

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON ÁNANDA MÁRGA PHILOSOPHY
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1958, Jamalpur, INDIA**

Q. 13 – How does unit consciousness influence unit mind?

Ans.: – The existence of an action or an object depends on witnesship. The existence, as well as all the activities of the unit mind, are expressed through unit consciousness, the witnessing entity of the self. Citta Shakti, through unit consciousness (jivatman), continually inspires the mind to move towards subtlety. Although unit consciousness is not the original source of inspiration, the Cosmic Ideation works through its apparent medium. This inspirational energy guides the unit mind on the path of progress and expansion.

Q. 14 – What is the difference between the consciousness of a protoplasm and that of a human being?

Ans.: – Every cell in a living body is a living entity; each one has an independent mind, which is in an extremely undeveloped stage. Unit consciousness develops as a result of the reflection of Cosmic Consciousness on the protoplasm. In the course of the flow of Pratisaincara this protoplasmic mind reaches an advanced stage and attains the status of a highly evolved entity.

The unexpressed mind of a sand particle will evolve. Its evolution will not stop at the stage of the protoplasmic mind because the flow of Pratisaincara does not end there. One day, in this process of evolution, it will attain the status of a human mind and will simultaneously receive a human body.

The mental arena of a human being is not merely a collection of many mental arenas of many mental protoplasms; rather it is an independent entity, a unit mind. If it were a collection of protoplasmic minds, it could not be called a unit mind. It would not be possible for a collection of protoplasmic minds to carry out the functions of a developed human mind. In each protoplasmic mind there is a domination of Prakrti over Puruśa which is further accentuated in a collection of minds. It is absolutely impossible for this collection of protoplasmic minds to engage itself in meditation or to exercise free will.

Q. 15 – Is there any fundamental difference between mind stuff and ether? If so, why?

Ans.: – No, there is no fundamental difference. Both originate from Consciousness. In reality there is no “non-living” entity: everything has Consciousness. Due to the bondage of Prakrti, Consciousness sometimes appears to be in the form of the crude five fundamental factors, sometimes in a subtle psychic form, and at other times in the form of Causal Consciousness. Mind is that stage of Consciousness where the domination of Prakrti is less than that present in the five fundamental factors.

Q. 16 – What is the relative importance of “Bháva” and “jáda” in Shankara’s doctrine of “Máyá”?

Ans.: – Shaunkara tried to disprove a number of theories with the characteristic fervour and enthusiasm of an over-zealous materialist. This was his approach while attempting to disprove “Baoddha Vijnánava da”, a highly idealistic theory. While trying to invalidate this theory he himself became an extreme idealist. According to him the universe is an illusion. Not only that, he maintained that even the psychic processes of projection and withdrawal are also illusions. The only reality is “Nirguña Brahma”. In this respect, Shaunkara sounds like some Western philosophers, notably Socrates, Hegel, Berkley and Kant. In order to defeat idealism he himself became an idealist. His theories closely resembled those of the philosophers preaching empirico-criticism. However, Shaunkara took his empiricism beyond the physical world, for, according to him, not only is the physical world an illusion but psychic feelings are also illusions. He states that the only fundamental substance that lies beyond physical objects and mental experiences is Brahma – the Nirguña Puruśa, the Non-Qualified Brahma. Not even Prakrti, the Supreme Operative Principle, is accepted as the reality. The paradox here is that Shaunkara had to use and depend upon that very Máyá which he claimed to be illusory, that same Máyá which was instrumental in creating this variegated universe.

Q. 17 – What sort of bondage does Prakrti have over Puruśottama? What is the difference between Puruśottama and Nirguña Brahma?

Ans.: – Puruśottama is the controlling centre or nucleus of Saguña Brahma. Wherever there is Puruśa Prakrti is also there in His shelter. Though

associated with Prakrti, Puruśottama is not bound by Prakrti. The expressed form of Saguña Brahma, under the bondage of Prakrti, is seen in the process of Saincara and Pratisaincara . Due to the preponderance of Consciousness in Puruśottama He is sometimes considered as Nirguña. However, upon closer observation, it is discovered that this conclusion is incorrect because, unlike the expressed universe, Puruśottama is neither “guñádhiina” (under the bondage of the guñas) nor “guñasrśta” (created by the guñas). However, due to His witnessing relationship with the guñadhiina universe, He maintains a contact with the guñas, and thus we call Him “guñadaniish” (beyond the periphery of the guñas). Therefore Puruśottama cannot be pure, unexpressed Nirguña Brahma because in Nirguña Brahma there is no witnesship and therefore no association with the guñas.

