

**THE
SCIENCE AND PHILOSOPHY
OF
SPIRITUALITY**

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**‘Eternal bliss, May we enjoy,
So created us, You in Your Image,
Ignorant, we have forgotten the Truth,
Lead us to Truth, through inner voyage’**

PREFACE

The humanity has been making great efforts to acquire knowledge in order that it may lead a more comfortable and happier life, but it has not been able to find a way to eternal happiness. Science has proved itself a double-edged weapon. The wicked mind of man has often crossed all limits of brutality to satisfy its lust for power. The man exists in the universe as the king of all creatures, because of his superior intellect and superior physical instrument (his body). It is up to him either to improve upon himself and acquire divinity or to degrade himself to the level of beasts. Although a king, the existence of man in the universe is like a tiny particle but his ego knows no end. His quest for more and more knowledge also is unending, especially in the fields of science, religion and spirituality, which not only govern his existence, but can lead him to the state of eternal bliss.

Science, religion and spirituality are not contradictory, as is the common belief but these are complimentary, being the different facets of the same Truth. While the science relates to the knowledge that can be perceived through senses and subjected to rational scrutiny, religion relates to training of mind (to exercise control over faculties of mind) in order that it may acquire capability of perceiving the knowledge of higher levels of Truth. Spirituality on the other hand is dwelling in the domain of Truth. To realise the Truth, however, one needs to learn through his own experience, practice and participation. Different people have followed different paths and in their own way they have had the glimpse of the Truth. The sages and seers have followed the path of inner journey and have described their experiences, often in metaphorical words. Essentially they have talked about the nature of the world and the way to liberation and self-realisation.

An attempt has been made in the present book to explain this ancient knowledge in a simple manner relying upon the Holy Scriptures like *Srimadbhagwat Gita*, *Srimadbhagwat Mahapurana*, the Bible and the Qur'an and many other sources. Essentially all of them talk of the same Reality but the way of expression to some extent differs. They have talked about the creation of the world starting

from the point when the Truth alone existed and how gradually the other creatures originated. All of them agree on the superior most status having been conferred on the man and the man alone having been given the capability of realising the Truth and regaining his original status.

The man has been cast in the Image of the God and He has breathed His spirit in the man. The soul, however, lost its original luminosity by identifying itself with the body and mind due to false association with the ego. In this world of multiplicity, the mind assumes the role of the ruler and governs both the body and the soul. It is the mind that experiences the bondage or liberation. Action is the law of manifestation of life and because of ego the man thinks himself to be the doer and thus binds himself to the action.

From time immemorial, man has been searching for ways to realise the Truth. Various religions have prescribed different practices and methods to realise the Truth. Every religion claims its superiority over others. It is, however, to be understood that religions act like gates to lead to the Truth, but the Truth is one. Men are unique; their requirements and their state of evolution are different. Different religions are thus meant only to cater to these different needs. Often, however, the outer form of religion alone makes most people satisfied and they forget about their ultimate quest, the Truth.

The soul has descended in the human aggregate and it pervades every cell of the human body. The possible ways of realising the Truth are, therefore, innumerable. Over the ages, prophets and saints have evolved newer and simpler methods looking to the limitations of time and effort on the part of seekers. ‘*Kundalini yoga*’ or the awakening of ‘*Kundalini*’ has become a popular catchword for luring unsuspecting seekers. They are taught some breathing and other exercises and at times they also acquire some miraculous powers. But the aim of spiritual seekers is to realise the Truth. One, therefore, needs to be careful not to waste his life in pursuing miraculous powers, or in gaining command over some postures.

In India the science of activating and awakening spiritual *Chakras* is related to the *Nath Sampdray*, but this

is an ancient science, which finds mention in the *Srimadbhagwat Mahapurana* as well. Sant Kabir has talked of spiritual *Chakras* in great detail and given their vivid description. The Sufi saints, especially the Naqshbandi Sufis, who are considered highly advanced amongst the Sufis, have greatly developed this science and have ascribed greater roles to the spiritual Masters to help the seekers in acquiring higher spiritual states in the least time.

The present book discusses these aspects in four chapters. The first chapter ‘Time, Relativity and Creation’ discusses the creation of the world, the role played by the time and how the Primordial Determination of the God has set up various planes of relativity. It also refers to *Sankhya Yoga* and describes how the human body is formed by the combination of various elements, which are responsible for its organisation and systematisation. The second chapter is titled ‘Action the Law of Manifestation of Life’ and describes that originating from energy, which contains in it the seed of action, all living creatures are constantly driven to action. It also discusses how the action binds or leads to liberation. The third chapter titled ‘The Knot in the Middle’ describes that the mind occupies a place between the body and the soul. Action and knowledge, and their purpose i.e. happiness, all lie in the mind. It gains impressions by traveling between the extremities and ties the knot. The last chapter ‘Realising the Truth’ deals with the science of spiritual *Chakras* and describes how the Truth can be realised by activating and awakening them, with special reference to the ancient Indian and the Sufi way of spiritual practices.

I may, however, mention with all humility that whatever is discussed in this book is only theoretical explanation. No one can convey the taste of jaggery by writing volumes about it. By reading one can acquire knowledge about the taste of jaggery but one will lack firm belief, an element of uncertainty will creep in. A small grain of jaggery would, however, let one realize the taste of jaggery immediately and this experience will be everlasting forming a permanent impression in the mind. The real thing is one’s own experience. No amount of theory can equate with the knowledge gained through one’s own experience. Of course, once an experience is gained, theoretical

explanation does help in understanding and better appreciation of the experience. The real spiritual experience can be gained only at the feet of the great Masters and one gets the opportunity to sit in their company only by the grace of the God. A few moments spent in their company are far more fruitful than several years of penance. May God bless us with such opportunities time and again.

My father, Dr. Chandra Gupta, took me to the pious feet of my Master Param Sant Thakur Ram Singh ji in 1966. This work is all their grace and submitted at their pious feet.

R.K.Gupta

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- 1. TIME, RELATIVITY AND CREATION**
- 2. ACTION, THE LAW OF
MANIFESTATION OF LIFE**
- 3. KNOT IN THE MIDDLE**
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THE SCIENCE AND PHILOSOPHY OF SPIRITUALITY

TIME, RELATIVITY AND CREATION

The man exists, so does the question of existence of the God. If there were no existence of man, the question of existence of God would also not have arisen. From time immemorial the question who has created him and what is the purpose of life has been agitating human mind. The life span of all creation is limited. Everything in the universe is constantly changing. One who is born is sure to die; death being a certainty for all living beings. Various religions cater to various beliefs; some believe in rebirth whereas some others believe in the present life alone as the end of the cycle, after which the God would consign them to heaven or hell, as a reward or punishment for their deeds in the present life. All religions, however, agree to it that the God has created everything, including the human beings, and everything would ultimately return to Him. The God is the Creator and He pervades everything.

The human mind has been carving out various explanations from time to time on how the universe was created, depending upon its state of evolution. The scientists are engaged in examining the truth of various theories of evolution. Some ancient sages and seers, however, had the glimpse of the Truth in a state of meditation or they had a vision, which they mentioned in various scriptures. Their descriptions are almost similar. Most scriptures mention that in the beginning of the creation, there was only the Absolute Truth, with no manifestation of any sort. It was the state when nothing had manifested and is described as the state of Supreme Darkness of Absolute Nonbeingness. No one has any knowledge if there was any creation that existed before. Everything having dissolved in its essence, rested in a state of total concealment in the Essence of all essences i.e. the God-the Truth, who was in the state of absolute peace, perfect harmony and supreme bliss. All His qualities and attributes were resting in Him in a dormant state. In this

state, there was no *Prakriti* (Nature or *Maya*) and *Kaal* (Time) in existence, nothing except the One-the Almighty God.

Since there was no existence of time in this state of Supreme Darkness, no one knows for how long did this state last. This was the state which is totally Indescribable, Unimaginable and beyond any perceptions. It was the state of the Absolute Truth all by Itself. No time, no relativity, no creation whatsoever. It was not the state of nothingness but the state of Completeness, of Totality and of Fullness. The scriptures describe such a state as the state of absolute bliss, as this was the state of perfection, harmony and equilibrium. Overwhelming with bliss, all of a sudden, the Almighty God thought of revealing Himself in the form of manifold existence in order that the manifold existence may also enjoy the same state of bliss. The Hindu scriptures mention that ‘before the creation, there was only the God, the Soul of all souls. Neither there was anything to be seen, nor any seer. He Himself was the manifold existence that is seen in the created world, as He desired to be alone’ (*Srimadbhagwat Mahapurana-Tratiya Skandh, Adhyay 5 Shloka 23*).

The world was thus created by the mere thought of the Almighty God. Thought is the most powerful thing, which creates and also dissolves the world. It is a common experience for all of us that all our activities are first born at the level of thought. The thought is the seed of all human actions and achievements. The thought of the God to manifest in the form of multiple existences in order that the manifold existence may also enjoy the same state of bliss was thus the root cause for the entire creation. The sages and seers consider this world to have been created in accordance with the principle ‘*Ekoaham-Mosyaam*’ meaning thereby that ‘I am One, I should become many’. The Islamic tradition supports this in the famous *Hadith*; ‘I was a hidden treasure. I desired to be known and hence I created the world so that I should be known.’

The human mind cannot give any explanation for this desire of the God, the cause of all causes. Desires arise from imperfection, if something is wanting, for fulfilling the deficiency. But the God is Perfect; He is complete in

Himself and does not depend upon anything. Why then this desire?

This desire of the God to manifest Himself as manifold existence to enjoy the same state of bliss acted as the Primordial Determination, the Cosmic Intelligence that reflects itself at all levels, in all the creatures, and which is the root cause of the desire for all living beings to multiply and to constantly endeavor to seek happiness. Every creature in the universe desires to be happy and to multiply. Look at the trees. They flower and produce seeds. Seeds in turn produce trees and thus keep on multiplying. The same is true of all other creatures. They all long for procreation and happiness; no one wants to be unhappy or to undergo any sufferings.

A lot of philosophical discussion has taken place on the issue that since God was alone in the beginning of creation and since everything has originated from Him, therefore, everything that exists is also a form of God. The other viewpoint is that although everything has originated from God, but everything is not the God; rather everything exists because of God. These two viewpoints are the creation of human mind and have given rise to various speculations. They appear to be different viewpoints initially on a cursory look but are, in fact, not different if one has realised the truth thereof. For example the sea is made of trillions and trillions of droplets of water, which exist together in the form of the sea. Seen from the viewpoint of the sea, every droplet in itself is the sea, but from the viewpoint of the droplet, its individual existence is that of a drop of water and not that of the sea. The reality, however, does not change whatever way one looks at it. The sea remains the sea whether one sees it as a conglomeration of droplets or the droplet as the part of the sea. The sea exists because the droplet exists and the droplet exists because the sea exists; the only difference is that while the sea is not dependant on the droplet, the droplet is dependant on the sea. It is the question of realisation. If the droplet realises itself as the sea it is the sea, otherwise it is a droplet.

The desire of the God to reveal Himself in the form of manifold existence in order that the manifold existence may

also enjoy the same state of bliss constituted a two-dimensional plane. The two dimensions were constituted by the two aspects of the God's desire, the first aspect being to multiply i.e. to manifest in the form of manifold existence and the second aspect related to the state of bliss enjoyed by the God to be enjoyed by the manifold existence. These two aspects were not unidirectional. The aspect of manifold existence required the One to manifest as many. Hitherto it was the God alone; all by Himself, but the desire to manifest in the form of manifold existence involved the One to appear as many. This caused the manifold existence to have a feeling of separate identity, an existence of their own-self. The One became many and the manifold existence lost the feeling of oneness, wholeness, completeness and fullness. At the same time the other aspect of the desire of the God was that the manifold existence should also enjoy the same state of bliss, which required that the manifold existence should realise its oneness, wholeness, completeness and fullness, as anything separated from its origin would always long for the unity and can become full of bliss only on removal of this feeling of separation. A piece of stone thrown in the sky rests at peace only on getting back to the earth to which it belongs. Similarly, a stream of water constantly endeavors to rush and reunite with the ocean, from where it originated. This is the universal law that one rests at peace only on regaining its original state, i.e. by reuniting with its origin.

This desire of the Divine, therefore, consisted of two opposing ends that of separation from the source and uniting back with the origin. This desire of the Divine was the Primordial Determination that reflects in and echoes in all the living beings. The entire creation, therefore, emulates this dual perception that arises from two opposing or mutually opposite complementarities. It is like a circle, which begins and ends at the same point. The point of beginning is the end of ending and the point of ending is the start of beginning. The two extremities thus originate from the same source but result in an expression of outward flow, which encompass within them the entire creation.

This two-dimensional desire of the God constituted the first plane to receive the irradiations from the Absolute Truth in the form of a Marvelous Brilliance-the Supreme

Consciousness that appeared instantly with the God's desire to reveal Himself wherein was cast His luminous image (known as the *Sat Purush*, the *Adi Purush* or *Saguna Brahman*) shining all around, which is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscience and has all the qualities and attributes of the God. This desire of the God, however, was the first illusion, the first veil, referred to as *Adi Maya* in the Hindu scriptures. The *Srimadbhagwat Mahapuram* in *Tratiya Skandh*, *Adhyay 5* states that before the creation, there was only the God, the Soul of all souls. Neither there was anything to be seen, nor any seer. With His desire to manifest in the form of manifold creation, He started to look around, but He did not see anything else, as He alone was shining all around and there was nothing else. The *Adi Purush* (*Sat Purush*, as He is referred to in most of the scriptures) accepted association with the *Adi Maya* in order to create the world. This very faculty of differentiating the Seer from the seen was the first manifestation of the '*Karya Kaaranrupi Maya*' (the *Adi Maya* in the form of cause and effect), with the help of which the God created the world.

The scriptures mention that being the Supreme Consciousness and the treasure house of all knowledge, the God creates the world by His mere thought, which reflects in the form of Cosmic Intelligence and sets in the process of creation. The *Srimadbhagwat Mahapuram-Pratham Skandh Adhyay 3* in *Shloka 1* states that 'in the beginning of the creation, the God desired to create the universe and at once He revealed Himself in the form of the *Adi Purush* accompanied with '*Mahtatva*' ('*Chitta*' or the faculty of thought) etc. at His command.'

Similarly, it is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an: 'The God is the creator of all. It is He, who produced fire for you by rubbing the green trees (like the bamboo tree) and now you (the man) produce fire by rubbing its branches. Verily, the One, who created the skies and the earth, does not He command the power to bring them to life (the dead persons)? Why not! He is the creator of all and He is the Knower. Verily, when He intends a thing, His command is: Be! And it is. He is the Lord of all and everything will return to Him'-Qur'an, 36:79-83.

The Holy Bible also mentions in Genesis, Chapter 1: 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of the God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day. And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmaments, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day. And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he seas: and God saw that it was good. And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the third day. And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth, And to rule over the day and the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning was the fourth day. And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creatures that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of the heaven. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And God blessed

them, saying Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. And the evening and morning were the fifth day. And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creatures after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepth over the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to everything that creepth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and morning was the sixth day.'

It is thus seen that the Holy Bible mentions the command of the God as 'let there be' and immediately the command is implemented, which is evident from the expression 'and it was so'.

From these descriptions in the Holy Scriptures, it is clear that the God created the world. No one can say whether the world in which we live is the world that has been created for the first time or whether it had been created earlier also. Since the world has been in existence now, the possibility of its existence earlier cannot be denied. The Hindu mythology strongly believes in the periodical creation and dissolution of the world. They believe that the universe is created and dissolved periodically by the action of *Kaal* (time). According to the

Hindu scriptures, the lord of creation *Brahma* has a life span of one hundred divine years. One day of lord *Brahma*, known as a '*Kalpa*', is equivalent to 4,32,00,00,000 years* of our time (the time on the earth). Similarly the duration of the night of *Brahma* is also one *Kalpa*. Lord *Brahma* creates the universe in the beginning of every new *Kalpa*, which exists during the day and remains dissolved during the night of lord *Brahma* (*Pralay*). In that dissolved state it rests in Lord *Brahma*. During the periodical dissolution of the universe, however, the *Prakriti* (the Nature or *Maya*) and *Kaal* are not dissolved. Only at the time of *Mahapralay* i.e. at the end of the life span of lord *Brahma*, everything including the *Prakriti* and *Kaal* are dissolved in the Essence of all essences-the God, and the process of creation starts afresh, as a result of the desire of the God, as mentioned above.

(*Aryabhata, a famous Indian philosopher and mathematician, has stated that in 10,80,000 years the planets make an integral number of revolution round the earth in the celestial sphere, which brings them all together in the same original position. This period corresponds to a *Yuga*. Four *Yuga* make one *Chaturyuga* equal to 43,20,000 years and one thousand *Chaturyuga* make up one *Kalpa* equal to 4,32,00,00,000 earth-years. Source-'What Awaits Man in 2000 AD' by Prof. M.K.Dave)

The desire of creation contained the seed of *Gyan* (knowledge) embedded in it, as the world could be created only through knowledge. The manifold existence could not be created without the power of knowledge. In regard to the role played by knowledge in the creation of the world, the *Srimadbhagwat Mahapurana* mentions in *Dwitiya Skandh Adhyay 9 Shloka 5* that Lord *Brahma* (the god of creation in Hindu mythology. *Bruha* in the Sanskrit language means expanding and *Manan* means contemplation. *Brahman* or *Brahma* thus means growing with thinking*) sitting on the lotus flower, the place of his origin, was contemplating about the task of creating the world. He, however, lacked the knowledge that was necessary for him to possess to be able to accomplish his task. While he was engrossed in this contemplation, he got an inspiration that he should perform *tapa* (penance) in order that he may acquire the knowledge necessary for creation. As a result of *tapa* it was revealed to

Lord *Brahma* that before the creation, it was the God alone. Neither there was existence of anything gross or subtle, nor the ignorance that gives rise to both. Where this creation does not exist, God exists; whatever is seen as existing that is also the existence of the God; and whatever would be left is also the existence of God. Whatever is seen as existing or not existing, all is an expression of *Maya*. It is the God alone that exists in all forms and everywhere; He alone is the truth of all existence.

Similarly, there is a reference in the *Dwadash Skandh* of *Srimadbhagwat Mahapuram* that lord *Brahma* sat in meditation to recollect the knowledge of creation that existed before. While he was sitting in meditation, a divine vibration, *Anahat Nad* appeared in his heart, which was not the result of any friction within his body. The *Srimadbhagwat Mahapuram* mentions that when the *Jeeva* (the embodied soul) restrains his senses from engaging in all outwardly distractions, he also experiences the appearance of this *Anahat Nad* in his heart. Great yogis worship this *Anahat Nad* and by meditating on this they attain liberation from the cycle of death and rebirth. The *Anahat Nad* resulted in the appearance of “*AUM*”, through the power of which the Nature starts revealing itself from the state of dissolution.

(*Truth Eternal-The original writings of Samarth Guru Mahatma Ramchandra ji Maharaj of Fatehgarh, UP)

The desire that the manifold creation should be blissful contained the seed of ‘*Kaal*’ (time) hidden in it. It is the *Kaal* that sets in the process of differentiation, movement, action and ultimately dissolution of everything in its essence. Existence involves the feeling of individual consciousness or the feeling of being separate. So long there is a feeling of separation, bliss cannot be complete. It is only through the dissolution of the self and merger of the self with the Source that one could return to the Original state and thus experience the eternal bliss.

At the due time the *Sat Purush* inspired the *Adi Maya* to transform itself into *Gyan* (knowledge) and *Kaal* (time). Both knowledge and time are thus the characteristic of the *Adi Maya*. The subtle time is reckoned by the

differentiation of the *Trigunas* of the *Maya*-Nature, as discussed later. *Gyan* also is a subtle veil; being within the domain of *Maya*. *Gyan* is the way that leads one to the Truth. The stage of *Gyan* is very high, very close to the Truth, but it is not the Truth. The *Sat Purush* needed the help of *Maya* to create the world; He could not have done it all by Himself without the help of *Maya*. The God required the help of something that was an illusion to create something illusionary.

The *Gyan* and *Kaal* together constituted the second plane of reflection (the second veil of illusion). The reflection (or the shadow) of the *Sat Purush*, who was shining all around, fell on this plane and together with the attributes of *Gyan* and *Kaal* this reflection of the *Sat Purush* took the form of the *Kaal Purush*, representing the temporal and spatial principle that governs all contingent beings subject to the condition of time, birth and death. Looking at the luminous *Sat Purush*, the *Kaal Purush* claimed its own separate existence, giving rise to the principle of *Ahankar* (ego-the principle of individual consciousness) in the formula “I am”. The *Ahankar* was the most important element responsible for the separate existence of the manifold creation. It is because of the individual consciousness that the man feels his separate existence and engages himself in the search of the Truth.

The *Gyan* and *Kaal* together with *Ahankar*, constituted a three-dimensional plane. At the due moment, under the influence of the Cosmic Intelligence, the *Kaal Purush* was transformed into two components, a spiritual component (pertaining to the *Sat Purush*) and a *Prakratik* component (pertaining to the *Maya*). Both these components appeared in the form of three-prong existences corresponding to the three-dimensional plane. The spiritual component appeared in the form of the trio comprising of *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Mahesh*, the lords of *Rajoguna*, *Satvaguna* and *Tamoguna* respectively, who govern creation, preservation and dissolution of the world respectively and are subject to the condition of time. The *Prakratik* component on the other hand transformed into the three components of *Ahankar* (i.e. *Vaikarik*, *Tejas* and *Tamasik*) or into the three-fold energy, the creative energy (*Rajas* energy), the preserving energy (*Satvik* energy) and the dissolution energy (*Tamas*

energy), which represent the *Trigunas* of the *Prakriti* (the three modes of Nature) i.e. the *Rajogun*, the *Satvagun* and the *Tamogun*.

In their original state the three components of energy rested in a perfect, harmonious and equilibrium state. The three-fold energy is referred to in the mythology as the *Trigunas* of *Prakriti*. The subtle time caused differentiation in the *Trigunas* of *Prakriti*. The interaction between the three-fold energy and time gave rise to various elements, gross and subtle, which constitute contingent existence. The *Satvik* energy (or the pure-causal energy) was transformed into the *Manas* (mind-heart) and the governors of the organs of senses and action. The *Manas* (mind) is the treasure house of all desires and it acts as the fountainhead for the senses. The *Rajas* (or the subtle) energy got transformed into the power associated with the organs of senses (i.e. the ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose) and the organs of action (namely, the speech, hands, feet, the genitals and anus), *Buddhi* (intelligence) and *Prana* (breathing). The *Buddhi* confers capability to acquire knowledge of the matter and guides the senses; it is the basis for acquiring knowledge. *Prana* on the other hand is the basis for all actions; it supports all the organs and leads them to activity. Lastly the *Tamsik* (or the gross-material) energy got transformed into the gross-material existence. At the level of contingent beings, the eyes, the sight or vision and the Sun (light) represent an example of the transformation of the three forms of energy where the eyes are the gross organs, sight or vision is the power to see and the Sun (light) is the governor of this power enabling one to see.

All the gross elements arose from the *Tamas* energy and *Kaal*. The energy was spread uniformly all over the universe and the interaction between *Tamas* energy and *Kaal* created matter (mass) in the entire universe simultaneously in the form of the most fundamental particle (called *Paramanu* in the Hindu mythology) setting up a two-fold motion in the fundamental particle i.e. around its own axis, as well as in the space. This motion was set up in the particles as the effect of the energy that caused the matter to come into existence. It is a universal principle that all that is an effect of anything carries an impression, in

some form or the other, of that thing which has caused its existence. The particles, therefore, carried the impression of the energy, which was exhibited in this two-fold motion, which also caused the matter to spread in the space at a tremendous speed and thus creating space in the form of *Aakash* (ether). This instantaneous movement caused in the fundamental particles resulted in the big bang. This was the moment when the matter in its physical form came into existence, for the first time. With the passage of time, the matter has kept on moving farther and farther away in space, resulting in the expansion of space. This is also explained by the physical formula $E=mc^2$. The energy E causes mass 'm' to move in space 'd' with an acceleration 'd/t²' (c^2 can be taken as $d \times d/t^2$ where 'd' stands for distance-or space and 't' stands for time, d/t^2 represents acceleration). The action of time also keeps on dissolving the matter back into energy in such a manner that the energy, matter and space co-exist maintaining a dynamic balance.

