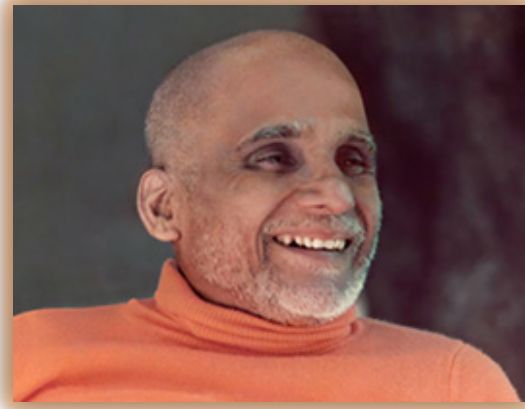


# THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF YOGA



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## **ABOUT THIS EDITION**

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## **PUBLISHER'S NOTE**

This book consists of a series of eighteen lectures that Swami Krishnananda delivered to the students of the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy from December 1981 to February 1982 on epistemology, which is the theory of knowledge, in regard to yoga and the attainment of the Ultimate Reality.

The book starts with an analysis of the mind and the means of perception, and explains why it is impossible for the mind to know the world and why we cannot know even ourselves, and why this lack of knowledge leaves us in a state of dissatisfaction and sorrow.

Then Swamiji tells us how the Yoga and Vedanta philosophies deal with this most important issue and how, though meditation leading to Samadhi, our individual consciousness realises its true nature as Universal-consciousness, or God-consciousness.

## PREFACE

There is a certain duality to the way our life is lived. On the one hand we have an inner quest and, on the other hand, an outward expression and execution of this quest. Our inner awareness is not adequate for achieving our goal. What follows is turmoil and a lashing of emotions so that, as Sri Swami Krishnananda says, we are terribly dislocated within ourselves.

This inner quest leads us in search for knowledge. Does knowledge reside in the subject or does it reside in the object? Is knowledge a function of the subject's relating to objects or is it a function of objects' responses to subjects? Is knowledge relative and therefore situation dependant? What is the basis or foundation for knowledge? How do we know what we know? How does knowledge arise? From where does it come?

There is a constant rush outwards, towards the external; and the more we intermingle with the external, the worse is our entanglement and the more difficult the extrication therefrom. As a result, we are more in things externally than within our own selves. This is residing in a world of death, and this is verily the genesis of all sorrow. This sorrow involves the mind so completely that all thinking is distorted or wrecked. Our every process is consumed and committed to this externality—our mind, our values, our will, our feeling and our reason. The goals of life shift outside and get defined by the ephemeral. Consequently, the inner persona remains unattended, inert, while sorrows increase.

What is the basis for the knowledge of this sorrow, or our understanding of it? Before gaining knowledge of things and beings, one needs to gain knowledge about oneself. Epistemology is the getting to know how we get to know, how knowledge takes place, and how the quest for that knowledge arises in us. Does the genesis for the knowledge processing occur based on what the senses perceive? And do the senses perceive what really is, or only what is perceptible through the multifarious lenses of our psyche?

All knowledge is a relationship of the knower with the known. Our relationships with things, and our conduct in life, depend upon the way in which we understand things. But where does this relationship reside? It is neither in the knower, nor in the known, and yet it cannot be absent in either. Further, we are in a phenomenal world and, therefore, we do not see things as they really are, but as they are perceived through the senses.

Thus, the understanding of the process of knowing is very important. Critical to this understanding is the very challenge to the perception of the world as being 'outside'. Swami Krishnananda says, "Why do we say that we see the world outside? Who told us that it is outside? The obviousness of the fact that the world is outside us shows the obviousness of the difficulty in knowing things as they are. We have been so involved in the error of human knowledge that we have ourselves become a heap of error."

Another dimension to this understanding of the process of knowing is the dual lens of space and time, through which all perception takes place. Space and time are the

forces of which the entire world is composed; and the world is known only through the five senses. Therefore, we are caught between enabling the attainment of the inner quest and the battling of the external consuming attraction and involvement of the so-called outside world, whose creation or occurrence remains a mystery. To come to grips with this 'outer' world, we need to apprehend the cause-effect relationship of all things and our own placement in space-time.

We feel separate from everything in creation, and we experience an urge to relate and enjoin with objects. But if the kingdom of God is within us, the whole cosmos is in every speck of space. How then do we resolve the contradiction?

The essence of this book is summed up in one paragraph, extracted here: "All perception, in the epistemological sense, is far, far removed from a true insight into things. Thus, a distinction has to be drawn between sense perception and insight, or intuition. 'Intuition' actually means an entry into the object—through the whole of our being, to the whole of the object. The entirety of us contacts the entirety of the object—not through sensation, but through a commingling of being. Being enters being."

True yoga is, therefore, a harmonising of our relationship with the environment in every aspect of the term, knowing the Ultimate Reality of the universe and, by the yoga of meditation which results in Samadhi, encountering the real nature of everything.

This is the struggle that is dealt with in this book, with great precision and care, beginning by defining the problem, moving to a recognition of its causes and the misconception that has laid its roots, and thereafter gently unravelling the knots of the human mind one by one in an attempt to lead the individual from misconception to conception to supra conception, wherein he enters into the Ultimate Reality.



## Chapter 1

### THE NEED FOR REAL SELF-ANALYSIS

There is a subtle aspect in which our life is involved which keeps us pursuing something or the other day in and day out and, at the same time, keeps us restless within ourselves. In the heart of our hearts, we seem to be doubly active—on one side, with an endeavour to free ourselves from the different kinds of restlessness in which we seem to be involved and, on the other side, we never cease to pursue some ideal which we have chosen as the proper means to free ourselves from the agony of restlessness.

There is no person in the world who is free from some sort of anxiety. This is a great psychological study. This series of discourses have a simple and obvious role to play: to examine, diagnose and direct our psychological personalities, just as medical science requires a scientific mind to understand the problem of a patient.

Our learning and our wisdom have not helped us very much. It is something we learn too late in our lives. When we are young, we are very enthusiastic and bubbling with feelings of hope and positivity of achievement, all of which begin to show a tendency to turn into dust when our hair becomes gray and the world begins to present a picture of disillusionment, as if we have lived for no purpose. This psychological state through which all have passed, right from prehistoric times, is very, very unfortunate; and it may appear that no one has escaped this predicament.

Our life is not physical or social, though it appears to be such. Our life is mainly psychological. We may be

politically important persons, socially very busy people, and individuals of importance and respectability, all which are a camouflage of what we are inside because the outer activities and relationships, whatever be the name that we give to them, are the efforts of what we really are within ourselves.

Our search for whatever be the aim of our life, and our joys and sorrows, are neither physical features nor social or political phenomena. Our joys and sorrows are not political and social; they are purely personal, inward, psychological. They are projected outside, and they become problems and matters for consideration—politically, socially, and so on.

We have heard it said, perhaps one thousand times, that it is essential to know one's own self. This has become a sort of shibboleth which has lost all its meaning. Everyone knows this old, old saying, from the Oracle of Delphi right down to the present day: One has to know oneself. The number of times that we have heard it is such that, actually, this oracle has no sense for us. A thing with which we are too familiar loses its significance to some extent.

Thus, we seem to be aware as to what is our objective, but this awareness is not adequate to the purpose. We are in a muddle of thinking and, oftentimes, we find ourselves dashed by strong waves and currents of emotions, moods of depression and elation, like a person sinking into the ocean and rising up to show his head for a few moments only to sink down again in utter desperation. There is something very peculiar about all of us, and this peculiarity is what keeps us moving and getting on in life—and yet, we are

terribly dislocated within ourselves. Do we not think that we all have so little time to be our own selves that we are practically not our own selves, that we are somebody else?

This is a peculiar trick the world is playing with us so that we may be defeated in our aims; and those who have left this world have been people who have been completely thrown out of gear. History stands as a great demonstration before us of human defeat and of the inscrutable circumstance into which one feels he is thrown at the last moment of time. Present-day life, especially, is an utter travesty—psychologically, and in every blessed way—because our minds are drawn outside and are urged externally to things which pull us with such vehemence that we live not in ourselves, but in something else.

We are terribly conscious of other things, and there is a total oblivion of the fact that we also exist in this world. This is a difficult thing to understand, notwithstanding the fact that we cannot forget our existence. It would be meaningless to say that one can forget one's own self. We are all here, and we know that we are here; how can we forget that we are here? But, nevertheless, the objectivity of the mind and the impulse of the psyche towards external affairs is so uncontrollable, morbidly vehement and impetuous that we seem to be ashamed to be conscious of our own selves and feel proud of being conscious of other people and the affairs of life.

The more we are immersed in the affairs of life, the more important we appear to be. The greatest men in the world are those who are conscious, totally, of what is outside them, imbued in the affairs of political existence

and social problems. We have social workers and political geniuses trying to attack each other with weapons of warfare, in order to make themselves very prominent. Our prominence increases, like the rise in a thermometer, in proportion to the extent that we are immersed in what is totally outside us.

This is the reason why it is said that this is a world of death. 'Mrityurloka' is a word that is common in India. This world is called Mrityurloka, the world of death, and not the world of life. Nobody lives in oneself; and what can be worse than not being able to live in one's own self? The fact that we are forced by circumstances to live in that which is not our own selves is the proof of this world being a world of death, and not of life. Here is the foundation of our sorrows, the root of our difficulties, and the impossibility to get out of the clutches of this condition which refuses to be understood by anyone. The grip that the world has upon our minds is so strong, like a crocodile's grip, that we are not permitted even to think. Even the mind is caught.

When I say that the person is involved in the affairs of that which he is not, I do not mean that only our bodies are involved. Everything that we are is totally caught hold of—our reason, our will, our feeling, our emotion, even our values of life—so that we value life in terms of what we are conscious of outwardly, and not in terms of what we are inwardly. A rich man is a valuable man, a powerful person is a valuable person, and a name that appears in the headlines of newspapers is very prominent. An unknown person, living in a corner of the world, is not so worthwhile.

Hence, the quantum of external involvement has become the thermometer for reading the greatness and value of a person, and of anything else in this world.

This is a serious subject in psychological studies. I began by saying that we are minds more than bodies, and all our involvements are inwardly oriented though the involvement appears to be wholly external. It is essential for each one of us to find a little time to discover the manner in which the mind is operating. This is not an easy affair, because we are not separable from the mind. A policeman who has become involved with a gang of dacoits becomes a dacoit himself and, therefore, there is no question of discovering the dacoity or the activities of these people.

How can we observe the method, the *modus operandi* of our minds when we, ourselves, are the mind? Who is going to study the mind, as if we are standing outside the mind and looking at it through a microscope? We can imagine where we are standing. To some extent, we can know why it is that we are so very grieved inwardly in a manner we ourselves cannot express outwardly in any language. Our sorrows are our private property which nobody can look into, and which we cannot explain, express or state in any adequate language. The privacy of our sorrows and problems is so intense that it defies illustration, explanation and description—logically, or in any language. Anything that is purely personal defies description, and we are, therefore, in an indescribable predicament of involvement. It is like an awfully sick person not knowing what sort of sickness he is involved in.

Swami Sivananda, the great saint and sage who was the seed of The Divine Life Society, was one of the many stalwarts who became conscious of this peculiar structure of the world. I do not say he was the only person to achieve this consciousness; there were many like him, but he was one among the many incomparable geniuses who plumbed the depths of this problem of man: Who is man himself? The problem of man is man; it is not somebody else. So, we are our own problem, not anybody else.

This requires tremendous patience, as would be required by a physician who is treating a very complicated illness. It may require days and days of diagnosis. Complicated diseases require an all-round consideration, and cannot just suddenly become objects of prescription, of treatment. We are not involved in a linear fashion. We are involved in a circular, zigzag and abysmal way, so that a straight-line approach is not the way of studying the human mind. It is clear like a mirror that is shining before us.

There has not been one person who could give a universal prescription for this difficulty because, while the difficulty is common in its generality, it is personal and has its own details specific to an individual. We all have a common problem as human beings in this world; this, of course, is true. But each one of us has, also, a peculiar personal problem which is not common to all of us. So we have to be treated from two different angles of vision, two standpoints altogether: the general aspect of it, and also the special aspect of it. Our condition is really awful because we are attacked from two sides: on one side by problems which are generally common to all human beings, and on the

other side by problems which are privately inherited by us through our race, through our species—one may say, by our *karmas*.

There is, according to modern psychoanalysts, a personal unconscious and, also, a species unconscious. This is the reason why we think only as human beings; we cannot think like snakes, scorpions, or in any fashion other than human. Is it a great wisdom to be able to think only in terms of human beings, to evaluate things only from a human point of view, and to be overly anxious about the welfare of human beings while not bothering at all about anything else in the world, though we know very well that our life is decided by factors most of which are superhuman?

The breath that we breathe, for instance, to take a very gross example, is not under our control. It is not a purely human affair. Even our heartbeat is not under our control. These are things which are important enough, and yet, of which we are totally ignorant and about which we wish to think nothing. We will be terrified out of our wits if we begin to probe into the mystery of even the heartbeat—which is our master, and not our servant. We take for granted things which are most important, and busy ourselves with things which are silly and secondary.

The outlook of life with which we, as human beings, are concerned at present is the projection of our secondary characters, whereas the primary characters are deeply rooted within us and do not actually come to the surface. This is to explain in another way what psychology has spoken of as the conscious level—as distinguished from the

very depth of humanity and human nature, which will not come to the surface as it is not necessary for it to come to the surface.

There is a fourfold level of our being, says the Mandukya Upanishad. This declaration was made years and years before the first psychologist was born. Modern psychology classifies our personality into what is called the conscious and the preconscious—or, sometimes, the subconscious and the unconscious. The Mandukya Upanishad tells us that there is a super-conscious condition—which should not be regarded as a condition, but as the True Being of ours—which billows up into the personality that we are, passing through a thick cloud of darkness which is called the unconscious, and conditioning our present conscious activities. There is a depth within us which is all light, brilliance and perfection. But, when it becomes the conscious personality that we are now, it has to pass through a cloud—the cloud of unknowing, as mystics sometimes call it.

When the great perfection that we are at the root of our being passes through this distracted thick cloud of unknowing, we can imagine what sort of consciousness we are able to operate with in our waking life. It is a totally distorted consciousness. It is not even like the rays of the sun trying to peek through the thick clouds. It is something worse than that, because this cloud which covers the unconscious totally miscalculates, misinterprets, misconstrues and wrongly projects the direction of this rootedness of our being in our conscious level, so that we



are now behaving in a way totally contrary to what we really are at our base. We are our own enemies, in a literal sense.

How is this possible? How could it have happened? The loss of self and the gaining of the world has been referred to in a pithy passage by Jesus Christ in his great statement: “What does it profit a man to gain the whole world, yet lose his own soul?” This is not merely a gospel; this is exactly the condition in which we are today. We have the whole world with us. All the dollars and the pounds are under our control. Yes, this is very grand indeed. It may be that the whole earth is our property. We have gained the whole world, but we have lost ourselves.

This immersion of what we really are in what we are not is what is called the affairs of the world. The whole panorama of the drama of existence in this world—the whole history of mankind—is the story of the antics which human nature plays by running out of itself and becoming what it is not. Only a very careful, investigative mind will be able to understand what it means to get involved in what one is not; a lay mind will not know the implications of it. This is called death. Though physically we are not dead, psychologically we are corpses; and, literally, it is so. We are living a life of psychological death and spiritual annihilation while physically we are alive. Thus, death masquerades as life.

Those who have read the pronouncements of great thinkers made under the pressure of a lofty desperation of life due to their insight into the nature of things will be able to appreciate the meaning of what I am trying to place before you. The joys of life are the projections of human

ignorance. As Patanjali, a great sage in India, told us, to the truly discerning individual, all the pleasures of life are forms of utter pain and sorrow. We are mistaking sorrow for delight. This is what Buddha said in the East and Schopenhauer said in the West. They all say the same thing, but these things will not enter our brains because in a very, very specialised sense, we are abnormal individuals. Though we may not be maniacs in the sense of patients intended for a mental hospital, in a highly metaphysical sense we are all abnormal. *Pitva mohamayim pramadamadiram unmatte bhutam jagat*: Having drunk the liquor of delusion, the whole world has gone mad. This is what Bhartrihari, a great genius not only of poetry but of philosophy, declared centuries back.

It is sometimes said that philosophy begins with the discovery of the sorrows of life. Dissatisfaction with the surface view of things is regarded as the mother of philosophy. If we are satisfied with the world, there is nothing for us to learn. [Addressed to the students.] Every one of you has a dissatisfaction—else, you would not have taken the trouble of purchasing a ticket and coming here to this jungle where you will see practically nothing which is satisfying or delighting to you.

We are seated here, therefore, to conduct a sort of self-analysis—which is a very intriguing term—because there is a need for self-analysis in medical parlance, in statesmanship and political governance, and in every walk of life. Even in conducting a good business, we may have to know what real self-analysis means.

The study of man is regarded as the highest of the sciences of life because, as I mentioned at the very outset, all the wide world that we see in front of us is a fabric or a web that we have cast around ourselves, and we are moving in an atmosphere created by our own selves, calling it the world of experience. The world of joys and sorrows is not the physical world of mountains and rivers. The mountains were there, and the sun and the moon were shining even before we were born into this world. They do not cause us any trouble. There is another kind of world in which we are living, which is invisible to the eyes—and the invisible man is the dangerous man. The visible man is perfectly all right. He is a geographical individual. We do not differ much among ourselves anatomically and physiologically, but each one is a world by himself or herself; that is the invisible definition of what we are.

We are engaged in a very serious theme, of which even the world may be afraid; and it is not for nothing that adepts on the path of yoga have warned us that when we probe into these mysteries, the sleeping dogs of life will wake up and will start barking at us, and then it is that we will find ourselves in hot water. The forces of nature get awakened when we begin to investigate into them—like the roots of a disease which are dug up and brought to the surface—especially by systems which study man as a whole and not as a part.

In the beginning, when we move in the direction of these studies, it may appear to be frightening because all discipline is unpleasant in the beginning. The word 'discipline' is frightening; nobody likes it, because we have a

feeling that discipline is a force exerted upon us by that which is not pleasant to us. We cannot be happy with the presence of others. We love ourselves more than we love anything else, though from another point of view we are totally involved only in other people. We are broken individuals, not wholes as we appear—broken because on one side we cannot honestly love anything except our own selves and, on the other side, we seem to be conscious only of other people and other things and are thus totally involved in the affairs of what we are not, as I have mentioned already.

This is a double game that we are playing. Due to the split of our personalities we are, therefore, half ourselves and half somebody else. This is perhaps the reason why the novelist had a good theme to write on—what he called the personalities of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Both are present within us. We are only half in ourselves; the other half has gone to the other world. Sometimes a major part of us goes to the other world and very little is left in our own selves. Then it is that we become delinquents, atrocious individuals, criminals and tyrants whose only intention is to destroy rather than to construct. It depends upon the extent to which we are psychologically alienated.

The percentage of this alienation differs from individual to individual, but whatever be the percentage of this alienation, it is there in everyone. And the purpose of yoga is to bring a right-about turn of these alienating forces in us, to turn them towards their centre which we are, so that we become whole beings. Yoga is, therefore, a science of health in a very, very real sense of the term.

Health does not mean merely a perfect working of the physiological organs, because we know very well that human nature is not merely flesh and bones or the anatomical system. The health of the individual is not the health of muscles, bones and nerves; it is the total integration. This theme will take us into deep waters because the art of the integration of the self—which is yoga precisely—is, at the same time, the necessity to take into consideration all the things in which our personality is involved. The whole world, itself, becomes an object of study when we begin to study ourselves. Such complicated persons we are. We are not individuals seated in a room here; we are little switch-bolts of activities that are taking place in the whole of creation. This is why we are indefinitely striving for the infinite possession of inscrutable perfection in our life. Though we look like small boys and girls here, almost like nothings in the eyes of the public, such a mystery is before us; and we have to clean our minds of all the cobwebs of involvements and entanglements, for the time being at least, and keep ourselves thoroughly de-conditioned.

Do not have prejudiced ideas and conditioned ideologies. Do not come with the idea that you already know certain things and therefore there is very little to learn. Let there be a clean approach to the studies that you are about to undertake, as if you are born just now, like small babies, into this new world, and you have completely brushed aside your past lives. Otherwise, the old memories will come and harass you again and again, and they will be impediments to an impartial study of your own selves.

You should not enter into discussion of this theme with prejudice in your minds. You should not take for granted certain conclusions in regard to what you are going to study. It should be totally dispassionate. Hence, great leisure is essential. Your whole being has to be dedicated to this study, without tentacles connecting you with problems which are extraneous to the task on hand.

So, let your whole being be here. You know very well, success in any adventurous project in life is proportional to the percentage of the wholeness of your being involved in it. If you are wholly engaged in some task, there is a greater chance of your succeeding in the fulfilment of the task than when you are partially involved in it. Your interest in it should be whole, and then there is certainly a bright future for every one of you. God bless you!

## Chapter 2

### THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL PREDICAMENT

In all studies concerning human knowledge it has been considered necessary to investigate into the very process of knowing so that we may be sure as to what extent we are correct in the knowledge that we seem to be possessing about things. Since we are the knowers of things it becomes, at the same time, essential to know something about our own selves. Though it is not easy to know oneself wholly, thoroughly—in a totally exhaustive manner—without reference to other things with which we are also connected, we have to start from somewhere; and it is not possible to start from everywhere at the same time.

The difficulty in all worthwhile philosophical studies is that we cannot start from any particular point of view, ignoring other possible points of view, because every situation that involves knowledge implies a relationship to various other factors without the knowledge of which, in an appreciable manner, we cannot know either ourselves or anything else. Yet since a beginning has to be made, the proper starting point would be a study of the mechanism of human nature which conditions the processes of knowing—after which, it will be essential to know what it is that we are knowing.

In the process of knowledge, there are three things involved: the knower, the process of knowledge, and the object that is known. The whole of experience is a threefold constitution of the structure of the knower, the process of knowing, and the nature of the object that is known. Hence, it was with some relevance that we commenced with a little

bit of analysis of our psychological makeup in order that we may know how we begin to know things at all.

The way in which things are known—the process of knowing—is a complicated subject. It does not appear to be as simple as it seems to be on the surface, at a first view of things. Even the simple act of standing on two legs is not a simple act of a fiat of our will, as people with knowledge of the physical structure of the body will tell us. There is a cumulative action of the whole organism of the body cooperating in a most beautiful and harmonious manner—many muscular centres coming together to make us stand up on our two legs. We take such a simple, ordinary thing as standing on two legs for granted and cannot imagine that the whole body is aware when we project our will to get up and stand.

The process of knowing is more complicated than even the act of standing on two legs. And, even today, we cannot say that people have come to a definite conclusion as to what is really happening when we know things. After we gain some sort of an understanding, at least an outline of the way in which we are made as subjects of knowledge, we may have a comparative knowledge of the manner in which we come to know things. Then, we may have to go further on to know what it is that we are seeing with our eyes—the world of perception. This will take us further on, into the nature of the Ultimate Reality, to which everything seems to be directed in one way or other.

It is not a pointless life that we are living in the world. There seems to be some significance in all things. There is a purposefulness manifested even in the growth of a plant,



the birth of a child, and even the movement of an electron. It does not seem that things are purposelessly acting, moving or behaving in the way that they do. The discovery of a purpose in the operation of things, a purpose in nature as a whole, will land us in the necessity to know what the final purpose of the universe is. This is an inquiry into the nature of the Supreme Reality.

Philosophers, whether of the East or the West, have mostly been concerned with only three things: God, world, and soul—the individual, the universe, and the Supreme Absolute. Here is the sum and substance of all metaphysical thinking, and every other detail is a ramification and an extended form of discussion arising from the positing of these three realities, which insist on being recognised.

There is no doubt that we are existing here. We are alive. I am. This consciousness of ‘I am’ is an indubitable experience. We need not have to consult books to know that we exist. We do not have to raise questions before other people: “Do I exist really, my dear friend?” Never is such a question put, just as we do not have a doubt as to whether it is daytime or night time, as it is so obvious for any sensible person. While everything in the world can be a matter of doubt, there is one thing which we cannot doubt: that we exist. Thank God there is at least something which we cannot doubt, and which we need not doubt.

Why should we not doubt? There have been sceptics in the world. There are consistent sceptical thinkers and agnostics who either conclude that it is not possible to know what ultimately is, or they hold the doctrine that everything is dubious. The fallacy in the argument of

downright scepticism is, again, very clear on the surface. Nobody can be a consistent sceptic. There is always a flaw in sceptical arguments because there is a justification on the part of the sceptic as to the indubitability of his arguments and the doubtless character of the doctrine of scepticism itself. This is a very strange way of arguing. That everything is doubtful is a statement which itself cannot be regarded as doubtful, so there is a doubtless base on which is founded all doubtful arguments and the whole structure of the philosophy of scepticism.

There have been thinkers in the East as well as in the West who were agnostics and sceptics. *Ya eva hi nirakarta tad eva tasya svarupam*. In this one sentence Acharya Sankara, in his commentary on the Brahma Sutras, refutes scepticism, root and branch. Whoever denies, does not deny himself. He denies everything except himself, because if the denier denies himself, the denial also is denied—and two negatives make a positive. Such a possibility is not acceptable. Nobody ever feels that he does not exist. Even the totally unconscious condition of sleep does not obliterate the consciousness of our having existed in sleep. We are able to remember that we did exist, even in swoon. By a process of memory and recollection, we can conclude that we did exist.

Now, the fact that we exist is a very important stronghold, a rock bottom on which we can build the edifice of our further analytical process. At least something is there to hold on to. If everything is going, if the ground itself is moving and is cracking, we cannot stand anywhere. But it does not appear that the ground is moving. All

consciousness of movement is an acceptance of the existence of a reference which itself cannot be moving along with the act of moving.

The existence of what is called the knower is the beginning of all consistent thinking—rationally, scientifically or philosophically. There would be no science, no philosophy, nothing meaningful or significant in the world, if the very existence of the knower is doubtful. That would be like talking through the hat. Such a predicament is not acceptable and not tenable. Our conviction that we are seeing something real in front of us may be a doubtful affair, granted; but we cannot doubt that we are the source of this doubt in regard to the objects that we are doubting. The whole world may be an object of doubt, and we may not be sure whether we are seeing people seated in front of us. We may be in a state of delirium. We are sleepwalkers, perhaps. We may be not in our proper senses, and we may be in a state of seeing phantasms in front of us due to a peculiar split in the way of our thinking; all this may be granted, accepted, but we cannot go deeper than that. That a person *is*, is beyond logical ascertainment. It is not by logical argument that we know that we exist. There is no deduction or induction involved there. Something is and, therefore, something has to be. Thus, such a conclusion is arrived at.

Such kind of induction is not essential. Logical arguments are not essential to prove the existence of one's own self, because all logic proceeds from the fact of our accepting that we are. Every form of knowledge, logical or scientific, is an outcome of our having convincingly

accepted that we indubitably exist. This is a very famous point and well-known ground that we have to take into consideration in every further state. We do exist—and, therefore, we have to take it as a certainty. We have a knowledge that we exist.

Now comes another point which we should not forget. That we exist is a doubtless position that we are assuming; but, this doubtless assuming of the fact of our being is nothing but an awareness that we are existing. As an unconsciousness cannot be associated with the conviction that one exists, it is a consciousness that is inseparably associated with the fact of our being there as such and such—as something.

So, look at this beautiful thing that is before us. We cannot deny our being, and we cannot deny the consciousness of our being, because the denying of the consciousness associated with being would also be to deny being. There is no being without consciousness. That would be a meaningless assertion. Hence, our consciousness of our being is a very important point to remember. Well, let us stop here and go no further.

There is something which is undoubtedly presenting itself before us: I am. This I am-ness in us is a consciousness of our being. The famous technical Sanskrit terms describing this position, Being associated with Consciousness, are Sat associated with Chit. For Being, or Existence, the Sanskrit word is Sat, or Satta; and Consciousness is Chit, or Chaitanya, as it is sometimes called. Sat-Chit is Being-Consciousness. They go together, but not as two friends walking hand in hand. Being and

Consciousness, in the case of one's own knowing that one is, are not two different aspects of personality. Being and Consciousness are not two features; they do not represent two things. The word 'they', as a plural, is inapplicable in this compound being which is Awareness-Existence, Sat-Chit. Sat and Chit, or Being and Consciousness, are two words that we use to designate one single, indivisible compound. All words that we use here are inadequate to describe this position. It is neither a compound nor a coming together into a blend of two things. It is an indescribable Being-Consciousness, for which language is impotent, and therefore we use such terms as Being-Consciousness, Sat-Chit, etc. Language is intended to describe by means of characterising objects of perception, but this so-called Being-Consciousness is not an object of perception. It is a subject that is responsible for every kind of perception, so it cannot be logically defined.

Therefore, language is useless where it is a matter concerning Being-Consciousness—that which is self-identical with ourselves. We do not require language to know our own selves. We require language to communicate with another person as an object of our perception, but we need not communicate anything to our own selves. The means of communication is not only absent but is ruled out completely, as there is no such thing as self-communication. We need not speak to ourselves. We need not have to communicate ideas to ourselves. We need not have to find a means of perceiving ourselves. We need not argue that we exist. Hence, every endeavour, from every

direction, becomes redundant in the case of that which is self-certain, which we, ourselves, are: I am.

When we begin to come to such a conclusion, we do not seem to be exhausting all our problems of life. This is only the opening of a gate to a vista of the further difficulties that we are going to face in the matter of experience, which does not seem to get exhausted merely with self-experience in the way it presents itself to us as individuals. The 'I am-ness' or the Self-Consciousness, the Being-Awareness of ourselves which we have concluded is an indubitable something, unfortunately happens to be a Self-Consciousness identified with a localised body. It is some XYZ sitting but ABC speaking about this position of the indubitable condition of 'I am'.

So, a problem suddenly springs up from this acceptance of there being such a thing as Self-Consciousness, or Being-Awareness, identified with individual being. The idea of individuality implies space and time, so our knowledge that we are—as individuals, or persons, or human beings—is limited by space and by the time process. We are therefore limited, self-conscious beings. We are finite individuals; and the consciousness of a finite being suddenly and simultaneously implies the consciousness of there being other finite centres of a similar character. The world that we see in front of us is a conglomeration of other finite centres like our own selves. The inviolable position of there being a world outside us arises on account of our knowing or being aware of ourselves as finite centres. There is an inscrutable intervention in our knowing that we are, by another inscrutable factor called space and time. Nobody can say

what is space and what is time. It is, again, something that is taken for granted. We cannot explain what space is, nor can we say what time is. They are names that we give to conditions that limit our existence and consciousness. This so-called Sat-Chitthat we are, this Being-Consciousness that we seem to be, this 'I am-ness' is conditioned by inscrutable factors known as space and time. They say these are the spectacles that we wear to know our experience. A pair of spectacles called space and time are worn by every Being-Consciousness that is individual. With these spectacles, we have a consciousness of objective experience. Space and time are the conditions of objectivity, externalisation—the projection of Being-Consciousness into what we call objects.

What we call the objective world is a vast presentation before our so-called Being-Consciousness by an action of space and time. If space were not to intervene in our consciousness that we are, the world would have been a different thing, perhaps. We cannot say what it would have been, minus space and time. We cannot imagine a condition minus space and time, because even the very thought that there could be a condition minus space and time is involved in space and time. So, man is utterly helpless in the matter of knowing things. Inasmuch as space and time are involved even in the attempt at knowing things about space and time, our ideologies are limited ones; and even our notion of a spaceless and timeless existence seems to be limited by space and time.

Thus, human knowledge is finite. No man can have infinite knowledge. We can never hope to be omniscient as

long as our expectations, even the loftiest ones, are perforce limited to the operation of space and time. Space and time come together as a single brood to throw our consciousness out. And, in a way, we may define space as the condition of externality. It is hard for us to know what externality means, but we can surmise with a little bit of exercise of common sense that externality is the way in which our consciousness operates in terms of what it is not—to which I made reference previously. We are involved in a consciousness of what we are not; and the only function of space-time is to compel us to be involved in that which we are not.

Thus, the world is space-time, and the whole world is only that. There is nothing else in the world except space-time. It is very interesting indeed to know all these things. If space and time were not to be there, our finite consciousness of being would not be able to know that there are other finite beings in the world. There would be no world if space and time were not. Hence, what we call world-experience is space-time experience. Therefore great scientific thinkers of modern times have come to a final conclusion that there is nothing in the world except space and time, and the hard things—the substances and the people that we see in front of us—are not outside space and time. They are also the very same Being-Consciousness in themselves. As we have concluded that we are Sat-Chit, every person in the world can also come to a similar conclusion in regard to himself or herself. But that they do not appear to be of the same stuff as we are made of, that they are objects of our perception with whom or with



which we have to deal in an externalised manner, is a condition brought about by the intervention of space-time. These are hard things for the brain to comprehend. Our minds are not made in such a way as to be able to go deep into these difficulties.

There is a famous thesis written by a most up-to-date scientific philosopher, Samuel Alexander, who gave the famous Gifford lectures called *Space, Time and Deity*. It is one of the most outstanding productions of modern times, in which and by which argument we are brought face to face with this final position that the world seems to be constituted only of space-time. Space-time is the matrix of all things and, therefore, space-time does not mean emptiness.

We think that space is emptiness, a void, a nil—a zero. It is not a zero. It can contain everything. A zero cannot be the medium of the communication of things. When I speak, you hear what I speak. An emptiness or a void cannot be the means of the communication of sound. We have television and radio, which means the possibility of conveying vibrations through a medium which is sometimes called ether; we may call it space or by any other name. If it was a total absence of all things—a total minus—there would be no television, no radio. No wireless communication would be possible.

There is a substantiality and a tangibility and a reality of some sort even in space, which appears to be a nothing before us. That which is between you and me is not emptiness. It is a very living and substantial something which is the basis of what we call the world structure. It is

through space and time that we are beholding objects of the world and, therefore, we are seeing the objects of the world as totally outside us. The purpose of space and time is to compel consciousness to project everything externally and to make it impossible for us to know things as they really are, but only as they appear through the spectacles of space and time. Therefore reality as such cannot be known, says the agnostic—from a different angle of vision, of course.

Now we continue the thread of this very same argument up to the point of the great question before us. How do we know that things are outside us? This subject of the process of knowing things which we are not, the ‘not me’, the ‘not I’, the ‘other than what I am’—how is it possible for me to know that such a thing exists, when I am not that? How can the ‘I’ know the ‘not I’? The ‘I’ and the ‘not I’ are contradictions; they are opposites. How can a position know an opposition? This is the subject of a great philosophical theme called epistemology, which is a technical term which simply means the knowledge of the very process of coming to know that things are.

The analytical studies in this direction will bring us no worthwhile fruit. All epistemology has been a failure, finally, because if it is true that we are not in a position to know anything except in terms of space and time, we have to conclude that our knowledge, whatever be the form of that knowledge, is an imperfect knowledge of things. My knowledge of the fact that people are seated in front of me is conditioned by the operation of space and time and, therefore, it is called empirical knowledge. It is sensory, conditioned, limited to space and time and, therefore, it is

not true knowledge. It is a characterisation rather than an insight. When I see you, I am not seeing what you are, but what you appear to be in terms of space-time conditions. The characterisation of an object is the limitations put upon it by the definitions of the object. I know that you are seated in front of me by a defining characteristic which is foisted upon you by the operation of space and time. There are features which characterise the existence of persons or things. We do not actually see persons and things, but only characterisations.

Definitions, or the qualities that go to define something, and the thing that we are—the thing-in-itself, as people say—is unknown, and is incapable of being known, because we know only the conditions in which the thing-in-itself is placed. What we know are only conditions, characterisations, definitions, qualities, attributes, and not that particular inscrutable thing at the back of what is seen through the eyes, sensed through the senses or even known mentally or rationally. So if philosophy is to be regarded as an insight into the true nature of Ultimate Reality, such a philosophy does not exist in this world.

This is the despair to which thinkers like Immanuel Kant—the Copernican philosopher, as people call him—came to land themselves. There is no such thing as the philosophy of Reality, as nobody can know it. Nobody can know it, because every knowledge is conditioned by space and time, so what we are seeing is only space and time—or space-time, as it is called. We are really helpless; we have nobody to help us. Nobody can help us because that somebody who we would like to help us is, again, only a

formation that we conceive through space and time. Thus, even the concept of God appears to be spatio-temporally conditioned.

We cannot know God as He is, through our minds. Rationally, by arguments, by logic, God cannot be known. Why God?—we cannot know even a sand particle on the Ganga bank, as it is in itself. We can know it only as it appears under the conditions imposed upon it by space-time. And do not think space and time are simple things; they are terrible limitations, and they condition the very way in which we think. So, how do we know things? How do I know that you are, and how do you know that I am, and how does anyone know that anything is? This is the problem of knowledge—the epistemological predicament.

Here, we should say that the insight of the Eastern sages has gone deeper than the psychological analysis of Western thinkers like Locke, Berkeley, Hume, etc. Because they were admittedly empirical philosophers, it was not possible for them to go deeper than the structure of the mind and the psychical reason. Reason is the highest endowment of man, and one cannot imagine that there can be anything superior to reason in the human individual. There were also certain geniuses in the West who may be said to have stumbled into a strange way of knowing that is non-empirical and accepted the possibility of such a thing as a non-empirical mode of knowing things. Plato, for instance, was one such stalwart in the field of philosophy, and there were some others also. Though they were also compelled to accept the usual difficulty of the human being in knowing anything as it is, there was something of a genius character in them

which accepted that there is another faculty in the human being which is superior to reason, by which reality, as such, can be contacted—by a means which, in India, is called yoga.

Yoga means union. Union of the reality in us with the reality in the cosmos is called yoga. The deepest in us confronts the deepest in the cosmos by a commingling of characters and a blending of features, and a unity of existence. This is the aim of yoga, finally. The knowledge process reaches its summit in the attainment of *samadhi*, the supreme state of consciousness where being enters being. The root of being in us enters the root of being in the whole universe. This is the final meaning of that great, oft-quoted statement *tat tvam asi*, thou art that. The truest essence, the quintessential root of what we are—the ‘thou’, not as it appears on the surface but the ‘thou’ in its being, free from the limitations of space and time—gets united with the non-spatial, non-temporal being in the cosmos.

We have often heard it said that God is beyond space and time and so there is no possibility of knowing God, because we are in space and time. That which is in space and time cannot know that which is not in space and time, so no man can see God. But, there is something in man which is superhuman. Man, though he is empirically drowned in sensory perceptions, has something at the base, which is called these days, in a philosophical style, the transcendental unity of apperception—not an empirical unity of sensory perception, but a transcendental unity of apperception, not perception. The Self-cognition which is attained by a transcendental means of knowledge is called

apperception. It is Self-knowledge, not knowledge of objects.

You may say even now, “I have self-knowledge. I am Rama, Krishna, Govinda. I am Mr. or Mrs. How do you say that I have no self-knowledge?” This so-called self-knowledge of yours as a man or a woman, or a son or a daughter, or an officer, or a rich man or a poor man—this empirical knowledge of yourself is not transcendental knowledge. When you say “I am sitting here in this hall, listening to what you are saying”, you are empirically thinking, and not transcendently knowing anything. Hence, what I am speaking to you is empirically conveyed to your empirical capacity to hear, which is not adequate. Therefore, merely listening to what I say is not sufficient. It has to go deep and sink further down into a stratum of your being, which is a tendency to non-empirical existence. Therefore, Indian sages have insisted upon contemplating deeply on what has been heard from an instructor or a Guru or a teacher. So do not think that everything is over by listening to what somebody says. This is called *sravana*, merely listening; and listening is an empirical act.

This empirical knowledge which you receive through the Guru or the teacher contains a transcendental essence which has to be separated from the conditions through which it has been conveyed to you. I am speaking to you in a language, a sound process, a means in space and in time, and you are hearing, understanding and appreciating what I speak through your psychological apparatus which, again, is conditioned by space and time. Yet, there is a substance that is conveyed through the empirical process. This

substance has to sink into you by a deeper reflective analysis called *manana*. *Sravana* is hearing, listening to what is told to you, and *manana* is reflection. And there is a further, deeper process called *nididhyasana*, where it is understood that what is obviously empirical, which cannot be anything but empirical, carries with it, at the base, a transcendental meaning.

We belong to four levels of being: the conscious, subconscious, unconscious and transcendent essence—a point that is made out in the Mandukya Upanishad. In the language of the Upanishad, these conditions are the fourfold layers of being: *jagrat*, *svapna*, *sushupti* and *turiya*—waking, dreaming, sleeping and super-consciousness. So there is a super-conscious, transcendent, non-empirical root to your being which has to absorb what has been conveyed empirically by instruction from a Guru or a teacher. Hence, yoga is a graduated process. Even when you are listening to what I am saying, you are in a state of yoga because you are uniting the knowledge that is conveyed to you with your mental structure. But, it is an outward process. It has to become more vital and real by standing in its purity, divested of empirical associations. It is not someone speaking to someone. Though it appears that the teacher as a person speaks to a disciple or a student as a person empirically conceived and known, there is something deeper between these two terms of relationship called ‘Guru’ and ‘disciple’. This is the only way I can put it.

The Guru and the disciple are not two persons. It is not one man speaking to another man. There is some deeper transcendental significance between the relationship of

Guru and disciple. That is why it is said that the relationship between Guru and disciple is not a human relationship. It is not a friendly attitude of one with another. It is not a gesture of social service. It is a spiritual occupation, a transcendental operation taking place between the teacher and disciple, though the knowledge is conveyed outwardly through empirical means of instruction. It becomes a transcendental essence when, with the help of the force that has been injected by the will of the Guru, the disciple sinks this knowledge deep into himself or herself. Afterwards, the disciple ceases to be a himself or herself. It is an impersonal something; and in the process of the deepest contemplation, called *nididhyasana*, knowledge shines in its utter purity, which is the final aim of yoga.



## Chapter 3

### SELF-KNOWLEDGE IS WORLD-KNOWLEDGE

We were discussing the nature of knowledge. The manner in which we come to know that the world is there outside us is a very important matter, indeed, in the conduct of our life. Our relationship with things and our conduct in life depend upon the way in which we understand things. The process of the knowledge of things entirely determines the way in which we behave or deal with things—hence, the importance of the study of the very process of knowing. Its importance cannot be overestimated, because it is very clear that our dealings with things depend upon the way in which we know things—hence, the great significance accorded to the manner of knowing. Academicians, in their own jargon, tell us that this theme is called epistemology. Definitions and names apart, it is important to know the extent to which we can have an understanding of the world.

Previously I touched upon the difficulty in correctly knowing anything in this world. It appears that we cannot know anything at all in the way in which it actually is in itself, because of the fact that there are certain curtains hanging in front of us. There are certain spectacles we are putting on, through which we behold the world outside us. The very word ‘outside’ is anathema to the true nature of things. Why do we say that we see the world outside? Who told us that it is outside? The obviousness of the fact that the world is outside us shows the obviousness of the difficulty in knowing things as they are. We have been so involved in the error of human knowledge that we have

ourselves become a heap of error. Thus, the empirical percipient, the individual knower of things, is nothing but a heap of misconceptions. To say that the world is relative is to say very little about it. It is much worse than a mere relativity of things.

I mentioned in the previous session that space and time condition us in an overwhelming manner. These are the principal spectacles that we put on: space and time. Everything is seen as located in space and in time because of these spectacles. These spectacles cannot be removed and set aside. They form part and parcel of ourselves, and are more intimate than our own skin. Even our skin can be peeled off, but we cannot peel off space and time from our existence. Hence, it is impossible to know anything except as being situated in space and conditioned by time—more so because of the fact that the knower of things in space and time is also in space and time. It is not that somebody outside space and time is looking at things through space and time. The man has become the spectacles themselves. He is not putting on the spectacles; he is himself the spectacles. What a pity! One can imagine where man stands.

Here is the basic problem of knowledge. All knowledge is mediate, and not immediate—mediate in the sense that it is a closeness of relationship between two terms of relation, the knower and the known. As the knower is different from the known, the question arises as to the way in which the knower can connect himself with the known. All knowledge is the relationship between the knower and the known; but, what is the meaning of relationship? Merely

because we utter the word 'relationship', it does not make matters clear. That which connects the knower with the known may be said to be the relation between the knower and the known. But, what is it that connects the knower with the known?

The connecting link between the knower and the known is, evidently, not identical with either the knower or the known. It has to be something different. If the relation between the knower and the known is a part of the knower himself, then there could be no relation between the knower and the known. On the other hand, if the relation is a part and parcel of the known, then, also, there could be no relation between the knower and the known. Either way we are caught. But, if we say that the relation between the knower and the known is neither connected with the knower nor with the known, then, also, there cannot be an understanding of things.

