

THE MIND AS A QUANTUM OF ENERGY

by

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(Spoken to the students in the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy
on Sept. 26, 1996)

Our subject is the yoga of meditation, which has direct connection with what we call the mind, or the mind-stuff. We may have a commonplace, lay-person's idea that the mind is inside the body, and it is moving within us like a ball of mercury, shifting its position from one place to another place. The mind is neither inside the body, nor is it outside the body; it is just what we are.

The quantum of energy, capacity, and confidence that we have in our own selves is the mind operating. Our value is not in what we possess as an external commodity from the world, but is the manner we are thinking in our mind. This is not a difficult thing to understand. Whatever may be our quantity of material wealth in this world, if our mind does not agree to accommodate itself with this idea of possession, the possession becomes null and void. It is well said that we are what we think we are.

What do we think we are? What is the opinion that we have about our own selves? The answer would be a bundle of chaos. Our idea of our own selves is nothing but a confusion. It is so because every moment of time we change the idea about our own selves. Often, we think that we are well off;

often, we think that we are miserable. Many a time we think that we have everything that we need; and often we think that we do not have what we actually want.

You must have noticed that even when a person is, for all practical purposes, confident that he or she has everything that one needs, still, there will be a persistent lingering thought that something more is there, beyond what one has already, and it is not under one's possession. Sometimes we look like very adequate people: "I have everything; I am comfortable." But, this is a paltry idea, which does not continue for a long time.

The mind is a quantum of energy that is operating in us. The mind is energy. It is not a thing; it is not an object. It is just what energy can be defined as. It is power, rather. Our power is in our mind. As strong as our mind is, so strong we ourselves also are. If, for any reason whatsoever, the mind is not strong, and it feels that it is incomplete in some way in comparison with somebody else, then the strength diminishes.

The wrong notion that the quantum of energy called the mind is only inside the body is the cause of our difficulty. We know very well that energy cannot be bottled up in any particular place. It is a pervasive reality, which gives meaning and value to everything in the world. This energy is present in everything in the world. Animate, inanimate, or whatever it is, everything is a concentrated form of energy. The word 'concentrated' is used because of the fact that a particular pressure point known as the individual thing, object or person feels finite and inadequate while comparing oneself with others who, too, are centers of energy and power.

For instance, we feel small before an elephant. We have energy in ourselves, but the energy of the elephant seems to surpass our own. We feel puerile before it, and we dare not even go near it. This question of the circumstances of the operation of the mind of a human being is taken up in the psychology of yoga practice. The whole of yoga is nothing but a drama played by the mind-stuff. The idea that the mind is

inside the body can easily be recognized as erroneous by the fact of the observation that a thing that is limited within the body cannot know that there is anything outside it. We take for granted, as we usually imagine, that the mind cannot be outside our body; either it is inside the body, or it is the body itself, but it is not outside. We cannot see the mind operating somewhere outside. It is not outside.

Since it is not supposed to be operating external to the body or individuality of a person, it becomes difficult to explain how one is conscious of the existence of other things at all. It is the mind that knows things. There is a mountain in front of us; there are trees; there are people sitting here. How do we come to know that they are there at all?

Accepting the fact that the mind is the knowing principle, and it is not outside the individuality of a person, it becomes difficult to explain how such a mind, which is so limited and is finite, can become conscious of the existence of anything else at all. If my mind is tied down to the location of my own individuality, I cannot know that you are sitting in front of me, because the mind cannot move outside the body. On a further analysis of the psychology behind the operation of the mind, we come to the conclusion that there is something seriously wrong with our notion that we are only in one place, and the mind is only within the campus of the individuality of a person. If this is regarded as something erroneous, then we would not be able to explain how we know that the world exists at all.

The mind knows everything, and there is no other faculty in us, except the mind, that knows things. The world is so big, and it is outside. The outsideness of a thing prevents the knowledge of that particular thing by that which is not outside, but only inside. That which is inside cannot be outside; and if anything is outside, then it is not inside. If we are only within ourselves, then we cannot know that the world exists. A mysterious operation takes place, due to which we are aware that the world exists, and there are

many things around us. This is a subject, not merely of general psychology, but of what we may call philosophy.