The time taken by the *Paramanu* to complete one revolution around its own axis is the fundamental or the basic unit of time measurement. Each particle in the universe has its own time, because of which the principle of relativity (i.e. the seer and the seen) is set up in the material world. In our Solar system the time taken by the earth in making one revolution around its axis is known as a day. Similarly, the time taken by the moon in making one revolution around its own axis is known as a moon-day, which is much shorter than the day on the earth. However, the time is zero (or infinite-depending upon the way one looks at it), i.e. non-existent at the very center of the *Paramanu*, and similarly at the poles of the cosmos. There is no time or mass at the very center of the fundamental particle; there is nothing at the inner most core. It is this 'nothingness' (the nonbeingness), which is the symbolic presence of the Truth in all that exists, as stated in the *Srimadbhagwat Gita* in *Adhyay 13 Shloka 14* that 'He dwells in the universe, pervading everything'.

In regard to time, the *Srimadbhagwat Mahapuran-Tratiya Skandh, Adhyay 11 Shloka 4* mentions that 'the time pervading the *Paramanu* is extremely minute and the time that enjoys the universe from the moment of its

creation through its dissolution is supremely great'. Similarly in *Shloka* 1 of the same *Adhyay*, it is stated that 'the minutest particle of the bodies like earth, which can not be divided any further, and which has not reached the state of effect of any material action and which has not combined with other particles (*Paramanus*), is known as *Paramanu*. As a result of combination of *Paramanus* and due to illusion people look upon them as a different body'.

The matter was created in the form of *Paramanus* simultaneously in the entire universe and it started moving and expanding in the space. The *Paramanus* first combined with other *Paramanus* in the vicinity forming bigger particles, which combined with other particles and so on, thus forming larger bodies and also creating void in between. Combination of *Paramanus* in different ways produced various materials. The gross elements in the universe, therefore, appear to have been created in an orderly fashion as a result of various modes of combination of the same fundamental particle with other similar particles and so on. This combination of *Paramanus* is in compliance with the Primordial Determination (to create the universe), and the movement set by the *Kaal* is again a reflection of the same Primordial Determination (to enjoy the same state of bliss). The movement set in by the *Kaal* does both, it allows the *Paramanu* to exist and simultaneously it sets in the process of dissolution. If there were no movement (and hence no centrifugal force), the whole creation would have collapsed. On the other hand, this very movement causes dissipation of energy and thereby resulting in the dissolution of the matter ultimately.

As mentioned above, the dissolution energy interacting with time was transformed into the matter, which produced vibration (*Shabda*) in the *Paramanu* arising due to motion around its own axis and simultaneously moving in the space. The vibration (*Shabda*) is the immediate principle or cause for the creation of *Aakash* (ether), in which the matter vibrates/expands. *Aakash* with its subtle principle (*tanmatra*) *Shabda* (vibration or movement) was the root of all other subtle principles and corresponding gross elements. The movement of matter caused the matter to expand, resulting in the formation of gasses, with lot of

empty spaces between their constituent molecules. Various gasses were formed as a result of combination of *Paramanus* in a particular manner. In turn combination of various gasses led to the formation of *Vayu* (air). The subtle principle of *Vayu* is *Sparsh* (touch). Being the effect of its cause-*Shabda*, it (*Sparsh*) also carries the characteristics of vibration in it.

The *Vayu* moving with a tremendous force (arising due to expansion), caused fusion of gasses, thereby releasing energy in the form of fire (*Agni-Tej*). Fusion of gasses and consequential release of energy caused fission to take place, which in turn released greater energy that helped in further fusion to take place and so on, setting up a chain of fusion-fission reactions and release of energy in the form of fire (*Agni-Tej*). The subtle principle of fire is '*Rupa*' i.e. 'form' (fire consumes all things and their form, reducing them to ashes). Being the effect of its cause *Aakash* and *Vayu*, it (*Rupa*) also carries their characteristics i.e. vibration and touch.

The heat so produced caused air (hydrogen gas) to burn (in oxygen), resulting in the formation of the next gross element in the series i.e. *Jal* (water), with its subtle principle *Rasa* (essence-savour). Being the effect of its cause- *Aakash*, *Vayu* and *Agni*, it (*Rasa*) also carries the characteristics of vibration, touch and form in it.

The last of the gross element to be created was *Prithvi* (earth), which was formed as a result of dissolution of various gasses in to water and so on. The subtle principle of *Prithvi* is *Gandha* (odour). Being the effect of its cause-*Aakash*, *Vayu*, *Agni* and *Jal*, it (*Gandha*) also carries the characteristics of vibration, touch, form and essence in it.

It is stated in the Holy Qur'an that the God has created the heavens and the earth in six days: Qur'an 7:54. Similarly, in the Holy Bible in Genesis, Chapter 1 we find the description of six days in which the God created the universe. The reference to six days in the Qur'an and the Bible is not six earth-days, but appears to be the six days of the *Brahmaloka* (*Brahma* being the lord of creation in the Hindu mythology, or Allah in His aspects of al-*Bari* or al-*Khaliq*).

In the context of the creation of the contingent beings, the *Srimadbhagwat Mahapurana* states that the subtle principle *Shabda* (vibration), along with the gross element *Aakash* (ether), gave rise to the organs of hearing, the ears. The *Shabda* is the subtle principle of ether, which has the characteristic properties of revealing the meaning of words and the identity of the speaker. The characteristic qualities of ether are to provide space for all the gross existence, to be present within and beyond, and providing support to *Prana* (breathing), organ of senses and the *Manas* (mind).

Sparsh (touch) along with the gross element *Vayu* gave rise to the organ of touch i.e. skin. Touch is the subtle principle of *Vayu* having characteristic properties of sensing softness, hardness, coldness and warmth. The characteristic qualities of *Vayu* are to shake the leaves and branches of trees, gather straw, reach all over, and carry odour and vibrations.

Rupa (form) along with the gross element *Tej* (fire) gave rise to the eyes. The *Rupa* is the subtle principle of fire, which has the characteristic properties of revealing the shape of objects, to figure and be subsumed in the matter and to be perceived according to the shape and measure of things. The characteristic qualities of *Tej* are to shine, to cook, to evaporate, to produce thirst and hunger and to digest food.

Rasa (essence) along with the gross element *Jal* (water) gave rise to the organ of taste i.e. the tongue. The *Rasa* is the subtle principle of *Jal*, which in its pure form is unique but due to combination with other substances becomes bitter, sweet, pungent, sour and salty etc. The characteristic qualities of *Jal* are to wet, to make lump of clay etc., to sate, to keep alive, to quench thirst, to soften and cool things and to reappear again and again on emptying out from wells etc.

Gandha (odour) along with the gross element *Prithvi* (earth) gave rise to the organ of smell i.e. the nose. The *Gandha* is the subtle form of *Prithvi*, which in its pure form is unique like *Rasa* but due to association with combination of various substances it assumes different textures like

good or bad, mild or strong smell etc. The characteristic qualities of *Prithvi* are to exhibit shapes, to remain steadfast without support, to absorb water, to occupy space and to reveal the bodily characteristics of all creatures. Being the effect of its cause, the qualities of all gross elements, i.e. *Shabda, Sparsh, Rupa, Rasa* and *Gandha* all are found only in *Prithvi*.

According to the *Sankhya Yoga*, the twenty three elements comprising of *Mahtatva, Ahankar*, five gross elements (namely *Aakash, Vayu, Agni, Jal* and *Prithvi*), their five subtle principles (namely *Shabda, Sparsh, Tej, Rasa* and *Gandha*), *Manas* (the mind), five organs of senses (namely, the ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose) and the five organs of action (namely, the speech, hands, feet, the genitals and anus) could not combine together to result into a human aggregate. The *Sat Purush*, therefore, cast His irradiation to bring life to this conglomeration, into the human being.

The human body is formed by the combination of these elements, which are responsible for its organisation and systematisation. The gross elements descended in the human body in the order of their unfolding or creation. The first element to descend at the microcosmic level in the human aggregate was the ether (*Aakash*), which took its seat in the throat, with its subtle principle vibration, which produces sound and is responsible for the faculty of speech. The next element was air, which took its seat in the heart, located in close proximity to the lungs. It performed the most important function of purifying the blood that is so necessary for life. After air, the next element was fire that descended and took its seat in the naval region. The most important function of fire is to digest the food and to nourish the entire organism. Thereafter it was the turn of water that descended and took its seat in the genitals, for the purpose of procreation. The last of the elements to descend in the gross determination was the earth, which took its seat in the anus, to provide support and for excretion of waste. All these gross elements are thus associated with many important functions for the maintenance of the human body.

All these elements originated from the desire of the God. This desire in itself was the first veil of illusion. Being an illusion, it could not have created on its own 'the manifold existence that enjoyed the same state of bliss as the God'. This, therefore, required the God to cast His irradiation i.e. the soul in the human body to bring it to life.

It is stated in the Qur'an that the God said to the angles: Behold, I am going to create man from clay. When I have fashioned him and breathed My spirit in him, fall ye down in prostration to him. While all the angels fell in prostration, the Satan did not comply with the order of the God. The God asked him: Ay Iblis what prevented you from falling in prostration before the man, whom I have created with my own hands? Do you consider yourself to be superior or are you proud of yourself? The Satan claimed his superiority stating that he was created from fire, whereas the man was created from the earth. The God asked the Satan to leave the heaven and condemned him till the Day of Judgment (*Qiyamat*): Qur'an 38:71-77.

The superiority of the man over other creatures is evident from the fact that the man is made from the clay (earth) and as mentioned earlier, the qualities of all gross elements, i.e. *Shabda, Sparsh, Rupa, Rasa* and *Gandha* all are found only in the element earth. The man was thus created from all the elements used in the creation of the universe and the *Sat Purush* cast His irradiation to bring life to the conglomeration of all the elements into the human being, who, therefore, contains in him the seed of all possibilities. In Qur'anic terms the man was created by 'God's breathing in him His spirit'. The Holy Bible says that the God created the man in His own image. It is stated in Genesis, Chapter 1: 'And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth over the earth', and 'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them'.

The spirit breathed in the human body by the God is known as the soul. It is impossible to describe what the soul is as it is beyond the perception of human mind. The whole

purpose of all the scriptures is to describe the reality of the soul but the words fall short of describing the soul. It is a matter of realisation. The *Srimadbhagwat Gita* in chapter 2 '*Sankhya Yoga*' mentions about the soul that it is unmanifest, immutable, inconceivable and eternal. Weapons cannot cleave the soul; fire cannot burn it; water cannot wet it nor can the air dry it. The soul is unbreakable, insoluble, all pervading, unchanging and immovable. The great philosopher Socrates was asked by Crito 'in what manner should he be buried?' It is said that Socrates had replied: 'In any manner you like, but first you must catch me, the real me. You can bury only my body and not the real me.'

Being the irradiation of the all-shining luminous *Sat Purush*, the soul is also luminous. It, however, lost its original luminosity while descending in the human aggregate, because of identifying itself with the body, senses and mind due to false association with the ego.

The *Srimadbhagwat Mahapurana* gives a slightly different account of the manner of creation. According to the *Srimadbhagwat Mahapurana, Tratiya Skandh, Adhyay 6*, the God first created the 23 elements e.g. *Mahtatva, Ahankar*, five gross elements (namely *Aakash, Vayu, Agni, Jal* and *Prithvi*), their five subtle principles (namely *Shabda, Sparsh, Tej, Rasa* and *Gandha*), *Manas* (the mind), five organs of senses (namely, the ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose) and the five organs of action (namely, the speech, hands, feet, the genitals and anus). When He saw that these elements were not able to combine together, He activated the *Adrishta* (the fate-the past *Karmafal*, i.e. the fruit of the past deeds not yet borne) of the *Jeevas* (embodied souls) and inspired these elements to combine in the form of *Virat Purush* (the Cosmic Man) and entered His *Ansha* (part) into it. The whole of the universe is situated in him (the *Virat Purush*) who possessed the faculties of knowledge, action and power of soul. Being the first creation the *Virat Purush* is the soul of all *Jeevas*; since it possessed soul, it is an *Ansha* of the God; and being the first manifestation, it is the first incarnation of the God. All the creatures are manifested from him. The *Virat Purush* is the treasure house of all the incarnations of God and from the minutest

part of the *Virat Purush* all gods (*Devtas*), animals and men are created.

All this explanation of the metaphysical reality is, however, relevant only from a contingent point of view, for realising the Truth through an inner journey and self-experience of the all-pervading transcendent principle. As already mentioned earlier, the first veil of illusion that befalls on human mind is the feeling of a separate existence of one who affirms the Truth and the Truth by Itself. This is the feeling of duality, i.e. the very feeling of being, the feeling of individual consciousness.

The God created the man and the reality of the man is his soul because of which the elements of Nature united into a human aggregate. The man, however, thinks himself to be a separate existence because of his identification with the mind and the body. He looks at the entire world from his own perspective i.e. keeping his focus on himself in all that he contemplates. In other words, the universe exists for him if he himself exists. If he did not exist, neither the universe nor the question of the existence of God arises for him. Some thing exists only when there is an existence of some thing else, something different. If there were existence only of one, the question of existence itself would not arise, as there is nothing to affirm existence of. If there were no darkness, the question of there being light would not arise. This is why the *Srimadbhagwat Mahapurana* states that in the beginning there was nothing except the God and in order to create the world, He started to look around. This faculty of differentiating the seer from the seen was the first manifestation of *Maya*. This was the foremost illusion and the mother of all principles of relativity. The man has to realise this truth; overcome this illusion of duality of the seer and the seen, in order to realise his true self.

The faculty, which realises, however, is not the soul since the soul is the very object that is to be realised. The soul is the reality, the real state of being. That which realises the soul is not the soul. When one realises the soul all is left behind, as everything gets merged in the soul. Everything in the first instance has originated from the soul

and one can get back to it only when all that is created by it gets dissolved in its essence.

The first glimpse of the soul occurs in the ‘*Chitta*’ (the faculty of thought-*Mahtatva* in the *Sankhya Yoga*), where alone the knowledge of Truth is first perceived. The feeling of duality very much persists at this plane, as the one who perceives and the one that is perceived stand distinctly apart. The ‘*Chitta*’ is the second veil of illusion in a descending order. This plane of reflection comprises of *Gyan* (knowledge) and *Kaal* (time) i.e. it has both the attributes that of knowledge and time. The Zen couplet by Angelus Silesius, translated in English by Frederick Franck, also expresses a similar thought in the following words:

*“Time is of your own making,
The clock ticks in your head,
The moment you stop thinking,
Time too stops dead.”*

Descending down from ‘*Chitta*’, the next plane of existence of the man is his ‘ego’ (*Ahankar*). This is the most prominent level of existence of the man. ‘Ego’ arises from the feeling of being a distinct entity, a separate existence. It has been mentioned earlier that the reflection (or the shadow) of the *Sat Purush*, intermingled with the *Gyan* and *Kaal*, giving rise to the *Kaal Purush*, claiming his own separate existence, giving rise to the principle of *Ahankar* (ego, the principle of individual consciousness) in the formula “I am”. Since the *Kaal Purush* in itself is only a reflection or shadow of the *Sat Purush*, the human ego is also a deceitful false existence. At this level the man perceives the knowledge, but that knowledge is not the knowledge of the Truth. It is covered with a veil and, therefore, an incomplete and imperfect knowledge. Here the man perceives the knowledge as ‘me and mine; you and yours’. Ego obstructs one’s awareness of being the whole, as it wrongly identifies oneself with the body and the mind.

The feeling of man’s existence as a separate individual arises because of his ego. The individual’s mind and his physical body are the manifestation of man’s ego. The mind, however, assumes the position of the ruler and rules

over not only the physical body but also over the soul (the *Jeeva* or the embodied soul), which due to this false association has lost its original luminosity and has assumed a false identity. The story narrated by Sant Sunder Das is related: A lioness gave birth to a cub in the forest, which fell in the hands of a ‘shepherd’ who brought up the cub as one of the sheep. One day a lion passed by and spotted the cub. The lion wondered how the cub was behaving like a sheep and was feeding on grass, forgetting his own true self. The lion roared and asked the cub to do the same. The cub also roared imitating the lion. The sheep and the shepherd ran away. The lion took the cub with him and showed him his face in a pond of water. The cub then realised that it was not a sheep but a lion.

The real meaning of this story is that our soul is the cub, which lives under the control of the mind, which is the shepherd and the senses are the sheep. The soul has come from the Infinite. The mind has mixed up the soul with the senses and body. The mind now rules us and feeds us on worldly things, which are like grass. When a Master like the lion tells us about the Truth and shows us our reality, we know the real form of our soul.

ACTION THE LAW OF MANIFESTATION OF LIFE

In the previous chapter the entire creation has been stated to originate as a result of interaction between energy and time, which caused transformation of energy into various elements, gross and subtle. Energy contains in it the seed of action. No action can take place without energy and energy induces action. No creature can, therefore, live without action even for a moment. The *Srimadbhagwat Gita* in *Adhyay 3 Shloka 5*, in this context states that ‘no one can remain even for a moment without activity. Everyone is driven to action helplessly according to the qualities borne of the modes of Nature (*Trigunas*)’.

It has been mentioned earlier that the three-fold energy is mythologically referred to as the *Trigunas* of the *Prakriti* i.e. the *Rajogun*, the *Satvagun* and the *Tamogun* are the three-fold energy, the creative energy, the preserving energy and the dissolution energy. In the beginning of the creation the three-fold energy was in its perfect state. The three components of the energy were in a balanced, harmonious state, and thus resulting in no action. Once, however, when this perfect undifferentiated state was set in motion, as a result of the Primordial Determination, the three modes of Nature started competing with each other resulting in manifestation of action. In *Adhyay 14 Shloka 10*, the *Srimadbhagwat Gita* states that the three modes of Nature (the threefold energy) never remain static. They keep on competing with each other i.e. there is always a state of flux in between the three modes, as a result of which activities are performed. In *Shloka 27* of *Adhyay 3* it states that ‘all actions are actually carried out by the *Trigunas* of the *Prakriti*, but the soul bewildered by the association with false ego thinks itself to be the doer’. It is the false ego that leads one to think that he is the doer of everything. He associates himself with the body and mind, not realising that the gross body (his physical body) as well as the subtle body (his mind) are the creation of the Nature (*Maya*). Such a person owns up the action and takes upon himself all the credit for doing everything independently.

In *Shloka 29* of chapter 3 the *Srimadbhagwat Gita* states that ‘those who are deluded by the modes of Nature

engage themselves in the activity and get attached to it'. It is mentioned above that all actions are actually carried out by the *Trigunas* of the *Prakriti*, but the soul bewildered by the association with false ego thinks itself to be the doer. It is because of the lack of knowledge that people are deluded by the *Trigunas* of the *Prakriti* and by falsely identifying with the ego, they consider themselves to be the doer of everything and own up the action, as a result of which they get attached to it. In *Shloka* 19 of chapter 14, the *Srimadbhagwat Gita* states that 'when one perceives the three modes of the Nature as the originator of all actions, one comes out of the delusion and has a glimpse of the Truth'. One perceives that it is the *Trigunas* of the *Prakriti* that originate action only by acquiring the knowledge. This knowledge enables him to come out of the delusion and to know his real position vis-à-vis the truth of action.

In *Shloka* 20 of *Adhyay* 14 the *Srimadbhagwat Gita* states that 'one who has risen above the three modes of the Nature i.e. one who has perceived this reality of action originating from the *Trigunas*, reaches the threshold of liberation, as the cause of birth and death lies in owning up the action'. Further in *Shloka* 5 of the same chapter the *Srimadbhagwat Gita* describes that the three modes of Nature i.e. the *Rajogun*, the *Satvagun* and the *Tamogun* alone bind the imperishable soul in the body. One engages in action because of the predominance of one or the other of the *Trigunas* of Nature, who always keep on competing. Further because of ignorance one thinks oneself to be the doer and gets attached to the action. The *Srimadbhagwat Gita*, therefore, states that it is only the *Trigunas* of Nature that bind the soul in the body.

All the three *Gunas* i.e. the *Satvagun*, *Rajogun* and the *Tamogun* bind the soul in the body in the same manner. Although the *Satvagun* is purer than the others and is illuminating and free from distortions, but it also binds the embodied soul with a sense of possessing knowledge and feeling happiness. The *Rajogun* is born of desires and attachments and binds the embodied soul with the fruit of actions. The *Tamogun* is born of ignorance, which deludes all creatures and binds the embodied soul through negligence, indolence and sleep. All these modes of Nature bind the embodied soul in one-way or the other. The

Satvagun attaches one to bliss, the *Rajogun* to action and the *Tamogun* to negligence. A shackle made of iron or that of gold binds one the same way, after all a chain is a chain.

All the *Trigunas* co-exist, but they keep on competing to prevail over each other. The predominance of *Satvagun* is manifested in the illumination of mind and all the senses being driven by knowledge. The predominance of *Rajogun* is manifested in insatiable desires, attachment and seeking of pleasure resulting in restlessness and increased activities. Similarly, the predominance of the *Tamogun* is exhibited in manifestation of ignorance, inertia, darkness and illusion. These *Trigunas* alone drive one to action. When one realises this truth and overcomes the *Trigunas*, one attains liberation.

It is, however, important to understand the true nature of action and the difference between action and duty. Earlier it has been mentioned that the human aggregate comprises of twenty-three elements i.e. the five gross elements, their five subtle principles, the five organs of senses, the five organs of action, the *Manas* (mind), *Ahankar* and the *Mahtatva*. Twenty-one out of these elements (i.e. other than *Ahankar* and the *Mahatatva*) have arisen from transformation of energy due to interaction with time and, therefore, are necessarily engaged in action all the time. The mind also indulges in action, which is called mental action. Even when one is asleep, the mind does not sleep, it remains active. There are many examples of people finding solution of intricate problems during sleep. The molecular structure of Benzene, which was posing so many difficulties to the scientists, was revealed during sleep.

Action thus has two components, a physical component and a mental component. Similarly action can be voluntary and non-voluntary. Certain actions are involuntary such as breathing, which is a need associated with all the living creatures and is a sign of their obedience to the Creator. The mind does not have to think about such actions, these are performed on their own. On the other hand a mental action is associated with all voluntary actions, which is known as the intention. In other words while mental actions involve mind alone, voluntary

physical actions involve both the mind and the body. Physical actions being good or bad depends upon the fact whether they benefit others or hurt them. Good or bad intention depends upon the fact whether the intention is to help others or it is one's self interest. Actions can, thus, be divided into four categories and the doers accordingly are known as angels, human beings, ignorant and devils respectively:

Where the **intention** and the **action both** are **good**,
Where the **intention** is **good** but the **action** is **bad**,
Where the **intention** is **bad** but the **action** is **good**,
and
Where the **intention** and the **action both** are **bad**.

The law of Nature governs the entire universe and it is unbreakable. Different people are seen to live in different conditions; some are rich, some poor, some happy, some unhappy and so on. The reason for this is their deeds. To act according to the dictates of scriptures is '*Dharma*' or one's duty and to act otherwise is '*Adharma*.' The outcome of one's actions depends upon the deeds and the circumstances in which the action was performed. One has to necessarily bear the fruit of the action (*Karmafal*), although when this outcome of action will fructify depends upon the conditions that are favorable for the fructification of that *Karmafal* and in bringing it to light.

In all his actions, one always has some expression of his ego, which makes him responsible for the outcome of the action. Since there is ego, desires also co-exist which take the action towards its outcome. Desires arise from imperfection, when something is lacking, something is wanting. Ego is the false feeling of a separate existence, being incomplete and imperfect. Human ego, therefore, is always associated with desires. The desire is the rope, which ties the action with its outcome.

The *Jeeva* (the embodied soul) has a desire for life and it always feels incomplete, imperfect and dependant, which is the cause of its sorrows and sufferings. The very feeling of separateness gives rise to the sense of duality and it starts comparing with others with the feeling of awe and pride i.e. with the feeling of inferiority and superiority. This

happens because he does not know his true self. The feeling of duality leads him to a state of illusion and multiplicity i.e. it sees all others as different from him.

The bondage resulting from one's actions can be broken only through an action without desire being associated with it, and not by renouncing one's duty. The *Srimadbhagwat Gita* in *Adhyay 3* states that one who outwardly restrains the organs of senses and action but dwells mentally on them is a pretender and a man of deluded intellect. On the other hand, one who exercises control over the organs of action and senses by the mind and engages himself in the performance of his duties without attachment is a superior being. One should, therefore, perform his prescribed duty, for action is better than inaction. One cannot even maintain his physical body without action. Performance of the prescribed duty, without attachment, is necessary, as it leads to liberation, whereas any other action leads to bondage.