I hope you understand the difficulty involved here. Neither can it be related to the knower, nor can it be related to the known, nor can it stand independently of both. Then, what is this relation between the knower and the known? Thus, there is an inscrutability about our knowledge of things. We do not know what we are seeing, and how we are seeing things at all. There is a muddle in the understanding of the individual in respect to anything whatsoever. Therefore, there is no such thing as right knowledge in the proper sense of the term. All knowledge is erroneous. We are in a phenomenal world. This is a world of phenomena.

Apart from the fact that the process of knowledge is conditioned by space and time and there is a terrible difficulty in knowing the relationship between the knower and the known, there is a kink in the mind of the knower himself, a contortion which delimits the very reasoning of the knower into certain patterns of understanding—moulds we call logic.

What is logic? It is a system of moulds into which the thinking process is cast; and we take for granted that this mould is the final thing. But, who told us that this is the final thing, that there cannot be any other way of knowing? This is a hypothesis on which we found every type of consciousness of existent things. The psychological conditions which are the limitations on the knowing process, plus space and time, make everything in this world almost impossible. We are in a state of despair in knowing anything. The knowledge process seems to conclude that we are in a relative and phenomenal world of unintelligible relations.

But every cloud has a silver lining. The very consciousness of this difficulty is a hope beaming forth as a ray of possibility in the deepest recesses of our own phenomenal individuality. Here, we are undertaking a process of self-analysis, an analysis of the very fact of our knowing that we are in a phenomenal world. The phenomenal and un-understandable quality of the world as a whole, as well as the relativity of things in general, act as a pointer to a higher possibility which is the hope of man.

The phenomena indicate that they are a phenomena of something which itself is not a phenomenon. When we say

the world is an appearance or a phenomenon, we mean that it is an appearance of something which itself cannot be an appearance. There cannot be simply an appearance without there being something of which it is an appearance. When we say that something is erroneous, we arrive at this conclusion by comparing it with a standard which is not erroneous. Nothing can be known to be wrong unless there is something which is right. If there is only wrong, we cannot even know that it is wrong. So, the restlessness that the individual feels, the finitude which annoys us every moment of time, the limitations of which we are conscious, and the philosophical conclusion that the world is relative and phenomenal is the first step of the ascent of consciousness towards its higher reaches. There has to be a noumenon in order that there may be a phenomenon. Technical thinkers tell us that there is such a thing called the thing as it is in itself which, of course, cannot be known, because of the difficulties mentioned. But, here, an intriguing position is maintained by the philosophical thought when it holds that the thing as it is in itself cannot be known, because the idea that the thing as it is in itself cannot be known is an acceptance of the fact that it is known in some way.

The thing-in-itself—that which is the noumenon, that which cannot be known—is known as that which cannot be known. This is how the mind, in an acrobatic feat of its own difficult processes in knowledge—even in condemning itself as a totally inadequate instrument of knowing anything—raises and lifts itself above this difficulty by the very profundity or the latency which is behind this

difficulty. The noumenon speaks. When a statement is made that the noumenon cannot be known, it is not the phenomenon that makes this declaration. The statement that the noumenon cannot be known is not made by the phenomenon, because the phenomenon cannot make a statement of that kind.

Thus, there is a depth in human nature which is beyond the reach of the mind and the reason; and the empirical processes of knowing are inadequate for the purpose on hand. Man cannot know himself by the endowments of reason, intellect, understanding, or even all the psychological operations put together. The potentiality of the human being is deeper than the psychological operations of the human being. That means to say that in our daily life now, we are not drawing from the deeper potentialities of ourselves. We are floating on our own surface, ignoring, neglecting, being unconscious of our own basic rootedness in something of which our phenomenal instruments of knowledge have no awareness. Thus, while a perception or sensory contact with things, in collaboration with the mind, the intellect and the reason cannot give us right knowledge, there seems to be some other way of knowing things as they are—some other means altogether different from the reason, the intellect or the mind.

Though we operate in our daily life only through the intellect and the reason, it is obvious that we have something in us which is deeper than, profounder than, superior to, the intellect and the reason. We have lost ourselves in forgetting ourselves; and in losing ourselves, we have lost the world also, because in the ignorance of our

essential nature we have, also, the ignorance of the true nature of anything else in the world. We do not know ourselves and, therefore, we do not know the world—and vice versa.

This is a magnificent analysis made in Eastern scriptures like the Mandukya Upanishad, to which I made a reference earlier, and in certain other Upanishads. Deeper than the waking condition in which man usually operates, deeper than dream, deeper than deep sleep, there is the true man. The true man is not the waking man, the dreaming man or the sleeping man. There is a superman appearing as a man in the conditions of waking, dream and sleep. These three conditions—waking, dream and sleep—are the relative operations of the finitude of the individual.

Our scriptures say that we are caught up in *samsara*. We hear it said many a time by admonishers that this is a world which is *samsara*, entanglement. *Samsara* means entanglement, involvement, unnecessary botheration. We have been involved in *samsara*, entangled in bondage, because of the fact that we cannot get out of this cycle of waking, dream and sleep. Either we are awake, or we are dreaming, or we are sleeping. What other condition have we? Is it a great freedom to be subject to these states, like puppets? But the revolution of these three states and the restlessness of these conditions prove that we are restless for another thing, on which we wish to rest ourselves finally.

There is a self in man that is deeper than the reason and the intellect and the psychological functions. The mind that thinks, the ego that arrogates, the intellect that understands,

and the reason that argues, are not sufficient. What can they argue? What can the mind think, except that which is thus involved in the limitations mentioned?

The process of yoga is the process of diving deep into one's own self, which is also a simultaneous diving into the depths of anything else in the world. There is a parallel movement of consciousness in this delving deep into the waters of the cosmos. The subject that is the human individual is co-extensive with the object that is the universe; therefore, the depth of one thing is, also, the depth of the other thing. To know oneself is to know the world, and to know the world is to know oneself. Therefore, the great dictum "Know thyself" does not mean know oneself as a person. To know oneself as one really is, is to know anything in the world as it really is. Self-knowledge is world-knowledge, and world-knowledge is, also, self-knowledge. This is the great standpoint of yoga in its psychology, in its philosophy, and in its spiritual techniques.

The world is not before us, outside us, confronting us. It is a large body, of which we are a part. This is the reason why we are entangled in it in such a way that we cannot understand the way of involvement, the way in which we know things. As I pointed out just now, the difficulty in understanding our relationship with things arises because of our intriguing relationship with the world, which is not a relationship in the logical sense of the term. We are part and parcel of this body called the cosmos. That is the reason why we are, on the one hand, incapable of wresting



ourselves from it and, on the other hand, unable to know anything about it.

This intriguing character of our knowledge of things arises because of our intriguing connection with the world. Here, we come to the cosmology of the world as a whole, which explains the process of creation. Philosophers, mystics and thinkers along these lines have attempted to understand the process of the evolution of things—how things came about—so that we may know where we stand at the present moment.

The scripture says that God created the world—the earth and the heaven. He created everything: plants, beasts, human beings, angels, and what not. This is the biblical fiat of the creational process. Every system of thought has endeavoured to understand how things evolved. Unless we know the linkage or the relationship between cause and effect in this process, it will be difficult for us to know exactly where our location is in this cosmic mechanism.

How far have we travelled in the process of evolution? How much of the track have we covered, and how much remains? We will be able to know only if we know the entire root, and not by seeing, only through blinkers, the little point on which we are standing at a particular moment of time. There is a very complete description of the creative process in the Upanishads—for instance, in the Aitareya Upanishad—and in the Puranas we have this elaborate description in a different way altogether.

In a small book which I happened to write some years back called *A Short History of Religious and Philosophic Thought in India*, I tried to delineate in some detail the

process of creation as it is described in the Upanishads and the Puranas. Those of you who have access to that book may read the chapter on the Upanishads, where the creative process is described in some measure. There has been a gradual descent from the larger Universal to lesser and lesser delimited forms of universals, so that the limited form of the Universal may be called a sort of individuality.

A universal is that which is self-complete, which regards itself as complete in itself. A self-sufficient form of existence is a kind of universality, by which word we have to understand a state of being, outside which nothing is. The Universal is that, external to which, nothing can be. There has been a gradual coming down of this consciousness of the Universal through the process of evolution, or creation. And, it is not a sudden action—at least, it does not appear to have been a sudden action, to the extent that we can know things.

According to the theological systems of Vedanta and Yoga philosophy, the Cosmic Being—God, the Absolute Supreme Being, the Almighty—willed, as it were, the manifestation of this cosmos. According to Genesis in the Bible, God created the heaven and the earth by a mere fiat of will; and also according to the Eastern system of thinking, it is, in essence, a fiat. There is a larger background to it, about which we need not go into detail now. This will of Ishvara to become the manifold universe is described in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad and some of the Puranas. Ishvara is a Sanskrit term for God. God willed the creation.

Out of which material did God create the world? As God is the Supreme Universal, and since we have understood the Universal to be That outside which nothing can be, there was nothing outside God. Therefore, we cannot imagine a material out of which God could have fashioned this universe. It is often said by certain theologians that God created the world out of nothing. This is perhaps the biblical notion. Though there is some point in this view, it is difficult to understand because we cannot conceive of nothingness—because if God created the world out of nothing, the world would be nothing, a conclusion which would be frightening to everyone. It may be that from one angle of vision the world is nothing, but the human mind cannot accept it without a frightening shock. We cannot accept—at least, we are not in a position to accept—that the world was created out of nothing, because that would mean that we, also, are nothing. It is a strange conclusion, which will inject intolerable bitterness and great insurmountable sorrow into our minds.

Hence, the other view, which does not in any way contradict this view, holds that God willed the world, the universe, this cosmos, this creation, by a multiplication of His Own Supreme Being. The one became two, says modern science. According to the astronomical discoveries of recent days, the whole universe seems to have been one single atom. And in the Indian epic descriptions, they are said to be all included in a single point called the Brahmanda, or the cosmic egg, as it is literally translated. It is not an egg, but it is called an egg because it was a whole,

and it is a convenient way of thinking of the whole as an egg—Brahmanda, the Cosmic Centre.

Astronomers tell us that there was only one atom in the whole cosmos. It was a cosmic atom which split into two with a bang caused by something which the scientists cannot understand, and no one is supposed to understand. The scriptures say it was the will of God that burst this atom. But, this atom cannot be regarded as a materially existent substance outside God's being—though certain philosophers, like the Samkhya in India, thought that there would be no other alternative for explaining the objectivity of the cosmos than positing a material thing called *prakriti*, or the original matter. But this is going to land us in great problems, as we have already seen how hard it is to know the difference in the relationship between consciousness and matter, the knower and the known. We cannot know the relation between matter, out of which the world is made, and the knower of this matter. The doctrine of the Upanishads is a different thing altogether. It does not entangle itself in these theories. It has a simple doctrine of God becoming the many. This is highly solacing, at least for the little mind of man, because, after all, we seem to be in the kingdom of God. Though it is a kingdom, it is a kingdom of God, which is ruled by God—the kingdom of heaven.

The delimitation of the universality of God, as described in the cosmological doctrine of the Upanishads, is a graduated coming down into lower and lower forms of universals, until the lowest form of Universality has reached us, the little individuals. We are seated here. That is why we

feel, in each one of us, a sense of completeness. We do not feel that any one of us is a fraction or a cut-off piece from the whole. Everyone is highly egoistic and proud, and feels “I am everything”. This is the tyrant speaking, the despot who feels that he is complete in himself, because it is the association with Universality that speaks in this manner.

Though there has been a coming down to the lowest form of universals, the characteristic of the Universal does not totally die. That’s why even the smallest animal, even the ant, feels that it is complete in itself. It is difficult to believe that even an ant feels that it is only a fraction of things; it is a whole thing by itself, and its own body is very beloved to it. Everyone loves oneself as the whole. We do not love ourselves as little chips cut off from something else. That is why we are so proud, so egoistic, so self-assertive and so arrogant in our behaviour, oftentimes. This little arrogance of the proud man is the Universal getting into the hands of the devil, which is finitude. When the devil begins to handle the Universal, it becomes the pride of man. This gradual descent of the Universal as described in the scriptures is a very interesting process to read.

Now, I shall confine myself only to the specific way in which the Vedanta philosophy, not contradicting the Samkhya doctrine, specifies this process. According to the Samkhya, the original thing was the Cosmic Intelligence, called *mahat*, which became self-conscious as *ahamkara*. These are Sanskrit terms about which we need not bother much.

According to the language of the Vedanta philosophy, the Supreme God, known as Ishvara, became

Hiranyagarbha, and Hiranyagarbha became Virat. The Universal concretises itself little by little, without losing its ultimate universality of being. The stages of Ishvara, Hiranyagarbha and Virat mentioned in the Vedanta doctrine are the stages of the Supreme Universal getting into stages of greater and greater perceptibility without losing the universality of Self-consciousness, a condition the human mind cannot grasp. Universal Self-consciousness is Ishvara-consciousness, Hiranyagarbha-consciousness, and Virat-consciousness.

Teachers of the Vedanta tell us that Ishvara is something like cosmic sleep—not comparable to the ignorant sleep of the individual, but the omniscient sleep of all-knowingness. It is sleep in the sense that there is no objectivity or externality of consciousness. The state of Ishvara is comparable to sleep not because there is unknowingness like the sleep of the individual, but because there is all-knowingness which excludes externality of perception. The state of Ishvara is like sleep in the sense that there is no externality or objectivity of perception; but, it totally differs from individual sleep in the sense that there is omniscience, all-knowingness, and not the idiotic ignorance of man.

Ishvara becomes Hiranyagarbha. Teachers of the Vedanta tell us that the coming down of Ishvara to the Hiranyagarbha state and then to the state of Virat is something like the process of painting on a canvas. The canvas is stiffened with starch for the purpose of drawing outlines on it by the artist. The canvas is the background on which the outlines are drawn. Hiranyagarbha is the outline

of the cosmos, Virat is the fully-coloured picture of the cosmos, and the background of this screen is the Supreme Absolute, Brahman, appearing as Ishvara, Hiranyagarbha and Virat.

These are transcendental states—not finite or empirical states. No man can reach these states. No one can see Virat or Hiranyagarbha or Ishvara—or Brahman, much less. When in the Bhagavadgita we are told that no human being can have the vision of this Cosmic Universality by any effort whatsoever, what is meant is that humanity involved in personality, individuality and body-consciousness cannot, through the instrumentality of its reason and understanding, etc., hope to have this cosmic vision of Virat, Hiranyagarbha and Ishvara. Man cannot see God, for the reason that there is no means of knowing God, since all means are involved in God's being. Such is the wondrous description of the original condition of the creative process from Brahman to Ishvara, Ishvara to Hiranyagarbha, and Hiranyagarbha to Virat. This is a divine kingdom—the Garden of Eden or the Brahmaloaka spoken of in the scriptures of India. These are all tantalising epic narrations for us. We do not know what could be the delight of living in the Garden of Eden, the happiness of living in Brahmaloaka, or having the vision of the Virat. No one knows what it is. It cannot be known, and it is not supposed to be known.

There is a further descent into the grosser form of space and time. Science can reach only up to this level, up to space-time, and not beyond. There is no Virat, Hiranyagarbha, Ishvara and Brahman for scientists.

Actually, there is no God either, because the question of God, or the Supreme Being, does not arise as long as we are confined to seeing things through space and time, as space and time. All science—physics and chemistry—is spatio-temporal and limited only to that point, and not before or after. The highest reaches of science, therefore, end in space-time. Here we go hand in hand with our scientist brothers, who tell us that the whole world is nothing but space-time.

What is space-time? It is a total forgetfulness of the Universal Consciousness, an entering into an emptiness, as it were, which is really not an emptiness. We look at space as if it is a nothing, while it is everything, because it is based on a reality of which it is the appearance. Space-time, or space and time, as we would like to call them, become the forces of which everything is made.

Today, science tells us that everything is force, not a thing or a substance. There is only energy in the cosmos. There is electrical energy, electromagnetic force, pervading the whole physical universe; and even space-time is nothing but electromagnetic force, envisaged by the human senses as a fivefold object of hearing, seeing, touching, tasting and smelling.

The world is known by us in these five ways: hearing, touching, seeing, tasting and smelling. Minus hearing, touching, seeing, tasting and smelling, there is no world; so, the world is a world of sensations. We do not know whether the world is there or not, independent of these sensations. If we are deprived of these sensations, we cannot know whether anything is at all. These sensations,



or the originals, objectively, of these sensations, are called *tanmatras* in Sanskrit—*shabda*, *sparsa*, *rupa*, *rasa* and *gandha*—which become hard, concretised, objectivised, as the physical world of earth, water, fire, air and ether. And, we are in a physical world.

## Chapter 4

### KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLD

In the context of gaining an insight into the process of knowledge, the perception of things, the knowledge of the world, we had to undertake an inquiry into the circumstance in which the individual is placed in this world—our placement in this universe. It was in this connection that it became necessary for us to have some sort of an outline knowledge of cosmology, the doctrine of creation. Brahman, the Supreme, becomes Ishvara, Hiranyagarbha and Virat, a theme we touched upon last time. What is called Virat in Sanskrit is, practically, the consciousness that animates the physical cosmos. Just as there is an intelligence within us, there is an intelligence in the universe.

Our intelligence is not only in one part of our body; it is pervading the whole of our personality and our being. We are conscious of what we are, in every cell. That is why we assert that the body is ‘me’. Just as our consciousness pervades the whole of our individuality, there is another consciousness which pervades the whole cosmos. This eminent consciousness, hiddenly present in the whole universe, is Virat. It is difficult to describe what Virat is—just as we cannot say what we are. We are not any of the limbs of the body, because we are all things that the body is. Likewise, the Virat is not any particular thing in the universe, but all things in the universe.

Yet, we know that we are not merely the body. When we say “I have come”, we do not mean that our body has come. There is something which is significant behind our

statement that we are or that we are doing something, etc. We always have a subconscious feeling that we own the body, or we have entered into the body, or we are utilising the body as an instrument, etc., though this fact is not consciously operating in the mind. We always say “my body”. We never say “I am the body”.

A similar situation operates, or prevails, in the universe. The consciousness that pervades the cosmos is inseparable from the cosmos in the same way as our consciousness cannot be isolated from our body and our personality. In a famous Sanskrit text on philosophy called the Panchadasi, there is a verse which tells us that God’s creation commences with the will to manifest, the ideation to become manifold, and is complete with the manifestation of Virat through the processes already mentioned, the intermediary stage of which is called Hiranyagarbha.

But, God’s creation does not bind us. God never does anything unjust. God is not interested in hurling us into sorrow. Then from where has sorrow come? Why are we so much grieved? This is a mystery. It is a mystery because we do not know how we have fallen from the Virat. In theology this is the famous doctrine of the fall of man, the angel becoming mortal and becoming self-conscious as the body.

It is not possible for us to know how we have fallen, because the moment we are aware of how this has happened we shall revert to the original condition. Some inscrutable weapon of nature wields a force upon us in such a way that we are not enabled to turn back and see what is behind us. We can see only what is ahead of us, in front of us. We are tightly chained, as it were, as the analogy of the

cave given by Plato in his *Republic* makes out. The prisoners are chained so tightly in the cave, which is dark, that they cannot turn back and see what is light. They can only see the shadows in front of them. Natural forces prevent us from looking back and seeing the source from where we have come. Our necks are stiff and our eyes are turned outwardly to what is ahead, and not to what is behind. The very need for seeing or perceiving arises because of this fall, this pit of consciousness, this isolation of us from the whole.

When the act of separation takes place, a blow is dealt on the individual with such force that it becomes unconscious. If someone is hit on the head with vehemence, that person will fall down in an unconscious state. The isolation of the individual from God, the Universal Being, is such a stroke dealt on the individual that it falls unconscious—dead, as it were. We have those reminiscences every day, by going into deep sleep. We are reminded again and again, daily, that this stroke has been dealt upon us. We are wretched beings; this is being told to us every day, as a prisoner may be repeatedly told every day that he is a prisoner so that he becomes worse and worse by listening to this declaration of his circumstances. The condition of sleep into which we fall every day tells us what we really are. We are bundles of ignorance, and it prevents us from knowing anything beyond it. It is a dark screen, a heavy cloud hanging over us.

What we call the intellect, the reason, the mind, the senses, and anything that is our endowment as individuals is what is reflected through this screen of ignorance, and

not the original consciousness. We are not seeing or knowing things through even a speck of Virat-consciousness. There is a qualitative distinction between the consciousness present in us and the consciousness that is in the cosmos because the consciousness of Virat is original, and ours is a reflection. The reflection loses the originality of the cause from where it has come, just as the reflected sun has not the heat or the burning capacity of the sun, although the reflection looks like the original. When consciousness, pure and pristine—Virat in its essentiality—passes through the prism of this ignorance, it is deflected into individualities and becomes topsy-turvy in a specific sense, so that we see, like in a mirror, the left as right and the right as left. The cause looks like the effect, and the effect looks like the cause.

The universe, from where we have come, looks like an object of sense. Nothing can be worse for man. The so-called individuality of ours, the *jivatva*, is a chip of the whole block of the universe. We have fallen from the Whole. The Virat-consciousness, which is latent in this universe—our mother and father which Virat is—we are gazing at that Virat with our eyes, as this physical universe.

But, there is no such thing as knowing the Virat as an object of sense. Such a thing is impossible because the universe is not an object of anybody. Since everybody is a part of the universe, no one can see it as an object; yet, we manage to look upon it as if it were an object. Here is the secret behind the failure of all scientific observations and even logical philosophies. Science and philosophy in the academic sense cannot take us to reality, because scientific

methods based on observation and experiment take for granted that the world is outside consciousness, which it is not. The observing scientist is a part of that which he is observing and, therefore, no observation can become complete or correct. Every discovery is superseded by a further discovery, so that we never come to an end of scientific knowledge. We can never catch the truth, for the reason mentioned.

Logical academic philosophy, also, is not in a better position. Insofar as logic is based to a large extent on sense perception, certain things are taken as hypotheses. Even logic accepts the distinction between the subject and the object, the seer and the seen, the knower and the known, ourselves and the world, though this distinction does not obtain, finally, in the nature of reality. So, logic is inapplicable to reality, and science is inadequate to the purpose. Therefore, our perception of the world is an erroneous recognition of what is ahead of us, in front of us.

All perception is descriptive, and not an insight into the real nature of things. When we look at an object, we are not looking at it as it is in itself. This is a phenomenal world. The object that is seen by our eyes, or contacted by the senses, is known as it appears to the senses—even as a person putting on spectacles with specialised lenses will see the objects only as conditioned by the makeup of the lens, and not as it is in itself. The nature of the glass will decide upon the nature of the object seen through the glass.

The whole of our individuality is like a glass which we have put on, which our true consciousness is wearing, through which it beholds the universe. We have decided

that we are just bodies and individuals; and through this lens of individuality consciousness which penetrates and beholds the reality outside, we behold the world as constituted of individualities like ourselves. All perception, in the epistemological sense, is far, far removed from a true insight into things. Thus, a distinction has to be drawn between sense perception and insight, or intuition. 'Intuition' actually means an entry into the object—through the whole of our being, to the whole of the object. The entirety of us contacts the entirety of the object—not through sensation, but through a commingling of being. Being enters being.

What we call yoga, the union par excellence, is the union of our being with the being of the object, whatever be that object. It can be a table or a desk, a pencil or a fountain pen, or a wristwatch, or a human being, or any blessed thing in the world. We can enter into it, and be that. It is then that we gain mastery over it. We have full control over it because we have a knowledge of it—knowledge which is not sensory, phenomenal, externalised or mediate, but is inside it, immediate, non-contactual, and is a commingling of the self with the Self. In the language of yoga this is *samadhi*, *sakshatkara*, or actual Realisation of the true nature of the object—insight, and complete mastery.

Knowledge and power go together where knowledge is identical with the being of what is known. Otherwise, we have no control over anything in the world. We cannot have any say in any matter in this world, because everything in the world is independent of us. We have already declared the independence of everything in the

world by saying that it is outside us. Therefore, we have no connection with it, and all our relationships with things and persons in the world is an artificial makeup. It is artificial because we have decided that it is really outside and it is not part of us. Anything that is not a part of me is not my friend and, therefore, I have no say in the matter of that friend who is only apparently so.

But the world resents this attitude, as a part of our body may resent our thinking that it is not us, as may happen in paralysis, schizophrenia and such illnesses where the body parts split themselves off psychologically and the one appears as many—falsely, not in fact or in reality. Hence, all of our knowledge is phenomenal knowledge, untrue knowledge, finally—not an entry into reality, not reliable in the end. We know nothing; we are ignoramuses, finally. Even our philosophical learning and scientific knowledge is, therefore, not of any utility when the time for it comes. So, in this study of epistemology, or the theory of perception, what we finally understand by analysis is that any mediate knowledge of the objects we gain through the operation of the senses is conditioned by space-time and the limitations of the mind itself.

Our social life is a child born of this erroneous knowledge. Our family relations, our community life, and every blessed thing that we can call social is brittle, finally—like glass. It can break at any moment of time, and that is why we have no real contact and relationship or friendship with anybody for all time to come. Nobody is our friend for all time. Such a thing is not possible, because the world is made in such a way—at least, we have accepted that the



world has been made in such a way. As our knowledge, which is perceptual, is far removed from the reality of things, all our social relationships based on this knowledge also lose their sense, finally. Nobody belongs to us, and we belong to nobody in this world.

Nothing is our belonging. We have no property whatsoever. Nobody can own a thing which is outside oneself and with which one has no contact and relationship, as it has been accepted by this epistemological knowledge which holds that things are totally outside. There is a contradiction in our way of living in the world. Life is a contradiction because, on the one hand, we want a sort of intimate relationship with things and, on the other hand, we have openly declared that things have no connection with us. Otherwise, there would be no need for the senses to struggle so hard to come in contact with objects. We are friends and enemies of people at the same time. We are double dealers, artificial in our living, and sorrow is the consequence. We know why we are unhappy in the world by a sort of analysis of our own selves and our relationships with things and the world as a whole.

Here is the drama of life. But the drama is a tragedy, unfortunately. It has ended in our anguish and poignant feeling; and, something is dead wrong in all things. Even in our pursuit the of pleasures in life, we are passing through endless pains. Life has been ever an intriguing, miserable, yet desirable thing. Everyone knows what an amount of misery the world can inflict upon us, and yet how pleasurable it appears. The misery and the pleasure of life that face us day in and day out, with which we collide every

moment of time, this double attitude of the world in respect to us and this dual experience that we have in respect to the world, are explainable only by the fact that we are in Virat even just now because a real separation from it is unthinkable, unimaginable—impossible, totally. And yet, on the other hand, we have somehow got into the mischief of imagining that the Virat is our object of sense. This dual attitude of ours is responsible for the dual reaction that is set up by the world in respect to us, in the form of simultaneous pleasure and pain. We like the world, and dislike the world, also. There is nothing in the world which we like or dislike wholly. The reason is this, which I have just mentioned.

The analysis that we have conducted through the study of this process of perception, epistemologically, lands us in a necessity to understand what this world is made of. Whether the world is outside us or not outside us, what is it made of, finally? What is its substance? The cosmology through which we have traversed in a bare outline has revealed that the whole physical universe is constituted of the five elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether or, in Sanskrit, *prithvi*, *apas*, *tejas*, *vayu* and *akasha*. What do we find in this world, except these five elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether? Nothing else—nothing more, nothing less. All that we see, all that we hear, all that we smell, taste and touch is nothing but these five elements in one form or the other, in different permutations and combinations. What is this world made of? These five elements; that is all.

And what are we made of, as a part of this world? Our body is nothing but an admixture of these five elements.

This bone, this flesh, this skin, this marrow, these muscles, this body that we are, is composed of the five elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether. The physical, the chemical, the biological substance of our individuality is nothing but these five elements only, in a mixture of varying percentage, as in a chemical mixture.

Some people are tall, some are short, some are stout, some are thin, some are black, some are white, some are brown, some are of this colour, some are of that colour. All this is due to the quantity of the elements that have gone into the body and the percentage of each element that is present in the different bodies. However, there is nothing in us except these five elements, whatever be the percentage of their presence.

What are we made of, physically? The five elements. What is the physical world made of? The five elements. What is there between us and the world outside? Nothing except the five elements. Is there nothing between us and the world? Correct. How is it, then, that we think that the world is outside us when there is nothing to distinguish us from the world? Can anybody explain this mystery, when the space that is apparently between us and another object is also part of the constitution of the very object, and also our own bodies? Our notion that things are outside us remains a mystery to us. We, ourselves, cannot know how this has happened. It is a psychological mystery, more than a physical one. Physically, astronomically, even chemically or biologically, there seems to be no reason for us to believe that things are outside us. Even an analysis through physics will tell us this notion is unfounded. Yet it is strong, like

flint, and it cannot be broken through. Hence, this distinction that we draw between ourselves and the things outside should be attributed to a psychological mix-up and not to a physically existent something.

We are non-aligned, psychologically. Something is wrong with our minds. That is why I told you the other day that, in a sense, we are abnormal persons, though we do not appear to be lunatics meant for a mental home. We can know that there is something seriously wrong with us by an in-depth analysis of what we are. If something was not basically wrong with us, we would not be in such a miserable plight, right from birth to death. In our life, it seems that we have not had a moment of real peace which is unadulterated and unmixed with pain. We have never seen unmixed joy. It has always been mixed up with some percentage of sorrow at the back or in the front.

Why should it be so? It is because this joy, this sorrow of ours, is an experience we are passing through as a necessary consequence of this mistake in our psyche. Yoga is the panacea for this illness of the individual, the ego, the personality, the 'I' or the 'me', whatever it be, whatever we may be, and so on. Yoga philosophy and psychology analyse threadbare the structure of the universe and the makeup of the individual.

This world is made up of five elements. That seems to be clear to us. And our bodies are also made up of the same five elements. Yet, this psyche is playing a very important role in creating a distinction between ourselves and other things, managing to convert the whole world into an object of sensation. Hence, yoga is supposed to be the restraint of

the senses from operating in this manner—amounting to a total self-restraint.

Yoga is control of the self—*chitta vritti nirodha*—the check that we put on the various modifications of the mind which compel us to see things as if they are outside. The world is made up of the same thing that we are made of, outwardly as well as inwardly. Externally, the world is the five elements and, externally, we are also the five elements. But, we are something more than the five elements. We have inner mechanisms which cannot be identified with, or mixed with, the five elements. The sensations that we have been mentioning are not to be identified with the material stuff called the body. Matter cannot know anything. It is dead, as it were. The knowledge of the existence of the material world cannot be attributed to the existence of the world itself. Without consciousness, matter does not know matter.

Inside the body we have the vital breath—the energy, also called the *prana*—operating in many ways as the pressure exerted on inhalation, exhalation, deglutition, digestion, movement, circulation of blood, and so on. There is an unceasing activity going on inside us in the form of the movement of the *prana*. The moment we are alive in any sense of the term, the *prana* operates. Even before we come out of the mother's womb, the *prana* acts. We are living beings even inside the womb; we do not become alive only after coming out. So, we can imagine from when the *prana* is with us; and it is with us until it departs by severing its connections with the physical body. The *prana* is the dynamo, the powerhouse, as it were, which pumps

energy to the senses and makes them active. The power of the senses is really the power of the *prana*. If the dynamo stops working, the senses will wither completely and become inactive.

The senses are connected with both the *prana* and the mind. The senses are certain intermediary operations between the vital sheath and the mental sheath. Inside the physical body there is the *prana*, and there is a set of senses—the senses of knowledge and the senses of action. There are ten senses, which are urged by the mind with an intention to fulfil a certain purpose. The impulsion from the mind is the directive force behind the activity of the senses. Therefore, the senses are affiliated to the *prana* as well as to the mind. The *prana* supplies the energy necessary for the movement of the senses, and the mind tells the senses where to go and what to do—just as a soldier receives energy by the food that he eats and the exercise that he undergoes, but his movements are directed by the order of a general who is his commander. The senses are like soldiers who receive sustenance from the *prana*, but get directed by the mind in the way they have to act.

Thus, inside the body we have the vital sheath, the senses and the mind. The mind is a general term that we use to indicate the process of thinking, determinately as well as indeterminately, particularly as well as generally. Thinking, as well as doubting, are the functions of the mind—*manas*, as it is known in Sanskrit. Thinking is an activity of the mind, by which it becomes aware of the presence of something. When we think, we are thinking something. That something is the object of the mind, of

which it is aware—aware either specifically or generally, determinately or indeterminately. For instance, sometimes we are aware of something outside us but we do not know what it is, though we know that something is there in front of us. When we definitely know what it is that is in front of us, it is definite knowledge, determinate awareness. In twilight or when there is a mist in the atmosphere, we may not be able to discern what is in front of us. We do not know whether it is a human being or an electrical pole; yet, we know that something is there: “I can see that there is something which is visible to my eyes.” This consciousness of the presence of something in an indefinite way, in an indeterminate manner, is generalised thinking. And when it is clear, it is determinate thinking: “It is a man, not a pole.”

The intellect is superior to the mind and is more interior than the mental sheath. It is a purified form of knowing, whereas the mind is characterised by the impurity of a little bit of *rajas* and *tamas*, distraction and torpidity. The intellect decides as to what action is to be taken or what relationship is to be established with that which has now been seen as a determinate something. When we have a definite knowledge of the object that is in front of us, the intellect comes to a conclusion and decides: “This has to be done now in respect of this thing that I see in front of me.”

An attitude is developed by the charging of the feelings and the emotions, together with the decision taken logically by the intellect. When we look at an object and come to a conclusion about it logically, intellectually, rationally, we begin to have a simultaneous emotional reaction in respect of it—unless it is something in which we are totally not

interested, like a brick that is on the road. Our emotions may not function when we see a brick, because we are not interested in its presence or absence. But, if it is a nugget of gold and not merely a brick that we see there, we know how the emotions react together with the perception of that object—and so on, with respect to various things in the world with which we have relationships.

So, what is a human being made of? Not merely the physical body; there are other things inside: the *prana*, the senses, the mind, the intellect. But, remember what these things all make. Finally, they are the stuff and the nonsense of this ignorance. We have the causal body inside us, called the *anandamaya kosha*, through which the Universal consciousness passes reflected and deflected, contorted, making things appear the other way around, like the cart before the horse. The object is seen as the subject, and the subject as the object.

We think that we are the subjects and the universe is the object, whereas the truth is the other way around. Hence, a real fall has taken place. It is not merely a fall as a fall from a tree, where we maintain the integrity of our body. We do not start seeing things topsy-turvy because we have fallen from a tree. Here the fall is much worse than falling from the top of a mountain or from a tree. It is much worse because this fall includes not merely a descent into a lower degree of manifestation of reality, but a complete overturning of the mind itself. There is a *sirsasana* of our consciousness. It is seeing things upside-down, yet we think that this is a great knowledge that we have acquired.



We are proud of our knowledge. We are highly cultured, educated, degree holders—whereas all our knowledge is nothing but this *sirsasana* knowledge of the world. This would explain how we look so foolish when we are put to the test by the vicissitudes through which the world passes in the course of history.

## Chapter 5

### YOGA—THE SCIENCE OF LIVING

The individual, the world, and God are the principle themes of all philosophical studies, and even of mystical experiences. We have inquired sufficiently into the nature of the human individual, its makeup and its constitutive differences. We have discussed, to some extent, the process of the perception of the world by the individual through the instrumentality of the senses and the mind.

Even as the individual is a complex of various layers of experience, and there are sheaths within sheaths—*koshas* within *koshas*—and the human being is not merely the physical body, so too the world is not exhaustively made up by only what we see with our eyes. Even as we are not as we appear outwardly in terms of the body, the world is not what it appears to the eyes. I mentioned previously that within the body there are the *pranas*, the senses, the mind, the intellect, and such complicated layers which constitute the individuality and personality of man. So too is the world.

There are planes of existence, called *lokas* in Sanskrit—degrees of reality—the lowest one being the Earth, or the physical universe. We cannot see anything beyond the physical realm because we live in a physical body. The subject and the object are always on par with each other as far as their degrees of reality are concerned. Neither can we see what is within us, nor can we see what is within the world. When we enter deep into our own selves we also, in parallel, go deep into the counterpart of ourselves in the world and begin to behold the inner layers of the cosmos.

Just as we have the *prana*, the senses, the mind and the intellect, etc., within us, there are the planes of being, internally laid within this physical cosmos. The physical universe is not merely what we see with our eyes. Comparable to every layer within the individual, there is a cosmic layer.

The science of yoga makes out that there are plexuses called *chakras* within the body, which is very well known in *hatha* yoga circles, *tantric* circles, and certain other mystical circles of religious practice. It is very difficult to understand what these *chakras* are. Most of us are confused as to what they could be. They are pressures, or rather pressure centres, in the whole of our being, not merely in some part of the body—pressure centres, upon which an impact is felt, exerted by the counterpart of each centre at the cosmic level.

The physical universe presses upon the physical body. This is what is usually called gravitation, in the language of science. The pressure of the world upon us is gravitation; and the world presses upon us at every level of our being. The different centres within the internal layers of our personality, which receive this pressure from their own counterparts in the outer realms of being, are known as the *chakras*. They are not wheels or lotuses as they are sometimes described in a humorous, aesthetic manner by teachers. They cannot be understood by intellectual analysis, just as, for instance, we cannot know what energy is by any amount of definition and description.

A *chakra* may at times be considered to be a whirl of energy, a circle—as can sometimes be seen in a river. There

are circular currents in rivers, sometimes even in the ocean, and if anyone is caught up in these whirling currents he is pulled in deep and cannot come out. There are one or two centres like that in the Ganga. People who swim there are cautious about these circular currents because anyone who goes near them is drawn in and does not come out. These currents of force, *chakras*, which take a shape or a form according to the desire potentialities of the individual, are actually the shapes which are assumed by the pressure from the whole universe in its different planes.

What are these planes? There are seven centres—the *muladhara*, *svadhishtana*, and so on. Corresponding to these *chakras*, or centres in the human body, which are all well known to many *hatha* yoga students, there are the cosmic planes outside. Actually, we should not say that they are outside, inasmuch as we have already decided that the world is not outside us. We are involved in the world, yet the world appears to be outside. As long as there is an insistence on the part of our personality to regard the world as an external object, we will go on thinking that every plane of existence, also, is external; so, even if we go to heaven and become angels there, that angelic world will be external to our angel self. Hence, one may be a denizen or an inhabitant of any plane of existence, but the individuality will persist. Even Adam and Eve had individualities, though they were in the Garden of Eden and very proximate to God, the Supreme Creator.

Thus, individuality is an inscrutable something which cannot be identified entirely with the physical body. Our individuality is not caused by the existence of the physical

body, and it will persist and remain even after death. The existence of our individuality as a principle even after the shedding of the physical body is the cause of rebirth. Individuality is the self-sense, the power by which we affirm our existence as an isolated, independent being. This independence of ours is not a physical assertion, but a psychological affirmation—a mix-up, an inscrutable, un-understandable, mysterious complex—which is what individuality is.

What is a human being? A human being is not necessarily the physical body. No one will say that the human being is only the body. Is the human being the mind? Even that would be difficult to accept. We cannot say that the human being is only a mind and nothing else, because there is also a body, and maybe something more. Is the human being the spirit within? We cannot say that the human being is only the spirit. Not the spirit, not the mind, not the body—what else is man?

Man, the human individual, is a mixture of different aspects abstracted from different levels of being, so that what we call the human individual, or any individual for that matter, is a complex, like a chemical mixture, and is not an indivisible whole. This explains the artificiality of human nature, which is the reason why it is called transient and perpetually moving onward—restless, and never satisfied with even a moment's existence in one given condition. We always move onward and onward, like a river that flows. Life is a river; every individuality is, also, a river. It is a river because it cannot rest. It must always pass beyond itself into the next higher stage. Restlessness is the

characteristic of the human individual, and of every atom in the universe.

This is the nature of every finite individual. Anything that is limited has the character of overstepping the limitations of that finitude in the direction of attaining limitlessness. Corresponding to the limited, finite centres within us, there are the unlimited counterparts in the planes of existence of the cosmos. Ordinarily, these planes are not visible to the eyes—just as radio and television waves are not visible to the naked eye, but they are visible with a mechanism which can catch them due to its subtle inner makeup. The vibrations of the higher realms of being cannot be felt by the gross body, and the celestial music cannot be heard by the fleshy eardrum; yet, these planes exist.

The Puranas and the Epics recount the nature of these inner layers of the cosmos—what the world is made of, internally. We say there is such a thing called evolution. The rising up of the dimensions of personality from inanimate matter to the vegetable kingdom, then to the animal level, then to human nature, is supposed to be indicative of a rise in the levels of dimension in experience. Man, today, is sometimes prone to think that evolution has stopped with man. This is why we say that man is made in the image of God and everything is well with man. But, it is not true. Everything is not well with man. He is a very unhappy creature.

The unhappiness that characterises human nature is indicative of the fact that evolution has not yet stopped. There is a further movement onwards to the higher levels of

being. We have been told again and again by such teachers as theosophists that man has to become superman. In the West there were thinkers like Nietzsche who, in their own way, started the doctrine of the superman, pointing out that man, as he is today, is not complete. That is why he is unhappy.

But Nietzsche's superman is different from the concept of the superman of the East. It is not the self-affirming, egoistic superman of Nietzsche we are thinking of and speaking about here, but the spiritual efflorescence of the human individual to the larger expanse which is potential within him. The superman is a transcendent man, and not an egoistic man. He is not a power-hungry tyrant, but a spiritually evolved, divine personality who has overstepped the limitations of humanity. That is why we call him a superhuman being—*ati-manava*, as he is called.

Upanishads like the Taittiriya Upanishad and the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad tell us that man aspires for higher states of knowledge, experience and happiness. When a person sheds his body, he is reborn in a realm of existence where his desires can be fulfilled. If the desires are very profane, turbid and *tamasic*, or even extremely *rajasic*, there is a possibility of getting reborn in this very world itself, or in a world which is similar to this world but more purified in nature. If the *tamas* and the *rajas* are to some extent subdued and a ray of *sattva* has raised its head, these persons are reborn in Gandharvaloka, which is supposed to be the realm immediately above the human level, which penetrates the physical realm but cannot be visible to the physical eyes.

The realm of the angels is, generally speaking, the very same thing which the Upanishad speaks of as Gandharvaloka, Pitriloka and Devaloka—the realms of the demigods, the gods, the celestials, the angels, Indra, and the like, where there is no old age, no hunger, no thirst, and no fatigue, not even death, until the whole universe is absorbed into the Absolute. Such is the joyous and delightful experience of the angels in heaven. These realms, Gandharvaloka, Pitriloka and Devaloka, are sometimes referred to as Bhuloka, Bhuhvarloka and Svargaloka—the physical, the astral and the celestial realms. We can, to some extent, understand what these super-physical levels—astral and celestial—could be by a study of what the scriptures say about the experiences of the angels there. But, there are realms above the celestial level. The angels are not everything.

The Upanishads, the Puranas and the Epics tell us that there are seven planes of existence; it is not that the degrees of manifestation of reality end only with these three—the physical, astral and celestial. The other *lokas*, or planes of existence mentioned, are above Svargaloka, or the celestial realm. Maharloka, Janarloka, Taparloka, Satyaloka—we cannot understand anything about them. We may become giddy by thinking too much about these wondrous states of being which seem to reign supreme above even the realm of the angels, where it is said there is no death, and nectar is their food. Anything which a human being can aspire for is to be found in the celestial realm.

The greatest happiness that a human being can imagine is to be found in the celestial realm; but, the highest



happiness that man can think of is the poorest compared to those realms which are transcendent even to the celestial realm. Great adepts, yogis, *mahapurushas*, masters, incarnations, and sages are supposed to be living in these realms. The highest realm is called Brahmaloka, identified with the realm of the Creator Himself, where individualities penetrate each other.

In Plotinus' great work called the *Enneads*, the great mystic of Alexandria describes this interpenetration of individualities in the state of that Universal vision. He does not call it Brahmaloka; his language is different, but the explanation is equivalent to what we hear of in the Mahabharata and the Puranas. Every individual enters into every other individual, as many mirrors facing each other may reflect each other so that everything is everywhere; this is Brahmaloka. One will find oneself everywhere, and everyone else will find himself everywhere, so that to know one thing is to know all things, and to know all things is to know any thing.

For us, descriptions of this kind make no sense. They are meaningless utterances, because we are not expected to understand them with our poor, physical brains. When we touch even the borderline of realms of this kind, we run into mad ecstasy. We heard of devotees dancing in a state of super-consciousness, which we mistake for unconsciousness, where they would not even be aware that they have a body or even whether they are wearing clothing or not. Such mystical masters existed even in the West, not merely in the East. These secrets are hidden within nature. Even a little contemplation on the possibilities of such

experiences will shut our mouths forever. Such terrible, magnificent variety is hidden in the bosom of the universe.

These planes are within us, also. That is the reason why we can enter into their being, experience them and make them our own. As I mentioned just now, as we go deeper and deeper within ourselves, we also, simultaneously, plumb deeper and deeper into the depths of the cosmos. The movement or advance of the spirit further and further is a parallel movement objectively as well as subjectively and, therefore, there is no such thing as an individual's meditation or a private salvation of a person.