In India, the most prominent philosophies that took up discussion of this subject are called the Samkhya and the Vedanta philosophies. In basic principles, the Samkhya and the Vedanta agree with each other; only in certain fundamental questions, they differ. Now, let us concentrate ourselves on the Samkhya aspect of the practice of yoga, which studies mind and consciousness. The word 'Samkhya' arises on account of it being a categorization or computation of the various degrees of the evolution of reality.

How many things are there in this world? The categorization and numbering of these gradational degrees of evolution is the function of the Samkhya philosophy. The word 'Samkhya' comes from the word '*sankhya*', which means numbering. The Samkhya philosophy numbers the categories of creation. It is a deductive philosophy, a little different from the inductive philosophies of Western thought – deductive in the sense that it accepts the existence of some fundamental being, and it does not require any proof that such a fundamental being exists. That thing which does not require any external demonstration is our own consciousness. We need not have to prove that we are conscious, because we never doubt that we are conscious. Always we are conscious of something.

Sometimes the mind and consciousness are considered as identical for certain practical purposes, though in fact the mind and consciousness are not identical with each other.

Briefly, we may say that the mind is the operational phenomenon projected by consciousness. Consciousness does not operate in any particular direction. The reason is that it cannot be confined to any particular place. We began by saying that the mind appears to be within the body, and it is located within our individuality. Not so is the case of consciousness, because consciousness is something by which everything is known. Without consciousness, knowledge is

not possible – knowledge of even one’s own self, apart from the knowledge of any other thing in the world.

Now, the Samkhya raises a very great question as to where consciousness is. Is it in some place? If it is only in some place, where is it located? All right, for the sake of argument, let us accept that consciousness is in some place only. It may be in me, in you, or somewhere else. If consciousness is only in one place, it is not in another place. The consciousness of being in one particular spot precludes the consciousness of there being anything at all outside that particular spot.

Unless we are simultaneously conscious that there is something outside consciousness which consciousness does not know, we cannot imagine that consciousness is limited. The supposed limitation of consciousness to a particular location implies also the non-location of consciousness. A consciousness of finitude is not possible, unless there is a simultaneous inductive or consequential conclusion that there is something beyond the finite.

If we are not satisfied with something, it follows that there is something else which will satisfy us. “I do not want this.” If we make any statement like this, we imply that there is something else which we want. Therefore, every assertion of consciousness is involved in subjectivity and objectivity, as they are called. There is a subjective side of consciousness, which makes one feel that it is the knower of a particular individual or a thing. But there is an objective side of it, namely, that it cannot know that it is subjective, unless it is also objective. The subject and the object are not two different items, but complementary to each other. The knower has to know something. If the knower knows nothing and tries to imagine that it knows only the knower, there will be a psychological conflict arising as to what it is that the knower is knowing. We will come to a deep conclusion about this matter a little later, but suffice it to say, for the time being, that the consciousness of knowing implies the necessary counterpart of there being something which is to

be known. That which is to be known by consciousness may wrongly be imagined to be outside consciousness. Or, it may not be so.

I shall relate one illustration to make this point a little more clear. When your waking mind goes into a state of dream, do you know what is happening to you? The waking mind, so called, is a composite inclusiveness of your total personality. What makes you feel that you are a whole by yourself is the waking consciousness; you may call it the waking mind. In that condition called dream, what happens is this so-called waking consciousness splits itself into the knower and the known aspect of the dream world. There is a vast world in dream – as vast as the one that there seems to be in the waking condition. Whatever you can see in the waking world, you can see in the dream world, also.