It may be mentioned here that although the *Srimadbhagwat Gita* uses the term 'Yagya' (or 'Yagna'), which has been interpreted by most scholars to mean 'sacrifice', the true meaning of this term appears to perform one's prescribed duties. Performance of one's prescribed duties also does involve sacrifice, the sacrifice of selfish interest, which is the real and the highest sacrifice. In this context, it will be interesting to mention that the *Ramcaritmanas* (by Goswami Tulsidas) states that *Yagyas* performed by *Rishis* (sages) were being often destroyed by the *Rakshashas* (demons). It appears that these *Yagyas* were scientific experiments carried out by the *Rishis* in their *Ashramas* (hutments), which in fact were laboratories. These experiments were intended for the advancement of humanity. The results of these experiments were codified and memorised as *Mantras* (formulas). Being afraid of their research and advancement, the *Rakshashas* used to destroy the *Ashramas* (laboratories) and the *Yagya*. The reference to *Yagya* here thus does not appear to be made for the sacrifice (in its usual sense) but more aptly to such scientific experiments, which they had taken upon them as their duty for the betterment of the society.

The *Srimadbhagwat Gita* states that all the living creatures need food for their subsistence. Food is produced by rains. For the timely and adequate rains it is necessary to maintain the environment, and the environment can be maintained only if the people perform their prescribed duties. Failure to perform prescribed duties would result in degradation of environment and thereby upsetting the nature's cycle. The nature supplies all necessities to those, who perform their duties. Those, who do not return this debt to the nature by performing their prescribed duties, act like thieves. One needs to live on food earned by discharging his prescribed duties, as the one who does not discharge his duties, eats unauthorisedly. Scriptures throw light on the prescribed duties of man and the satisfaction of the God lies in performance of the prescribed duties. Those, who do not follow this arrangement of the nature and remain engaged in fulfilling their desires, live like a load on the society.

The *Srimadbhagwat Gita* further states that it is through performance of duty that in the past great persons like King Janaka and others have achieved perfection. The conduct of great persons sets a standard for others to follow. People look upon them for guidance and getting inspiration. One should, therefore, perform his prescribed duty selflessly. Further, performance of one's own duty even if devoid of merits, is preferable to the duty of another well performed. It is commendable to lay one's life in discharge of one's duty instead of engaging in performing other's duty, as other's duty is fraught with fear. It is important to note that the *Srimadbhagwat Gita* does not discriminate between duty of one and the duty of other, nor does it describes any duty to be inferior or superior, but it exhorts everyone to perform his own duty, wholeheartedly even if it lacks merit.

The domain of physical action is the domain of science and the domain of mental action is the domain of religion. To rise above the attachment to the fruit of action is entering into the domain of spirituality. There is no contradiction or denial of the use of science in the advancement of humanity. The science is neither irrelevant, nor it is something unwanted or exterior for making spiritual progress. It is one of the facets of the Truth that

shines in selfless action. One cannot run away from the society or from his responsibilities. No scripture in fact advocates inaction or running away from one's duties.

Going a step ahead the *Srimadbhagwat Gita* clarifies that one, who, however, takes delight in the Self alone and is gratified with the Self and is contented in the Self, has no prescribed duty for him. He is freed from the sense of duty, as his perfected nature issues spontaneously in action. Such a great soul has no self-interest in things done or things left undone. He has no selfish dependence of any kind on any creature.

The Primordial Determination manifested in life and action is the law of manifestation of life, it is the final product. It is the fruit of life and contains in it the seed of the future life. The bondage resulting from action causes the *Jeeva* to take birth, in a body that is suitable to bear the fruit of action. The human body comprises of three bodies namely, the gross or the physical body, the subtle or the mental body and the causal body or the soul (the soul bound by the action). All the three bodies join together in performing action. While the gross body performs physical action (movement), the subtle body performs the complimentary mental action, which involves subtle organs, and the causal body stores the impression of the action. This is the resting movement, which is called bliss in the causal body. In fact the action originates in the mind, it is performed by the physical body and the impression of action i.e. its outcome is stored in the causal body.

The man alone has been given freedom of action; other creatures do not enjoy this freedom. They, rather, bear the reward or punishment of action. Even the higher creatures like angels do not have the freedom of action. Although they may enjoy the pleasures of the heaven, they cannot make further spiritual progress and have to take birth again as human beings after their *Punya Karmas* (the reward for good deeds) are exhausted. The man alone has the capability, through his actions, to acquire divinity or degrade to the level of beasts and other lower creatures. After going through the reward or punishment for the actions, it is open for the man to make effort again for liberation and attain the supreme goal of self-realisation.

The law of nature is based on justice and is intended to return one's debts. Physical actions have their impact on the physical body. If one's actions are good, his body remains in good condition and those who indulge in bad deeds have to suffer bodily. Intentional actions result in mental happiness or unhappiness and it is because of this that one sees strange happenings in the world.

The outcome of action does not perish. Every person has an aura around him and the impression of action is stored in the aura to be borne at an appropriate time. In fact it is the sum total of actions, desires and thoughts that is stored in the aura. Outcome of actions is divided into three categories, i.e. the *Sanchit Karma* (accumulated deeds), *Prarabdh* (destiny) and *Kriyaman* (current actions). The *Sanchit Karmas* are the impressions of good or bad deeds, which are accompanying the soul for time immemorial and which have not been borne so far. *Prarabdh* is that part of *Sanchit Karmas* which is to be borne in the present life. One has no control over *Prarabdh* and has necessarily to undergo the same, except that the saints through their grace may produce change in the mode of bearing the same. *Kriyaman Karmas* are the current actions, performed in the present life; the fruit of some of which may be borne in this life itself and the balance are accumulated as *Sanchit Karma* to be borne in future at the appropriate time.

There seems to be an apparent contradiction in the theory of action, as on the one hand it has been said that the man has freedom of action and on the other hand he is said to be bound by his past deeds. This apparent contradiction, however, can be explained through an example of a running car. The running car acquires the momentum, which to some extent guides its direction and speed. The driver, however, has control over the accelerator, steering wheel and the brake. He can change the direction and speed of the car in a gradual manner, but if he applies the brakes or changes the direction suddenly, there are chances of accident and damage.

In the above example the momentum of the car is the *Prarabdh*, and the controls at the command of the driver are the current actions over which he enjoys freedom. By

his current actions, therefore, one can gradually change the direction and the speed. Subject to this limitation, it is in his hands to choose his path. At times we come across examples of fast moving cars changing their direction by 180 degrees (i.e. complete reversal) on applying sudden brakes. These are the examples of people like Balmiki and Angulimal, who turned into great saints from an earlier life of heinous crimes, as a result of sudden realisation of the gravity of their misdeeds and taking a vow to change their way of living and proceeding on the right path with firm determination.

Man has been given intellect to choose between good or bad. If one exercises discretion and acts with resoluteness of intelligence, one is said to be making effort to improve, otherwise one dragged by the force of desires and lust ends up in losing the opportunity given to him in the form of human life.

The colours present in the aura around every person keep on changing constantly depending upon their actions. With the *Satvik* (pure) actions, the aura turns very bright and golden. *Rajoguni* actions (indulgence in fulfilling desires) turn it to red and with *Tamoguni* (vicious) actions the aura becomes black. The shades present in one's aura keep on changing with different intensities of thoughts and desires. The colours present in the aura as a result of one's deeds do not disappear till one bears the fruit of his action. After bearing the brunt of one's deeds, one becomes purified and acquires capability of making spiritual progress, provided one does not indulge again in evil deeds. The aura also helps in making spiritual progress since as the colours change in the aura, they have their impact on the body, mind and thoughts. The aura not only indicates the fall or rise of the one to whom it belongs, but also influences others associated with him. The peace one experiences in the company of great persons and saints is mainly because of the influence of their aura that cleanses the mind of the visitors. The aura around saints is very bright and golden in colour, with that around head being more intense than the other parts of the body. With the spiritual progress, first the aura becomes light and as the ego and desires vanish, the aura intensifies, and gradually a

bright light alone is left. Similarly, vicious people also have their influence on others.

A question may be asked as to what do the saints do for the society. The answer is very simple. As the trees standing quietly at their place cleanse the environment by purifying the air, similarly the saints through their grace cleanse the human mind by purifying thoughts of others. Although they may look as not doing anything for the humanity but sitting silently they pray for the well being of all the creatures and for conferring peace upon them, which is the greatest service rendered by them to the humanity.

According to the rule of action, if one begs pardon and takes a vow not to indulge in evil actions again, there is a possibility of being pardoned. Bad deeds result not only in bodily or mental suffering but also in a mental unrest. Spiritual progress is blocked because of this mental unrest. A firm commitment not again to indulge in vices, repentance in the heart and a vow to do good in future, take away the darkness from the heart and cleanses it. Consequently, one undergoes the suffering with a steady mind and does not act like a weak person who considers even a little suffering to be too much and keeps on crying. There is a lot of difference between the two from the point of view of the strength to forbear the suffering. Going through the sufferings and disappearance of the unrest from the mind, which was an obstruction in making spiritual progress, is in reality being pardoned.

There is another way of being pardoned, but only for highly spiritual persons. The *Karmafal* can neither be increased nor decreased, but there is a possibility of change. There are two components of suffering resulting from wrong doings. These are the intensity of suffering and the duration of the suffering. The product of the two i.e. the intensity and the duration taken together determine the quantum of the suffering. Thus, if the intensity of suffering is increased, the duration of suffering can be reduced or vice versa, which brings about the desired change. One can get over the accumulated *Karmafal* only if the intensity can be increased in such a manner that one undergoes the accumulated *Karmafal* in the present life. It, however, requires both knowledge and the strength to forbear the

Karmafal and can be done only by a competent spiritual Master. It perhaps also explains as to why some of the great saints are often seen ailing or undergoing physical sufferance. Once all the actions are accounted for, there is no need for rebirth, except to discharge some duty assigned by the God, such as showing the path to others.

As mentioned earlier, action is the law of manifestation of life. It is, therefore, equally true that action alone can lead one to liberation. If both the gross body and the subtle body act in harmony, in accordance with their natural combination and characteristic quality (*Swabhavik Karma*), i.e. if no conflict with one's nature is allowed to creep in they function spontaneously. The thought of self in the mind, however, brings intention into play that takes the form of thought. The thought of good and bad is implied in the right and wrong intention. One acting with an intention knows that right (virtue) is good and wrong (vice) is bad. This thought is the root cause for the rule of action to operate.

The plane of right or wrong is the plane of relativity, as both result in bondage. Those, who indulge in good actions like charity with a view to be rewarded, also are tied with the rope of desire. They are elevated, are on a higher platform, but are not liberated. A chain made of gold or iron, ties the same way, as after all it is a chain. If, however, there is no thought of self, the resultant action will be natural, spontaneous and selfless, which does not create any bondage whatsoever.

From the above discussion, it is clear that the embodied soul has necessarily to indulge in action and that it can achieve liberation only through selfless action. The question, however, is how to reach this state of mind? The *Srimadbhagwat Gita* cautions that although when one withdraws his senses from sense-objects like a tortoise withdraws its limbs, one's mind becomes stable and by restraining sense-enjoyment, one may get away from sense-objects, yet the attraction for them still persists in the mind. This attraction disappears only when one has experienced a superior state of bliss. The senses, however, are so strong and turbulent that they forcibly carry away the mind even of a wise man, who is endeavoring to control them.

Similarly, it is stated in the *Uttarkand* of *Ramcharitmans*:

*“Indriya Dwar Jarokha Nana,
Tahan Tahan Sur Bathe Kar Thana,
Aavat Dekhahin Vishay Bayari,
Te Dradhi Dehi Kapari Ughari,
Jab So Prabhanjan Ur Guhan Jaain,
Tabahin Deep Vigyan Bujhai,
Granthi Na Chooti Mita So Prakasa,
Buddhi Vikal Bhai Vishay Batasa,
Indriya Suranah Na Gyan Sohahi,
Vishay Bhog Par Priti Sadai,
Vishay Sameer Buddhi Krit Bhoori,
Tehi Vidhi Deep Ko Bar Bahori.”*

(In brief this means that one is slave of desires. As one advances on the path of spirituality, materialistic attractions try to pull him down.)

The physical desires arise due to lack of knowledge. As one moves ahead on the path of acquiring the knowledge of Truth, desires start vanishing. Often, however, one craving for peace follows the wrong path. One looks for the comfort in material things but it does not lie in them. The real source of peace and happiness is the soul but one searches for them outside. In fact the happiness lies in the soul, nay the soul itself is the bliss. Peace in mind gives happiness. When the desires are not fulfilled, one feels discontented and the feeling of happiness is suppressed. On fulfillment of desire, the feeling of happiness reappears. It makes one feel that the happiness was in that thing, whereas that thing only has removed the feeling of discontentment, which had suppressed the feeling of happiness. Desires disturb a peaceful mind in the same way as a stone thrown into still water. Desires are endless and, therefore, can never be fulfilled completely. The cause of our miseries, thus, is desires, which obstruct us to realise the Truth.

Desires can be overcome only by training the mind to be content. It, however, does not mean renouncing one's duty. It is rather acting in a detached manner. One should

neither feel attached with anything nor should one hate anything. The true meaning of liberation is liberation from both attachment and hatred. It is a condition of mind in which the mind does not feel attached to what gives it happiness nor does it feel repulsion to despondency. Action without attachment does not mean a thoughtless action or performing one's duty halfheartedly. Whatever one does, one has to do it with dedication and to the best of his capability. Actions are endless; one action leads to the other and so on forming a chain of actions. One cannot wish away actions or their results. The actions result in their fruits some of which are borne now and some later. The detachment to action means performing action without attachment to its fruit i.e. the fruit of action should not become the driving force for the action. It is the mind-set, the condition of mind that needs to be tuned to see the performance of action in the larger perspective, keeping in view the greater purpose for the betterment of society rather than focusing on self-interest.

No doubt an action has to be performed thoughtfully keeping in mind the result it may produce. One owes full responsibility for a careless or negligent action. The human beings have been given intelligence to weigh pros and cons of their action and to choose the best alternative in the given circumstances. In case of any doubt the conduct of the great persons and the scriptures provide the guidance in choosing one's course of action. The result of the action, however, is not in one's hand. Various factors govern the result of action, including the Divine Will or the forces of Nature. One, therefore, has freedom only to make effort but not for its outcome. To bear the outcome of action with evenness of mind is the true meaning of detachment. It is the state of disciplined mind in which one does not feel overjoyed with a favourable outcome of action nor one feels unduly perturbed with an adverse result. One accepts both the eventualities with a balanced and steady mind without losing the inner peace.

One does not acquire peace by renouncing material things. The real peace lies in sacrificing one's ego and thereby removing the attachment towards material things. One should also not renounce relations with a view to attain spiritual advancement because by doing so the ego will not

vanish, instead it will be inflated because one starts taking pride in his act of renunciation.

The *Srimadbhagwat Gita* in this context states in *Adhyay 2, Shloka 49* that those, who indulge in action for reward are greedy. One should, therefore, overcome desires and take refuge in devotion. One, who has taken refuge in devotion to the Divine, i.e. whose mind rests in the God (or Truth), casts away both good and evil. The wise, who have taken shelter of the Divine, easily overcome the bondage resulting from action and, therefore, are freed from the shackles of birth and death and reach the blissful supreme state.

It is necessary to understand the true meaning of devotion. Devotion is *Bhakti*, which means to be connected. The true meaning of devotion, therefore, is to be wholly absorbed in God, to completely surrender one's ego and remain in the Presence of the Divine.

'*Narad Bhakti Sutra*' throws immense light on the true nature of devotion. It states that the true form of devotion is unqualified love for the God. When the mind withdraws from all other objects and rests wholly in God, i.e. when the mind has moved beyond all worldly pleasures and given up even the desire for the pleasure of liberation, then the mind is said to rest wholly in God. Such a love for God is the nectar, which makes the devotee a divine being. One, who has drunk this nectar, has achieved the real object of life. In the *Srimadbhagwat Mahapurana, Ekadash Skandh, Adhyay 14* it is stated that such a lover of God does not wish to accept the position of *Brahma* or the kingdom of *Indra* etc. He does not want any thing; he feels no incompleteness or lacking of any thing; the love for Divine makes him fully content and a divine being. He experiences the Divine will working both in creation and destruction. The death, therefore, does not frighten him; in fact the death does not exist for him. It is only till one feels the existence of worldly objects as separate from the Divine that one searches pleasure in them. When one realises that everything originates from the Divine, his attraction for worldly objects disappears. Having realised the Absolute, he becomes content.

The heart of such a devotee is so filled with the love for Divine that there is no space left for anything else. Udhavji (one of the courtiers of Lord Shri Krishna) had gone to preach *Gopis* after Lord Shri Krishna had left for Mathura. *Gopis* on listening to the sermon of Udhavji told him:

*“Udhav man na bhaye das bees,
Ek huto so gayo Shyam sang, ko aradhe Is”*

The *Gopis* said to him that they had only one heart, which has accompanied Lord Shri Krishna; who would now worship the God? When there is no space in the heart for any one else except the beloved Shri Krishna, when Shri Krishna has occupied the heart completely, how can any one enter there? The eyes do not see any one else; the heart does not allow them to see any one except Shri Krishna. Similarly, it is related to the great Sufi saint Rabia that she had struck down the words ‘hate the Satan (devil)’ from the holy Qur’an. When someone asked her the reason for doing so, she replied that the love for God has left no space in her heart for hate towards anyone.

One, who is fortunate to garner such a love for the Divine in his heart, gets completely absorbed in that love. He forgets everything else and gets disinterested in worldly objects and behaves like a bewildered man. He has no knowledge of any thing else since he loses his identity in the identity of the beloved.

This love and devotion for the God wants nothing in return from Him. Leaving aside worldly things like wealth, comforts etc., the devotee does not crave even for the liberation. When one is blessed with such devotion all his desires vanish; he no longer has any selfish interest in any action. All his actions, knowingly or unknowingly, are directed towards the pleasure of the God. As the Sun cannot cast darkness anywhere, such a devotee cannot indulge in any action against the desire of the God; all his actions are dedicated to the God. There is, however, a word of caution against giving up one’s duty. Unless one has reached such a state of love and devotion that one is totally absorbed in the Divine and has no selfish interest in

anything done or left undone, one should not turn away from one's duty, as per the dictates of scriptures.

Such a devotee does not seek patronage of any one else except his beloved and his attention remains totally focused on God. He sees his beloved in all creatures, in all things. He is prepared to sacrifice anything, any relation that obstructs his love for the beloved. As Goswami Tulsidasji wrote in a letter in reply to Sant Meera Bai:

*“Ja ke priya na Ram Baidehi,
Tajiye tahi koti shatru sam jadhapi param sanehi,
Pita tajyo Prahlad, Vibhishan bandhu, Bharat mahatari,
Bali guru tajyo, kant Brijbanitani, bhae jag mangalkari”*

(One, who has no love for your beloved, leave him like an enemy even though he may be very affectionate to you. Prahlad left his father; Vibhishan his brother; Bharat his mother; Bali disobeyed his *Guru* Shukracharya and the *Gopis* left their husbands for the love of Lord Shri Krishna, and all this proved beneficiary for the world.)

Various *Rishis* have described the signs of devotion in their own way. According to *Maharshi* Vyas one whose mind is absorbed in the worship of God is a devotee. In other words one, who engages his body, mind and belongings in the worship of God is a devotee. According to Shri Gargacharyaji, one who is absorbed in listening to the sacred legends, i.e. one who propagates the Divine qualities and attributes is a devotee. Shandilya *Rishi* states that one, who is content in the Self and rests his mind in the Self, is a devotee, as the essence of all creatures is the essence of God.

In the opinion of *Devarshi* Narad submission of all actions at the pious feet of the Lord and to feel deep anguish on falling in oblivion even for a moment is the true form of devotion. This not only supports the previous descriptions but also adds strength to them. The *Srimadbhagwat Gita* in *Adhyay* 6, *Shloka* 46-47 states that a yogi is superior to the man of austerities, the man of knowledge and the man of fruitive action. Even amongst yogis, he who devoutly worships the God, with his mind focused on God, is the highest. It further states in *Adhyay* 8,

Shloka 7 that one whose mind and intelligence is fixed on the God, whose activities are dedicated and who performs his prescribed duties in His remembrance, attains to the Divine.

The devotion and love for the Divine is the fruit, the objective that one aspires to achieve through action, knowledge or yoga. It is the end in itself and not a means to achieve something else. It is the highest objective. A seeker following the path of selfless action, acquiring knowledge or practicing yoga faces the danger of being proud of his effort and achievement. The God does not like arrogance and, therefore, takes away the pride of the arrogant, which in fact is His kindness, as arrogance results in fall and obstructs further progress. By taking away pride, the God provides him an opportunity to make progress. But a devotee considers himself to be nothing. He has no pride. The God loves one, who is humble. One, however, does not become humble without passing through difficult path. It is not the state of being poor but when one loses all sense of pride and rises above the false ego, when one loses the sense of being the doer and sees all acts being performed as a Divine order. When one remains humble even in the biggest achievements and considers others to be more meritorious than him, it is the sign of real humbleness.

Adiguru Shankaracharya, the great scholar of *Advaitvad* (unicity of existence), considers that knowledge alone is the cause of liberation. One can know one's true self only by acquiring knowledge, just as only light can remove darkness. According to him, selfless action cannot destroy ignorance, for selfless action is not in conflict with ignorance. Some others, however, consider that knowledge of the Divine leads to devotion and love for the Divine and some others consider knowledge and devotion to be interrelated, but the ultimate objective is to be absorbed in the love for Divine.

Devotion grows by withdrawal of senses from sense-objects and by restraining sense-enjoyment. The attraction for the sense objects, however, still remains. This can be overcome only by the continuous remembrance (*Bhajan*) of the Divine. Continuous remembrance of the Divine is an integral part of devotion. It is both the means and the

objective. One cannot be a true lover, who falls in oblivion of his beloved. Withdrawal of senses from sense-objects is the real sacrifice and continuous remembrance is the real practice. One, who engages in this sacrifice and practice, makes himself eligible for the true love of the Divine. The *Srimadbhagwat Gita* in *Adhyay 8, Shloka 14* states that one, who always remembers the Divine with undivided mind, can attain the Divine easily because of his constant remembrance.

The state of constant remembrance can, however, be achieved only by the grace of *Satguru* (Master). The *Srimadbhagwat Gita* in this regard states that one can reach the Truth only through the humble reverence and rendering service to the Master, who alone can give the knowledge to the seeker.

A Master is needed. By oneself alone, one can never go beyond the level of the mind. Mind cannot empty itself of itself. How is it possible to empty out the mind, if one is constantly working through the mind? One must be able to leave it and forget everything. One cannot do this on his own, as the mind cannot transcend itself. The Master serves as a focus of attention for the mind. The mind needs something to hold on to and it takes the form of the thing it thinks about. If, therefore, the disciple focuses his attention on the Master, he starts acquiring the qualities of the Master. The spiritual knowledge cannot be conveyed through words. The real knowledge can be transmitted only from heart-to-heart. A seeker, therefore, needs to follow the directions of his Master so that he can attain his goal. By taking the shelter of the Master, the disciple surrenders his ego at the feet of his Master. This is the easiest and quickest way to surrender one's ego. The ego is the devil. Scriptures are full of examples where individuals fell down even after reaching very high spiritual states because of their ego. The Master having already traversed the path knows the intricacies of the path and helps the disciple achieve his objective. Besides, the Master also helps the disciple to keep his ultimate objective constantly in mind and not to get distracted by miraculous powers that might be acquired by the seeker in the process.

Human beings are unique. Their spiritual requirements vary depending upon their nature, state of evolution etc. No two disciples can, therefore, be treated in the same manner. The Master treats them according to their possibilities, their character and their past conditioning. The teaching is given according to the time, the place and the state of the evolution of the disciple. The Master knows what is in the best interest of the disciple and how his character can be molded, quickly and without undue strain. The Master, however, does not go against any religion, all religions for him are alike; they are only different roads to the same Truth.

The Master is like a door, on the one side of which lies the darkness and the other side opens to the sky. The Master is the threshold leading to the God. He is the representative of the Divine, but being a human he is subjected to human limitations and conditions. The Master is linked both to the finite and the Infinite. It is the Master who by his grace gives faith to the disciple. The Master assures the disciple that it is possible for him, with all his human weaknesses to overcome them and to become one like his Master. In fact like the child who sucks the milk of its mother and becomes strong and grows, so the disciple absorbs from the Master. The disciple is nourished with the essence of the Master.