This, again, is a mystery which the human mind cannot understand. We are under the impression that each one independently goes to God, and others go to hell. This is not the case. But any amount of explanation of this mystery is not going to be a real explanation, because man is not supposed to enter into discussion of divine mysteries of this kind.

As the objective universe and the subjective individuality are correlated in every level of manifestation, every step in the advance made by the spirit in the direction of God-realisation is a parallel movement subjectively and objectively, so that when we reach God, the whole universe is absorbed into us—or, conversely, we are absorbed into the whole cosmos. Therefore, the world does not exist after we become one with the Universal Being. We will be terribly upset even to listen to this predicament. How is it possible? What happens to the world? What happens to other people? These atrocious doubts persist at the intellectual level when we are mere academicians, only

professors of knowledge, but have not actually experienced anything. But these doubts get hushed in one second when we receive even a modicum of the touch of God, if we drink even a drop of this nectar of divine experience. Further discussion on this matter is futile. We will stop, and inquire into these mysteries further on.

However, what I wish to point out is that the world is a great mystery, and it is not as the materialists speak about it, or even as the scientists describe it. It is more grand and magnificent in its internal constitution than any human mind can understand, even with the farthest stretch of imagination. So is the mystery of each one of us. The whole heaven is moving with us, wherever we go. “The kingdom of heaven is within you,” is a great declaration. How can a kingdom be within a finite being? How can we carry a whole country in our hearts? But, this we do. And if there is any sense in this declaration that the kingdom of heaven is within, well, the whole cosmos is in every speck of space.

The Yoga Vasishtha dilates upon this theme in an infinite variety of ways by saying that the whole space is filled with universes. Every atom is a universe by itself, and this universe is, also, an atom. The Puranas say that there are many *brahmandas*, many universes, and it is not that God created only one pattern of the universe. Every pattern of the will of God is one universe. There are infinite patterns of His thinking, and therefore infinite *brahmandas*, or universes, are possible. In Indian parlance, God is called *ananta koti brahmanda nayaka*—the Lord of an infinite number of universes. So, it is not that only one world has been created by God.

Who can go into these mysteries? Our little knowledge of the world through this epistemological operation—sensorially, mentally, intellectually—is a poor, poor apology for what is possible as a potentiality within us. The yoga techniques bring these potentialities out and make them part of our conscious experience. We live in heaven, and not merely think and talk about it. This is the objective of yoga, the aim of every form of yoga—*karma* yoga, *bhakti* yoga, *raja* yoga, *jnana* yoga, whatever it be.

Whatever we have been considering up to this moment is a sort of philosophical analysis of deep mystical secrets. But, philosophical analysis alone is not sufficient. This analysis is essential to convince the mind that there are such great things which man cannot even dream of; but these mysteries have to become part of one's direct experience, or *shatkara*. The aim of yoga is to bring about this direct intuition into these mysteries of the universe—direct union with the Absolute itself, finally. Yoga is union with Reality—Reality in every level of its manifestation, in every degree of its expression. Even in the lowest degree of its manifestation, we have to be in communion with it. We have to be friendly with every level of the expression of Reality, in harmony with every form of the atmosphere in which we are placed—physically, socially, politically, psychologically, astrally, or in any sense of the term. Whatever be the environment in which we are living, with that environment we have to be in communion. This is yoga.

Yoga is union with God, the Almighty. Yes, it is true; this is yoga, in the end, but it also means that yoga is every

stage of the ascent of the spirit in the direction of this supreme attainment. Though there may be millions of steps to be taken in the direction of God-realisation, each step is, also, yoga. Though we may require fifty morsels of food to appease our hunger completely, each morsel is a satisfaction by itself. Each grain of food that goes into the stomach appeases it in some measure, though complete satisfaction comes only when the meal is over.

Hence, yoga is also a great social science. It is not merely metaphysics or mysticism. A yogi is a good man, a friendly person, a philanthropic individual, and also an ideal citizen of his country and of the world. A yogi is not an other-worldly dreamer, but a matter-of-fact individual who is an expert in dextrous execution of any duty that is entrusted to him, even if it be washing dishes or sweeping the floor. A yogi can sweep the floor better than an ordinary person. He can wash dishes better than a servant would. In any position in which he is, he is the best exemplar in that particular place.

A yogi is in union with whatever is around him—whether people, or things, or anything else. This removes conflict at every level. Yoga is the solution to conflicts of personality with the environment outside. Yoga resolves the psychical, psychophysical, psychological and psychoanalytical conflicts within the individual, and resolves his conflicts with others—socially, politically, and even astronomically.

Thus, yoga is a universal science. It is not a religion of a particular creed, cult or nationality. It is a science of living. Therefore, the way in which we have to rightly live in this

world is yoga. Yoga does not belong to the East or to the West, to white or to black, to men or to women, or to any class of people. It is for creation as a whole.

While yoga is union, we have to be cautious in establishing this union through every link in the chain of the development of our movement towards the ultimate ideal. We should not jump into God at one stroke, under the impression that it is so easy an affair. We should not be over-enthusiastic even in good things, because a good thing done in a bad manner ceases to be a good thing. We must know our strengths and our possibilities, and also our weaknesses. We have great abilities within us, no doubt. We can enter into God Himself; such is the strength and potentiality we have. But, at the same time, we have small weaknesses and vulnerable points in our bodies and in our minds. We should be very honest to ourselves. "To thine own self be true," said the poet. There should be no deception of our own self while we are encountering the face of God in the forms of creation. Who can be deceptive before God? And, as anything that we encounter in our life is a face of God, deception is a misnomer, a falsity of approach, futile in the end, and it may lead to a total ruin of personality.

We hide our secrets even to our own minds, which is a malady to be gotten over. This requires leisurely hours of thinking and a dispassionate analysis of one's own desires, frustrations, feelings, emotions, and even of past memories which sometimes harass us. Past memories are terrible things; they will not leave us easily. That is why Patanjali, in one of his *sutras*, says that memory is an obstacle in yoga.

Memory is a good thing; people would not like to lose their memory. They take tonics and elixirs to improve memory. It is a very good thing, indeed, but it is also undesirable when we go on remembering unpleasant experiences of the past that we would like to forget. But, these unpleasant things that are within us, the impulses which speak in an unethical manner, should be converted into the great ethicalness of spirituality.

Spirituality is above ethics and morals. It is not limited to the dos and don'ts of religion. Inasmuch as we are living in human society, these dos and don'ts persist; and we cannot get over them, because we have to adjust and adapt ourselves with people and things around us in such a way that the dos and don'ts cannot be escaped. They are there. They persist as long as we are not in a position to resolve the conflict that is between us and others on account of the cutting off of our personality from the being of other people. Morality and ethics are absolutely unavoidable as long as we are conditioned by the existence of separate, isolated individualities. The more we get united in spirit, the lesser is the need for these dos and don'ts. We become our own law, and nobody else need inject law into our veins.

Spirituality is above the laws and disciplines of human society. It is an acquiescence to the will of God in an integral manner, an art which has to be learned from a competent teacher because we are unacquainted with these difficulties. Every one of us has desires of one type or the other. Everyone has frustrated memories and unfulfilled ambitions which have been thrown into the limbo of the

unconscious due to unfavourable circumstances for fructifying these desires. And, many a time, we substitute these unfulfilled desires with other activities like cricket, football games, clubs, newspapers, cinemas, and even drinking liquor. These are substitutes for emotional disturbances within the individual—emotions which have not been fulfilled, and which cannot be fulfilled under the existing conditions of human society.

But, throwing them into limbo is not the solution. These devils within us demand a solution. The immoral devil within us has to be brought to the surface and encountered as he is, and transformed into the angel that we are expected to become, finally. We cannot keep the devil chained in a prison and then go to God, individually. This is not possible. The devil ceases to be there when we are transformed into the angel that we are. Here again comes the point that the movement towards God is a parallel movement, inwardly and outwardly. It is not that we are angels and others are devils, or that the world will go to the dogs and we will be enjoying the paradise of God's being. That is not yoga.

These are super-individual, super-logical difficulties. Ancient masters insisted on less and less study but more and more service to the Guru, to the master, which enabled the student to wipe off these old memories—*samskaras*, *vasanas*—impressions of past experience. Studies will not be sufficient. Any amount of physical exercise is also not adequate. It requires a scrubbing of the whole personality by unselfish service and worship, adoration, by which the emotions get sublimated, as especially detailed in one of the



systems of yoga called *bhakti* yoga. Love of God is the process of the transmutation of every affection with which man is acquainted.

The greatest mystery in life is love. The intellect is not our problem; our emotions are our difficulties. Where there is love, there is also hatred. We cannot love everything. For us, love is possible only towards certain individuals or certain items, or even groups of individuals or items. Those items and individuals which are excluded become objects of hatred. Hence, love and hatred are two sides of the same coin. They persist and trouble us because we do not know how to reconcile these two sides.

Yoga is not merely an intellectual exercise. It is not merely a philosophical discipline. Yoga is a spiritual transmutation of our whole being, which includes the sublimation of love and of emotion of every type, positive or negative, together with the activities of the reasoning faculty. In this process, intellect and feeling join together in a fraternal embrace. When understanding and feeling work conjointly in the knowledge of anything, we are said to have intuition of that thing. God-realisation is the intuition of the Ultimate Reality, which is the aim of the practice of yoga.

## Chapter 6

### THE CHARACTER OF THE ULTIMATE REALITY OF THE UNIVERSE

The study of human experience is, in a very important sense, the study of life. Bring back to your memory all that has been discussed along these lines up to this time, and recollect where you stand in this arduous adventure of the analysis of human experience. These processes of self-analysis are difficult to remember inasmuch as analysis and rational judgement, with a due consideration of the pros and cons of every act and thought, is not the usual way in which we operate in our lives. We are generally driven by instincts, impulses, sentiments and habits of the past, and are not necessarily guided by reason and a considered judgement of values.

We are now here, not to be driven by instincts and to be pushed by old habits of our social environment and social living, but to consider in a more logical form the causative factors operating behind our experiences, in all the aspects of the dimension which they occupy in the scheme of things. We have come to the point of confronting the universe before us as a large body of experience which has ever managed to place itself in the position of an object. Even just now, at this very moment when we are speaking and listening, it remains an object of our consciousness. People around us are our objects of sensory perception and mental cognition; and things around us are of a similar nature. The world as a whole refuses to be recognised in any other manner than as a content of our awareness and

an object of our experience. To resolve this mystery of our relationship to things is the hard task that is before us.

We cannot understand the correct relationship that obtains even between ourselves and our own neighbour. How is this neighbour related to us? “Who is my neighbour?” was a question put by an inquisitive person to Jesus Christ. How do we know what sort of relation is there between us and the next man? We are not in a position to easily probe into this difficulty. That there is some sort of a connection of one thing with another goes without saying. No one will gainsay this fact that there is a relationship among people, a sort of cause and effect relation among all things. But, what do we mean by ‘relation’? I have tried to touch upon the intriguing character of the very concept of relation. We cannot understand what it actually means, where it stands. Does it belong to the subject, or to the object, or is it independent of both? We found that it cannot belong to the subject; it cannot belong to the object; and, also, it cannot stand independently.

Thus, the world is a world of relativity, inscrutability, indeterminability and unintelligibility. Nothing can be understood to the core, inasmuch as relation stands as a concept which cannot be explained and cannot be understood. How am I related to you, and you to me? Nobody knows. Again, there is a psychological habit which takes for granted that there is such a thing called relation, whatever that relation be.

This difficulty is the difficulty of all life—any kind of life, anywhere. It boils down to another difficulty: our inability to understand what we ourselves are, and what

anything is—what the world is, what creation is, what life itself means. Life stands before us as a mystery, because the mystery is hidden within our own selves as the incapacity to understand anything whatsoever, within or without. All this difficulty arises because our probing is shallow. It is not an in-depth analysis. The senses are so powerful, our social instincts are so rapacious in their demands, our hunger for name and fame, authority, power and wealth is so intense that these pressures will not permit the mind to go deep into its own self. It requires a herculean effort on the part of the seeker of Truth to resist the onslaught of these cyclones of sensory movements. No one can withstand them. When a tornado blows, we, too, will be blown out, together with its movement. But, by *abhyasa* and *vairagya*, as the Bhagavadgita and Patanjali put it—by persistent, tenacious practice and an attempt to cut off the internal connection of the senses with the so-called externality of things—we can, with intense hardship, no doubt, go deep into ourselves.

The going deep into ourselves is also, at the same time, a going deep into anything in the world. To know ourselves is to know all people, all things—the whole world. Researchers in biology have demonstrated that the whole man can be seen in one cell of his body; the human body is a macrocosm to the cell which is the microscopic mini-representation of the human organism. We are told that in one drop of blood the whole history of a man can be read, right from his birth to his death. And it is not for nothing that our scriptures have told us that the whole history of man is written when he is in the womb of the mother. The length of life for which he has to live, the experiences

through which he has to pass and the relationships in society which are to decide his experiences—these are written in invisible characters by the mystery of the cosmos even before the child comes out of the womb, because every child is a child of the universe. It is not born to one person, one individual called the father and another called the mother. Every event is a cosmic event; every baby is a child of the whole cosmos. It belongs to the universe. Everyone belongs to the universe—myself, yourself, all people. Neither you belong to me, nor I belong to you. Nobody possesses anything here. One cannot be the object of possession and enjoyment of another. Such a thing cannot obtain in this world, where everything belongs to one single centre of operation, the government of the cosmos. Perhaps we cannot conceive of a greater socialistic form of administration than the way in which the universe operates, where each one is for everyone, and everyone for each.

This is an empirical difficulty, and also a philosophical problem. Where everything is hanging on everything else, thinking is not possible. Yoga drives us to this point where thinking is not possible. It is thinking that is our doom—thinking in terms of perception, doubt, memory, sleep, etc., which are the psychic operations in man. A great aphorism of Patanjali puts it plainly before us that every psychic activity is a hindrance to the impulse to the practice of yoga. Yoga is not a psychic operation, not a mental activity. It is not thinking. It is a tendency to being in a larger dimension.

When we enter into the field of yoga, we expand the ambit of our existence. We do not merely start thinking of

something as an object outside us. We think 'being' as such in the various degrees of its expression. We are individuals, and in that sense we are also a sort of being. I am. This consciousness of 'I am'-ness is an affirmation of the being of the isolated individuality. The rise of the yoga consciousness is from this level of being to the next higher state of being, where it includes the environment of the individual's perception and experience—not in the sense of a contact with the environment outside, as it happens in ordinary sense perception, but in an inclusion of this atmosphere in the ambit of one's experience. This is called yoga *samadhi*, *samyama*—the art of uniting one's being with the being of that which tentatively appears as an atmosphere around oneself.

The environment around us is a being in itself; it exists. This existence of the environment around us is inseparable from the being of our own selves, as we appear to ourselves. Unfortunately, this environment stands outside us, so we struggle with the environment. We are in conflict with the environmental atmosphere. We struggle to exist because of the fear of the unknown motives behind the way in which the environment operates. This fear vanishes when the environment becomes a part of our existence.

Yoga is the art of union with every content of consciousness. That which the consciousness apprehends as an existent something is its content, and may also be called its environment. When I am conscious that I am placed in an environment of people around me, of air blowing, sun shining and earth under me, all these ideas that occur to me are ideas of an environment which is physical, social,

political, and every blessed thing. This complicated environment of the perceiving consciousness, which stands outside in space and time as an object thereof, has to get absorbed into the being of the perceiving consciousness by deep meditation.

This is a difficult art. Meditation is a difficult job because the mind insists on affirming that the environment is outside, that people are external and things are unconnected. The obsession that things around us are unconnected to us will not leave us until the end of our life. The child born of our egoism affirms the isolatedness of our being. The ego is hard, like flint. It will not melt, even by the application of the heat of meditation.

Yet, it has to be effected. The day has to come when we shall have to achieve this purpose. All our desire, all our ambition, all our conflict, all our love and all our hatred in life is a multi-formed expression of our attempt to seek a union and harmony with the environment around us. But we bungle in this attempt. We fumble and fall, and get defeated and receive a kick in our attempt to establish this union between ourselves and the environment around us. Thus, we feel frustrated and come back. But, nevertheless, our activities in life are a blind groping in the darkness of ignorance in the direction of a communion that we wish to establish with the universe outside—which we never achieve because of the difficulty in controlling the senses, which insist on saying again and again that the environment is outside us and we can never have union with it.

Our desire is nothing but a desire for union with things. When we love an object, we wish to enter into that object and absorb that object into ourselves, as a part of ourselves. We wish to get absorbed into that object, as a part of that object. All fulfilment of affection and love is the fulfilment of union with the object of affection. Hatred, animosity and conflict are only the negative side of this affection, which operates like the obverse side of the same coin of the human attempt to encounter the world—its environment.

This is the outcome of our study of the internal relation that obtains between us and the world outside. We have, to some extent, conducted an analysis of our own selves. Then, we studied, in a measure, the process of knowledge—what we call the epistemological predicament. We encountered the universe. I tried to explain in some detail the internal structure of the cosmos in its various planes of expression. Now we are coming to a crucial point in our spiritual adventure—namely, the character of the Ultimate Reality of the universe, which is a more difficult problem for us to understand, encounter and analyse than anything that we have been discussing up to this time.

What is Truth, finally? What exists finally, ultimately? Everything passes, everything is transient, everything moves. Everybody who is born also dies. We have never seen Truth in this world. That which perishes, demonstrates its unreality. “I am not true. I go.” That which goes, goes with a proclamation of the inadequacy of its own being. Everything moves; everything is a flow of energy, a force. We cannot touch the same water in a flowing river the next moment, nor can we touch the same fire in a



moving flame. Perhaps, we may not be able to touch the same object the next moment. It transforms itself in an impulse of movement which carries it onward, forward, towards a destination which no one knows.

Such being the case of things in this world, such being the character of the whole world which perishes every moment like a bubble that bursts, what can be Truth? We live in a world of untruths, transitory right to the core. Mortality is gripping everything relentlessly. Mrityuloka is this; everything dies. Why one dies, no one knows. Why should one be reborn? No one knows. What is birth; what is death; what is transition; what is all this drama of the universe; what is anything at all? This is a question which will point to the possibility of our solving this mystery of the Ultimate Reality of the universe. If nothing is possible, if everything is transitory, no question will arise because the question, also, will be transitory.

There is something which speaks within us in the language of eternity, not merely in the language of transitoriness. The consciousness of the transitoriness of things is an indication of the presence of a non-transitory eternity. This is a subtle voice that speaks within us, but it gets stifled, smothered by the mud that is thrown over it and the dust that is kicked up by the activity of the senses which blinds our eyes until we cannot see what is hidden behind this profundity within our own selves.

The art of yoga is the procedure which the deepest in man adopts towards the solution of the mystery of life. I mentioned at different times that yoga is not what we actually do as a human being. It is the art of being. We will

not be able to make any sense out of this mystery of the art of being. What does it mean, after all? What do we mean by 'being'? Being is that which is to be distinguished from becoming; a subtle distinction has to be drawn between them.

The world that we see, that we are experiencing before us, this body in which we are caught up, this visible life, is becoming, because it is a movement. It becomes; it never is. We, also, become, every moment of time. We have been growing and growing, right from our babyhood, and we are growing, decaying, moving, undergoing transformation. Even our human individuality is a becoming; there is no 'being' in ourselves. But, the fact that we are able to know that we are involved in becoming is an answer to the question as to what is behind becoming. All becoming, all movement, all evolution is an impulse to being, so that becoming is the response of the universe to the call of that which is Pure Being—that which we call Eternal, that which we consider the Infinite, that which is beyond the transitoriness of perception, space and time—that summons all becoming towards Itself just as the periphery of a circle may be summoned by the centre thereof.

We are pulled, in spite of ourselves. We run fast in a direction of which we have no consciousness. All the religions of the world and all the philosophies have racked their brains in trying to know what is this call that keeps man restless from moment to moment. Why should we be restless, if we are totally involved in becoming? We die every moment of time, and in this perpetual process of dying, there is no time for us to get restless. There cannot

be any such thing called joy and sorrow in a world of total transitoriness. This stands to logic. But, there seems to be a secret hidden behind the transitoriness and the dying process of things. That secret keeps us ever restless.

The feelings of joy and sorrow, and the anxiety, insecurity, and difficulties that we experience in our lives cannot be explained if everything is really passing, because a thing that passes cannot have an experience that it passes. Then, there cannot be any experience at all. No one can know anything. Even the thing that tries to know a thing cannot know that it is doing so. It would be a fool's paradise to the core. But, it does not appear to be such. Even in the contradictions of life there is an impulse from within us to resolve these contradictions. Otherwise, why should there be organisations, conferences or efforts of any kind whatsoever? Why should man do anything at all, and think anything at all, if everything is passing, dying, and nothing exists, finally?

Here is an indirect answer, arising from within our own selves, to the question of life as a whole. We are the answers to our own questions. Not the books, not the scriptures, not even the Gurus of the world can help us, finally. We have to stand on our own legs. Finally, we will find that the Guru is within us; God is within us; the secret is within us; immortality is within us. That which we struggle for is being carried by us from place to place every moment. The treasure is within us. But, this within-ness of ours is, again, a mystery that eludes our understanding. We are empirically brainwashed. The empirical-ridden senses tell us that the within-ness of experience is nothing but the

within-ness of the body. That which is inside the body is within; that which is outside the body is without. The existence of the body is the reason behind our entertaining notions of inside and outside. If the body were not, there would be no such idea. But, can we think as Pure Consciousness, which we seem to be?

The conclusion we arrive at is by self-analysis itself. The three states of waking, dream and sleep, when they are analysed thoroughly, threadbare, reveal to us that we do exist under conditions bereft of the awareness of even the body and the mind—for instance, in deep sleep. There is a subtle suggestion in the state of deep sleep that we do exist independent of body encasement and mental restrictions. In what condition do we exist in deep sleep, except as a bare minimum of the awareness that we were, that we existed, that we are—nothing more, nothing less? I existed; I was; I am. Nothing more can be said about the condition in which we persisted at the back of the condition we call sleep.

This bare, featureless transparency of consciousness seems to be our essential nature. And, consciousness is an indivisible something. No one can cut consciousness into pieces. It cannot be divided into parts. No one can imagine a division within consciousness. We cannot divide ourselves into two parts or into any number of parts. The very attempt at imagining a division in consciousness asserts the indivisibility of consciousness, because the consciousness of there being a gap between two parts of consciousness is, again, filled with consciousness itself. Therefore, a conception of the division of consciousness is impossible.

There is no dividedness in the being of consciousness. Consciousness is being; being is consciousness. Being is consciousness; consciousness is being. The awareness that I am is also the awareness that I exist. I am-ness is nothing but existence affirming itself as being conscious of itself. We cannot separate being from consciousness, or consciousness from being. When I feel that I am, it is a summing up of the blend of consciousness and the being thereof, and vice versa. So, the minimum of our being is the barest residuum of consciousness.

We are not bodies, not men, women or children—nothing of the kind. The root from which we start the practice of yoga is the operation of consciousness, not of the senses and the psychic operations, all which have to be restrained by *nirodha*, as yoga puts it—*chitta vritti nirodha*. The restraint of the senses and the mind is the restraint of those conditioning factors which compel us to feel that we are always bodies, individuals, human beings. We have to melt down these impulsions to the feeling that we are pinpointed to one place through a body and are segregated from others. But, this suggestion and hint at the nature of the Ultimate Reality as Pure Consciousness and Indivisible Being leaves us in a peculiar difficulty, which sometimes overwhelms us with an impossibility to move onward.

The reality of the world persists even here, at the point of our coming to a final conclusion that the final reality of things is Being-Consciousness, Sat-Chit. The winds of life blow so hard upon us, and they will not easily leave us to ourselves. Again and again we have to persist in this meditation upon the conclusion we have very wisely arrived

at through this analysis of Being-Consciousness as the final reality of things, notwithstanding the fact that we are tossed hither and thither by the waves of empirical existence, as a person caught up in the waves of the ocean sinks down one moment and rises to the surface another moment, only to sink down again. We, in this ocean of life, go within, and come up to the surface only to see the world again with our eyes. Yet, we should develop within ourselves a hardihood and a toughness of conscious behaviour by which we shall stand firmly on ourselves. We should apply the whole of our will to a dedication of whatever we are in our entirety for this great purpose of bringing to the level of our conscious experience what has remained only as a suggestion at the barest minimum of our being.

Now we have only logically come to a conclusion that the whole universe seems to have at its core the reality of Being-Consciousness, Existence-Knowledge, Sat-Chit; but, logical assertion should become part of feeling and experience. Mere intellectual analysis does not suffice in a world where instincts are strong. We know very well how logically and scientifically we behave in a court of law or in an office in which we are working, but we are poor, instinct-ridden people in our own families, in our little circles of private relationship. Our public life is different from our private life. We know very well that we are not internally what we are outwardly in external relationships. This is proof of the inability of logical conclusions to guide our life wholly. The strong emotions, feelings, instincts and sentiments, which have become part of our living, have to get blended with logical understanding. All the logic and

reason should go hand in hand with the deepest feelings within us. We should not feel something and understand another thing. Otherwise, we will be like people being convinced against their own will. As the poet put it: "A person who is convinced against his will is of the same opinion still." He does not change.

Hence, all the teachings go over our heads, mostly, because the teachings are on the surface of our life. They remain as communications in the empirical realm of our sensory existence. But there is a transempirical being in us which is subliminal and is not merely what we see with our senses. This has to be brought to the surface of consciousness. In a way, we are conducting a super-psychoanalytical inquiry where we bring up to the surface of consciousness not merely what is subconscious and unconscious, but what is spiritual. The Atman, the Self, is brought to the surface of conscious experience, so that the indivisibility of experience which remained only as a suggestion in the state of deep sleep becomes a direct experience in our waking consciousness. When we are conscious, we are not conscious that there is a divided world of isolated individuals. We become conscious of the indivisible connectedness of our being with the whole cosmos. Yoga is a movement towards this larger interrelatedness of our being, so that when we think in yoga, we think in the way the whole cosmos thinks.

## Chapter 7

### COMPARATIVE PHILOSOPHY ON THE ULTIMATE REALITY

There is an inveterate obsession in our minds which prevents us almost entirely from conceiving the goal of life as a practical reality. It remains mostly as a kind of concept and an idea, an ideal which is not easily reconcilable with the hard realities of the workaday world. It may be God Himself, but nevertheless He is only an idea and an ideal, a concept, an imagination, a possibility, a may-be or may-not-be. This suspicious outlook is not absent even in the most advanced persons, due to the strength of the senses, the power of the mind and the habit of the intellect in understanding things in a given fashion. We are discussing a subject called comparative philosophy; and, in this context, we would be benefited by bestowing a little thought on the conclusions arrived at by certain other thinkers also, apart from the Vedantic philosophers like Sankara with whom we are well acquainted and about whose thinking we have spoken enough.

There was a great man in Greece, called Plato. According to Paul Dyson, the world has produced only three philosophers: Plato, Kant and Sankara. There is some truth in what he says. There cannot be a greater philosopher than these three persons. I was thinking about this statement—why does Dyson say this. Finally, I felt there is some truth in it, whatever it is.

The idea of the Ultimate Reality is the principal doctrine of Plato. I started by saying that we are living in a world of ideas when we live a spiritual life—when we



behave religiously, conduct worship and mass, do prayers, do *japa* and even meditation. But there is a very uncomfortable consequence that follows the idea: that, after all, the Ultimate Reality is an idea.

Ideas are abstractions, notions, which are supposed to correspond to realities, and as long as ideas correspond to realities, they are valid. I have an idea that there is a building in front of me. This idea is a valid idea because it corresponds to the real existence of a building outside. Therefore, the validity of my idea depends upon the reality of the object which is in front of it. My idea itself has no reality. It is a borrowed reality. It hangs on the existence of something else outside—the building. But, if the idea of the Ultimate Reality, or God, is to hang on the existence of another thing, God is not a real being.

This is a very subtle difficulty that may trouble the minds of even sincere seekers. Don't you think that the world is real? It is not merely real, it is very, very real, hard to the core, flint-like—and no one can gainsay that it is. Perhaps, the world alone is. God is an idea that has been introduced into our minds by our ancestors, by our books, by our scriptures, by our professors, teachers and parents, and somehow we have been forced by the logic of these teachings to accept that there should be such a thing as an other-worldly existence. We have somehow reconciled ourselves with it: God must be there.

But, we are accepting the existence of God against our own will. We are hungry and thirsty, and this hunger and thirst of the body is more real than the idea of God. No one can say it is not so, whatever be our devotion to God. We

are terribly angry, upset and very much attached to things, all of which cannot be explained in the light of the supreme existence of God. It is so even in the case of advanced seekers, *sadhakas* and sincere aspirants. This subject is a principal theme of Plato's doctrine on the Ultimate Reality.

Socrates was a speaker, and he had many colleagues with whom he conducted conversations. Doubts arose in the minds of those colleagues. Ideas precede realities; this one sentence is the entire philosophy of Plato. The reality of the objective universe is subsequent to the idea of the universe. Here we have an echo of the great philosophy of Vedanta that Hiranyagarbha is prior to the cosmos of physical appearance.

The Panchadashi, the Upanishads and other systems of Vedantic thinking tell us that in Hiranyagarbha the world does not exist in a concrete form, as it appears. It is only an idea cosmically manifested by Ishvara, who is subtler than even the idea. Ishvara is only a possibility of the very idea that there should be such a thing called the universe. Hence, Ishvara would be subtler than even the idea which is Hiranyagarbha. Virat is supposed to be the animating consciousness behind this so-called physicality of creation.

Even in the Vedanta philosophy, all great men think alike; there is the same doctrine of the idea preceding concrete existence. But, we can never believe this. My idea that there is a desk in front of me cannot be said to be harder in its concreteness than the desk itself. I have an idea that there is a little table in front of me. Is the table more real, or is my idea that the table is there more real? Anyone with common sense will say that the idea is subsequent to

the existence of the object called the table, and the idea does not precede the object. Because there is a table, we think that there is a table. We have an idea that there is an object, so the idea that there is an object is a consequence of the existence of the object. Therefore, God must be a subsequent, and not a precedent.

These questions arose before Socrates. How can we say that an idea is prior to the universe? How can there be an idea unless the universe exists? How can we have a thought about a thing unless the thing exists? How do we say that things are subsequent and ideas are precedent? If God is Supreme Consciousness, how could consciousness be prior to existence? Consciousness is always of something existing. If something is not there, then there cannot be consciousness. What is meant by saying merely consciousness, awareness, understanding, thinking, feeling? They cannot have any significance unless they are connected to a thing which is already there in existence.

This is the gross realistic doctrine of empirical philosophers, which was highlighted by British thinkers like Locke, Berkeley and Hume, but already anticipated, in a different fashion, by people like Plato and Aristotle. This is a very terrible problem before us, notwithstanding the fact that we are devotees of God and honest, religious thinkers.

The concreteness of the world and the reality of the things that we see with our eyes and contact with our senses cannot be abrogated merely by the notion that ideas are precedent. Ideas cannot be precedent as long as we are accustomed to thinking in the way we are thinking today. "Here is a man coming." I am saying this. The man is there

and, therefore, I have an idea that he is coming. If the man were not there, the idea could not be there. It is not that I think the man first and then the man comes. The man is there, and the idea comes afterwards. So, realism has this great forte behind it. There cannot be an idea unless an object already exists. God must be afterwards; the world is first. Here is materialism, which has a very strong ground. Consciousness cannot be there unless an object is there; so, what we call consciousness is only an exudation, a manifestation, a kind of effect from an already-existing material stuff. This is crude materialism, realism—impossible to face easily. We cannot answer these people. We will not be able to say anything about this matter. “Ah, yes. There is something in it.”

This problem is an indication of the state in which we are placed—how far we are advanced spiritually. Where is our spirituality? Where is our God-love and God-consciousness? Incidentally, this is not a joking matter or a humour. It is a very, very serious thing for us. Whatever be the study of our scriptures, we cannot get out of the idea that we are living in a very, very hard, flint-like, iron-like, steel-like world; and we can never accept that the idea of the world is in any way more real than the world.

But, Plato affirmed that ideas are more real than the world. The universals are precedent to the particulars. Horse-ness is prior to horse. It is very strange, indeed, to say this. Horse-ness is prior to horse. Table-ness is prior to table. Building-ness is before building. How can there be building-ness before the building came into being? How can there be horse-ness unless there is a horse? These

questions were hurled at Socrates. We cannot easily answer these questions. We know very well that there cannot be horse-ness unless the horse is already there.

Man's mind is very poor. It is not wholly philosophical, and we cannot understand how there can be an idea of a thing unless the thing is already there. How can God's consciousness be there if God is only consciousness minus the consciousness of something? We have been indoctrinated into this belief not merely in this life but throughout the lives that we have lived in earlier incarnations. The difficulty arises on account of the impressions created in our minds by hanging on objects of sense.

We have passed through many births. The little spiritual aspiration that we have is a late development in the process of our evolution. Let each one of us think: Since when are we thinking of God, and religion, and spirituality? Since how many years? Compared to these few years of our ardent adventure in the spiritual field, what is that long, long time which we have passed in other types of thinking? The heavy weight of the errors in our thoughts in our previous lives hangs on us so vehemently and powerfully that our little aspiration is submerged. Therefore, again and again we have suspicions in our minds; doubts are galore. Very great difficulties are there. Am I fit? Am I right? Is there some substance in it? Am I living in a foolish world, in a fool's paradise? Nothing is coming. I have been meditating for years, and nothing is visible. Or, I may be hoodwinked even if there is some point in it. Or, all is a waste. These doubts can come, even to sincere seekers.

The idea of the world is not dependent upon the world; the world is dependent upon the idea. Berkeley said this in a crude form, but Plato affirmed it in a more philosophical fashion. We can never stomach this idea that consciousness is precedent to matter, though we have attempted to convince ourselves that consciousness is our essential reality by an analysis conducted of the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep. We have already understood this, to some extent. We have gone into the depths of our condition in deep sleep where we appear to exist only as Pure Consciousness, minus association with the body and mind. If we could exist as Pure Consciousness, minus the body and mind, in the state of deep sleep, that must have been what our stuff is. This so-called body of ours, this hard substance of contactual experience and the mind which thinks of it, are subsequent evolutes. If they were the ultimate realities that we are, they would have also persisted in deep sleep. But, we had no such experience there; we were bare, featureless, unobjectified Being-Consciousness only. This was what we learned in our earlier analysis of the condition of sleep.

What were we in deep sleep if not man, not woman, not human being, not body, not mind, not anything, not any object? What were we, then? A mere bare, impersonal, indefinite, undivided awareness is what we were. This consciousness that we were is the same as consciousness of being, inseparable from being—being inseparable from consciousness, consciousness inseparable from being.

This is the great conclusion of Vedanta philosophy. Being-Consciousness, Sat-Chit, was our essential nature—

not body, not mind, not the world, not anything the senses can see or perceive. Then, wherefrom this body came? What is this body? What is this world? What are these brick buildings, and stony mountains, and flowing rivers, and the burning sun? What is all this? From where have they come? They are, also, ideas.

When Berkeley said that all the trees and mountains and heaven and earth are only ideas, later on Samuel Johnson, it seems, kicked a brick and said, "I hereby refute Berkeley." Kicking a brick does not refute Berkeley. It is a very prosaic way of confronting him. There was a mistake in the thinking of Samuel Johnson. We cannot kick a building and say that we have refuted Berkeley, because Berkeley includes Johnson himself, not merely the brick, in his doctrine of ideas.

Electric repulsions can produce a sensation of hardness, as those of us who have had an electric shock may know. If we touch a live wire with high voltage flowing through it, we will have a sensation of terrible weight and solidity. Though nothing is there, we will feel as if a mountain is hanging on our hand. Anyone who had a shock knows what it is. How can this idea of the heavy weight of a mountain hanging on our hand be a sensation when there was nothing whatsoever except the fact that we touched a live wire?

Why go so far? Come to our own modern scientists. These solid objects, maybe of steel or granite, are constituted of electric energy—pure energy, electric energy; we may say, electricity itself. What is electricity? It cannot be seen. It has no weight; it has no dimension, no length,

breadth or height. A thing which has no length, breadth or height is the raw material of heavy substances which have length, breadth and height. This indescribable continuum of force and motion has become atoms and molecules, and hard things like mountains and the solar system.

Go further, still. The doctrine of relativity lands us in a mere idea of the cosmos. The space-time stuff which they speak of as the ultimate substance is not a hard reality. Neither space nor time can be called a hard reality like a table. Researchers in the science of physics seem to conclude that the hardest realities, like hills and rocks, are constituted of configurations of the space-time continuum. We cannot understand what this space-time continuum is except as a mathematical heap of point events in the brain of the scientist—but, not a human scientist. Here Berkeley rectified himself when he said that the world is an idea—not of Mr. Berkeley, but of a larger being in whom all the individual ideas are also included. We again come to Hiranyagarbha in Vedanta philosophy, though such words are not used by Berkeley or Plato.

Plato uses the words “the idea of the good”, a strange definition of his. We may say “idea of God”, if we like. It is not idea of God, but idea which is God. Actually, God is only an idea—not our idea, but idea as such, which is the cause of all other ideas. The Yoga Vasishtha goes into great detail in the explanation of this point that the whole universe is mind—not my mind or your mind, but mind as such—pure, impersonal existence of which our minds, thoughts, feelings and volitions are ripples. Read the great book of Samuel Alexander, *Space, Time and Deity*, which is



a great exposition of the structure of the universe, made on the basis of the modern theory of relativity.

The physical universe, which is so hard and real, is only space-time. Space-time is not a substance; it is not something tangible. We cannot touch it. We cannot see it. We cannot sense it. We cannot taste it. We cannot smell it. And a thing which cannot be sensed is not a reality at all. But, that is *the* reality. It configures, pinpoints, pressurises itself into a movement, a force. Space-time becomes motion, manifesting itself into primary qualities of length, breadth and height. Remember that length, breadth and height do not mean the length, breadth and height of substances; they have never come into being.

These are difficult things that only a mathematician will understand or a purely impersonal thinker will be able to appreciate. How can there be the conception of length, breadth and height unless objects are there? But space-time is itself without dimensions; it has no dimensions. It is a four-dimensional thing, not a three-dimensional substance; and, we do not know what a four-dimensional thing is. It is only an idea, a meaningless thing for us. It becomes primary qualities like length, breadth and height, etc. Geometrical patterns are called primary qualities, which manifest themselves as secondary qualities of colour, sound, taste, smell, etc. The world has not come into being yet. We have only *tanmatras*—*shabda, sparsa, rupa, rasa* and *gandha*, says the Vedanta philosophy. *Shabda, sparsa, rupa, rasa* and *gandha*—sound, touch, etc.—are not substances, but are principles behind the objects which produce these sensations. The world is not earth, water,

fire, air and ether, hard substances, but is *shabda*, *sparsa*, *rupa*, *rasa* and *gandha*, comparable to the secondary qualities of Aristotle and Plato, and the modern scientists.

Oh, what a wonder! We seem to be living in a dreamland, like Alice in Wonderland. We are not living in the world as it appears. The primary qualities condensing themselves into secondary qualities of sensations solidify themselves, as it were, into hard realities like the heaviness that we feel when we get an electric shock. Thus, by these conclusions it appears that the solidity and the substantiality of this physical world is comparable to the solidity and the substantiality of the mountain that we felt weighing heavy in our hand when we had a high voltage shock. Does the world exist? No one knows.

Our own body is also of the same nature. This substantiality of the world, which has been reduced to practically nothing but a sensation and an idea of a cosmic existence, also includes the very notion of our body so that, by these conclusions, we also go, and the scientist also goes. Sir Arthur Eddington said that no scientist can live in this world without going mad. Fortunately, he did not want to go mad—because with these conclusions, no one can exist here for three minutes. Buddha said that a really perceiving individual cannot exist in this world for three days. He will melt into nothing. But that perception has not arisen in us; that is the reason why we are very happy here. Therefore, ignorance is the cause of our very comfortable existence.

This comparative study of Eastern conclusions with Western discoveries seems to make us feel that all great men think alike—whether Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, or

Acharya Sankara or Vidyaranya Swami. Ideas, therefore, are not ideas of things which are previous to the ideas, just as space and time are not subsequent to the substances we call the objective world. They are precedent to the objective world.

It is a fine conclusion of Sir James Jeans, for instance, that God must be a mathematician. It is not a man thinking mathematical points, but mathematics itself. How can there be only the thought of mathematics, without a person thinking mathematics? He says it is a mathematical consciousness, highly abstract, purely impersonal, and the universe is nothing but conceptions of mathematics. Today we are in this world of modern physics; and, what is Hiranyagarbha, what is Ishvara, but these conceptions in the Sanskrit language? What are *shabda*, *sparsa*, *rupa*, *rasa* and *gandha*? They are only conceptual precedents of the hard substances called earth, water, fire, air and ether—including our physical bodies. We can imagine why we have difficulties in meditation, why we cannot do *japa*, we cannot do prayer, we get angry over little things and we fly at the throat of another. It is because we are yet to be spiritual. Religion has not yet entered us fully. We are playing jokes with God, at least for now.

These deeper truths cannot easily enter our minds, because we are very busy bodies—with bricks and mortar, vegetables, tea and coffee. These are greater realities than these supernal ideas that are the contents of our religious and spiritual consciousness. I raised these ideas before you to bring about a comparison between the great thinkers of the East like Acharya Sankara, the Upanishads and the

Bhagavadgita, and Western thinkers like Plato, Aristotle and Kant. They seem to think alike, only in different languages and giving different definitions.

We are now face to face with a great reality, the God of the cosmos. We have passed through an analysis. If you remember what I told you earlier, in the preceding lessons, we have conducted a study of the essential nature of the human being by a study of the three states of consciousness—waking, dream and deep sleep. We studied epistemological processes, the perception of the world, how we come in contact with things, and how we know that the world exists at all. This, too, we have concluded. Many of you may not remember it; but, think over it.

Now we are facing the third principle, the Ultimate Reality of the cosmos. Call it the Absolute, call it Sat-Chit-Ananda, God, Ishvara, Hiranyagarbha, Virat—whatever it is. Here, true religion begins. Real religion is an awareness of the presence of the Supreme Being. It is well said that religion begins where intellect ends, where reason fails. When religion commences to control our life, we cease to be a mere intellectual scientist or philosopher. We are no more a thinker, but a person who lives Reality. Religion is living Reality, and not merely thinking Reality or analysing it academically. All this has been gone over already in our earlier lessons. We have thought enough philosophically and academically, and we shall not touch this subject again.

We shall enter into true religion, which is God-consciousness itself in some proportion, in some measure, in a modicum. To face God and to encounter Him in our actual life is to live religion. Thus, religion is not ringing a

bell, waving a light or chanting a mantra; it is encountering God face to face. Religion is superior to philosophy, if we understand religion in the true sense of the term. Religion is not Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism. It is the art of envisaging God-being—man melting like ice vanishing before the blaze of the sun. When the sun of God-consciousness rises, this hard substance called body-consciousness evaporates into an ethereal nothing. Gradually, we begin to approximate God-being.

The life of religion is the way of gradual approximation to God-consciousness. Here, true love begins to preponderate in our lives. We do not merely think God as philosophers and academicians and professors; we love God. And, we cannot love a thing which is not really there. We cannot love a thing which is only an idea, a concept in our mind. All love is an urge of the soul to contact that which it feels is a hard reality in front of itself. Every love is God-love, finally. The final stuff of the universe may be said to be love.

There is some secret meaning in the last verse of the eleventh chapter of the Bhagavadgita, where we are told that *bhakti* is supreme: *bhaktya tu ananyaya sakya aham evam vidha. Naham vedair na tapasa na danena na cejyaya; sakya evam-vidho drashtum.* The *bhakti* that Sri Krishna speaks of towards the end of the eleventh chapter is not the ordinary obeisance to an idol. It is not a mass that is performed in a church. It is a melting of our being before the Absolute. Therefore, Bhagavan Sri Krishna says, “Not charity, nor philanthropy, nor study, nor austerity is capable of bringing about this great vision that you had,

Arjuna.” *Na veda yajnadhyayanair na danair na ca kriyabhir na tapobhi rugraih; evam rupah sakyah aham nr-loke. Bhaktya tu ananyaya sakyah.* “Only by devotion can I be seen, contacted.” *Jnatum drastum ca tattvena pravestum.* “I am capable of being known, seen and entered into.” Three words are used towards the end of the eleventh chapter of the Bhagavadgita: ‘knowing’, ‘seeing’ and ‘entering’. Arjuna knew and saw, but never entered into it. Therefore he was the same Arjuna even after the Bhagavadgita. He never merged into the Supreme Being.