Q. 18 – What do human beings enjoy? The original object, its shadow or its shadow’s shadow?

Ans.: – For the unit mind, this universe of the five fundamental factors is real, and for the body, which is composed of the five fundamental factors, the objects of enjoyment are also real. The body of the five fundamental factors cannot exist if this is denied. However, the unit mind does not enjoy objects in their physical forms. Rather, it enjoys the “tanmátras” of the object received through the sensory or motor organs. From this viewpoint one may say that the mind does not enjoy the original object, but the “shadow” (tanmátra) of the object.

Even though this universe composed of the five fundamental factors appears to be real for the unit mind, in actual fact it is nothing but the self-created imagination or thought process of the Cosmic Mind. For Him this universe is nothing but a shadow of reality.

We may conclude that the mind enjoys the shadow of an object, and that this creation of the five fundamental factors is itself a shadow of the Cosmic Mind. Thus, from the viewpoint of the Cosmic Mind, whatever the unit mind enjoys is neither the original object itself, nor a shadow of the object, but rather a shadow of the shadow of the object.

Q. 19 – Is Saguña Brahma beyond the factor of time, or is He eternal?

Ans.: – Saguña Brahma is the controller of the guñas but He is not beyond

them. Thus one should not say that He is beyond the relativities of time, place and person, but rather that he is the controller of time, place and person. Prakrti, who has created these relativities in Consciousness is also active within the infinite body of Saguña Brahma. Unlike the jīvas, Saguña Brahma is not bound by the guṇas, but is, however, associated with them. Thus it is more appropriate to say that He exists eternally, i.e. that He is beyond measurability since infinite time exists within Him.

Q. 20 – How is it possible for the jīvas to find an appropriate physical structure according to their “saṁskāras” after death? It is said that the Sattvaguña of Prakrti determines this. However, how is it possible for the blind Rajoguña to find a suitable physical structure?

Ans.: – The new physical structure is determined by Rajoguña. But Rajoguña is not independent of Saguña Brahma. It is the binding principle of the Ahamtattva of the Macrocosm. Thus instead of saying that Rajoguña finds the physical body it should be said that the Macrocosm finds the physical body with the help of Rajoguña. This new body is not determined by some blind force, but by Puruśottama.

Q. 21 – If the annihilation of saṁskāras results in Nirvāna, then is it possible for atheists to attain “mukti” or “mokṣa”?

Ans.: – When the saṁskāras are fully annihilated, the mind also gets annihilated. Mukti means to be free from all bondages, and mokṣa means to be free even from the witnesship of the object. If an atheist is annihilated there is no question of him/her attaining mukti or mokṣa because he/she doesn't believe in the Cosmic Mind or in Cosmic Consciousness.

Q. 22 – What is the difference between “jīvātman” and “Paramātman”?

Ans.: – Although jīvātman and Paramātman are essentially the same there is a difference in their “upādhi”. The jīvātman has a limited upadhi. The collectivity of the total witnessing operation is known as Paramātman. In philosophy, the reflection of Paramātman on the microcosm is commonly known as jīvātman. It is appropriate to call it “anuakṣara”. Depending on the varying degrees of psychic expansion, the degree of cosmic reflection on the unit mind varies.

From a philosophical standpoint there may be a difference between

anuakśara and jīvátman, but operationally they are indifferentiable. Thus the word anuakśara may be safely used in the place of jīvátman. By doing sádhaná and offering it's mental endeavours to Paramátman, a jīvátman becomes established in the ideation on Paramátman.

Q. 23 – Is there any difference between mind-stuff and the five fundamental factors?

Ans.: – There is no fundamental difference. They are both forms of Consciousness under the bondage of Prakṛti. The dissimilarity is that the degree of bondage when the ethereal factor is created is greater than that when Cosmic mind-stuff is created. Similarly, as the degree of bondage increases, the aerial, luminous, liquid and solid factors are created. Actually, there is no elemental difference between vapour, water and ice. The dissimilarity in their forms is due to the varying degrees of bondage of Prakṛti. Similarly, there is an apparent difference between mundane and supramundane objects and yet they are all made of the same consciousness.