Various sects and religions adopt different methods of teaching but their objective is the same, i.e. acquiring spirituality. The essence of spirituality is to attain the knowledge of the Truth and the characteristic of the Truth is such that one, who attains It's knowledge becomes one with It.

The reality of the man is his soul, which is an irradiation of the God. The man has to realise his true self to realise the God, as his essence is the Essence of God. The soul, however, lost its original luminosity while descending in the human aggregate, due to identification with the body and mind arising out of association with the false ego. One, therefore, needs to traverse back from the body and mind to the soul in order to reach the origin and to know his true self.

THE KNOT IN THE MIDDLE

It has been mentioned earlier that the human aggregate comprises of three bodies, i.e. the *Sthool Sharir* (gross or the physical body), *Sukshma Sharir* (subtle or the mental body) and *Kaaran Sharir* (causal body or the soul). The gross body is made of five gross elements (namely *Aakash, Vayu, Agni, Jal* and *Prithvi*), their five subtle principles (namely *Shabda, Sparsh, Tej, Rasa* and *Gandha*), five organs of senses (namely, the ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose) and the five organs of action (namely, the speech, hands, feet, genitals and anus). The subtle body is made of *Manas, Buddhi, Chitta* and *Ahankar*, all taken together known as the *Antakaran* or mind. The causal body is associated with the embodied soul as the vehicle of past actions. Although the three bodies are reflected in every cell of the human body, their aggregate is known as the gross body, subtle body and the causal body of the man. *Mahesh* or *Rudra*, the lord of *Tamsic* energy, is the governor of the gross body, *Brahma*, the lord of *Rajas* energy, is the governor of the subtle body and *Vishnu*, the lord of *Satvik* energy, is the governor of the causal body.

The gross body has the characteristic qualities of Movement and growth. Thinking and knowing are the characteristic qualities of the subtle body. The union of gross body and subtle body is called birth and their separation is called death. In regard to birth and death the *Srimadbhagwat Mahapurana* in *Tratiya Skandh, Adhyay 31* mentions that the subtle body remains in existence till one achieves salvation; its union with the gross body is known as birth and its inability to work together i.e. their separation is known as death. The causal body, which is the storehouse of all *Karmas* (actions), however, causes their union or separation. What we call as birth is the coming into existence of a new gross body. On death the gross body becomes incapacitated and starts decomposing. As it no longer has any life and serves no purpose after the death it needs to be disposed off. People belonging to different religions dispose off the dead body in different ways and they have different beliefs about what happens after death. While some believe in the theory of rebirth after death, some others believe in the resurrection on the Day of

Judgment, to be consigned to hell or heaven for the eternity. It is not the purpose of this book to enter into any discussion about these beliefs but to lay stress on the importance of action (*Karmas*), which every religion believes that the man is responsible for his actions and that the action leads to reward or punishment.

Knowing and understanding, which are the functions of mind, are also actions, mental actions, the reward or punishment for which is happiness or sorrow. The mind plays the most important role in all human actions. In fact, the mind is the ruler, which rules over both the gross body and the embodied soul. The mind has the middle place; it occupies a place between the body and the soul. Action and knowledge, and their purpose i.e. happiness, all lie in the mind; these are the characteristics of the subtle body. It is the mind which has knowledge, exercises discrimination and makes judgments. Action is expressive and is the outer physical movement, which involves the gross body. Happiness results from comfort and peace, which are stationary and involve the causal body. Thinking, knowing and understanding are the intermediary processes that involve the mind and govern both the action and the resultant happiness.

A single thing cannot produce anything; two things are required to produce the third. The *Satogun* and the *Tamogun* are the two extremities of the *Trigunas*. The gross body represents the state of *Tam* i.e. the state of darkness and inertness, which is a lower state. The causal body represents the state of *Sat* i.e. light and consciousness, which is a higher state but this also is inert, since action lies here only in the seed form. The mind represents the state of *Raj*, which lies between the two extremes of *Tam* and *Sat*. The mind has no independent existence; it is a product of the body and the soul. If there were no body or soul, mind would also not have existed. The existence of mind comes in manifestation on the combination of the body and the soul. It is the state of mixture and combination having the influence of both the *Tamogun* and the *Satogun*. The mind travels between these two extremes and carries the impressions of both, the light and the darkness and thus forms shadows of various shades. It moves between these extremities and forms a knot under their influence. It is the

knot of inertness and consciousness. This is the middle state, the state of knowledge, i.e. the state of discrimination and understanding. There can be no knowledge when there is existence only of one. Knowledge is, therefore, associated with discrimination, which is immersed in multiplicity or the state of numerous possibilities.

The mind is compelled to think and understand. The first state is action, the second is understanding and the third is the bliss. The mind moves in all these three states, resulting in movement, understanding and steadiness. Knowledge is the middle state but this state of knowledge in fact is the state of ignorance, as one who is immersed in multiplicity cannot rest in peace. An ignorant is not devoid of knowledge but he does not know the meaning or real purpose of knowledge.

The mind focused on gross body is called stupid and materialistic. When it is focused on causal body, it is called ignorant and spiritual. The third state of mind is fickle, that is when the mind is focused on the subtle body it is called fickle. In this state the mind receives impressions from the gross body and the causal body due to which it gets movement and because of this movement it is called fickle.

Those, who are merged in the unity, are called wise. But both the ignorant and the wise live in the field of relativity. While the ignorant lives in the field of multiplicity, the wise lives in the field of unity. The former finds peace in the body and its actions; the latter finds peace in the causal body and its steadiness. Neither of them has the knowledge of the real peace and steadiness. Both are relative and depend upon mutual existence. The wise cannot cast off the physical body, nor can the ignorant deny the happiness of the soul. One, who lives in the field of multiplicity, returns to the state of unity and the one who lives in the field of unity returns to the field of multiplicity. Multiplicity is the conscious waking state and unity is the state of *Sushupti*-deep sleep. In the waking state one is conscious of the differences, the differences in appearance and so on, while in the state of deep sleep one has no remembrance whether he is a king or a beggar. The only feeling that one has in the state of deep sleep is that of peace and relief, forgetting everything else. One in the waking

state returns to the state of *Sushupti* and the other in the state of *Sushupti* returns to the waking state. The journey between these two extremities is a routine experience. The mind is active in both the conditions and travels between them. One may ask how the mind is active in *Sushupti*? The answer is that if the mind was not active in the state of *Sushupti*, one could not experience the peace in that state and could not say that he had a sound sleep. Generally the focus of attention of the man is his body and mind and he remains confined to these planes only. In the state of *Sushupti*, however, the flow of the mind is towards the causal body. When the mind is absorbed in the causal body it merges with the causal body, but it finds itself lost and, therefore, the impression it acquires from there is that of unconsciousness and ignorance. One does not know how to keep the mind up there absorbed in that state and, therefore, one is not able to know anything about the state of *Sushupti*, or to acquire any knowledge about the soul.

Knowledge for the sake of knowledge has no meaning. It is not an end in itself; it is not the final goal. Often knowledge makes one arrogant, specially the book-knowledge. It may result in the hardening of the heart. No amount of theoretical knowledge can take the place of knowledge acquired through practical experience, since the practical experience becomes a part of one's understanding. It is related to the great Sufi Master Rumi (Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi) that he had written eighteen treatises on spirituality. His spiritual Master Shamshtebrez, however, refused to take him under his shelter unless he threw away all those books in water. The utility of knowledge and science is in recognizing the true nature of things, and having known their true nature, to treat them accordingly. The Truth being eternal, the purpose of knowledge is to establish that fact and to reach the Truth. Knowledge is acquired to prove what is true to be true and false to be false.

The wise know that the real knowledge reveals that the Truth exists and that the Truth is eternal, although It cannot be known in the physical sense. Some knowledge can be acquired relating only to God's Names, Qualities and Attributes. The scriptures of various religions describe the Names, Qualities and Attributes of the God but as it is

said even if one were to use all the water in the oceans as ink, it cannot cover even a fraction of the God's glory. One can know about a happening but its cause cannot be known. The door leading to the knowledge of the cause of happening is closed, since the God is the Cause of all causes and He is the Reality of all realities and it is not possible for any one to have the complete knowledge of the Reality. Thus, one cannot fully understand the reality of anything. This alone is the real knowledge; the perfect knowledge that one knows that he knows nothing. It is, therefore, said that the state of a beginner and that of a knower is the same. The beginner does not know of the Reality and the knower also knows that he knows nothing of the Reality. There is, however, a lot of difference between the actual understandings of the two. This feeling in the beginner arises out of his ignorance whereas in the case of the knower, he gets immersed in the ocean of knowledge and he realizes that the ocean of knowledge is Infinite. The more he goes deeper, more he realizes about the unending depth of this ocean of knowledge. He, therefore, realizes that whatever he knows is nothing in comparison to what still remains to be known.

The complete faith in the existence of the Truth, however, leads one to the realisation of the Truth. The purpose of creation of the manifold existence was to enjoy the state of bliss; happiness or bliss is, therefore, the purpose of life, which is the real existence. The purpose of acquiring knowledge should also, therefore, be happiness. While some people have considered liberation as the ultimate objective of life, it has to be understood that liberation means to become free from the bondage resulting from action. Both liberation and bondage are illusion, and are the conditions of mind as it is mind alone that experiences and accepts the conditions of bondage or liberation. All the spiritual practices are, therefore, directed towards the mind to train it to know the real nature of things and to understand the reality and through this knowledge reach the state of bliss.

The three bodies, namely the gross body, the subtle body and the causal body, exist in all the creatures. In the case of non-livings the gross body, the subtle body and the causal body all are included in the gross body. In the case

of plants and trees they have gross body and their causal body includes the subtle body. In animals and human beings the gross body, the subtle body and the causal body exist separately. The gross body, the subtle body and the causal body are called as the body, mind and the soul. These bodies are also known as the *Sat*, *Chit* and *Anand*, taken together to mean *Satchitananda* or *Sachidananda*.

Sat is associated with the gross body, which has the desire of living for the eternity. However, one knows it in one's heart that in spite of all efforts, death is a certainty; it cannot be avoided by any means. No amount of wealth or worldly possessions can buy or get back the moment already gone. Knowing this fully well and feeling helpless, the desire of living for eternity converts into the desire to become famous so that if not one own self at least one's name is left behind forever. Building of memorials, tanks, wells, temples etc. are an expression of this desire that at least through them one's name will be remembered. However, one knows that in this world many persons worth reckoning have lived from time to time, but today they have all been lost in the oblivion.

Chit is associated with the mind, which has the desire to acquire knowledge. Every one, whether old, illiterate or learned, has the desire to learn more and more or has the curiosity to know about unknown things. Millions of books and newspapers published regularly keep on feeding the world on latest developments, discoveries, inventions and ideas, but the hunger for more and more knowledge does not satiate. One always desires to reach to the depth, to the root of all matters, but the law of nature is very complex. More and more one learns about it, more and more one finds still left to be known. One who has half-baked knowledge may feel proud about it but as one learns more, one feels embarrassed about one's ignorance.

Anand is associated with the soul, which is blissful. To be happy is the strongest desire, being a reflection of the primordial desire. It is difficult to find anyone who does not want to be happy. Every one desires and makes effort to somehow gather more and more means of comfort and to spend the life happily. Unfortunately, however, in spite of all efforts, one spends more time in worrying, thinking

about future, rather than live in the present and enjoy the life.

Happiness also can be categorised into physical, mental and spiritual happiness. The physical happiness can also be termed as material happiness, which is associated with the acquisition of or consumption of material things and is experienced by the physical body. One could acquire this happiness through wealth but the organs of the body do not always have the same strength to enjoy the material acquisitions.

The mental pleasure results from thinking and understanding. It is also of three kinds. The first one is the expression of ego, which gives immense mental pleasure. There are many ways of expressing one's ego such as display of one's wealth, authority, beauty, reputation etc. Amongst these, display of authority is the most prominent way of expressing one's ego. Wealth, respect and fame all are accompanied with authority. People do any thing; sacrifice even their lives to show authority. The desire to be famous, to be reputed, is one of the most sublime and hidden desires in human beings. The second is the expression of knowledge. Learned people often do not care even for the kingdom as their pleasure lies in their knowledge. This pleasure is more intense than physical pleasure. For example only a mathematician can experience the pleasure of solving a problem. The pleasure of possessing knowledge does not diminish by sharing it with others, nor does it pose any problem in possessing more and more knowledge. In the case of physical pleasure, excessive indulgence often results in harm. The third type of mental pleasure results from doing something good to others. Good deeds, sympathy, kindness and affectionate behavior are some such examples.

When as a result of good deeds one's mind becomes pure, it leads to steadiness of mind and absorption, which is known as spiritual pleasure. Only those who are knowledgeable feel this pleasure and they are known as sages or seers. One, who is fortunate to experience spiritual pleasure, considers the other pleasures as meaningless.

The knowledge of the true beloved i.e. the God is the source of tremendous happiness. As in the case of worldly knowledge, the more complicated an issue is, the more pleasure one gets in understanding and resolving it. Similarly in the spiritual world, the knowledge of the God being the highest, the seeker of the divine knowledge moves on the path of supreme bliss.

The human beings have all these three desires i.e. the desire of living for eternity, to acquire knowledge and to be blissful, existing in them. In the Sanskrit language these characteristics i.e. eternity, intellect and bliss respectively are known as '*Sat*', '*Chit*' and '*Anand*.' Together they become '*Satchitananda* or *Sachidananda*' i.e. the ultimate resort of Truth, Consciousness and Happiness. One, therefore, always wishes to reach the state of '*Sachidananda*', but often this desire remains unfulfilled. Two questions that arise in this context are why at all this desire exists in human beings and if this desire exists why it is not fulfilled.

It is a well-known fact that everything rushes towards its origin, for example if one throws a piece of stone in the sky, it finds its way back to the earth, to which it belongs. Similarly, a stream of water runs towards the sea to merge and become one with the sea. The man also in the same way turns towards *Sachidananda* since his reality is *Sachidananda* or the epithet of the Supreme Soul. The desire to achieve *Sachidananda* is in human nature, but one does not find it because one searches it outwardly and not in his inner self, which is the treasure of *Sachidananda*. If this delusion somehow can be eliminated, one can experience *Sachidananda*.

As already mentioned above the gross body, the subtle body and the causal body i.e. *Sat*, *Chit* and *Anand* coexist in all the creatures, although the intensity of their existence varies in them, depending upon their state of evolution. For example fire has many characteristics; it has light, it has warmth and it also has movement. All these qualities of fire exist together but different objects placed before fire react to these qualities differently. If a stone is placed before fire, it will absorb heat and would represent only the characteristics of heat associated with the fire. If a mirror is

placed before fire, it will reflect both light and heat. Similarly, the living creatures reflect different aspects of *Sachidananda*. The lowest creatures like trees and insects reflect the desire to exist more prominently, whereas in the case of lower animals intellect also is exhibited to some extent. In animals belonging to a higher category and in human beings, all the three characteristics of *Sat*, *Chit* and *Anand* are exhibited. In great persons, however, *Sachidananda* is reflected fully. In fact the exhibition of the intensity of *Sachidananda* in different persons depends upon the purity of their heart and mind.

The three bodies also represent the three states of awakening, dreaming and deep sleep. In the waking state the focus of the mind is on the gross body and the outward activities. The physical body binds us like a building. It has its limitations, which have their impact on the capabilities of perceptions by the body. In the sleeping state the focus of the mind is on the subtle body, which is called dreaming. The limitations of physical body have much lesser impact in the state of dreaming. We see many strange things happening in the dreams. Dreams, however, cannot be considered as a plunge in mere imaginary world, which ceases to exist, when we are awake. The experiences in dreams are also undergone with consciousness and, therefore, feelings and experiences of dreams are not imaginary. In the dreams we do not have control over consciousness because we have not established the harmony with the world of dreams in the same manner as with the physical world.

Dreams are of many kinds. Stray dreams, which are unorganised; those in which past, present or future incidences are seen happening exactly as it is. Only true and good persons see such dreams. In the third type of dreams, great persons and saints are seen imparting guidance or directions to the viewer. Such dreams are, however, seen by highly advanced spiritual persons. One can assess one's condition from the type of dreams one sees, as the dreams are a reflection of one's thoughts.

In the state of deep sleep the senses and mind get absorbed in their principle-the causal body. *Ahankar* (ego), therefore, does not exist in this state since ego reflects in

the body, senses and mind and in deep sleep the focus of consciousness is on the causal body. On returning from this state one has no memory of that experience but it leaves behind a feeling of relief and comfort. One feels relief in this state, which is proved by the fact that on waking up one has a memory of the peace one enjoyed in the state of deep sleep, otherwise how can one remember that which one has not felt. In this state the limitations of body almost cease to exist and the knowledge acquired thereby also turns out to be correct. The intensity of existence of *Sachidananda* in this state is comparatively much higher and, therefore, one feels happiness here. The access in this state is, however, restricted only up to '*Devlok*' (i.e. the world of angels) and not beyond.

Often we pass through all these experiences but we are more attuned to the physical world and understand it better than the others. Beyond these three states, lies the fourth state known as *Turiya* where the happiness and the knowledge are forever. This is the state of *Sushupti* (deep sleep) but with full consciousness. One is fully conscious in this state but one is absorbed in the soul. Even in the state of *Turiya* a slight discrimination of the experience of bliss may remain, which vanishes on merging completely with the Truth. When the difference between the Self and the Truth is wiped off, one attains the state of eternal bliss.

The individual soul longs for the merger with the Truth. It enjoys the state of permanent bliss on realising the truth of its true nature. The real knowledge is acquired on merger, otherwise the knowledge is imperfect, it leads to the state of triad where exists the knower, the known and the knowledge. The state of true merger comes when one sees himself in all manifestation and all manifestation in him and then even this feeling of oneness vanishes; all that remains then is the Truth. Till there is a feeling of oneness, feeling of duality is not completely vanished. The true merger is, therefore, the merger in Reality where nothing except the Reality remains.

REALISING THE TRUTH

Who am I; what is the reality of my existence; what is the Truth are some of the questions that agitate a spiritual seeker's mind. None of these questions can be answered fully, since these questions as well as their answers arise at the level of mind, whereas the truth thereof can only be realised, not by the mind but at a level beyond the mind, at the level of the Self. All the scriptures attempt to provide answers to these questions in their own way, but no explanation or description can be fully satisfactory, as the Truth cannot be comprehended completely in words.

In the first chapter of this book the origin of creation has been discussed from a materialistic point of view. Overwhelming with bliss, the Almighty God desired to reveal Himself in the form of manifold creation, which may enjoy the same bliss. This desire, the Primordial determination, constituted the first plane of relativity and the first illusion, which consequently gave rise to *Gyan* (knowledge), *Kaal* (time), and the three-fold energy (the *Trigunas* of the Nature) that in turn resulted in the creation of various elements including the five gross elements (namely *Aakash*, *Vayu*, *Agni*, *Jal* and *Prithvi*), their five subtle principles (namely *Shabda*, *Sparsh*, *Tej*, *Rasa* and *Gandha*), *Manas* (the mind), five organs of senses (namely, the ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose) and the five organs of action (namely, the speech, hands, feet, the genitals and anus). These elements, however, could not combine together to result into a human aggregate. The *Sat Purush*, therefore, cast His irradiation to bring life to this conglomeration, into the human being.

In the present chapter an attempt has been made to explain the reality of existence of man from a spiritual point of view. Looked from the spiritual point of view, it is only one transcendental principle, the Supreme Soul, which subsists ultimately. The entire creation has originated from the Supreme Soul and would ultimately return to It. The Holy Qur'an states 'He (the God) is the creator of all and He is the Knower. Verily, when He intends a thing, His command is: Be! And it is. He is the Lord of all and everything will return to Him'-Qur'an, 36:80-83.

The *Srimadbhagwat Mahapurana* in *Tratiya Skandh*, *Adhyay 29* mentions that ‘the God resides in the heart of all creatures in the form of the soul. One, who considers the soul and the God to be even slightly different, faces the supreme threat of death’. The soul, therefore, is qualitatively the same as the Supreme Soul and its true nature is eternal bliss. In regard to the qualities of the soul, the *Srimadbhagwat Gita* in the second chapter states that the soul is invisible, inconceivable and immutable. The soul is never born, nor does the soul ever die; nor does it undergo any change or will ever cease to be. The soul is eternal, ever existing and primeval. When the soul takes on a material body, a physical body is born. This physical body undergoes various changes; it grows, decays and ultimately dies one day. The soul, however, neither takes the birth nor does it die. The physical changes also do not have any effect on the soul. The soul neither deteriorates nor does it decay. The physical body, however, has a life because of the presence of the soul. The presence of the soul in the body is evident from the presence of consciousness in the body, consciousness being the characteristic quality of the soul.

The *Katho Upanishad* states that the Supreme Soul and the embodied soul are both situated on the same tree of the body within the heart of the living being. The embodied soul having forgotten its real nature identifies itself with the body and mind due to association with false ego and undergoes the sufferance. The *Mundaka Upanishad* and *Svetasvatara Upanishad* also compare the Supreme Soul and the embodied soul as two birds sitting on the branch of the same tree. One of them, the embodied soul eats from the fruit, i.e. it engages in enjoying the worldly pleasures and gets tied to the action, and, therefore, keeps on moving from one body to the other. The other, the Supreme Soul keeps on looking at its friend, the embodied soul, as a witness. The Supreme Soul is the treasure house of all the power, from which the embodied soul derives its power to act and to enjoy the fruit of the material body. The Supreme Soul being only a witness does not involve in the action and, therefore, is not affected in anyway by the outcome of the action. The embodied soul on the other hand, gets

engaged in the enjoyment of the ‘fruit from the tree’ and gets tied to the action.

The soul, however, is the real existence and the real state of being. What we call as the life is only the span between the birth and death of the material body. The material body of the creatures is manifested from an unmanifested state during their life and again it is annihilated in the unmanifested state. The cycle of life and death is unending, till one attains liberation from it.

It has been mentioned in the last chapter that the knot is in the middle, i.e. it is the mind that travels between the two extremes of the physical body and the soul, carries impressions from there and forms a knot under their influence. It is the mind that rules both the body and the embodied soul and it is the mind alone that accepts bondage or liberation. The action, which entangles the embodied soul, originates first in the mind. Many people, therefore, say that every evil has its origin in the mind and it is the mind that is responsible for all misdeeds. The mind, however, cannot be condemned. Mind is not the originator and responsible for bad actions alone, the good and virtue also arise in the mind alone. There is, therefore, no justification for blaming the mind. The mind is like the horse on which one has to ride to cover the distance in the journey of life. If the mind is compelled or coerced with force it gets irritated and becomes weak. One cannot complete his journey satisfactorily and pull the cart of the life to its destination using a weak horse. All that is necessary is to control the fickle mind and to train it. It needs to be guided with love and care. With love the mind gets to the right path easily.

Importance of body can also not be undermined. The God has given us this physical body wherein resides the soul. The body is the living temple of the God. As mentioned earlier, the God has created the man as the king of all creatures. The man was created from all the elements used in the creation of the universe and the *Sat Purush* cast His irradiation to bring life to the conglomeration of all the elements into the human being. The man, therefore, contains in him the seed of all possibilities. The spiritual progress is based on knowledge, which in turn is based on

movement. The capability to act lies in the soul. Contact of soul with the physical matter is, therefore, necessary so that on the basis of experience, it may acquire knowledge of the world and thereafter the knowledge of the Truth. A physical body is necessary for realisation. The soul needs an outer covering, the physical body, just as for a seed the outer shell is necessary. If a seed is sown without its outer covering, it will not sprout; it will not grow into a tree. Similarly, the soul also cannot realise the Truth without a physical body. The experience of pain and suffering enables one to understand pain and suffering of others and to develop sympathy and kindness for them. It is a process of constant evolution and achieving perfection as a true human being.