Religion is knowing, seeing and entering into. Knowing is considered by such thinkers like Ramanuja, the great propounder of the Visishtadvaita philosophy, as inferior to devotion. I am now digressing a little from the point that I was discussing into another thing altogether, which is also interesting. Ramanuja said that knowledge, or *jnana*, is not equal to *bhakti*; and Acharya Sankara said that *jnana* is superior to *bhakti*. It may appear that they oppose each other, though really there is no opposition. They have laid emphasis on different aspects of the same question. Why does Bhagavan Sri Krishna say that nothing except *bhakti* can make us fit to see the vision of God? He seems to be speaking like Ramanuja, and not like Sankara. But they are saying the same thing in different ways. There is no contradiction between them. Knowing, seeing and entering into signify the processes of contacting God by degrees.

In Vedantic parlance, there are two types of knowledge: *paroksa jnana* and *aparoksa jnana*. *Paroksa* is indirect knowledge, and *aparoksa* is direct knowledge. That God exists is indirect knowledge; that I am inseparable from

God-being is direct knowledge. Now we do not feel that we are inseparable from God's being. That knowledge has not come to us. We have not entered such a height of religious consciousness as to be convinced that we are inseparable from God's existence. But we are convinced enough to feel that God exists. At least, the people seated here are perhaps convinced that God must be. He is. Circumstances compel us to feel confident that God must be; God is. But, we have not gone to such an extent as to feel that we are inseparable from Him. That is a little higher stage. We have known in an indirect way. *Jnana* has come, but *darshana*, or the vision of God, has not come.

We are not seeing the Virat in front of us, notwithstanding the fact that we are seeing the Virat. This whole cosmos is that; but we have somehow segregated our personality from this Virat-consciousness. A cell in the body is seeing the body as if it is outside it. The way in which we are seeing the universe now is something like the a particular organism called a cell in the body separating itself in notion—not really, of course—from the body organism, and looking at the body. What would be the condition, the experience, of a cell in our own body notionally isolating itself from the organism to which it belongs and considering the body as a world outside it? You can imagine the stupidity of it.

This is exactly what we are doing. We think that the world is outside us because we fly into space and drive in a motorcar on the road, because a peculiar notion has become a reality in our minds that the world is outside us—though we are a part of the world. Therefore, the idea that

the Virat is an object of perception and the world is external to us is notional, and not realistic. All our difficulties are notional, in the end. They have no reality or substance in themselves. We are bound by our minds, our thoughts, our feelings and our willing.

Hence, when Acharya Sankara says that *jnana* is superior and Ramanuja says that *bhakti* is superior, they are saying the same thing. By *bhakti*, Ramanuja means that love of God which supersedes intellectual activity, or mere knowing that God exists; and when Sankara says that *jnana*, or knowledge, is superior, he means that knowledge which is identical with being and which is the same as *parabhakti*, or love of God, where the soul is in communion with the being of God.

The highest devotion is the same as the highest knowledge. *Jnana* and *parabhakti* are the same. *Gauna bhakti*, or the secondary love of God, which is more ritualistic and formal, is inferior; but, Ramanuja's *bhakti* is the surging of the soul and the melting of the personality in the experience of God. It is to become mad with God-love, as we hear in the case of Spinoza, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Tukharam, etc. Their *bhakti* was not simply the love of God that a churchgoer or a temple-goer has. It is a kind of ecstasy in which the personality has lost itself in God-being. That is *jnana*, and that is *bhakti*. In the ultimate reaches, there is no difference between Ramanuja and Sankara; and, Bhagavan Sri Krishna's dictum is of a similar character.

Now, while we are discussing the final point in our studies, we are gradually losing attachment to this obsessive



notion that we are tied up to this little Mr. and Mrs. body, and that we are located in a physical world called India, America, Japan, etc.; and we are slowly trying to become citizens of a larger dimension, which is wider than this earth—perhaps even larger than this solar system and this physical cosmos. When we enter into the true religious life, we become real children of God.

## Chapter 8

### THE MYSTERY OF MOKSHA

God is Being; and the practice of yoga becomes relevant to God-being to the extent that it participates in Being, and does not continue to be merely a kind of activity on the part of the individual which is a process, a becoming rather than a being. This is a single sentence which explains the nature, as well as the difficulty, of yoga practice. All reality is being; and anything is real in proportion to its participation in being.

The human being is supposed to be, also, a being. We always say human being; we do not say human becoming. But, is man a being, or a becoming? The whole of the philosophy of Buddha, and of Heraclitus in Greece, and certain other thinkers of this kind has been that there is no being, anywhere; everything is becoming. “The whole world is fire,” said Heraclitus. “The whole universe is becoming,” said Buddha. If this is true, there is no human being. There is only a becoming, which looks like being.

It stands to reason, because we seem to be growing, moving, undergoing transformation—born, and then die. Every part of our body changes. There is metabolic activity in the system. What is being, here? There is no being; not one atom is existing, but acting. Every electron is moving, every molecule is moving, every cell is moving. Every planet is moving, and everything that constitutes an organism or a body moves with a tremendous velocity, for a purpose no one knows.

This is a world of becoming. “It is phenomenon, not noumenon,” said Immanuel Kant, Buddha, and others. We

are living in phenomena, and not in noumena. The thing-in-itself is out of the reach of human perception, which means to say that human perception is not relevant to being as such. It is, also, involved in a process called becoming. This is something very strange indeed that there is nothing real anywhere if reality is to be defined as that which is, and not that which is yet to be.

We are reminded here of the old saying that man never is, but he is always to be. This is why no man can be happy. No man is contented, because if we are, and we are not to be, there cannot be a desire for anything. Every desire, ambition, expectation, restlessness, and sense of inadequacy and finitude is an acceptance of the fact that we are not being, but only becoming. Being is stability, rootedness, fixity, completeness, self-sufficiency; and no desire can be associated with such a thing. We are not characterised by these attributes. We are restless every moment, asking for something or other, and are never satisfied with all that the world gives us. Man is becoming. It is human becoming, not human being.

This is the reason why everything evolves or devolves. There is involution and evolution. Transiency is the character of the cosmos, which means to say it is the character of everything that is in the cosmos—including man, and even inanimate matter. Everything is a conflagration. This is the language of Heraclitus. The whole universe is a conflagration of fire, because fire is not a being, it is a movement. So, the universe is a movement, man is a movement. Everything is a movement; and nothing that is moving can be called a reality in itself,

because movement is a tendency to restlessness and a lack of adequacy in oneself. Who among us can be said to be adequate? All our endeavours, projects, enterprises and adventures in life are indications of inadequacies in our lives. Everything that we think, feel and do is an expression of our lack, want, finitude, inadequacy. Yoga is the attempt, the art, of union with Reality—with Being as such.

There is such a thing called Supreme Being, a term we hear oftentimes. It is called Supreme in contradistinction with the apparent being that we also appear to be. We never regard ourselves as becomings; we are beings, only. I am, you are, this is, that is, the building is, the world is. We never say the building becomes, this becomes, that becomes, I become, you become. Such words are never uttered. We are somehow or other made to believe that we are living in a world of being rather than a world of becoming, notwithstanding the fact that there is no adequate proof to show that this is a world of being. There is an irrational conviction within ourselves that it is being, though rationality shows that it is becoming. Again I come to the old, old point that we do not seem to be as rational as we appear to be on the surface. There is a basic irrationality within us which argues in its own way, refuting every rational argument, because we cannot prove rationally that we are being, for reasons already mentioned.

But rationality goes to the dogs where instinct is supreme. Where desire is rampant, passion is strong and instinct preponderates, the intellect does not operate and philosophy goes into a limbo. Hence, we are not living philosophy; rather, we are living instinct, a type of

irrationality which looks like rationality on account of a peculiar phenomenon operating within ourselves.

The language of Vedanta calls this phenomenon *adhyasa*, or superimposition—the foisting of characteristics on something which actually do not belong to it. When we begin to see characteristics in a thing which are really not there, we call this circumstance a superimposition—a rope looking like a snake, a post looking like a man, a cloud looking like a city, a mirage looking like water, the horizon appearing as if it is touching the earth. These are all illusions, but they do not look like illusions. When they are seen, they appear real.

This is the predicament of human nature. We seem to be satisfied, somehow, with our lives, though there is every proof that we are never satisfied with anything in this world. Yet, we wish to live a long life, as many years as possible. In this world of death and transformation, we live a long, long life, only to suffer for years and years. No one would like to live a long, long life in a world of becoming, destruction, transformation and sorrow; but, we have a desire to live in this world. It is a shock to hear that we have to leave this world in spite of the fact that no one can be happy in this world. What a mystery! Have you seen one person in this world who is one hundred percent contented with everything in the world—anyone ever, since the beginning of human history? Yet, how is it that we are forced to long for an endless life in this very world of inscrutable mysteries? This is *adhyasa*, superimposition of characteristics upon ourselves and the world which really do not belong to the world.

There is a being which is other than becoming. The fact that everything is becoming is, also, a demonstration that there is something other than becoming. If everything is phenomenon, there has to be a noumenon. The changeful character of the world is an indication that it is not all change. There must be something other than change, otherwise no one would know that there is change. If the knowledge of the fact of everything being changeful is also changeful, then the person who makes this statement is cutting the ground from under his own feet. He has no place to stand. Hence, there is a Being which is other than the apparent 'being' of things which have a borrowed being—borrowed, because of the fact that the becoming process of the world itself appears to be a 'being' on account of the characteristics of Being transferred to it, as characteristics of a snake are transferred to a rope and vice versa.

The art of yoga, the science of meditation, is the endeavour on the part of that peculiarity in human nature which participates in true being and can dissociate itself from becoming, so that this apparent being that man is can enter into true being, which is Supreme Being. It is called God-realisation, attainment of *moksha*, salvation, Nirvana, Brahman, entering into the bosom of the Absolute, salvation of the spirit, reaching God—all these things mean our entering into the state of true Being, where becoming is naught. For this purpose, that which participates in the true Being within us has to work actively. And, our human phenomenal nature is not adequate for this purpose.

Again we come to that old, old point that meditation does not mean thinking through the mind or doing anything through the body, because both the body and the mind are parts of phenomenon, and phenomenon cannot reach noumenon. Only the noumenon can know the noumenon; God knows God. It is being that participates in being, not becoming one with being. The empirical characteristics in us have to be transcended by the effort of a non-empirical substance within us—the presence of which is the reason why we are conscious that we are finite and restless, and the longing for this thing and that thing.

The longings of man are indications enough of the fact that he is Being, essentially, though he appears to be becoming, outwardly. We belong to two worlds at the same time—the world of phenomena and the world of noumena. We are empirical; we are, also, transcendent. We are in this world; also, we are not in this world. Because of the fact that a part of our being, or nature, is in this world, we are subject to the transformations and the griefs that are concomitant with this phenomenal existence. But, inasmuch as we are not entirely engulfed in phenomenal becoming, there is, also, a transcendent spark within ourselves. We think of such things as infinitude, eternity, immortality, salvation, and perfection.

The root within us is Being; the crust of us is becoming. We have the five *koshas*: *annamaya*, *pranamaya*, *manomaya*, *vijnanamaya* and *anandamaya*—the physical, the vital, the mental, the intellectual and the causal sheaths—the gross body, the subtle body, the causal body. All these investitures belong to the phenomenal realm

because they are subject to change and destruction. Birth and death are not of Being, but of becoming. Actually, there is no birth and death. It is only a name that we give to certain events that take place in the series of becomings. Just as we say that we are going to sleep and we are waking up from sleep, yet we maintain a continuity of personality in spite of our having lost the consciousness of existence itself in the state of deep sleep, there is no birth and death, finally. It is a continuous movement. The cessation of the existence of the individual, which we regard as death, and the coming into being of the individual, which we call birth, is an interpretation on the part of the phenomenal intelligence of man of certain abstracted forms or features of this becoming, not being conscious of the whole process.

Look at the Ganga River flowing in front of us. We cannot see the Ganga beyond Luxman Jhula, nor can we see the Ganga after Rishikesh. We do not know from where it is coming and, also, we do not know where it is going. Only a little bit of Ganga is visible here in Muni-ki-reti. This is our little life. Similarly, we do not know from where we came and, also, we do not know where we go, because our perceptions are not profound enough to fathom the depths of the beginnings of things and the ends of things. We see only the little bit that is in front of us. The whole process is a universal cycle. We are involved in a cosmic movement, and it is not that only I die and I am born, and you die and you are born, individually, independently, isolatedly, without any connection with others. It is a total transformation taking place everywhere, like the growth of the human body, where it is not that only one cell is being



born and one cell is dying. The entire growth is there, like the growth of a tree into hard timber. But, human beings are individually localised, tied up to body-consciousness and, therefore, are conscious only of the little phenomenon that is going to take place within the body. The entire linkage of this body, or personality, with other personalities is not the object of individual consciousness.

It is not true that only one person is born and one person dies, to the dissociation of oneself from everybody else. Everything changes every time, and everything is known to everything else. There is an interrelatedness of things. Every event, when it is born, is known to every other event in the world. The birth of every event is an impact communicated to every other event in the whole cosmos. Therefore, there is no such thing as individual birth. All birth is cosmic, and all death, also, is cosmic, but it appears as an individual coming and an individual going on account of the intense egoism of personality which abstracts certain features of experience into its own localised existence called the body, and segregates everything else—like the colour that we see in objects. Objects have no colour, really speaking. The leaf is not green; the rose is not red. The colour of things is only that particular feature which that particular structure of the object is able to abstract from sunlight; and, it is the abstracting character of the object that is responsible for the particular reflection of the colour. Otherwise, no one knows the colour of any object.

So is everything in this world. The locality of an object, or the stability of a thing, is an abstracted perception on the

part of the individualised consciousness wrenched out of the whole; and so, it appears as if everyone has an individual existence of one's own, while that is not true. There is a total movement—a total coming, and a total going. Everybody is in the same boat in the cosmos. We are participants in a single family of the universe, and no one is independent. Hence, there is no single suffering, no single enjoying, no single birth, no single salvation—no individual matter, whatsoever. But our minds are not able to understand this because the mind is only a handmade tool. The operation of this body is tied up to the ego-consciousness so intensely that we cannot see anything outside the body. We have to free ourselves from this entanglement by great effort, if our yoga is to be successful.

Yoga is a cosmic outlook. It is a universal activity. It is not my thinking something or your thinking something. Meditation is not some little, private adventure of ours in a corner of the room, but it is a cosmic endeavour in which we begin to connect ourselves with the forces that are in the universal environment. That is why oppositions and difficulties rise up, as if we are waking up sleeping dogs. The whole world begins to be aware that we are meditating.

The lower nature, which has a centrifugal tendency, resents any kind of attempt on the part of anyone to meditate in a centripetal fashion. This is a mystery, again. We cannot understand how things work and why things should work in this manner. There seems to be two types of nature, the higher and the lower. The Bhagavadgita makes reference to *para prakriti* and *apara prakriti*, the higher

nature and the lower nature—the higher one pulling us to the centre and the lower one repelling us from the centre.

Meditation is the effort of our consciousness to move toward the centre of the universe, while there is something in us vehemently working to move away from the centre to the periphery. All desire, ambition, passion, anger, greed is the centrifugal tendency in us operating as a counterbolt against the tendency to move centripetally to the centre. In yoga, we are moving against the current of the lower nature.

All forces are impersonal, finally; they are neither good nor bad—like electric energy. We cannot say whether it is a good thing or a bad thing. Fire, water—the five elements—have no ethical or moral characteristics; likewise is universal nature; likewise is anything. But, there is some inscrutable manner in which nature works. Man has never understood this mystery, up to this time.

It is recorded in the Yoga Vasishtha that when Rama put the question to Vasishtha: “Why should things be as they are; why should nature work in this way?” Vasishtha replied, “Rama, ask not this question. Ask me how you can get out of this difficulty. I shall tell you the way. Don’t ask me why it is like this; ask me how you can be free from this.” *Kuto jnateya vidite rama nastu vicharana. Katham imam aham hanyet evam testu vicharana*, says the great master Vasishtha in the Yoga Vasishtha: “How can I transcend this bondage of involvement in phenomenon? Ask this question; I shall answer you. But ask not, ‘Why have I entered into it.’”

Why should nature have two facets, the higher and the lower? We do not know. We do not know, because we are in it. Perhaps we may know it when we go beyond it—possibly. At present, it is not possible. The lower nature is a tendency towards diversity and the higher nature is a tendency towards unity. We have a tendency toward diversity in our daily behaviour. The impulses of self-preservation and self-reproduction are standing demonstrations of the strength of this diversifying energy, the centrifugal force, which insists on multiplicity rather than unity.

Hunger and thirst are indications that we have to exist in this body. We should not die. We have to go on plastering this body, which is of mortar and cement, with food and drink, so that it may not perish. And, there is the fear of the ego that even with all this plastering, the body will perish. This subtle suspicion is present in everyone. Whatever be the attempt made to perpetuate our body with food and drink, with tonics and medicines, it shall end one day. But the diversifying tendency of the lower nature warns that it shall not end, so it tries to perpetuate itself by the reproduction of personality. That is why hunger and sex are the greatest urges in man. Nobody can resist them. This is the impulse of the diversifying activity of the lower nature, which cannot be easily faced by mere human effort.

Herculean effort is yoga. *Api adhvipanan mahatah sumerun unmelanadapi api vanya sanat sadho vishamaschitta nigras*. This is, again, a verse from the Yoga Vasishtha. “You may drink the ocean, you may empty the whole sea with a blade of grass, you may uproot Mount

Meru and swallow fire itself, but the mind cannot be controlled.”

What is mind? It is the symbol of outward activity, the tendency to perpetuate individuality and diversity and to enter into mortality as if it is heaven, and nectar and drink. As a moth enters into fire thinking that it will gain something, we enter into the mouth of death under the impression that the world is heaven, milk and honey. The yoga process, therefore, is a hard job. No amount of ordinary effort will suffice, because the lower nature is cosmic in its operation and is not merely working within ourselves.

Who can stand this cosmic nature? Which person has succeeded? Not one. Yet, it is a necessity. It appears that we are born with this bequeathed inheritance of attaining Nirvana in the end, attaining freedom from this mortal existence. There is something in us which is divine, though most of us feel that the divine element is totally extinct in us. The way in which we think, feel and act is more brutish than it is divine and celestial. There is very little of the divine quality manifest in our daily life. We never behave like godly beings. Terrible animals are we, mostly. Yet, and a very great and important yet, there is some good that is at the root. Behind this dark cloud there is a silver lining. There is an angel behind the devil that man is, speaking in a different language—on account of which, we are seated here. Otherwise, we would be going crazy, tearing out our hair and running in different directions. Therefore, yoga is a possibility and a must, whatever be the difficulty before us. He is a hero who is able to control this impetuosity and

violence of the senses which, impelled by the lower nature, move in the direction of diversity. That is a hero, and not merely one who dies in the battlefield.

A gradual understanding of a widened form—an understanding that one is not merely a single person sitting for yoga or meditation, but that one is participating in a larger network of things, as threads are in the cloth—is what we have to initiate ourselves into before we enter into yoga. Yoga is not a personal action. It is not my work or your work; it is the work of the whole world.

Therefore, the notion that yoga is a personal endeavour is a misconception. No one does yoga for his own or her own good. That is not possible. Yoga is a universal adventure of the universal that is present in the particular that is man. It is the principle of universality that is in us that practises yoga, not the individuality that is in us. Therefore, yoga is not an individual affair. It is not my affair, not your affair; it is everybody's affair. Hence, *moksha*, liberation, is not my salvation; it is an awakening of the whole cosmos. This, again, is a mystery, and we shall not be able to talk much about how it happens.

Previously I touched upon the common features that can be recognised in Western thought and Eastern thought, or any kind of thought when we go deep into its roots. The world does not appear to be the thing that it is to the senses. "There are more things in heaven and earth than philosophy dreams of," as Shakespeare told us. We, also, are not exactly as we are; and, neither is anything else. "There is a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will," said the bard. However much we may play

antics like monkeys, there is a divinity superintending over us who takes care of us. Maybe this divinity has opened its eyes in the hearts of many of us. Maybe the people who are seated here are blessed ones—few in number, in quantity, but in quality we seem to be blessed ones; otherwise, even ideas of this kind will not arise in our minds. Even the desire to liberate oneself from bondage will not arise unless some divine grace is operating.

God is thinking of us, perhaps. The Lord be blessed! If God does not think of us, we will not be able to think of Him. We think of Him only after He starts thinking of us. Hence, it is not a great credit to us that we are able to sit here and think a few good things. The credit goes to Him Who is compassionate and undeservingly merciful towards us. The grace of the great Master Swami Sivananda and the blessing of the Almighty operate in a mysterious way in the little people sitting here. So, let us be grateful to the Supreme Being Who is thinking of us. He is definitely thinking of us; I am not joking. Otherwise, we would not be breathing here at this moment. Thus, when the spirit awakens itself to this consciousness of the necessity to liberate itself from bondage, it enters into the practice of yoga.

You have heard much about yoga, you have studied about it in the scriptures, and much is already known to you. But, in spite of the fact that you know a lot about yoga, every one of you must be feeling some difficulty with it. You may be having some sort of discomfiture: “After all, very little has been achieved.” This feeling that nothing tangible has been attained after years of effort may affect

you so seriously that you may even lose interest. But, you should gird up your loins and rouse yourselves into a new spirit.

*Vyadhi styana samsaya pramada alasya avirati bhrantidarsana alabdhabhumikatva anavasthitattvani chittavikshepaha te antarayah.* In this sutra, Patanjali says that there are many obstacles in yoga. There are nine in the long list I mentioned just now. Physical disease will hamper us and confine us to bed. We will not be able to think; we will not sleep. When we take a positive step in the right direction, in the direction of true yoga, these difficulties will come. We will fall sick. Whether it is due to our mistake or due to the rousing of the impulses or vasanas of prarabdha karma which are sleeping inside, we do not know. In the beginning, there is a setback.

And, even if we are somehow able to recover from this melancholic mood caused by the repeated physical onslaught of illness, oftentimes a mood of dullness, torpidity and a lack of interest will come upon us, as told in one of Buddha's stories: "I shall meditate tomorrow. After all, it is very cold winter. With very severely biting cold, I cannot sit anywhere. It is cloudy, and drizzling, and windy. When the sun comes, let us see how much meditation I do! Very good weather starts in April." But when April comes, it is hot. "Oh God, I made a mistake! It is so hot that I cannot sit inside and I cannot sit outside. When the rain starts, the weather will be cooler. See what I will do when the rain starts! Then I will start meditation." But when the rain starts, it blows horribly and rains like cats and dogs. "I made a mistake. When winter comes, see what I will do! In



winter I will do deep meditation. I will confine myself only to meditation.” But when winter comes, again it is cold. “Oh, I made a mistake!” So goes life, says Buddha. Neither we do this, nor we do that.

We go on thinking and thinking, like the bee that was caught in the lotus flower. It is an interesting anecdote. It seems that a bee was sucking honey from a lotus. The lotus opens when the sun rises and closes when the sun sets. Mad with the honey liquor which it was sucking from the lotus, the bee forgot that the sun was about to set. It was so inebriated with the taste of the honey in the lotus that it was stuck inside. “Very beautiful honey, tasty; the world is grand!” When it was thinking like this and drinking honey, the lotus closed at sunset. Now it could not come out. It looked up and thought, “I am caught inside. I cannot go out. It does not matter. Night will pass, the sun will rise, the lotus will open and I will fly away happily. Day will come.” While the bee was thinking like this, a mad elephant came to drink water from the pond and damaged all the lotuses, crushed everything to pieces, and the bee went with it.

This is what happens to unnecessarily brooding *sadhakas*. “I will meditate in Uttarkashi. I will go to Kanyakumari. I will meditate in Kathmandu. Rishikesh is no good; I will go here or there. This Guru is no good; that Guru is no good. This scripture is no good; that scripture is no good. I shall go on experimenting with various things”—just like the bee that says the sun will rise; and, the mad elephant of death comes and crushes us to pieces and we are no longer there. We are only brooding and brooding,

and nothing happens. We are neither in Kathmandu nor in Kanyakumari; death has overtaken us.

So, make the best of the opportunity provided to you just here, at this moment. The Sivananda Ashram lacks nothing. Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was immensely kind. He used to tell us, many years back, “You boys lack nothing. If everything goes, the Vishvanath Mandir is there. We have enough funds to make *kichari*. You know what is *kichari*. It is a simple meal of boiled rice and lentils, which the kitchen gives to you in the evening. This much you can get every day. The funds of the Vishvanath Mandir are sufficient to maintain you on *kichari*. What else do you want? You have got a forest behind the Ashram, a beautiful temple, and *kichari* to eat. I have given you everything. Be happy! Ganga is in the front; Himalayas are there as your parents. You have got a library with the best books, books that cannot be found in ordinary libraries.”

So, we are not in any way in an unfortunate condition. We have no reason to complain. God has blessed us, the Guru has blessed us, the saints and sages have blessed us. We are most fortunate people, here in the Sivananda Ashram today. Complain not. Gird up your loins to adjust your daily program so that it is conducive to intense meditation and the transformation of your daily duties and occupations into a mode of yoga itself, in the style of the Bhagavadgita, knowing that you are living in God’s creation and not in the Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh, Muni-ki-reti, Uttar Pradesh, India, or even on Earth.

You are not living in this world. You are not on this planet. You are not living in any particular country. You are

in a wide, wide creation of the Almighty Creator. You are a citizen of this kingdom of heaven which is controlled, ruled by the omnipresent, all-knowing God Himself; and, you can put your petition to Him at any moment of time, and you shall be answered. You lack nothing. You are immediately in the presence of God. Anything that you ask will be given, and when you knock the door shall be opened, and whatever you seek shall be found in this kingdom of heaven. Do practice. Enter into yoga. Be happy!

## Chapter 9

### THE MEANING OF TRUE KNOWLEDGE

God loves only Himself; He cannot love anybody else. This is the intriguing feature of God, the mystery of God, the greatness of God, and the glory of God—which is also, simultaneously, a message to us as to how we have to conduct ourselves in this world. How can we please God if He can be pleased only with Himself, and nobody else? We can please a person by raising his salary, giving him a cup of tea, asking him, “Hello, how are you?” There are also many other ways in which we can please a person. But, how can we please God if nothing can please Him, and He can be pleased only with Himself? “I am that I am.”

Here is the foundation of yoga practice—the rock bottom of religion and spiritual endeavour. All that we have been studying up to this time is a preparation for a great ordeal on our part—the ordeal of preparing ourselves for this final onslaught into this great, grand mystery which is called by various names as the goal, as salvation, as Nirvana, as beatitude, as God, as Ishvara, and such other epithets. “God pulls the world,” said Aristotle, “as the beloved pulls the lover.” The way in which this pull is exerted is not mechanical. It is not calculable like a gravitational force. It is soul pulling soul. Only those who have had experience of the soul’s activity in the world will know what the pull of the soul can be. And, religion commences only when the soul begins to wake up into the consciousness of its destiny—not by making merry with the body and the senses.

In Hindu literature there is an old story. There was a pilgrim who was on a long journey, and in order to take rest he went to an inn, a *dharmshala*, which was managed by a *panchayat*, a body of five people. This pilgrim asked for a little place to rest during the night and was provided with the inn's hospitality, and he comfortably laid himself down. After taking rest and enjoying hospitality and when everything was fine, he began to exercise authority over that inn. He began to say that all the property was his and the whole building belonged to him. This was an appropriation of property which did not belong to him, an authority which he unwarrantedly began to exercise over things with which he had no concern, which belonged to a body of people. And, when he thus exercised such an unwarranted authority, he was turned out.

This story indicates the predicament of the soul which, on its journey to its destination, takes a little rest in this body on this Earth. This body is owned by a group; it is superintended by deities who manage it through the senses. The body moves, acts and performs its functions by the operation of the senses which are, again, motivated by deities, divinities. The senses are agents, as it were, of certain authorities. The Sun rules the eyes; the Ashvinis rule the sense of smell; Varuna rules the sense of taste; Vayu rules the sense of touch; the Digdevatas rule the sense of hearing. There is nothing in this body which is owned by any particular person. It is a public trust, as it were; and a pilgrim who is allowed to take rest there cannot occupy it as his property—which, unfortunately, is what has happened.

One becomes conscious of a large democratic relationship that operates in the world, where property does not belong to anyone yet everyone has a right to everything in some measure, in proportion to the percentage of cooperation expected from each part of this large body of organisation. But the soul of man, due to some mysterious occurrence, gets entangled in possessorship, ownership, doership and, consequently, enjoyership. Whoever owns has to enjoy the fruits thereof.

In a railway train there was a passenger carrying a large quantity of sugarcane. He tossed several quintals of sugarcane into the carriage without any permission from the authorities—without any ticket for the sugarcane. He sat there, and it occupied practically half of the carriage. When the inspector came, he asked, “Whose is this?” The gentleman who actually kept the sugarcane there was afraid of saying that it was his, because he knew the consequences. He said it was not his. Everybody said it was not theirs. Everyone was afraid to say that it was theirs, because they would be hauled off immediately. But another passenger sitting there thought that because nobody said it was theirs, he would take it. So he said that the sugarcane was his, and immediately he was arrested. Then he said, “No, it is not mine! I merely said it is mine because if nobody owns it, I thought I can use it. But I didn’t know you would trouble me like this. No, it is not mine.”

These are all humorous stories which illustrate our own position in this world. Due to the imagined joy that seems to accrue from association with this body and its relations, we have become owners of this body and the proprietors of

this world. But when troubles arise, we disown everything and, finally, we are cast out by the owners thereof. The divinities take possession of the real property—the five elements which constitute this body—and exercise their true authority. The body belongs to the five elements, and it does not belong to us, who tentatively remain there as a tenants.

The soul awakens after many, many years of experience, ages of coming and going, receiving kicks and blows from all sides; and even after passing through hardships of every kind, one rarely learns the lesson of life. There is always a desire for pleasure and a hope that pleasure will come, whether it really comes or not. Human birth is very rare. Tradition holds that several million species have to be experienced, passed through, undergone, in order that the soul will awaken itself into human consciousness. But when one enters into the human level, he experiences a kind of itching. He scratches his body for a little pleasure.

There was a blind man caught up in a fort which had only one exit. He could not see where the exit was in order to get out, so he would feel all around the walls of the fort with his hands. As the story goes, there were eighty-four facets—to illustrate the eighty-four lakhs of *yonis*—and the blind man would touch these facets with his hands and grope to find the exit. But by chance it so happened that every time he was nearing the place where the exit was, he would experience an itching sensation on his head. When his hands were busy scratching his head, he missed the exit; and again he would go round and round the fort looking for the exit. Every time he reached the exit he would again

have to scratch his head, so that he would miss it and never come out.

This is the blind soul's struggle to gain an exit out of this bondage of mortal life; but when it is provided with a little, narrow, straight gate through which it can pass, which is the purpose of attaining this human life, there is an itching for pleasure and we go on scratching the body and the senses. The whole personality seems to be yielding to some sort of pleasure by scratching, itching, irritation, titillation of the nerves and, thus, we miss the exit.

*Yah prapya manusham lokam mukti-dvaram apavritam griheshu khaga-vat saktas tam arudha-cyutam viduh*, says Bhagavan Sri Krishna in his message to Udhava, as it is recorded in the Eleventh Skanda of the Srimad Bhagavata. Having attained this great blessedness of a higher reason with which the human being is endowed, by which we can have an inkling of the higher existence beyond the human level—having been endowed with this opportunity, one misses that opportunity. Such a person is a fallen one. Having ascended, he falls.

The discussions, the studies we have conducted up to this time seem to point to a very, very important, matter-of-fact duty that is ahead of us—the actual living of the knowledge. The lectures that you hear, the instructions that you receive, the information that you gather from books in the library, and other types of enlightenment that you gain by mutual conversation and discussion among friends and colleagues, is a kind of light which points the way that you have to tread towards the destination. But, it is only a pointer to the way; it is not itself the end or the finale of



your efforts. All knowledge in this world today is a type of information, a guidance, a torchlight. The torchlight does not walk for you; the walking has to be done by you alone, but the torchlight helps you in walking.

The knowledge that we gain in this world in the manner mentioned is called *paroksha jnana*, or indirect knowledge—not direct experience. But it is an indicator or a pointer to the nature of *aparoksha jnana*, or direct experience. All knowledge is futile if it is divested of the life principal, the Being, behind it.

Knowledge is not an awareness of something which is outside us. We already have that knowledge in plenty. We have scientific knowledge, artistic knowledge, and the types of knowledge we gain in our educational institutions. But, this is not knowledge which is identical with life. We are not happy with this knowledge. There is one touchstone by which we can have some idea as to the worth of our knowledge: To what extent are we better today than we were earlier, when we did not have this knowledge?

There are certain characteristics of real knowledge, an inquiry into whose nature will give us an idea as to what sort of knowledge we have, or whether we have any knowledge at all. A person endowed with real knowledge is happy inside—happy not because of possessing any external object, but merely because of the fact that there is knowledge. The very fact of knowledge itself is the source of happiness.

Knowledge is satisfaction. We are able to remain satisfied, contented, happy and delighted within ourselves merely because of the fact that we are. This happiness of

knowledge, the knowledge that I am referring to here in this context, does not arise from our relationship to other people or from contact with the objects of sense. We can merely be seated somewhere and we can be happy for reasons that only we know. This is the special feature of knowledge which is organically related to our being. Knowledge is not only happiness, it is also goodness, virtue and righteousness. A person with true knowledge will not do unrighteous deeds. He will not harm any person or do anything detrimental to the welfare of somebody else. No danger will come from that person to anyone else. Fearlessness is what emanates from that source of true knowledge. No one will be afraid of that person, and that person will not be afraid of anybody. True knowledge is, also, power.

When true knowledge arises, we are happy. When true knowledge arises, we give fearlessness to all; and when true knowledge arises, we, too, are fearless, and no one can frighten us. Knowledge is, therefore, happiness; knowledge is virtue; knowledge is power. Each one may touch one's own heart and feel the extent to which one has attained this knowledge. Are we happy because we have some knowledge? Are we endowed with some confidence in ourselves? Are we unadulteratedly good in our heart, or have we any tendency within us even to wreak vengeance or see the ill of others? These special features of true knowledge distinguish it from academic knowledge or learning, which is quite different from the vital knowledge that is Self-illumination.

I began by saying that God loves only Himself—a strange statement, but a statement with a profound meaning. When Moses asked God, “What shall I say that I have seen?” God said, “Say that you have seen that I am what I am.” The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad says that *aham asmi* was the consciousness of God at the time of the creative will He manifested at the time of creation. With all our effort, we cannot understand what all this means, because the senses of the human being are so very powerful and rush outward, like a flood, with such force that we are always carried beyond ourselves, outward in movement. We can never be aware of the condition where it is just Awareness, free from awareness of something or related to something outside. This “I am that I am”, or *aham asmi*, is a consciousness which does not stand in need of being conscious of something else. Not that it is unconscious of the existence of others, but the very question does not arise, on account of the coming together of the great I in an inclusion of all the little I’s, so that this affirmation of God is an affirmation of the whole world at once.

I am. You are. Everybody says “I am”. Even an ant feels that it is. There is a self-affirming attitude even in an atom and a molecule. It struggles to maintain itself by an adjustment of its organisation. The survival instinct, the impulse to exist somehow or other, visible even in the minutest forms of creation, is a feeble indication of the final structure of the universe and the aim towards which everything is moving—the direction of evolution and the goal of life itself.

Yoga is the union of the I of the seeker with the I of that which he seeks—the latter I being the total I, or the I which includes every other I. When we confront the object by yoga, in our deep meditation, we confront everybody else in the world. But this step is taken only towards the end and is a cumulative completion of the earlier stages of a similar type, where a gathering up of consciousness in this manner is effected by concentration on lesser forms of this total.

The universe is constituted of levels of wholes, or completions. Everything in the world is a whole, complete in itself; and all levels of existence may be said to be levels of wholes, or completions. Take the gross example of us being seated here in this hall. We are many persons here, but each person is a whole by himself or herself. We are not fractions of individuals. Even when we become members of a society or a parliament, and in that sense we may be fractions of that body called the society, the parliament or the organisation, nevertheless we maintain a wholeness in ourselves. Each member himself is a completion. No member feels that he is only a part or a fraction. Nevertheless, that wholeness which each individual member feels is a fraction of a larger organisation which is the thing to which he integrally belongs. Each cell in the body is a whole by itself, and the body is, also, a whole by itself. So, the little cell which is the whole belongs to another whole, which is the whole body. One whole begins to feel its association with another whole to form a larger whole; it is not a fraction.

Perhaps there are no fractions in this world. Everything is complete. Even a molecule is complete. Our little

attachments to things of this world, to family, relations, etc., indicate the impulse from within us to enter into larger wholes from the lower wholes that we are. We are not satisfied to be in a corner, alone to ourselves. We feel restless. We like to go about, talk to friends, shake hands and meet people in order that we may become larger wholes than we were earlier when we were little wholes sitting in a corner—though we were also wholes even earlier.

We want to become larger and larger wholes, to become rulers of a country, emperors of an empire, owners of the whole world or, if possible, of the whole of creation itself. Now, when we are striving for larger and larger completions of perfection, we are not actually moving from a part to the whole in a literal sense, but only in an indicative sense. Even the part which belongs to the whole is, also, a whole by itself. That is the reason why there is so much selfishness in individuals. If everyone recognised that he or she is only a part, selfishness would not work. But, there is somehow or other a wholeness felt even in the apparent whole that belongs to a larger whole. This is an impediment within us that we call egoism, selfishness. It is only the self-complacency felt by a part belonging to a whole, as if it is a whole in itself.

Why should this happen? Why is it that even a part begins to feel that it is a whole in itself? How is it that we are so vehement in our affirmation that we are completions, and we tend to become utterly selfish? The reason is that the great Whole is reverberating in every part, and it is indivisible in its nature. The indivisible character of the

original Whole makes itself felt as a sort of indivisibility in the little wholes, and so each one of us feels that he is an indivisible completeness. There is a satisfaction in feeling that one is complete, and this sense of completeness arises on account of a reflection of the original Whole.

But, together with this satisfaction arising out of a blatant selfishness or egoism, there is, at the same time, a restlessness attending upon every form of selfishness or egoism. There is an audacious satisfaction in a selfish man, an arrogance which speaks in the language of satisfaction; but, at the same time, it is utterly miserable because it is an assumed, artificial wholeness—a reflected wholeness, and not a final wholeness. God is the finality of wholeness, and that is why God can assert an I which does not have to undergo further transcendence to another I.

Each person in the world is struggling to maintain himself due to the love for this wholeness, which this little I is. The love that we feel—any kind of love in this world, whatever it be—is a love for the wholeness of experience. There are utterly selfish people—rare, of course, are such ones—who wish not to look at anybody's face. The tiger, the lion, the beast in the jungle is generally regarded as an example of utter selfishness, where it struggles only to maintain its own body, at the cost of everybody else. Yet, there is a tendency even in the beast to outgrow its little wholeness when it lives in a brood, in a community of its own species, and shows affection to its own child. Utter selfishness is a theory; practically, it does not seem to work anywhere. Even in the beast it cannot be seen wholly, yet it is strong enough. The tyrants and dictators of the world

manifest in themselves a little of the beast, which on the one side is utter weakness and on the other side is arrogance. The great impediment in the practice of yoga is the affirmation of the ego, which shows its head in various ways—thoughts, feelings, words that we utter, and our deeds.

The *pratyahara*—or the abstraction, the withdrawal, the renunciation, the *sannyasa* that yoga speaks of—is a difficult thing to conceive unless we are careful in the understanding of this mysterious process. There is a detachment and an attachment going on simultaneously in the practice of yoga. Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj used to quote a passage from Saint Kabir, who always replied: “I am attaching and detaching” when asked what he was doing. Kabir was a weaver who moved the shuttle back and forth, detaching it from one part and attaching it to another.

Detaching oneself from the world and attaching oneself to God—this is very easily said but cannot be very easily understood. We are not detaching ourselves from the world and attaching ourselves to God, if by that we mean that we are severing our relationship from one existent thing and associating ourselves with another existent thing. We are not moving away from ‘A’ to ‘B’ when we move from the world to God. Here is the vital aspect or part of yoga which is not quantitatively measurable, but qualitatively intelligible.

The abstraction, the *pratyahara*, the isolation, the aloneness that is required in the practice of yoga is an inward transmutation of a conscious outlook. It is not at all a severance from existent objects. The moment the soul

begins to feel an aspiration for its larger dimension, which is God, renunciation is effected automatically. The renunciation spoken of so much in religions and in yoga circles is the abandonment of the self-assertive character of the false whole, called the ego, and acquiescing in its true belonging to a larger whole, which is its higher Self.

Therefore when we move from the world to God, when we renounce the world and aspire for God, we are moving from the lower self to the higher Self, not walking horizontally from west to east or vertically from north to south. God is a higher Self within our own self, so that we are searching for our own self when we are seeking God. So, what is *sannyasa*? What is renunciation? It is a renunciation of the lower completeness, falsely assumed by the ego, in the interest of a higher completeness, which is the larger Self.

There are two selves, the higher and the lower, which are spoken of in the sixth chapter of the Bhagavadgita. *Bandhur atmatmanas tasya yenaatmaivatmana jitah*: Friend is the self of him who has conquered the lower self for the sake of the higher Self. Enemy is that self for whom one has subjected himself to the lower self and ignored the law of the higher Self. We are our own friends, and we are our own enemies. In renunciation, in *sannyasa*, we renounce our own self, and not anybody else or anything else. When we aspire for God, we are aspiring for our own Self, and not for somebody outside us. Thus, both renunciation and aspiration, *vairagya* and *abhyasa*, are concerned with our own Self where we renounce our self in one way and aspire for our Self in another way.



It is finally a Self-discovery that is the art of yoga. It is a renunciation of the self for the sake of the realisation of the Self. Very enigmatic is this mystery, of course. We are saying that we have to renounce the self for the sake of union with the Self. How is this possible? How could we renounce a thing and also attain the same thing, at the same time? The connotation changes, though the words that we use are the same.

*Tyajet ekam kulasyarthe, gramasyarthe kulam tyajet, gramam janapadasyarthe, atmarthe prithvim tyajet*, says the Mahabharata. For the sake of the family's welfare, one intractable individual may have to be renounced. For the welfare of a larger community, an intractable, unyielding family may have to be renounced. For the welfare of the whole of humanity—the welfare of the world, a whole country may be renounced. For the sake of the Self, the whole universe may have to be renounced: *atmarthe prithvim tyajet*.

Here is the crux of the whole matter. What is it that we are going to renounce? Are we going to get angry with the world? Is it a type of hatred that we are going to develop? Are we going to hate the world when we love God? Love and hatred are two aspects of the same attitude, so we cannot have hatred without love, or love without hatred.

The aspiration for God, the union with the great ideal of yoga, is love, no doubt, but it is not love which is the other side of hatred. We cannot love a thing unless we hate something else, because love is a concentration of consciousness by the exclusion of factors which are not connected with this concentration; so, that exclusion is

hatred. But in the movement of consciousness towards the destination of yoga, there is no exclusion; there is only inclusion. Nevertheless, in all practices of yoga and forms of religion there is an insistence on excluding something.

Life in a cloister, in a monastery, a life of asceticism, *sannyasa*, or a life of a monk, a religious man, a spiritual recluse, implies a sort of dissociation or exclusion for the sake of a holy pursuit. Every holy man is a renounced person. But, what has he renounced? It is very easy to give a blunt answer to this question and entertain a glib notion of what renunciation is. We have, generally, a very simple and commonplace definition of dissociation, exclusion and austerity. They are things which are well known to everybody.

But the salvation of the spirit does not seem to consist of the dissociation of itself from factors with which it is, somehow or other, associated at the back. The spirit is associated with all things in one way—though, in another way, it is not so associated. The spirit is pure I, complete Self, and not an object. The factor which somehow introduces itself into the selfhood of consciousness as an object thereof is the thing that is to be renounced.

We renounce objects. We are told again and again that objects of sense have to be renounced for the sake of the pursuit of the spiritual ideal. We have to understand, first of all, what an object is, in order that we may renounce it. An object is not necessarily that which we touch with our hands or see with our eyes, but this is the general notion that we have about objects. House and property, father, mother, brothers, sisters and relations are all objects which

have to be renounced in the interest of the spiritual goal. But the spirit, or the soul—the consciousness within us—is bound by something which is very peculiar. It is bound by a conviction that there is something outside it. As long as this conviction continues, it cannot renounce that which it regards as existent outside it. One cannot go against one's own conviction. It is a very difficult, hard thing to do.

Let any renouncer dispassionately analyse his own mind. Is he convinced that there are things outside him, or not? To what extent is this conviction deeply rooted in his consciousness? And, if we are logically convinced and feel fully certain that things do exist outside our consciousness and, somehow, because of a religious admonition we are estranging ourselves from this object, we shall pay for it through the nose one day or the other.

Salvation is not such an easy thing. *Moksha* is hard to attain because, somehow or other, we get caught in a vicious circle by any amount of effort on our part, due to a subtle, small mistake that we commit—though it may be little, like a sand particle sticking to the eye. Whatever be the extent of our religious and spiritual aspiration, we are somehow convinced that there are things outside us. This conviction is our bondage, and not the things themselves. Therefore, bondage is an idea.