Now, who is seeing the dream? If you are the waking consciousness, which makes you feel that you are composed and safe, do you believe that the waking mind itself is dreaming, and entering into another condition? It cannot be so, because in the dream world, there is a dissection of the subjective side and the objective side. You are intelligent enough to understand that a peculiar split of the waking mind takes place in dreaming, due to which, a part of the waking mind looks like the observer of the dream, and another part looks like the observed world of space, time, cause, object, etc., in the dream. You cannot say that you are yourself dreaming as a waking mind, because if the waking mind is completely exhausted in the dream world, you would wake up. You would remain only in the dream world forever and ever. The transcendent aspect of the waking mind is retained intact, in spite of its apparent descent into a division of the dream subject and the dream object. You appear to have become somebody else in the dream, but really you are the same person that you were even before going into the dream. This is the reason why you wake up from the dream healthily, and without feeling that you have become somebody else.

The objectivity of the dream world, the externality of things that the dream subject observes, cannot be regarded as an ultimate reality, because if that world which you observe in the dream world really exists external to the consciousness of the observer, it will not allow you to wake up into the waking consciousness. You would be always dreaming. That you are able to wake up into the real waking consciousness, as you call it, shows that you have not become the dream object, nor have you become the dream subject. A kind of dramatic theatrical action takes place, as it were, in the dream, due to which operation the waking mind, which is otherwise hale and hearty – which is what you really are – appears to become somebody else.

It appears that King Janaka once dreamed that he was a butterfly, and this dream continued all whole night. When he woke up, people greeted him: “Janaka Maharaj, *namaskar*.” He asked the courtiers, “Am I Janaka, or a butterfly? Is it Janaka, the king, dreaming that he is a butterfly, or is the butterfly dreaming that he is a king?”

Imagine that there is a beggar who dreams for twelve hours every day that he is a king; and there is a real king who dreams for twelve hours every day that he is a beggar. Now, who is the king, and who is the beggar? You will be flabbergasted. For twelve hours a beggar is the king, and for another twelve hours the king is a beggar. Now, who is the king, and who is the beggar, because both are kings and beggars for twelve hours?

You may say, due to some difficulty you feel within yourself, that only what the waking mind thinks should be considered as real, not what is dreamt. The dream king is not a real king. The waking king only is the real king. Why do you say that? Because you have an indescribable, indemonstrable conviction that the waking mind is qualitatively superior to the dreaming mind. You cannot prove it, but you are convinced that you are qualitatively better in the waking world than in the dream world.

You have been an emperor in the dream world, but you are a poor fellow in the waking world. Would you like to wake up into the consciousness of a poor person, or would you like to continue dreaming that you are an emperor throughout the night? You would rather wish to be a poor fellow in waking condition than a king in dream. It is not the kingship or the beggarship that is important; it is the quality of consciousness that is important. Who told you that the waking consciousness is qualitatively superior? Nobody can demonstrate why it is so. It is a self-identical conviction: I am what I am.

The Samkhya philosophy takes us to this question from another angle of vision, and establishes that consciousness cannot be located in one place, though it looks like it is being located in the dream world, because the consciousness of limitation proves the existence of that which is not limited. You have to remember this one sentence. You cannot know that you are limited, unless there is a simultaneous conviction that there is something which is unlimited. A poor person cannot know that he or she is poor, unless there is a simultaneous consciousness that there is something called wealth or richness.

So, every affirmation is a complementary action, and pure isolated thinking is impossible. Samkhya, therefore, concludes that consciousness is unlimited. It is infinite in its nature, and as you yourself are the consciousness, you are, at the root of your being, an unlimited potentiality. Surprising, indeed, it is to hear this! There is an unlimited magazine of power and potentiality in every person. Due to the fact of there being such an unlimited capacity in every one of us, we feel miserable every day, and nothing in the world seems to be actually satisfying us.

Everything in the world is in one place. You cannot see any object in the world which is everywhere. There is location for everything in the world. That is to say, everything in the world is finite. Therefore, your infinite potentiality of inclusiveness cannot be satisfied even by the

possession of the whole world. Even if you are a king of the Earth, you will be an unhappy person, because the Earth has not become you. The Earth remains outside the king always, though the foolish king imagines that he is the owner of the whole world.