To realise the Truth, one has to first realise the Self, because the essence of the Truth is the same as the essence of the Self. A story is related: The story of thirty birds narrated by the great Sufi Master Farrauddin Attar in his book '*Mantiqu't Tayr*' (or Birds' Conference) is an allegory of the journey of a spiritual seeker to self-realisation. The story concerns a group of birds that were eager to find their king. They had heard of the beauty and majesty of their king, but they had no idea where to look for Him. One day a wise bird hoopoe arrived there, who knew about the king and learning about the eagerness of the birds to meet their king, the hoopoe decides to help them. The hoopoe tells the birds that the name of their king is Simurgh (which in Persian means thirty birds; 'si' means thirty and 'murgh' means birds) and that the king lives far off in hiding in the mountain of Kaf. The hoopoe also tells them how dangerous and difficult it is to reach that place. They will have to cross five valleys and two deserts before reaching the top of the mountain, where is the palace of the king. On the insistence of the birds to guide and help them reach the king, the hoopoe starts training them. The initial enthusiasm of some of the birds with weak wills start dwindling. They lose interest and start finding excuses to back out. One of the birds speaks of its love with roses and that it has found the secret of love. The other bird says that it cannot live without water and yet another says that it has had a dream of the heaven in the night and that it will wait for that day, and so on. The hoopoe explains in vain that they should not allow their hearts to be driven away from

the love for the king for the love of worldly things, which will vanish one day and, therefore, to give up their deluded attachment to the roses, water and the heaven. The hoopoe, however, encourages the other birds giving them examples and telling them wondrous stories of other birds that already had made this journey.

Hearing the stories from the hoopoe, the remaining birds get inspired and decide to set on their journey to the first valley. As they proceed ahead on their way to the mountain Kaf, they realise that the journey was more difficult than what they had imagined. Some of them, therefore, again start making excuses. Some even start challenging hoopoe's wisdom and others start expressing their longing for the comforts they enjoyed back at home. The hoopoe decides to tell the birds what lies ahead so that they could be better prepared for facing the difficulties of the way. The hoopoe tells them that they will have to pass through the five valleys of Quest, Love, Knowledge, Detachment and Unity and the two deserts of Bewilderment and Annihilation.

The hoopoe explains the first valley as the Valley of Quest where one restlessly seeks for the Truth. A dedicated seeker alone can cross this valley safely for the next, which is the Valley of Love. In this valley the fire of love for the king grows so intense that it becomes all-consuming. Though this valley is more dangerous than the first one but the power of true love takes one through to the third valley, the Valley of Knowledge. On entering the Valley of Knowledge one's heart is illuminated with the light of the Truth and with the knowledge of the Beloved. The next valley is the Valley of Detachment, where one is freed from all desires. The fifth valley is called the Valley of Unity, where one feels unity of all existence and that the essence of all beings is the same. Each new place is more dangerous than the previous one, putting the seeker to various trials and difficulties. After crossing the five valleys one enters the Desert of Bewilderment, where one forgets everything, about all existence. His intellect fails him and he knows nothing. Finally the seeker enters the Desert of Annihilation, where remains nothing of the self, which merges completely in the Beloved. This is the end of the journey where one finds the king.

The excited birds resume their journey. Some of them die of heat, some are tired and unable to continue their journey any further, some get distracted by the treasures they find on the way, so they are left behind. Only thirty birds are able to reach the door of the king at the top of the mountain of Kaf, where the doorkeeper confronts the birds with the record of their deeds. On recalling their deeds the birds feel ashamed but having traveled all the distance their bodies and souls were purified, as a result of annihilation of their self. Finally the King's personal servant ushers in the thirty birds to the King's Presence. The birds see there nothing, no Simurgh (the king), but only themselves, the thirty birds. They realise that by looking at themselves, they have found the King and in the search of the King the birds have found themselves.

The essence of the story is that the Almighty can be known only by knowing the Self. The only window open to realise Him is one's own heart. The mirror of the heart is to be purified and cleansed of all dust and rusting i.e. one has to get rid of all worldly desires and aspirations in order to see His reflection in this mirror. There is no other way, no other possibility of realising Him, except through the heart. No amount of austerities can help one unless the heart is softened; it is melted by the fire of love.

The true nature of the soul is eternal bliss. It, however, forgot its true nature on descending down in the material body due to association with the false ego because of which its attention is totally focused on the body and mind. It started considering itself affected by the sorrows and pleasures of the body and mind. Since its nature is eternal bliss, the soul always keeps on searching for the happiness. The man can return to his original state of eternal bliss only by reversing his path of journey i.e. from the body and mind back to the soul. This journey back to realise the true nature of soul has been called by various sages as '*Yoga*', '*Kundalini*' and '*Chakra Vidya*' etc. and involves purification and subjugation of various centers of energy in the human body.

The Almighty God has conferred special capabilities to the man alone by gifting him the human body, which

contains in it the seed of all possibilities. In practical terms it means that it is possible only for the man to reach the highest level of spiritual attainments. The human body reflects the cosmos at a micro level and the soul pervades each and every cell of the human body in the same manner as the God pervades the entire cosmos. While descending down in the human body, however, the soul rested at some stations and chose them as the centers of energy in the human body, which are called spiritual *Chakras*.

The saints belonging to different traditions have described the stations of initiatic path i.e. the spiritual *Chakras* situated in the human body in different manners according to the method followed by them and based on their own experiences. In India the knowledge of spiritual *Chakras* is traced historically to *Nath Sampraday*, who traditionally followed the path of *Hatha Yoga* to awaken their *Kundalini*. They consider Lord Shiva to be the *Adiguru* (the first Master), whose abode is at the *Sahastradal Kamal* (i.e. one of the spiritual *Chakras*, which is located in the skull). The abode of *Shakti* (Goddess Parvati, the mate of Lord Shiva) is at the *Mooladhar Chakra* (the lowest of the spiritual *Chakras*, which is located at the base). They need to awaken this *Shakti* and seek its reunion with Shiva, meaning thereby the reversal of the path of journey from the *Mooladhar Chakra* to the *Sahastradal Kamal*, which they call as the *Kundalini Yoga*. Since the spiritual *Chakras* from the *Mooladhar Chakra* to *Sahastradal Kamal* lie on a path in the shape of a coil (*Kundalini* means coiled), the process of their awakening, activating and subjugating is called *Kundalini Yoga*.

While most of the saints prior to Sant Kabir are believed to have talked of spiritual *Chakras* only up to the *Sahastradal Kamal*, Sant Kabir is considered to be the first person, who spoke of spiritual *Chakras* beyond *Sahastradal Kamal* up to the highest station of the abode of the Truth. Sant Kabir has talked of twenty-one *Lokas* or *Chakras* in his treatise '*Granth Adibhed*'. Giving an account of the process of creation, Sant Kabir refers the Absolute Truth or the Supreme Soul as '*Purush Ninavam*' i.e. 'the Nameless' (*Ninavam* in Hindi means something without a name). The time had not come in to existence then, as it was the beginning of creation. If the time existed before this

beginning, it would have been beyond perception. There was no earth, no moon, no sun, no sky, no water or land, no creation at all. He (the Truth) has no origin, though He is the origin of all; He is not a seed that it grew into a tree bearing fruits and in turn the fruits bearing the seeds and so on; nor does He claim that I am this or that. Although Nameless and Indescribable, He alone is the Origin of all. If He was not there, nothing else could have existed. Our existence is the proof of His existence.

Some people say that He was One in the beginning, some others say that there were two or three. The fact of the matter, however, is that it was the Truth in the beginning in whatever manner one may describe. If one says He was a '*Purush*' (Man), it is not the truth, as He manifested as a '*Purush*' only when He thought of His existence. He was not even the '*Shabda*' (word or vibration), as that also required existence of two things without which '*Shabda*' cannot exist but He was all alone, the only Himself. This is the Highest State of Truth i.e. the Truth by Itself, with no manifestation, no description, no attribution and no duality whatsoever. The beginning started from this Supreme State.

Even at this stage there was no time (*Kaal*) and, therefore, no one can say when even this beginning started. This was much earlier than the beginning of the material creation and, therefore, beyond the perception of senses. One can have a glimpse of this state only through realisation through the grace of the *Satguru* (Master) when the *Satguru* causes ascension of the consciousness to that state.

Everything has originated from the 'Nonbeingness', which is the highest state, the state beyond all attributes. The first state of 'coming into being' of the Absolute Truth was the state of flux or the state of twinkling in which It had started to manifest but it was still hidden, or in other words neither manifested nor hidden. This state of the Truth has been named as '*Videhi Purush*' i.e. 'the Bodiless' (*Videhi* in Hindi means one without a body).

Sant Kabir has explained various states of the Truth in the process of creation in terms of *Nirat*, *Surat* and *Shabda*.

In order to understand the description given by him in the '*Granth Adibhed*', it would be necessary to first understand the true sense in which he has used these terms and what does he want to convey when he uses these terms. It has been mentioned earlier that in the beginning of the creation the '*Purush Ninavam*' was all alone in the Perfect state. There was no duality or existence of anything else whatsoever. He alone was the only one with no discrimination and, therefore, no manifestation of any sort. In order that He could come into being and reveal Himself in the form of manifold existence, it was necessary for Him to disperse His power. For the creation to come into existence, it was necessary that there existed more than the One. Sant Kabir mentions *Nirat*, *Surat* and *Shabda* as His three States of Being. These have three centers of separate as well as coexistence, which are called *Satya Loka*, *Agam Loka* and *Videhi Loka*. These *Lokas* are the abodes of '*Sat Purush*', '*Agam Purush*' and '*Videhi Purush*' being the different states of the Truth in these *Lokas* respectively, which act as the center of attraction for the souls to reach these states of being.

'*Nirat*' is a distortion of the word '*Nritya*', which means dance or movement. In the spiritual context, *Nirat* is the power of the soul that awakens the '*Surat*' i.e. the consciousness and leads it to move on to the higher planes. This is the power of the thought, the determination, which awakens the consciousness. '*Surat*' means consciousness and the power that guides consciousness is referred to as '*Nirat*'. Unless *Nirat* is activated *Surat* cannot move ahead.

An example of a child would be apt to understand the meaning of activating the *Nirat*. The child has consciousness and he utters some words, which do not carry any meaning. His *Nirat* has not been activated so far. He is now gradually trained to utter meaningful words such as Papa, *Chacha* (uncle) etc. The child at this stage does not know what these words mean. He is then trained to understand the meaning of these words. This is activation of the *Nirat*. Once the *Nirat* is activated, it guides the consciousness to understand the true meaning of words. It is important to note that the mother uses the words to activate the *Nirat* of the child. It is thus through the transmission of word that *Nirat* is activated and then the

consciousness is guided to understand the word and to reach its objective. In the context of spirituality, it is the *Satguru* (the true spiritual Master), who activates the *Nirat* for the seeker in order that he can engage the '*Surat*' with the '*Shabda*'. The scriptures mention it in no uncertain terms that it is the *Satguru* who arouses the determination-the thought-lights the lamp in the heart of the disciple and keeps it burning. In the Naqshbandi Sufi Order the Master through his grace, transmits the *Shabda* from heart-to-heart to the disciple and through this transmission activates the *Nirat*. Consider the couplet below:

*'Guru Saman Data Nahi, Yachak Shishya Saman,
Tin Lok Ki Samapda, Pal Main Dinhi Daan'*

(There is no greater giver than the Master, who gives away all the treasures of the world to his disciple in a moment. The master gives this treasure in the form of *Shabda* by transmitting the *Shabda* from his heart to the heart of the disciple. The *Shabda* is invaluable, as the entire world has been created from the *Shabda*.)

The '*Videhi Purush*' is the treasure house of all consciousness. The souls that have reached this state rest along with the '*Videhi Purush*' in this '*Videhi Loka*'. In this *Loka*, however, the *Nirat*, *Surat* and *Shabda* all are in a hidden state. All the three *Nirat*, *Surat* and *Shabda* existed in the '*Videhi Loka*' but they were in a hidden state, i.e. this was a state prior and superior to the state of manifestation of *Nirat*, *Surat* and *Shabda*. *Nirat*, *Surat* and *Shabda* are all the characteristic powers of the soul and, therefore, in the '*Videhi Loka*' the soul rests in a higher state beyond the state of manifestation of these powers.

The next state was that of '*Agam Purush*' (the 'Unapproachable' or the One beyond reach). This was the state where the '*Agam Purush*', like the *Satguru*, activated the '*Nirat*', which was so far in a hidden state in the *Videhi Loka*. In the *Agam Loka* both *Surat* and *Shabda* were in hidden state. *Nirat* in turn first awakened the '*Shabda*' and then the '*Surat*'.

The '*Sat Purush*' is the state of the Truth in the form of '*Saarshabda*' the highest state of '*Shabda*' whereas

‘*Surat*’ still was in a hidden state. In the Islamic tradition the *Saarshabda* is known as ‘Kalma-e-Kun’, which is considered to create the earth and the sky in turn. The abode of the *Sat Purush* is called *Sat Loka*. The ‘*Sat Purush*’ was Perfect, the highest state of ‘*Sat, Chit and Anand*’, the ocean of pure love and bliss and the highest state of consciousness and enlightenment. Those souls that have reached the state of ‘*Sat Purush*’ rest in this *Loka* with eternal peace and enjoy the perfect state of *Sat, Chit and Anand*. The Sufi saints call Him ‘*Insan-ul-Kamil*’ or the Perfect Being.

As mentioned above, the *Shabda* had been activated in the *Sat Loka* but the *Surat* was still in a hidden state. The *Shabda* is heard in this *Loka* in the form of sweet melodies. Lord Shri Krishna revealed this *Shabda* in the form of the melody of His flute, which attracted thousands of His devotees (*Gopis* and *Gwalas*) towards Him as the Divine call.

The ‘*Videhi Purush*’, ‘*Agam Purush*’, and ‘*Sat Purush*’ all are the different states of the Truth, the ‘*Purush Ninavam*’ i.e. ‘the Nameless’. While in the *Videhi Loka Nirat*, *Surat* and *Shabda* are still in a hidden state, in the *Agam Loka* the *Nirat*, *Surat* and *Shabda* exist in their highest states. Here the *Nirat* is activated but *Surat* and *Shabda* exist in a hidden state. In *Sat Loka* *Shabda* exists in the highest state and *Surat* is in a hidden state. The entire creation is based on *Surat* and *Shabda*. While the capability of expanding and manifesting existed only in *Surat*, it exhibited its presence in the form of *Shabda*.

The souls that have reached the state of resting in the *Videhi Loka* are stated to be shining like ‘*Koti Surya*’ (or millions of Sun), i.e. these souls are so powerful. The shining of the souls in the *Sat Loka* is stated to be comparable with the light of sixteen Suns shining together. The power of the soul thus keeps on diminishing as it descends down to lower states.

Sant Kabir has explained the different states of existence in terms of ‘*Surat*’ and ‘*Shabda*’. While ‘*Surat*’ is the consciousness i.e. the attentive power of the soul, ‘*Shabda*’ is ‘word’, about which the Bible says: ‘In the

beginning there was the word, the word was with the God and the word was the God'. He has, however, distinguished '*Saarshabda*' (essential word) from '*Shabda*' and it will be important to understand the true nature of '*Shabda*' and the '*Saarshabda*'.

As described earlier the '*Shabda*' (vibration) was produced as a result of transformation of the dissolution energy into the matter and the action of time. This '*Shabda*' was the immediate principle or cause for the creation of *Aakash* (ether) and all other gross elements. The '*Saarshabda*' on the other hand is the reflection of the Primordial Determination, the desire of the God, in all that has originated from Him. It is like the genes carrying the memory of the forefathers, the '*Saarshabda*' exists in the entire creation, gross, subtle or causal, as the reflection of the Truth from which everything has originated. The '*Saarshabda*' is the essential remembrance of the Highest Truth. Even in our day-to-day experience when we speak any word it leads us to recollect that thing in our memory to which it is associated, be it the name of a person or a thing. The words are immediately related to things. If a person needs help to find something, the first question he is asked is what is it that he is looking for? What is the name of that thing? The name helps in identifying that thing and it can lead one to that thing. Similarly the '*Saarshabda*' is related to the remembrance of our essence, which is the Essence of the God and it is this remembrance i.e. the '*Saarshabda*' alone that can lead us back to the Truth. The '*Nirat*' awakens the '*Surat*' (consciousness) to this essential remembrance of its Origin (*Saarshabda*) in order that it can lead back to the Origin. Once the '*Surat*' gets turned on to the '*Shabda*' it gradually becomes one with it and effortlessly traces back its Origin, the Truth.

It may be mentioned here that these *Lokas* are not to be understood in the physical sense of the term, i.e. not as a place in the space. There is no existence of day or night, or that of sorrow or pleasure in the *Sat Loka*; nor does there exist the mind, the senses, desires or worries. These *Lokas* thus denote the state of the soul and should be understood in spiritual sense only. Many souls having reached the highest state of *Sachidananda* rest in peace in this state and enjoy the bliss of witnessing the Truth.

The '*Surat*' was in a hidden state in the '*Sat Loka*'. When the '*Sat Purush*' desired to manifest Himself in the form of manifold creation, the '*Surat*' i.e. consciousness was awakened and it spread like a boundless ocean, which was the next state, the highest state of consciousness, known as '*Pad Nirvan* or *Surat Loka*' or the state of eternal bliss. This was the last state of the soul with full consciousness.

The next state of the soul is that of '*Akshar Purush*' the '*Imperishable*' (*Akshar* means when who does not perish) in the '*Akshar Loka*' where the souls lie in a dormant state. These are those souls, which have not yet overcome the bondage of action. Their accumulated actions are not yet over and they are waiting in a dormant state for the right time to arrive, when they will get an opportunity to make further progress. It was to awaken these souls and to provide them with an opportunity to make progress that the '*Kaal Purush*' came into being. This was an act of extreme kindness of the God, as this provided the souls resting in *Akshar Loka* with an opportunity to take birth in a suitable body and make effort for further progress. If they were not provided this opportunity, they would have remained in that dormant state forever.

Sant Kabir has named the '*Kaal Purush*' as '*Niranjan*', who represents the temporal and spatial principle that governs all contingent beings subject to the condition of time, birth and death. As mentioned earlier, looking at the luminous '*Sat Purush*', the '*Kaal Purush*' claimed its own separate existence, giving rise to the principle of *Ahankar* (ego-the principle of individual consciousness) in the formula "I am" or '*Aham Asmi*'.

The creation required two things to interact in order that a third thing could be created. These two things are the *Surat* i.e. consciousness and the *Shabda*. It has been mentioned earlier that the *Shabda* is the source of all material creation. The entire creation has thus originated from the interaction between conscience and the matter.

The *Kaal Purush* was made of causal element and was full of light (a derivation of *Shabda*) but it lacked the *Surat*

i.e. consciousness. It is *Surat* alone that can engage in multiplication or creation and which can attain the higher states of Truth and can feel the bliss. In order that further creation could take place, the *Sat Purush* caused *Adi Maya* to engage with *Kaal Purush*. Sant Kabir calls the *Adi Maya*, as the ‘Fifteenth *Surat*’, the Sixteenth being the *Sat Purush* Himself (corresponding to the mythological ‘*Solah Kalaen*’- the incarnation of Lord Krishna is considered to be complete with all the ‘*Solah Kalaen*’).

The *Kaal Purush* in association with the *Adi Maya* was called as the ‘*Avigat Purush*’ (the one which has not yet passed away-not yet over). This was the state of the merger of the *Shabda* and *Surat* into one. Prior to this state i.e. the souls in the *Surat Loka* and above were full of consciousness and the *Shabda* and *Surat* existed separately. The souls above this state being full of consciousness, they were not required to associate with *Shabda*, as they lacked nothing and hence the *Shabda* was not required to associate with the *Surat*. This consciousness of the soul was that of its origin i.e. the Truth. Once this state of full consciousness was lost, it required the *Shabda* to lead it back to the state of full consciousness. Before this the *Kaal Purush* was in the state of pure ‘*Brahm*’. The desire for creation had not yet arisen in him. It may be mentioned here that the *Brahm* enjoys the same status at cosmological level as the mind in the human beings. The *Brahm* is also the middle state, like the mind and it is the knot formed by the two extremes of the soul and the matter.

This *Loka* of the *Kaal Purush* and the *Adi Maya* was called ‘*Anami Loka*’ also known as the ‘*Amarkot*’ and ‘*Akah Loka*’. This was their first creation and it was a replica of the abode of the ‘*Purush Ninavam*’. Some saints state it as the place of ‘*Brahmarandhra*’. The *Sushumana Nadi* (nerve), which originates from the heart, goes up to *Brahmarandhra*. The tenth chapter of *Srimad Bhagwat Mahapurana* mentions this path (of *Brahmarandhra*) as the one “followed by the Seers belonging to the lineage of the Sun (*Arun-Vanshi*) to realise the Truth. One, who gets an access to this lighted path and moves forward on it, does not then fall in the trap of life and death”.

All the *Lokas* or the spiritual *Chakras* from the ‘*Anami Loka*’ to the lowest, the *Mooladhar Chakra*, are located in the human body. It may, however, be mentioned that these spiritual *Chakras* or centers of spiritual energy cannot be identified as any particular organ in the human body or in their physical form, but they are located in the human body in their subtle form as centers of energy.

The ‘*Anami Loka*’ is full of light and various sounds, which attract millions of souls, who rest here immersed in this light and sound. *Shabda* is the base of this *Loka*. The *Avigat Purush* created this *Loka* with five words, the secret of which is known only to those, who have reached this state. Similarly the *Adi Maya* also revealed five words, which are: *Sohum*, *Ni:Akshar*, *Rarankar*, *Omkar* and *Niranjan*. All these five words are echoing continuously in all human beings and in the universe, but only some saints have acquired their knowledge. The place of the origin of the *Shabda Sohum* is near *Bhanwar Gufa*; *Ni:Akshar* originates in *Mahashunya*; *Rarankar* in the *Shunya*; *Omkar* near the *Trikuti* and *Niranjan* near the *Agya Chakra*. The actual location of these *Chakras* has been discussed below. These five *Shabdas* are the sources of tremendous powers and are continuously echoing in all human beings. Rarely, however, people are aware about their presence in them. They have forgotten the powers of these *Shabdas* and their own reality. Only some saints have known them and they have merged their selves in these *Shabdas*. Those who are not aware of the powers of these *Shabdas* may laugh at it, but the stories of the lives of such saints leaves no room for any doubt in this regard. It is also equally true that most of the saints did not go beyond this state as they got stuck with the wonders and charms of these *Shabdas*.

The creation below the *Anami Loka* was called the ‘*Avigat Srishti*’ in which the upper *Lokas* were replicated. The first *Loka* of the *Avigat Srishti* was the ‘*Saptam Shunya*’ i.e. the ‘Seventh Void or Vacuum’. Here the *Avigat Purush* replicated the *Videhi Loka* and named it as ‘*Agam Loka*’. This *Loka* is free from all sorrows and pains and is full of light. The word ‘*Agam*’ sounds here continuously. One, who reaches this state, acquires eligibility for all the four kinds of liberation i.e. *Salokya* (in

the same *Loka*), *Samipyra* (being near), *Sarupyra* (in the same form) and *Sayujya* (being united).

In the ‘Sixth Void’ the *Avigat Purush* replicated the *Loka* of the *Agam Purush* and named it as ‘*Alakh Loka*’. The state of soul here was called ‘*Alakh Purush*’. Similarly in the ‘Fifth Void’ the *Avigat Purush* replicated the *Sat Loka*, which is also full of light and free from joy and sorrows. ‘*Anahat Nad*’ echoes here uninterruptedly. The Muslim saints have called it ‘*Muqam-e-Haq*’ and the sound echoing here as the ‘*Sada-e-Haq*’. The Hindus have called it as the ‘*Satnam*’ and the Sikhs call it as ‘*Sachkhand*’.

The ‘Fourth Void’ is called ‘*Bhanwar Gufa*’, which is a replication of *Pad Nirvan* or *Surat Loka*. This is the place of origin of the sound ‘*Sohum*’. The Muslim saints name this sound to be ‘*Anahoo*’. This is the state of realisation ‘So am I’ i.e. ‘I am a part of the Truth’. The souls up to this *Loka* are liberated souls as they are in a highly conscious state although the level of consciousness declines from the higher states to the lower.

The ‘Third Void’ is divided in ‘*Mahashunya*’ and ‘*Shunya*’. The ‘*Mahashunya*’ is known as the abode of ‘*Nirgun Parbrahma*’ or ‘*Nirgun Ni: Akshar*’. The Muslim saints have called it ‘*Alam-e-Hahoot*’. It is also known as ‘*Mahakaal*’ and it is engulfed in darkness all over. The disgraced souls from the ‘Fifth Void’ i.e. *Sat Loka* are pushed back here. Although they do not suffer in any way but they lose the bliss of *Sat Loka*. They regain their position when saints passing through this path seek God’s mercy for them.