**Etasmádátmanah ákáshah sambhúta ákáshádváyuh
Váyeragniragnerápah adbhyám' prthivii.
–Shruti**

Out of this Consciousness ether is made, and from ether air is made, and from air the luminous and liquid factors are made, and out of the liquid factor the solid factor is made.

Q. 24 – Is the freedom that human beings possess absolute or is it something like “Dominion Status”?

Ans.: – You cannot call it absolute freedom. The reason is that humans are dependent on the grace of Parama Puruśa each and every moment of their lives. All their activities, whether noble or ignoble, are confined to a limited sphere. Absolute freedom is impossible without the unification of unit consciousness with Cosmic Consciousness.

Q. 25 – It is said that Avidyá is the root cause of pleasure and pain, and that by sádhaná a jīva can be liberated from its bondage. In such a situation, who attains liberation?

Ans.: – The unit mind attains liberation and becomes as expansive as the Macrocosm. The term liberation is meaningless for a person who doesn't accept Puruṣottama as the Macrocosmic witness. And for those who do not believe in Nirguṇa Brahma, salvation (mokṣa) is a meaningless concept. That's why the concepts mukti, mokṣa, kaevalya, nirvāṇa and parinirvāṇa are totally insignificant for the atheist.

Q. 26. Would it be correct to say that Saguṇa Brahma is the creator of time?

Ans.: – The relative factors of time, place and person are created in Saguṇa Brahma's flow of imagination. Thus, He should certainly be called the creator of time.

Q. 27 – Is the object of unit consciousness “one” or “many”?

Ans.: – The expressed universe is the object of the Collective Consciousness. Each and every entity of this universe is moving along with its limited unit consciousness. The totality of this movement appears as the flowing imagination of the Cosmic Mind. In that Cosmic Mind the Cosmic Consciousness maintains an uninvolved witnesship of everything.

Q. 28 – Is it possible to have more than one “ātman” in a tree?

Ans.: – Consciousness, or jīvātman, is the witnessing entity of each developed, semi-developed or undeveloped mind in the microcosm. The tree is a multi-cellular organism. Just as there is one jīvātman as the witness of the developed or undeveloped mind in a collective body, similarly for each undeveloped mind in a collective body, similarly for each undeveloped cell there is also an undeveloped jīvātman as the witnessing entity. Therefore, a witnesship of many jīvātman is possible in a single tree. Similarly in humans and other organisms not only is there the overall consciousness, but also a cell-wise existence of innumerable jīvātman.

Q. 29 – What is the difference between an animate and an inanimate entity?

Ans.: – The unit mind can be described as Consciousness under the bondage of Prakṛti. What we normally call inanimate is merely a form of Consciousness under a stronger bondage of Prakṛti. Advanced beings are not fully controlled by the Cosmic Mind but are guided to some extent by their

own unit minds. The static bondage of Prakṛti is less in the unit mind than in inanimate entities. Hence, the unit mind is more advanced in the flow of Pratisaincara than the inanimate entity. Jivátma is the reflection of the Cosmic Consciousness on this unit mind. Thus we can say that Consciousness, mind and inanimate entities are all made of the same stuff, but are under varying degrees of Prakṛti's bondage.

Q. 30 – Why is idol worship faulty?

Ans.: – An idol is nothing but the imaginative creation of the human mind, with a finite beginning and end. On the other hand Brahma is beginningless and endless. This we can deduce through reason. This idol, this finite creation of the human imagination cannot, therefore, be the cause of emancipation of the living entities.

Moreover, the external idols of clay, stone and wood are composed of the five fundamental factors. Ideation on such crude objects cannot lead human beings towards Non-qualified Consciousness; rather it will lead them towards degeneration.

Q. 31 – Would it be true to say that Prakṛti is the Singular Entity?

Ans.: – No. Prakṛti is the Operative Principle that creates diversity. The original entity from which diversity has been created is not Prakṛti. Objects are created due to the crudifying influence of Prakṛti on that original entity. The differences amongst objects are due to the varying degrees of influence of that crudifying force. Thus, in no way can Prakṛti be considered as the Singular Entity.

