try to put me wrong for personal benefit. My resistance involves sometimes a neglect of my duty to my parents too. It is quite possible that the other powers may try to risk my livelihood and even personal safety. Do you think I should put up fight to the end or give it up as hopeless?*

Never give up an honest fight.

November 13, 1960

840: *According to Manu Smriti, meat-eating and carnal*

pleasures prevailed in olden days. It was not a sin. Even the Brahmīns and Rishis indulged in it. Why, therefore, is it considered a sin in the present times?

(1) Meat-eating has never been considered sinful either in ancient or modern India. It is forbidden on grounds of hygiene and of cruelty involved in killing animals. Particularly those who are keen on spiritual evolution have to eschew it, as it is *tamasic* food, that is, food which induces grossness.

(2) Pleasures are never considered sinful. The Lord in *Gīta* wants the Yogi to indulge in food and pleasures, but in a self-restrained way.

(3) Meat-eating and carnal pleasures are discouraged because of the tendency among those who take to them to lose their sense of proportion and become gluttons or addicts.

841: *What is the essential difference between heavenly love and earthly love?*

(a) True love, for that is the appropriate word, is self-giving and is unselfish. It is purged of egotism. Giving love, therefore, becomes an act of complete surrender in which the object of love—whether God or a human being—becomes the sole master. It is also earthly in the sense that it is found on earth.

(b) Ordinary love is the selfish sentiment inspired by a desire of good for oneself. It may be love of God for getting some benefit. It may be love of a human being to secure joy and happiness.

(c) The degraded form of desire often referred to as love which wants a member of the other sex for selfish ends can scarcely be called love.

842: *What is meant by 'inward bent of mind'?*

It means the capacity (a) to look into the process of your mind, (b) to scrutinise and control the working of your

intellect, emotions and aspirations, and (c) to search for internal strength without external aid.

November 27, 1960

843: *Can you tell me why some of our energetic Indian youths have greying hair?*

Grey hair results from (1) heredity, (2) constant anxiety, and (3) neglect of bodily care.

844: *Is it true that Gayatri is forbidden for women? I have been doing it for nearly a year. Will it do me any harm? Can we read the Gita and other religious books or attend Satsang on permissible days of the month? Can we touch Japamala? Please enlighten me.*

Women and men are equal in matters of morals and spirituality. Any ban on religious activity for women is just nonsense. In fact women being more sensitive can develop spirituality and approach God much more easily than men.

In Vedic times, there were women Rishis; and Gargi and Maitreyi were great philosophers in the Upanishadic period. And Mary Magdalene had greater spirituality than most of the disciples of Jesus Christ.

845: *I am a young boy of 21 years. I have great ambition to serve my people. How can religion help me in the fulfilment of my ambition?*

Religion alone will give you the true spirit of service by getting rid of your egoism.

846: *I saw in an issue of your Journal the portrait of an actress adorning the cover picture. I believe the sale of your magazine depends upon its contents and not on the attractive title page. Don't you agree?*

I agree. It is the advertiser who thinks that exhibiting cinema actresses in colour induces foolish men and women to buy his goods.

847: *I wish to become a Buddhist. But there is nobody to initiate me. What shall I do? I have no practice of praying to God. Will you suggest some prayer in the morning, evening and night with its meaning?*

(1) Why should you become a Buddhist? There is not a thing in Buddhism which is not in Hinduism.

(2) Select any prayer you like. You ask for the Bhavan's prayer, with its translation, if you like.

December 11, 1960

848: *What is "Moksha"? Please define.*

"Moksha" is to be free from attachment, fear and wrath and live in God.

849: *I understand Swami Vivekananda to have concluded that only individual spirituality backed by religion can be the base for a good social and political reform in India. Am I correct?*

Swami Vivekananda said so, and so did Sri Aurobindo and Gandhiji. If there is no spiritual outlook, social and political reform is a mockery. Reform is not external change, it is the internal change in man, which only comes of developing spiritual outlook.

850: *Unlike Mohammedans or Christians etc., most of the Hindus are very irregular in going to the temples or devoting time for worship. Is this a freedom to our religion or indiscipline?*

It is not freedom. It is lack of moral responsibility which is only kept alive by observing forms of maintaining contact with ceremonies or places associated with God.

851: *What is your opinion regarding "Dvaita" and "Advaita" philosophy?*

The universe, including matter, life and mind, are manifestations of God, through which He unfolds himself. But as it is very difficult to establish a living bond with a universal Existence it is essential that we begin by surrendering ourselves to God. Surrender of an individual to God viewed as living Power—which is implied in Dvaitism—is an essential stage for most of us for attaining God-mindedness.

852: *If Lord Buddha is considered an incarnation of God by the Hindus, why should Adi Shankaracharya rise much against Buddhism and cause its downfall in the very land of its birth?*

Adi Shankaracharya did not fight Buddha; he fought the doctrines which had sprung up round eighth century Buddhism. Perhaps Buddha was accepted as an incarnation after Shankara's time.

December 25, 1960

853: *In the Mahabharata Yuddha we find the grandsire Bhishma siding with the Kauravas and fighting against Pandavas knowing as he did that the Pandavas were right. Please explain.*

Dharma required of Bhishma that he should support the sovereignty which he had built up. If he had left the Kauravas, Hastinapur, as a sovereign power, would have been destroyed. His conduct shows that in the affairs of State, it becomes a higher duty to fight for its stability and integrity than to stand away by one's personal view of right or wrong.

854: *It is mentioned in Bhagavan Parasurama, Part II, that the Maharishis Vasishtha and Viswamitra attained salvation when Parasurama was a youth and that Parasurama was the sixth incarnation of God. How does it happen then that these rishis were alive in the days of Sri Rama?*

The Vasishtha and Viswamitra of the time of Sri Rama were not the same persons as the Vedic Vasishtha and Viswamitra who took part in the Battle of Ten Kings. Each of them left behind their schools of learning and their later disciples were evidently known by their names.

855: *In his Urdu book entitled Do Islam, Ghulam Jilani Barq of Pakistan states that the word "Hindu" does not relate to any Indian language, new or old, and that it was first used by Mahmud Ghaznawi for the "Aryans" of India by way of contempt and that it means "a dark man, a slave, a cunning fellow, etc." Kindly give full information on this point.*

The statement in the *Do Islam* is incorrect. Punjab, where the Aryans settled first, was called Sapta Sindhu, the Land of the Seven Rivers, Sindhu meaning a river. The word Sindhu stuck to the main river, which in English we call Indus. The ancient Iranians corrupted Sindhu into Hindu. And those who lived in the valley of Sindhu and across generally came to be known as Hindus. When the Central Asian barbarians invaded India, they adopted the word to indicate the people of the land across the Indus, and being arrogant conquerors—as all conquerors are—they treated the conquered people as infidels and enemies. The British scholars transferred the name to the religion by calling the religion of the Hindus 'Hinduism'.

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