The ‘*Nirgun Parbrahma*’ now took the form of *Brahma*. This is the last conscious state of *Surat*, below which it takes the form of ‘*Jeeva*’ i.e. the embodied soul, the one craving for life and who has forgotten the truth of his reality. This is the last state of the association of *Surat* and *Shabda*. Stating in other words the *Niranjan* and *Adi Maya* separated from this station. This provided the base for further creation resulting from cohabitation of ‘*Prakriti*’ and ‘*Purush*’, as described below.

The '*Shunya*' is also known as the '*Dasham Dwar*' or the '*Tenth Gate*'. The Sufi saints call it '*Alam-e-Lahoot*'. It is also called '*Aranya Dweep*'. The soul lost its state of consciousness to a further degree here. '*Rarankar*' is the sound that echoes here. It is said that one whose soul departs from the body through this '*Tenth Gate*' is a liberated person. The other nine gates are eyes (2), ears (2), mouth (1), nostrils (2), genitals (1) and the anus (1). After the '*Shunya*', *Surat* and *Shabda* separated. According to saint Kabir, *Surat* now turned into '*Yog Maya*', which is called '*Prakriti*' in the '*Vedas*' and *Shabda* into '*Purush*'.

The '*Second Void*' is at the '*Trikuti*' in the human body. The Sufi saints call it as '*Musallasi*'. This is the place of the revelation of the four *Vedas* or the other divine books that descended as a divine order according to the belief of different religions. Here the sound of '*Omkar*' echoes continuously. The Sufi saints have described this sound as '*Hoo-Hoo*'. The spiritual center of *Trikuti* is the treasure of all knowledge. All the creation below *Trikuti* is destroyed at the time of *Pralay* (at the end of the *Kalpa*) but those, who have reached this state keep on making further spiritual progress even after leaving the physical body. This is the place of the origin of the five gross elements and the three '*Gunas*' (i.e. the *Trigunas* or the three modes of the Nature), which are created by the *Prakriti* and *Purush*. The creation beyond this was the material creation and the *Jeevas* (embodied souls) descended from the '*Nirgun Parbrahma*'.

The '*First Void*' is at the '*Sahstradal Kamal*', which is located at a height little above the eyebrows and towards the backside of the head in the human body. It is called '*Alam-e-Jabroot*' by the Sufi saints and is also known as the abode of Lord *Trilokinath*. The *Avigat Purush* has taken here the form of *Niranjan* and there is tremendous light over here. The divine books descended from here with the breathing. This place is also the abode of Cosmic Mind. One, who reaches this state, leaves behind his *Pindi Manas*-the psyche i.e. he subjugates his *Manas* (mind). It is said that the *Sahstradal Kamal* is a *Chakra* in the form of a lotus with thousand petals and hence the name *Sahstradal Kamal*. It appears that the thousand petals is an allegorical reference to confluence of a number of nerves ending at

this *Chakra*, which illuminate the mind. The *Chakras* below *Sahstradal Kamal* are related to human psyche and hence again the *Sahstradal Kamal* is allegorically referred to as a lotus having its root in the muddy clay.

As mentioned earlier, the *Chakra* (or the spiritual center) corresponding to the *Anami Loka*, the abode of the *Avigat Purush*, is located in the human body at the place of *Brahmarandhra* the uppermost reach of the *Sushumana Nadi* (nerve), which originates from the heart and goes up to *Brahmarandhra*. The *Avigat Purush* is the highest creation representing the temporal and spatial principle that governs all contingent beings subject to the condition of time, birth and death and accordingly, his abode in the human body is also at the highest point of the human body, at the *Brahmarandhra*. The other *Chakras* are also similarly located in the human body at different places between the *Brahmarandhra* and *Sahstradal Kamal*. The *Trikuti* is above *Sahstradal Kamal* and the way to it passes through the Optic Nerve, which is curved like a new moon, which the saints have called as '*Bunkanal*'. It would also be important to mention here that the human body has been cast in the image of the God and that the man is made from all the elements used in the creation of the universe and contain in him the seed of all possibilities, which is evident from the fact that the entire Cosmos is reflected in the human aggregate in the form of the spiritual *Chakras* as mentioned above. In the process of descent to the human body, the soul is believed to have first alighted at the *Brahmarandhra* from where it descended and rested at other spiritual centers, ultimately spreading to all the cells in the body. The spiritual centers or *Chakras* have been identified by the saints, as the major landmarks in the human body being the centers for spiritual activation and awakening for a spiritual seeker.

The soul enjoys more and more peace and bliss as it moves from the lower to higher *Chakras*. Sant Kabir and other saints have given very vivid descriptions of these stations, mostly in allegorical terms. There is danger for most souls making these stations as their permanent abode, because of the powers and charms associated with them. A true seeker, however, needs to keep his goal of realising the

Truth always in mind and to keep on moving ahead, without getting stuck anywhere.

The *Chakras* below the *Sahstradal Kamal* are the ‘*Agya Chakra*’, ‘*Vishuddha Chakra*’, ‘*Anahat Chakra*’, ‘*Manipurak Chakra*’, ‘*Swadhasthan Chakra*’ and ‘*Mooladhar Chakra*’. These are the lower six *Chakras*, which are the subject matter of the popular ‘*Kundalini Yoga*’.

The ‘*Agya Chakra*’ is located a little above the eyebrows in the middle of the forehead and about an inch inside the skull. The Sufi saints call it as ‘*Nukta-e-Suveda*’. While awake, it is believed to be the normal resting place for the embodied soul. In the state of sleeping the soul descends down to the throat and in deep sleep to the heart. The ‘*Agya Chakra*’ receives influences from all other *Chakras* above it or below it. It is the center that governs human psyche. As mentioned earlier, this is the last point beyond which the *Pindi Manas*-the psyche does not accompany the soul. This is the highest place that can be achieved through ‘*Hatha Yoga*’ (i.e. through insistence; by performing some yogic exercises, *Bandhas* and *Asanas*). In yogic terminology this is also known as the place of the third eye, which means that one who has subjugated this *Chakra* acquires the capability of seeing the inner realities. The way to the *Sahstradal Kamal* from here passes through a very fine nerve, which the yogis call as ‘*Mukti Dwar*’. Ascent beyond this point leads to liberation of the soul. The soul can move ahead following three different paths, called ‘*Triveni*’ i.e. confluence of the three rivers, the Ganga, Yamuna and the Saraswati. The path leading straight to the Truth i.e. where the seeker’s sole objective is to realise the Truth is said to be the middle path (the path of Ganga), and the other paths are for those yogis who are interested to acquire knowledge of and powers associated with these *Chakras*. They, however, face a danger of getting stuck to the wonders and astonishments seen over here.

The next *Chakra* below the *Agya Chakra* is ‘*Vishuddha Chakra*’, which is located in the human body on the throat. As mentioned earlier the first element to descend at the microcosmic level in the human aggregate was the ether (*Aakash*), which took its seat in the human

body at the throat, with its subtle principle vibration, which produces sound and is responsible for the faculty of speech. The governor or the lord of this first primitive power is called '*Maha Maya*' or the goddess '*Durga*'. She is the goddess of creation as well as that of destruction. Accordingly, *Rajogun* and *Tamogun* predominate this *Chakra*.

'*Anahat Chakra*' lies below the *Vishuddha Chakra*. It is also called the '*Hridaya Chakra*' and is located on the physical heart in the human body. The Sufi saints call it '*Qulb*'. This *Chakra*, which is governed by Lord Shiva (Mahesh or Rudra-the Lord of *Tamogun* and dissolution), is dominated mostly by *Tamogun*. As mentioned earlier the *Sushumana Nadi* originates from the heart and goes up to *Brahmarandhra*. The element air took its seat in the heart, located in close proximity to the lungs and it performs an important function of purifying the blood that is so necessary for life. The human heart and mind (psyche) are closely linked. The condition of the heart reflects on the human psyche and vice versa. Meditation at this *Chakra* connects one to the higher cosmic centers in the mind by-passing the intermediate *Chakras*.

The *Chakras* below *Anahat Chakra* are common between animals and human beings. The animals live through eating, reproduction and turning things into soil and, therefore, work through the lower three *Chakras* namely '*Manipurak Chakra*', '*Swadhisthan Chakra*' and '*Mooladhar Chakra*' only. Their higher *Chakras* are not developed.

The '*Manipurak Chakra*' is located on the naval. The element fire took its seat in the naval region. The most important function of fire is to digest the food and to nourish the entire organism. Lord Vishnu is the governor of this *Chakra*, who is known as the sustainer or the lord of preservation of the world. This center releases energy for the nourishment of the entire body and has the healing power. Dr. Chandra Gupta, a Sufi saint, has described one of his experiences in these words:

“December-1972. Once Shri Durgadan ji and I went to Shri Mool Raj Tondon's residence. Shri Mool Raj Tondon

was a freedom fighter and my fellow disciple. He had been operated upon for hernia and one of his kidneys had also been removed. He also was suffering with high blood pressure. We all set in meditation. Shri Durgadan ji and I saw Tondon Sahab's *Manipurak Chakra* getting activated. It emitted a spherical beam of golden light. The rays were falling on Shri Mool Raj Tondon, as if his wounds were being cured. Durgadanji could not bear the heat and came out to have some fresh air. Shri Mool Raj Tondon in spite of bad health lived till 1978."

The next lower *Chakra* is the '*Swadhisthan Chakra*', which is located at the height of the genitals. The element water descended and took its seat in the genitals, for the purpose of procreation. The governor of this center is *Brahma*, the lord of creation. The last *Chakra* is the '*Mooladhar Chakra*' where the last of the elements to descend in the gross determination was the earth, which took its seat in the anus, for excretion of waste. The governor of this center is lord Ganesha, who commands precedence over all other deities in the worship. The quality of *Mooladhar Chakra* is cohesiveness and inertia. One stuck at this level has no desire to change or to make progress. Like the root of a tree, however, this *Chakra* is embedded in earth and has the utmost possibility of growing. This *Chakra* helps in the strengthening of the will power, and enhances his chances of success in worldly affairs. These lower three *Chakras* are associated with various miraculous powers, but lack spiritual enlightenment. Acquisition of miraculous powers generally acts as an obstruction to making spiritual progress. One desirous of realising the Truth should not, therefore, get attracted to the miraculous powers. The level of consciousness of the embodied soul in these *Chakras* is comparable to that of animals and other lower creatures.

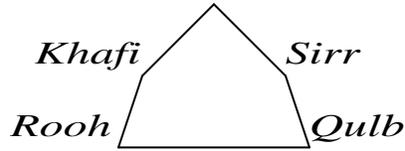
The Sufi saints, particularly those from the Islamic tradition, consider the macrocosm as the sphere of universal possibilities (or the *Daira-e-Imkan*), which contains in it the sum total of all present, future and past possibilities. This is divided into two parts, the upper hemisphere known as the 'World of Order' (or *Alam-e-Amr*) and the lower hemisphere known as the 'World of Creation' (or *Alam-e-Khalq*).

The world of order is also known as the ‘World of Light’ (or ‘*Alam-e-Nur*’), which came into existence immediately at the command of the God, without any temporal succession. The World of Creation on the other hand was subjected to creative process and it evolved gradually. The World of Order relates to the causal body (or the soul), which contains the principles and inner realities of all possibilities of manifestation. The World of Creation relates to both the subtle body and the gross body. The World of Creation is divided into two parts namely, the ‘World of Sovereignty’ (or ‘*Alam-e-Malkut*’) relating to the subtle body and the ‘World of Human Sovereignty’ (or ‘*Alam-e-Mulk*’), which relates to gross body and is perceivable through the senses. The highest reach of the World of Creation is the subtle heart and the lowest limit of the World of Order consists of the subtle principle of the heart organ.

The causal body in the man is reflected in five constituent organs i.e. the five spiritual centers namely the *Qulb, Rooh, Sirr, Khafi* and *Akhafa*, which pertain to the World of Order and govern the inner aspects of the man. The subtle body is reflected in the *Nafs* (the psyche) i.e. the heart or the mind and the gross body is reflected in the physical body comprising of the gross elements. The five spiritual components pertaining to the World of Order are considered to be the principle of and bear a strong relationship with the individual elements pertaining to the World of Creation and directly derived from them. They bear the relationship of the cause and effect. These five energy centers (the spiritual *Chakras*) are all located in the *Hridaya Chakra* of the man by the order of God.

The position of these spiritual *Chakras (Lataif)* is as under:

Akhafa



Latifa Qulb i.e. *Qulb-Chakra* is situated under the ribs on the left side in the chest where one feels the sound of the beating of the heart. *Latifa Rooh* i.e. *Rooh-Chakra* is situated opposite *Latifa Qulb* on the right side. *Latifa Sirr* is situated a little above the *Latifa Qulb* and similarly *Latifa Khafi* is situated a little above *Latifa Rooh*. *Latifa Akhafa* is situated at the center of *Latifa Sirr* and *Latifa Khafi* but a little above these centers, as shown in the figure above. Some Sufis associate these five *Chakras* with emotions, consciousness, intuition, deep intuition and the deepest intuition respectively.

The *Latifa-e-Qulb* is closely associated with *nafs* and the other four *Lataifs* bear a strong relationship with the individual gross elements directly derived from them. *Latifa-e-Rooh* is associated with the element air; *Latifa-e-Sirr* with the element water; *Latifa-e-Khafi* with the element fire and *Latifa-e-Akhafa* with the element earth.

These subtle *Chakras* need to be activated and awakened in order to reintegrate them with their latent spiritual principles in the form of pure light of different colours in the World of Order. It is believed that the five subtle organs lost their original purity-luminosity due to their association with *Nafs* (the carnal soul), during their descent into the World of Creation. They, therefore, need to be purified so that they may acquire their original uncontaminated state.

Each of these *Chakras* is associated with a different colour. Yellow is the colour associated with *Latifa-e-Qulb*, red with the *Latifa-e-Rooh*, white with the *Latifa-e-Sirr*, black with the *Latifa-e-Khafi* and green with the *Latifa-e-Akhafa*. These five *Chakras* together with the *Nafs* and the entire physical body made of the gross elements constitute the seven subtle centers (spiritual *Chakras*), the purification of which ensures their reintegration with their latent spiritual principles.

Some Sufi saints mention the first eight *Chakras* up to *Trikuti* same as Sant Kabir, and *Chakras* beyond *Trikuti* as *Shunya*, *Mahashunya*, *Bhanwar Gufa* and then *Satlok*, *Alakh Loka*, *Agam Loka*, *Akah* or *Anami Loka* and the *Dhruv Pada* or the ultimate abode of the Truth. They consider *Trikuti* to be comprising of six *Chakras** One, however, need not be confused by the similarity of names in the count of twenty-one *Chakras*, where *Satlok*, *Alakh Loka*, and *Agam Loka* are the names assigned to the Fifth, Sixth and the Seventh Void respectively and *Akah* or *Anami Loka* is the name assigned to the abode of *Avigat Purush*. The *Sat Loka*, *Alakh Loka*, *Agam Loka*, *Akah* or *Anami Loka* and the *Dhruv Pada* that the Sufi saints mention are located beyond the *Trikuti* (which they consider to be comprising of the six Voids) and thus refer to the abode of the *Sat Purush*, *Agam Purush*, *Videhi Purush* and the Absolute Truth respectively. There is, therefore, essentially no difference in the way of the description of various states of the soul by Sant Kabir and the Sufi saints.

(**Trikuti* is made of six *Chakras*-‘Aim Divine’ by Shri V.B.Lal; *Sat Loka* is the place of Eternal, ever existent *Sat Purush*’ the True Lord or Truth Real-‘Secrets of Realisation’ by Shri Har Narayan Saxsena)

Many saints including Sufi saints also consider the entire creation divided into (i) *Dayal Desh*, (ii) *Kaal Desh* and (iii) *Maya Desh* depending upon the state of the soul. The souls belonging to *Dayal Desh* are full of consciousness and bliss, with no desires or influence of any sort. They thus refer to the *Lokas* above ‘*Anami Loka*’ as *Dayal Desh*. The souls belonging to the *Kaal Desh* have lost their state of full consciousness and bliss and are, therefore, subjected to condition of *Kaal* (time) and subtle *Maya*. This includes the *Lokas* above *Sahstradal Kamal* and up to ‘*Anami Loka*’, which are referred to as *Kaal Desh*. Lastly the *Lokas* from the *Mooladhar Chakra* up to *Sahstradal Kamal* are referred to as belonging to *Maya Desh* as these souls are greatly influenced by the condition of time and *Maya*.

It has been mentioned earlier that the human body is made up of three bodies i.e. the gross body, the subtle body and the causal body. It is also considered to be made of different *Koshas* or sheaths. These are five in number, namely the '*Annamay Kosha*', the '*Pranmay Kosha*', the '*Manomay Kosha*', the '*Vigyanmay Kosha*' and lastly the '*Anandmay Kosha*'. These layers or sheaths got accumulated over the soul in order that the life may manifest in the form of various creatures. The souls covered with these *Koshas* are called the embodied souls.

The first sheath to descend on the soul was the '*Anandmay Kosha*' or the sheath of bliss consciousness. The next was the '*Vigyanmay Kosha*' or the sheath of intellect, which includes the faculties of reasoning, discrimination and decision-making. Above this layer descended the '*Manomay Kosha*', i.e. the mind, which comprises of the faculties of senses, i.e. hearing, *Sparsh* or touch, sight, savour and smell. The next sheath is the '*Pranmay Kosha*' i.e. the ethereal sheath, which comprises of the five breathing actions i.e. *Prana*, *Apana*, *Saman*, *Udan* and *Vijana*. *Prana* refers to the inhalation of air, *Apana* refers to exhalation, *Saman* refers to the breath that nourishes the body, *Udan* refers to the pharyngeal breath and *Vijana* refers to muscular stimulating breath. The last sheath is the '*Annamay Kosha*', i.e. the gross or the physical body, which is nourished and survives on the food. The twenty-one spiritual *Chakras* described above are related to the three bodies and the five *Koshas* as discussed below.

The first three *Chakras* i.e. *Mooladhar Chakra*, *Swadhisthan Chakra* and *Manipurak Chakra* are related to the gross body and the *Pranmay Kosha*. These centers can, therefore, be activated and awakened through *Pranayam* i.e. the breathing and other yogic exercises, postures etc. The seeker can acquire a lot of miraculous powers by conquering these *Chakras*, which, however, is not important from the spiritual point of view; rather the miraculous powers act as a distraction for the true seekers. These *Chakras* are also related to the state of awakening (i.e. *Jagrat Awastha*) where the focus of mind is on the physical body.

The next four *Chakras* i.e. *Anahat*, *Vishuddha*, *Agya Chakra* and *Sahstradal Kamal* relate to the subtle body and the *Manomay Kosha*. These are also related to the state of dreaming in which the focus of the mind is on the subtle body. While it is possible to activate and awaken these *Chakras* through *Hatha Yoga*, it may take many years and a lot of effort on the part of the seeker. This is the limit of *Hatha Yoga*. One cannot move beyond *Sahstradal Kamal* through *Hatha Yoga*. The grace of a true Master is required to move ahead on the path of realisation of the Truth. It is not to say that a Master is not required for *Pranayam* or *Hatha Yoga*, as without a Master *Pranayam* or *Hatha Yoga* can also prove to be dangerous, one may follow wrong practices resulting in harm rather than any benefit.

The *Chakras* above *Sahstradal Kamal* starting from the second *Shunya* up to the *Mahashunya* also relate to the subtle body but to the *Vigyanmay Kosha*. This is the state of *Sushupti* or deep sleep. Here the seekers enter into *Savikalpa Samadhi* (entering into a trance or getting absorbed in a thought but the knowledge of multiplicity of existence remains) and later into *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* (with no thought flowing and with no discrimination of I and you). This is the state of receiving the knowledge. While in the *Savikalpa Samadhi* the seeker may have a doubt about his perception of things, in the *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* there is no doubt left as the seeker perceives the inner realities of things and the knowledge in this state descends as a divine order.

Bhanwar Gufa and other *Chakras* above it relate to the *Anandmay Kosha*. While the *Chakras* from *Bhanwar Gufa* up to *Sat Loka* relate to the subtle body, *Alakh Loka* and beyond it relate to the causal body. The state of *Akshar Purush* and that of *Pad Nirvan* or *Surat Loka* is the *Turiya* or the fourth state of the soul. Having crossed this state the soul keeps on making further progress by the grace of the God.

More important than knowing the different stages of spiritual progress is to know the way to achieve it. The ultimate objective of human life is to realise the Truth rather than have a theoretical knowledge of it, which is superfluous. Theoretical knowledge is useful only after one

has gained the experience, as it helps to understand and explain it better.

The spiritual progress can be made only through practice, participation and self-experience. One's conduct plays an extremely important role in making spiritual progress. In fact spirituality is a matter of conduct; it is the refining of the self and complete annihilation of the ego, which enables one to make spiritual progress. There is a famous say: '*Baans ka pet chirkar use aag par tapaya jata hai. Tab jaakar us se mithi awaz aati hai.*' It means that the bamboo is drilled and cured on fire before it can be used as a flute for playing sweet melodies. Similarly the man has to cleanse his heart of all lusts and vices and keep an eye on his conduct in order that he may acquire the eligibility to listen to the eternal divine music.

The spiritual seekers can be placed in two categories, one following the path of *Bhakti* (devotion) and the other following the path of Yoga. These paths are also called '*Sulook*' and '*Jajb*'. *Sulook* is the way of step-by-step journey i.e. starting from the lowest the *Mooladhar Chakra* and gradually moving up to the higher states, whereas *Jajb* is the path of love and devotion.

In *Sulook* the seeker has to pass through various stages, i.e. he has to move from this station of death up to the station of the Truth crossing all the intermediate stages. This is like a passenger, who starts from his residence to a distant place and halts at the place where the night falls and in the process visits all buildings, rivers, townships etc. that fall on the way and acquires the experience and knowledge about them. Another person who although passes through the same route but travels in a motorcar, looks at things only if they happen to fall before his eyes, but does not make any deliberate attempt on his own to look at them or to acquire knowledge about them. There is yet another person who leaves the first few stations altogether and riding on a fast moving vehicle reaches his destination quickly. While the first person is said to follow the path of *Sulook*, both the later persons are said to follow the path of *Jajb*. *Jajb* literally means absorption, getting attracted or being pulled upwards. In the aforesaid example, the motorcar is the shelter of the Master, who by his grace

takes the seeker much faster to his destination. In the case of the last person, who is made to leave the first few stations, he cannot do so on his own. Only a competent Master can pull his disciple from any station and take him to any station, as he desires, leaving the stations falling in between.

Most *yogis* follow the path of *Sulook* in which they start their spiritual quest from the lowest, the *Mooladhar Chakra*, and through *Pranayam* (breathing exercises) and other yogic exercises they activate and subjugate various spiritual *Chakras*. The *yogis* generally make spiritual progress on account of their own effort, i.e. by performing *Pranayam* and other yogic exercises. They follow the path of ‘*Ashtang yoga*’, which is an eight-fold path and hence named as *Ashtang yoga* (*Ashtang* means eight-folded). The first five parts of the *Ashtang yoga* are external exercises, while the last three are internal practices.

The first part of the *Ashtang yoga* is ‘*Yamas*’ (self-control). These practices govern the external conduct of the seekers. *Yamas* have the following components:

- (i) *Ahinsa*, i.e. non-violence,
- (ii) *Satya*, i.e. truthfulness or honesty,
- (iii) *Asteya*, i.e. non-covetousness,
- (iv) *Brahmacharya*, i.e. chastity,
- (v) *Kshama*, i.e. forbearance,
- (vi) *Dhairya*, i.e. patience,
- (vii) *Daya*, i.e. kindness,
- (viii) *Komalta*, i.e. humility,
- (ix) *Satvik Ahar*, i.e. pure food, and
- (x) *Sauch*, i.e. cleanliness.

Yamas relate to one’s conduct and include non-violence i.e. not to hurt any creature either by action, words or thought. While it is easy to understand violence through action and by words and thus to refrain from them, one also needs to refrain from hurting others by thoughts. To think evil of others or to harbor contempt or ill feelings towards others is a form of violence to them. Hurting the feelings of others is also a form of violence, much graver than physical hurt. The responsibility of running the world is on the God, who has created us all. He knows what is to be done with

others, good or bad, but if one interferes with that, it will only be a distraction for him and nothing else. By pointing towards vices of others, one does not overcome his own shortcomings. Self-improvement is in one's own hands and that is the stepping-stone for gaining spirituality.

Satya, i.e. truthfulness or honesty means to be transparent in one's actions. One should live on fair means and on honest money. One, who learns to live within his means, leads a life free from worries. Money earned honestly, even though less, gives tremendous happiness and one lives cheerfully.