Q. 32 – What does the word “Puruśa” mean?

Ans.: – Pure shete yah, sah Puruśa; i.e. that entity which witnesses without participating in the action is Puruśa.

Q. 33 – Is Saguṇa Brahma conscious of its own existence. If so, on what evidence?

Ans.: – He who creates this universe from the flow of His imagination is certainly aware of His own existence. The reason is that awareness of

existence is a prerequisite for the flow of imagination.

Q. 34 – Are the jīvas, Saguṇa Brahma and Nirguṇa Brahma conscious of the concepts of past, present and future?

Ans.: – The microcosm becomes aware of time as well as the other relative factors due to the mobility or immobility of external objects. The sensory and motor organs (indriyas) play a decisive role in this process of awareness. Therefore, it is possible for the jīva to have a limited knowledge of time, place and person; and indeed such knowledge does exist. However, since there is nothing outside Brahma, He has no organs for the acceptance or rejection of anything.

The temporal, spatial and personal factors to which the jīvas are bound are all internal for Brahma. Thus Saguṇa Brahma is called the controller of time, place and person. For the jīvas, Saguṇa Brahma is the witness as well as the creator of these relative factors. He is not bound by them, but is conscious of them. However, Nirguṇa Brahma, having no relation with the objective world, has no association of any sort with the temporal, spatial or personal factors.

Q. 35 – Who should be called an atheist (nāstika)?

Ans.: – Those who do not believe in Consciousness (Atman), Supreme Consciousness (Paramātman) or Vedas are atheists. Those who believe in any one of them may be called theists. Thus Christians, Muslims, Jews, Ārya Samājists and Brāhma Samājists may all be called theists. Those who worship idols, those who symbolically offer various things such as sesame and holy water to satisfy the departed souls and those who call different peoples' fabricated stories "scriptures" should not be considered as genuine theists. Those people who follow certain religions and deny the existence of Paramātman, Ātman and Vedas may also be called atheists.

Q. 36 – Does Prakṛti have any influence on Puruṣottama? If so, with what result?

Ans.: – Although Puruṣottama is not under the bondage of Prakṛti, He has some association with Prakṛti. That's why, although He is beyond the control of the gunas, He is not altogether detached from them. It is due to this sort of

association with Prakrti that the faculty of witnesship of the Saincara and Pratisaincara of Brahmamana has [devolved] on Him.

Q. 37 – Does Prakrti have any influence on unit consciousness?

Ans.: – Like Puruśottama, the jivátman also has some kind of objective association with Prakrti, and that's why it also remains as the witnessing entity of the Saincara and Pratisaincara of the microcosm .

Q. 38 – Philosophically speaking, what is the difference between Puruśottama and Nirguña Brahma?

Ans.: – Puruśottama has an association with the entitative world through His witnesship. However, Nirguña Brahma has no association whatsoever with the objective world.

Q. 39. Is savikalpa samádhi a state of endless bliss or endless sorrow?

Ans.: – Although the expressed citta of Saguña Brahma is extremely vast, it is not infinite; however it's potentialities are infinite. The citta of Saguña Brahma is composed of both the expressed citta and the unexpressed citta which is infinite. The Supreme Entity, in its vast cosmic stance is the witnessing entity of the infinite cosmic citta, and that's why it is an embodiment of bliss. The happiness or sorrow experienced by His expressed citta are not infinite, but are finite. And that limited stance, because of His inseparable association with the unit soul, is also blissful.

Q. 40. Does he who created the universe know when, how and with what it was created?

Ans.: – Certainly He knows because the temporal, spatial and personal factors are created by His imagination. This very universe is created from His citta. His existence is beyond cause and effect, and remains eternally engrossed in the feeling of Nirguña.

Q. 41. If God is an impersonal entity, is it possible for Him to be pleased or displeased by an individual?

Ans.: – Those who live according to His systematic vibrational flow, and with

one-pointed, uncompromising mental attitudes accelerate towards their goal of merging with Him, will have an ever-increasing reflection of Parama Puruśa on them as they approach the source of His ideation. You may call this, His grace, or may say that He is happy with you. It is to be noted that He spreads His light towards all jīvas in the same way and in equal proportion. He is equally gracious to all. Whoever has the purer citta will be able to grasp more of His light. Those who have not understood Him feel that He is partial to some. They feel that He is cruel because He has showered His grace on everyone except themselves whom He has kept in the darkness of the crude world.