We have heard it said that mind is the cause of bondage—*mana eva manushyanam karanam bandha mokshayoh*—but do we realise why the mind alone is the cause of bondage, and not anybody else? It is because the mind is only a conviction; it is not a substance. A conscious affirmation in a particular point in space is called the mind;

it may be within a body or outside a body. A conviction is bondage. A conviction is, also, freedom. So, from one conviction which is bondage, we have to release ourselves and enter into a larger conviction which shall be our freedom.

The world is mental; it is not physical. If the physical world is there, let it be there. We are not going to be concerned with it. We are not bound by it. We are bound by the fact of our conviction that it is there outside us; and, the conviction is a part of our very existence itself. As long as I am, you also are. But there is no 'you are' for God. Here is the distinction between the I of God and the I of man or the I of anybody else.

It is like peeling off our own skin when we try to practise real renunciation or austerity in the true spiritual sense. We are releasing ourselves from entanglement in the lower affirmation or conviction that there is a reality external to the self, because if the external is really there, attachment is unavoidable. As long as there is a conviction that the external is there, love and hatred cannot be avoided. How can we avoid being conscious of the existence of a thing which we are convinced exists? An attitude towards it has to be developed. We either like it, or we do not like it, or we are indifferent towards it.

Renunciation is neither liking it, nor not liking it, nor being indifferent towards it. All the three attitudes are out of point altogether. In true spiritual renunciation we are not liking, or disliking, or being indifferent towards things. We are rising above all three attitudes of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. But, what attitude can there be other than like,

dislike and indifference? We are involved only with these three attitudes.

To like the world is bondage. To not like the world is bondage. To be indifferent towards its existence is also bondage. So, there is a fourth type of attitude, if at all we can call it an attitude, by which our self—our consciousness, we ourselves—attain to a freedom where we attain a different kind of conviction altogether in which these three attitudes get subsumed, included, melted into liquid, as it were, absorbed into its higher being, and we need not have any attitude at all.

*Vairagya* is not an attitude. It is an attainment which is deeply mystical, highly spiritual. That is why we are so happy when we attain this conviction. This is knowledge. When this knowledge arises, we are happy automatically, because happiness arises out of freedom from bondage.

We have tried our best to go a little deep into what the nature of bondage is, and what sort of thing it is that we are expected to renounce in spiritual life, and how we can execute this modus operandi in an inward attunement of ourselves to a thing which is our own self in a larger sense.

## Chapter 10

### THE DIFFICULTY OF THE MIND

Yoga is a practical science, and it has a very rational foundation as its philosophy. I have touched upon practically all the important theoretical or foundational aspects of yoga. From now onwards, I propose to enter into the practical side of it in more detail.

People tell us, oftentimes, that there are different kinds of yoga. It is not exactly true that there are many yogas. They are different colours or shades of meaning given to a central approach which yoga really is. The foundations of yoga are deeply philosophical in the sense that they are related to the ultimate structure of things—the very nature of the universe and all creation taken together.

The art of yoga is a universal process. It is not an activity undertaken by any person. Actually, when one enters into the field of yoga, one starts shedding this individuality gradually, little by little, and begins to expand one's being into wider and wider areas until it becomes impossible to think except in terms of the whole of creation.

That we are now able to think absolutely individually, almost in terms of this body, is the travesty of the whole matter. We are sunk so deep in utter ignorance which beggars description that we cannot understand how our aim of life can be super-individual—not concerned with this so-called 'me' and, much less, this body.

“I wish to attain salvation. I wish to have a vision of God. I shall contact the Creator.” These ideas are puerile, child-like notions whose meaning is not clear even to the

person who makes such statements. No one can contact God as someone contacts an official in the government. This is quite a different matter altogether. But, we are human beings thinking like children, practically, and are totally bereft of the inner relationships that exist between ourselves and God's creation. We think in terms of family relations and our little nationality, our gender differences, political feelings, and so on. All of these have gone so deep into our blood and veins that we cannot actually think in an impersonal manner. It is practically impossible to be impersonal in the interpretation of experience since we are hard-boiled individuals, and it is difficult to melt this individuality.

If we read the lives of great saints and sages, whether of the West or of the East, we will find that it is not an ordinary task to transform oneself into a spiritual seeker, a truly religious aspiring soul, a seeker on the path of yoga. The austerities to which I made some reference previously, which one is called upon to practise for the purpose of this spiritual transmutation, are unimaginably difficult, because nothing can be more difficult than self-control.

We are always trying to control other people—controlling servants, controlling subordinates, controlling other nations. Everything is externally motivated. No one knows, no one can even imagine, that there is such a thing as self-control. One does not know whether it exists at all. Even to be told about it is a great marvel. *Ascharyavat pasyati kascit enam*: A wonder is this teaching! Wonderful is the teacher, wonderful is the recipient of this knowledge,

wonderful is the theme that is discussed. Everything is a wonder when we enter into this field.

Yoga, in one sentence, is self-control, self-restraint—the inhibition of the outward movement of consciousness—which follows, as a consequence, in the wake of this entry of consciousness into this body. We cannot understand what all this means when we are told that self-control is the withdrawal of the connection of consciousness with external objects consequent upon its entry into this body, or individuality.

This is all hard metaphysics for the layman, because this position that is stated implies a knowledge of everything that has happened to the individual before the individuality took place at all. If you can recollect what I told you in some of the earlier lessons, you would have noticed that the essence of our being is intelligence, a luminosity, a radiance, a light which does not shed its radiance on something else but is itself radiance—light shedding light on its own self. It is not a light emanating from some substance, like the light emanating from a candle, but it is the substance itself.

This, again, is a little difficult for us to understand. We are accustomed to think in terms of substances and attributes, as one distinguished from the other; the quality of a thing is different from the substance in which the quality inheres. So, when we speak of light, radiance, luminosity and such things, we imagine that something is there which sheds this light. Even when we say that consciousness is light, there is a subtle feeling that there is a substance at the back of consciousness, of which this



consciousness is a light or radiance, because this is the way we are made to think and to believe. But, here, the substance and the quality are identical.

Consciousness is not a quality of something which has consciousness. This problem arises in us because we are prone to think that we are individuals from whom consciousness emanates. We are the substance, and our intelligence is our attribute. “I am intelligent. I am conscious.” Such statements imply that I is the substance and consciousness is the attribute. “I am conscious. I am endowed with consciousness.” There is no substance which is at the back of consciousness. We have to try to reorient our thinking totally in order to enter into a new realm of understanding. The old habits of the linear logic of the mind and three-dimensional geometry have to be shed.

This is the reason why yoga is very difficult. The very purification process itself goes on for the whole life of the person. Why is it said that one has to live with a Guru for years and years? The reason is that this so-called living with a Guru, or a master, is the process of purification of the very outlook of life and the very way of thinking itself. We are accustomed to totally wrong thinking, right from the beginning, and this topsy-turvy thinking can be straightened in no other way than by the impact of a living being who is the superior, the guide, the master—the Guru.

A person who sees everything topsy-turvy due to some defect in the organic structure of his body cannot be taught anything, even by any amount of lecturing or teaching. It requires an organic approach, a medical treatment which is not merely a theoretical administration. We can never

imagine how our basic substance is consciousness. Consciousness is being; being is consciousness. We have been told this again and again—Sat is Chit, Chit is Sat. This consciousness that our being is, is infinite, essentially. Here again is a shock injected into us. How could we be infinite? How could any person have an infinitude at the root of his being? We are little bodies, almost nothings, insignificant before the magnitude of the physical universe.

Again, a deep analytical process has to be undergone in order to convince ourselves that our root is infinite. The study of the three states of consciousness—waking, dream and deep sleep—has adequately revealed to us that it is impossible to divide consciousness into parts, into bits of individualities or localised existences. Here, we have to exercise a little bit of our purified reason to understand how consciousness cannot be tied to a body and it cannot be partitioned into bits of process. Consciousness cannot be divided. It has to be undivided, and an undivided thing is, also, an unlimited thing.

This unlimitedness that is at our back is the reason for our asking for unlimited things in the world. We are, basically, unlimited existences—not ‘existences’ in plural, but one single existence into which we all converge at the root. The asking for an eternity of living and an infinitude of possession, which is the characteristic of every human being, is an outer expression of what we really are at our base. There is an endlessness behind us, both in space and in time. This endlessness, spatially within us in terms of magnitude, is the reason why we cannot be satisfied by any amount of possession in this world. Even if we are the

rulers of the whole earth, we cannot be satisfied. There is nothing that can satisfy us, because we ask for more and more things until the limit of possession is reached, which is nothing but the unlimitedness of possession.

At the same time, we ask for endless existence. We do not want to die, to perish in one moment. We do not want to exhaust our life, even after three thousand years. There is no limit to our asking for time, and there is no limit to our asking for space. Therefore, there is a mystery of an eternal asking, and an infinite asking, within us. And, if that had not been the root of our being, we would not have been kept restless here—asking, and getting nothing. We keep on asking for endless things in space and in time; yet, we can get nothing in this world. No one has purchased infinity or eternity by any amount of struggle or wielding authority or power as an emperor. Everybody has turned to dust and gone to the wind.

What is this mystery? Why does this happen? How is it that on one side we ask for that which is endless, and on the other side we seem to turn to dust? This is because the phenomenal and the noumenal pull us in two different directions. Because of the phenomenality of our body, our egoism, our individuality and our social relations, we can get nothing that we ask for. That which we ask for pertains to the noumenal existence at the back of our being; but the manner in which we conduct ourselves, or the method that we employ to fulfil these askings, is phenomenal. There is a contradiction between the methodology and the nature of the asking. While we ask for that which is permanent, we employ impermanent means to fulfil this wish. That is why

we go on asking, and get nothing, finally. Everybody asks till the end of life, and departs with open hands.

This is a philosophical argument proving that man is infinity and eternity, though, unfortunately, caught up in phenomenality. Yoga is self-restraint. It is a restraint of the phenomenal nature and a reverting to the noumenality within us, which is sometimes called the Self in man, the Atman, the Brahman, the Absolute, the Supreme Being. The noumenal existence is commonly present, uniformly spread out everywhere, so that when we enter into the Atman, or the Self of ours, we are not entering into any particular person's Atman, but the Atman which is the soul of the cosmos—as, when a ripple or a wave in the ocean subsides into its base, it is entering into the base of all the waves in the entire ocean and not merely into its own little root. The little root of this one wave is the root of all the waves because the single ocean is spread out at the back of all the waves.

The limitations of language and the poverty of the meanings attached to the words we utter make it difficult for us to explain the significance of words like 'Atman', 'Brahman', etc. We are hypnotised into a feeling that the Atman is a candle flame that is inside our body. This is unfortunate.

This substance of ours is the Atman. This hard thing that we feel as we are seated here—this solid, rock-like existence of ours—is the Atman which has solidified, concretised itself into this phenomenal body. It is more real than this phenomenal body, but due to our involvement in sensory contacts and in this body's operations, we may

imagine that this Atman is an abstract concept. We are unable to believe that it is a substance.

Can we ever believe that the whole universe is constituted only of mathematical point events, as scientists tell us? We feel that they are talking through their hats. It makes no sense. How can this hard world be made of mathematical point events? But, this is what the world is made of. It is an ethereal emptiness, finally—*shunya*, a void. There is some substance in this Shunya-vada, a doctrine which says that, finally, there is nothing in this world. There is some truth in it.

The world is made up of nothing. God created the world out of nothing, because there was no substance out of which God could have created the world. Again, we revert to a little philosophical background. “If this world has been created by God, out of what wood, bricks, mortar and cement did He create it?” asks the Veda. Where are the beams and the structural patterns of the world, out of which the world was fashioned? Where was the material for the world to be created at all when God alone was? So, He must have created it out of nothing, like a magician conjuring up a large show before a huge audience and flabbergasting them. God has, like a tremendous magician, *mayavi*, projected this great panorama of the beautiful universe out of nothing, emptiness. Like a balloon, hollow inside, so is this world. This hard substance, this strong body, iron-like body, is an empty balloon. There is nothing inside.

But, the apparent substantiality that we feel in our existence is the characteristic of the Atman, which is not an

abstraction. The reverse is the case. The idea of the good, the notion of God, and the consciousness of the Atman are not abstractions. They are the substances. They are the realities whose being is the reason behind our apparent feeling that the body is real, concrete, hard.

Hence, when we attempt self-control, restraint of the senses, we are faced with a terrible difficulty. What are we restraining, and what are we attempting to enter into after this practice of so-called self-restraint? We have a fear that we are entering into a nobody, a nothing, a void, a darkness, an annihilation of personality. Nobody can be happy by a long procedure of meditational practice. We get frightened. We want to get up and run away due to the fear that something wrong is taking place. Perhaps we are going crazy: “From this hard reality of the world, I am withdrawing into a void in meditation. What is the purpose? What do I gain out of it? What is this meditation, going on thinking some abstract idea, rejecting the hard realities of life? Oh God!”

Meditation seems to be a running away from realities into an unreal, ideal kingdom which is within the hat of a person. These difficulties will pursue us wherever we go because, after all, we are what we are. We cannot be anything other than what we are. We are the sons and daughters of fathers and mothers—and we are just that, even now. We cannot be somebody else. Just because we call ourselves yoga students, we do not cease to be sons and daughters of fathers and mothers. We think only in this way. And, we are commercial people. We think in terms of

give and take. What comes, and what for? What is the purpose?

These questions are out of point when we are struggling to enter into a non-mathematical, non-commercial, non-give-and-take region of Pure Being, where Being alone is the value, and not possessing, enjoying, etc., as we are accustomed to. Why is self-control, meditation, so difficult? It is because there is fear, suspicion, and doubt. We may not accept that we have any doubts, because we do not want to say that we are Doubting Thomases. We wish to regard ourselves as yoga students and lovers of God. Very good! Still, the doubt is there: “Where am I going? What is the outcome of it all, finally?”

The greatest problem before us is that the world seems to be a hard reality, and it cannot be brushed aside as if it is nothing. It is impossible to do so. And this body is there, terribly hanging on us like a hard rock on our necks; and we want to withdraw ourselves from that? Who can withdraw oneself from this granite-like body, so hard, like flint? Like iron, like steel is this body, and we withdraw ourselves from that—into what? What is there, into which we will withdraw ourselves? There is nothing, an emptiness. And the so-called ideal which we seem to be entering into by self-control does not promise any satisfaction. It eludes us, it tantalises us; and, sometimes, it appears as if it is deceiving us. And when we come back, we are the same hungry, thirsty, angry, fatigued souls, not the illumined, blissful, blooming, flower-like yogis who come out of meditation. We are exhausted, tired, perspiring, and aching all over the body.

We have somehow been forced into this conduct of yoga, but the inner being that we are is not permitting it. Hence, self-control, self-restraint—control of the senses, the mind and the intellect, which yoga is—is not an easy thing, because we know very well how valuable physical life is, earthly life is, and the joys of life are. To convince ourselves that there are greater joys than the joys of the world and the joys of the senses and the body, what an amount of training is necessary! How beautiful things are in this world! How tasty are the delicious dishes, and what a majesty and grandeur we have in the various parts of the world! Can anyone gainsay that things of this kind exist?

What satisfactions the world can provide us with! Are we not running after satisfactions, whether they are of the senses, or of social relations, or aesthetic and romantic satisfactions? Are they non-existent things? Who can say they are non-existent? And whoever, against one's own will, tries to hit upon the valuelessness of these great values of the world gets defeated, and does not attain to yoga.

Sri Krishna is posed this question by Arjuna: "Is this possible? Whatever you say, I understand, of course; but, is this possible? This mind is like the wind, like a gale, like a tornado. Who will tie it up in self-control?" "Yes," says the great Lord. The mighty teacher accepts that it is so. The mind cannot be controlled.

Why can it not be controlled? Because the mind is not inside our body. Here, again, there is a little misconception in us. The mind is not a thing that we can tie with a rope, as we tie up a cow or a horse. It is a power, a force, an energy—a permeating, ethereal movement of nature itself.



So, the control of the mind is almost an attempt to control natural forces; and, inasmuch as we have already accepted that nature is stronger than we are because it is outside us—it is very powerful, and it is larger than our body—we cannot imagine how natural forces can be controlled by a single individual. How can one person control all of nature? Again, doubt comes in the mind.

But, to come to the point again, yoga is not an individual affair. It is not you or me that practises yoga. It is not one person trying to control the powers of nature. Nothing of the kind is yoga. What we call mind is the mode in which nature operates. And, we participate in this mode. Thus it is that we seem to be working in accordance with natural purposes, instincts, desires, etc. Our desires are uncontrollable because nature is vast, and not limited only to our body. The whole world is working behind us when a desire operates—as, to give an example, the whole ocean is pushing a single wave. All the bubbles of the ocean push the waters up to form a single wave on the surface. This is the reason why our desires are, on the one hand, infinite in number and, on the other hand, incapable of control. Infinite are the desires because endless is nature. Uncontrollable is desire because we have made a mistake in imagining that nature is outside us.

It is these intriguing facets at the back of the practice of yoga that give meaning to the hard austerities that were, in ancient times, imposed upon disciples by great masters. Why should there be so much *tapas*, and hardship, and serving the master for years and years? We can imagine why it is so, and why it is necessary. We can never trust our

own minds, because our minds are nothing but a name that we give to erroneous thinking. Who can rely on this way of thinking? Who can try to streamline themselves in an altogether new direction, unless a higher power operates?

Often it is said that yoga is a matter of grace coming from God. It is not an effort of a single individual, because the effort towards overcoming individuality proceeds from the individuality itself. This is another thing which is very interesting about yoga. How can the feeble individual project a kind of effort which is equivalent to the powers of all of nature? Hence, individual effort is not adequate. Guru's grace is necessary—which means a higher, divine grace has to operate.

This is a mystery. All yoga is a mystery, in the end. It cannot be logically dissected into precise terms. How knowledge arises in us, how we are able to succeed in controlling ourselves, and how we step out of this phenomenal realm to the higher one is a miracle which automatically takes place. We do not even know how we wake up from sleep. Who wakes us up from sleep? Somehow, we wake up; something happens, and we are awake.

How did the idea of the existence of a higher life arise in our mind if not by a miracle, a wonder? We never created this idea in our mind. It occurred to us. The ignorant individual cannot manufacture a knowledge which is superior to that ignorance. No philosopher has been able to give an adequate and satisfactory answer to the question of how knowledge arises in a person. An ignorant person cannot create knowledge, because already we have accepted

that the individual is ignorant. So, from where does knowledge come? No one knows. It happens.

Everything in the world is a happening, and not a doing of anything. Hence, humility on the part of the seeker is called for—utter effacement of egoism and an acceptance of one's limitations. Pride has to be ruled out, totally—every kind of pride, even the so-called religious and spiritual pride which may insinuate itself into us without our knowing it. The smaller we become, the better for us.

When we reduce ourselves and subjugate our egoistic affirmations, the higher powers gradually enter into us as sunlight enters the room when the windows are opened and the breeze blows freshly; otherwise, there is stinking air. We need not have to create the air and sunlight; we have only to open the doors and windows. Such seems to be the requirement on our side. Mostly, it is a humble and simple attitude that is required of us, a goodness that is the characteristic of the exact position in which we are placed in this world.

With this little introduction, I shall try to touch upon certain further details of the way in which we can overcome this pressure exerted upon us by the phenomenal nature and receive the light of the higher Self—the noumenal existence which we really are within ourselves.

## Chapter 11

### THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-CONTROL

Whatever be the form of yoga that we may practise, the basic methodology is practically the same, especially when we go straight and deep into the subject. This is so because the world is the same for all; there are not different worlds for different persons. The structure of things is the same for everyone and, therefore, everyone has to pass through the same pleasures and pains of life, even as a pedestrian moving towards a destination along a particular road has to cross the same landmarks and visualise the same vistas as anyone else who treads that same path towards the same destination.

This path that leads to the destination of life is not a linear movement—like a road from Rishikesh to Delhi, for instance. Here is the difficult and, also, the interesting part of yoga meditation. In yoga, we do not move in any particular direction, though it is a movement in a direction. It is not in any particular direction because in yoga we are confronting God's creation. We are confronting God Himself. The Supreme Reality is that which is envisaged in the consciousness when we seriously undertake what is known as meditation.

There is no movement in the sense that we understand movement, though there is a total movement and a complete transformation. Since the world, the whole of creation, is connected to us in every fibre of our being, our movement towards the great destiny of the cosmos is connected to every fibre of our being. We are moving in entirety towards the great destination of the universe—not

moving partially or fractionally. Neither are we able to understand this entirety of ours, nor are we able to understand the entirety of the world, as long as we are subjected to the vision of things through the senses. We live in a sense world and, therefore, our idea of our own selves, as well as our idea of the world outside, is not adequate.

When it is said that we move towards the great destination of the universe, we may not be able to clearly grasp what this statement means. Who are we? What kind of 'we' is it that moves towards what kind of universe—and, what sort of destination is situated where? Questions of this kind may arise, and these questions cannot be answered abruptly, because we have never been educated in the cosmology of things. Our education is empirical, wholly—economic, sociological, political, and so on. A cosmological educational system has been ever unknown to us. But, it is necessary to have a sufficient knowledge of our placement in this environment called the universe, inasmuch as one cannot do anything unless one knows where one is standing.

This knowledge of where we are standing is called philosophy. We may call it cosmology, we may call it ontology, or anything we like. The knowledge of our exact position in the structure of things is the subject of all philosophical studies. Where are we sitting, just now? The answer to this question is philosophy. After having known our placement in the structure of things, we have to know what we are supposed to do under the circumstances in which we are placed. This is yoga.

So, *samkhya* and yoga represent theory and practice—knowledge, and the duty that is incumbent upon a person in the light of this knowledge. We have discussed the theoretical side sufficiently. How this world is made, what our relationship is to the cosmos, and where we are finally moving—this we have studied, to some extent, in a rationalistic fashion. The practical side is summed up in one word, meditation, but it has many facets and, also, several stages of its evolution.

Just as there is a series in the evolutionary process of the religious consciousness in the human individual, there is also an evolutionary process of the meditation technique. One does not suddenly jump from ‘A’ to ‘B’ in meditation. It is a growth and a progressive movement organically taking place, within as well as without at the same time. The growth of an organism is inward as well as outward. There is an internal transmutation simultaneously taking place in the growth or the maturity of an organism in relation to its connection with the atmosphere in which it is born. It adjusts itself to the atmosphere.

The adaptation of an organism to the environment in which it is placed is a part of its life. One does not live on an island. No man is an island, it is well said. So, when we grow, when we become mature, when we become adults, we are not individually, isolatedly, physically growing. We grow in every respect of the term. The adaptation of oneself to the environment is a part of the growth of the personality of the individual, whatever that individual be. We are not growing isolatedly, in a corner of our own house. We are also growing simultaneously with our environment,

because the environment is not cut off from us, and we are not cut off from the environment. If yoga is a growth of the stuff of individuality called consciousness in its movement towards yoga in meditation, it undergoes a transmutation together with every kind of relationship that subsists between itself and its environment.

What is the environment in which we are placed? During your lessons on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, you must have heard something about the limbs, as they are called—the steps or the progressive stages of the ascent of the meditative consciousness from the lower stages to the higher. If you try to properly understand their significance, you will realise it is a cosmological ascent. It is not an ascent from one rung of the ladder to another rung of the ladder, as is seen when a mason climbs to the top of a house. It is not a bifurcated rung. It is an interrelated rung, as every day is a rung in the ladder of the development of our person. Every day we grow, and when we grow we naturally move from one rung to another rung, but we cannot see the distinction between one and the other. It is a flow, like a river moving, and we cannot make a distinction between one part of this movement of the river and another part. That is the very meaning of movement as a flow.

Thus, the movement of consciousness in yoga meditation is a flow, and not a jump. It is not a sudden eruption from one state to another state. It is a very healthy, powerful, constructive, happy, integral movement in an all-around manner. It is not from a spatially lower position to a spatially higher state, because consciousness is not in space

but is a mystical, adventurous movement. The mystical movement is different from the spatial movement.

It requires a little training of the mind to think in this fashion. That is why teachers of yoga have always insisted on the purification of the mind before one enters into meditation and the advanced stages of yoga. One cannot even understand what all this means if the mind is impure and is filled with the dross of the usual associations of love, hatred, and the like. Nothing will enter the head, whatever be the thing that is told. We will get confused, that is all.

But, it is possible to succeed in this superhuman adventure of the human spirit when it is cleared of the obstacles and the impediments that come in its way in the form of obsessions, which are psychological in nature. All human beings, everything in the world, has an obsession of his own, her own, or its own, and it is very difficult to free oneself from these obsessions. An obsession is a peculiar kink, a kind of trait of the outlook of the mind which becomes vitally connected with it as a part and parcel thereof, so that our very way of thinking is that obsession.

The service rendered for years together under a Guru is supposed to work a miracle by itself. All training spiritually, and on the path of yoga, is supposed to be always under the direct supervision of a Guru. It is not a matter concerning books and libraries. Any amount of reading will not keep the brain clear, because books do not speak.

We have peculiar difficulties within us. Sometimes we, ourselves, may not know what the difficulties are that we have to face tomorrow, just as illnesses sometimes take different turns and a panel of physicians may be required to



understand the peculiar turns that the disease takes, and it may be difficult to know what can be expected. We are accustomed, right from our birth, to think in one particular manner. This manner has to change, root and branch. The initial thing is a transformation in the very theoretical outlook of things. Hence, theory is essential, though practice is more important.

Every doctrine has a theory behind its practice, whether it is physics, biology, or even engineering. The technology behind a thing is the theory; the actual implementation of it is the practice. We cannot suddenly jump into the practice without knowing the method behind it. The methodology, which is the foundation of the practice of yoga, is the whole educational process, which, in a few words, I have been trying to detail during the last sessions. We are connected to the world, we are connected to people, and we are connected to the whole purpose of this creation. First and foremost, we have to shed the idea that we are contained inside the universe.

When we open our eyes and look at things, we are not looking at the universe. We are looking at our own selves, as a spread-out body. In a way, when we look at things, when we see the world outside, it is something like a finger of the body looking at the whole body. I am giving you one illustration as to what the world is made of in relation to ourselves. Place yourself in the position of a single finger in your hand, and if that finger is to see the whole body, what will it think—or rather, what is it supposed to think? The idea, the notion, the outlook and interpretation entertained by this finger in respect of the whole body is an illustration

of the manner in which we have to envisage things, because the finger does not see the body; it sees its own self, inasmuch as it is the body. It is not a finger; 'finger' is only a name that we give to a part of the body. There is no such thing as finger; it does not exist. It is all just body. The legs, the hands and the other limbs of the body are the body. So, when we look at the world, the world is looking at itself.

I am not looking at things; you are not looking at things; the world is seeing itself. Here is a fundamental change in our very outlook of things. This will inject a shock into us, if we start thinking like this. The world is seeing itself. It is not somebody meditating on the universe. The universe is, itself, attempting to contemplate its own internal pattern. In a few words, I have summed up the principal position.

Now, this position wherein we are placed—this position which we cannot easily think in our minds, this position which is not the usual way of our thinking, this position which may give a shock to us if we go on thinking like this for a long time—is the real position of things. This is why life sometimes gives shocks. When reality enters into us, we get shocks because we are accustomed to living only in a web of unrealities, which seems to be very pleasant. But, we cannot always set aside the realities of things, though sometimes they give us a long rope to go astray. Occasionally, the truths of life enter into us and give us such a kick that we do not know what is happening to us. We seem to be shattered into pieces.

Why should we get a kick unconsciously and be shattered to our bones? Why don't we consciously enter

into this educational process of knowing the true relation that is between us and the world, and avoid this kick? Why don't we honourably and respectfully understand things as they are, rather than be forced to understand things as they are? If we are not going to learn the lessons of life honourably, we have to learn them by pain. These are the pains of life.

People learn lessons by pain because they do not want to understand them by education. They want the pleasantness of life and not the realities of life because, somehow, they have been given to understand that truth is not pleasant. This is very unfortunate. Truth need not be unpleasant. If truth is not going to be accepted by us under the impression that it is unpleasant, this unpleasantness will flood us one day and we will drown under it. Of this, history is a demonstration before us.

The world is not made in the way in which we think about it; and, our friends, relations, family and society are not related to us in the way in which we think. We are neither friends nor enemies. We are not in any way connected in a social fashion. We are connected in a cosmological fashion. Truth should speak, and one day it has to speak—if not today, tomorrow. But we are always thinking that we are human beings, socially connected in an organisational fashion. This is not true.

We are not an organisation. Human beings are not connected to one another as brothers and sisters, as fathers and mothers, as we are presently contemplating them. We are related in a different fashion altogether, which can be precisely stated as an impersonal relationship. We are not

social units; we are cosmical pressure points. We are not men and women. Such things do not exist in the eyes of God, perhaps—or, at least, in the eyes of nature.

Here, yoga speaks now, and it speaks in a different language. That language is to be understood by us, and we should shed our ordinary social language. Here is a highly metaphysical, cosmological, spiritual, mystical language which speaks in terms of the basic realities of life that we are going to confront in meditation and, therefore, meditation is not some social being thinking. It is not a brother meditating, or a father contemplating—nothing of the kind. It is a very serious event that is taking place in the whole environment in which one is placed. No event is a local event. Nothing happens in one place only. Everything happens everywhere.

But, we cannot understand that a thing happens everywhere. We see things happening only in one place, and because we cannot understand the relationship of an event with other events in the world, we are shocked when such news reaches us. There is a reverberation taking place in the entire cosmical atmosphere when any event takes place anywhere. All things belong to all things. Everybody belongs to One Being; nobody belongs to anybody else here. There is no personal possession, no property. No attachment is possible. Likes and dislikes have no sense.

What we call love or hatred is a meaningless thing. It cannot obtain in this world. They are laughingstocks, yet they are hard realities for us. We are very affectionate, and very hateful, but this has no sense in the structure of things. Neither can we affectionately hug anything, nor can we kick

anything. We have no right to do anything, because nothing belongs to us, and we do not belong to anybody. Our duty in this world is not in respect of one person, two persons, three persons, or this thing or that thing. It is a total duty.

The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, in the description of the stages of the practice, tell us that we have to learn the art of meeting, facing, encountering this world gradually, stage by stage—as we may face a tiger which we want to subdue or a lion which has to be brought under control. This should not be done at one stroke. We should not go and sit on the neck of the lion, thinking that we are going to control it and be the ring master. That is not the way. A long duration of time may have to be taken for the purpose of dextrously manoeuvring this art of controlling a wild relationship, which seems to be the thing between us and the world at present.

Everything seems to be wild, everywhere. Nothing seems to be under our control. We are totally unhappy. But, it can be brought under control. The very first step in the last stage of meditation, called *samyama* in yoga—I am not touching upon this subject because it belongs to another section altogether—is the control of the elements: earth, water, fire, air and ether, which are the substances which form our physical bodies and everything else. As I mentioned, this is the first step in the last stage, not of the first stage. There are other stages—*yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, etc. You may know something about all these things. In spite of knowing all these things, and in spite of living for years practising *yama*,

*niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana*, you would not have touched even the fringe of Reality, which begins with *samyama*—the control of the forces of nature.

The control of the forces of nature also implies the control of the forces of our own individuality and personality. Therefore, world-control is self-control, and self-control is world-control. They mean one and the same thing because what we are made of is the thing out of which the world is made, and vice versa. Hence, natural forces cannot be controlled unless there is self-control first, because we are miniature universes. The whole world is contained within us. We can operate upon all things by operating on the parts of the body itself. The *chakras*, as *tantrics* and *hatha yogins* sometimes tell us, constitute the points, by operating upon which, we can operate on the cosmos.

So, we are little universes moving here. Therefore, there is no point in trying to control anything without controlling one's own self. A restraint of the senses, the mind and everything of which we are made is the essential thing that we are called upon to perform before we try to control the world, before we try to see the gods and the angels in heaven, and meet the Creator Himself.

Self-control is the subject with which I started last time, and I am once again coming to the very same point. Yoga is self-control. What kind of self is it that we are going to control is a matter upon which we have to bestow some thought. What do we mean by self-control? Which self? "I am the self." This statement sometimes refers to the body. "I have come; I am here." When we say this, we mean the

body has come and the body is seated here. “I am hungry.” When we say this, we are referring to the *pranas*. “I am upset.” When we say this, we are referring to the mind. “I don’t understand.” When we say this, we are referring to the reason. And when we are asleep or we are unconscious, we are not referring either to the body, or to the senses, or to the mind, or to the intellect, but to something else—which is the residuum of our unconscious.

Therefore, when we speak of self-control, we have to understand what types of self are involved in what we call ‘ourselves’. “I am very unhappy because my son is sick.” When you make this statement, you are referring to a peculiar kind of self. Why should you be unhappy if your son is sick? In what way are you connected? That means to say that the son, also, is some kind of self. “I have lost all my property; I am very unhappy.” So this property, also, is a kind of self; otherwise, how can the loss of property bring unhappiness to you? Something happens somewhere outside yourself, and you are disturbed by it. Either you are disturbed, or you feel happy or elated. Your son is occupying a very high position in society: you are very happy. Your son is dead: oh, very sorry, indeed! So, look at this; you are somehow connecting yourself with your son, and his happiness or unhappiness is your happiness or unhappiness.

That means to say that you have got a vital connection with this person called the son, which is a conscious connection. Your consciousness has moved away from your centre and enveloped that person. This self is called a secondary self. In Sanskrit, it is called a *gaunatman*. It is not

the real Atman because, really, the son is not you; if he dies, you need not die. Your connecting yourself with him is artificial. Hence, the relationship of oneself with the son, wife, husband, property etc., is secondary. It is called *gaunatman*—not the real Atman, or the true Self.

There are three categorisations of the conception of self—the secondary, the false and the primary. All this is described in some detail in a very important text called the Panchadasi, which is a philosophical treatise. The secondary self, called the *gaunatman* (*gauna* means secondary) is that with which we externally connect ourselves, as with the children, property, etc., due to which connection we are either happy or unhappy. The false self is what I have already referred to—the body, the senses, the *pranas*, the mind, the intellect, and this unconscious base into which we sink when we fall into deep sleep. These are called the five sheaths, five *koshas*: *annamaya*, *pranamaya*, *manomaya*, *vijnanamaya* and *anandamaya*.

Neither the son is yourself, nor the body, mind, intellect, are yourself. Yet, there is some point on which we have to bestow thought in regard to these things also. Though these selves are not the real Self, they are some kind of self. Otherwise, we would not bother about these things. So, every kind of self has to be taken into consideration when we practise self-control. Though the son and the daughter are not the true Self, and money in the bank is not the Self, and the body is not the Self—yet, they are some kind of self, though falsely imagined. Just as a person who imagines that he has swallowed a lizard vomits the entire contents of his stomach even though he has swallowed



nothing, in the same way an imaginary difficulty can create a real disease.

There was a small boy who was having his dinner. He saw a lizard crawling on the wall. He was looking at it, and eating his food. He went on looking at the lizard, and after a few minutes he looked away. When he looked again, he could not find the lizard. He looked around in alarm. "Where has it gone, where has it gone? Oh, I have eaten it!" he exclaimed. He started vomiting everything that he ate, and doctors were called. No doctor could find any lizard in his stomach, and no medicine worked. The boy wept and cried, "Oh, the lizard is moving inside! It is moving!" He could feel the sensation, and it was awful. No physician could cure this boy of the lizard that was 'inside'. After a few minutes, he again saw the lizard crawling on the wall. "Oh, there it is! I am okay. I am all right. Oh, Mummy, Daddy, I don't want any medicine. The lizard is there. I have not swallowed it. I am alright!" How is this? He was so sick that he was vomiting, and he could feel the sensation of the movement of the lizard in the stomach; but it was not really there.

Similarly, we can get terribly upset and be overjoyed over things with which we are falsely connected. As I told you, though they are false relationships, they are important as far as the problems of life are concerned. Finally, the problems of life may be falsely grounded; but, nevertheless, they are there, and we have to pay attention to them. Therefore, the yoga technique takes into consideration every kind of self in the practice of self-control—the *gaunatman*, or the secondary self, the social self, the

physical self, the sensory self, the *pranic* self, the mental self, the intellectual self, and the causal self, before we go to the Absolute Self.

We should not say that we are concerned with only the Absolute Self, only with God, and we do not care for anything else. This is not a proper way of looking at things, because we know very well that we experience hunger, we experience thirst, and anything happening anywhere can upset our mind. So, how can we say that we are concerned only with the Almighty? It is not true. Hence, we have to be very, very honest to our own selves, and we should call a spade a spade, as they say. The reality as it is experienced by us in the present condition in which we are now placed should be taken into consideration. Whether it is false or not false, that is a different matter. Whatever we consider as real is real for us—though, later, we may get out of this impression.

Hence, the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali very, very intelligently and dextrously consider every kind of self, every stage of self, which has to be subdued in the process called self-control—reaching, finally, the control of the whole Self, which is universally spread out. This control of the last Self is also the attainment of the final Self. So, self-control is also Self-realisation, at one stage; and at every stage, also, it is a kind of Self-realisation. From the stage of the lower conception of the self which is to be restrained in self-control, we reach a higher Self which is realised simultaneously.

Thus, self-control is also Self-realisation at the same time, in the sense that the lower self—or the lower notion of

the self—is subdued, overcome or transcended, and at once the higher stage of Self is realised. Therefore, self-restraint and Self-realisation are simultaneous things; perhaps, they mean one and the same thing. The going out of the disease is the same as the gaining of health. They are not two different things. When sleep goes, waking comes. Finally, total self-restraint is total Self-realisation. Thus, yoga is a graduated process of self-control.

## Chapter 12

### MOVEMENT TOWARDS THE SELF

The whole world is nothing but Self. *Idam sarvam yad ayam atma*, says the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. Whatever was, whatever is and whatever will be is just this Self, and nothing more. This great proclamation of the Upanishad also lays the foundation for the great duty of man in the form of self-control. If all is the Self, what is self-control? What is yoga meditation? What are we going to restrain? The whole universe is vibrating with a centrality of Selfhood.

Previously, I mentioned that there are degrees of self. There are, rather, conceptions of self and different types of experience of the levels of self. It is this experience of the existence of degrees, or levels, of self that is responsible for the idea that there are degrees in the ascent, or practice, in yoga. The graduated steps—the orderly movement in yoga meditation—is consequent upon the presence of a graduated series in the notion of the self. The restraint of the self is, also, the realisation of the Self. The checks that we put upon the operation of the lower self are contributory to the experience of the higher Self.

We have to be very careful in understanding what we mean by the word 'Self' when we speak of self-control or Self-realisation. There is an immense difficulty in entertaining a notion of Self because, in fact, no notion of it can be entertained. One cannot have an idea of the Self, because the Self is that peculiar thing which is behind even the very notion of there being such a thing called the Self. Hence, no one can think the Self, or imagine it, or conceive

it, or have anything to say about it. Yet, it has to be there. It has to be there because there seems to be something. We cannot say that there is nothing. The very notion of nothing is, also, something. Therefore, it is impossible to conceive that there can be nothing, because the conception of there being nothing is, also, something. So, we are in a difficulty here.

This eluding something is the so-called Self, the Atman, which is sometimes said to be, and sometimes said to not be. *Nusyē'stity eke nayam astiti caika*, says Nachiketas to the great Lord Yama, as recorded in the Katha Upanishad. Some say it is; some say it is not. Does the Self exist, or does it not exist? If it exists, why should we control it, restrain it, subjugate it, or run away from it? If it does not exist, from where comes the need for realising it, or experiencing it, or running after it? Either way, we are caught. Neither can we say that it is, nor can we say that it is not.

But, while we cannot say either this or that about the self, yet, we can say both things about the self: It is, and it is not. In one sense it is, and in another sense it is not. The self that we are thinking of in our minds is an experiencing centre for the world outside. Such a self, ultimately, is not. It is this experiencing self which imagines that there is a world of experience outside. It is that which is to be restrained, and it is to be restrained to such an extent that it has to be abolished altogether.

This self is capable of being abolished, because it is really not there. There are not many points of view or many centres of experience in this world. So, the doctrine that there are no selves is also true, because there are no

percipients individually gazing at the world or contacting it and experiencing it. This so-called centre of selfhood in us is a fiction; and fiction is also entertaining, sometimes. It has a reality of its own. Such a fictitious centre is what we call this 'I' in ourselves. Such an 'I' does not exist, really. It has to be subdued and completely annihilated. Like an incubus, a bad dream, it has to go.

This so-called self of ours is a knot—a *granthi*, as we are told—and this knot is a complex of energy movements, sometimes called *chakras* by certain schools of thought, animated by consciousness and, therefore, appearing like the self, just as a mirror may appear to be shining when light falls on it. Our individuality is not a reality, finally; and, if our individuality is to be taken as the selfhood, such a thing is not. It cannot exist. It is a contradiction of the ultimate nature of things.

Yet, we feel a hardness and substantiality in our individual existence. We are unable to abrogate our hard conviction that we do exist as individuals. It shows the extent to which we have descended into the grossened forms of individual consciousness. This individuality of ours is a knot—a Gordian knot, as it were—which cannot easily be untied. What it is made of is also a little difficult to say.

What are we made of? What is this knot? What is this individuality, to which this so-called I-ness is tied? Some say it is a fabric of desires. Some say it is a heap of frustrated feelings. Some say it is nothing but a reservoir of unfulfilled and defeated ambitions, desires, cravings—longings for power, sex, and self-existence. These three notions are

highlighted by psychoanalysts like Freud, Adler and Jung. Finally, to them also, this individuality is a hollowness.

This is the reason why a perpetual motion, and a growing, and a tendency to step beyond oneself is felt in every individual. We never exist in ourselves. We always move beyond ourselves; at least, there is a desire to extend beyond ourselves. The finitude of our nature compels us to pay attention to something unknown, beyond ourselves.

Many have compared this world to a flow, a mere transition—like the flame of a fire, the movement of a river, a phantasmagoria, a city in the clouds, the water in a mirage, the snake in a rope, the horns of a hare, and so on. These illustrations exemplify the ultimate truth behind our individualities and, also, the extent to which we are caught up in a kind of delusion which we are unable to explain. If this kind of medley of confusion is what is meant by the self, it has to be completely annihilated. This is bondage, and bondage is nothing but this notion of selfhood—where the self is not.

Now, this bondage of selfhood is also of a complicated nature. Again, I revert to the point I touched upon previously. There are gradations even in our delusion. Our attachments are external indications of the way in which we are bound to this notion of self. The types of attachment, called *asakthi*, exemplify the characteristic of the bondage in which we are involved. We are not attached to one particular thing only, and it is not that the matter ends there.

Every bondage is a terrible involvement. It is like a thick layer of clouds, one hanging over the other, and one getting

involved in the other. Our attachments are as difficult to understand as anything else. For the purpose of actual practice, we have been asked to concentrate ourselves on certain broad outlines of the manner in which this selfhood manifests itself. Mostly, we are attached to external things, though it is not true that this is the only kind of attachment that we have.

Yet we have to start from some point, as we cannot start from everywhere. As in a medical examination, we have to start from some sort of an experiment and observation of the kind of disease one is suffering from, though it may be a very difficult case. We know very well what we think in our minds when we wake up in the morning. Whatever our ideas are, our commitments are, our pleasures and pains are, these are the things to be taken note of first. The spiritual diary is very important in spiritual life. The spiritual diary is a note of the procedure that we have to adopt in the practice of yoga.

We have always to move from the lesser complications to the larger complications. The immediately visible things have to come first, and the invisible things may be taken care of later on. We should not jump into invisible spheres at one stroke while the visible ones are staring at us and we have not yet understood them. We have small problems which are very obvious and glaring, which have to be noted down in the order of their intensity. Even among the visible forms of involvement—attachment, aversion, etc.—there are degrees: the intense ones, the moderate ones and the lesser ones. The lesser ones should be addressed first. They have to be tackled in the order they have to be faced. As we



may have many kinds of illness—headache, purging, fever, eczema, and so many other things—each has to be taken into consideration in the proper order.

The stages of yoga mentioned, especially in the system of Patanjali, are precisely the way in which we have to ascend—the manner in which we have to engage ourselves in yoga meditation. We have emotional attachments of a very difficult nature. Attachments are mostly emotional. They are not so much intellectual, though there can be a type of intellectual attachment which sometimes goes by the name of egoism. That is a matter to be considered a little later.

Emotional issues are very touchy. These are the vulnerable points in our personality. Generally, we are open intellectually but are cowards emotionally. We cannot expose ourselves emotionally as we sometimes do intellectually, socially, etc. This shows that emotion is a more secret thing, and more intimate to us, than intellect and our outer behaviour. Our emotions subtly worry us and keep us restless. Here again we come to the point of a good guide, a Guru.