No one can own anything that is totally outside. If that is the case, then you can own nothing in the world. What is the situation now? You can own only your own self. As people usually tell you, when you were born, you did not bring the world with you. The child who was born was not a king; and when he passes away, he ceases to be a king. In the middle of its little tenure of temporary existence, an illusion is created that there is a large possession, and the king feels, "I am the king."

This is the reason why people say that the world is an illusion, and it is not a reality. If you consider the world as your possession and your property, and minus this possession of the world you cannot be happy, then you can never be happy under any circumstance, because you can never possess the world. The world was existing even before you were born, so how will you possess it now?

The Samkhya concludes that we have an infinitude of potentiality inside us, called consciousness, due to which we feel restless at all times. No finite accumulation of objectivity can satisfy any person. Even if the whole country is given to us as our property, we cannot say that we will be secure. There is a fear: "The whole country has been given to me, but how long will it continue? How long will I be existing here? It can all vanish."

The possession of the whole Earth cannot satisfy us because, in fact, there is no such thing called possession, because one thing cannot become another thing. That which is not us cannot become us. If we imagine that the world is not us, then it cannot become us under any circumstance. Whatever be the effort that we put forth to possess it, it will elude our grasp. A beggar is born, and a beggar dies, and nothing remains in the middle.

The insight into which the Samkhya philosophy takes us is really fundamental. We are not the physical body; we are consciousness, and that consciousness is not in one place only, because if it is in one place, if it is a located point, it cannot know that it is located in one point. This is the very important conclusion that follows, as a logical deduction. We cannot know that there is nothing outside us, unless there is something outside us. It is very strange indeed.

Are we living in a real world? Are we really educated into the structure of this whole cosmos? Or, are we poorlings who do not know where we are actually living? Do we know how we are connected to this world? Here, again, another question arises from the point of view of the Samkhya: "How are you related to the world at all?"

The Samkhya calls the world *prakriti*. What is called *prakriti* in the Samkhya terminology is matter, in ordinary terms. The whole world is considered as a material ubiquitous pervasiveness. And consciousness is that which knows that there is *prakriti*, or matter.

The Samkhya concludes that there are only two realities ultimately – consciousness and matter. That which knows is consciousness, and that which is known is called matter. The known-ness of matter arises on account of the fact that matter cannot know itself. The materialist argument that only matter exists is defeated in one moment by the consequence that follows from this argument that matter cannot know itself. If matter only exists, according to the materialist doctrine, who will know that there is matter at all? Matter is that thing which is bereft of consciousness. Therefore, matter cannot know that it exists. Hence, who is saying that the matter exists at all? That one which is affirming that there is such a thing called matter cannot itself be matter. Hence, there must be two realities at least – namely, consciousness, and that which is known by consciousness.

The Sanskrit terminological description of these two principles is *purusha* and *prakriti*. *Purusha* is the conscious,

living principle; *prakriti* is the matter that is what is called the whole universe. That which cannot know its own existence, and yet operates, is matter; and that which knows itself is consciousness.

Having established the fact that consciousness is everywhere, it cannot be considered as an active principle, because activity is a movement of something outside itself. The externality of a phenomenon is necessary in order that activity is possible. If there is nothing outside us, we cannot act. But having concluded that consciousness is everywhere, and it is infinite in its nature, the Samkhya has to conclude, at the same time, that consciousness is inactive, while *prakriti* is active. The inactivity of the illumination of consciousness, combined with the activity of matter, which does not know itself, is the whole drama of life. It is an admixture of the inactive infinite consciousness, and the active unconscious material principle.

A question arises: "How is it possible that consciousness can be associated with matter in any way whatsoever? How could consciousness know that there is matter, because they are two different things, qualitatively? If consciousness is infinite, it is everywhere. If it is everywhere, where does matter exist? Where is the place for matter to exist at all, because you have already filled the whole space with consciousness? Does matter exist at all?"

This question is taken up by the Vedanta philosophy, where it refutes the fundamental proposition of the Samkhya that consciousness and matter are two different things. This is a difficult subject, and we shall take it up another time.