Asteya, i.e. non-covetousness means to refrain from seeking or craving for something that belongs to others. One should not claim anything from what belongs to others. Leave aside material things, even the credit for doing something should not be claimed by one, who does not deserve it. The credit must be given to the person to whom it actually belongs. One should also not have a feeling of jealousy towards others.

Brahmacharya, i.e. chastity means to restrain oneself from over indulgence. It does not mean running away from the family life. The God has created this world and it is His desire that this world should continue to exist and grow. Family life is, therefore, an essential part of this world. One, however, should not fall in the trap of lust. Lack of self-restraint can result in downfall even for great *yogis*. One should, therefore, exercise self-control even in the family life.

Kshama, i.e. forbearance means to refrain from harboring the feeling of vengeance, to control one's reactions and to seek pity for others. One, who is able to bear with others' behavior, does well both for himself and others. It may be difficult to tell others to forgive, but one can at least practice forgiveness himself. To forgive is a great quality and one, who practices it receives the grace of the Almighty, as the God is the greatest forgiver and a servant must try to follow his Master.

Dhairya, i.e. patience means not to become over eager to get results or to get rewarded. Patience is necessary to

achieve the objective. If one has no patience, one would not be able to withstand the difficulties arising on the way. An impatient person often leaves his job half done and his effort is wasted. An enduring person does not get frightened and tries to find solutions of the problems and does his best in the given situation. The Almighty helps those, who help themselves.

Daya, i.e. kindness means to treat all creatures with respect and to behave with them in the same manner as one would like to be treated oneself. The true meaning of being kind is to seek well being of all, to seek God's mercy for all creatures. One can never be happy by inflicting sorrows on others. The God resides in the hearts of all creatures. Cruelty to others, therefore, has its impact on the one who indulges in it. It is the law of the Nature that one gets in return the same, which he gives to others.

Komalta, i.e. humility means to be humble. One, who lives humbly, arouses a feeling of sympathy and mercy in others. Similarly, those who misbehave arouse a feeling of violence and anger in others and owe its responsibility on them. It also means to live like an ordinary person, who does not attract anyone's attention. If one is appreciated, he should attribute the praise to the God and pray for being saved from the feeling of pride. The Holy Qur'an starts with the *Ayat 'Alhamdu Lillillah'*, meaning thereby that 'all the praise is for the God'. It is only the God (or one's Master), who is worth praising. Think of a person who gets an opportunity to sit with the king. He starts feeling big and thinks others to be insignificant before him. Now imagine a spiritual seeker who experiences nearness to the Almighty, what would be his attitude? A spiritual seeker, therefore, has to constantly keep a watch over himself.

Satvik Ahar, i.e. pure food is extremely important for the purity of mind. All creatures survive on food. The food one eats has a great impact on one's mind. It has been mentioned earlier that the soul has five sheaths over it, the outermost being the *Annamay Kosha*, which is nourished and survives on the food. The *Annamay Kosha* supports the other sheaths and, therefore, the food taken by the man influences his mind and affects his spiritual progress. Scriptures categorise food as '*Tamsik*', '*Rajasi*' and

‘*Satvik*’ depending upon the type of food and the means of its acquisition. Foods that are juicy, soft, nourishing, wholesome and pleasing to the heart are considered *Satvik*. Such foods build life, strength, health and happiness. Foods that are too bitter, sour, salty, hot, pungent, dry and burning are considered *Rajasi*. Such foods cause distress, misery and disease. Foods that are stale, badly cooked, tasteless, polluted and impure are considered *Tamsik*. Such foods are harmful. Not only the food should be pure but it must also be obtained from honest earnings since dishonestly earned money affects the food and in turn the mind and thoughts, which leads one ultimately to indulge in bad deeds. Besides one should eat the food in the remembrance of God, as the thoughts occurring in the mind while eating has lasting impact. One should also exercise moderation even in eating *Satvik* food, as overeating often results in harm rather than benefit.

Saucha, i.e. cleanliness refers to internal and external purity acquired through things like maintaining cleanliness of the surroundings, of self and the purity of thought.

The second part is ‘*Niyamas*’ (austerities). *Niyamas* relate to those practices, which inspire the seeker. These include:

- (i) *Sanyam* i.e. self-control,
- (ii) *Santosh* i.e. contentment,
- (iii) *Astikata* i.e. faith,
- (iv) *Daan* i.e. charity,
- (v) *Upasana* i.e. worship,
- (vi) *Shrawan* i.e. listening to scriptures,
- (vii) *Paschatap* i.e. Repentance,
- (viii) *Dridhata* i.e. firmness in good deeds,
- (ix) *Jaap* i.e. recitation, and
- (x) *Tyaga* i.e. sacrifice.

Niyamas or austerities relate to internal practices, i.e. these are the practices to train one’s mind and are considered to be on a platform higher than *Yamas*. *Sanyam* i.e. self-control means to exercise restraint in fulfillment of desires. Desires are the biggest obstruction between man and the God. Worldly desires take one away from the path of realisation. Worldly desires and the desire of salvation

cannot coexist. It, however, does not mean inaction or withdrawal from duty. The true meaning of exercising restraint is not to become a slave of desires. Desires cause worry and worries result into instability of mind. Desires disturb a peaceful mind in the same manner as a stone thrown into still water. Desires are endless and can never be fulfilled completely. One desire leads to the other and so on. It is, therefore, utmost important for the spiritual seeker to exercise due restraint on fulfillment of desires.

Similarly one has to learn to be content. It is said that contentment is more than a kingdom. Contentment means to refrain from greed and from attachment to material things. Both the rich and the poor spend their lives worrying for the wealth; the rich in an effort to protect his possession and the poor in an effort to somehow acquire the wealth. One, who possesses enough wealth, also keeps on trying to acquire more wealth. The desire to accumulate more and more somehow does not satiate. The happiness, however, does not lie in material things. As one grows one realises that the things, which were giving him happiness earlier, are no longer of any interest to him. His attraction towards them starts diminishing and he starts getting detached and feeling contented. To give up the sense of possession and the arrogance of a rich, is being contented. One should consider oneself only as a trustee, as the real owner of all that one possesses is the God. He alone is the Giver and everything will return to Him. Whatever one gets without craving for it should be accepted thankfully, considering it to be God's grace. The treasure of saints is their contentment. Contentment, therefore, really means not to have an attachment to worldly possessions.

Astikata i.e. faith means to have complete trust on the God. It is strange that one has faith on a letter from a friend but he has no faith on the words of scriptures. Nothing is hidden from the God. In fact, faith in God means the complete belief that whatever is happening, it is in accordance with His desire. One, who has faith on God lives without worries, as a child lives happily leaving all the worries to the mother. The God fulfills the requirements of all on his own and when He considers doing so in their interest. A father does not give a knife in the hands of his immature son, howsoever he may cry, knowing fully well

that the knife may hurt him. Similarly, one should think of the Almighty and should not insist with Him for anything. Complete faith results in complete surrender.

Daan i.e. charity is associated with kindness. One, who gives something to others acting like a trustee of that thing, is the true giver. He does not have the feeling of arrogance, nor does he make it public. Generally people donate with a desire to be rewarded, but that is not true charity. A donation, which encourages piety and acquiring virtues, is the source of real happiness. Charity, even at the cost of self-deprivation, is a duty. All that one possesses is the grace of the Almighty and, therefore, one must spend a part of it for the well being of others. One should help them first who need it most, without discrimination. The Almighty considers Him to be the debtor of such persons. Rendering of selfless service to those in need is also a form of charity.

Upasana i.e. worship means to sit alongside, or in other words to sit in remembrance of the God. The God is not away from us but He is nearer than the nearest. The need is to turn one's attention towards Him. Bulleh Shah, the famous Sufi saint of Punjab, asked his Master Shah Inayat Khan that he wanted to reach the God. Shah Inayat Khan replied, '*Bullya! Rab da ki pana, aidharon putna te audhar lana.*' (O Bulleh! What do you talk of reaching the God. Just turn your attention from the world to Him). One just needs to attune himself. The God is not lost anywhere nor is He annoyed that one needs to search Him or please Him. The Almighty does not get anything if someone worships Him, but it is the duty of the man to worship Him. Worshipping helps in training the fickle mind. People often worship God in the expectation of fulfillment of their desires and feel disheartened and they start blaming the God when their desires are not fulfilled. They forget that they cannot keep under shackles the power that runs the whole universe, just because they spend some time in worshipping. Do they cast any obligation on Him? No. He is not concerned whether one worships Him or not. The real thing is love. When one prays and repents, His Ocean of mercy gets stormed and He comes running for help. The real meaning of worship, therefore, is the wholehearted devotion and unfettered love for Him.

Shrawan i.e. listening to scriptures helps one in understanding true meaning of things and to acquire the knowledge of transitory nature of the world. It also gradually confers upon the listener the eligibility for getting the shelter of a competent spiritual Master.

Paschatap i.e. Repentance means to be ashamed of one's own faults, to beg for God's mercy and to resolve firmly not to indulge in wrong doings or in evil thoughts again. One can overcome one's vices only during one's life. To err is human and it would be difficult to find a person who would have committed no sin in his life. Repentance does not absolve one from the responsibility but it helps in reducing the mental agony and provides the repentant with an opportunity to correct himself and to make further spiritual progress. *Dridhata* i.e. firmness in good deeds is complimentary to repentance. Firm faith in virtues keeps on one encouraging to stick to the right path and move ahead with all the strength at one's command.

Jaap i.e. recitation is an important spiritual practice. The usual form of recitation is by tongue in which the seeker recites one of the innumerable names of the God. This, however, should not be a mechanical exercise in which the seeker keeps on repeatedly uttering the name of the God by tongue but his mind is engaged somewhere else. *Jaap* by heart in which the seeker may or may not recite the name by tongue, but his attention is focused on the God is a much superior form of recitation and such a *Jaap* gradually leads one to the state of Presence, i.e. it leads the seeker to the state of continuous remembrance.

Tyaga i.e. sacrifice is commonly understood to mean sacrifice of material things. The real meaning of sacrifice is sacrifice of attachment to material things. Performance of one's prescribed duties also does involve sacrifice, the sacrifice of selfish interest, which is the real and the highest sacrifice

The third part of the *Ashtang yoga* is 'Asanas' (postures). This is an important practice by which the seeker adopts himself to sit in a composed posture. This enables the seeker to recollect his thoughts and to

concentrate. There are a number of postures described by different authorities that have been considered to be suitable and helpful in various spiritual practices. The most important of these postures are *Siddha Asan* and *Padma Asan*, which are generally used in spiritual practices.

The fourth part of the *Ashtang yoga* is the '*Pranayam*' (the breathing exercises). The essence of breathing exercises is to gain control over breathing. A composed posture helps in performing breathing exercises. Breathing has three phases, i.e. inhalation (*Puraka*), holding the breath (*Kumbhak*), and exhalation (*Rechak*). Some seekers also practice a fourth phase of remaining without breath (*Brahmya Kumbhak*-holding without breath). The three phases of breathing are performed for a proportionate duration of time; inhalation for two units of time, holding it for eight units of time and exhalation for four units of time. Along with practicing *Pranayam* the seeker also concentrates on different *Chakras*, starting with *Mooladhar Chakra* and gradually moving up. The duration of the unit of time is also increased gradually. *Pranayam* helps in strengthening the body and mind of the seeker and helps him in concentration.

These four practices i.e. self-control, austerities, postures and breathing exercises do not require any deeper mental involvement. These are mostly performed at the physical level and, therefore, pertain to the *Annamay Kosha* and *Pranmay Kosha* and involve only the three lower *Chakras* i.e. *Mooladhar Chakra*, *Swadhisthan Chakra* and *Manipurak Chakra*.

The fifth part of the *Ashtang yoga* is '*Pratyahar*' (retraction). *Pratyahar* involves withdrawal of the senses from their external engagement to internal focusing. This does require a firm determination on the part of the seeker to restrain senses and prepares him for the higher spiritual practices.

The next three parts of the *Ashtang yoga* are '*Dharna*' (concentration), '*Dhyan*' (meditation) and '*Samadhi*' (absorption), which require higher mental involvement. '*Dharna*' refers to thinking of an object with full mental concentration. If the mind deviates from the object, one

needs to drag it back (retraction). Gradually this can lead one to the state of meditation, where one remains focused on the object of meditation. The deeper state of meditation where one gets absorbed in the thought of the object is called the state of *Samadhi*.

Sufis consider that the knowledge of the Truth can be based only on self-experience. There is no other way to realise the Truth except through one's own experience. All the practices are aimed at gaining the capability and to enhance the completeness of this experience. If the religion helps one in this realisation it is worth it, otherwise it is of no use. People generally consider religion as a matter of devotion and faith where reason or argument has no role to play. This is not the right attitude. Faith can be considered as that state of mind where one considers the matter put before him to be right in all respects. It could be possible that one may not be able to comprehend all aspects of that matter but supported by conjecture or inference one believes in its truth. Faith, therefore, is based on reasoning and analysis. The objective of the religion is to enhance human experiences so that the principles they have been following to guide their lives should gradually lead them to realisation and their lives be based on the truth. The religion that asks its followers to close their eyes and not to use their intelligence or knowledge is not true religion. When even for ordinary worldly affairs one is asked to use his brain, how can one act blindly in the matter of religion and spirituality? Human beings have not been blessed with intelligence and the faculty of reasoning without any purpose.

The essence of all the religions of the world is that the man should know his own real worth. He knows the worth of everything else but does not know his own worth i.e. he does not realise the importance of his life and that is why he acts as a fool. He needs the help of Master who makes him know his real worth and leads him on to the path of realisation of the Truth through his (seeker's) own understanding and experience. This is the task of the Master to lead the seeker to this understanding and to develop the capacity in the seeker to realise the Truth.

The basic principles of Sufism were given by Abdul Khaliq al-Ghujdawani, one of the greatest Sufi Masters of the Naqshbandi Sufi Order. Till about the 6th Century Hijri, the Sufis practiced loud *Dhikr* (*Jikr*, *Japa* or recitation) i.e. they used to recite the name of the Almighty loudly by tongue. One day while reading the Qur'an, Shaikh Ghujdawani came across the *Ayat*: 'Call upon your Sustainer humbly, and in the secrecy of your hearts.' This prompted him to inquire about the silent *Dhikr*. He was the first one in the Sufi orders to use silent *Dhikr* and was later considered the master of silent *Dhikr*. He coined the following phrases to which Muhammad Baha'uddin Shah Naqshband after whom the Naqshbandi Order of Sufis acquired its name added three more principles later. In his book *Faslul-Kitab*, Shaikh Muhammad Parsa, a friend and biographer of Shah Naqshband, said that the method of Shaikh Khwaja Abdul Khaliq al-Ghujdawani in *Dhikr* and the teachings enunciated in his *Eight Principles* were embraced and hailed by all the forty *Tariqats* (Sufi Orders) as the way of Truth and loyalty.

(i) *Hosh Dar Dam* (Conscious Breathing): The true seeker should always be alert that he does not take any breath devoid of God's remembrance. He must remain in God's Presence with every breath. Every breath taken consciously is alive and every breath taken in heedlessness is to be considered to have been lost. One should ensure with every breath that he does not indulge in doing a wrong or a sin. Shah Naqshband said, 'This Order is built on breath. One, therefore, must safeguard his breath in the time of his inhalation and exhalation and in between.' Similarly, Ubaidullah al-Ahrar, a great Sufi Master said, 'The most important mission for the seeker in this Order is to safeguard his breath.' In his book, *Fawatih al-Jamal*, Shaikh Abul Janab Najmuddin al-Kubra said, '*Dhikr* is flowing in the body of every single living creature by the necessity of their breath-even without will-as a sign of obedience, which is part of their creation.' It is, therefore, necessary to be in the Presence of the Almighty with every breath, in order to realise the Essence of the Creator. It is, however, difficult for seekers to secure breath from heedlessness. Therefore, they must safeguard it by seeking forgiveness, which will purify and sanctify it and prepare

them for the Real Manifestation of the Almighty everywhere.

(ii) Nazar Bar Kadam (Watch Your Step): It means that the seeker should take each step forward consciously i.e. one should avoid doing anything which may drag him down or which may obstruct his spiritual progress. It also means that one should avoid looking here and there aimlessly as the mind by seeing forms impression. This is why Sufi saints ask their followers to look at their feet while walking. As the mind becomes more and more purified by various practices, it becomes more and more prone to be afflicted; a spot on a spotless clean sheet is more likely to be visible and noticed than on a dirty sheet. The first glance is, however, harmless but a second look i.e. a deliberate look forms an impression on the mind. One should therefore, take each step forward in the remembrance of the God.

Shamsuddin Habib Allah, a great Sufi Master of the Naqshbandi Order, said about his Master Shaikh Nur Muhammad that once when a man was coming to see him, his eyes fell on a woman on the street. As soon as he reached before Shaikh Nur Muhammad, he told him that he saw the traces of adultery in him and asked him to protect his eyes next time. Similarly, once a man saw an alcoholic on the street. When he reached before Shaikh Nur Muhammad he told him, ‘ I am seeing in you the traces of alcohol.’ A similar incidence is related to Thakur Ram Singh ji, another great Sufi Master of the Naqshbandi Order. A young person used to visit him. Once when this man was coming to see Thakur Ram Singh ji his eyes fell on a girl. When she had crossed him, this man turned back and saw her again. When he met Thakur Ram Singh ji, he remarked, ‘Here come some people, who turn back and see others’ and then started talking something else. This remark had a deep impact on him.

It is said that Gautam Buddha used to walk slowly and that he took every step forward with full consciousness. Similarly Prophet Muhammad also while walking never looked left or right but towards his feet. Lowering the gaze i.e. looking at the ground is also a sign of humility. Those in authority, full of pride and arrogance do not look down.

Keeping eyes on one's feet also helps one to concentrate and to reach his destination faster.

Shaikh Ahmad al-Faruqi, a great Sufi Master of the Naqshbandi Order, in one of his letters has written that the gaze precedes the step and the step follows the gaze. When the step reaches that place, gaze is raised higher and then the step again follows the gaze. Spiritually it may mean that one must keep his objective constantly in view and if one does so one is bound to reach his destination.

(iii) *Safar Dar Watan* (Journey Homeward): This means that the seeker must move from the world of creation to the world of Creator. Moving away from worldly desires and human weaknesses and acquiring godly characteristics is known as '*Safar Dar Watan*.'

The Naqshbandi Sufi Order divides this journey into two parts. The first is external in which the seeker desires and searches for the Master. The internal journey begins with the blessing and grace of the Master. The internal journey leads to the purification of his heart and makes him eligible to receive the Divine grace.

(iv) *Khilawat Dar Anjuman* (Solitude in the Crowd): '*Khilawat*' means seclusion, both external and internal. External seclusion requires the seeker to be away from people, staying by himself and spending his time in the remembrance of God. This helps in gaining control over sensual perceptions and reaching the state of internal seclusion. The internal seclusion means whether amidst a crowd, walking or doing anything else, one should constantly have his mind attuned to the Almighty. This is the state of Sufi adept that they remain constantly in the Presence of the Almighty. Worldly affairs do not disturb them, as Shaikh Ahmad Faruqi has said, 'Perfection is not in exhibition of miraculous powers, but perfection is to sit among people, sell and buy, marry and have children; and yet never leave the presence of Allah even for one moment.'

(v) *Yad Kard* (Essential Remembrance): '*Yad*' means remembrance and '*Kard*' means essence of remembrance. To keep oneself continuously engaged in reciting the name

of the God (the internal practice as directed by the Master) and in such a manner that the seeker starts feeling the presence of the Master or the Almighty in his heart is the Essential Remembrance.

(vi) *Baj Gasht* (Returning): The literal meaning of '*Baj Gasht*' is to return back to the origin. In its true sense, however, it refers to developments during internal practice when the seeker may come across different experiences such as sighting of light, activation of the mystique centers, acquisition of miraculous powers etc. These experiences may often result in the downfall of the seeker due to arousal of the ego. The great Masters of the Naqshbandi Order have, therefore, recommended the seekers to keep on praying the Almighty at intervals that He alone is the objective of the seeker; He may give strength to the seeker to be happy in whatever condition He keeps and beg Him for His love and knowledge.

(vii) *Nigah Dasht* (Attentiveness): The seeker should always keep an eye on his internal condition so that no doubt or ill thought ever arises and he constantly keeps on remembering the Almighty. If ever such a thought arises, one should immediately check that thought, otherwise if it once stays in the mind, it may become difficult to clear it later. Sufism is to protect one's heart from bad thoughts and from worldly inclinations.

(viii) *Yad Dasht* (Recollection): It means continuous remembrance. When the seeker through practice becomes so adept that the remembrance continues in the heart effortlessly on its own, it is called *Yad Dasht*.

The three principles added by Muhammad Baha'uddin Shah Naqshband are:

(ix) *Wakoof Zamani* (Awareness of Time): The seeker must watch that the time at his command is spent in the remembrance of the Almighty and he must make all efforts to make progress on the path of spirituality. The seeker must recount his actions and deeds and seek His forgiveness for the wrong doings. Shah Baha'uddin Naqshband has said that the seeker must know his internal condition as to whether he should thank God (*Shukr*) for

the same or he should seek His pardon (*Tauba*). Maulana Yakub Charkhi has explained this by stating that if the seeker finds that he is not able to concentrate and engage wholeheartedly in the spiritual practices, he should beg for *Tauba* and when he finds pleasure and feels charged with divine emotions, he should thank God. In short it refers to introspection by the seeker and to act accordingly so that no moment is spent without remembrance.

(x) *Wakoof Adadi* (Awareness of Numbers): According to the principle of *Wakoof Adadi*, one should while holding the breath recite the name of the God, feeling His Presence in the heart, in odd number i.e. 5,7,9,11,21 etc. The real meaning of *Wakoof Adadi*, however, appears to be that the Almighty is One and He likes Oneness. It perhaps also means that one should remember the Almighty alone.

(xi) *Wakoof Qulbi* (Awareness of the Heart): The seeker should always have an eye on his heart (Qulb) so that his attention is always towards the Divine Presence and it may not be diverted elsewhere. The remembrance must be through heart and the heart should be fully absorbed in the remembrance.

Sufis consider their spiritual training as a journey and the seeker is addressed as a wayfarer, who travels the path, passing through various stages and experiences. Although different Sufi Orders (*Tariqats*) state them differently but most of them agree on the basic tenets. The first step for the wayfarer to prepare himself for the higher stages of spirituality is '*Tauba*' (to repent) for the sins committed by him in the past knowingly or unknowingly. This is the awakening from a state of unconsciousness. The wayfarer becomes alert and keeps an eye on his actions. He repents for his past sins and wrong doings and makes a firm resolve not to indulge in them again. However, if he is not committed to refrain from such actions in future, he is not to be considered as a true repentant.

The next step after *Tauba* is renunciation of worldly possessions i.e. living in poverty. The real meaning of poverty, however, is lack of desire for worldly possessions. It is the sense of possession that is to be given up.

Everything originates from the God and He alone is the real owner of whatever that exists. If one possesses something, he thinks himself to be the caretaker of that thing which is to be used for the benefit of all. To live a life of simplicity and contentment is living a life of poverty.

After renunciation comes abstinence i.e. to control one's mind and to restrain it from indulging in sensuous pleasures against the dictates of scriptures. To do so people often adopt practices like observing fast, silence and solitude. Sufis, however, lay stress on the evolution of the inner-self and consider it more important than physical restraints. True repentance, *Satsang* (company of one's Master) and receiving grace of Master (*Tavajjoh*) are considered more helpful. In the company of the Master, the seeker starts feeling that the knots of sensual pleasure hitherto tying his mind are loosening and their place is being taken over by the love for the Master or the God.

After this the wayfarer reaches the state of '*Tawakkul*' (the state of complete trust in the God), and then to '*Raza*' (to live as the God desires). Trust in God means complete dependence on God. It does not befit a devotee to look towards anyone else except God. One should have firm faith in Him. All that happens is according to His desire. The seeker now learns to be thankful to the Almighty in whatever condition He keeps. He learns to live according to the desire of the Almighty. Both the sorrows and happiness are considered to be His blessings. The reactions become dull and one starts accepting things as they are. Fully content the seeker now sees His grace in everything.