Emotions are such private things that they cannot be contemplated even by one's own self, much less exposed before another. The moment we bestow thought on our emotions, we get disturbed. The agitations in the deeper levels of our being can disturb us to such an extent that we may not even be able to properly exercise our reason at that time, especially when we are angry or when we are losing ground from every side and there is no hope of any kind

whatsoever in the world. Everything seems to be lost; at that time, we are in a mood which is not rational or intellectual.

The student of yoga has to guard himself from the impulses which are characteristic of general human nature. Everyone is a human being; and, there are certain features common to all human beings. These impulses of human nature cannot be easily analysed unless we know the stages by which we have descended from the higher levels to the present level in which we are. These impulses, these desires, these attachments, these aversions are not erratic movements of personality. They are natural consequences of the present position we occupy in this universe in the scheme of evolution—or, we may say, involution.

I shall repeat once again the bare outline of this process of descent, for the purpose of regulating our thoughts in the direction of practice. We have not suddenly jumped down from God. There has been a gradual coming down. There has been, as our religions tell us, a mysterious occurrence in the process of creation: the individual sparked off from the cosmic whole. This is what is called the fall, in scriptural language—an event that is described in practically every religion, in different ways.

This fall is a catastrophe, a sudden shooting off like a meteor from the whole, which is God-being—or one may call it the universe, in one's own language—which is a kind of blow that is struck on that which has been shot off from the whole; and, suddenly, there is a blankness, an unconsciousness. Sometimes we have similar experiences in our own practical life when we become unconscious and we cannot see, we cannot hear, we cannot think; we are

completely blank due to a sudden shock that has been injected into us.

If we have lost everything and there is nothing, not even one broken needle that we can call our own, we may receive a shock. At that time the mind will cease to think, and there will be a blankness. Even in midday, when the sun is blazing, we will see only darkness everywhere. When sorrow becomes deep, our eyes will become blind and the mind will become turbid at one stroke.

This condition is a kind of sleep, a coma, which follows as an immediate result of the separation of this angelic spark from the divine conflagration. It is called the fall of Lucifer, who was an angel. We were all angels. We are not devils, really. But, we look like devils due to something that has happened to us. Originally, we were radiant sparks of divinity—which we are even now, essentially, basically, at our root. But then this spark, which is radiant, becomes charged with the power of self-affirmation—which is the Satan we speak of. Satan is that power which affirms an individual existence, independent of God Himself.

This affirmation is preceded by an unconsciousness. There is an obliteration of every kind of awareness. It is said that this condition of unconsciousness lasts for some time, and no one knows how long it lasts. Here is a mystery. As the Aitareya Upanishad tells us, there was a great agony felt by each spark, or angel, or the fallen individual, and we were sunk into the ocean of hunger and thirst. There was a cry of agony. It is the loss of Soul, the loss of Self. The Supreme Self is God, the Universal Being; and, the loss of consciousness of one's relation to that Being is the loss of

Selfhood. So, to lose one's Self is the worst thing that can happen to anyone.

Now we have lost our Self and gained the whole world—which means nothing to us, finally. The loss of Self is such a loss that one cannot tolerate it for an indefinite period. One cannot even sleep, eternally. The condition of unconsciousness cannot last forever. Hence, there was a struggle on the part of this fallen individual to rule in hell rather than serve in heaven. As the poet says, "It is better to rule in hell than to serve in heaven." So, we are now ruling in hell because we do not want to serve in heaven, before God.

This rule in hell, or whatever we call it, commences with an artificial consciousness of individuality by the stroke dealt upon the individual at the time of this separation. This is the intellect, the reason. The intellect that we speak of is a refracted consciousness. It is not the original consciousness of the divinity which we were in the beginning, as angels. We cannot easily describe the way in which the intellect works or the reason operates. It is not the original consciousness.

When we think, we are not thinking like angels; otherwise, we would be little gods moving here in this world. But we are not that. A complete topsy-turvy motion takes place when there is a reversal in the order of perception, which happens at the time of the shot-off individual regaining consciousness as a self-existent person, which we are now. We are sparks that have been cut off from the whole, descended from the higher worlds. From Satyaloka, Tapaloka, Janaloka, Maharloka, Svarloka,

Bhuvārloka, Bhuloka, we have come to the Earth plane—the lowest plane conceivable.

Here, we have lost the consciousness of our relation to the whole. No one can imagine that we belong to all things. Even with the farthest stretch of the imagination, this idea does not come to us. We are always separate. But the Self-existence of the Supreme Being, which is at the back of each individual, asserts itself in a different way altogether in the egoism of the human being. Egoism is only a topsy-turvy affirmation of this Universal Selfhood. Instead of there being a Universality of the affirmation of Selfhood, there is a physicality of the affirmation of selfhood—an individuality and a terrible isolation felt within oneself, as if the Self is nothing but this body and there is nothing else. This consciousness, which was originally the cause of all things, becomes the effect.

The cause becomes the effect, and the effect becomes the cause. We have shot off from the universal whole and, from the point of view of the whole to which we belonged, we are effects rather than causes because we proceeded from the cause which is the universal whole. Yet, we look upon the universe as if it is an effect, as though it is outside us. That, from where we have come, appears to us as that which is outside us. The world of perception is the original mother of all things. It is not an effect. It is not an object of perception. Rather, we are its objects. The universe may look upon us as effects, shot off from itself as the cause. But, we think the other way round—that we are the subjects, and the world, the universe, everything, is external to us. This is a reversal in the order of perception.

The original subject looks as if it is the object, and the object looks like the subject. We are objects to the Universal Consciousness, and that Consciousness is the Supreme Subject. This is the reason why the Upanishad says *idam sarvam yad ayam atma*: All this is the Self. But, this is not our experience. The universe is not a self to us. It is a material content. It is an insentient object outside us, and we are the subjects.

We have created a heaven for ourselves in this world of topsy-turvy experience by creating relationships of various types—firstly with the intellect, the mind, the *pranas*, the senses, the body, and with every other thing in the world we call social relation. We have come down very, very gradually to this present condition.

Yoga is a reversal of this movement. *Te pratiprasavaheyah suksmah*, says Patanjali in one of his *sutras*. All problems can be solved by a reversal of the order of the movement of the effects from the causes. In the order of creation, the effect proceeded from the cause. There is a series—A, B, C, D, E, F, G—etc., and yoga is a movement in the reverse order. The last item in the scheme of creation is the first thing to be considered in yoga; and the first thing in the order of creation is the last thing that we have to think of. The last thing is the condition in which we are involved now, with our attachments and aversions, loves and hatreds, and a conviction that we are living in a material world. The *yamas*, so-called—*ahimsa*, *satya*, *asteya*, *brahmacharya*, *aparigraha* mentioned by Sage Patanjali—constitute a system of discipline by which we

weaken our attachments to things and our emotional relationships to the people around us.

It is a hard thing, as everyone knows. We cannot be alone to ourselves even for a few months. We will be like fish out of water. We will feel wretched if we are absolutely alone somewhere for months together. Try to be alone to yourself for some years, and see what happens to you. Your brain may cease to operate. You will not know what is going to happen. There will be an unhappiness that you cannot explain.

This happens because the emotions do not find an outlet of satisfaction. They have been forcefully thrown inside due to the absence of conducive circumstances and suitable objects for their fulfilment. That is the reason why we run about here and there, in all directions, to see that our impulses receive satisfaction. We have a hundred impulses, not just one or two—but, basically, there are a few, like ringleaders, that have to be understood. These basic impulses arise on account of a vehement struggle of the individual to maintain itself somehow or other, by hook or by crook. The finite individual does not want to get abolished, because that appears to be the destruction of selfhood. We have planted a kind of self in our own body, and we worship it as the true one. Not merely that—we have gone further, still.

We have many other kinds of self which we love, and we know what they are: money and power, the body and its relations, maintenance of the body and all that is necessary to perpetuate it. These are our subtle longings, and no one can gainsay that they are there. They may be visibly there or

invisibly there, but they are, nevertheless, there. These have to be transmuted. The sublimation and transmutation of these impulses is a difficult thing. It is like melting ourselves in boiling oil—not possible.

However, this can be done, slowly, by the application of different methods—not one stereotyped method. We should not apply only one method in dealing with our desires, our attachments, our longings, our impulses. As is the nature of the impulse, so is the type of remedy that is to be applied. If you are intelligent enough, you can do it yourself. A good student with a clarified understanding can deal with his own self. But, if it is not possible, take the help of a person who is superior, a guide.

When the external attachments cease—which may take years in most cases—and we do not seem to have a strong like or dislike for any outside person or thing, then the internal difficulties will manifest themselves: intense hunger, thirst, and fear of death. These will take possession of us. We know what hunger is, what thirst is, and what insecurity is. When we are in a comfortable society, these problems do not rear their heads much. We do not feel so insecure or harassed by hunger and thirst, because we know very well that we are in an atmosphere of people from whom we can receive support of one kind or the other.

When we sever ourselves from relationships with things, then these impulses react upon us with a rapacious vengeance, because the body is the self. If the body is the self, it has to be given its due. The body is hungry, the body is thirsty, and it is afraid of destruction. These are the three difficulties that the body feels, always. Normally these



problems will not arise, because we are always in human society with our friends. We never are afraid of death, nor do we think about hunger and thirst, because we are well off in many respects.

But, we should have no friends; nobody should look at us and nobody should speak to us. When we have withdrawn all connection from everything, we will see what happens. The natural forces which constitute this physical individuality will set up a revolt, and it will appear as if our bodily individuality is getting disintegrated. No one knows what it would be to experience this condition. To feel that every nerve cracks, every bone breaks and the flesh melts, is something unthinkable. They say that great saints and sages such as Buddha had to pass through these experiences. He felt that his bones were cracking, his flesh was melting, and all hell was descending on his head. Everything was experienced, but still he had the guts to face all this.

Violent desires will manifest themselves when social connections are severed—desires which cannot even be detected as long as we are comfortably placed in society. Read the lives of great saints and sages, and how they experienced life. Their lives are greater gospels and stories than what can be found in logical texts. St. Francis of Assisi, St. Teresa of Avila, and some of the great saints of India, both ancient and modern, right from Parashara and Visvamitra, are examples before us. We will be terrified even by reading about the lives of these people. We will not be able to contain these things in our minds.

This is so because, in yoga, we are trying to untie this knot of individuality. Inasmuch as this knot is our own

selves, the untying of it is like untying our own selves, which is like losing ourselves. What can be worse for us? We try to lose our own selves by dismantling this whole edifice of personality, by dismembering the whole body and everything that it is made of. We may say that we understand, but when it actually comes to it, we will not be able to go near it. It will be like touching blazing fire. We may touch even fire, but cannot touch this subject.

Even this difficulty comes in stages. As our detachment from social relations is to be practised gradually, step by step, and not at once, at one stroke, the internal ascent of consciousness from the lower to the higher is also graduated. Inasmuch as we have descended from the Supreme Being gradually, we have to ascend, also, gradually. The life of Visvamitra, as narrated in Valmiki's Ramayana, is very beautiful to read. Many times I felt that it is the whole story of the human being, the story of the seeker. From the lowest material life of royal comfort which Visvamitra enjoyed, he rose to the supreme heights of God-consciousness. But, how did he achieve it? The difficulties he had to face are all interesting things to read.

The connections of our personality, our individuality, with things outside, with nature as a whole, are countless in number. Each one has to be snapped. These connections are vital, like nerve currents; and, we cannot snap a nerve. We know the pain we feel if we cut off one nerve in the body. Similarly, the severing of each attachment is like cutting off one limb of the body; such is the agony that we feel when one attachment is to be overcome with effort. It is impossible to logically describe loves, attachments and

affections, because love is something which escapes analysis of every kind and we should not subject it to any kind of vivisection, whether psychologically or philosophically. Love is what it is. Love is something that escapes everybody's notice, and it is that which controls all things.

The love of Self is the source of every other love in the world; and, the love of Self is supreme in the light of the varieties of self we have referred to earlier. When we speak of love of Self, we mean love of every kind of self. Thus *varaigya*—detachment, self-restraint, self-control—is the overcoming of the involvement of the higher self in a lower self. And, we should not take a step in the direction of the higher self, even the self immediately above, unless the lower one is completely subjugated.

All desires have to be either fulfilled or they have to be destroyed. They should not be allowed to remain. Either desires go because of complete fulfilment or they go because they are totally annihilated. A beggar wants nothing because he cannot get anything. A king wants nothing because he has everything. Either way, they want nothing. In any case, desires should not be there.

These are internal processes which follow in the wake of external detachment. Yoga is a gradual movement from the outer to the inner, and from the inner, finally, to the Universal.

## Chapter 13

### THE OBSTACLES AND THE STAGES OF KNOWLEDGE

While consistent spiritual practice is an establishment of harmony with the universal nature, it is also, in another sense, an opposition to nature. There is a double aspect involved in spiritual meditation—coordination, and opposition. This mystery involved in the process is the reason why we are often under the impression that we are progressing and, at other times, have the opposite feeling that nothing is being achieved.

The reason behind this circumstance is that we belong to two different realms of being—the phenomenal and the noumenal. We have to struggle against the phenomenal involvement of our nature when we try to coordinate ourselves with the noumenal existence. While it is true, for obvious reasons, that God and the world are inseparable, in a different sense they are also contradistinctions. We cannot isolate the world from God, because God is present everywhere, and we have been told that the universe is the face of God—or, rather, the body of God Himself. Yet, there is a mysterious difference between what we regard as the world and what God Himself is, or what we think God ought to be.

In a particular, specific sense, the universe is the body of God; but, in another sense, the universe cannot be identified in any manner with the characteristics of God. This peculiarity introduces itself into our spiritual meditations, especially when we are able to move further on, to an appreciable extent. When no winds blow and no

dog barks in the realm of nature, we should not be under the assumption that things are quite well, because nature is like a lion which, because of its strength, will not mind our existence. It will begin to snarl and stare at us only when it feels that what is in front of it is its opposition.

A little scratching activity of the thinking process—so-called meditation—will not affect nature in any way, and nature is not going to be afraid of our meditations. So, everything will be calm and quiet, undisturbed, as if nothing is happening anywhere. But the moment we push ourselves with the force of that which is called the noumenal in us, and elbow our existence into the thick of phenomenal interconnections, there will be that circumstance we call natural opposition.

Sage Patanjali made reference to this condition in some of his aphorisms, in which he said that many a difficulty has to be passed through in meditation in one's endeavour to reach the Ultimate Reality. All that we consider ourselves to be will be shaken up from its very root. Physical illness, psychological doubts, and a feeling of spiritual aloneness and nothingness will take possession of us, and the condition will be indescribable—like a drowning man or a person who is thrown into empty space.

We are too very phenomenal; very little of the noumenal is in us. We belong to this world of external contacts and sensory relationships to such an extent that a wrenching of ourselves from such an involvement in our attempt at meditation will tell upon us acutely, in many ways. Our involvement in this world of nature is multifaceted, multifarious, and ramified in many

directions. We are, to repeat what I said earlier, involved in this world socially, politically, physically, psychologically, even rationally—and, much more, emotionally. Would we like to sever all these relationships in our adventure of spiritual meditation?

We know how hard it is to break our affections. If there is anything difficult in this world, it is this. But when our will is strong and the reason is determined to achieve its spiritual goal come what may, the whole world will wake up, and we may have to stand before the whole world. Again, the lives of great saints and sages are examples before us. They had to stand and face the world. The world was ready to crush them down and see that they were effaced. Many times it appeared that they had to succumb to these threats from the world. All this is beyond our understanding. Somehow, the problems were faced and the world was defeated.

The process in spiritual life involves both progression and retrogression. It is not a smooth, buttery movement in one direction only. As in the activity of an army in the field of battle, it is not always a seamless movement in one direction. It is a coming back, and a moving forward—a descending, ascending, and many other things.

Each one of us has to be honest to discover within one's own self the extent of one's own involvement in this world. We should not overestimate our own capacities and be foolhardy in our attempts. There is no use in misjudging our involvements and patting ourselves on our backs. As we move forward we become lonelier and lonelier, helpless

in every way, and it will appear that the world has deserted us.

In the earlier stages, as I mentioned, nothing happens; nothing appears to happen. Everything is good; everything is fine, and we are happy because we are still in the sensory world. To be fed with sense is to be happy, and we are acquainted only with this kind of happiness. We become unhappy and thrown to the winds when sensory pleasures are withdrawn. The ego and the body become fat by the feeding of the senses. The Yoga Vasishtha mentions, in a famous passage, that our personality becomes robust by the intake of sensory food.

Most, if not all, of our pleasures are sensory. We have no spiritual happiness within ourselves. When we are elated within, it need not necessarily mean that the spirit is operating. It may be an emotional satisfaction caused by the sensation of having what one has obtained in this world of relations, and so our happiness is relative, nevertheless. The happiness that is consequent upon the entry of God into our being is a death of all earthly pleasures.

This is surprising and most intriguing for every one of us. Why should our pleasures die when God enters us? Why should we become unhappy when we become spiritually-oriented persons? Why should spiritual life mean a destruction of the joys of the world? This is so because the joys of the world are sensory joys. Even the greatest satisfaction we can think of is, finally, motivated by sense activity. It is not spiritual, because spiritual bliss is non-relative. It does not require contact with anybody or anything else.

We can, to some extent, understand whether our pleasure is sensory or otherwise by subjecting it to a touchstone of internal examination. Is our happiness caused by contact, by relation, by acquisition? Or, is it a self-blossoming from the very fact of our existence, independent of any kind of psychological or emotional relation? We will find that our pleasures are not born of just our existence, but are related to certain conditions prevailing in the world.

What we call the world is nothing but conditions of relation. The world is relation; that is all. And, inasmuch as God, the Supreme Reality, is non-relational, every movement in the direction of God-being is a movement towards non-relation. Therefore, there is a simultaneous withdrawal from relation. This involves withdrawal from all pleasure centres of the world because pleasure centres are relatively connected to us, not absolutely oriented in our being.

Thus, when there is a war going on within and without—behind, and in front of us—between the two realms to which we belong simultaneously, we are torn apart into shreds. The troubles of a spiritual seeker, in the advanced stages particularly, are unthinkable, indescribable—horrible, really. We cannot understand these things by reading metaphysical books or logical texts. Some insight into these problems can be had only by the study of the lives of great saints and sages. They are greater examples before us than metaphysical books or philosophical treatises. A person who has lived this life is a better example than a textbook.



This is so because spiritual life is not academic information or study, but life, and nothing can be more difficult to understand than what life is. The difficulties that we may have to pass through have been listed by Patanjali: the body rebels, the mind rebels, the emotions rebel, the reason rebels, society rebels. There is no friend for us anywhere. Our physical health is mostly connected with sensory satisfactions, even as our emotional feelings are. We are totally sensory, root and branch. There is nothing else to us.

So, any attempt at the restraint of the senses tells upon the physical health, mental peace, social security, and also intellectual conviction, in many ways. We will be shaken in all these levels. In Patanjali's list he mentions, first and foremost, physical reactions set up by the organism in the form of many unpleasant sensations: aches, illnesses, fevers and so on, dullness of attitude and a subsidence of enthusiasm, a torpidity of mind, and a putting off the sessions of meditation by procrastination and by one excuse or the other. Excuses are many, and every excuse has a justification behind it. We can substantiate it and logically convince ourselves that we are on the right path. But, the greatest difficulty that Patanjali mentions is doubt and a feeling of helplessness and hopelessness.

The last, and not the least, of the problems is a sense of incapacity on one's part. Everyone has felt it; even the great ones had to face this difficulty. Many a time we feel that God has left us. He is not going to help us. We may even doubt the very existence of God. Does He really see us? Does He exist? Is there such a thing as Nirvana, spiritual

salvation? Is there such a thing called *moksha*, or are we in airy abstractions?

Even if such a thing be, we seem to be away from it, with no contact with it. The mind will wind up all its activities and go to sleep. Inordinate sensory activity, gluttony, talkativeness and excessive social contacts felt as a necessity from within, coupled with a desire to sleep excessively, will all be the reactions that the mind will set up. This will all gradually, slowly, secretly sneak into us, and we will not know that the enemy has entered our camp.

Again, to repeat, we are still in the phenomenal world. It has not left us. Fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters—all the relations who love us intimately—are connected with nature as a whole. They will weep before us. Everything that we have severed ourselves from will present itself as an endearing thing before us; and it will become more endearing as we try to reject it more and more. The more we try to abandon a thing, the more beautiful it will look, the more necessary it will appear, and the harder it will be to avoid its presence. That which we are trying to be away from will appear to be coming nearer and nearer to us—in direct proportion to our attempt to be away from it. The more we wish to avoid a thing, the more frequently will it come to us. This is how nature will work, to see how we are faring.

The other difficulties, of an astral nature, not merely physical and visible, are also mentioned in the scriptures of yoga. These astral problems—the supernormal visions and the auditions and temptations and oppositions mentioned—are the cosmical counterparts of our own

internal makeup. Our desires themselves become persons and present themselves as hard realities in front of us.

When Buddha was in deep meditation, his wife was there in front of him, with a little baby on her lap. He was not able to understand how this could be. “How has she come from the palace, from such a long distance? How is she seated before me in the thick of the forest?”

“My beloved one, how have you deserted me and come? Here is this little child of yours. Are you going to kick it aside?” This is what the young and beautiful wife Yashodhara exclaimed before the meditating Buddha, to his consternation and fright. How could this be? And, angels danced with beautiful music—not the music that we hear in this world, but music that will melt our hearts and scathe our nerves completely. Such celestial music was around him. Beauties unimaginable by this world, undreamt of by man, were presented. But Buddha was made of different stuff. He knew the reason behind these appearances—the causative factors behind the appearances of this kind—and stuck to his guns in his pursuit. Still, the matter did not end there.

When we resist a temptation, we are assaulted by fear and an untold type of insecurity and threat from every side, as if our life is going to break into pieces. Thunderbolts and lightning from the heavens may appear to descend on our heads, their causative natures not easily discoverable. All this is because nature has two sides—beauty and terror. It is beautiful on one side, and terrible on the other side. Nature has both these things. Nothing can be so tempting, and attractive, and beautiful as nature is. Nothing can be so

fearful and terrorising as nature can be. Sometimes nature puts on a very beautiful feature; and when we are not going to acquiesce in its presentations, it will raise up a storm in the way that only it can.

We have a description of the *Visvarupa-darshana* in the eleventh chapter of the Bhagavadgita, where in earlier stages it was a terror and, later on, it became a very calm and composing, motherly, affectionate presentation before Arjuna. Everything in this world, everything in creation, has these two sides—beauty and terror. Everything is beautiful; everything is terrible. This is so with everything, even a mouse. It can be a very beautiful thing to see and touch. It can also be a very terrible thing for us. Even an ant—nothing can be excluded from this feature. The whole universe is two-sided. Every man, every woman, every child, everything is of this nature—good and bad, beautiful and ugly, nice and terrible.

When we progress in meditation, we have to pass through these stages—which have minor details, of course, and cannot all be described here. But the major side is a temptation of grand and attractive presentations of sensory test in every sense of the term—physical, astral and celestial included—then, a terror of death threatening from every side. Who can withstand all these things? Do we think that any one of us is made of such stuff that we can face these difficulties? They are not difficulties. That is a very poor word that I am using. They are much more than this. They are death itself, yawning before us.

In the Epics and the Puranas there are some graphic presentations of how we can be confronted—as, for

instance, Surpanakha, as described in the Ramayana. She was the ugliest of persons one can imagine, a most terrible being, and she appeared as the most beautiful. And Putana, who is mentioned in the Bhagavad Purana—such a terrible ogress, frightening even to think of, appeared as the most beautiful being ever. We do not know how we can encounter nature, this creation.

I am reverting to the point that all this is so because we belong to two realms of being at the same time. This is why we have these difficulties. We belong to this world of relations externally—in space and in time, and in causal connections. We also belong to God, finally. So, there is a tug-of-war between these two natures, one pulling us from one side and the other pulling us from the other side. Therefore we are torn, as if people are pulling us from two different directions—one pulling this ear and another pulling the other ear.

If we have a good guide, a Guru, he will take care of us. Or, we may have such strength within us that we are strong enough to face everything, and we are positively convinced that God is appearing before us in all these ways—because God is all these and every other blessed way. That is not necessarily the only way in which we can think of Him. Every event is an event occurring in the realm of God. Everything that is visible to our eyes, as well as everything that is not visible to our eyes, belongs to the creation of God.

The reason behind our likes and dislikes, our satisfactions and our fears, is the type of special relationship that we establish with certain parts of nature due to our

specified forms of individual makeup called *prarabdha karma*. The much spoken of *prarabdha karma* is not a thing or a substance. It is a kind of vehement force which ties up our individuality to this particular form of body and establishes sympathetic relationships with nature outside, corresponding to its own needs. Our present needs evoke certain sympathetic reactions from nature, and only these reactions and actions are our concerns. Everything not connected with this particular form or need of our body and our personality as a whole is rejected.

Hence, our world is only that circumscribed area which is requisite for this particular group of forces operating in our body, called the *prarabdha karma*. It does not mean that in other lives we will be asking for the same things that we are asking for now. Why go to other lives? Even in this very life, we ask for different things at different times. There is a flow of *karma*, like the movement of a river. It is not a static, stone-like cement pillar, and that is why there is a change of our attitude from day to day. Our likes and dislikes change. This happens because we are moving, experiencing, passing through various connections, just as we pass through various vistas when we travel on a long journey. When we are moving in a vehicle, we do not see the same thing always. Actually, this body of ours is a vehicle during this process of evolution. It is moving. Not merely the body, everything that we are—all the five *koshas*, everything that our constitution is made of—moves.

When we move, we begin to visualise many things. These visualisations are the so-called rebirths and transmigratory processes. But we cannot understand that

we have passed through such vistas, that we are passing through some now and we have yet to pass through certain others, because we easily forget the past and we have no knowledge of the future. We have a little, blinkered knowledge of only the present circumstance.

Today I have spoken a little bit about the internal intricacies involved in the practice of meditation, which is not a very happy thing always, though it is going to take us to the happiest state or goal ever.

Now, we again take up the theme we were discussing previously, to continue its thread—namely, the stages of meditation, which are the stages by which we have descended into this present condition of ours through the process of creation. We are now human beings; and, there are beings lower than the human species—animals, plants, and inanimate matter of rocks, stones, and the like. Evolution seems to begin with inanimate existence, where consciousness totally sleeps. It is said that it wakes up into life in plants and the vegetable kingdom. It is in a dreaming condition, as it were, in the animals, and it is awake in the human state.

But it is not fully awake even in the human state. It is only awake to the fact of the finitude of human nature, and it is not awake to the future possibilities or potentialities of human nature. Descriptions of the higher stages are given to us in the Upanishads, such as the Taittiriya. Human happiness is supposed to be a unit, a little drop of the happiness that is possible in the higher realms, which are designated in the Taittiriya and the Brihadaranyaka Upanishads as the realms of happiness of the *pitris*, the

*gandharvas*, the *devas*, the angels or the celestials, the rulers of the gods, the masters, adepts, yogis, and incarnations—and, finally, of the Creator Himself. In Indian tradition, Brahmaloaka is the highest conception of happiness—where everything is everywhere, and everyone finds everything at one place or at all places; space and time get abolished in an eternity and an infinity of self-possession.

Man is very low in the stage of evolution. He has not reached the crown of this process. Man is not the crown of creation yet—though he has the consciousness of being some such thing in the future. The finitude of our human nature, of which we are now intensely conscious, is also an indication of the latency of the perfection that is within us. As human beings we have some aspirations, together with our foibles. There is something good in us, together with many things that are bad. This goodness in us is an aspiration for the higher possibilities to which consciousness directs us when it becomes rarefied into spiritual aspiration.

The Yoga Vasishtha also tells us that there are seven stages of knowledge. Everywhere, we are told of the seven stages. The desire to be good and to do good is the first stage in spiritual life—*subecha*, as the Yoga Vasishtha puts it. Many people do not have even the desire to be good. They do not know what it is to be good. The idea itself does not occur to them; they are like animals. They live a natural life of impulses, for the satisfaction of the senses. But, there are some people who cogitate: “It is good to be good.”

The second stage is where we deeply think over the ways by which we can be really good: “How can I be good?”



What is the meaning of ‘good’? And how can I do good?” These investigations come under the second stage, called *vicharana*. This is the language of the Yoga Vasishtha. *Subecha* is the first stage, and *vicharana* is the second stage.

The third stage is one of *sadhana*, or direct practice, where the mind gets thinned out. This stage is called *tanumanasi*, the attenuated condition of the mind where things become less and less attractive and the world does not fully satisfy us any more. In the animal condition of human life, everything seems to be satisfying. We are very happy with all things in this world. But when we feel that the things of this world are not going to satisfy us, that there is something wrong with them, that there is a defect in things—and we are seeking something which the world does not give and cannot give, we are in the state of *tanumanasi*.

The first three stages mentioned—*subecha*, *vicharana* and *tanumanasi*—are considered to be the stages of *sadhana*, or spiritual enterprise. The Yoga Vasishtha is very quick and rapid in its enunciation of the stages, but these three stages are filled with many details of spiritual practice, or *sadhana*—especially the third one, because the Yoga Vasishtha seems to suddenly jump from the third to the fourth stage. It tells us that in the fourth stage, called *sattvapatti*, we have flashes of divine light. This is, at least for many of us, a very far-off stage. We do not seem to be having flashes of divine light so easily.

The Yoga Vasishtha tells us that in the fourth stage, *sattva* manifests itself. *Sattva* is another name for light. We are mostly in a morbid condition of *rajas* and *tamas*—full

of desires and sleepiness, torpidity, etc.—but when *sattva* predominates and to a large extent subdues *rajas* and *tamas*, its percentage gets enhanced and its light is visualised internally as a flash of lightning which comes and goes. This is the fourth stage, called *sattvapatti*. When the flash of lightning—which is a symbol or insignia of divine manifestation—is felt, we begin to taste it as a great delight. It is not merely a light to illumine things outside. It is not like a candle flame, or even like sunlight. It is not a light which illumines objects. It is the light emanating from the Self; so, it is very tasty to the senses. There is a condition described in the Vedanta texts as *rasa svada*—the involvement in the taste, the delight, of this experience.

It is said that we should not go on tasting this delight, because it is only a flash and it may come and go. If we are concerned too much with the taste of this experience, we may forget that there are also higher stages. We may even get attached to the taste. This should be obviated with diligence. In a few verses of the sixth chapter of the Bhagavadgita, some reference to this condition is made. We have to be detached even from the sensation of delight because we are still in the lower stage, and any kind of delight which is appreciated by the self-sense should not be regarded as a complete experience. The self-sense still persists because we are going to experience this light, and as long as this persists, we have to be guarded.

There should be a detachment, or an *asamsakti*, even to this flash and the joy that accompanies it; this is the fifth stage mentioned in the Yoga Vasishtha. Then, the glory descends. God takes care of us, as it were. From all

directions, angels begin to appear before us—not as persons, but as powers of nature who have unmasked themselves and are no more masquerading in the form of sense objects: persons and things. These persons and things that we see in this world today are masquerading angels. They appear deceptive because of the masks that they are putting on. The masks will be removed in the sixth stage, called *padartha-bhavana*, where the true realities behind the persons and things of the world will be visualised.

Sometimes a mother tries to terrify her child by covering her face with a cloth and making a sound like a devil, and the child is terrified. It runs away, not knowing that it is its own mother that is coming. When a mother is in a playful mood, sometimes she does this; but then she removes the veil, and the child comes jumping back and sits on the mother's lap. Similarly, now the angels are terrifying us in the form of the things that we see with our eyes; and then they will unmask themselves and show that they are friends, not enemies. For us, these are all theories only. We seem to be very far away from the stage when the angels unmask themselves.

The true form—the *padartha*, or the substance of things—will be revealed to us in the sixth stage; and then they will embrace us, but not as human beings, because even the mask that we are putting on now will be removed. Thus, it is an embrace of soul with soul that is the merger. That is Nirvana; that is the extinguishing of this temporal flame of individual existence, to which we have to ascend through the very stages by which we descended.

## Chapter 14

### THE ESSENTIALITIES IN THE STAGES OF MEDITATION

In the process of the descent we were referring to, the nearest cosmic principles visible to our eyes and intelligible to us are the five elements, known as *mahabhutas*—earth, water, fire, air and ether. This body of ours is, also, made up of these five elements. Hence, we have in our body all those characteristics which belong to the five elements. That we seem to be separate from these elements as independent persons and, as a consequence, the five elements appear as objects of our senses outside, is due to the fact of a cohesive effect exercised by certain forces within us—rather, forces which we ourselves are.

We independent persons are really not independent persons. This we shall realise gradually as we advance through the stages of yoga. Even this body is not an independent object belonging to us as individuals. The so-called independence of this body—the feeling that this body is the I or the me—is a misconception arisen due to some unfortunate event that has taken place in the process of the descent.

There is a power which we sometimes call desire. It is very difficult to understand what desire means, here. It has a higher than psychological significance in this particular context. There is an intensive urge to solidify matter into a localised existence, which is what we call the ego. The ego is not a substance. It is not a thing. It cannot be seen, and it is not tangible. It is only an energy that centralises itself into one point—as the eye of the hurricane, for instance, into

which the power of the hurricane converges and from where it deflects its energy. There is a point which is not geometrical and not physical, but only conceptual, which is called the ego. This point is the converging centre of certain forces which go to form what is called self-affirmation—the hard feeling that I exist, or this so-called me is existing here. It is the vehemence of this force that makes us feel that we are so vehemently independent of the five elements.

This is what is also known, in certain forms of yogic language, as the knot of the heart—*granthis*, as they are called. A *granthi* is a knot. They say that there are various *granthis*, types of knots, the major ones being called *brahma-granthis*, *vishnu-granthis* and *rudra-granthis*. Whatever the names be, there seems to be a triple knot, sometimes philosophically called *avidya-kama-karma*—ignorance, desire and action. All these mean one and the same thing.

The three knots constitute the three stages of the affirmation of individuality. First there is the total ignorance of one's connection with the cosmic existence, which is called *avidya*, or ignorance; and then there is the desire arising to affirm one's individuality. In the beginning there is only a forgetfulness of one's relationship with the cosmos, or God Himself. That is *avidya*, ignorance, *maya*—whatever we call it. A total obliteration of the consciousness of one's connection with the whole creation is *avidya*, ignorance. This is immediately followed by a strong wind of desire, as winds blow when the sun is covered and clouds hover heavy over our heads. The desire to exist independently as an individual immediately follows this

ignorance of one's connection to the cosmic existence. *Kama* means desire. *Kama* simply means the desire to exist as an independent individual; and everything else that follows it is also called *kama*.

But, here the matter does not end. *Avidya* and *kama*, ignorance and desire, immediately ramify into activity—*karma*, or action—in relation to the atmosphere and the persons and things around oneself. The whole of *samsara* is this much. All our bondage is threefold—*avidya-kama-karma*. This is what is called *brahma-granthi*, *vishnu-granthi* and *rudra-granthi*. They are internal, as well as external.

This physical body is, therefore, a part of the five elements, and when we die, it goes back to the five elements. It disintegrates. But the so-called personality, the desire, does not die. Even if the body dies, desire cannot die, because desire is not material, as the physical elements are. Desire is a force, and nobody can destroy force.

In modern science there is a principle called the conservation of energy, which makes out that energy cannot be created or destroyed. It does not increase, and it does not decrease. It is always the same in quantum, but it is unequally distributed. This unequal distribution of energy is the cause of the appearance of individuals, persons, things, objects, etc. Where there is an equilibration of the energy by a reverting of the centres into their causes, there is dissolution of the cosmos—*pralaya*, as it is called.

Our scientists also tell us the same thing: one day the universe will cease. Scientists speak of a principle of heat called entropy, according to which the heat in the universe

is now unequally distributed . For instance, there is tremendous heat in the sun, and less heat around the sun. This unequal distribution of heat is the process of creation. The heat of the universe will be equally distributed one day. Then, everything will become cold, and the whole universe will perish. It is not merely the heat that is unequally distributed; all the energy of the cosmos is unequally distributed. Consequently, we have a variety of things in the world, including persons.

This kind of thing cannot go on for a long time, because any kind of inequality is unnatural. The natural condition of things is equality, and they will revert to this equality one day or the other. The impulsion to move towards equality is the impulsion to the dissolution of things. Individually, it is called death; cosmically, it is called dissolution, or *pralaya*.

When this *pralaya*, or dissolution, takes place involuntarily, even without our wanting it, it does not lead to liberation. So, while liberation is the state of ultimate equality of being, when it is forced upon us, it does not lead to liberation. It remains like a cosmic sleep, just as entering into the state of deep sleep is not equivalent to entering into the Atman—though, in a way, it is something like that. When anything is done by constraint of force from outside, it does not bring satisfaction. It has to be realised voluntarily, by one's own self. A voluntary entering into this final equality of things is *moksha*, or liberation, but an involuntary entering is *pralaya*, or dissolution.

Voluntarily entering into the deepest core of one's being is Self-realisation. Involuntarily entering into the core of one's own being is deep sleep. This is the difference.

There is no point in entering into deep sleep, or getting dissolved in *pralaya*, the cosmic end of things. There should be an activity of consciousness inwardly towards Self-realisation—entering into one's own being—and outwardly in the direction of Cosmic-realisation. Hence, Self-realisation means the same as God-realisation. This is why it is said that, in a very ultimate sense, Atman is Brahman.

Inasmuch as this physical body is a part of the five elements, the Yoga System takes into consideration this very, very important fact. The practice of *yoga asana* towards meditation is, finally, a tendency towards the dissolution of this cohesive, self-affirming principle within us and coordinating it with the five elements. This is the beginning of *samadhi*, or *samapatti*—the entering into the substance of all things.

Yoga tells us that one gains mastery over the five elements in the same way as one has mastery over the limbs of one's own body. We have no difficulty in lifting our legs or raising our hands, because we are identical in consciousness with these limbs of the body. We cannot lift an elephant, it is too heavy; but an elephant can lift itself because its consciousness pervades its whole body and it is identified with its limbs. We cannot lift even one leg of the elephant, it is so heavy, but the elephant moves its tremendous weight. Even a larger animal like a mammoth could move, because the weight is felt only when it is outside one's consciousness. We do not feel the weight of our own body; however heavy we are, we can move. But somebody else cannot come and lift us, because we are outside the consciousness, or the mind, of that person.



Thus, we cannot do anything in this world. We have no control over anything. Everything is outside us. We are helplessly situated here because we are independent of the five elements. We have no control over the earth, or the water, or the fire, or the air, or anything else. But, when by deep meditation we enter into the reality of our body, which is nothing but an edifice constructed out of the building bricks of the five elements, we slowly gain control over the physical elements.

This is very easily said, but cannot easily be achieved, because our egoism is very hard. It cannot melt by any amount of meditation, just as flint cannot melt by a little bit of heat. The heat that we apply by means of meditation is inadequate for the melting of this ego. The sense of I and the struggle for the existence of this I is so indescribably strong that it cannot easily melt unless proper meditational techniques are employed.

Everyone knows how hard each one is, how much self-love is there, and how much effort is exercised by every one of us to maintain our individual existence in every walk of our life. Such tendencies cannot be avoided by a little scratching of inadequate meditations.

*Dirgakala nairantarya satkara asevitah dridhabhumih*, says Patanjali in one of his *sutras*. Many, many years of practice are necessary. With great love, as we love our own mother, this practice has to be conducted—unremittingly, without break even for a single day. Just as we have an appointed time for breakfast, lunch and dinner, sleep, etc., and we have a regular routine for our daily occupations, so

should the disciplined routine be maintained by every seeker in regard to meditation practice.

Meditation should not be considered as a hobby. Spiritual practice is not a diversion, like hockey or cricket. It is the very purpose for which we exist. Everything else is secondary to it. We are somehow tolerating other things. The main thing is meditation. It should not be the other way round—that we are somehow tolerating meditation, and other things are important.

In the beginning, a certain amount of discipline is necessary. And, as we cannot impose discipline on our own selves, we require somebody else to impose this discipline upon us. That is the Guru. That is why people live in ashrams, monasteries and sequestered areas where the normal functions of the senses are curtailed to a large extent by the very nature of the atmosphere. If we go to a lofty mountain in the Himalayas, we may not get milk, and so on. Certain needs are cut off by the very nature of the circumstances there. We will not have a television or a radio. Nothing of the kind is possible in Nanda Devi or Badrinath, etc.

But, that is not enough. These are only initial steps that we are taking. We require, also, positive solace. It is not enough if we merely cry that we do not have anything. We should also have the satisfaction that we have something. This can come only from a divine source—secondarily from a scripture, primarily from a Guru and, ultimately, from God Himself.

Thus, a disciplined series of sessions in meditation conducted along the lines prescribed in the yoga scriptures

will gradually end the cord which connects this body with other bodies by way of affection, love and hatred, and we will be centralised in our true relation to the very original cosmic substance from which everything has come. Our physical body is a part of the five elements. Our mind is a part of the cosmic mind. Our intellect is a part of the cosmic intellect. Our consciousness, the Atman within, is identical with the Universal Atman, Paramatma, the Supreme Self, the Absolute.

There is no independent existence in any part of our personality. Neither is the body independent, nor is anything else. The body belongs to the five elements, the mind to the cosmic mind, the intellect to the cosmic intellect, the Atman to Brahman. So, what remains in us? We have nothing with us; we do not any more exist.

This gradual ascending from the body to the mind, from the mind to the intellect, from the intellect to the spirit is to be practised slowly, every day. The concentration of the mind should be on this ideal of a transference of the physical and psychological individuality to the sources thereof. Since we are very tightly bound to the physical body, in the beginning we have to maintain only a physical concept of reality. This is the philosophy behind idol worship and adoration of diagrams, portraits, etc. of divine beings, because at the present moment we cannot think anything which is non-physical. Even when we conceptualise objects in meditation, they are the counterparts of physical things that we have seen with our eyes or at least heard with our ears. It does not matter. The point in meditation is not the kind of object that we select

for meditation, but the extent to which we are able to focus the attention of the mind entirely on that object. We have to understand the psychology of meditation, and the purpose behind it, in order that we may feel a sense of satisfaction within us. It does not matter what object we select for this purpose. The object is not what is important. What is happening to the mind at that time is important.

As I mentioned, the existence of the mind is like a network of relations centralised in a point called the ego. The purpose of meditation is to break this centre. Now the mind is maintained by relations, as a cloth is maintained by the threads. If the threads are not there, the cloth cannot be there. Likewise, if relations are not there, the mind cannot exist. The mind is only a name that we give to a relative centre of externalised contacts.

We can imagine this very well by contemplating a little over the very process of thinking itself. When we think, we always think something other than the mind itself. The mind does not think itself when it thinks. This process of thinking something other than thinking itself is called relation. This has to cease; and when this relation ceases, the mind cannot exist. It will be starved of its very existence, because the existence of the mind is nothing but the existence of relations. It is a fabric constituted of external, as well as internal, contacts with physical, as well as conceptual, objects. So, when the mind is concentrated on any particular point or object, or whatever it is, the relationship is focussed and gathered up by a mustering in of all the energy in one direction only.

The mind does not think only one thing throughout the day. It has got thousands of things to think—consciously as well as subconsciously. The attempt at meditation is to bring the mind to a focus of attention on one thing only, whatever that thing be. Therefore, the distractions of the mind are collected together into a single attention. This is what is important, and not the object that we are choosing. But, we cannot easily do that because we have no love for any one single object in this world. We cannot love anything entirely, wholeheartedly. All our loves are spilt over scattered objects which we remember now and then on different occasions as the pressure within is felt, but not continuously. We can neither love anything wholly, nor hate anything wholly.

But, there is a necessity in meditation to centralise the attention and not to scatter the attention in diverse things, either consciously or unconsciously. Hence, meditation is a very difficult process. We cannot bring the energies of the mind together into one point. We cannot concentrate on anything for a long time. Even the most endearing of things cannot attract our attention for days together, because it is not true that any particular thing is so very endearing to us. We are falsely under the notion that things are dear. They are dear only tentatively, for a particular purpose and under given circumstances, for a period only, and not throughout our life. Nothing can be endearing throughout our life. This is very important to remember. But, here is a necessity to make some point the object of our concentration forever and ever. Is this possible? If this is possible, we have succeeded in meditation.

We have no knowledge of the way in which our own mind works. We are totally ignorant of even our own mind, what to think of other things. There is a deceptive activity going on in the mind in the form of relations that we establish, internally as well as externally. We are perpetually being deceived by the activities of the mind. Inasmuch as we have somehow accepted the way in which the mind works, we have also accepted this deceitful activity, and so it is very pleasant. Meditation becomes unpleasant when we throw a counter-bolt on this natural activity of the mind.

In the earlier stages, all good things are unpleasant and all useless things are pleasant. This is what the Bhagavadgita makes out in one of its passages in the eighteenth chapter. Good things appear bitter in the beginning, but in the end they will become pleasant, like nectar. And, things which are going to bind us appear beautiful and pleasant in the beginning, but they will become bitter and poisonous in the end.