Q. 42. During the process of saincara , does a physical change occur either within Brahma or outside Him?

Ans.: – There is nothing outside Brahma, and therefore it is useless to talk about it. In the process of Saincara He travels very far in the cosmic realm, far from His original blissful stance. This may be compared to someone thinking about England or the USA, or any other country for that matter. The object of their imagination, i.e., the country they are thinking about, stays within the citta and not outside it. In saincara , the mind, depending on the crudity of it's object, tends to go further away from the state of pure Consciousness.

Q. 43. During the phase of saincara does the internal clash or the external clash increase more within the structural body?

Ans.: – The internal clash increases more because the movement of the Macrocosmic Consciousness is towards further crudification. There is a physical transformation of the macrocosm into energy and that energy into matter. And the molecules, due to their closer proximity, undergo further internal clash.

Q. 44. Are vyápti (expansion) and sthiti (preservation) both within the domain of time?

Ans.: – An entity which has the capacity of witnesship transcends the law of causation. Anything which has the faculties of vyápti and sthiti is bound by the time factor. When the mind attempts to trace the ultimate cause and fails it is called the meta-empirical state of mind.

Q. 45. What are the psychological defects of materialism?

Ans.: – The characteristic (dharma) of the mind is to seek the infinite. The mind attains this goal by concentrating on a particular ideation. As material objects are finite, those who accept them as the aim of life eventually feel frustrated. They fail to attain bliss because neither wealth nor material objects can be enjoyed infinitely. Moreover, those who make material objects their aim in life find their self-interests in conflict with those of other people. They try to deprive others, to protect their own endless greed for wealth and material objects. There will have to be a continuous pressure on the minds of these people to keep them away from material objects. People cannot tolerate such imposition and, on becoming disgruntled, take the path of revolution or counter-revolution against those who pressurize them.

Materialism functions by imposing social pressure on people to enjoy material objects; and accepts that as the only mode of operation. Thus, in materialistic countries or societies, people look at one another with suspicion and act according to the information given by the intelligence agencies. In the absence of spiritual ideas, firmness of morality cannot be established. The apparent morality in a materialistic society is nothing but an immoral alliance to protect self-interests.

Without spiritual ideals true morality based on universal love cannot be awakened. Unless God is accepted as the creator of all, human fraternity is impossible since God's authority as the universal father is denied. Only spiritual ideals and spiritual desires can lead humanity onto the path of well-being. Universalism, cosmic ideation and cosmic bliss, unlike the material objects composed of the five fundamental factors, are not limited.

Therefore, humanity should be inspired to move on the path of spirituality, or also nothing worthwhile will be achieved. Those who don't accept this spiritual ideology will have to be kept under some social or external pressure to check the greed of usurping others' property. Proper education will also have to be imparted. However, it should be borne in mind that merely exerting circumstantial pressure is not enough. This pressure tactic will no longer be necessary once the ideology is accepted. Those who believe in spiritual ideals, but don't believe in the policy of exerting external pressure, in other words, the application of physical force, will find it utterly impossible to

achieve their goals. In this world there are many people who pay deaf ear to pious appeals. On such people social or other types of pressure will have to be imposed. No problem will ever be solved if one waits indefinitely for their consciousness to be awakened. Like materialism, spirituality based on non-violence will be of no benefit to humanity. The words of non-violence may sound noble, and quite appealing but, on the solid ground of reality, have no value whatsoever.

Q. 46. What is the difference between ritualistic religion and spiritual sādhaná?

Ans.: – In almost all cases ritualistic religion ultimately encourages the fulfilment of materialistic desires. Generally, human beings want to acquire physical objects as well as name and fame. Sometimes, even after fulfilling their desires, they want to accumulate more. With that goal in mind they follow a ritualistic religion.

The practice of ritualistic religion is nothing but pursuance of the path of preya. Ignorant men even fail to realize that by following such a path they do not always gain the material objects they desire. Only the sinful religious and social exploiters gain from such efforts.