Sufis also lay a lot of stress on prayer. For them prayer is neither a ritual nor merely words. Prayer is not something simply uttered by mouth signifying belief. What can be conveyed and confined by words has a beginning and an end. It starts with the words and ends with the words. Such a prayer is nothing but a hollow thing. The essence of prayer is to forget oneself in His remembrance and get absorbed in His thoughts, to be in the Presence of the God. One does not have to stick to any external form in offering prayer. The real prayer is to get merged; all the formalities then disappear. Mahatma Radha Mohan Lalji, a great Sufi saint, also used to say, 'what is the use of

repeating a prayer mechanically? One has to overcome the language barrier.’

It is related to Prophet Muhammad that in regard to offering prayer he remarked, ‘Thou shouldst worship thy Lord, as if thou seest Him; and if not, He indeed sees thee.’ An incident from the life of Maulana Bahauddin Wald (son of the great Sufi Master Maulana Rumi) is related. One day he was lost completely in the remembrance of the Almighty. The hour of offering prayers (*Namaz*) arrived. Some of his disciples mentioned it to him but as Maulana Bahauddin was deeply engrossed in the remembrance of God, he did not pay any attention to it. All his disciples, except two, also got up to offer prayers. Maulana Bahauddin and the two disciples kept on sitting in the remembrance of God. One of the disciples who got up to offer prayers was blessed with insight. He noticed that all of those disciples who had stood up to offer prayers, their prayers were not accepted and their faces appeared to be turned away from the Kaaba, whereas Maulana Wald and his two disciples who kept sitting with him were facing the Kaaba, as is usual in the prayers. This was so because at that moment Maulana Bahauddin Wald was deeply immersed in the divine thoughts and had completely merged himself with the Almighty, which is the real offering of prayer.

Some one once asked Maulana Rumi that as he remained busy in his duties and worldly affairs, he is not able to offer prayers faithfully, although he always wished to do so. Maulana Rumi answered that the worldly duties are also ordained by the God and, therefore, they are also the work of God. However the worldly duties should not be motivated by self-interest. If the worldly duties are performed for the benefit of others, as a service and considering them to be a duty enjoined upon him that enables and help others also in offering prayers then they are like offering prayer to God. If the intention is pious, all the acts are spiritual acts. God chooses them to perform such duties to whom He is extremely kind and merciful.

In the case of most saints (the lovers of God), they follow the path of *Jajb* in which their love and devotion for the Divine takes them to higher spiritual states, without any

effort on their part. It is, however, important to understand the true meaning of love. Mahatma Radha Mohan Lal ji has said, 'Love is quenching the thirst on the physical plane, but thirst is not love. The human being is love, and Love loves the human being. To realize Love is to realize the God. If one sits before the open fire, it warms him. There is no effort on his part. Those who have realized the God are like this fire and their company ignites the warmth of love in the hearts of seekers. God realized Himself in the heart of Hearts of the human being. It is like the ocean and waves; they disappear and are here. When we realise, Love disappears. We cannot give shape or name to Love. The deeper one goes, the more it disappears. It radiates from every part of the body.'

Love can be expressed as the desire to become perfect, to remove all imperfection. This is true of the love at the physical plane as well as at the spiritual plane. At the physical plane, the eyes love to see a beautiful thing, the ears love to listen melodious songs, the nose loves to smell fragrant flowers and so on. It is this lacking in the sensual perceptions, which is desired to be fulfilled and is called love for that thing.

At the spiritual plane, one desires to remove imperfection of his conduct. The love for the saints of God is explained because of their perfection in conduct. The love for God is also explained similarly, as the God is the most Perfect One. He is the creator of the universe and He runs it perfectly. One, who does not accept this fact lives in the world with anguish, pain, suffering and sorrow; he lives miserably. One, who has this knowledge, also lives like an ordinary person in the world, but he lives with the understanding that the God has created the world, and the Lord of the universe is running it perfectly. This understanding enables him to live happily in the world in accordance with His desire and it results in the love for God, reflecting in the love for all His creatures.

Although all the religions lay stress on love of God, but for most religions the love of God is expressed in worship and obedience to the commandments of the God or to the dictates of scriptures. The true nature of love, however, needs to be understood. One loves oneself the

most; it is a fact of life experienced by everyone some time or the other. One loves oneself the most because of his identification with one's own self. This is because of ego, which arises from the feeling of individual consciousness, from the feeling of being separate from others. If one loves some body else, it is because of the reason that he starts identifying himself with that other person. For example, the mother loves her child because she identifies herself with the child, so much so that the child becomes a part of her own existence. On the contrary, the child has no identity of his own, for his ego has not yet grown up; he knows nothing except the mother, he is completely dependant on her, which explains his love for her. As they both grow, the child starts acquiring his individuality and the mother also starts recognizing his independent existence. The degree of love starts getting affected.

The God is the creator of all. He resides in the heart of all creatures. When one talks of the love of God, it implies love for all creatures; the removal of the feeling of individual existence, the feeling of separation. With the complete surrender of the ego one acquires the spiritual knowledge that his essence is the Essence of God i.e. cessation of the duality and that his reality is nothing but the Reflection of God. With this realisation one reaches the state of Unity i.e. the state of Oneness. In this state there is no difference between the love, faith and enlightenment. This is the true knowledge. When this realisation dawns one's self exists no more. The love for God has, therefore, to be understood as the complete Unity with the God.

It has been mentioned earlier that the essence of the man is the Essence of God. It is, therefore, difficult for the man to realise his own essence. As the great saint Shri Ramakrishna Paramhans used to say '*Namak ka putla samundra mapne gaya, so gaya*', meaning that 'the puppet made of salt went to measure the depth of the ocean, never to return.' How can the puppet made of salt measure the depth of the ocean? It gets dissolved in the ocean; its separate existence remains no longer. Who would then measure the depth of the ocean? An external help is required, at least initially, till one is firmly grounded in the Reality. Most people, therefore, need the help of a spiritual Master. The Master has a physical body and is like them.

The disciple can perceive Master's existence through his own senses. It is easy for him to surrender his ego at the feet of his Master. The love for the Master gradually leads the disciple to the realisation that there is no duality between the Master and the God. The face of the Master is only a mask under which lies the Reality.

The Master is like the river that flows continuously towards the ocean and merges in the ocean. At the point of merger there is no difference between the river and the ocean. On merger with the ocean the river loses its identity, its independent existence. It becomes one with the ocean. The disciples who are like small watercourses by merging themselves with this river i.e. the Master can reach the ocean i.e. the God. On their own it is not only difficult but almost impossible for the small watercourses to travel through all this distance without the fear of being lost on the way. Their merger with the river paves the way for them to merge with the ocean. This is the easiest and the nearest path for the seekers to reach their destination. It is for this reason that the saints lay stress on the love for their Master.

In unity with the God what exists is only the Reality of the God and one sees the existence of the God alone in all beings. His love takes the form of divine love for all beings. The love for God does not mean apathy or hatred towards the world; rather it results in the understanding that the others need to be treated in the same manner as one would like to be treated himself by others. One cannot be justified in saying that he loves God by worshiping Him at the cost of neglecting his duty towards the others. The mother cannot be justified in neglecting her child for the sake of performing her *Pooja* and similarly a king cannot be said to love God if he spends all his time in worship and refuses to protect his people from the enemy. The real love for God is to do one's duty with utmost care and attention, while at the same time remaining in His Presence i.e. taking it to be a Divine order to discharge his obligations most faithfully and wholeheartedly.

The great Sufi Master Bayazid established supremacy of love by saying that 'the Almighty can be approached only through love.' The love for the beloved reveals his

secrets in the heart of the lover and conversely the knowledge of the beloved produces in his heart the love for the beloved. He also said that ‘love for the friends of *Allah* results in their love for you. The Almighty looks at the hearts of His saints and if He will see your name engraved in their hearts, He will forgive you.’ It is for this reason that the Sufis love their Master the most. Their love for the Master lifts them to a state of bliss and presence in the heart of their beloved.

In regard to supremacy of love, the great Sufi Master Mahatma Ramchandra ji has also said that ‘love is such a thing which can cross the limits of the Seven Skies.’ His dear disciple Param Sant Thakur Ram Singh ji also used to say, ‘Love is all encompassing. The Almighty can be realized only through love. The illiterate *Gopis* had won the love of Lord Sri Krishna only due to their unfettered love.’ The true love brings in enlightenment. In fact there is no difference between Love and Enlightenment. Love is God and the purpose of acquiring knowledge is to know the God. Love is the culmination of knowledge and the height of enlightenment.

The true meaning of love thus is ‘*Ekatmata*’ (oneness) i.e. complete merger with the beloved and cessation of the duality. There is no scope in love for the separate existence of the lover and the beloved. As soon as the feeling of duality between the Master and the disciple vanishes, one starts seeing His manifestation everywhere in the entire universe. Selfless love gradually turns into devotion, which makes one identical to one’s beloved. The disciple (the lover), however, is imperfect, and, therefore, it is the Master (the beloved), who being perfect, merges with the disciple and takes him on the path of love. The couplet below expresses this idea beautifully in these words:

*‘Jab mein tha tab Hari nahi, abHari hai mein nay
Prem gali ati saankri, ya mein do na samay’*

(Till I existed, God was not there. Now only He exists and I am not there. The path of love is so narrow that it has no place for the two.)

The Sufi saints consider the shelter of a competent master as the most important step for the spiritual training of the seeker. The Naqshbandi Sufis have specially developed a system of '*Tavajjoh*' (or *Pranahuti*) i.e. transmission of spiritual energy by focusing one's attention on the seeker. The Sufi saints, especially those from the Naqshbandi Order consider this as an important practice, known as '*Shagl Rabta*' (meditating on the Master). In the Naqshbandi Order the Master does this transmission of spiritual energy to the disciple from heart-to-heart, which helps the disciple to make spiritual progress rapidly.

It may be mentioned here that initially even in the Naqshbandi Order the way of *Sulook* was followed. The seekers were required to make spiritual progress starting from the very beginning. Prior to the time of Shah Baha'uddin Naqshband, the Masters of the Order followed the practice of purifying all the *Chakras*, starting from the lowest, the *Mooladhar Chakra*. Shah Baha'uddin Naqshband introduced the practice of starting from the *Hridaya (Anahat) Chakra*. The method of practice was further modified and improved by the Masters of the Order after him and Shaikh Ahmad Faruqi Sirhindi considered that purification of *Latifa-e-Qulb* (one of the five spiritual organs of the *Hridaya Chakra*) alone was sufficient. Once the *Hridaya Chakra* is perfected the seeker can be immediately taken to the *Nafs-e-Natiqa (Prana Bindu* or the *Agya Chakra*) the subtle abode of the *nafs* in one step, and he may then be elevated to the *Brahmand Chakra (Sahstradal Kamal)* as the second step.

The subtle heart is considered to be intimately connected with the '*Latifa-e-Nafs*', which needs to be purified of the impressions gathered by it arising from innumerable sensual desires and distractions in order to achieve the state of definitive annihilation (*Fana*) and permanent realisation (*Baqa*). Purification of this center results in transmutation of the sensual soul (*Nafs-e-Ammara*) into the pacified soul (*Nafs-e-Mutmainna*). It is the process of molding the character. While it is true that the *Satguru* (Master) can and does lift the seeker to the highest spiritual state through his grace (*Tavajjoh*), just in a moment by a mere sight, it is the individual character of the

seeker that takes time to mold, i.e. the *Nafs-e-Ammara* to transmute into *Nafs-e-Mutmainna*.

Shaikh Habibullah Mazhar Mirza Zanzana (1701-1780 AD) made this spiritual journey further simpler by casting a great lot of responsibility on the *Pir* (Master) for the spiritual progress of the disciple. The role of disciples became more and more passive, seeking the divine grace to flow from the Master, rather than self-effort. The effort on the part of the seeker was to seek the company of the Master (*Satsang*) and the love for the Master. Mahatma Radha Mohan Lal ji (1900-1966 AD), a revolutionary Sufi saint of the Naqshbandi Order declared, ‘the system followed in this line (Naqshbandi Sufi Order) needs no effort on the part of the disciple. The Master through his grace does everything for the disciple. Effort on the part of the disciple does not lead anywhere. A real Guru, a *Satguru* knows how to mold the disciple from deep within, just by a mere sight. The Master does not impose conditions. He is like a loving mother. The child can be angry, can run away but the mother does not take it very seriously. She cares for the child just the same. Similarly, the disciples can and do sometimes leave the Master, but the Master is never supposed to do so since the Master disciple relationship is forever. The disciple cannot go anywhere if he is pledged to the Master. The Master is like an experienced rider who makes the horse go where he wants. But disciples are not slaves. They are free. Even when the personality wants to run-away it is difficult for it to do so, the Higher Self knows better. This is a system of liberation, of freedom but most people fail to understand or appreciate it as they are asked to do nothing, no discipline, no bondage, no enchanting of mantras. We live in the epoch of the mind. Mind is the ruler. Most of the people are not satisfied; they will not accept anything till at least some kind of explanation is given. This system, therefore, is never widespread; it is for the few and it is from the heart-to-heart. The goal is to be achieved in the present life itself.’

Mahatma Radha Mohan Lalji has also stated that ‘in this Order the *Hridaya Chakra* is used mainly, which is the center of love. When it is activated such force, such power flows that one forgets all other things.’ By activating the *Hridaya Chakra* love is created by the Master with his

spiritual power (*Tavajjoh*). This is a process of induction where the Master through his high spiritual energy, induces love in the heart of the disciple. The result is that the entire work of awakening, activating of other *Chakras* is done by this *Chakra* alone. The *Hridya Chakra (Latifa-e-Qulb)* is considered to be related to the attribute of creation, which is the basis for existence of all possible beings. Mythologically this center is associated with the Prophet Adam and is considered to be the root of all other centers. Activation and subjugation of this center results in transcendence of any attachment to individual action of the seeker into action in harmony with the Divine will. Perfection of this state results in the annihilation of the heart, known as the state of '*Fana-e-Qulb*'.

The spiritual journey is divided in three parts, namely ascent (*Fana*), staying atop (*Baqa*) and descent (*Baqa-ul-Baqa*). The first part of the journey involves ascending to the higher stations of Truth, also called '*Uruj*'. This is moving towards God, which is a movement vertically upwards until the movement surpasses time and space and all the states dissolve into what is called the 'Necessary Knowledge of Truth'. It takes the seeker away from the multiplicity of creation towards unity of existence, in which the individual consciousness that gives rise to the sense of separation (*Ananiyat*) is annihilated ('*Fana*').

The next stage involves co-presence with the God, known as moving in God. This is the stage beyond the state of Names and Attributes, where the seeker moves to a state, which neither word nor sign can describe. This is the state of 'Existence in Truth' called *Baqa*. This is like completely realising the state of annihilation and absorbing that state deep within. The presence of individual, however, remains with the Presence of the God.

The third stage involves moving from God in which the seeker returns from the heavenly world to the world of cause and effect, descending from the highest station of knowledge to the lowest that matches the understanding of human beings. Here he forgets God by God, and he knows God with God, and he returns from God to God. This is called the State of the 'Farthest and the Nearest'. Moving in things is a movement within creation. This involves

knowing intimately all elements and states in this world after the stage of *Fana*. Here the seeker can achieve the 'State of Guidance', which is the state of the prophets and saints. It brings the Divine Knowledge into the world of creation in order to Establish Guidance.

Shaikh Ahmad Faruqi Sirhindi has described the entire process like threading a needle. The thread seeks the eye of the needle, passes through and then meets with its beginning. The two ends meet there, form a knot and secure the entire thread. They form a whole; thread, eye and needle, sewing in any material they catch into the fabric of the unity.

The concept of annihilation, however, is not unique to Sufism alone. The *Srimadbhagwat Mahapurana* in *Dwitiya Skandh Adhyay 2* mentions how a *yogi* (following the path of *Sulook*) should prepare for departure from this world. It states that such a *yogi* who has overcome his desires following the path of knowledge should sit steadfastly pressing his anus with the toe of the foot. He should then direct his breath (*Pranvayu*) upwards according to the technique of subjugating the six spiritual Chakras (*Shatchakrabhedan*). He should direct the breath from the *Manipurak Chakra* on the naval to the *Anahat Chakra* at the heart, from there to the *Vishuddha Chakra* on the throat through *Udan Vayu* (the pharyngeal breath) and then gradually to the top of the *Vishuddha Chakra* at the root of the palate. Thereafter he should block the seven gates i.e. two eyes, two ears, two nostrils and the mouth and lift that breath to the *Agya Chakra* at the center of the eyebrows. If the *yogi* does not wish to go to any *Loka*, he should hold the breath there for a short while and then with a firm determination raise it to *Sahstradal Kamal* and get absorbed in the Supreme Soul. He should then cross the *Brahmarandhra* and leave behind his body and senses (*Indriyan*).

If, however, the *yogi* wishes to go to *Brahmaloka* and to acquire the eight miraculous powers (*Ashta Siddhi*) or to go to any other *Loka* in this universe, then he should leave behind his body but carry with him his senses and the *Manas* (mind). The body of such *yogis* is subtly thin like air. Those *yogis* who follow the path of worship (*Upasana*),

penance (*Tapasya*) or knowledge (*Gyan*) acquire the liberty to move freely anywhere within or outside this universe. This liberty, however, cannot be acquired through action alone.

The *Srimadbhagwat Mahapurana* states further that when the *yogi* moves ahead on this lighted path of the *Sushumna* for the *Brahmaloka*, he first goes to *Agni Loka* where the remainder of all his vices are burnt and from there he moves up to the lighted sphere '*Shishumar*' of Lord Sri Hari (Lord Vishnu), which is the center for the movement in the entire universes. After crossing it, he acquires a very subtle and pure body that enables him to go to *Maharloka*, which even those possessing knowledge of *Brahma* praise and which is inhabited by the angels (gods-*Devta*). When the time of dissolution (*Pralay*) arrives, the *yogi* moves to *Brahmaloka*, which has the life span of *Brahma*. Here there is existence of no sorrow or pain, nor that of aging and death. The only discomfort they have is to witness other creatures suffering the pain of life and death.

On reaching the *Satya Loka*, the fearless *yogi* now dissolves his subtle body in the element earth and proceeds to subjugate the seven sheaths. He now proceeds to dissolve his earthen form into the element water; water into the element fire and then gaining the form of *Tej* (fire), into the element air. At the due moment his subtle form then gets dissolved into the element ether, which imparts the experience of the boundless *Brahman*. While going through the dissolution of the gross elements, his organs of senses (*Indriyan*) also get dissolved in their subtle principles. The organ of smelling gets dissolved in the subtle principle *Gandha* (odour); the organ of savour in its subtle principle essence; the organ of vision in its subtle principle form (*Rupa*); the organ of feeling in its subtle principle *Sparsh* (touch); the organ of hearing in its subtle principle *Shabda* (vibration) and the organs of action in their respective powers of action. Having thus dissolved the gross and subtle principles, the *yogi* now enters the sheath of ego (*Ahankar*). Here he dissolves the subtle elements in the *Tamas Ahankar*, the senses in the *Rajas Ahankar* and the *Manas* (mind) and the governors of the organs of senses and action into the *Satvik Ahankar*. Thereafter he dissolves the *Ahankar* in the *Mahatatva* and lastly in the *Prakriti* (the

Adimaya), the origin of all *Gunās* (modes of Nature). When the time of *Mahapralaya* (the ultimate dissolution) comes, the *yogi* now having no sheath over his true Self becomes the abode of eternal bliss and becomes One with the Truth.

In regard to the *yogis* following the path of love and devotion, the *Srimadbhagwat Mahapurān* states that they should withdraw their attention from all other engagements and restrain their mind and senses. They should then absorb their mind and intellect (*Buddhi*) into the embodied soul and the embodied soul into the inner Self (*Antaryami*). The inner Self is then to be absorbed in the Truth. Such *yogis* have no duty left for them. In such a state the *Trigunas*, *Ahankar*, *Prakriti* or *Mahatatva* none exists for the *yogi*. This supreme state is achieved only through the unqualified love and devotion for the Almighty God.

Different Sufi Orders follow different paths for achieving the state of *Fana* (annihilation). Most of them follow the path of *Sulook* and start with the purification of the lower spiritual *Chakras* and then gradually move up to the purification and reintegration of the higher spiritual *Chakras*. In the Naqshbandi Sufi Order, which is considered to be highly advanced in the science of spiritual centers, this process is reversed. They usually start from the *Anahat Chakra* or the *Agya Chakra*, leaving apart the lower *Chakras*. The Master through his grace (*Tavajjoh*) leads the seeker to experience the state of annihilation (*Fana*). This part of the spiritual journey is known as spiritual ascent or *Uruj*.

It has been mentioned earlier that the Naqshbandi Sufis consider *Shagl Rabta* (meditating on the Master) as an important aspect of the spiritual practice. In fact the process is that of internalization of the presence of the Master, to feel his presence in the heart of the disciple all the time. The transmission of the spiritual energy from the heart of the Master to the heart of the disciple takes place through the transmission of the *Shabda* i.e. vibration, through his (Master's) *Tavajjoh*. Gradually the disciple starts feeling the presence of the *Shabda* inside him and a time comes when the disciple starts identifying the *Shabda* itself as the Master within him. This is what is meant by the internalization of the presence of the Master. Truly

speaking the reality of both the Master and the disciple is that of *Shabda*, both being an expression of the *Shabda*. When the disciple acquires this firm faith that the Master is always with him in the form of the *Shabda*, it is the state of annihilation of the self (*Fana*). This is the state when the disciple develops true love for the Master and witnesses His presence all over.

Gradually the consciousness (*Surat*) of the disciple starts getting absorbed in the *Shabda* and when such a state is reached that the *Surat* gets completely absorbed in the *Shabda* i.e. when *Shabda* alone remains, the seeker is said to have achieved a state of permanent realisation i.e. *Baqa*. The seeker reaches the height of ascent and now starts for the *Nuzul* or the descent. Here he knows that it is only the Master (or the God) that exists and that everything that is happening is happening in accordance with and in accordance with His desire. He is blessed with complete faith and he lives in a state of total peace. He lives like an ordinary person but internally he is on a much higher platform. He has reached that state after making a complete circle. This is the state of the 'Farthest and the Nearest'.

The phase of descent, however, is completed only after the purification of the gross elements, which form the contingent body of the seeker. These gross elements are purified as a result of the influence of the purification and consequential elevation of the five spiritual constituents namely *Qulb*, *Sirr*, *Rooh*, *Khafi* and *Akhafa*, belonging to the 'World of Order' (*Alam-e-Amr*) and which bear strong relationships with the respective gross elements. The last of the gross elements to be purified is the earth, which completes the process of purification and reintegration of the gross elements with their causal elements. It may be mentioned here that *Prithvi* (earth) was the last gross element to be unfolded in the sequence of unfolding of gross elements and being the effect of its cause, the qualities of all gross elements, i.e. *Shabda*, *Sparsh*, *Rupa*, *Rasa* and *Gandha* are found only in *Prithvi* (earth). Purification and reintegration of element earth, therefore, completes the process.

In the Naqshbandi Order, the grace of God works through the *Tavajjoh* of the Master, which helps the seeker

to achieve his goal in an effortless manner and in the shortest time. The Masters lift the consciousness of the seekers to higher states through their grace. This experience of the seeker not only makes him believe in the truth of these higher states but also the impression of this experience constantly propels him towards this state. The Naqshbandi Masters thus guide their disciples first through the movement from God, traveling from the higher states to the lower. They, therefore, maintain the common veils over the spiritual vision of the seeker, removing the veil of ordinary consciousness only at the final stage. All other systems begin with the movement to God, moving from the lowest states to the highest, and removing the common veils first.

It is said by the Naqshbandi Masters that their starting is from a point where the other *Tariqats* end their journey and the end of their journey is at the point where the others begin. In effect, therefore, all the methods of spiritual practices lead to the same goal, but from the point of view of time and effort on the part of the disciple, the method followed by the Naqshbandi Masters is far simpler and advantageous for the seekers.

It may be mentioned here that it is difficult to describe or even to mention the innumerable stages between this station of death and the highest abode of the Truth, as each cell of the human body is and can lead to the abode of the Truth. One, who is fortunate to garner true love for the Divine in his heart has, however, nothing to worry about all these stages, as the ultimate purpose or objective of the spiritual quest is to garner this love for the Divine. For such a person no veil is left between him and the Truth. The veils in fact are drawn between the seeker and the Truth because of selfish interest and desires. In true love no selfish interest or desires are left behind, as the true love seeks nothing except the pleasure of the Beloved. Such a true lover need perform no worship, no penance, no meditation, no contemplation, no *Samadhi*, nothing at all, as the true love for the Beloved fills his heart completely with the Presence of the Divine, leaving no space for anything else. He has completed the entire journey.

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