So is meditation, spiritual discipline—very unpleasant in the beginning. Nobody likes it, and they would like to get over it, get out of it as early as possible. How long can we sit for meditation? It is a very unpleasant thing. We feel it is a kind of torture that is imposed upon the mind. We rather go for a walk, chat with friends or watch television. Going to a movie, reading the newspaper and so on, are more pleasant than sitting and concentrating on one particular thing—which is hell itself. Nobody would like to do that, because the mind resents this activity.

Why does it resent this? Because it is a tendency to the death of the mind; and who likes such a tendency? We are

trying to destroy the mind itself by this peculiar introduction of a discipline called meditation. The mind knows it, and so it will not permit such an activity. It understands. It senses some danger. "Something is coming before me that is not good for me." So, it deceives us, distracts us and sidetracks us into misconceived notions even when we are honestly seated for meditation.

Doubts enter the mind; difficulties come. "Why are you seated here, useless person? Get up. You get nothing out of it, this very useless will-o-the-wisp," says the mind. Buddha was told this. "Why, foolish man, are you sitting here? What are you going to gain? Nothing is going to come. It is a waste of time! Go to the palace. Be happy." The mind will repeat this many times; and, a falsehood uttered one thousand times becomes true. We should be very guarded in this matter.

Again, I revert to the point of the psychology behind meditation. It is difficult because we cannot understand why we are meditating at all. We, ourselves, will develop certain doubts inside. "What is the matter with me? What is all this about, and what am I going to get out of it?" No amount of instruction in the lecture hall will have any effect upon the mind later on, when it is in a rebellious mood. Rebellious people do not listen to any advice. When the mind is revolting, nobody will help us. This is why it is said that a guide is necessary. That person will guide us.

This is the psychology of meditation. The point in meditation is not what object we are selecting, but what we are doing with our mind at the time of meditation. What we are doing during our meditation is important because

the mind, as I mentioned, is a falsely-imagined centre of internal and external relationships, loves and hatreds—*avidya-kama-karma*, the *granthi* mentioned. Any concentration on one single point, either externally or internally, cuts off connections of the mind with relations other than this one relation that we have maintained with the conceptual object or physical object. The relation is still maintained, but with only one relation—not multifarious relations.

At present, we have hundreds of relations. We gather them up into a single relation, so the mind becomes very strong. Then it is focussed on one point, and thoughts begin to materialise when such effect is produced in the mind. A meditator's mind is so strong that whatever he thinks, will happen. What he utters will take place. The words of a great yogi have such power that they will materialise. "It shall be like this; it must be like this." If the mind thinks something, it shall take place.

This is so because the mind becomes so powerful, as a river becomes powerful when it is concentrated in one direction only. The river becomes very weak, and cannot move even a single log of wood, if it is diversified in a thousand ways. The power of the flow is irresistible when it is directed only in one channel. To repeat once again, the purpose of meditation is not external, but internal. It is not physical, but psychological. It is intended to break this centre inside us called the ego, the affirming principle, the I-ness which is connected to this body—which is not our property, which really belongs to the five elements.



Nothing is our property. We, ourselves, do not exist as we imagine ourselves to be. We belong to the cosmic substance—physically, psychologically, intellectually, spiritually. The Supreme Absolute alone is. Nothing else exists. It alone is, and all these particularities, including our own individualities, are limbs, as it were, of this Cosmic Being. Hence, meditation is a movement towards this great realisation of cosmic interconnection and Absolute Existence.

What happens in meditation? External relations are cut off, and a single relation is maintained—in the beginning with an external object, because we are used to thinking of external objects. It is advisable not to concentrate on the centre of the eyebrows or the heart in the earlier stages, because the mind will resent it much more than our instruction to the mind to concentrate on external things. To think something external is easier than to think something internal. Even the internal concentration is to be transcended later on, in a further stage, but we should not take immediate steps. Nothing should be done with haste. We have to be very cautious in dealing with everything.

Therefore, in the earlier stages, we have to take care that in meditation the mind is not given a sudden blow on the face. If that is done, we may be defeating our own purpose. Even when we lay an axe at the root of a tree, we do it stage by stage. At one stroke, the tree will not be felled. This axe that we deal at the tree of attachment is, therefore, also to be levelled stage by stage. The knots are untied, one after another. We don't cut the Gordian knot; we untie the Gordian knot. The *granthis*, the knots of *avidya-kama-*

*karma*, are to be untied—not broken through, as that is not a possibility.

If there are three knots, in the beginning we untie the first one, the second one next, and then the third one. In these knots of *avidya-kama-karma*, the knot of *karma* is cut first, *kama* afterwards, and *avidya* finally. We cannot cut *avidya* itself in the earlier stages, as the first knot cannot be untied unless the other knots are untied first. *Avidya-kama-karma* is a graduated knotting of individuality.

Therefore, first external withdrawal, then an internal withdrawal, and then, finally, a universal centralisation—these three may be said to be the essentialities in the stages of meditation.

## Chapter 15

### THE GREAT YOGA OF MEDITATION

We are now on the pedestal of the great yoga of meditation, which is the sum and substance of all spiritual endeavour, finally—the end, which includes also all the means that led to the realisation of this end. In the beginning the means appears to be separate from the end, just as the destination is different from the road that leads to that destination. That which leads to a thing appears to be different from that thing which is attained, reached or obtained.

We always make a distinction between the means and the end—the *modus operandi* and the final achievement. All our efforts, all our activities, all our performances are means to this great end of cosmic integration of spirit. But, this great destination is, also, inclusive of every step that we took earlier. The means in every form, and in every stage and level, gets swallowed up in that great destination which does not any more remain as a distant object to be reached or a place to which we have to traverse, inasmuch as the nearer we go to this goal or destination, the further we get lifted from the notion of spatial distance and temporal succession.

The lower we are in the category of evolution, the more removed we appear to be from one another in space, and the more intense seems to be the distinction of one from the other. The grosser is the body, the greater is the vehemence of the attachment to it, and the more intense is the separation of it from anything else or everything else, due to the vigorous impact of space and time. When space

and time very actively have their say upon us, we seem to be like abandoned children, completely cut off from everything else, totally thrown into the prison of self-encasement in this body, which we are told is our only property.

But this is an illusion, a type of make-believe—which is what all space-time arrangement is, in the end. The way in which space and time tell upon us is, again, a graduated knotting of our personality. The stages of yoga—*yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi*—or the stages mentioned in other systems of yoga, are only the internal efforts of the spirit within us to disentangle itself gradually, by stages, from the clutches of the space-time complex which the world is, in essence. The world does not exist, except as space-time. Though it wrongly appears to our blinded eyes that the world is inside space and time, it is not so. The world is not inside space and time.

We are accustomed to think of the world as the planet Earth, the Sun and the Moon, etc., which appear to be hanging in space. It is nothing of the kind. There is an invisible connection of the vast space-time complex with the apparent configurations in the form of matter. This invisible connection is unknown to subjective percipients like us. Inasmuch as we are involved in this concretisation into material forms, we cannot know what is above or beyond us.

In cold areas, parts of the ocean may solidify into ice and parts may remain liquid, yet the liquid and the solid parts of the ocean are not really cut off. There is a

continuation of substance common to both the liquid portions and the solid portions of the ocean. If we like, we may theoretically distinguish between the solid and the liquid. But, in fact, the liquid has become the solid and the solid is going to melt into the liquid, and in bodily substance they are inseparable. Even the word 'they' is inapplicable there. It is one mass.

Something like that is the kink which the space-time complex seems to have developed in the form of material content. What we call the hard, physical substance of this earth, or even the entire solar system, is said to be the space-time configuration getting curdled, as it were, into formations including our own bodies, abolishing at the base any distinction between these curdled forms of solidified substance and the so-called empty space—which to us is a nothing, but really it is everything.

Thus, the bondage of the soul is a universal bondage. We are not involved only in one place, in a single family or a house. It is a terribly unintelligible complex of involvement which we have to free ourselves from in the process of the practice of yoga. When we are sunk into bondage, we are universally sunk from every side, in every way, and it is not only in one place. Bondage and liberation are both universals. There is no individual bondage and individual salvation, but it appears to us that it is wholly individual and each one reaps his or her own isolated harvest.

Finally, it is not so. There is an internal family relation among ourselves which is deeper than family relation or organic connection. An unthinkable relation subsists

among the very atoms of the cosmos, what to speak of ourselves as human beings, here. Thus, when the vista that is to be presented before us in the practice of yoga unravels, we step into the waters of the ocean of the cosmos.

We are not merely sitting in a meditation hall. These few words that I have mentioned are very important words which may try to brush aside the illusion that is before our mental eye that we are meditating on the top of a hill, or inside a room, or in our little cottage. We are not doing this meditation in a cottage. There is no such thing in this world. We belong to the whole of creation.

This is a mantra that you can repeat to yourself: “I belong to the whole of creation. I am a citizen of this universe.” This is a very important mantra for every one of us: “I am not Indian or American or British. I am not white or black. I am not a man or a woman. I am a pressure point in the cosmic continuum of space-time.” What a thrilling message this would be for the heart to receive, if this could be repeated again and again, inwardly, and made the object of deep contemplation by every one of us! All our little problems would vanish like mist before the blazing sun.

When we enter into this vast field of meditation, ‘vast field’ are the words to be emphasised. It is not a little act of ours. It is not a little psychological operation within the brain that is taking place in meditation. It is a ripple that we are setting up in the whole atmosphere in which we are seated, which we are occupying, which is this creation of God. But, in earlier stages, this relationship is not felt. That is why, particularly, the emphasis is made obvious in the system of yoga propounded by Patanjali—that from more

and more gross particularities of observations and experience, we move to larger and larger generalities of experience. It is necessary for us to tabulate our involvements in life and be totally dispassionate in this assessment of ourselves. We should not hide any of our prejudices, weaknesses, desires, longings, involvements, emotions, attachments, likes or dislikes. We are before God, the Almighty. We are in His presence, so no hiding is possible there. It is useless to hide anything where everything is clear, as in the midday sun.

Since we are the persons concerned in the practice of yoga, we have to be honest to our own selves; this is important. And while we are in our mood of deep meditation, we should open up our hearts to our own selves—and all the mud, rubbish and cobwebs are brushed aside. With great effort of psychic operation conducted vigilantly within ourselves, all our desires are melted down into liquid by methods which we have to adopt for our own selves by our own intelligence, understanding and discrimination—if we have that discrimination. Otherwise, we go humbly to our master.

*Tad viddhi pranipatena pariprasnena sevaya, upadekshyanti te jnanam jnaninas tattva-darsinah*, says the Bhagavadgita. Go to your master: “This is my predicament; this is my condition inwardly. I am very much tied up in all the layers of my personality. Everything is dark before me. I do not see any ray of light on the horizon.” Thus, you surrender yourself. Confess all your weaknesses. To confess a weakness before a great master is not a shame. It is like

exposing one's illness before a physician. It is a necessity, and is in your own interest.

But if this is not possible, if you have not any person before you who can take care of you in every way, humbly offer your prayers to the Almighty Himself, who is the Guru of all Gurus, and light will dawn before you if your sincerity is genuine.

Thus, our outward involvements are to be taken into consideration in the beginning, and our inward involvements are to be taken into consideration afterward. Finally, our attachment to the body and the ego come like Ravana and Kumbhakarna. They are the last enemies to be faced. Our attachment to the body and the ego is terrific, and nothing can be compared to it. Everything else fades into insignificance. All problems go as if they are nobodies in comparison with this terror of our attachment to the ego and the body.

We cannot peel off our body as if it is an onion skin; it will not leave us. We have become the body, and nobody can believe that we are other than the body. Even this conviction will not arise. We cannot think, even for a moment, that we can be anything other than this body. We are heavy, many-kilo-weighted persons—nothing more, nothing less. This will catch hold of us in the end.

These are the difficulties before yoga. The agonies that one feels and passes through when the body struggles to maintain itself in the name of yoga, in the teeth of all opposition, are indescribable. They are like tearing out one's own flesh, and cutting the cords of one's life. And the



ego will say, “I must exist. I shall exist. I have to be.” Nobody would like to be annihilated.

There cannot be a greater terror to man than the idea of self-annihilation. This possessed Arjuna himself, when he witnessed the vision of the Lord’s Visvarupa. “Great Master, Lord Supreme Almighty, subdue yourself and come down to the original form. Enough of this vision!” was the exclamation of even that great disciple and devotee, incomparable as he was, as we are told. We cannot stand this vision. It is a terror, like a roaring lion before us. And we say, “Come down! Enough! *Tad eva me darsaya deva rupam prasida devasa jagan-nivasa*. Come down! I do not want this cosmic vision always, because the cosmic vision is the death of the individual ego. Who wants it? If God exists, I cannot be. And, if I have to be, then God must die.” We would wish that God dies rather than we die.

These difficulties are indescribable, even to one’s own self. To avoid a sudden boomerang coming upon us, or a thunderbolt descending on our heads, or a bomb being thrown at us in the form of these difficulties, physical as well as egoistic, we should proceed slowly—by untying knots, by pulling out our hair one by one and not pulling out all our hair at one stroke, which is more difficult.

We can remove all our hair by pulling out only one strand every day. We will not feel that all our hair has gone. But if we pull out all our hair at once, we know what a pain, what a terrible terror it is. So, do not pull out all your hair in one stroke. Pull it out strand by strand, and you will not feel that it has gone. We have to be very cautious in dealing

with these problems, which are part and parcel of our own existence.

Every step in meditation is a meditation itself. It is not merely a step to something else. It is, itself, a meditation, and every conscious effort towards meditation is, also, a meditation. Anything that we do for the purpose of attaining the state of meditation is, also, a meditation. Even if it be the least step that we are taking, even if it be a little relaxation that we are having in preparation for further meditation, it is a part of meditation because it is necessary for the purpose of the next onslaught.

In fact, when we are conscious, really, of what we are doing in the light of the great purpose of life, every act becomes yoga. Only when we are not conscious of the connection of our daily occupations with the purpose of life do we seem to be miserable. So it is necessary, first of all, to awaken within ourselves a consciousness of the relation of everything that we do with the purpose of existence.

We are not manufacturing this purpose and our relation to this purpose. It is already there. We have only to awaken ourselves to this fact, and then we shall be enabled to adjust ourselves to every circumstance—good or bad, beautiful or ugly. All circumstances are within the circumstance of life. Inasmuch as every circumstance is connected to the greatest circumstance, which is the aim of the cosmos, we will be able to find ourselves accommodated to any circumstance, without a word of grumbling or complaint.

Thus, life becomes yoga. Every activity becomes *karma* yoga, as we have been told again and again. All actions

become *karma* yoga when actions are related to the purpose of the universe. Dissociated from this purpose, they become our bondage. Teachers of yoga generally prescribe *karma*, *upasana* and *jnana* as the traditional steps that have to be taken in the direction of this fulfilment. *Karma*, *upasana* and *jnana* are supposed to be aids in getting rid of the three troubles called *mala*, *vikshepa* and *avarana*.

*Mala* is the dirt of the mind. *Vikshepa*, vacillation, is the distraction of the mind. *Avarana* is the veil of darkness over the mind. Dirt, *mala*, is that which tarnishes the transparency of the mind—on account of which it is having a blurred and distorted vision. A long list of what this dirt means is given in a very famous Vedanta text called Vasudeva Manana. The list in Sanskrit is: *raga*, *dvesha*, *kama*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *moha*, *mada*, *matsarya*, *irsya*, *asuya*, *dambha*, *darpa* and *ahamkara*, all which finally mean likes and dislikes manifested in various forms—likes in a chain of their details, and dislikes in a chain of their details. Desire, anger and greed sum up this long chain mentioned. This is the dirt of the mind.

Desire, anger and greed cannot be removed except by unselfish service, dedicated sacrifice—*karma* yoga, which may begin with actual religious rituals like worship, performance of mass in a church, *puja* in a temple, *namaz* in a mosque—whatever we may call it. The religious rituals of *puja*, worship, chanting and *satsangas* all come under this category of *karma* intended to purify the mind of all the dross with which it is infested.

In certain systems of thought, particularly a system known as the Saiva Siddhanta, which is famous in southern

India, there is a beautiful categorisation of this process of moving from outward ritual to inward contemplation by processes known as *chariya*, *kriya*, *yoga* and *jnana*.

These are all technical epithets. Humble external service in the name of God, service to God Himself, service to the saints and devotees of God, including service in the temple such as cleaning the temple, washing the vessels, lighting the lamps, bringing *bilva patra*, *tulsi* and flowers, all come under the category of divine service known as *chariya*. *Kriya* is the internal service, particularly in the temple, where one might see an assistant lighting the lamp and helping the *pujari*, etc. He does not go to the tree and bring *bilva* leaves; that is done by another person who is doing external service. The internal assistant is the devotee who is performing *kriya*.

All these processes of *chariya* and *kriya* come under the lower category of worship, which gradually gravitates into pure worship which does not require flowers and *bilva* leaves. Internal worship is, nevertheless, a worship. We perform the worship in the same way as we would with material offerings, but here the offerings in a material form are not necessary.

Internally, we can offer worship to God. We can collect the flowers. We can climb the tree and bring *bilva* leaves. We can light the lamp. We can clean the floor. We can perform the ritual and mentally chant the mantras. Everything is done without external appurtenances. Finally, we enter into deep contemplation on the very form of the deity, culminating in the union of the meditator with God Himself.

These are some of the very interesting scientific processes described through the philosophical system of Saiva Siddhanta; and, there are similar systems and processes mentioned in other schools of thought. I am coming to the point of *karma*, *upasana* and *jnana*. Unselfish service, service of the Guru included, is necessary. It is something unavoidable, especially in the tradition of India. No one can say that he is a Guru himself; it is a very preposterous assumption. Everyone is a very humble servant until the end.

Thus, service to the Guru, service to God, service to humanity, service to everyone who needs our service may be summed up under *karma*, and this includes every religious ritual in any form of religion. *Upasana* is the direct inward attempt at worship, without too much external appurtenances. Meditation in the lower forms comes under *upasana*. But, in the higher forms, meditation merges into the wisdom of God, *jnana*, or the feeling of inward communion of oneself with the Almighty. All these stages are included in the system of Patanjali. The eight limbs of yoga comprehend all that one can understand by *karma*, *upasana* and *jnana*, without mentioning these words.

We have traversed through the necessary stages of the understanding required for the practice of the last step in yoga, which is meditation. The meditation process is, for a beginner, an inward operation of the psyche, or an activity of consciousness—though it is not, really, an inward activity of consciousness, for the reasons I mentioned earlier. For consciousness, there is no ‘inward’ or ‘outward’. Yet, inasmuch as we cannot escape  
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the notion that we are

inside these bodies, for all practical purposes it appears as if our meditation is an internal process. It is not an external activity in the sense of going to a shop or to a railway station. It is something that is taking place inwardly, within our outlook of consciousness.

In the earlier stage of meditation, which is sometimes called *dharana*, or concentration, a great effort is necessary. It is not easily achieved. Effort is necessary because we have to struggle hard against those thoughts which we do not want to interfere with the thoughts which we consider as the right thoughts in meditation. We cannot help making a distinction between necessary thoughts and unnecessary thoughts in meditation. This is so because we are still in the novitiate stage. When we go into the meditation hall, we struggle to concentrate our minds through certain processes of thinking and try to exclude thoughts which we consider as irrelevant for the purpose or perhaps as even obstructing the very attempt.

There are four facets of effort involved in the process of *dharana*, or concentration of the mind. The first is the consciousness that we are concentrating. We cannot escape this consciousness. "I am seated in the meditation hall. I am in the temple. I am in the meditation cottage. I am in my room." We cannot avoid this idea that we are sitting there for meditation. This is one aspect. The second aspect is the consciousness that we are meditating on something. This consciousness, also, cannot leave us. The third aspect is the consciousness that the mind is working, or operating, in a particular manner. The fourth consciousness is the

consciousness that we have to set aside certain thoughts which are irrelevant to the process of meditation.

Thus, four aspects operate simultaneously in *dharana*, or concentration: I am concentrating; I am concentrating on something; the mind is thinking something at the time of concentration; it is trying to avoid certain thoughts during the time of concentration. This is a very difficult thing, not an easy job. We will be tired in a few minutes by thinking like this, because mental fatigue tells upon us more than the fatigue caused by carrying bricks.

When we construct a house, we can carry bricks and we will not be tired; but to think like this is a great exhaustion. We will sweat and say, with a yawn and a sigh, that it is enough for this time. To streamline the activity of the mind is harder than any other job, because the mind is very rebellious in its mood. It is unyielding, even until the end. It will have its say always, and will not listen to what we want it to do.

The conflict between relevant thoughts and irrelevant thoughts is a very important matter to consider. That we are conscious that we are concentrating, and that we are concentrating on something, and that there is something taking place within the mind is all right, understandable, because they are almost friendly processes. But there is an unfriendly kick given by another aspect which we consider as undesirable in the process of concentration. Our consciousness that we are concentrating, and our consciousness that we are concentrating on something, and that the mind is thinking of the object, is a friendly process. Let those thoughts be there; it does not matter. But, we do

not like to be aware that some thoughts are intruding into this holy of holies—this ‘in camera’ process going on. This is a very secret thing that we are conducting within ourselves, and we would not like anyone to eavesdrop or probe into what is happening and interfere with us with shouts, noise, clamour, and demands. This is very unfortunate, and that tension is a real difficulty. We would be trying our best to set aside these irrelevant thoughts, and they would be coming again and again, like a river in flood, trying to break the bund that we have put against this inflow. Here, we would be struggling against odds for days and months and years.

We may be wondering why there should be such a difficulty in setting aside extraneous thoughts. After all, they are extraneous; we have concluded that they are irrelevant. When we have concluded that they are irrelevant, there should be no difficulty in setting them aside. Why is it so hard? How is it that we have to put forth a herculean effort in setting aside things which we have concluded are definitely unnecessary things? Nobody would like to purchase trouble. When we have been convinced within ourselves that these thoughts are not good for us, it should be very easy for us to set them aside. Why should we struggle against them? Why is it that people always complain that they find it very hard to set aside unnecessary thoughts? The difficulty is that they are not really unnecessary thoughts. We are not really convinced that they are irrelevant to us. That is why there is a struggle.

We may imagine that these thoughts are irrelevant, due to an emotional enthusiasm—a spurt of an idea that we



have to sit for meditation in order to attain the goal of life. Maybe it is all very praiseworthy. Yet, in the heart of our hearts, we have not been wholly, entirely, totally convinced that these so-called irrelevant things are really irrelevant things. There is a little taste in the honey of this world, though it may be scattered over poisonous shrubs. What of the poison in the shrub? Nevertheless, there is a drop of honey on top of it. We would like to lick this little honey. This is very unfortunate, and we may accept that it is very unfortunate. "I am very sorry that this should be the state of affairs." But, what is the use of saying that it is unfortunate? It is still what it is.

The craving of the senses, the desire of the mind, is inordinate. Nobody can escape it, not even a great saint. No saint ever maintained a continuous spiritual consciousness from birth to death. Impossible is this task. There are ups and downs in the lives of anyone, even if he is a great man. Unavoidable is this difficulty, man being what he is and God being what He is. Yet, we have to swallow this bitter pill and live in this world, whatever it is, and take things for what they are and not imagine what they are not.

These little desires of ours—our thoughts, which are so-called irrelevant events in the process of concentration—have been our own children. Now we are trying to abandon them. Abandoned children are also, after all, our own children. They were born to us. Just because we do not want them now—they are burdens on the family, and we want to throw them out—they have not ceased to be those born to us. "I cannot sustain, maintain you naughty boys. Go!" we may say to them. Yes, they understand that they

are unwanted children in the house; yet, they were born to us. They say this, and loudly say this. We have to go on listening to the loud noise and clamour of these children of ours, though they have now become very undesirable.

These so-called undesirable things are the insistences of the processes of the fulfilment of desires which we entertained once upon a time, in earlier lives. The pains of life today are the consequences of the pleasures that we sought in earlier lives. Today they have become pains; and, the pleasures that we seek today will become our pains in the next birth or in future lives to come. Beware! We have to be very cautious when seeking for pleasures and satisfactions of the ego, whatever they be. When we asked for pleasures in an earlier life, they did not come. They were not presented before us, for reasons God only knows.

All of our desires are not fulfilled, though they will be fulfilled one day or the other. Do we think that everything that we ask for in this world is given to us? Nothing of the kind. Something is given; many other things are not given. But, these many things that are not given to us for certain reasons are going to be given to us afterwards, when we will not want them. This is a travesty of affairs.

They may come to us after centuries, saying, "Here are the things that you wanted, sir." "When did I ask?" "You asked for them many centuries back." "I don't remember. Go away." We may remember or not; these are the things that we wanted, and they shall be heaped upon us. Then we say, "Oh God, unkind One, why is this terror coming upon me now?"

God has never been unkind. He has been a systematic computer, an electromagnetic force—no friend, no enemy, nothing of the kind for God, the Universal Law. Two and two make four; and they shall always make four—nothing more, nothing less. We should not say, “Why should I have to pay four rupees to the creditor? Let less be given to the creditor.” Nothing of the kind—arithmetic is arithmetic always, whether it be for the creditor or the debtor. These irrelevant, unpleasant and painful things, the things that we want to set aside, are those things which impinge upon us as necessary consequences of the earlier operations of our own mind.

So, what is to be done? “I understand what you say, but what am I to do?” In the process of concentration, we have to increase the intensity of this positive thought on the ideal we have chosen. The intensity of this concentrational process will be able to force aside the other thoughts—as, in Allahabad, the power of the Ganga pushes aside the Yamuna and creates great floods and havoc, because the force of the Yamuna is less than the Ganga. There are two rivers meeting in Allahabad. When they are in spate, the Ganga is so powerful that she does not allow the Yamuna to flow so easily and join her. The Ganga elbows and pushes the Yamuna, and on the other side there is a rising up, and the bridge over the Yamuna breaks.

Likewise, the Ganga of our concentrational process should have a stronger current than the other currents, which should be pushed aside by this power. If we elbow them continuously, they get famished and go elsewhere. Famished desires dry up. They get extinguished, like fire

that is not fed with fuel. This is a very hard thing in the earlier stages, a terrible thing—very painful because we go on thinking of them again and again even though they are undesirable things. A thought of the undesirable is also a thought, after all; it does not cease to be a thought.

In the earlier stages, meditation is not an easy, happy thing. It is very difficult and painful. But, when we invoke the glory, the majesty, the power and the bliss of God's existence by our positive processes, they will inundate us enough to give us the strength to bear the onslaught of these irrelevant ideas.

Suppose we get a telegram that we have won a hundred million dollars in a lottery, but to get it we have to walk to Delhi. We will certainly walk to Delhi in the hot sun. The pain of walking in the hot sun will not be felt because of the joy that we are going to get a hundred million dollars. "Let me walk to Delhi. Walking is good. After all, I have not walked for years." We will have good arguments for this. We will walk to Delhi in the hot sun, for a hundred million dollars. The joy of the positive side completely swallows the pain that is involved in the process of the attainment of this joy because it is larger, greater and more intense.

Thus, the glory of God should be able to set aside every other thought in our mind. "What wonder; what grandeur; what majesty; what perfection! What perfection and what completion it is that I am going to attain, wherein I shall become immortal forever!" These insistent contemplations will slowly set aside the irrelevance and absorb it into this force, as the Yamuna will slowly be made to flow together with the Ganga. They become a terrific flood.

Similarly, all this phenomenal experience will be inundated by the great flood of meditation. The power of the noumenal will make the whole of phenomena melt down. The world will converge into God, and the solid earth will melt under our feet. When the light dazzles from every corner of the earth, we will find that the weight of the body, and the weight of the very earth, will vanish. Life will become a buoyant and happy process of a Godward movement. This is the final aim in meditation.

## Chapter 16

### THE FORCE OF REALITY

The thoughts that we would like to eliminate in the process of concentration are those that pertain to our external relationships in human society and to the objects of sense with which we established relationships earlier. This is a hard job because the pressure of external impulsiveness towards the objects of sense is motivated by aeons of experience through which we have passed in our earlier lives. It is comparable to a push exerted upon us by the whole ocean that is going to flood us.

There is a vast reservoir of energy tending toward externalisation in our unconscious being, the *anandamaya kosha*, which seeks expression, and which we do not wish to give vent to. Thus there is, in the earlier stages, a struggle between our pious intention in meditation and a search for pleasure caused by the impulses that are hidden, unexpressed, in the unconscious root of our being. Therefore, in the beginning stages of meditation it is all struggle, and not happy in every way. It is true that when we are in the gravitational field of the higher forces we may not feel this difficulty, just as when we cross the gravitational field of the Earth by soaring above we may not feel the pull of the Earth below. But until we reach that point, the lower pull is a pull that we have to fight against, drawing us back to the point from where we wish to move away.

These thoughts are not ordinary things. They are not just occurrences which can be explained away in a very casual and academic fashion. The thoughts that we intend

to eliminate in the process of concentration are terrible energies. They are not simple thoughts in an ordinary, psychological sense; otherwise, everybody would have jumped into the Absolute within two days of thinking and meditating. That is not possible on account of great difficulties which are unimaginable.

But, as I mentioned earlier, there is another thing within us, apart from that which prevents us from going further; there are also friendly forces. And, often we are told that God is more powerful than anything else. Though the devil is strong, God is stronger. Thus, there is something of a highly mysterious nature within us which will propel us onwards, in spite of the fact that there are *karmic* forces which drag us down and distract us in every direction.

The power of faith is very important. Nothing can equal it. The power of reason is secondary, compared to faith. The faith that we are referring to here is the very same thing which Patanjali mentions in a very, very interesting manner in one of his *sutras* when he says *tivrasamveganam asannah*. He uses the word *samvega*, which cannot be translated. It is a devastating push that God exerts upon us. We cannot use any other word except devastating; a call from God which devastates our entire personality.

Can we imagine what that call can be, and what impact it can have upon us? Our whole body will shrivel into pieces because of the love for that objective or ideal towards which we intend to move, and upon which we are trying to concentrate and meditate. A love that takes possession of us, root and branch, is the *samvega*. It is not an ordinary love for a rose flower, or a cup of tea, or a drop of honey.

These are little, distracted affections. But there is a love which is incapable of explanation, description, definition, which will flood us, which will enter into every pore of our being, and we will not be able to understand what is happening to us. This is something like what is called God-madness—a person entering into raptures of a possession which is supernatural; and that is the faith, that is the love, that is the devotion that yoga requires of us.

When we are possessed with such a devotion to the ideal of yoga, to such a faith in God's existence and the possibility of this attainment, these extraneous and distracting pressures, whatever be their intensity, can be counteracted with a bolt from this impulse and urge for love which is superior to every other kind of love. But most of us are not possessed of this kind of love for God, or even for yoga. We have a lukewarm understanding of the implications of practice and, similarly, a lukewarm love for anything that we consider as possibly good for us. There are many, many reasons in each one's case why it should be so. Each one should know for one's own self. We cannot generalise this matter. However, the fact is there.

Are we not a few people who are perhaps awakened to the necessity of being one hundred percent occupied with this central purpose of human life? Most of us, perhaps all of us, have received a novel type of blessing from God, due to which the inconveniences that we may have in life should pale into insignificance compared to the blessings that have come upon us. These blessings will be known to each one of us if we honestly enter into our own hearts. Our problems are minor; our blessings are large and abundant.



This is something that we have to take advantage of, with gratitude to God and to our Guru.

As I mentioned earlier, when we sit for concentration we are involved in a fourfold process of psychological operation which, later on, ceases to be merely psychological and becomes a conscious effort of the whole of our being. Actually, the difficulty in setting aside extraneous thoughts arises due to not being able to understand what these thoughts are and why they come at all.

We should not exert any force of will in meditation. Mere pressure exerted by the will is not enough. These extraneous thoughts impinge upon us because they have some vital connection with us; they are not totally extraneous. They are not utter foreigners. They have some connection with us. At least, they did maintain some connection, and we accepted that relationship; so, they are insisting upon that relationship once again, and though today we say 'no', they are not willing to accept this 'no'. We have made mistakes in earlier days, and those mistakes have produced the effect of these repellent attitudes which we are now trying to get rid of.

There is an old analogy about a hunter who discharges an arrow at a moving object in the jungle, thinking that it is a tiger—which he could not see properly, due to the absence of light. He discharges an arrow. The arrow has left the bowstring. When the arrow has left the bowstring, he realises that it is a cow. It is not a tiger. He feels great distress. "Oh, it is a cow! I have discharged an arrow at this animal, thinking that it is a tiger." He repents; he grieves. But what is the use of grief? He has let the arrow off. It has

to go and hit the target. He has killed the cow. Afterwards he repents, but what is the use of repentance? The deed has been done.

Something like that is what has happened to us. In our state of ignorance, we desired objects of sense. We thought they were desirable objects of sense—very, very precious, very pleasant, very necessary, very affectionate and, therefore, we discharged the arrow of love toward these objects, thinking that they were necessary things and our own possessions. When we discharged the arrow of affection or love towards these objects of sense, thinking that they are our own and are necessary, knowledge dawned. Then we realised that they are not desirable things. We had imagined that they were not tigers, but that they were cows. Now the knowledge has arisen that we have made a mistake. We ought not to have desired them, but we have desired them for ages, throughout the incarnations we passed through. The arrow has been let off; desires have been discharged in respect of those objects which we thought were good. Now we are thinking that they are not good. We have made a mistake, but those objects have their say, as the arrow will have its say when it is discharged.

So, these things which we do not want now are the things which we wanted, once upon a time. This is a difficulty before us which we have to swallow somehow or other, like a bitter pill. The consequences of *karma* cannot be escaped by any amount of learning. Every effect of every *karma* has to be enjoyed, experienced as a pleasure or a pain, and it can exhaust itself only by producing its effect; it cannot be suppressed. Hence it is that we are undergoing

this peculiar stress and strain of life which sometimes looks pleasant, and sometimes looks unpleasant.

The extraneous thoughts, therefore, are forces which have a larger significance than purely the psychological operations, as we understand the mind. In meditation, *dhyana*, which is a deeper and more intensive process, this difficulty ceases. We do not have to struggle hard to set aside undesirable thoughts.

Then, what happens in meditation? What is *dhyana*? *Tatra pratyayaikatanata dhyanam*: Meditation, *dhyana*, is a continuous flow of consciousness—undistracted, unadulterated—towards the great ideal. Whatever be the object of meditation, towards that the whole being moves.

In the earlier stages of concentration, the whole being was not moving. It is like the government of a country which, while thinking intently on a constructive process for the rejuvenation of internal culture is, at the same time, attacked by a foreign force, and it has to work in a double manner. It has to defend itself against the onslaught of foreign forces and, also, work constructively for the welfare of its own citizens. Likewise, in the earlier stages we had to defend ourselves against the onslaught of these extraneous thoughts and, at the same time, we had to work positively towards the internal occupation of the mind, which was direct meditation.

But now, the foreign forces have gone. We have won victory in the war. Now we can work wholly for the internal constructive process—which is cultural, educational, economic, social, spiritual, and so on. When the country is strong, and it has no inimical forces threatening it from

outside, it can work for its internal welfare. Otherwise, it is distracted and its attention is divided.

So now we are free in the process of meditation. The struggle which was of a war-like type in the process of concentration is over. What happens in *dhyana*, meditation? There is the consciousness of the fact that *we* are meditating. We cannot escape this. There is an intense awareness, of course, that there is an object, or objective, of meditation, and there is a flow of this consciousness. In meditation, *dhyana*, the object is somehow—in some form, in some way, in some mysterious manner—set outside the meditator. Now we are discussing *dhyana*, meditation, not *dharana*, or concentration. We have passed through that stage.

The object of meditation is something which requires our careful attention. In meditation, what is it that we have to concentrate upon, meditate upon, think upon? What is it? Many people have a difficulty here because they do not know what to choose. The psychology of meditation will suggest that any object can be taken for this purpose, as a point on which the consciousness can be fixed. There is a religious aspect as well as a psychological and purely logical or scientific aspect. The religious side tells us that God pervades the whole universe, and therefore any point—anything in creation—can be regarded as a way to God.

The universe is the face of God. His fingers move in every act and event of creation. There is no place, no time where God is not, so a religiously inspired student would do well to feel the presence of God in all things in creation, and take anything for the purpose of his meditation.

Through any branch we can reach the trunk of the tree, because all the branches are connected to the very same trunk and to the root. Through any river, we can reach the ocean. Through any limb of the body, we can touch the whole body. Thus, as God indwells in everything in creation and God is embodied as this universe, anything can be advantageous to us for the purpose of meditation.

But there is, also, another aspect here which tells us the same thing—that anything can be an object of meditation—because the purpose of meditation is to break the knot of isolation of oneself from the total structural pattern of the universe. There is an egoistic knot, which is the centre of our individuality, affirming its isolation from everything and standing independently, by itself. This knot of the ego is to be broken through, bombarded by the activity of meditation, just as an atom can be split by bombardment and its energy released. The process of meditation is a kind of bombardment by which we hit upon the mind again and again, just as we drive a nail into the wall, so that it bursts. The universal energy that is hidden in this little atom of the mind is released, and it becomes a very potent force.

Secondly, the purpose of meditation is to open up the Universal Consciousness that is at the back of the mind. Just as the ocean is at the back of every water drop in the ocean, so too the Universal Being is at the back of every mind, every centre of individuality. But, the drop resists even being conscious that it has the ocean at the back. It wants to maintain its independence.

We do not like to be told that we are one with the universe. This is very uncomfortable for us who seek

pleasure in the objects of sense; and, anyone who likes to be totally independent would not like to be told that he is one with everybody. To be one with everybody is not to assert independence, but to lose independence. One feels very, very unhappy when one is asked to do any kind of sacrifice of oneself, especially a total sacrifice by way of an alienation of one's existence itself in the interest of a larger being—which we do not want. But, meditation is an endeavour in this direction.

Everything in this world, every atom of creation, is such a centralised individual—like a knot. We can break through any knot, anywhere, and we will enter the cosmos. Thus, any object of meditation is as good as any other object of meditation. This is a point which has no direct religious connotation but is a philosophical and a psychological way of understanding the very same point.

The candle flame on which we are concentrating, or the dot on the wall that we are thinking of, or the rose flower that we are meditating upon, is not important. What is important is what that is happening in the mind. The external object, or even the concept, is only an agent in arousing certain spiritual powers within us. They act only as agents, like proper medicine injected into the body. The body does not receive any direct sustenance from the medicine. The medicine only acts as an agent in relieving the body by preventing the entry of toxic matter, and helps the forces of health to awaken into action. Similarly, we do not create anything positively divine in ourselves. It is already there, within us. We only help the revelation of it,

or the awakening of it into the conscious level and not merely remaining in the background.

But, the memories of the past do not wholly leave us. Although the positively repellent and undesirable powers have been practically eliminated during the process of *dharana*, or concentration, the memory persists. Though we do not actually come in contact with sense objects, a desire for them may persist. At the top of Mt. Everest, we may have a desire for things which we cannot get there. We cannot get those things because they are not available there. The object of sense is far removed from the person who desires that object; yet, the taste for the object will persist: "If it had been there, it would have been good." This desire will be there; that the object is not there, is a different matter.

Similarly, though we may think that we are free, in a way, from the difficulties of personal involvement in phenomenal existence, a peculiar difficulty will persist even when we go into deep meditation. It is a type of resistance from the memories of the past—not necessarily from the gross objects of sense, the stage which we have already traversed and outgrown.

We all know what memories can do to us. They can wreak havoc. If we go on remembering the old things again and again, we feel very much distressed. Many times we try to forget the old memories. Sometimes we succeed in forgetting them. Often we cannot succeed, because there is a taste in these memories. If it is a painful memory, we would like to brush it aside; but sometimes even very agonising memories will persist.

Little things go, but the hard things do not go, whether they are pleasant or otherwise. So, the pleasures of life remain as a type of memory and a kind of subtle longing which tells us that there would be, perhaps, a possibility of regaining all those things that have been lost. A sense of having lost certain items of pleasure will persist. Unless we read the lives of saints, we cannot understand the meaning behind all these processes taking place inwardly. These are not matters for logical discussion; they are mystical processes. They are beyond academic and rational studies. But, one who resorts to the feet of God will receive such consolation and support that even the memories will go.

It is difficult for us to believe, hard-boiled individuals that we are, that God is joy and bliss. The mind cannot appreciate that God is pleasant, beautiful, happy, etc. Our idea is that God is a legal God, mostly. He is a judicial chief. This idea of God cannot leave us easily. Though we are accustomed to being told that God is everything, He is not really everything for us, because the world is also something. The taste that we feel in the things of the world has to be also seen in God, or in the supreme ideal of yoga. This is not easy, because to sense the taste in supernatural things, we require a supernatural instrument of perception. Our physical senses cannot taste them. The subtle music of the spheres cannot enchant us when we are accustomed only to listening to the jarring noise of the transistor, because our ears are not so fine-tuned as to listen to the beauty of the music of the higher realms, nor can we visualise the grandeur of the higher, supernatural realms.



To attract us towards the higher realms, yoga scriptures go into great detail. Vyasa, the commentator on the *sutras* of Patanjali, goes into great details about this matter—what we will see in the heavens when we rise high in meditation. We can read about all those things. These are distractions to be guarded against, he says. Temptations become stronger as we go higher and higher. They are very weak now, in this world. We cannot resist the temptations of this world itself, what to talk of the higher realms. The subtler, higher, celestial temptations are stronger because they are more delightful, more pervasive, more ethereal, more catching than the physical, gross, heavy-laden pleasures of sense.

There is a very short *sutra* of Patanjali in this regard, for which Vyasa has given a large commentary on the necessity to resist temptations in the higher realms also. These higher realms are not necessarily outside. They are also inside us. Again, we have to remember that there is no inside and outside when we go higher and higher, inwardly, in meditation. It is a wider conception that we have to entertain, free from the division of the spatial distinction of outside and inside. We grow entirely and wholly as we rise higher and higher, and not partially like the individuals that we are. We cease to be this person when we go higher in meditation.

Thus, coming to the point, while there are four facets in concentration, there are three facets in meditation: *dhyata*, *dhyeya* and *dhyana*, i.e., the meditator, the object of meditation, and the meditation process. These persist in *dhyana*, or meditation. As two tanks of water filled to an

equal level may flow one into the other if there is a connection between the two, and we will not know that there is a flow at all because of the equality of the level of the water in the two tanks, so will be the experience, the relationship or the connection between the meditator and the object meditated upon. The object will not any more remain an object, so that one will not know where the consciousness is operating. Regarding the two tanks that I mentioned as an analogy, one is not a subject and the other is not an object. They are equal. They are placed on an equal pedestal. One tank does not see the other tank as an object.

Likewise, the so-called object on which we are meditating gradually sheds its objectivity, and it puts on a new form which is akin in character to the subjective consciousness itself. To speak in the language of the Vedanta philosophy, the *visayi* becomes the *visaya*; the *chaitanya*, or the consciousness that is indwelling the subject, is recognised as also indwelling the object.

The substance of the subject is the same as the substance of the object. The thing out of which the subject is made is the thing out of which the object is made, so that neither can be called 'subject' or 'object'. We have to give up these definitions, these designations or epithets of 'the seer' and 'the seen'. There is no seer and no seen, because such a distinction will not obtain in this deeper consciousness of meditation, where both terms of relation stand on an equal pedestal. They are on par with each other, so that either we may say that we are meditating on that, or we may say that it is meditating upon us. Both

statements are equally valid. We do not know whether we are meditating on the object, or the object is meditating on us. One has entered into the other and one embraces the other, as if they are twins in the womb of the mother.

Then it is that a miracle takes place. 'Miracle' is the only word we can use. We cannot call it by any other name. A wonder, a marvel happens which will enable the joy of creation to burst out in the midst of this process of meditation. The *ananda*, the bliss that is at the core of creation, will open up its treasures, and nature will begin to smile through every nook and corner. Afterwards, there will be no inimical impact. Nobody will frown at us. Everyone will smile, "Now my friend has come." Just as our family will receive us back when we return after long, long years of separation, the exiled one, the Prodigal Son, comes back to the father who receives the son with great affection: "My son, you have come back."

The Chhandogya Upanishad says that all nature will receive us. Tribute will be offered to us by every point in creation, as if we are kings of this world. From every nook and corner, from every part of the horizon, tribute will come to us. Offerings will be poured at our feet, as if we are the owners of this creation. Is this not a miracle?

But, we are yet on the verge of entering into the bosom of things. We have not yet gone deeper. There is only a sensation of having touched the borderland of the truth of things; we have not yet entered. Like the vision of Arjuna that is described to us in the eleventh chapter of the Bhagavadgita, it is only a vision. We have not yet possessed

it. We are seeing a large treasure in front of us, but it has not yet become our property.

These are the indications that we are merging into a state which is often called *samadhi*, or it can be called by any other name we may use to describe it. *Sakshatkara* is one name, which means direct Realisation, immediate experience, entering into the substance of things. *Samapatti*, is another name, which means the acquisition of the noumenal truth in all things. Many other rapturous terms are used to describe this sense of possession, which is not like the possession of the goods of this world.