Spiritual sādhaná is an individual and collective process that leads toward all-round progress. This path of sādhaná may certainly be termed as nivritti. Liberation does not imply escapism from the world, but rather observing the world with spiritual ideation. There is no scope whatsoever for the desire for name and fame, for pomp and show, for religious exploitation. Rather, the co-existence of such desires with spiritual sādhaná is contradictory.

The ritualistic differences in various religions are quite marked. By accentuating these differences, medieval and even contemporary people did not and do not hesitate to cause heavy bloodshed. However, in spiritual sādhaná there is no place for the differences in nationality, race, language or religion. Everyone has a singular dharma named spirituality, and only this is worth calling dharma. Religions are not dharma; they are mere collections of rituals.

Q. 47. What is the best way to popularize an ideology? Is it by refuting the ideals of others? Is it by criticizing others directly? Or is it by doing

constructive work?

Ans.: – The best way to propagate a sublime ideal is by doing constructive work. If one condemns or criticizes the ideals of others, one may enjoy the satisfaction of an apparent victory, but humanity has never gained anything worthwhile from such a practice. In fact, a criticizing mind becomes associated with that which is being condemned.

Q. 48. Do those who keep their hair long, wear orange robes and become “sannyásiis” suffer from some type of mental disease?

Ans.: – Yes, although it may sound unpleasant; it is a bitter fact. People develop an escapist tendency due to being disappointed with their worldly affairs, or due to intense fear of some sort. Some become sannyásiis in order to run away from the responsibilities of the world. Some, due to being unable to bear the pangs of separation, some due to excessive debts, some due to failure in academic life, and some due to family problems, find satisfaction in saying that this world is an illusion.

They go to live in the Himalayas but fail to realize that the Himalayas are also in this world. They may not have to worry about clothes there, but they will certainly have to worry about food. That food is also from the trees and vines of this “illusory” world or given as alms by the worldly people under the spell of Máya (in the language of such sannyásiis!).

The thief (out of fear of the police) and the lazy person (to run away from work) become sannyásiis. With a selfish motive, they tell everyone about the illusions of the world to inspire them to offer their hard-earned food, clothes and money. However, they do not call their own newly-created world an illusion.

Q. 49. How far is the unification of all religions possible?

Ans.: – To seek infinite bliss is the only dharma of humanity. Humanity has but one dharma. Thus, the question of the unification of religions does not arise. The apparent dissimilarity between various religions arising due to differences in their ritualistic practices is not a spiritual difference. Whenever rituals dominate and efforts to attain bliss are feeble, whatever that may be, it is not spirituality.

Q. 50. is a social classification based on profession appropriate?

Ans.: – Nothing in this universe is valueless. In the age of undeveloped science, when industries were essentially cottage industries, families used to work in the same profession for generations. Thus children and grandchildren used to practise the same profession for many years, and as a result of their endeavours, progressed well. Therefore classifying families on the basis of profession was not improper in those days.

However, the world of today has changed substantially and professions are not necessarily inherited. Due to the rapid expansion of technology, the system of hereditary profession is not easily maintained. Thus, social classification on the basis of profession is meaningless today. Apart from that, even during the age when social classification was justifiable there was no necessity for social divisions on the basis of caste.

Q. 51. What is more important in life: Brahma sádhaná or constructive work?

Ans.: – The aim of a living being is Brahma Sádhaná. Just like having a bath, eating and sleeping, constructive work is also a part of Brahma Sádhaná. Therefore Brahma Sádhaná is more important than anything else.

Q. 52. Can a singular economic theory be adopted for all countries, at all times and for all strata of society?

Ans.: – No. Social ideals and systems should be formulated after considering the time, place and person as well as the all-round progress of the society. It may be that something which is quite useful for a particular time, place and person is totally worthless for a different time, place and person.

Society is not a static entity, but a dynamic one. The ideology which was formulated in relevance to a particular time, place and person and which was once considered beneficial, becomes backward and outdated with the change in time, place and person. As the society progresses it is considered as an anachronism in the later period.

Be it Marxism, or any other socio-economic theory, one cannot cling to it blindly because each theory is optimum only for a particular time, place and person. Short-sighted people, after observing the effectiveness of a theory in a particular context, begin to believe in its eternal effectiveness. This is certainly an illusion.