There is a difference between that possession and this possession of property here. We do not really possess anything in this world. We are imaginary possessors of things. We are in a delusion when we think that things are possessed by us. Nothing can be possessed, because things are outside us—and everyone knows that everything is outside. The money that we have, the land that we possess, the buildings—these are not ours. How can they be ours? They are not clinging to our body. They are independent. They were there before we were born, and they will be there even if we die. How then can we think that things are ours? So, we are imaginary, deluded possessors of things in this world, madmen thinking that things are ours. But when we unite with objects through *samadhi*, we become real possessors, because to really possess a thing is to enter into the being of that thing. As long as the being of the possessed object is outside the being of the possessor, nothing is possessed.

The being of money is outside us and, therefore, we cannot possess that money. At any moment it can leave us; and, even now, when we are thinking that it is ours, it is not ours. We are under a total illusion. But in meditative union, a real possession of an uncanny type takes place. That is why the joy is unbounded. *Samadhi*, *samapatti*, *sakshatkara*, or Realisation, is unimaginable at present.

When we possess a dear object and embrace it, enjoy it, swallow it, we are in a condition where we lose self-consciousness. To possess the dearest object and make it one's own is to lose the sense of being. This experience is faintly reflected in artistic possessions, rapturous music, elevated literature, and romantic experiences which go beyond the human level of experience. There, one loses the sense of being. It is a kind of giddiness of consciousness, where it cannot know what is happening to it. It is simply merged in a joy, and joy possesses it. It becomes joy. There is no I, no you, no object—nothing. It is just bliss bursting forth.

A faint reflection of this kind of joy is sometimes, though rarely, also felt by people in this world—for a fraction of a moment, not for a long time. But there, it is a different thing altogether. The Reality is possessed—the archetypes, as Plato sometimes tells us in his great philosophical disquisitions. The archetypes, the originals of things, are possessed—not the reflections that we are catching now. If the reflections make us giddy with joy, what will happen to us if we possess the originals? We become mad with joy by catching shadows; what will

happen to us if we catch the originals? Unthinkable is that condition! Nobody knows what *samadhi* is.

There are stages of this attainment, and even this attainment is not a sudden jump into the ocean. Perhaps even when we enter the ocean, there is a gradual entering. We touch the water slowly with our feet or with our fingers, and a little of our body goes into the ocean. Little by little, we go inside, and we do not suddenly enter into the bosom of the waters. Similarly, this great attainment is a gradual experience. Sometimes—very rarely, in exceptional cases—it may look like a sudden possession, like a devil coming and catching hold of us. But, very rarely it is so. Mostly, it is a graduated process. We rarely get possessed like that.

Thus, we gradually, slowly, enter into these substances which are the realities, the archetypes or the originals of things, and we become pulled towards these things. When we touch the substance, the reality, the archetype, the original of a thing, it is as if we are touching a live wire which will pull us with a tremendous force, because the force of Reality is the force of anything that is here in this phenomenal world.

## Chapter 17

### TRUE YOGA BEGINS WITH SAMADHI

We concluded that the aim of life is a universal union of things, a confederation of existence, where each one exists for everyone else. Each is all, and all is each. This is the beginning of a great spiritual endeavour culminating in the communion usually known as *samadhi* or *samapatti*—the direct Realisation of the ultimate nature of things.

It is a supernatural awakening of ourselves from the dream of this world, as it were, wherein we contact the originals—whose reflections and shadows the things in this world seem to be, including our own personalities, our bodies, and our appearances here. We would realise that we are in utter darkness as to the nature of the originals which cast this shadow in the form of these phenomena, this visible creation.

This inward art of spiritual communion is called, in the language of yoga, *samadhi* or *samapatti*—the great attainment, the finale of the life of people, wherein the deepest spirit in man recognises its home everywhere. Its home is not just inside the body of some person. We have houses built everywhere. “In my Father’s house there are many mansions,” said Christ. There is not just one little room or a cottage. So, we are not located in one house. We have mansions everywhere, citadels built for us in all places. Everywhere, everybody is eager to welcome us, always.

We are like the Prodigal Son in the biblical story, who runs away from his father and, now repenting, returns; the father willingly, joyously embraces this little ignorant exile—which is what we all are. When we return to the

originals, it is as if we are gazing at the sun. Because we had turned our backs to the sun, the light was behind us. Now we are face to face with the light when we effect a right-about turn of our consciousness and behold things as they really are. It is a beholding—not by the eyes, but the spirit envisaging its own original in the very structure of all things. This beholding is a pressure which the little spirit in man cannot contain.

It is like the river, the little daughter of the ocean, finding herself in a state of ecstasy when she communes herself with her father, the ocean. The river jumps and dances when it touches the ocean. It is as if the whole treasure of the world is given to us—which we cannot contain, and we cannot even think in our mind. The tentative inability of the human spirit to gather itself up before this mighty Reality of the universe is the reason for the rapture, the ecstasy that one feels in heights of spiritual communion.

It is difficult to explain what one feels at that time. It doesn't mean that we will be always in a state of ecstasy. The ecstasy ceases when we enter into the bosom of the ocean; but, until we touch it, until we enter into it, there is an inexplicable experience, and there is joy. At the same time there is also a danger, because there is a possibility of getting frightened and then wishing to revert to the little cocoon of the body once again—and expecting the great majesty to withdraw itself, as our little eyes cannot behold this blazing sun. “Enough of this!” said Arjuna to the Great Lord. “Come down! Bind yourself. I cannot behold you any more.”



Even when desirable things come to us in large quantities, beyond our comprehension, we cannot contain them—even though they are desirable things. Our desires are puerile, feeble instruments which cannot understand their own aims and objectives. Before desires are fulfilled thoroughly to the brim, overflowing and breaking the limits of even our requirements, we will not be able to contain or understand what is happening to us. Hence, even to fulfil desires is a danger because we do not want to fulfil them thoroughly, root and branch. There is a little defect and a foible even in our expression of desires. They are misguided, thoroughly. When we come face to face with the realities, the originals of things, we are touching the *samadhi* of consciousness.

As I mentioned previously, this entering into the truths or the archetypes of things seems to be taking place gradually, stage by stage, as we touch the waters of the ocean when we step in for a bath. Slowly we enter, little by little—first drenching our feet, then going knee deep, navel deep, neck deep and then, finally, plunging into it. Something like that seems to be the usual way in which the spirit enters the original, though this need not necessarily be the only way. There are occasions when we can be totally inundated in one stroke, but these are rare occasions—most blessed things, that all cannot expect. Usually it is a gradual process, though occasionally it can be a sudden thing. We shall not bother about the sudden things just now because to expect too much, also, is not a happy thing.

The graduated touching of the originals of things is the graduated *samadhis* of the yogas. When we behold the

radiance, the beauty, the glamour, the fragrance, the taste and the majesty of the original, we get pulled towards it, as iron filings may be pulled towards a magnet. This pull is the urge towards *samadhi*.

We cannot explain in language what *samadhi* means, though the word is known to us and we have heard about it one hundred times. We may go on doing *japa* of this word, but we will not be able to make much sense out of it because the minds of most of us are not prepared for this experience. Yet, we wish to be confident within ourselves that we are intending to have this experience; that is why we are considering it here as a theme of our studies.

The creational process is a graduated descent of the Universal Reality into grosser and grosser forms until it becomes what we are seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling. I have touched upon the lower categories which we confront in our meditations. I do not propose to revert to the other minor details of the earlier stages which we have already considered, but to gather up our minds to where we are trying to gravitate, finally, as the goal of our existence.

The physical universe is the immediate reality before us. This is the object of consciousness. While we imagine that there are many objects, they can all be grouped together under a single object: the whole physical cosmos. Inasmuch as all the forms which have a physical connotation are included in the physical form of the five elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether—all the forms which we can think in our minds do not stand outside the formations of these five elements. Actually, we cannot think of what we have

not seen or heard. Even when we hear things which we have not seen, we cannot conceive them properly.

For example, if we hear of heaven, we will imagine heaven in terms of what we have seen with our eyes. Unseen things cannot be imagined by the mind; and, all seen things are physically connected. The formations, the features, the shapes, and everything connected with these things are, somehow or other, related to the physical universe. All things in the world are physically constituted. Our bodies and everything that our bodies are related to, i.e. the physical objects, all objects of sense, these are a part of the physical cosmos. So, the spirit within man, the consciousness within us, directly confronts the physical cosmos.

This is not done at once. As the mind cannot think of the whole universe at one stroke, we are advised to take certain symbols for concentration—an image, a portrait, an idea, a picture, a candle flame, a flower—anything that is dear to us, and anything that can attract our attention. The whole universe cannot attract us, because we do not know what it is. Unseen things do not pull us towards themselves. Inasmuch as we seem to be concerned with what is visible and intelligible, the advice given by the masters is that we should, in the earlier stages, concentrate on those visible forms or concepts, externally or internally, which are dear to us, which we consider as our own and which we regard as very valuable—the most endearing things conceivable.

I mentioned previously that concentration on the object in yoga has, on the one side, a religious connotation and, on the other side, a purely psychological significance. The

religiously conceived object is God as we think of Him—our Ishta Devata, our deity, our dear Lord, the God of the universe as we can envisage in our consciousness. It can be with form or without form, sitting in one place or everywhere—whatever the case may be. This is something which everyone can understand. There is not much of a difficulty here. Everyone has a God, and we may concentrate on our God.

The God that we think of is That, beyond which there cannot be a value for us. That is the meaning of God. If there is something superior to that object or ideal, that cannot be our God. Hence, to utilise that objective as an instrument to satisfy another need would be to misconstrue the whole aim and to regard the final goal as an instrument of another goal altogether. Therefore, the God that we think of in our minds should be the finality of things in which we can attain, achieve, or experience everything that we would like to attain, achieve, or experience.

We have to stretch our minds a little bit to conceive such an idea. As was pointed out before, the psychological concentration involves the process of breaking the knot which intensely ties up the mind to this body-consciousness and all the desires connected therewith. Intense concentration on any conceptual or physical point is an effective method of piercing through this network of mental operation, or psychological activity. We have to go on hammering this point again and again. A few minutes of thinking deeply will not do, because the mind is harder than a ball of steel. We can melt steel, but not the mind. The ego-consciousness is the steel point in us—flint-like,

impossible to melt—and it requires great energy and force to bombard and break through it so that what is behind it, at the base of it, can be discovered.

Therefore, concentration on any point, whatever the point be from our own angle of vision, should be a perpetual habit of the mind. It is the only objective and aim of our life, and we are living here only for that purpose; we have no other duty to perform. Even if it appears as if we have other duties to perform in our daily life, they are subsidiary to this great duty, accessories to this duty, contributory to this duty—not opposed to this duty. All our functions in life are small rivulets moving towards this major stream of the movement of consciousness towards the ideal, the goal of yoga. Thus, we are gathered up in our spirits in an intensive aspiration for a communion with the original, of which the universe is a reflection.

Every object in this world has a threefold character: It is something in itself, it appears to be something to each one who beholds it, sees it, conceives it, contacts it, experiences it, and it has a relationship to other things, which is what we call the definition of an object. These are subtle points which are worth considering. Our concept of an object is nothing but a relation that we try to establish, psychologically, with other objects. Generally, when we look at any object, we do not understand how this process takes place. We take everything for granted, and do not probe into the intricacy of the process of perception.

The location of any particular object in the world and the cognition of its location is a result of a simultaneous rapid process of a relating of that thing with every other

thing by comparison and contrast. The mind does this so quickly that we cannot even know how it has worked. If comparison and contrast are not there, no object can be visualised or known. This is what is called the definition of an object, creating in the mind an idea about that object independent of what the object is in itself.

Why go so far? Even in our social life—look at a mother seeing her child, and look at a physician seeing the child as a patient. Is there not a difference? The physician who treats the child as a patient has one idea of that child, and the mother has another idea of that child. They see two different things there. Perhaps, a tiger who is a man-eater may see a third thing altogether in that human body. It cannot see what the mother sees or what the physician sees. And a scientist viewing it through a microscope may see a fourth thing altogether. He will not see a child; it will appear as something else. The subtle microscope, which reveals the atomic structure of things, will not show the form of the child. It will look like something else.

I placed these as examples before you to give you an idea of the various possibilities of visualising of one and the same thing, and that the thing in itself may be quite different from the visualisations thereof. We have to concede that a thing is what it is from its own point of view and it may not necessarily be what it appears to others. My idea about you need not be the idea that you have about yourself or what you actually are. Thus, every object has a threefold character—two characters foisted upon it by the process of externalised perception, and one ontological status which is its own being.

This ontological status is the reality of the object. This is its original, the archetype which we have to contact in *samadhi*—not the definition or the idea that we have. How can we achieve this? We are involved in this tangle of definitive perception and ideational notion of an object. Everything is only this much; nothing more can be available to us in this world. How could we have *samadhi* with the original of things, which we have not seen? These are the secrets of meditation, into which one is supposed to be initiated, and are not subjects for a platform lecture. Yoga is never taught from a pulpit or from a broadcasting station. It is always a communication from spirit to spirit, from a Guru to a disciple. Such mysteries cannot be understood by reading books or even hearing lectures. How do we contact the original? We have to do that, somehow.

When we contact it by freeing ourselves from our involvement in the definition of an object and the idea about it, we rub our shoulders against it; we recognise it as it is, as it has always been, and as it shall ever be. The mask of the object is lifted when we lift the mask of our perceptual process. Since we are looking at things with a blinkered mind, we cannot see all the aspects of anything in this world. When we cast off these blinkers and lift the mask from the spirit which we really are, we will find, simultaneously, the mask outside is also lifted. The progress in yoga is a parallel of movement and attainment, subjectively as well as objectively. Which comes first and which comes afterwards, we cannot know. Perhaps both things happen simultaneously, internally and externally.

This is a very hard job. In the perception of an object, we cannot break through this tangle of our wrong notion and the completely different way in which the object is in itself. But, by *abhyasa*, or practice, we can break through this tangle and reach the original of the object.

Here we are in *samadhi*. The mind is balanced completely. It does not perceive the object any more; it is balanced with that object. It stands on par with the reality of the object, and it should not any more be considered as an object. Would you like to be called an object of anybody? It is an insult. It is a derogatory definition of a person to call him an object. It means a satellite. It is a very unpleasant word—not a cultured way of defining people. It is to rob the thing of its subjectivity and its own status.

Here, it does not remain a satellite or a thing of satisfaction by contact. In *samadhi* there is no contact, because contact is an operation of the senses. Here it is a contact-less coming together of one's spirit with the spirit of things—*duhkha samyoga viyoga*. This *dukha samyoga viyoga* is the separation from a union with the pain that is caused by the contact of the senses with the false forms of objects imagined in the idea of the mind.

This initial stage in *samadhi* is very hard—impossible to attain. However much we may try to go into the ocean, we will be thrown back by the force of the waves. They do not want us. But once they embrace us, we enter into them. It is to enter into the gravitational field of the object of meditation, breaking through the other impulse which is the movement of the mind towards this body only—which it regarded as its own, up to this time. It is like the Sun



pulling us upwards when we cross the border of the gravitational field of the Earth, instead of the Earth pulling us down because we are within its field.

However much we may try to enter into the substance of an object in meditation, the body—which is manifested by the desires of the senses and the impulsions and assertions of the ego—will pull us back. The ego and the senses will not permit this *samadhi*. They will pull us back, as the Earth will pull us down, however much we may try to go up. The higher we go, the greater is the danger of falling down; and we fall with a thud and break everything. This can happen if caution is not exercised. We require the grace of the Guru, the infinite blessing of the Almighty; this is the only thing we can say, as we do not know how this mystery operates. All great achievements are mysterious. They are not expected things. Great things come unexpectedly, whatever they be.

Thus, we enter into the structure, the original, the true nature of an object—which is also the true nature of every other object in the world. The definition, the idea and the contactual notion of an object may vary from one thing to another thing. Therefore, we seem to be in a world of multitudinous varieties. But once we enter into the substance of one object, we have seen the substance of every other object in the world—just as when we break through one wave in the ocean, we have touched the base of every other wave in the ocean.

The last thing which will harass us, again and again, is space and time. It is impossible to get out of this idea of space and of our location in time. In fact, our idea of

objects, whatever they be, is involved in the concept of space and time. Everything is somewhere, and sometime. How can we think that something can be there without being in space, and without being in time? The idea of space and time arises on account of the distance between the subject and the object, and the isolation of one thing from another thing. *Samadhi* is the abolition of this distinction between the seer and the seen—which means to say, the overcoming of the distance between the subject and the object, the seer and the seen, the knower and the known, consciousness and matter, ourselves and somebody else.

We appear to be outside somebody, and something or somebody seems to be away from us in space, and therefore in time, on account of the operation of the senses, which tell us that things and persons are external to us. When we place ourselves in the context of those very objects and things, the distance between ourselves and others gets abolished.

Nobody can understand what all these things mean unless we actually practise. Otherwise, we will go on listening and nothing will enter the head, because the mind cannot contain these things. It is not accustomed to think in this manner. This is not the way in which we usually think in our life. This is something quite novel.

The notion of spatial location and temporal process is overcome by the placement of one's own self in the ideal of meditation—the absorption of ourselves in the object, which is the deepening of meditation, *dhyana*, into *samadhi*. As our understanding of the creational process

seems to involve a gradational descent, our notion of ascent, also, involves the same gradations. Whatever be the ultimate truth of things, we have to go according to our notion of things—because what binds us is our idea, and not the thing as it is. So, we have to pay due respect to our envisagement of things. Behind the physical is the subtle, behind the subtle is the causal, and behind the causal is the Supreme Truth. This idea of one thing behind another thing is also involved in the concept of space and time—which, again, has to be abolished by a great effort of consciousness.

Various schools of yoga have various things to tell us. Some say that we will rise from one *chakra* to another *chakra*—from *muladhara* to *svadhishtana*, *manipura*, *anahata*, *vishuddha*, *ajna* and *sahasrara*. This is one way of looking at things from a mystical, microcosmic point of view. The individual persists as long as consciousness is at a *chakra* that is below the *sahasrara*. A *chakra* is a whirl of energy, the way in which the mind understands things. This is the *hatha* yoga technique, the *kundalini* yoga technique, and other techniques associated with these systems. The Yoga Vasishtha and such other mystical texts like the Tripura Rahasya say another thing altogether, about which I have mentioned something previously.

In Patanjali's Yoga Sutras it is mentioned that the *mahabhutas*—the five elements of earth, water, fire, air and ether involved in name, form and the space-time complex—are the initial objects of meditation. Beyond these five elements are the *tanmatras*: *shabda*, *sparsa*, *rupa*, *rasa* and *gandha*. When we contact these subtle forces

behind the five elements, we enter the kingdom of heaven, the cosmic *ahamkara*, the *mahat tattva*, the *prakriti* and, finally, the *purusha*. The Vedanta, in one of its phases, tells us that we cross this border of the five elements and the *tanmatras* and enter into Virat, Hiranyagarbha, Ishvara and Brahman, the Absolute.

To give an example, it is something like the probing of our understanding of the nature of an object by carefully observing it through an intensely powerful microscope. We begin to see molecules rather than a desk or a table or a chair. If we go deeper into it, we will not see molecules; we will see atoms. The molecules are chemical in their nature, and a molecule of water may look different from a molecule of air or of something else. But atoms are not so differentiated. They look alike, though certain atomists distinguish between an earth atom, a water atom, a fire atom, and an air atom. But, notwithstanding that atoms may differ one from the other in their structure, we can break through the atom by bombarding it. Then, we enter into the electromagnetic field where the atoms enter into one another and we do not know which is earth, which is water, which is fire, which is air—because, as we are told, the atomic structure of a particular form is the reason behind our distinguishing one form from another. Finally, we enter into a wide sea of indistinguishability and an incommensurable, wide-spread continuum.

This is to speak in the language of our own present-day understanding; and all these things, perhaps, mean one and the same thing. But, the yoga technique goes beyond these methods and investigations of science. We are not merely

entering into a continuum of an energy as if we are observers of this continuum, standing outside it. The great scientist, the visualiser, the observer, is inseparable from this continuum. He has entered into it. There is no instrument of perception when this continuum engulfs even the beholder thereof.

The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali dilate upon the stages of *samadhi*, known as *savitarka*, *nirvitarka*, and so on. I am not going to speak about this theme now. But these are also the difficulties that we may have to expect, and this instruction as to the degrees involved even in the *samadhi* process is supposed to tell us that, perhaps, true yoga begins only when *samadhi* starts. Until that time, it is only digging the earth, laying the foundation and putting the bricks one over the other. The structure is not complete.

Thus, yoga does not end with *samadhi*; it begins with it. All other things prior to it are a large preparation for this, what some mystics call the spiritual marriage. Perhaps this is the term used by St. John of the Cross where the Great Beloved, centred in all things, lifts the veil and is beheld by the lover. This is how the Sufis, the mystics, and the *bhaktas* conceive the ideal in yoga. Who can love us more than God loves us? What can we love more than we can love God?

In the beginning, yoga looks like a great analysis of the sensory operations. Sensations and perceptions, including social relationships, are the theme of our discussion and study in the earlier stages of yoga. Later on, yoga melts into understanding. It is a rational, intellectual, logical process, and not merely an analysis of sensation and perception.

Then yoga, when it comes to what is called *samadhi*, goes beyond the intellectual, rational features of yoga. It becomes spiritual, an affair which can best be described as soul coming in contact with soul—which is generally considered as filled with joy, bliss, or *ananda*. The nature of the spirit is not a sensation or a logical understanding. It is love which loves only itself. It is joy arising not from contact with any other thing, but from the very consciousness of the very existence of the spirit. It is not love and it is not joy in the way that we understand in this world. It is not loving something and rejoicing over something else. It is a joy accruing from the recognition of the fact that we, ourselves, are the source of joy. The origin, the substance, the root of all things is said to be love. That is why, in the heights of *samadhi*, we are in raptures of joy.

In the final reaches of yoga, we are not intellectually operating or rationally arguing. In the earlier stages of *savitarka*, etc., argument ceases. We are possessed. In a state of possession, there is no intellectual operation, no rational investigation, no sensory perception. Possession is possession, and nobody can say anything more about it. When we are possessed, we are in a condition of losing ourselves, totally. We are tripped under our feet, and we lose grip of ourselves because we are gripped by something else to which we really belong. These are the very, very difficult ways in which language tries to express that which it cannot express, by using idiomatic expressions and language which is poetic, imaginative, grasping, melting, possessing—an entering into us, rather than merely an informative description as in science or even in ordinary

visual art. Such is the bare outline of the features of that glorious entry into the truth of things that is called *samadhi*.

## Chapter 18

### CONCLUSION

The great difficulty in the fulfilment of the requirement in yoga is our inveterate belief in the substantiality and reality of things as they appear to our senses. The world is as much real in itself as a cloth is real, independent of the threads. There is a network of relations which makes the world appear as real. The world is not exactly as it appears to our eyes. We cannot discover this mystery of the structure of the universe because we, ourselves, are involved in this structure. The greatest difficulty in understanding anything in this world is that we cannot stand outside the world. Hence, we cannot know anything in this world.

The reality of things is commensurate with the reality of our own bodies and personalities. Since we, as percipients of the world, stand on par with the reality of the world outside, we cannot understand anything in this world in an impartial manner—as an observer thereof. We are participants in the world; hence, we cannot understand the world. We cannot understand anything in which we participate as an integral part. We cannot impartially judge our own friend, because that person is our friend; nor can we impartially judge our enemy, because that person is our enemy.

The proper attitude for us to understand the world is that we should neither have the idea that the world is a friend, nor have the idea that the world is an enemy. But we are always partial persons, hanging on this side or that side. Either the world is beautiful and grand and it is worthwhile possessing, or it is a wretched substance which is the ugliest



thing conceivable. Either we like it, or we do not like it. But, understanding is not a process of liking or not liking. It is an apprehension of things as they are—which is outside the ken of sensory perception and operation. Here is the moot difficulty in the practice of yoga.

We cannot unite ourselves with anything, though this is the sum and substance of yoga practice. We are repelled by everything and, therefore, we cannot unite or commune with anything. The repulsion follows as a consequence of our self-assertion that we are percipients of this world. Every perception is a relation. Not only are we related to the objects which we perceive, but every object is related to every other object. Therefore, the whole world is relative; there is no absolute substantiality to anything in this world.

By a mutual pull exerted on one by another, the planets are moving along their orbits. Otherwise, one cannot understand how, unsupported, this planetary system is revolving and rotating in a mathematically precise manner. The explanation lies in the gravitational pull systematically exerted on one planet by the other, thus giving an idea of stability, whereas the stability is not independent of this relative pull exerted by one upon the other. So is the society of human beings, the organisation of things in this world. They are not substantial; they are like balloons, but they appear to be substantial, hard things on account of an illusory permanency attributed to them due to the relative interference and influence of one in relation to the other.

This is why they say the world is *maya*, the world is not true. But for us it is true, and it shall ever be true, because we are observers of the world—of which we are parts, and

in which we are involved. No man can understand the unreality of things. It is impossible to go into these mysteries, inasmuch as we are not observers of the world. Therefore, in the end, every scientific observation of anything in this world is an inadequate, futile process. No scientist can know things in their realities, because the scientist is involved in the things that he observes—which, in his enthusiasm of observation and experiment, he forgets.

No one can know the world; and, therefore, the world continues, just as an undetected thief survives and thrives because he knows that he can never be detected. No one can detect this peculiarity that is secretly hidden at the root of things, because whoever tries to understand it is also a part of it. This is *maya*. This is *avidya*. This is the inscrutable nature of things. This is the difficulty before us. No one who is caught up in this illusory network of relations, which are taken for granted as being substantial, can take to yoga earnestly, because the value that is attributed to the substantials very persistently presents itself before the mind's eye of even the best seeker in the world. The value of yoga will be tarnished and adulterated to the extent that value in the objective world is also, simultaneously, accepted.

To the extent that we are prepared to accept the value of substantial existences in the world, to that extent our love for yoga is diminished—is deteriorated and weakened. Each one of us stands as a witness before our own selves as to the extent of attraction that we feel towards the values of the world—which we cannot understand as unrealities, even

once in our life. We talk about the values of things and the worthwhileness of our enterprises in this world. We cannot get over the meaning that we attach to our own personal existence, our individual life and all its relations, and the interrelations of things.

It is necessary to learn the art of becoming a witness of the world panorama before one honestly tries to enter into this dispassionate practice called yoga. To stand as a witness of the world would mean to also stand as a witness of everything in us which belongs to the world. It is not merely a witnessing of that which is outside our bodies, which is what we generally do in judgements and witnessing of things. The features and characteristics in our own selves belong to the world and, therefore, when we try to be witnesses of the world, we have also to be witnesses of our own selves. We should not partake of characteristics in ourselves which do not really belong to us, but belong to the world.

The phenomenal part in us has to go to the phenomenal part of the world; and, that which is phenomenal in us should not be the judge of the world outside. The scientist is part of the world. His eyes are phenomenal instruments and, therefore, he can never understand the world, because he is a part of the world. His eyes, his instruments, his microscope, etc.—all the radar systems that he employs—are part and parcel of the phenomenal world, so he can be duped by the very instruments that he employs in understanding things. And so, we are under a spell of deception in everything that we try to know in this world and everything that we try to do in this world. When we

quit this world, we go totally defeated. No one has gone with satisfaction, and no one has succeeded in understanding—much less conquering, possessing or enjoying—this world.

Here is a problem which is a terrific iron curtain before us, preventing us from probing into the mysteries behind it. Ordinarily this is not an easy affair, because to stand as a witness of the world would be to stand as a witness of one's own self, as the self appears to the senses. This poor so-and-so sitting here is a part of the person seated in front, the objects visualised by the senses. They belong to the same category of things. A judge has to stand outside the defendants, the advocates and the witnesses in order to understand the nature of the case, but we have never been able to stand as a witness of the world. We are in the world—very much in it, organically connected with it, inseparably related to it—and, therefore, it is impossible to visualise the world. We visualise the world as we visualise our own personalities, and so we see in the world what we, ourselves, are.

It appears that the world before us is a reflection of our own minds. It is a mirror in which we see our own faces grinning, smiling, frowning, and so on. There is nothing in the world that we experience except what is in our own selves—the world as such, as it is said. The thing-in-itself has never been seen, and no one can see it.

No one can see it, because no one can go outside the world. Even if we stand on the sun, we are within the world, because the sun is a part of the world. Even if we go far away—millions and millions of miles away, light years away

to the star Sirius—we are within the world, and we cannot know anything of this world. We can move to the most distant spots in space; still, we are within the world. We can dive into the nether regions, but we are still within the world. We can fly like an eagle to the topmost regions, but we are still within the world—because we are within our body. This is the problem.

Wherever we go, we carry our body and the mind which is enshrined within it and works through the body as an instrument. Therefore, we cannot escape this difficulty in knowing anything. We cannot understand even a sand particle on the Ganga bank. Not an insect, not an ant can be known as it is in itself. Here is the cause of our difficulties, our moods of melancholy, dissatisfaction, depression and retrogression in yoga practice, even with the earnest enterprises we enter into after years of preparation in yoga.

It is not for nothing that it is said that we require divine guidance and a supernatural assistance, which we have to summon and invoke, because yoga is a supernatural effort on the part of that which is supernatural in man. It is not man that practises yoga; it is that which is super-physical and super-individual in him which encounters this world.

The student of yoga is not a man or a woman; it is a different thing altogether. Our concepts of the human species are to be very effectively brushed aside by an inward affiliation with the true spark of light that we are. We are to dissociate ourselves from all the social and biological associations into which we were born and with which we were brainwashed—and which we have become, totally, as if they are our own skin. As we cannot run away from our

own skin, we cannot run away from these conceptual relations, social and biological. Where, then, can yoga come before us? It is far away.

This is the reason why we are dissatisfied. We weep and cry, as if we have lost both God and the world at the same time, and nobody wants us. This happens in an intermediary stage of yoga where we either have no proper assistance or guidance from a superior, for reasons known to each one, or there are very hard oppositions arising from our own psyche which is not yet prepared for this arduous adventure.

Primarily, and finally, it looks as if we are our own obstacles; and, our difficulties land upon our heads like a vicious circle. We cannot understand things because we have suppressed emotions, frustrated feelings and unconscious impulses. As long as these impulses remain, not brought to the surface of consciousness and not fulfilled in the manner required, an understanding of even the ideal of yoga is not possible. But, on the other side, we are in the vicious circle again, because unless we take to yoga with effort—effectively, with intensity of aspiration—these impulses cannot be brought to the surface of consciousness. We are always caught, as if by both our ears, and it looks as if we are pulled with equal power in two different directions.

The causal network of the world cannot be broken through easily. The cause determines the effect, and the effect catches hold of the cause. As the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad puts it, in its own mystical language, there are the *grahas* and the *atigrahas*. The *grahas* are the sense

organs, and the *atigrahas* are their objects. The senses grab the objects, and the objects grab the senses—like the embrace of a bear. We embrace the bear, and the bear embraces us. We cannot leave the bear; and, also, the bear will not leave us. We are caught. Even a crab will catch us. If we touch a crab, it will catch us with its claws. We will not be able to get our fingers out, it will take hold of us so tightly. So is the bear-like embrace of this world. The world has embraced us because we wanted to embrace it as a delightful thing. Once we embrace the world, the world is not going to leave us.

Thus, there is a mystical difficulty before everyone—not an ordinary empirical difficulty which we can understand and probe into. Something has involved us very, very intricately within its web of interconnections, and it is not for nothing that we are given this admonition in the *Bhagavadgita*: *tad viddhi pranipatena pariprasnena sevaya, upateksyanti te jnanam jnaninas tattva-darsinah*. “You have to go to great masters and be students of these great ones, with utter patience.”

Impatience is our problem. We are push-button people, and we want to push a button and yoga should suddenly flood us. This is not the way in which things work. The world is not operating with push-button systems. It has its own graduated, evolutionary method of working. Therefore, undaunted vigour of patience is necessary in the practice of yoga. One may have to suffer for a long time. One suffers due to one’s own weaknesses, not due to the impositions of discipline from a Guru or the requirements of religion or spiritual practice.

It sometimes appears that, in this century, the world is not prepared for yoga. It is unfit for yoga in the true sense of the term because it has descended too far into a mechanical way of living and a love of comfort—always after ease, satisfaction of the body, and social relations of the best type possible; and, yoga has to somehow or other get accommodated to this mechanistic way of living where comfort is the first thing that we seek and the satisfaction of the ego is certainly unavoidable, and our attitude is: yoga may come, if it wants to come.

We will not find a true yogi anywhere. We may run from earth to heaven, but we will not find one. The difficulties are obvious. We have make-believes, whitewashes before our eyes, and they can satisfy us. Anything can satisfy us, as we are prepared to be carried away by the winds of the world. We can have warmth blown on our face for the time being, and when we are warmed up, we seem satisfied. Our satisfactions are puerile good-for-nothings, and we are carried away by these satisfactions. We do not want Gurus; we want only pleasure, satisfaction, comfort, and an appeasement of our ego. If a Guru of that type comes, okay; otherwise, we have nothing to do with a Guru.

In fact, we have nothing to do with God Himself, truly speaking. It is difficult to believe that we are honestly seekers of God. We are pleasure-lovers of the ego first and foremost, seeking satisfactions of various types in society—the type of which is very clear before us in this Twentieth Century. Let each one probe into one's own heart. Is one fit to confront the fiery face of God—which is that energy



which can engulf us and transform us as if we are reborn, as Christ put it? Unless we are reborn, there is no entry into the kingdom of heaven.

We have to understand what this getting reborn is. It does not mean entering into the mother's womb once again. It is a different kind of spiritual rebirth that we are expected to undergo. Hard it is, and we cannot understand what this self-transformation and rebirth is. It is a birth into the life of eternity, from this realm of phenomena. It is a withdrawal from this relative world of phenomenal connections and a birth into the cosmic noumenal existence. That is the rebirth Christ speaks of. Not entering into a mother's womb once again—he is not speaking of that rebirth. We would not like to have that kind of birth once again. We have seen it once; enough of it!

But, everything does not seem to be in our hands. We are helpless persons. We are helpless because we are caught in a stream of the current of life which goes the way it goes, and we seem to be satisfied. It is impossible to avoid the great requirement of study and discipline under a great master. Nobody should be under the impression that one can stand on one's own legs. Such legs are not provided to us. At least, to my eyes, such legs do not exist. The master is essential.

A few of us in the Ashram are standing witnesses to this necessity for a great master. A few of us here consider ourselves blessed—thrice blessed, one thousand times blessed—because we had this divine gift of having the divine satisfaction of living with a master. If we are anything today, whatever we may be, it is not due to the

books that we studied, not due to the intellect that seems to be operating in us. They are nothing. There is a supernatural element that seems to have saturated us, which is not due to any kind of empirical training or yoga conferences, or any kind of known methods of training or sessions of meditation. Nothing of the kind did we have. We had no lectures, no sermons, no teachings of any kind, and nothing was told to us.

But, we were bathed in the sunlight of a great, protective force, which is what gives us satisfaction; and if the whole world goes to the dogs, we shall still be happy. It cannot affect us. If the sun falls on our heads, we shall still be happy. If the earth cracks under our feet, we shall still be happy, due to a reason which does not come from textbooks or from anything that we grasped intellectually by any kind of experience. We feel ourselves immensely grateful to God who made this world, for having given us this little titbit of the glorious adventure of being physically in contact with a supernatural person, Swami Sivananda. I do not hope to see another person of that type in this world, at least in this physical existence of mine, unless a miracle takes place.

I mention this because none of you should be under the impression that a little yoga camp or a yoga course of three months is enough for you. You will be the same person again, because the world is too hard for every one of us. It is a terrible ogress, and you cannot stand before her. This little training is a scratching on the rock with a little needle, which is only a little satisfaction for you—a kind of satisfaction that something worthwhile has been done. You

have scratched on the rock a little bit, but it is not enough. So, you must be really honest and sincere students in the pursuit of the great ideal and goal of yoga, and not merely curiosity-mongers trying to find out if something is there—if God is there at all. If this is the attitude, you will get nothing. You will go back disappointed, worse than what you were before.

This predicament should not befall you. It is essential for you to be honest to your own selves first and foremost, before you try to be honest to others. To thine own self be true. Nothing can be more difficult for us than to do this, because we can be carried away by our own impulses unwittingly, unknowing to our own selves, and we will not know what is happening to us.

Therefore, have good friends. Be always in the company of people who will give you spiritual sustenance, strength, and enable you to imbibe a higher force in life. Do not be in the midst of people who will distract you, talk nonsense, gossip, and waste your time. Be in the midst of people who will speak good things, glorious things, and who have divine ideals. When you study books, study only those great glorious texts which will inspire you to a realm which is beyond this world—like the gospel of Christ, which goes by the name of *The Sermon on the Mount*, or the Bhagavadgita, the great Upanishads, the proclamations of the Zen masters and the great Sufi mystics like Jalaluddin Rumi and such other great, glorious teachers whose words will inspire you beyond your wits. Good company is very important. Do not be in the midst of friends who will waste

your time and distract your attention, who speak nonsense and of worldly things.

This world is going to be the same thing that it was. Nobody can change it. God has made it with His ordinance, and nobody can change His ordinance. Many have come and many have gone, and the world is the same; it cannot be changed. It cannot be changed because the very structure of things is beyond the capacity of human understanding. Therefore, we have to be very practical to hope always for the best, yet be prepared for the worst if it comes, so that we will not be taken by surprise by the events of the world. If something wonderful takes place, be happy, God is very kind. If something bad takes place, be satisfied, because the world can give us only this much.

In a cloth shop we can get only cloth, and not salt. In a salt shop we can get only salt, and not sweetmeats—and so on. This world cannot give us any satisfaction; it can give us only pain. *Anityam asukham, dukkhalayam asasvatam* is the description of the world given in the Bhagavadgita. It is transient: *anityam*. *Asukham*: unpleasant, because it is a relative world. It is not a substantial thing and, therefore, it cannot give us pleasantness always. *Dukhalayam*: the abode of sorrow is this world. No one is wholly happy, and no one can be entirely happy. *Asasvatam*: that which comes and goes. It is like a mirage, a city in the clouds, etc. These are the comparisons made in regard to the pageant of this world.

We have to be very cautious because at any moment we can be snatched away from this world by the powers that be. We are working hard in this world—not for this world,

though we may be under the impression we are working for this world. Here again we are under a deception. We do not know how many minutes we are going to live in this world. If it is not certain as to how many hours and days we are going to live in this world, why are we working for this world? We are misguided, and in a predicament where nobody knows how many minutes one is going to live in this world. It is impossible to believe that anyone can work for this world. No intelligent person will work for the welfare of this world, because one does not know how many minutes one is going to live in this world.

Unconsciously we are working for an achievement which is not of this world—unconsciously, because consciously we do not know this. We are caught so tightly in the network of relations that we are made to believe that we are working for this world—though, really speaking, we are working for another welfare altogether which is not of this realm. We are totally deluded in the impression that we are of this world. We think that we work for this world, that this world is ours. Not so is the case.

May we awaken our minds, and pray to the Almighty: *dhiyo yo nah prachodayat*. May our understanding be rightly directed. May we expect nothing from anyone, not even from God, except right understanding—not satisfaction, not pleasure, not happiness, not long life, not anything that one would usually expect in this world, but right understanding. May our understanding not be tarnished, may it not be muddled. May it not be caught up in delusions. May it be directed along the channel of the movement of the spirit toward its glorious destination.

This is our prayer, and may this prayer be granted. May the blessings of all the masters, sages and saints of yore—those who have been in this world and are now invisible, and also those who are now visible—may their blessings be upon us all. May the Almighty be kind to us, be merciful to us. May blessedness be on the whole world, and glory to you all!

## **A BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF SWAMI KRISHNANANDA**

Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj took birth on the 25th of April, 1922, and was named Subbaraya. He was the eldest of five children in a highly religious and orthodox Brahmin family well versed in the Sanskrit language, the influence of which was very profound on the young boy. He attended high school in Puttur (South Kanara District, Karnataka State) and stood first in the class in all subjects. Not being satisfied with what was taught in the classroom, young Subbaraya took to earnest self-study of Sanskrit with the aid of Amarakosa and other scriptural texts. While still a boy he studied and memorised the entire Bhagavadgita, and his simple way of doing it was not having breakfast or even lunch until a prescribed number of verses were memorised. Thus, within months Subbaraya memorised the whole of the Gita and recited it in full every day; such was his eagerness to study scripture. Reading from the Srimad Bhagavata that Lord Narayana lives in sacred Badrinath Dham, the young boy believed it literally and entertained a secret pious wish to go to the Himalayas, where Badrinath is located, and see the Lord there.

By the study of Sanskrit works such as the Bhagavadgita, the Upanishads, etc., Subbaraya was rooted more and more in the Advaita philosophy of Acharya Sankara, though he belonged to the traditional Madhva sect which follows the philosophy of dualism. His inner longing for Advaitic experience and renunciation grew stronger every day.

In 1943 Subbaraya took up government service at Hospet in Bellary District, which however did not last long. Before the end of the same year he left for Varanasi, where he remained for some time. But the longing for seclusion and the unknown call from the Master pulled him to Rishikesh, and he arrived there in the summer of 1944. When he met Swami Sivananda and fell prostrate before him, the saint said: "Stay here till death. I will make kings and ministers fall at your feet." The prophecy of the saint's statement came true for this young man who wondered within himself how this could ever happen. Swami Sivananda initiated young Subbaraya into the holy order of Sannyasa on the sacred day of Makar Sankranti, the 14th of January, 1946, and he was named Swami Krishnananda.

Sri Gurudev Swami Sivananda found that Swami Krishnananda was suitable for the work of correspondence, letter writing, writing messages, and even assisting in compiling books and editing them, etc. Later on Swamiji was given the work of typing the handwritten manuscripts of Sri Gurudev, which he used to bring to him every day. For instance, the entire volume of the Brahma Sutras of Sri Gurudev, which he wrote by hand, was typewritten by Swami Krishnananda. Swamiji confined himself mostly to the literary side and never had any kind of relationship with visitors, so that people who came from outside never knew that he existed in the Ashram. It was in the year 1948 that Gurudev asked Swamiji to do more work along the lines of writing books on philosophy and religion, which he took up earnestly. From that year onwards, Swamiji was more absorbed in writing and conducting classes, holding



lectures, etc., as per the instructions of Sri Gurudev. The first book Swamiji wrote was *The Realisation of the Absolute*, which was written in merely fourteen days, and is still considered by many as his best book—terse, direct, and stimulating.

When it became necessary for the Ashram to co-opt assistance from other members in the work of management, Swami Krishnananda was asked to collaborate with the Working Committee, which was formed in the year 1957. At that time Swamiji became the Secretary especially concerned with the management of finance. This continued until 1961 when, due to the absence of the General Secretary for a protracted period, Gurudev nominated Swamiji as General Secretary of the Divine Life Society, which position Swamiji held until 2001.

Swami Krishnananda was a genius and master of the scriptures, and expounded practically all the major scriptures of Vedanta. These discourses were given in the Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy of the Society during the early morning sessions, afternoon classes, and the regular three-month courses. Many of them have been brought out in book form and are authentic commentaries covering the philosophy, psychology and practice of the various disciplines of yoga. Swami Krishnananda is thus the author of forty-one books which were printed during his lifetime, fifteen books which were printed after Swamiji's Mahasamadhi, and twenty-four unprinted books which are published on Swamiji's website, each one a masterpiece in itself. Only a genius of Swamiji's calibre could do this in the midst of the enormous day-to-day volume of work as the

General Secretary of a large institution. Swamiji is a rare blend of karma and jnana yoga, a living example of the Bhagavadgita's teachings.

Such was Swami Krishnananda's literary skill and understanding of the entire gamut of the works of Swami Sivananda, numbering about three hundred, that when the Sivananda Literature Research Institute was formed on the 8th of September, 1958, Sri Gurudev himself made Swamiji the President. Again it was Swami Krishnananda who was appointed as the President of the Sivananda Literature Dissemination Committee, which was formed to bring out translations of Sri Gurudev's works in the major Indian languages. From September 1961, Swamiji was made Editor of the Society's official monthly organ, *The Divine Life*, which he did efficiently for nearly two decades.

Swami Krishnananda was a master of practically every system of Indian thought and Western philosophy. "Many Sankaras are rolled into one Krishnananda," said Sri Gurudev in a cryptic statement, which he himself has amplified in his article, "He is a Wonder to Me!" Swami Krishnananda, as the embodiment of Bhagavan Sri Krishna, lived in the state of God-consciousness and guided countless seekers along the path of Self-realisation. Swamiji attained Mahasamadhi on the 23rd of November, 2001.

All of Swami Krishnananda's books, plus many discourses, audios, videos and photos can be found on Swamiji's website at [www.swami-krishnananda.org](http://www.swami-krishnananda.org). According to Swamiji's wish and with his blessings, these are available freely to all. May the blessings of His Holiness Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj be with us always.