Q. 53. There is no other alternative except *Ánanda Marga* to sustain human beings in their joint endeavours. Why?

Ans.: – A united human society is the prerequisite for the development of civilization. The collective desire for survival ensures society's meaningful existence. The society is a dynamic entity and its survival indicates its inherent dynamism. When a group of people bound by the ties of a common ideology move together along a particular path, inviting fellow humans to join them to share their common joys and sorrows, theirs is a real movement; they are destined to be successful.

In this universe of rapid temporal, spatial and personal change, no specific economic, political, or religious structure can be the permanent aim of humanity. This is because theories are born in a particular temporal, spatial and economic context. People can move along the path of eternal progress only (1) by accepting the Cosmic Entity, who is beyond time, place and person, as the aim of life and (2) by continuing to do all their worldly actions while moving along that path towards Him.

Ánanda Marga is that path of progress, and that is why *Ánanda Marga* is the only alternative for the preservation of human existence and civilization. The external rituals, the so-called dharmas, are not dharma but mere religion. They are subject to change depending on time, place and person. By manifesting distinctions within themselves and outside themselves (such as the differences like vijatiya bheda, svajatiya bheda and svagata bheda), religions, like other relative factors have invited the repression of humanity by creating dogmas, bloodshed and similar evils. Thus religion cannot bring peace to humanity.

Q. 54. Are diseases of the mind and brain one and the same?

Ans.: – No. The crude brain is simply the vehicle of the subtle mind, it gives concrete shape to the mind's inner thoughts and feelings. The different parts

and cells of the brain are composed of the five fundamental factors. Due to some physical cause a cell may fully or partially, temporarily or permanently become defective. That defective cell cannot express mental thought vibrations as effectively as it would in a normal state. This is a disease of the brain. A cell may sometimes become abnormal if it is unable to withstand intense mental vibrations. In such a case it is also an abnormality of the brain and not of the mind.

However, if the brain does not get inspirational input due to defects in the ectoplasmic structure of the mind, it cannot carry out its normal functions of thought process and memory. This is a disease of the mind. Other examples of such diseases of mind are: Getting angry on seeing a particular person, entertaining feelings of dislike for someone, getting unnecessarily heated up about something, or suffering from absent-mindedness. The base of memory is the mind, not the brain. Thus, a lack of memory is an abnormality of the mind, and not of the brain. However, due to a weakness in the brain, many persons of normal mind cannot remember things properly. This is then an abnormality of the brain, and not of the mind.

Q. 55 What is the base of memory?

Ans.: – Memory is the re-creation of things already perceived. Once the citta has perceived an object, a certain vibration corresponding to that perceived object is imprinted in the nerve fibres. That experience remains in the citta in the form of seed. By recreating a congenial vibration in the nerve cells, and thus by invoking the same feeling in the citta, one experiences the process of memory.

Thus the base of memory is not in the brain but in the citta. Vibrations of a perceived object remain imprinted in the nerve fibres for a few days and then gradually fade. Some people believe that memory is stored in the nerve cells in the form of “line”. If that were the case, however, the human brain would not be able to accommodate it. The cranium of those whose thoughts are multifarious would have to become larger and more complex to fulfill the needs of creating proper vibrations.

Q. 56 Do Ghosts really exist?

Ans.: – Those strange figures which we call ghosts are mainly figments of the

imagination. When the mind is in a weak or vulnerable state, what was previously created in the imagination now appears to be real.

In a dream, due to the dormant state of kámamaya kośa, the thought-vibrations of manomaya kośa appear real (this we call a dream when we wake up). When, due to extreme fear, stupefaction, crudity, or an excessive expression of any ripu or pásha, the kámamaya becomes temporarily suspended in the next higher kośa and the imagined objects appear real. This is also the case when a person sees various gods and goddesses. Psychologically, seeing a ghost, god or goddess is the same thing; none of them actually exist.

When hypnotized by someone, a person starts perceiving things as per the commands of the hypnotist. In this state, when the kámamaya is dormant a person feels that his/her imagined objects are real. Often, weak-minded people see ghosts, gods or goddesses of relatives. Such visions are auto- or outer-positive-hallucinations. Conversely, when people declare the absence of things which are actually present, it is called auto- or outer-negative-hallucination.

This clarifies that those who emphatically claim that they have seen ghosts are not wrong. It is due to the illusions of the negative or positive hallucinations that they see these things.

It is also possible for the mental ectoplasm of a strong willed person to force a body-less soul to inhabit a body according to its samskára and thus create a ghost. The existence of that so-called ghost depends upon the person's whims and desires. This type of ghost is not the same as the commonly known ghost. To force a soul to inhabit a body by utilizing one's mental ectoplasm (citta) is a very bad thing and good people will not do such things simply to show someone a ghost.

Those who think that ghosts appear periodically with the help of their own ectoplasms to fulfill their desires or to express themselves are wrong. In fact, the ghost is created out of their mental ectoplasm and does not have an independent soul. The soul of the person whose ectoplasm created the ghost is also the witnessing entity of the ghost.

Q. 57. What is being possessed by a ghost, god or goddess?

Ans.: – Being possessed by a ghost, god or goddess is similar to seeing one. The difference is that a person hypnotizes himself herself and ends up being absorbed in the imagined object, believing him/herself to be a ghost, god or goddess, and acting according to that saṃskāra. In a hypnotic state the thought vibration possesses more knowledge and energy than the consciousness of mind, and hence the hypnotized person acquires new convictions and acts very strangely. The process which brings the person back to a normal state is similar to the process by which the nerve fibres are normalized.

Exorcists and physicians do the same thing. The only difference is that while physicians do this as a normal course of action, the so-called exorcists create ignorance and fear in people's mind by telling them stories about ghosts and by reciting powerful mantras. When hypnotized, the patient, in response to certain specific commands, can perform superhuman tasks such as breaking a branch of a tree. In reality, this ability is derived from the extreme concentration of the patient's ectoplasmic mind. People think that the ghost broke the branch of the tree while leaving the patient's body. In this possessed state the kāmamaya and manomaya kośas lose their ability to act independently.

Q. 58. Who receives the answer or remedy at the time of staging a Dhāraṇā?

Ans.: – Once the conscious and sub-conscious minds are inactive the remedy is received from the all-knowing Causal Mind. The ectoplasmic mind will take the shape of anything which is ideated upon with a specific aim, with sincerity and with proper concentration. While staging a dharṇā the kamamaya and manomaya kośas become partially suspended and a vision of knowledge occurs (like a particular type of dream state) originating from the Causal Mind. In that dream state the person receives the answer to any question he/she may have asked about medicine or other matters.

Those staging a dharṇā are convinced that a certain deity will give the cure for a disease or answer any question they may ask. Therefore, when the answer comes, they naturally conclude that it was given by that very same deity. In fact, this vision of the deity, like the vision of the ghost, is simply a play of the mind. After being told about the greatness of a particular god or goddess a person will go to make offerings and will often receive the expected

cure or answer. There is no question of a god or deity being involved here; God had nothing to do with what happened. It is purely a psychic phenomenon. The effectiveness of the cure or answer depends upon the degree of concentration of the mind.

Q. 59. What is exorcism?

Ans.: – Possession by ghosts usually occurs in a state of shock or fear when there is a loss of eternal awareness after concentrating on an imaginary ghost. In this state of possession the person establishes the feeling of oneness with the imaginary ghost. The kámamaya kośa becomes suspended and the manomaya kośa fails to think independently. In such cases the exorcist tries various methods to reactivate these inactive kośas. They try different techniques such as making their patients smell various things and hitting them to revitalize the nervous structure because they know that once the nervous system is operating normally the effect of the ghost will disappear. First they study the physical and mental state of the patient and then the mental and economic state of the patient's relatives! And then they tell stories about different types of ghosts such as elves, goblins, phantoms, demons etc. to the patient's relatives in order to extract money or establish their influence. They also utter mantras in the colloquial language to further develop people's belief in ghosts.

In reality the ghost is not removed due to mantras but rather due to the normalization of the nervous structure. Those possessed by ghosts fall into different categories. Some are obsessed by anxiety and fear and speak little; some have weak minds; some feel injustice and insult but are unable to express their feelings, or are physically immature. Hysteria, which results from certain diseases, is similar in origin to possession by ghosts and has a similar cure.